

Daily life 51

Chapter 51 Drop Of The Resplendence Of Spring

"Phew, that was a handful. Mao Mao, who is next?" Yang Qing asked as he stretched his back and spooled himself lazily in his seat looking for a comfortable position, not at all caring about how he'd look in front of those present.

Mao Yunru cocked her eyebrow as she looked at Yang Qing who looked just about ready to sleep before she went on with what she was asked.

"The next cases are; a 3-way conflict between a sect, its core disciple, and a merchant organization who are after the sect because of the huge debts they haven't repaid. Destruction of the furniture in the Earthvine restaurant by 3 cultivators at the core formation realm who refuse to pay and lastly suing of the falling meteor blacksmith shop for selling a defective sky rank sword to a rogue cultivator at the peak of the core formation realm.

Take your pick on which of the remaining we should start with?" Mao Yunru said like a diligent judicial assistant.

"Mmmh the 3-way case sounds like it would be a handful. After the Green fog swamp sect case, I need an easier case not a pile of problems that one is bound to be. I've made my mind up let's deal with the case of the Earthvine restaurant vs the three rogue cultivators," Yang Qing said after giving it some thought whilst still lazily diving into the comfort of his seat.

"Umm judge Yang Qing there is still something we need your help with," Peng Zhen awkwardly said at the side. Cheng Yuan had a puzzled look wondering what Peng Zhen wanted to ask.

"Could Peng be trying to get the number of duels he is to have increased?" Cheng Yuan couldn't help but wonder and increasingly think he was right on the mark.

"What is it, Elder Peng Zhen?" Yang Qing groggily replied with his eyes still closed.

"It's about the Tupelo tree it is still in Inquisitor Feng Xin's custody and our treasures, I don't know if we could get them back. I don't care about the treasures but I was hoping to have the Tupelo tree back. He is a treasured companion who has taken care of us since we were kids, and I was hoping to have it back.

It's at a critical stage where it will need constant monitoring and care from us," Peng Zhen couldn't help but ask with some worry in his voice. He was worried about both the Tupelo tree's wellbeing and if the Order would decide to confiscate the tree as an added punishment to the sect.

"Oi Peng, has it already started?" Cheng Yuan couldn't help but hurriedly ask.

"Yes, it should just be about to if it hasn't already. However, things are less optimistic than before. It spent a large reserve of its energy just to keep me and Gui safe. I'm not sure how it will be able to pull through with its remaining reserves," Peng Zhen said with guilt showing on his face.

"Oh, I almost forgot about the tree. Feng Xin .." Yang Qing said as he got up with an interested expression showing on his face. Feng Xin was already making his way toward him even before he was called.

"It's in here and their treasures too. After you finish with them there are also some things I'd like your decision on sooner rather than later," Feng Xin said as he met Yang Qing who had already flashed where Cheng Yuan and Peng Zhen were standing. Wen Chang at the moment was with Gui Bingwen who was patiently filling her in on the details about Peng Zhen's plan and everything that transpired after.

"What an interesting storage pouch. Seems to be a high-grade monarch treasure mmh a storage treasure with life-nurturing capabilities. Feng Xin, you sure struck it big this time. Will you keep it or are you thinking of selling it? Those guys from the beast-taming division will definitely buy it for a hefty sum if you decide to sell," Yang Qing said as he patiently scanned it all over with deep fascination like a kid with a new toy.

"I'm thinking of keeping it. It will help keep ingredients fresher than what normal storage rings can do," Feng Xin replied.

Yang Qing nodded in understanding as he fiddled around with the pouch some more before the Tupelo tree appeared in the middle of them. Peng Zhen and Gui Bingwen couldn't help but have a guilty look when they saw it as Cheng Yuan had a dark look with his fists deeply clenched. The tupelo tree had shrunk in size it was now 70 cm tall with leaves being just around less than 100. It was mostly bare. Even someone not skilled in botany could tell it didn't look too well. Yang Qing threw back the leopard storage pouch to Feng Xin as he moved closer to scrutinize the withered-frail-looking Tupelo tree. He rustled his hands through its leaves as he gently examined its branches and bark with careful attention. He couldn't help but sigh in the end as soon as he finished his examination.

Cheng Yuan's heart and the rest sank once they heard Yang Qing's sigh. They couldn't help but assume the worst-case scenario from that sigh.

"Let's just treat this as fate and it would be a shame to let a unique thing like you disappear just like that. But I'm not doing it for free. If you start producing fruits make sure to save me some," Yang Qing's look quickly turned greedy once he finished his sentence. Feng Xin's eyes equally lit up once he heard the mention of fruits. He couldn't help but lick his lips as he imagined what the fruits of a variant tree like this one would taste like. They were bound to have a unique flavor. However, his brows curved in a frown. Yang Qing was too much like him, they never liked sharing especially the good stuff. To get even leftovers from the gluttonous Yang Qing he would have to trade with something of equal value and when it came to the both of them it was not cultivation resources but something edible.

"I'll have to use that," Feng Xin thought to himself with a reluctant expression.

"Seems like Feng Xin has something of equal value to trade. His harvest in the green fog region must be bountiful to have something that would be able to match fruit from a tupelo tree which seems to have traces of the imperial pearl tree. A tree so precious that holy lands would shed all pretense and fight over it. The traces are slim but even those slim traces are enough to ensure that this tree will at least reach the domain rank and it will be the strongest among its peers even at that rank. Heheheh Feng Xin I'll make sure to bleed you dry of everything that you got, just you wait," Yang Qing said as he threw a sideway glance at Feng Xin like a fat lamb he would skim.

"Now let's start before things get even more perilous than they are now," Yang Qing thought as he shook his head free of distracting thoughts.

