

## Daily life 451

### Chapter 451 Parting Words (1)

When it came to the valley master, Yang Qing knew she was a monstrous genius, the kind that appears once every million years when it came to alchemy, herbology, and other related matters, but he didn't think when it came to combat she had enough abilities to make someone strong enough to be a chief inquisitor, to be fearful.

"Will I be safe, after refusing her all this time?" he worriedly wondered.

However, his thoughts of impending doom were cut short, when Vice President Tao Wen and Chief Inquisitor Zhu Qiu started another discussion of their own, more specifically related to the origin of that tree.

"Mei, can you show us what happened, please?" said Vice President Tao Wen to the horn in his hand which let out an elland's call as a water-like membrane appeared out of thin air displaying the events that happened in extreme detail.

Yang Qing and the rest were unable to follow because of the speed with which the details were being shown.

The whole ordeal had taken them close to an hour to conclude, but the water membrane appeared and disappeared in the blink of an eye.

"Your thoughts, brother Zhu Qiu?"

"The Ba She looks to have been artificially recreated, and with some degree of skill at that. The mastermind seemed to have embedded something in the founder as a fail-safe.

Mmh It seems the tree was controlled in the same way.

The mastermind seems to have a wide array of skills from alchemy to spirit beasts, and herbology, while his blood arts are some of the finest I've seen for it to be able to recreate lifelike creatures like the tree and the Ba She ..."

"Just as I thought, we have a thorny person here..." said Vice President Tao Wen as his eyes let out a strange ethereal glow.

"From the fight, the thorn had the power level of a soul beginner, but the exquisiteness of the moves, the level of expertise is of someone higher, and then there's a judgment.

They didn't even hesitate to detonate their apparition, despite the damage it does, all to make a clean getaway.

Brother Zhu Qiu, you are better at tracking than I am, although I feel someone that cautious and skilled is less likely to make such a mistake, but are there any traces left we can work with to track them?"

"Let's see.."

The chief inquisitor waved his palm like he was pulling something to himself. Millions of leaves surrounded by a mystical light were instantly produced from his palms, and spread all over the ruins of the Ice Emerald Sect with the bulk of it concentrated on where the corpse of the Ba She had been along with the red abyssal thorn tree.

The leaves gently swayed all over the place like falling leaves during autumn and cast an ethereal look to the place.

Yang Qing and the rest gasped in awe at the marvelous sight. They felt like they were standing in a galaxy of stars.

After a minute the leaves disappeared.

"The trace is light and discombobulated hidden beneath layers of trickery and misdirection. There are even curses mixed in there.." As Chief Inquisitor Zhu Qiu said this, hundreds of bursts of dark smoke

surrounded with a radiant light appeared all over the place. I think you should take a look at [pandasnovel.com](http://pandasnovel.com)

"Their karma has also been erased...but in combusting their apparition and also appearing, they did leave something, but by the looks of it, it will only be around for ten minutes or less.."

A wavy thin hazy golden light appeared as it weakly meandered like a river headed in the northern direction of the ruins of the Ice Emerald Sect.

"Ten Minutes huh...hopefully that is doable. My real body will meet us halfway..Oh before I forget.." the apparition of Vice President Tao Wen turned to face the five judges.

[pandasnovel.com](http://pandasnovel.com) "The Chief Inquisitor and I need to chase after the person while we still have time, and I will need to take the horn with me.

Have this instead for your protection when you head back, should be enough to protect you against someone in the early stage of the soul formation realm. Though it will only be there for two hours at most, so make sure you reach the headquarters by then.."

Vice President Tao Wen opened his palms as five water swords instantly appeared. They gleamed with glow of the sun, and they were about the size of an index finger.

Yang Qing couldn't detect any energy from them and just seemed like a mundane water sword to him, a parlor trick conjured from qi.

The fact he couldn't gauge their power level was a sign of how unfathomable those ordinary-looking water swords were.

The five swords instantly flew toward them and disappeared into their bodies through their glabbelas.

The five judges tried to scan their bodies to find where the swords had disappeared to, but they all couldn't detect it.

"Take care now... and ..." a sympathetic look appeared on Vice President Tao Wen.

"Visit the judicial review when you arrive, they will guide you on what's next. This ordeal couldn't have been easy..Good job.." he said as he comfortingly patted each one of them.

"The doubt you have, the heaviness you feel, and all the other things running through your minds, don't hide from them, don't ignore them, just like when you conducted the sentence, face it.

It won't be easy, but take solace in knowing all you are feeling, we have all felt it. You're not weak for feeling it either.

I wish you rest and comfort on the path ahead.." Chief Inquisitor Zhu Qiu gently said as he saw the complicated looks flash in their eyes when Vice President Tao Wen patted them.

"Be well, and the Order will always offer you support despite the circumstance..." Vice President Tao Wen lastly said as he and Chief Inquisitor Zhu Qiu flashed and disappeared.

A somber silence drowned the area after the two had left, with the five young judges finally having a breather, as they prepared themselves for another fight, one though didn't have risk of death like this one, was just as tough.

It was unknown who sighed first, but they all collectively sighed, trying to relieve the heaviness from their chests.

Chapter 452 Parting Words (2)

"Should we leave?" Dai Chen somberly asked.

After Vice President Tao Wen and Chief Inquisitor Zhu Qiu had left, they had remained there for a whole minute stewing in silence and the ironic loudness of their thoughts surrounded by a ruin devoid of life.

No building was left, no plant was left, nothing that had life remained in the area except them, Yang Qing's plant clone, and one other object that looked to be well on its way to its death, closing curtains on all life on Ice Emerald Sect.

The central grounds of the sect had been eviscerated and nothing was left standing. All 50,000 years worth of history had just been erased within an hour.

All that was left of proof that the Ice Emerald Sect existed, was the seven survivors, who will more than likely never come here again or raise the banner of the sect considering the scale of destruction left in the area.

As for the other proof of their existence, sadly enough was the manner in which they were destroyed.

[pandasnovel.com](http://pandasnovel.com) The way in which they were destroyed; the horrific scale of it, and the transpiration of events, were likely to keep the sect immortalized in the annals of the history of the southern continent.

Thousands of years down the line, the sect will likely still be freshly remembered by mortals and cultivators alike, as another cautionary tale and also a reminder, that this was still a cultivation world, even with the presence of the Order.

Despite the era, or the illusion of peace in the continent, any organization out there despite how old it was, as long as it wasn't powerful enough to guarantee its existence, it was at risk of suffering the same fates as the sect, clans, empires and countless other organizations that existed thousands and thousands of years ago, before the Order came to be.

Back then organizations came and went like the rising and falling of the sun, and with the destruction of the Ice Emerald Sect, that fact still rang true even now.

That destruction served as a reminder to those that had forgotten, power still reigned supreme.