"Drop of the resplendence of spring,"

Yang Qing's voice echoed around the room like an edict before a horrific level of energy was released from his body. However, luckily all that energy was concentrated within a few centimeters of his right hand which was pointed toward the crown of the tupelo tree. A multitude of different colors was produced and concentrated on his index finger as Yang Qing's hair turned deep green. Sounds of birds chirping, insects buzzing, animals running about in a carefree manner, water flowing, the earth moving, the wind rustling, flowers blossoming and plants growing filled the whole room. The voices all seem to come from the light coming from Yang Qing's index finger. The produced multitude of lights produced by that finger had started blending in together. There was orange, yellow, blue, and green which were all encompassed by a deep purple color that combined them together. The lights congealed together

into a palm-sized ball that was further compressed till it was the size of a tiny water droplet. With every compression, the amount of energy Yang Qing released would increase till his robes fluttered and the air around him seemed to tremble and quake. The light at the tip of his index finger finally condensed into a green water droplet with hints of purple in it. The tiny droplet fell on the Tupelo tree. Even though it was tiny the droplet seemed to house a world within it.

The moment the droplet touched the Tupelo tree it was like spring had arrived. Its leaves started sprouting faster than the eyes could see. They were even larger and more defined than before. The glowing lustre that the Tupelo tree had lost came back brighter and gentler with a hint of warmness to it. Phantasms of blackbirds, skylarks, robins, and tree swallows all appeared flying around the tupelo tree singing in cheer. Flowers soon blossomed and bees buzzed around all matching the atmosphere created by the singing birds.

Every single person present even Yi Jie and the rest felt their bodies restored not only that even their mental seas felt refreshed.

CRACK

The bark of the tupelo tree broke like glass as a new smoother white bark that seemed like it could even reflect sunlight appeared. Within minutes the tree that looked like it was on death's door looked like a young tree full of life and vibrance.

"Don't forget my fruits. You now have more than enough energy reserves to pass through your trial." Yang Qing said as he waved his right hand with all the phantasms disappearing with his wave as everything went to normal. The tupelo tree shook its branches as its way of agreeing.

Cheng Yuan and the rest were too shocked at what just happened they all just wondered if Yang Qing was even fit to be called a human. They had endless gratitude but were also filled with an equal deep sense of dread. Like one a rabbit would have when faced with a seasoned lion.

The tupelo tree glowed with a yellow brilliance which flashed and shrunk as it flew toward Cheng Yuan. The light then transformed into a yellow leaf that was pinned on his robe.

"That's convenient, atleast now we won't have to worry about how you'll safely get back the tree to your sect. Feng Xin transfer their treasures into this storage ring. Elder Peng Zhen, you'll bring it back

when you come for your duel. Oh yeah, I almost forgot about the blue-grade cultivation art," Yang Qing said as he scimmaged through his storage ring and produced a smooth grey jade.

Peng Zhen instantly recognized it as a onetime use jade. He inserted his spiritual sense into the jade and all the information of the blue-grade cultivation art was transmitted into his head. The name of the cultivation art was the brilliant rush fist technique. Though it was a fist technique it had its own movement technique, palm techniques, and even body and spirit refinement techniques as part of the art. It had five major levels before one could completely master it. In its complete mastery, one's fist would be as fast as light with the force that could blast everything within a 1000-mile radius. Peng Zhen couldn't help but marvel at its intricacies and complexity.

He gave Yang Qing an even deeper bow than before. He may have not seen any blue-grade cultivation arts but he knew this art was definitely top tier even among blue-grade cultivation arts.

"Practice it well," Yang Qing politely smiled as he shoed them from the courtroom. Mao Yunru looked at Yang Qing as if there was something weighing on her mind. Yang Qing had been uncharacteristic of him throughout this whole case and she couldn't guess why despite thinking hard about it.

Chapter 52 Yang Qing's Deduction And Scheme Part (1)

"Mao Mao I've never known you to be shy with your words. If there's something on your mind ask away, I'd be more than happy to guide my little junior on her path so she takes as few detours as possible. Or is it something that you can't say in front of Yi Jie and Feng Xin? I'd be happy to kick them out, they always stifle the air in the courtroom unlike you Mao Mao who's a ray of sunshine. Life will be hard without you in the palace courts," Yang Qing had a mopping expression towards the end as he let out a pained sigh and looked at Yi Jie and Feng Xin like sharp poisonous thorns deeply stuck in his toe that he could never get rid of.

The duo snorted at the same time as they threw an equally provocative glance labeling Yang Qing as the greater thorn that grew into a parasite and just leeches of their nutrients.

"You three can't be normal for once," Mao Yunru couldn't help but shake her head.

"I've been wondering Yang Qing ever since the case started there were some instances where you have acted rather odd. Yes, you're an odd quirky person who common sense and sanity never apply to but still some acts of yours seemed too odd even for you," Mao Yunru rattled on innocently.

"Were the jabs at me being an odd person really necessary Mao Mao? Did you even need to use all those different words just to show how much of an oddball I am?" Yang Qing couldn't help but grumble.

Mao Yunru as if completely oblivious went on,

"One of the instances was the time when you used the green cocoon of Evernight to help Wen Chang with her mental breakdown. Both Yi Jie and I detected you releasing a part of your aura and invading sect master's Cheng Yuan's mental sea with it. Then there was you sharing your oolong tea with him and specifically ordering dishes made by Cao Ying and the things that happened in between during your meal. Everything seemed to be geared at helping Cheng Yuan improve his realm when minutes ago you were terrifying him with your aura.

Then there's the matter with Peng Zhen, it's the same thing. You seem to be proactively helping his growth even going to the extent of sharing a blue-grade cultivation art with him and those favorable terms you offered barely even seem like punishment. Throughout this case it seemed at one point you had something against Cheng Yuan but then as the case continued it seems like you were doing everything you can for their growth. Being this invested, isn't it going against the impartiality one should have as a judge?" Mao Yunru asked as she waited in apt attention for Yang Qing's reply.

Yi Jie and Feng Xin were completely disinterested as if this had nothing to do with them and were barely interested in knowing Yang Qing's rationale. They were bickering at the side bargaining with each other on ingredients and wine quantity.

"How can you two be lackluster about this, aren't you interested in Yang Qing's odd behavior, especially you Feng Xin? You almost died, don't you find it a bit unfair for your boss to actively help the ones who put you in that situation," Mao Yunru asked. Seeing their reaction made her feel slightly irritated for some reason like she was out of the loop about something. She has been with the three in the courtroom for the past three months. She discovered she could never follow their train of thought on certain things sometimes but on this, she expected they'd be on the same page.