Power was what drove the Ice Emerald Sect to do what they did, and power was what enabled the Order to do what they did. In the middle of it, power started and finished today's events, and power was the lesson countless of people had learned from today's events.

Some had their bellies reignited with ambition towards it, while some reigned theirs in when they saw the display of real power.

Despite the varying conclusions and outlooks all around, today's events had an impact on the whole continent, from the seven survivors to the five young judges who executed the sentence, to those with relation to the victims of the punitive activities of the Ice Emerald Sect like the Tang family, to those with a relation to the sect, to the bystanders, today's events were firmly engraved on them and on the continent.

In that silence, another voice suddenly sounded, spreading to every land on the continent, It didn't matter whether it was a holy land or just a shack in a village, cultivator, mortal, spirit beast, spiritual plant, regular animal, insect, reptile, amphibian, bird.

When that voice sounded, every single living thing understood the contents of the speaker.

"The Ice Emerald Sect is no more. While justice was served on behalf of their victims, it's still a sad affair. The lives lost can never be brought back on both sides.

While cultivating is considered to be going against the heavens and breaking free of our mortal shackles, it does not mean we act with impropriety and disregard.

We need to ground ourselves and look inwardly as an anchor and as a guide on our paths and hearts, so we may not lose ourselves, and if you cannot do that, or are unwilling to do that, you will more than likely lose yourselves, along with everything you are pursuing and hold dear.

Choose to ground yourselves, or we, the Order will do that for you, no matter your cultivation base, rank, or background.

Take care denizens of the continent.."

The voice was gentle, and serene, and had an ethereal mystique-ness to it along with a profound vastness like just a single word could birth life.

"Who was that?" Yang Qing asked with a dumbfounded look on his face.

He could feel as if the speaker was talking next to his ear. I think you should take a look at [pa1dasnovel.com](http://pa1dasnovel.com)

"I don't know, I've never heard that voice.." answered Zhang Qingge as she closed her eyes in an effort to recall if she had ever come across that voice.

"Me neither."

"Me too.."

"It could be the third vice president or some big shot from the high council.." said Wei Ying.

"Could be.."

"Huh! I've forgotten it!!" Yang Qing suddenly said with his eyes wide open.

"Everything about the voice is suddenly gone, except the message! How is that possible?!.. Do any of you..."

"I can't remember it either.." Dai Chen answered with a stupefied expression, similar to the one Yang Qing had on him.

"Today has surely been a humbling experience.." Mo Liwei said as he shook with a bitter smile on his face.

"It has.." the rest somberly said.

There was the display from the tree, and the intervention of Vice President Tao Wen, and now whoever this speaker was, they were powerful enough to even tamper with their memories from wherever they were.

...

At the same time in different parts of the continent,

"Who would have expected them to grow this strong in just a few short years.." said a middle-aged man with a slender build, black silky smooth flowing hair, and a tranquil look to his eyes.

He had on a simple black robe with a coat that had the image of a mountain filled with dazzling swords revolving around it, on his back.

He was calmly seated by a pond with a tea set next to him, along with a wet stone that he used to gently polish a silver blade that was seven feet long.

Every movement he made produced a dazzling light like he held the light of the galaxy within his palms and used it to refine his sword, which let out a hum of satisfaction as it released radiant light.

As he was leisurely polishing his sword, an elderly man with piercing eyes appeared behind him.

"What is it, Qian?" the middle-aged man gently asked without turning.

"Sect master, the inner sect disciples chosen for the crimson tide subjugation and investigation, are about to head out.."

"Oh..elder Nianzu will be heading out with them?" asked the middle-aged man.

"Yes.." the elderly man respectfully answered.



"Mmh, add one more inner core elder, and two disciples from the radiant sword hearts.."

### Chapter 453 Parting Words (3)

The elderly man was shocked at first before he replied,

"Sect master, isn't that too much? Though Elder Nianzu is newly promoted, he is still a soul formation expert, and with his identity as a former radiant sword heart, he should be more than capable of handling the mission.

The Crimson Wave is no more, and all they will be doing is hunting down regular blood fiend groups.."

"I don't doubt Nianzu's abilities, vice sect master. It's just that things have been radically changing over the past few years, almost as if in preparation for something.

It can't harm to be careful with these things. Even though we are considered a holy land, the number of people in the sect can't compare to that of sects led by a palace realm cultivator. They are now called rank 3 sects, right?"

"They are.."

"What an interesting grading method...oh where was I.."

The elderly man sighed to himself at the antics of the middle-aged man. Though the person before him was one of the most talented and powerful cultivators to have ever graced the sect, or worn the crown of sect master, holding a conversation with him was hard because he would easily lose himself to his own thoughts and even forget someone was there.

He had heard it was a side effect of the long seclusions that he had taken ever since he was small. He couldn't help but wonder if that was the reason he put so many restrictions on regulating secluded cultivation among younger disciples, and the social events he had been secretly promoting around the sect.

"Well, at least the disciples are less stiff and indifferent to one another now.."

"We have low numbers because of our stringent requirements on those we allow in. However, because our numbers are so low, we cannot afford to be careless with the lives of our fellow members.

I do not want what happened back then when we lost two inner elders and half the disciples to repeat itself.

I'd rather be overcautious and not lose a single member, Qian He.."

"As you wish, sect master.." the elderly man said with a sigh as he remembered the events of back then.

It was one of the greatest losses their sect had ever suffered to date. They lost two soul adept cultivators, and about a dozen disciples who were in the domain realm and had enough abilities to even reach the soul formation expert, all because they had underestimated their enemy, even though at the time, they did not think so.

"Good, though I take it, you didn't come here just to inform me they were leaving?" the middle-aged man said with a meaningful smile as he turned to face the elderly man.

"You're right, sect master.." the elderly man paused as he steeled himself.

" From Elder Han Ming's report, the Order's vice president, the chancellor who is rumored to have taught countless domain experts, and now this...they may grow beyond our abilities to control them if they haven't already.

They may one day get too full of themselves and decide to bare their fangs against us.."

"So, what is it you're asking vice sect master.."

"We need to suppress them, now, while we can.."

"Why?"

"Huh, what do you mean why?! Because of the threat they pose to us.."

"Sigh, vice sect master, this is why I've been constantly insisting for the disciples to leave the mountain and explore the outside world. The world is a big place, much bigger than you or I can imagine.

If they stay cooped up here, their visions will be a reflection of what their seniors think, and it will not be something they decide for themselves.

Holy lands., holy lands...." The middle-aged man had a forlorn look in his eyes as he stared upwards.

"This continent is known to be the richest one when compared to the others and it doesn't lose out even to the central continent. In its heyday, I read sects and other organizations that rivaled us in strength numbered in the dozens, but currently we are just two.