"Umm Mao unlike you I'm just an inquisitor, I don't overthink Yang Qing's ruling that much. I'd rather spend that effort thinking of how to get off the blacklist of certain restaurants and how I'm going to afford another primal lotus dew. Yes, I almost got injured but that is another day on the job. An inquisitor's job is fraught with dangers and variables. If it didn't happen in this case it would happen in another plus I got a bountiful harvest in this case. I'm glad I was the one who went this time....I wonder how I can get the most out of that corroding heron. I hope it doesn't taste as disgusting as it looks," Feng Xin's words trailed off at the end as he started mumbling to himself about different ingredients completely forgetting what Mao had even asked.

"I'm on the same page with Yang Qing. Don't worry Mao your doubts are understandable but the more you do this job the more your judgment will be fluid. You've already sent a copy of the proceedings to the higher-ups but haven't you noticed they haven't overruled Yang Qing's ruling? They are in agreement with it," Yi Jie softly explained as he gave Mao Yunru a comforting smile.

"I know that's why I'm asking, I can't help but feel I missed a couple of things that despite trying I can't figure out myself. That's why I need his help," Mao Yunru reluctantly said as she helplessly smiled. It was embarrassing for her to admit she couldn't track her superior's thoughts at all despite being a judge herself.

"Mao Mao is so cute when she is embarrassed," Yang Qing cheekily smiled as he poked at her.

"Do you want me to report you to Supervisor Lei Weiyuan for harassment?" Mao Yunru coldly said as her eyes radiated a dangerous glint.

"Cough cough ahem. Since I'm a good boss it wouldn't hurt to guide you through my thinking. I'll start it off by saying this and this is purely my guess but I think Sect master Cheng Yuan was the mastermind behind the whole plan. To involve the order, to split up their forces, I think it was all his machination. At first, it was only a tiny suspicion but that changed when I detected something as I was removing the gu and forcefully removing the hibernating Dong Yanlin. I found remnants of qi like someone tried to tamper with the art but stopped early enough before it could trigger anything. It was faint but it couldn't hide from my monarch sense.

No questions until the end of the presentation Mao Mao," Yang Qing said as he turned away from her and walked to the middle of the courtroom trying to evoke an expert-like demeanor. He paused in the middle of the courtroom and stared ahead pretending he had a far-reaching gaze.

"How obsessed are you with posturing like some enlightened sage," Mao Yunru couldn't help but shake her head at this. Yang Qing completely ignoring her statement went on,

"I refuse to believe someone of Cheng Yuan's level wouldn't notice a group of elders scheming behind his nose. Peng Zhen's betrayal was also suspect from the start. I find it hard to believe people who have saved each other's lives as much as they have, that one would just betray the other so easily especially siblings under the same master. However, the bulk of my suspicion was on Cheng Yuan. Working behind this desk I've come across numerous sect masters and not one, even the ones heading a rank 5 sect was

a simple character. They all had one thing in common, they all have a breadth of sight and a calculative mind if you may to anticipate and plan things.

There's no way someone of Cheng Yuan's caliber would fall short on this. In fact, I'd rate him higher among sect masters of sects of his rank. The reason for this is simple. He was thrown into that seat when he was young, their master who had the highest cultivation base had just died and he bore all this and managed to even help it to grow into what it is today in just less than 100 years in a place as tumultuous as the green fog region. With zero presence of the Order, that place is a hotbed of slaughter and murder from the human themselves not to mention the spirit beasts. There's no way someone who was able to survive and even thrive in the midst of that be a simple character easily deceived.

Following that thread of thought after hearing Peng Zhen's version of events I assumed Peng Zhen came to him first and not Gui Bingwen. Cheng Yuan knew his junior brother well so if something was off he'd be the first to detect it. From there he tried to remove the gu from Peng Zhen but realized it was too complex for him so what does he do? Kill the initiator of the art in the hopes that the technique will dispel but he can't do it himself since the person is wary and he may have surmised the fight wouldn't be easy and the aftermath of the fight would leave the sect in shambles. So he and Peng Zhen create that little reuse of the dispute between him and Wen Chang and while they are at it use the situation to get rid of the tumors from the sect with a borrowed knife. He has Peng Zhen get rid of Dong Yanlin since he would be less wary of him. He gives him artifacts with the might of a core formation expert and they enlist the tupelo's tree help which has the might of a peak core formation expert. With all these factors in place, they were sure they'd be able to get rid of him.

The Tupelo tree being taken out of the sect was also another giveaway he was involved. It's the most prized possession of the sect and Peng Zhen got it way too easily even if he was the vice sect leader. No way Cheng Yuan as a sect master would ignore his due diligence and leave it so easily unguarded.

I think they set off two plans. Plan A was for Peng Zhen to deal with Dong Yanlin aided by the Tupelo tree however if something unexpected happened that even the Tupelo tree would be unable to deal with it then the second plan would be in effect. This is Cheng Yuan with the aid of Wen Chang could start over and preserve the embers of their sect. I'm willing to bet among the people in the sect master's entourage coming here most would be the seedlings of the sect who showed the highest potential. I think Feng Xin can confirm that since he has seen them." Yang Qing paused as he looked to Feng Xin for a response.

"By the standards of their sect, they were promising. There were about 15 people all young and at the foundation realm with 2 being at the peak of the qi refinement realm. Among the foundation-level members, there was a guy who seemed about 30 years old who was in the middle stages of the

foundation realm. That level is sufficient to be labeled a talent at a rank 3 and even some rank 2 sect," Feng Xin answered. Yang Qing nodded in appreciation.

"To Cheng Yuan, the continuity of the sect is the most important thing to him more than his life, his junior brother's life, and even the tupelo tree if it came down right to it. Hence he was willing to make that gamble and risk losing the Tupelo tree in case their plan met a mishap. About the only one clueless in all this was Wen Chang and she would have paid with her life if I didn't intervene. This was the read I got from being around him." Yang Qing paused as he drank something from a container that looked like a small cylindrical green log. It was made of green wood with visible grains all around

Chapter 53 53: Yang Qing's Deduction And Scheme Part (2)

When Yang Qing felt he had sufficiently wet his beak he put it away and continued giving a rundown of his rationale.

"By the time Wen Chang had the mental breakdown I was more or less certain of my deductions. So I used the brief moment I was helping her to release part of my aura and implanted something in his mental sea. What he experienced was only a tiny part of it, the real thing will be released later if what I suspect will happen, happens.