Where did they all disappear off to? If they had the same strength, then they could have still been around, even if it was one or two, but there isn't even one..well there is the Dragon Meadow and the Odyssey Horizon, but that's too few in comparison to the rumors of the numbers that existed back then.I think you should take a look at

The nebulous star sect, the illusory sword mountain, the Timeless Lotus sect, the celestial river garden sect, the Blue Mist Aurora Manor, the void walker sect, and their likes..even the Frozen Serenity Sect..

Each one of them is as powerful as us, if not more, and were once occupants of this continent, but not one of them exists... All we have are ruins, mysterious realms, grottos, and little bits of information and cultivation arts that serve as evidence, that they once existed, but not one explains how they disappeared.

It's like they all vanished at one point, and their traces were wiped out. Qian He aren't you curious? How could all these organizations with strength that rival ours, disappear like that with no trace, other than dead buildings and scrolls and jade slips?

If you're not, I surely am. As sect master, I would be remiss if I wasn't. If it could happen to them, it could happen to us, but alas my investigations all these years bore no fruit.

Though I'm certain the Dragon Meadow and the Odyssey Horizon have those answers, but even as the sect master of the so-called 'holy land', I'm unqualified to learn it.." the middle-aged man said with a self-deprecating smile.

"I'm sure the three ancestors know something too, but I don't want to get beaten up .."

"Qian He, though I appreciate your efforts and concern for the sect, I feel your concerns are a little bit misplaced.

I can tell you think the same of me, and that I'm lost in my fantasy thoughts again.."

"Surely not sect master.."

Even though the elderly man said that his eyes flickered slightly.

"Okay.." said the middle-aged man with a slight smile.

"Ignoring the bygone era, we could take a look at something more recent; the invasion of the continent by outside forces.

The story around is they came because the whole continent was at war, and they came to fish in troubled waters because of how rich our continent is, but we all know that wasn't it.

If it was just regular organizations, maybe, but there is no way just a spiritually rich land would manage to garner the attention of different holy lands around the continent and make them tempted enough to even traverse the dangerous bodies of water that separate our continents.

The ground that houses them is no different than ours, so there had to have been something else which we still don't know what it is..

Who's to say, they won't try again? That is where our focus should be, besides.." the middle-aged man paused as he turned to his polishing.

"Don't you think you're looking on the Radiant Sword Sect too much...I Bai Xiaodan, am I someone who is weak enough to let myself or my sect be subservient to someone else or try to weaken them so I can protect some status?

If they have the capabilities let them try, whether it's the Order, that ambitious two-faced snake Flowing Valley, Mythical races, other holy lands, I welcome their challenge any time..." An overbearing pressure that made the skies cry emanated from the middle-aged man.

An illusory sword appeared from his body and extended all the way to the skies above with its tip disappearing further and further up.

The elderly man despite being a soul supreme expert felt his blood run cold, and his legs quake from the pressure being released by that middle-aged man.

The pressure came and went just as fast, and the middle-aged man looked just like any other normal person caring for their sword while drinking tea.

The elderly man felt like he had just escaped an inferno with pools of sweat soaking his body.

"Sorry for speaking out of turn sect master.." he said as he cupped his fist.

"It's okay Qian He.. You can go make the arrangements.."

The elderly man nodded and swiftly disappeared.

"The Order huh..i felt my heart tremble, I wonder who that swordsman was..."

Chapter 454 Parting Words (4)

## Ruins of the Ice Emerald Sect

"Can you guys give me a second.." Yang Qing said as he headed to the location where the Wisteria tree had been.

Yu Gen, Xia Ting, and four other inquisitors had already arrived where they were, after everything had settled down.

The four inquisitors were each from the four judges' team that they had brought along for the mission. Their duties along with the two roaming inquisitors were to maintain the cordon around the Ice Emerald Sect while also remaining vigilant against any would-be cultivators who would be tempted to interfere with the sentence, or those scheming to fish in troubled waters.

It wasn't only the allies of the Ice Emerald Sect they were wary about, especially with the recent rise in attacks on Order employees, an event like this one would be the perfect place to plan an ambush, especially, in the midst of the chaos brought about by the fight.

Therefore the five had to make sure their bases were covered even if they had a saint-grade treasure and an ascendant-grade treasure, that was now nonexistent.

Mo Liwei's inquisitor was a lady named Yu Lanfen. She had a studious look about her, like one of someone who liked things done prime and proper. She was at the second stage of the palace realm just like Mo Liwei.

Wei Ying's inquisitor was a taciturn young man with a slender and small build. He was at the second stage of the palace realm and was an accomplished swordsman from the bit Yang Qing knew.

Next were Dai Chen and Zhang Qingge's inquisitors who were both in the first stage of the palace realm.

Both Dai Chen and Zhang Qingge were newly promoted palace court judges. They had only been there less than a year more-so the latter.

Every judge had five inquisitors to their team, with the option to have more, should the option be available but at the bare minimum, they needed to have five.

Dai Chen had six inquisitors under him while Zhang Qingee had five, and of their inquisitors, only two from both sides had reached the palace realm. In Dai Chen's case it would have been three had Lai Lei not been gravely injured and had his dantian injured while he was in the quasi-palace realm.

In terms of talent, among the inquisitors under Dai Chen, he was the most skilled, skilled enough to even rival Dai Chen's abilities, the same as how Yi Jie was with Yang Qing.

Stepping up to cover the gap left by Lai Lei's injury was an inquisitor by the name of Cheng Qing. He was a bit older than Dai Chen and by default Yang Qing. His features were that of someone in his early forties. He had short black hair and a calm and stable aura about him.

The Order unlike most organizations, never looked at someone's age when they applied to get in. They would rather spend enormous resources to pull out a buried talent from the ground which always resulted in a few old cultivators coming in through their ranks like that old man during the test in Yang Qing's invigilation who managed to gain sword sense during the test, while also showing one of the highest comprehension skills with the cultivation art Yang Qing had given them.

Cheng Qing, Dai Chen's inquisitor got in the same way. He was 70 years old when he got in. He had wanted to maintain the same look, but it made Dai Chen and Lai Lei feel awkward so he changed his look to his present look. I think you should take a look at

He didn't have any outstanding qualities other than the fact that he was a jack of all trades. He knew enough about everything, whether it was soul techniques, formation arrays, pill refining, medicine, or poison identification. He wasn't stellar at them, but he knew enough for a baseline and his application of them was ingenious and creative.

He was an all-rounded person who would have been the likely candidate to be head of the inquisitors under Dai Chen's team, but refused it because in terms of talent, he couldn't match Lai Lei, but with Lai Lei injured, he took up the mantle.

When it came to Zhang Qingge, the inquisitor by her side, was a gentle, motherly, and serene-looking young lady called Zhu Ren. She was from the same year as Yang Qing but a bit older than them by four years.

She was the head inquisitor under Zhang Qingge and had a special physique related to the earth element. In terms of defense, she was an absolute turtle which suited her rather well for her role because even though she was an inquisitor, her primary job was to be Zhang Qingge's nanny. Whether it was to hold her hand during shy moments or prevent her callous berserker state from causing too much damage.