I don't know how he did it but I suspect sect master Cheng Yuan wiped some parts of his memory specifically the ones related to Dong Yanlin and the scheme he hatched otherwise he wouldn't have been so flawless in his acting. It's not an act when you truly don't know it." Yang Qing said as he had a pensive look on his face. He couldn't help but wonder what means Cheng Yuan used that even he couldn't detect traces of it without forcefully reading his soul.

"But don't we have measures to defeat whatever means he used to wipe his memory," Mao Yunru asked in confusion. It wasn't that she looked down on the lower-rank sects like Cheng Yuan's but she felt they couldn't have something in their arsenal capable of stumping the Order's means.

"Mao Mao if you keep thinking that way, your view of the world will be closed and short-sighted making it easier for people to pull one over you. The world is much bigger than you or I can even imagine. Cultivation is a long endless journey with as many divergent paths and discoveries that are as many as grains of sand. There may be rankless sects that have techniques to break through three realms of the body refining stage within a day, others with unique blacksmithing skills, others who can mimic the cultivation style of spirit beasts and the list goes on. The same line of reason applies especially to cultivation arts and alchemy. Not even a seasoned alchemist can claim they know all recipes out there. What they know is just a drop in an otherwise gigantic ocean, the same applies to cultivation arts. They may not be powerful in the larger scheme of things but they may be powerful in targeting a single specific attribute let's say wiping memory safely. Don't ever underestimate anyone regardless of their

rank even someone at the qi cultivation stage may know something you don't. I suspect the Green fog swamp sect has a unique method capable of wiping their memories that it can even fool the senses of a palace stage expert. As for those means I'm more inclined to believe it's from a natural treasure like let's say their tupelo tree," Yang Qing said as he lightly smiled.

Mao Yunru lowered her head as her heart raced. She realized her eyes had been blinded by mild conceit from being a member of the Order. The reason Yang Qing had a different outlook was because of his family who were living proof of a rankless family who were specifically skilled in a particular area to such a level that it even drew in the eyes of those cultivators who were more powerful than them even in the Order. His family wasn't the only one. This was what made Mao Yunru feel even more ashamed as she had overlooked one of the foundations that helped the Order grow into what it was today. It not only accepted students from rankless families but it even accepted their families and among those families or clans there were those with a unique set of skills, inheritance, and knowledge in a particular minor field. This became one of the foundations for the Order.

"Well that answers the first question you had as for the rest which more or less boils down to why it seemed I was going out of my way to support the Green fog swamp sect well...Mmmh Mao Mao what do you think the mandate of the Order is?" Yang Qing asked

"We serve to maintain and enforce fairness, justice, and stability in the southern continent irrespective of who it is," Mao Yunru studiously said. This was drilled into them when they were kids it was like an oath to them.

"You are correct but there are a few things I'd like to add to it. The Order was started so the wars of the cultivators wouldn't destroy the lives of normal people. Fundamentally the reason the Order exists and our real goal is to ensure the safety of normal people. Just someone at the qi refinement realm is able to easily massacre a thousand people with no cultivation while someone at the foundation can kill fifty times that and that is by themselves what about a whole slew of them, millions of non-cultivators would perish as unwitting bystanders. Their lives are no better than grass in front of cultivators where they don't care if they accidentally stomp on it in the midst of their fight.

The wars back then were so bad that the population of non-cultivators throughout the continent fell to a third of what it was. That created a dangerous consequence for the whole southern continent. Our foundation had been hollowed out. As you well know cultivators don't conceive easily and it gets harder the more powerful we are. Someone could have lived for 10,000 years but have one child throughout their whole life.

We like to forget the more powerful we become but our roots come from those normal people we treat as grass. The lifeblood of cultivators comes from them and without them, our numbers would drop, and there would be no new talents or heaven-defying geniuses. The sects, clans, and empires came to find out that harsh reality when centuries and millenniums passed by with the acceptance rate of new disciples suffering a massive dip. There were pitifully few new talents and the ratio of the young replacing the old was 1:50,000. The rank 3 and above sects had to even lower their intake requirements leaving the lower sects with almost no intake within a few centuries. There was no one to pass down their legacy to and some with no one to pass down the touch to were buried in the sands of time. The cultivation level of the southern continent as a whole fell and this is one of the reasons sects from other continents even dared to sink their fangs into our backyard.

You see Mao Mao the Order's bottom line is the lives of normal people. It is why the punishment given to cultivators who harm them is the harshest compared to when they harm each other.

When the primary goal is protected we can move to our secondary goal which is to ensure stability is maintained. We can either do it forcefully or use other means. Relying solely on the first option is impossible for us. We have the shortest history and we don't have the numbers to comfortably enforce fairness and justice throughout the whole southern continent. So we use other means, one of them is what I did with the Green fog swamp sect. Most of the sects, clans, and empires nowadays see us as a thorn in their side. They have been trying to imitate what we did to grow so powerful in a short amount of time and create alliances all to rival us and tear themselves from our rules and regulations especially the rank 2 sects and above. They hate the feeling of having someone above them monitoring their every action. It's only because they are not completely united otherwise they would have already stormed our headquarters.

We need therefore to create as many variables as possible and deflect the attention of these sects and clans from us to each other. The thing these sects hate more than us is another sect lower than them growing to be as powerful as them. This is where the Green fog swamp sect comes in. Their fate lies entirely on us moreso if Cheng Yuan did what I think he did. I showed them mercy and helped them, they now owe the Order. They will strive to keep the straight and arrow for fear we will target them and they are less likely to form an alliance with other sects in fact I'm even willing to bet they will inform us of those alliances of their own volition to get in our good books.

We need as many sects out there like the Green fog swamp sect to be our eyes and ears but also as pieces to form a chaotic fragile balance. A chaotic balance like this one is our best friend Mao Mao. Sects, clans, and empires being wary of each other, keeping each other in check instead of having a common enemy. I plan to install as many variables as I can out there and disrupt the long-established balance as much as I can. At a time like this chaotic balance is our friend. That's why I gladly helped Cheng Yuan, as for Peng Zhen it was in part to support the Green fog swamp sect but the other is because I admired him. In all this, whether it was Cheng Yuan's scheme or not his end was guaranteed in

death but he still willingly did it. Someone like that has a strong and admirable resolve. But I was surprised to see he had used the tribulation cleansing method to upgrade his pillars from the orange grade to the blue grade using the tribulation lightning meant for his ascension to the core formation stage instead he used to refine his pillars. Having someone willing to go through that duel against our students is a boon for us as it is for him plus I trust his character more than I do Cheng Yuan.

Don't worry Mao Mao you don't have to imitate my way of doing things, the more cases you judge the more you will find your own way of enforcing judgments that are a reflection of your take on the ideals of the Order. Read more, listen more, seek advice more and most of all keep an open mind and you'll see your own path," Yang Qing said as he softly patted her back.

"I know you will be a splendid judge Mao Mao, you had an amazing teacher after all. In the Order, I have many monikers and one of them is the World's canvas because of how much of the big picture I can see, you're in luck Mao Mao to absorb some of this splendor and greatness." Yang Qing said as he puffed up his gait with some pride.

"Pppfthahahah," Mao Mao soon broke into a peal of soft laughter with the rest joining in.

"Leave it to Yang Qing's shamelessness to lighten the mood." They all thought to themselves as the man in question rubbed his nose cheekily. He went on to have a discussion with Feng Xin who informed him about having Bolin the rainbow mist toad in his possession and the possibility of Haishi the mirage dragonfly joining their unit.

"Of course he is ours, I'm not sharing with those alchemists. We are already undermanned and having an extra pair of hands wouldn't hurt and we could know more about the green fog region. Let him out first." Yang Qing vehemently said with righteous indignation.

Feng Xin released him from the soul-anchoring bamboo jar. Bolin was a bit disoriented like one waking up from a deep sleep before he got his bearing together. He looked around spotted Feng Xin and knew he was at Feng Xin's workplace. He bowed toward who looked like the boss which was Yi Jie, completely overlooking Yang Qing who snorted in displeasure.

"How does Yi Jie look more like an expert than I am," Yang Qing thought as he seethed in envy.

"Ahem, Bolin my boss is the green-haired guy though the one you have bowed to is also my boss but the green-haired one is the overall boss. He may not look like much but even two of me couldn't defeat one of him," Feng Xin said.

That statement shook the glands off Bolin as he looked at Yang Qing with some weariness. He couldn't place him as a fearsome target then again they thought Feng Xin was a soft lamb based on his looks and he had learned painfully from that mistake.

"Sorry esteemed master, this lowly one is Bolin," Bolin said as he bowed so low his face touched the courtroom floor.

"Wow a rainbow mist toad," Yang Qing had already squatted next to him poking him over with his index finger with a childlike smile on his face. Bolin was a nervous wreck thinking he was about to be obliterated but the smooth gentle qi coursing through him disproved that guess. Purple glowing writing soon congealed on his skin with the words 'Yang Qing's toad don't try anything funny'

"Good with that those alchemists won't be tempted to kidnap him and swap with a fake. Feng Xin you can have him registered at the personnel office as for his training we will leave it to Luo Meili she is better at this sort of thing. Nice to meet you Bolin, I look forward to chatting with you more but I'm a little strapped for time. We will have a proper welcoming ceremony later together with the mirage dragonfly too." Yang Qing said as he admired his own calligraphy.

Feng Xin nodded as he went his way together with Yi Jie who went to the hallway to call in the next people whose case was to be heard. Feng Xin's footsteps paused as he couldn't help but feel he forgot something important. But he soon shook his head dismissively as he continued moving.

Chapter 54 54: The Second Case Begins

Yang Qing and Mao Yunru were each in their respective positions as Yang Qing went over the case details in the white jade talisman Mao Yunru had passed over to him earlier in the day.

"Three brothers Shen Shi, Shen Ding, and Shen Tian destroyed one of the tables made from earthvine wood belonging to the Earthvine restaurant. The three brothers were unable to pay 15,000 middle-grade spirit stones the sum required to cover the damage done to the earthvine table.

Mmmh it seems they are rogue cultivators which explains why their purses are tight. Three brothers all at the fourth stage of the core formation realm and are less than 200 years old. With that talent, they

could afford to be retainers or guest elders in any rank 3 and rank 4 sects or family but they insist on being rogue cultivators.

Let's see about the other party in this, the owner of the Earthvine restaurant. The restaurant is known for its iconic earthvine wood that is known to have gentle restorative properties and also gently soothes someone's spirit. This effect is highly beneficial for someone affected by mental demons. The characteristics of the earthvine wood and their quality dishes made this restaurant garner a lot of regulars and is one of the organizations to stand out in the rank 3 kingdom the Emerald lily kingdom. The proprietor of the place is someone at the seventh stage of the core formation.

Mmmh what is this? They are a subsidiary of the Golden bamboo pavilion!! Mao Mao, you read this report, right? Yang Qing suddenly asked

"Mmmh," Mao Yunru nodded in reply

"Well, why is the owner bringing this case here instead of dealing with it in-house? The report says his restaurant is a subsidiary of the Golden bamboo pavilion which is a mercantile organization made of 4 leaders each with a domain rank cultivation. With that level of power, they can handle a few puny core formation cultivators easily. Why bring the case here then not unless there is something I'm missing?" Yang Qing asked with a puzzled expression.

"From what I heard from Zheng Hu who is the one in charge of this case, in the background he did for the restaurant he discovered that the Golden bamboo pavilion is caught up in something major. From the information he dug out it seems to be a merger with another mercantile organization and that merger has the pavilion too occupied to spare its attention or resources on other matters. All the subsidiaries were asked to handle all matters independently for the next few months to a year, be they minor or major the pavilion would not be able to step in even if they were facing a calamitous disaster.

From what Zheng Hu could glean from interacting with the owner of the earthvine restaurant he said the owner has a cautious personality and he could detect some instability in his cultivation. He suspects the owner's realm was built off of the consumption of alchemy pills. He may be in the seventh stage of the core formation realm but someone with such a shaky foundation would be hard-pressed to suppress three core formation experts who have been living all their lives on the edge as rogue cultivators. It was why he decided to involve the Order," Mao Yunru patiently explained.