Zhang Qingge would be buried in never-ending debt from reparations were it not for Zhu Ren. She was great friends with Yi Jie, which Yang Qing never understood how, since Yi Jie was never a sociable person. Other than his wine friends, he rarely interacted with people.

The four judges had thus decided to each bring one member of their team, while in Yang Qing's case, the two roaming inquisitors had to be present as primary investigators of the whole thing.

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"I can't believe you're still hanging on. I wonder what it is that has you desperately clinging on?" Yang Qing said as he gently removed the debris and sand that covered a tiny withered bark that had cracks all over, and faint white flashes in those cracks that also released a little cool mist.

"F..i..n..al w..o..r..d..s.."

"Yours?" asked Yang Qing with a sad expression on his face.

This day was less than pleasant for him, and when he saw the husk of the Wisteria tree, his emotions grew even more complicated.

Despite knowing it was corrupted, and had its spirit sealed. The tree had still been at the center of thousands of deaths one of which was Ma Yuan's wife.



If Yang Qing didn't know someone related to its victims, he was sure he wouldn't be feeling as he did. The churning pit in his stomach made him nauseous, and his body felt unlike himself.

If it was just victims on a piece of paper, he would have been sympathetic but he interacted with Ma Yuan for quite some time which inadvertently made him invested.

He hoped he could reunite the whole family and give the man some good news as a reprieve for all the torment and suffering he had endured for the past seven years.

#### Chapter 455 Parting Words (5)

But now, things were different. His wife, Shun Fei was dead, and likely at the hands of the tree before him even though it had been at the behest of the founder, and his child, she had a gu implanted in her which had interfered with her memories, and Yang Qing didn't know how wide and deep the damage was.

What if it had affected all memories of her parents?

Yang Qing wasn't sure Ma Yuan could take it, which was why he was hesitant to head back immediately.

He gently shook his head to push those thoughts away. The tree was likely a victim just as the rest of them.

"N..o..t m..i...n..e b..u..t l..a..s..t t..h..r...e...e"

The wisteria had reached the palace realm and could thus transmit its thoughts. Its voice was cold, serene, and was that of a lady. However, because of how damaged it was from whatever the founder did, it struggled to transmit its thoughts.

Yang Qing who detected waved his sleeves and the vine clone that was still on standby flew in his direction.

He sat in a lotus position, and the clone did so too, with their palms facing each other and gentle light filled with different colors in between them.

The vine clone produced a single branch that tapped the withering wisteria husk.

"You can talk now.." Yang Qing said.

He had used the vine clone as a conduit between him and the Wisteria tree. It could directly transmit its thoughts to the vine clone without the need of using its palace sense, and whatever it wanted to say or show, would be transmitted to Yang Qing.

Yang Qing was still suspicious of the tree, especially after the recent events with the red abyssal thorn tree and the likely soul formation mastermind, he couldn't risk a direct transmission, case the mastermind still had something planted in the tree.

Having the vine clone as a go-between was safer.

"Many thanks for the consideration, young Daoist..." said Wisteria Tree.

"I achieved sentience thirty thousand years ago, but it's been a blur from then. All I remember is being tied by miasma chains while my body was drowned in a river of blood that had billions of accumulated resentments of different creatures from humans to spirit beasts.

I only gained clarity of my surroundings from about 30 years ago, thanks to a young lady who would play the harp every time she was here. She was absolutely horrible at it, but she released a unique charm with it, along with the pure yin energy around her, it managed to awaken me.

My consciousness grew stronger and stronger from that moment, until 18 years ago when she disappeared with my help.

I hid that I had regained clarity from the founder since I was weaker, and she controlled the seal that shackled me, but I could still maneuver with the help of the yin spirit vein below. I used it in helping the

lady escape along with revealing a few memories I had of what awaited her, had she stayed. I think you should take a look at

However, that young lady was brought back here seven years ago, and no matter how much I didn't want it, she ended up suffering the same fate as all the others who had been brought here.

She was set for refinement a few months ago after she reached the peak of the core formation realm. She knew what waited for her, but she willingly chose it in exchange for her daughter being spared. Even though I think she knew her daughter was likely to suffer a similar fate somewhere down the line.

In these 30 years, three people have been refined with me as the trigger, with her as one of them.

While I was too helpless to save them or stop what happened to them, I tried to preserve their last words that they would like to leave behind. They all chose to do so.."

Yang Qing clenched his fists as he heard that. Even without asking the young lady's identity, he knew it was Ma Yuan's wife.

"What did she say?"

Even though it was a thought transmission, the words said managed to convey Yang Qing's present state which was hesitation, regret, sympathy, and worry.

"Ma Yuan,

You're a blockhead, unreliable in so many ways except for farming which to date I still can't believe how a clumsy person like you could be so good at it. A shameless braggart who just never shuts up, never stops getting in trouble, and is too stubborn for your own good sometimes...but it is thanks to that stubbornness that made me fall in love with you, and it is from that stubbornness that I know you will never stop looking for us.

Some part of me dreads it, but some part of me is happy. Happy to have found someone willing to go to such lengths for me, someone stupid enough not to stop no matter how difficult and impossible it may be.

This is why I'm leaving this message. On the off chance that you do find us, and..... I'm not there.

Thank you, Yuan'er for giving me a life, and giving me a reason to look forward to each day and the beautiful child we created, who I'm glad doesn't have your nose.

She will need you, and you will need her, now that I won't be there for you both. Be there for each other and live Ma Yuan, live. Promise me you will. Take this as another unreasonable request from your wife.

I know you'll be a good father to her, just as you always have been a good father and a good husband, a little too nagging but you were truly good, which is why I hope you can have a good life even if I'm not there to have it with you. Honestly, you still worry me to no end but even in your unreliability, you've always been reliable, a reliable blockhead of a husband, father, and farmer.

Thank you for an amazing life and for letting me be a wife and a mother, and experience a joy I never thought possible. If possible in the next life, I'd want to be your wife again and make so many memories without the shackles of my past hanging above me.

Take care my little blockhead, and look after our daughter, and tell her how much I love her. At least now you can't nag that I'm stingy with my words. Those years of being with you, I've learned something.

Thank you and don't forget me, I won't forget you even in death, from your loving wife, Li Liu.."

Chapter 456 Farewell Ice Emerald Sect

"Li Liu huh, so that's her real name..Ma Yuan, you had a good wife..." Yang Qing thought to himself with a sad smile.

"Can you do me a favor?" asked Yang Qing to the Wisteria tree as his dread of going back to the headquarters increased a couple of notches.

"Anything young Daoist as long as I'm able.."

"Could you recreate the message in her voice, exactly how she was when she passed on those words to you? You can do the same for the remaining two messages. If it's not too much trouble.."

"I can.."

"Thank you.." Yang Qing said with a heavy sigh as he took out three recording white jade talismans.

He didn't know if it would help but he hoped hearing his wife's voice and her parting words would have offered some bit of consolation to him.

He would have preferred to have a visual recording of the moment itself, but the Wisteria tree didn't have long. It was using its last vestiges to communicate with Yang Qing.

After about two minutes, the three recordings were done.

Li Liu's voice was cold but it had a hint of gentleness and fluidity to it. The Wisteria had done its utmost to recreate that scene, as Yang Qing could feel the raw emotions contained in her words.

The Wisteria tree did the same with the other two victims who left their final words with it. One of them was an old woman in the core formation stage who was the matriarch of a small rank 3 clan. She was the most powerful member of the clan, and her name was Shao An. She had been abducted a couple of years prior to Ma Yuan's wife being brought back and was refined shortly after.

Her message was simple, and unlike Li Liu's the emotion contained in it was scarce. It felt more like her giving out her last instructions to her clan members more than anything else. Her instructions were directed to her chosen heir, which wasn't her children but her great-grandchild by the name of Shao Zhen. She left him instructions on where to find some of the treasures and resources she had hidden away with the bank owned by the White Rose Pavillion.

She also left him with a few more instructions such as who to trust, who not to, and who to go to for help within and outside the family, along with a few other things that would help him cement his position as the next head of the family.

The last message was from an inner-sect disciple of the Azure petal sect, a rank 4 sect that focused on herb growth and alchemy. Her message was to her master and it was her mostly thanking her for all the support she had gotten from her since she was a small girl.. She had been an orphan whom her master found when she was roaming in search of ingredients.

The inner sect disciple was called Xu Yun and her master found her when she was four. She had a yin wood-based physique, which was what drew her master's eye, and immediately accepted her as her personal disciple and introduced her to the Azure Petal Sect. Her life experienced a seismic shift from then on. She moved from orphan to prized disciple in a single leap.

However, her journey got cut short when she got kidnapped during a sect mission outside, which ended with her demise. Of the three, she was the earliest to be refined, and also the youngest, at seventeen years old.

Once Yang Qing had the three talismans he stored one of them away, as he held the other two in his hands.

"Do you know who the founder's master was? or how they met?" I think you should take a look at

Even if Yang Qing thought it was a long shot to ask, he decided to go ahead and try and glean the identity of the person who almost killed them, and set everything in motion that led to today's events.

"No, I don't know who her master was nor their interaction. By the time I gained sentience, she was already in the palace realm and stronger than me. I couldn't risk prying into her secrets, and she was always careful even with no one around, she never let down her guard when communicating with that entity.

However what I do know is, that the previous two sect masters before Zhao Ju were killed by her and then refined, and as for Zhao Ju, she had similar plans for her when she reached the fourth stage of the palace realm.

Though they didn't know it Zhao Ju and the other elders were nothing more than harvestable products for her.."

Yang Qing sighed when he heard this.

"It shouldn't come as a surprise I guess... and the fruits? I heard that the victims were all refined into fruits, was that your doing? Is it some ability of yours?"

"I don't have such an ability...I have an innate ability to sense yin treasures and creatures. I can improve their comprehension and quality by a bit. The sect used that ability to track those with yin-based physiques.

As for the ability to refine them, it has more to do with the seal implanted on me and that tree. I have no idea how it works either as every time it was activated, my mind would go blank, and they could use it even with my cut branches.

I'm afraid only the founder knows, but even her, I doubt she knew much about it since the mechanisms seemed to work in an alternate space, the same space, I felt like my spirit had been sealed..."

"That tracks, I guess...it seems the Ice Emerald Sect were nothing more than laborers for that person... well this is a little beyond me...."

"Thank you..uhm... I'm sorry I didn't ask your name.."

"It's Li Hualing, Li Liu asked me to share a name with her, so I went with that.."

"Thanks, Li Hualing.."

"You're welcome young Daoist, now I can finally go... thank you for letting me do one good thing at least... farewell.."

The shriveled stem withered away gently like burning paper and was blown away with the wind, releasing a gentle chill mist.

"Farewell.." Yang Qing exhaustedly said.

With that, the final living creature with ties to the Ice Emerald Sect was gone.

Chapter 457 Stopping To See Someone In Deer Mountain

"I guess only you are left now.." Yang Qing muttered to himself as his gaze fell to the ground below. His gaze seemed to penetrate the sand and rocks down to the yin-rich spirit meridian that had a budding spirit about to form.

"This place has seen too much bloodshed, there is no need for it to continue like that.." Yang Qing said as his eyes flickered with white flames.

Baleful and malevolent energy filled with resentment and death still permeated around the sect, especially in the place where the Wisteria tree had been located.

The founder and the rest had slaughtered millions, leaving the area soaked in resentful and baleful qi. If left unattended it could end up being a blessed land for corpse and ghost cultivators, or it will build up to form miasma that would not only corrupt the yin spirit meridian and the budding spirit below but could slowly spread to the surrounding areas poisoning the ground, the air and the creatures around.

Yang Qing stood up, and his look instantly changed to flame white hair, coated in a flame white cloak and white flame eyes and white raven above.

He brought his palms together, and instantly a wave of white flames surrounded him and bellowed outward and upward like a ferocious tsunami.

Eternal Yang flame rest



The flames released pure yang energy that one would mistake it to be flames that had dropped off from the sun.

Despite the strain, the art had on Yang Qing who had not yet restored his qi fully. Yang Qing kept the flame burning for almost ten minutes, which was the time it took for him to completely eradicate and purify the baleful and resentful energy that had surrounded the area.

Universal capsule

When he was done with the flames, Yang Qing placed his right hand on the vine clone that was still seated in the lotus position.

Waves of light filled with a multitude of colors flashed through its body as it shrunk till it eventually became a translucent multicolored ball.

Yang Qing gently pushed that ball into the ground and it suddenly burrowed deeper as if it had a life of its own.

"Consider this payment for the help you gave.." Yang Qing said as he turned to leave.

"Senior Wei Ying can I trouble you to seal this place in a formation? I am willing to provide the materials," asked Yang Qing when he reached them.

"How strong do you want it and for how long?"

"Strong enough to stop someone in the first stage of the palace realm. As for the duration, mmh make it fifteen years.." Yang Qing said as he took out a few monarch-grade treasures from his storage ring.

The treasures were part of what he had received as gifts during his ceremony.

"There's no need for you to produce the materials alone, I have.."

"No, let me do it. I need to do it, even if it's just an excuse to try and ease my conscience.."

Yang Qing interjected with a bitter smile on his face when he saw Wei Ying and the rest wanted to offer up some of their treasures for the formation. I think you should take a look at

"Okay.."

"Thank you..." Yang Qing said as he cupped his fists at them.

Wei Ying showed off her talents as a gifted blue-grade formation master, as she laid out formation after formation, maximizing the use of every material that Yang Qing had provided. By the time she was done, the formation was strong enough to stop even someone at the fourth stage of the palace realm.