"Mmmh okay well everything seems simple enough, I doubt we will see any twists like the previous case," Yang Qing said as he stared at the courtroom doors that had opened with Yi Jie in the lead

followed by three stockily built men who looked to be in their forties. The three men were carbon copies of each other down to even how they walked. The only thing that seemed to differentiate them was the color of the robes they wore. One had on a blue robe and it was clean and straightened out which looked in contrast to his stocky build and menacing appearance of blade scars on his forehead and chest and part of his hands. The second man had a yellow robe while the third had on a brown robe that looked unrefined like it was made of a patchwork of different unprocessed spirit beast hides. All three men had their bodies riddled with scars that showed they lived through the edge of the blade every single day.

However, there were some subtle differences among them that someone with a trained eye like Yang Qing could easily spot. For example, the one with the blue robes had a valiant general aura to him every step he took was measured every breath he took was at a timed interval. The one with the yellow robe had a shifty and calculative look to him. His eyes kept secretly darting around the room like he was taking stock of everything and deciding how much he could make from them. His eyes resembled that of a merchant. As for the last one with the brown patched hide-looking robe he was picking his ear and giving off a lackluster and unrestrained vibe however Yang Qing could tell he was the furthest thing from carefree. His body was high-strung to react explosively within a moment's notice. He also had the fewest injury of the three.

Behind the three triplets was a rotund middle-aged man with orange robes that had the emblem of the earthvine tree embroidered on it. He had short curly light brown hair, a medium goatee, and a rosy pink complexion. He heard a friendly and gentle aura that made him easily approachable and amiable to most people. And lastly closing the group was a youth who looked to be 18 years old. He had on a charming smile that went up several notches when he spotted Mao Yunru. Appearance wise he looked like a looker with some hints of craftiness and playfulness to it. He had red hair tied in a bun with a green stick and had on robes that were half red and half blue with a rhombus image on the back that had the numeral IV imprinted on it. This showed that he was an inquisitor of the Order.

He guided the triplets to the left and the rotund middle-aged man was guided to the right.

"Inquisitor Zheng Hu hereby presents Zhong Quan the owner and proprietor of the Earthvine restaurant who has filed a complaint against the three brothers namely; Shen Shi, Shen Ding, and Shen Tian. The three brothers have been accused of destroying an earthvine wood table with the damage costing an equivalent value of 15,000 middle-grade stones as per the owner's valuation. The three brothers were unable to pay the sum and a middle ground was unable to be reached between the two parties. Both parties have thus agreed to submit their case to the Order and fully adhere to its ruling," Zheng Hu solemnly said as he performed a curt bow to Yang Qing. His earlier playful look had disappeared and was replaced by a professional look suited to an inquisitor.

"Thank you little ahem cough cough I mean thank you very much INQUISITOR ZHENG HU for your report," Yang Qing said as he tried to hide his embarrassment by offering an apologetic smile to Zheng Hu who was as still as a rock as if the earlier statement had nothing to do with him. But his secretly grinding teeth spoke a different story.

"My name is Yang Qing a judge at the superior core courts and I'll be in charge of your case for the day. Both sides will take turns presenting their sides of the story and after satisfactorily hearing the case from both sides, I will pass my verdict. I trust Zheng Hu has informed you of the penalties you would incur should you act against the verdict. You being here means you have both submitted yourself wholly to the ruling of this court.

"I'll ask again for your sakes do you all agree to submit to the ruling decided by this court and the penalties that come with it should you disobey?" Yang Qing asked with a serious look.

"We do," they all answered solemnly.

"Good, then we will start off with hearing from your side of things owner Zhong Quan then after it will be the three brothers' turn. Let's begin then," said Yang Qing.

Chapter 55 55: Owner Zhong Quan's Side Of Things

Zhong Quan straightened his robes and adjusted his figure to make sure he was as presentable as he could be. It was rare to find a plumb cultivator, especially in the core formation stage. There are only a few cases why a cultivator of such a caliber would end up that way and they are; they have a bloodline that makes their body that way, a side effect of a cultivation mantra, a deliberate attempt by the cultivator to hide his/her true physique i.e most assassins use this ploy as most people are less wary of a round cultivator or the last option which is that the cultivator consumed a lot of alchemical pills or natural treasures beyond their bodies capacity to properly refine them leaving the unused energy stored in the body as fat.

Without seeing the person himself based on Zheng Hu's report he would have assumed the owner Zhong Quan was part of the last group who consumed alchemical pills and thus his body ended up that way however on seeing the person up close he had to revise that opinion. The moment Zhong Quan stepped into the courtroom he had already detected an anomaly in his body after scanning him with his monarch sense. Zhong Quan's qi seemed unstable just like Zheng Hu had reported however through Yang Qing's monarch sense he detected much more than that. The qi seemed to be clashing and destroying each other and rebuilding each other up again and the energy produced from that destruction gets stored in the body. There seemed to be a feral primal nature to the qi. If it was any other superior core court judge, Zhong Quan's true nature would have likely evaded their eyes but never

in a million years would Zhong Quan have expected that a palace realm cultivator would be in a superior core courtroom instead of a palace courtroom.

"I wonder what bloodline he has. Too bad I can't probe deeper without alerting him," Yang Qing thought to himself as his eyes gleamed in deep interest.

Zhong Quan who was fixing himself up suddenly flinched as he quickly tried to hide it,

"Huh why does it feel like someone probed me," he thought as he stealthily gazed around the courtroom before his eyesight settled on Yang Qing who was throwing him an interested and crafty look.

"WAIT, Did he?...No he couldn't have. No one below the palace stage can discover my secret. He is just someone at the core formation stage maybe a quasi-palace stage expert but even they can't see through me. No, No, Zhong Quan it seems you're getting too sensitive and paranoid with age. Ever since the merger started and the Golden bamboo pavilion diverted its attention life has just gotten harder for me. Attacks from other rival merchant organizations and even some I suspect may have fingerprints from some of the subsidiaries of the Golden bamboo pavilion. If I knew it would bring this much trouble operating a restaurant I'd rather have opened up a bookstore café instead. It's likely to be less troublesome. What's done is done hopefully bringing this case to the Order will serve as a warning to the rest. I don't know if these three brothers were deliberately sent to cause trouble in my shop but even if they weren't it doesn't hurt to have another person take care of the problem," Zhong Quan couldn't help but sigh in his heart at his troubles.