The formation was wholly focused on defense and illusion as its purpose was to keep people out of the main grounds of the ruins of the Ice Emerald Sect.

If word got out there was a spirit vein capable of becoming a lesser dragon vein beneath the ruins of the Ice Emerald Sect, it would trigger another blood bath in the area.

Lesser dragon vein could ensure the longevity of a rank 3 sect and even help produce a rank 2 sect if they were lucky.

Something valuable like that would draw in countless cultivators and organizations from all around the continent to try and gain ownership over it.

Yang Qing didn't wish to see the place embroiled in war so soon, which was why he opted to hide the vein. In fifteen years, the budding spirit will have fully emerged, since before its death, the Wisteria tree had transmitted some of its essence to it.

With the spirit fully formed, it was capable of hiding or even defending itself against early-stage palace realm experts and thus had freedom in choosing those it would let in the area and with that bloodshed could be kept at a minimum. At least that was what Yang Qing hoped for, though he had half a mind to

sell the information about the spirit vein to a reputable powerful merchant organization like the White Rose Pavilion and have them occupy it and broker the deal to sell it to someone else through an auction.

Yang Qing would have preferred that option since it had zero risk to it and the highest degree of success in preventing bloodshed over the spirit vein. But some part of him was sentimental, especially after hearing the Wisteria tree's circumstance. He wanted if possible, for the spirit vein to choose its next occupants, if it wanted. To let it have the free will the tree never had, or Li Liu.

"Dai Chen, Zhang Qingge, Mo Liwie, Wei Ying, thank you for today.." Yang Qing said to the four of them as they were prepared to leave.

The four nodded their heads in return with smiles on their faces, but one could tell, they were affected by today's events just like Yang Qing.

With everything already settled, they left the area, leaving a desolate ground that was once the former rank 3 sect, the Ice Emerald Sect.

....

"You guys can go on ahead, I have someone I need to see at the Deer Mountain Kingdom.." Yang Qing suddenly said when the group was close to the kingdom.

"Don't worry I'll make sure to be back before the two hours are up. I've already communicated with Hao Da. I'll use the teleportation array there to come back.." Yang Qing added when he saw the solemn looks on Zhang Qingge and Dai Chen's faces.

"Fine.." said Dai Chen with a sigh as he led the others to leave.

Yang Qing watched them disappear into the horizon before he went in the direction of the Deer Mountain Kingdom.

He passed the forests, and grounds of numerous organizations in the area before he finally stopped above some decrepit buildings on the outskirts of the Deer Mountain Range.

"Seems like you went too, Sect Master Wang Yi.."

Chapter 458 Company In Solace

Yang Qing sighed as he made his way down to an area filled with rich verdant vegetation. It was lush with green shrubs, grass, and trees, giving the area a tranquil, relaxing, and vibrant look which was in contrast to the state of the scant buildings in the area.

"It seems only three people left.." Yang Qing absentmindedly muttered to himself as he made his way through the run-down gate at the entrance of the area.

The gates were made of wood and looked to be on their last legs as they were bent over, and it didn't look like it would need much effort to topple them over.

Yang Qing bent over and picked up a rectangular smoothly carved wooden board. He turned it and removed the grass and dirt covering it, revealing the words 'Clear Sword River Sect'

The Calligraphy was beautiful, and the craftsmanship of the wood showed it had been done with great care.

Yang Qing sighed and walked with the board toward the area that had the densest vegetation in the area.

The grass was greener, while the trees were taller with wide canopies between them. They produce a refreshing scent in the area. The glow from the sun gently cascaded down, accompanied by the melodious chirps of birds and insects that had made those trees their home.

Despite the area lacking human presence, it seemed more alive than when Yang Qing was last here.

He walked into the lone building in the area. It was a two-storey courtyard, that had leaves all over, with vines growing around it.

It had ceased to be a courtyard and had melded perfectly with its surroundings.

"The Yin Yang jade bones and the universal indulgent of the myriad worlds are truly wonderful.." Yang Qing softly said as he took in his surroundings.

The vegetation that had grown in the area was a consequence of his actions when he was healing Wang Yi, the sect master of the Clear Sword River Sect, whose body had been damaged from cultivating dubious incomplete arts.

As he healed him, his qi had an inadvertent effect on the surroundings. Yang Qing could have controlled it at the time, but he decided to let it flow outward on a whim, which resulted in the dense forest and vegetation around the area.

After he left, the area seemed to have continued growing as he saw more trees and variety in vegetation, and now there were even animals that had started making the place their own. He wondered how much his little whimsical action would affect the area in the times to come.

"Maybe I can come to cultivate here every once in a while..." he mused as he walked into the courtyard.

Inside was the same as he had left it albeit dusty, and at the center of it, was the same person he had met when he first came here to do a sect demotion. However, unlike before the person at the center no longer had any life to him, but ironically, even though he was dead, to Yang Qing he seemed much more alive than he was when he came here.

Yang Qing sighed once more when he saw the elderly person at the center of the room. It was an elderly man with old grey robes seated in a lotus position with a peaceful smile on his face.

Before him was a desk with neatly arranged parchment and scrolls, and at the center of it, there were two objects.

One was a wine jar, and the other was a painting of a man's back fishing by the river during a starry night.

If it wasn't for the lack of life aura around him, one could easily mistake the elderly man to be savoring the taste of wine with his eyes closed, or he was in silent meditation.

But Yang Qing knew the person was dead beyond beyond doubt, and had been for at least a week.

"You went earlier than expected Sect Master Wang Yi.." Yang Qing said as he waved his sleeves producing a green wind that cleared the dust out of the area while adding a refreshing spring scent to the room.

The elderly man before him was Wang Yi, the sect master of the Clear Sword River Sect, which had been a rank 5 sect slotted for demotion into a rankless sect since Wang Yi was the only foundation establishment cultivator in the sect, and he didn't have long to live. I think you should take a look at

When Yang Qing did the evaluation with the heart stone, it had given him 63 days, and by Yang Qing's count, he still had about two weeks left.

"Seems like you made your peace with it, in the end.." Yang Qing thought to himself as he looked at his peaceful look.

Yang Qing was rather envious of it. With the complex emotions running through him, he didn't even know why he decided to stop by there.

Was it to delay delivering the news that would more than likely break Ma Yuan? So he wanted to delay that inevitability as much as he could?

Was it to seek the advice of someone with a few days to live who had experienced all that life could throw at him?

He had heard people at the cusp of death had some of the greatest clarity one could have, and maybe some part of him hoped maybe he could borrow that, especially from someone like Wang Yi, who had seen his sect fall from glory to where it was.

His company and insight would have proved invaluable for Yang Qing. At least he hoped he would.

But alas, Wang Yi was already gone.