The brief internal monologue took just a few seconds before Zhong Quan threw those thoughts away and renewed himself to focus on the matter at hand.

"Thank you judge Yang Qing for gracing us with your presence my humble name is Zhong Quan and I've been the owner of the Earthvine restaurant for the past 70 years. My restaurant is a small one but we pride ourselves on excellent service and customer satisfaction. This is why we don't discriminate and our doors are open to anyone whether it's a scion of some noble family or a commoner our service is equal to all just like how the Order is to the whole southern continent which I admire greatly. If I wasn't a coward and had low talent I would have definitely joined but alas it wasn't meant to be?" Zhong Quan made a dramatic pause and showed an expression of lifelong regret that no one would doubt as being faked.

"How great are his acting skills?" One of the three brothers thought as he scrutinized Zhong Quan's display to try and spot a bit of falsity in it. As for Yang Qing and Zhong Quan, their thoughts were elsewhere. Yang Qing had imperceptibly noticed Zhong Quan's subtle hint with the open doors phrase. Birds of a kind always had a way to sniff each other out from a crowd.

"Message received. Okay, I'll come you better not disappoint,"

"Don't worry young master we won't short you on the quality and quantity,"

"Price?"

"50% OFF,"

"Deal!!!"

"Deal!!!"

No words were exchanged but the brief look they exchanged they had already come to an agreement and even ironed out the details each pleased with themselves. One had gotten a place to eat with a large discount and the other had just gotten a new customer.

After the brief and unnoticed exchange Zhong Quan continued swiftly after,

"It was with that spirit of diligence and excellence that in all our years of service we have never had many complaints from our customers and the number of regulars kept rising. I guess it's from that reputation that maybe the three brothers decided to patronize my restaurant. They came in four days ago and had a meal there. From what I heard from one of the restaurant's servants who waited on them, they seemed to enjoy the meal but out of nowhere, they started arguing amongst themselves and before the servant could intervene it had already come to blows and they broke the earthvine wood table in the midst of their brawl and even caused spilled the meals of other customers. By the time I came to intervene the damage had already been done.

I gently asked the three to repay me for the destroyed earthvine table only and I'd forgive the debt they owed for their food and the food of the other customers that their fight ruined. However, they couldn't pay for it. They only had almost 40 middle-grade spirit stones to their name which could barely cover a drop of it. Understanding that they were rogue cultivators and that money would be tight I offered an alternative which was for them to work for me until their debt was cleared. But even that caused a disagreement between us as we couldn't come to an understanding on the going rate of their services. The amount that they suggested was their worth was enough to hire someone who was at the late stages of the core formation realm. So negotiations broke down.

They did suggest giving them time so they can scrape the amount together but I don't know them all too well. What's to stop them from moving to another place? They are rogue cultivators so they are not tied down to any sect, family, or kingdom. Finding them again would be next to impossible not without me spending an amount more than the damage they caused. So we eventually decided to use the unbiased judgment of the Order. I know it's rather inconsiderate of us to bring a case of this level here but it's the only place I trust to bring this issue to a welcomed resolution.

I ask for your guidance Judge Yang Qing," said Zhong Quan as he made a curt bow however with his belly he didn't seem to have bent much but the sentiment was well transmitted.

"Thank you very much for your trust in the Order and we will strive to ensure fairness is maintained despite what form it may take. Now then which of you three brothers would like to start or if you'd like one of you can speak for the rest? Whichever one you decide is okay," Yang Qing said as he gently motioned to the three brothers.

Chapter 56 56: The Shen Brothers

"I WILL DO IT," all the three brothers clamored up to do it.

"No, I will do it!! As the oldest, it's my responsibility to shoulder things and speak up for the rest," The brother with the blue meticulous robe suddenly said with a serious expression that seem to leave no room for debate.

"Who said you were the oldest? I'm clearly the oldest and also the smartest so clearly, I should be the one to speak up," said the other brother with the yellow robes who had a crafty and calculative look.

"Why are you two wasting time arguing, clearly the one with the biggest fist is the one who should speak up for the rest. Might has always spoken in the cultivation world and I'm clearly the strongest unless you two want a refresher in that regard," the other brother in brown patched robes said with a provocative smug look.

"Isn't someone so full of himself? You seem to have forgotten the tally Shen Tian. All those blows to the head from head-bushing spirit beasts must have done a number on you. You were not gifted in the mental regard to begin with but it looks like things have dropped even lower than before," the yellow-robed brother said mockingly.

"WHAT DID YOU JUST SAY YOU MONEY GRUBBER," Shen Tian who was the brother in the brown patched robes aggressively said as he clenched his fist preparing to take a swing.

Yang Qing shook his head sideways once he saw Yi Jie about to interrupt these brothers' spout. He had an amused look as he was watching the show of the three brothers go on.

"Be mindful of where we are Shen Tian besides what Shen Ding said isn't a lie either. What was the tally again of your fights against us?

You have won 23 bouts against me lost 22 drew 15 and against Shen Ding you have won 12 bouts lost 14 drew 34 while my tally against him is I have won 18 lost 17 drew 25. With these results, you still want to claim you are strongest and on what grounds. Wait until we are done with this we can settle the score later.

For now, I think it's fair to have the one who had the most recent victories be the one to speak for the rest. You both agree with this yes?" the brother with the blue robe suddenly asked directing the question to his two brothers.

"Fine," Shen Tian the brother in the brown patched robes suddenly let up and his earlier display of aggression changed into a normal expression in an instant.

"Better you Shen Shi than him," Shen Ding the crafty-looking brother in the yellow robe said as he shrugged.

Yang Qing only continued to smile in amusement at the charade. The three brothers may look to have come to a sudden agreement but they only did that when they noticed Yi Jie was about to flare up.

"I guess living their lives as rogue cultivators has made them rather sensitive to dangerous situations," Yang Qing thought as he drummed his index finger on the podium as his eyes gleamed with an idea.

"Sorry for the rude display judge Yang Qing. We meant no disrespect to the Order, my brothers and I have lived in the wilderness all our lives since we were kids so we sometimes struggle to keep our mannerisms in check," Shen Shi the blue-robed brother said as he performed a curt bow.