"I hope your next life is easier Sect Master Wang Yi.." Yang Qing said as he took the wine jar from the table in front of the deceased Sect Master.

Yang Qing took out a bamboo cup and poured the wine that still remained in that jar onto his cup. The wine was misty, and chilly and had a fruity scent to it. It was the wine he had left with Sect Master Wang Yi after he had made the demotion official.

The wine was the snow peak ginseng wine. One of the few wines to come out of Jiang Fu's hands.

The wine left behind was only enough to fill half the cup.

"This scene must have left an impact on you.."

Yang Qing recognized the painting before him on the desk matched the same painting Wang Yi had given him as they were parting.

With a thought Yang Qing took out the painting he had gotten from Wang Yi, and unrolled it as he went on to compare the two.

To Yang Qing, on surface level, they seemed identical, however, the painting on the desk, despite having only been recently painted and been done with cheaper materials, it had an ephemeral quality to it when compared to the painting Yang Qing was given.

It had a quality to it, like an homage, a clarity, something Yang Qing could sense but couldn't describe.

"If you don't mind it, sect master, please let me have this one too.." Yang Qing said as he gently rolled the painting and put it in his storage ring.

He then went on to drink in silence, with countless thoughts flooding his mind as he constantly replayed today's events wondering if there was anything he could have done differently.

Some part of him even thought of the scenario in which he avoided the lake where he found Ma Yuan. If he did, then the heaviness and the guilt he felt would have been avoided altogether.

However, the lives lost, Ma Yuan's face when he said he would pick up the case, Tang Wenyan's face when he heard his great great grandfather's long-standing will could be realized, all flashed before his eyes.

"The good, the bad, this is mine now I guess.." he thought as he gulped down the final contents of his cup.

#### Chapter 459 Dual Fate Forest

He continued to sit there, but now he had chosen to just empty his mind and soak in the sounds of life around him. The birds chirping in excitement over something, the insects' cacophony of noises as they foraged and built more homes on the trees around, and the sound of the gently swaying of leaves around him.

Yang Qing stayed that way for ten minutes, completely lost to his surroundings, and unbeknownst to him, the trees, the grass, the shrubs, the birds, and the insects, started swaying to his breath.

The trees released leaves that went through the window and fell on his head, almost as if comforting him. The same could be seen with the birds and the insects, whose sounds had a charm of comfort to them.

A gentle light filled with a myriad of colors, with the most prevalent being green was produced from Yang Qing's body. It leaked out from him and spread to his surroundings. It didn't seem to have an effect at first, but some of the trees, grass, and animals around him got soaked in it, and from that bunch, there were some that started to experience visible changes to their features, due to being soaked in that light.



An oak tree had its leaves turn from green to blue-green, which formed dew drops of similar color; there was a sparrow that had its wings turn from brown to orange, as it released a gentle orange glow from them, that had purifying abilities to them; there was a skylark whose melodious voice created an illusory image of a calm river with its chirp; a firefly that had its light turn to a deep green light that seemed to affect some of the flowers around it as it made them bloom; a beetle whose body turned into the luster of a diamond. Every time the rays from the sun hit it, it would create a rainbow; a moth whose wings turned crystal clear with a crescent moon shape on its wings. A flick of its wings would create the sound of water waves, and its accompanying breeze; and finally, an azalea that flickered with aurora lights every few seconds.

In those ten minutes, Yang Qing felt the stifling sensation in his heart and mind, get repeatedly cleansed, over and over.

When he opened his eyes, even though the guilt was still there, and he could still remember the faces of those he had killed today, especially the innocent ones, he felt lighter in his heart and mind.

Baffled by the change, he looked around and was instantly shocked when he detected the changes around the courtyard.

The vegetation had more than doubled, and the sizes seemed to have decreased, however, the vitality and richness of air produced by them seemed to have doubled by a few levels, and there were seven living organisms that seemed to stand out in the midst of them.

Yang Qing felt a connection with every living organism in the area, but he felt the most kinship with those seven organisms.

"So it was you.." Yang Qing muttered in realization as he detected the warmth coming from the leaves on top of him, the vine that had coiled around his fingers, the soothing melodies from the birds and insects that still lingered in the air, and the air released by the trees, shrubs, and grass, that seemed to relieve his burdens.

"I guess I am a really glorified tree like Grandpa said.." Yang Qing chuckled as he thought to himself.

"Thank you..." he gently said to them increasingly surprised by the abilities of the purple grade art he was given. Its abilities kept surprising him over and over.

He could feel all the trees, grasses, shrubs, and animals around him, had been soaked with his universal qi, and it had even seeped into the ground, and of them, there were seven of them that had the densest universal qi in them. It was; an oak tree, a sparrow, a skylark, a firefly, a moth, a beetle, and an azalea.

Even though they seemed normal in terms of strength and abilities, with no cultivation base, they seemed to have changed fundamentally. Yang Qing could even feel their emotions, which was one of gladness and the gladness was directed toward Yang Qing.

"How did this happen?" he wondered.

Whenever he cultivated at his abode, nothing like this happened. While the vegetation would grow rapidly as per the norm, none of them retained his qi like all the organisms here. He had been completely oblivious to what had been happening in those ten minutes. I think you should take a look at

He had only been immersing himself in his surroundings, and before he knew it, the heaviness he felt seemed to have been soothed, which was why he opened his eyes.

But now, other than the changes to the surroundings, he could feel even within himself something had changed or more aptly unlocked, though he couldn't quite put his finger on it yet, he intrinsically felt it had something to do with the mysterious jade tree within the deepest recess of his body. The one he suspected was the representation of his yin yang peerless jade bone physique.

To taste the theory he produced a gentle wind from his hands, and revolved it around his palms.

"Serenity.." Yang Qing muttered as he detected his qi's ability to induce calmness seemed to have jumped in levels. He felt he could help those within the core formation realm quell their internal demons with a boost from his qi.

Yang Qing gently rubbed his palm, dispelling the wind. He would investigate the matter deeply later, but for now, he needed to return back and give Ma Yuan the news, and his wife's last message.

With his mind cleared a bit, he now had the heart to go back. But before he did, he picked up the body of Sect Master Wang Yi, along with the board he had, and the painting he had given him.

He dug a grave next to the oak tree with green-blue leaves, and gently placed the sect master there. Above it, he placed the wooden board sign with the name 'Clear River Sword Sect' and the painting.

He took out a piece of wood from his storage ring and carved out

'Herein lies sect master Wang Yin, who loved, lived, and died for his sect, the Clear River Sword Sect. A worthy sect master and cultivator and loyal to the end..'

The calligraphy was beautiful and had solemnity to it. Yang Qing placed that wood next to the signboard and painting.

"Take care sect master, and thank you..."

"Can you look after him.." Yang Qing said to the trees, birds, insects, and grass around, which all responded with fervor in their own ways.

"I'll come back here after some time to check on you all.. take care until then.." Yang Qing said as he waved his hands goodbye and left the area.

The little budding forest and its inhabitants shook in gladness and a bit sad, as they bade Yang Qing, farewell.

In a thousand years, the little forest would turn out to be the home of hegemony of the Deer Mountain Range, a place clamored to be the most beautiful but also the most dangerous in the whole range, as it was headed by seven stars of restoration and destruction.

Countless cultivators lost their lives in search of fortune in the area, due to how blessed the ground was, and others would have their lives transformed. It was a hell to some and a blessing to others which was why it came to be known as the dual fate forest, seclusion place of the Yin Yang Emperor. But that is a story for another day.

Chapter 460 Considered Options

It didn't take long for Yang Qing to make his way to the Order's branch in Deer Mountain Kingdom.

The Branch was situated in one of the numerous mountain ranges that were in the kingdom. Creating a branch here was easier compared to other places because of the predicament of the Deer Mountain Kingdom.

The kingdom was vast, with its territory matching the size of young rank 2 kingdoms, empires, clans, or sects. However, unlike those groups, the kingdom didn't have a firm grasp of its territory due to the numerous tumultuous regions in the area, and after their failed attempt at consolidating their territory a few hundred years ago, they were all too glad to welcome the Order's presence in the area.

With how vast the territory was, the Order was able to cut out a place in the territory to build the branch. They chose to occupy a mountain that housed a bloodthirsty rock horn boa that was in the early stages of the palace realm.

The Mountain they occupied was large as it covered an area of about 8,000 acres. It had a mountain, an inland lake, and a forest that wasn't filled with much at the time. But when the Order gained control of the area, they renovated it, and added natural treasures to boost the spiritual qi in the area, and the quality of the vegetation there.

The whole area was suffused with dense spiritual qi to the point it had condensed into blue droplets filled with ethereal light, and the growth of spiritual plants was abundant.

As for the building itself, the Order didn't skimp out on the materials as it used low-tier ascendant grade materials to build it. From goldweave cedar wood to silverdew stone down to stormcloud slate.

The materials used to build, coupled with skilled craftsmanship and the dense spiritual qi in the area, made the building look like an immortal's abode.

Yang Qing sighed as he saw the grandiose image before him.

"For as stingy as it is, it sure loves its face a lot."

"Hao Da," Yang Qing waved his hands as he saw the young blue-haired youth making his way over.

"It seems you've had a long day.." said the blue-haired youth with a sigh.

Even with Yang Qing smiling like he always did, for someone who has known him since their younger days at the institute, he could detect him hiding a bit of his grief.

"It was a hard one, but I'm a little better than I was half an hour ago.."

Hao Da stared at him briefly before he said,

"You know you could always just join a branch. I feel it suits your temperament more. The cases are not that many or that large scale, and you get to decide your schedule. If there are no cases, the rest of the time, you can spend it doing what you want, other than the occasional surveillance of the area.

It's an easy job. You could get the soft life you always cried about here."

"Ideally the branches suit me best, but Hao Da, you know how much of a coward I am.." Yang Qing said with an embarrassed smile.

"I'd have to leave the dense layers of protection at the headquarters if I joined a branch. While the formation arrays, and protective mechanisms here are not bad, they don't quite much like those at the headquarters.

Then what if I have to leave to go eat? I'd be exposing myself, and with how much a creature of habit I am, I'd be the softest target.

No, I get nervous just thinking about it. Maybe when I'm a domain expert and I have my own saint-grade treasure, maybe I could consider leaving that overworking black tower, but until then I'll have to slave away for the protection it affords me.."

"How could you still be so cowardly with your abilities? Glad to see you're still the same.." Hao Da said as he shook his head with a smile.

"Though...Yang Qing, pardon me for saying this, but you're not exactly an altruist, right?"I think you should take a look at

"Not really. While I'd step in to help if I can, I'll always weigh it against my own well-being. Why?" Yang Qing asked in curiosity.

"Then why didn't you join the holy lands? With your talents, you could have surely gotten in and would have received preferential treatment from the moment you stepped in. In terms of protection, they offer the same as the Order, and you wouldn't have to work.

The only requirement they have is for you to cultivate.."

"The Holy lands huh.." Yang Qing stared at the skies as his mind wandered. Under different circumstances, he may have very well tried his hand, and if back then he had known he would be worked to the bone at the Order, then maybe he would have opted.

"Who am i kidding," Yang Qing thought with a smile as he shook his head, dispelling those notions.

"It's the same reason I won't go to a branch, I'm a coward. For holy lands, you'd have to go all the way to the one testing site. Who knows what could have happened to me during that journey..unlike the Order where you can visit any branch and they'll transport you to the headquarters.

Though it would be a lie to say, I didn't entertain the thought but I wouldn't have gone to either of them. If not the Order, I think I'd have gone to the Jade Leaf Academy. I have a family friend who's like my grandfather, and he is from there..."

"The two holy lands while they'd offer me safety and resources, I don't know why, but I felt I'd be more constrained there, but the Order and the Jade Leaf Academy are different.

I doubt I'd get away with half the things I do here if I were to do them there. As much as I hate to admit it, the Order grew on me, more than I expected it to. Even with recent events, I wouldn't leave even if there was a chance to.." added Yang Qing as he shuddered in fear at the thought the Order had them where they wanted.

"What about you? From the questions you are asking, it seems like you considered it?" asked Yang Qing.

Hao Da didn't have the best of starts at the Order, so Yang Qing wouldn't be surprised if he harbored those thoughts. He wouldn't be the first one. When they were young they would all fantasize about what life would be like in the holy lands, especially, after a session with the murderous instructors, that thought was constantly on their minds.

"I haven't, actually. I doubt I'd have fitted much in those places.." he said with a rueful smile.

"Besides, my current life isn't bad, just like you, it has grown on me and I'm looking forward to the three fires branch. Come visit when you can, the Three Fires Empire has pretty great restaurants known for their meat dishes..." he added with a chuckle when he saw the greedy look on Yang Qing.

Even when going through hard times, it seemed like his appetite would remain constant.

"I'll do that.." Yang Qing said as he quickly wiped his dripping drool with a floosh of his sleeves.

"Where's the branch chief by the way?" Yang Qing said when he didn't see or sense him around.

"He went to see the king of the kingdom who had concerns that there may be heretical cultivators with a hideout here..."

"Oh...the Spiritual Temperance Sect had one too, the Dark Helminth Ghost Sect. I wonder if the special inquisitors found anything related to them.." Yang Qing thought as he rubbed his chin in deep thought.

He still had a pending report to make with the Judicial Review Committee, separate from today's matter, in regard to opening a branch within that area.

He exchanged a few more words with Hao Da before the latter activated the teleportation array at the branch and had him transported back to the headquarters.

"The holy lands huh.." Hao Da muttered to himself as he watched the spatial gate that had been opened, close up.