"It's okay, I'm already used to it. Being on this desk I've seen all kinds of people, especially from the rogue cultivating community," Yang Qing said as he dismissively waved his hand. He could tell Shen Shi had only performed a perfunctory bow without any sincerity either.

For those who have lived most of their lives as rogue cultivators, there were certain traits that some were bound to have. Some of them were contradictory to each other whilst some were similar. In as much as a rogue cultivator's life was filled with freedom and a sense of unrestraint, it was also fraught with danger all around more than what cultivators belonging to sects, families, royalty, or organizations could see or experience in their lifetime.

Those dangers made these cultivators either value their lives too much or be indifferent in the face of life and death. They were either valiant or cunning to the extreme. There was also another thought that was ingrained into these rogue cultivators the more dangers they survived with little to no resources. In their eyes, their survival proved them superior especially with so many odds stacked up against which in turn developed into contempt for cultivators who belonged to sects, clans, royalty, or organizations. In the same way, the cultivators of sects looked down on rogue cultivators the same sentiment was reciprocated as some of these rogue cultivators looked at these cultivators as domesticated cultivators who had no bite and would never survive a day in their shoes. The more dangers they weathered through the more that contempt for others and pride in themselves was ingrained. Some even dubbed themselves as true cultivators.

Yang Qing noticed the three brothers were part of that group. They may look restrained and showing deference right now but all that was a pretense. There was a veiled contempt hidden in their eyes when they looked at him and everyone else in the courtroom.

"No wonder despite their talent they never joined any sect. The arrogance of defying death a few times sure is something but I never quite understood how this makes them true cultivators though. How are they the better cultivators if something they fought tooth and nail to defeat it takes me just a pinkie and a millisecond to defeat?"

That reminds me, what did happen to that rogue cultivator who was at the early stage of the core formation realm that Kang Huilang had fight against one of the students who was interning with him and was just at the peak of the foundation realm? Hehehe I heard the cultivator was beaten black and blue and almost suffered qi deviation from how serious that beating was. Kang is really insidious at times. But seeing the look of these three brothers even I am tempted to break their wills in the most insidious of ways. Let me be magnanimous for once seeing it's my final week in this court," Yang Qing thought as quickly threw those thoughts aside in time to hear Shen Shi's introduction.

"My name is Shen Shi and these are my brothers Shen Ding and Shen Tian," Shen Shi said as he pointed to the yellow-robed man and the brownpatched-robed man respectively.

"We three brothers are rogue cultivators to others it might seem like a path for those with no prospects or as a last resort but to us, it's a gift that keeps on giving. We get to travel all over, experience different things and learn new things with the sky as our blanket and the earth as our bed. It was during those travels that we heard about the Earthvine restaurant as we were making our way across the Emerald lily kingdom for a job. We decided to patronize the place to enjoy a good meal and taste the effects of the earthvine wood and see if they are good as they say it is.

The service wasn't bad though we've seen better but I can appreciate that the Earthvine restaurant doesn't discriminate against who it serves. The food was okay and as for the earthvine wood, its effects though minimal on us could still be felt. It was during one of our discussions as brothers that it got heated and before we knew it due to our passionate natures it got to trading blows. But we didn't use much force we were mindful of where we were and restrained much of our abilities seeing as only the table was the only thing that broke is a testament to the truth of my statement.

However, despite us holding back the earthvine table broke way too easily. Isn't something touted with so many great effects meant to be resilient even against the attacks of a core formation expert?

We couldn't make heads or tails of how something that is atleast of sky rank broke at the minute of our attacks. But since we were at fault we agreed to compensate for it. But the owner said it was 15,000 mid-grade spirit stones. The owner was clearly trying to take advantage of us since he may have guessed we were rogue cultivators and we may not be informed on certain matters.

Judge Yang Qing my brothers and I truly do not believe that table was made of true earthvine wood. We may have not seen one ourselves but we have seen other sky-rank woods such as the condor's caller wood, ghost stream wood, and wood from the thunder-thorn tree and they were all able to withstand an attack from an early-stage core formation expert without a doubt. But I'm supposed to believe that an earthvine wood broke to an attack that wasn't even at the core formation stage.

As we didn't want to create a commotion we decided to compromise and do one job for him but he insisted we lend our services for a month to make up for the 15,000 mid-grade spirit stones. However, the math didn't add up. We are three core formation experts at the 4th level whose might is as strong as someone at the early stages of the 7th level of the core formation realm. How could our worth be simply 500 mid-grade stones a day? The going rate to hire someone of our caliber is ten times that at 5,000 a day. After telling him that negotiations broke down and we are.

I plead Judge please look at this case fairly. Despite being conned by the owner we didn't act out and wanted to find a peaceful resolution but the owner just insisted on trying to have his way and take advantage of us brothers just because we are rogue cultivators. We hope the court will be fair in this matter and let the world know there are no distinctions in this place even if you are royalty or just a commoner justice and fairness are meted out all the same," Shen Shi said as he performed an even deeper bow.

Chapter 57 57: Chief Song Chuanli

"Don't worry Mr. Shen Shi we will ensure fairness will be upheld above everything else," Yang Qing said as he faintly smiled. Shen Shi cupped his fists in acknowledgment.

"Before I make my ruling, Zhen Hu would you please?" Yang Qing said as he placed his palms open to receive something from Zheng Hu. Zheng Hu happily obliged as he removed a square-shaped block of wood with rough edges that seemed like it had been forcibly snapped. The wood was orange-red like the sun during a sunset.

The Shen brothers had their pupils constrict once they saw it before they calmed down a second later.

Yang Qing fiddled around with the block of wood as he nodded to himself a couple of times with his gaze flickering. The calm soothing feeling like cool and gentle water calming things around it already gave the identity of the wood away as the earthvine wood. It was one of the few trees to have a mild and gentle nature with soothing effects that could even soothe the soul.

"With this, I should have everything I need to make my judgment," Yang Qing said as he placed the block of the earthvine wood aside and crisscrossed his fingers together.

"The earthvine wood may not be the sturdiest plant out there but I agree it should be able to withstand the attacks from an early-stage core formation expert."

The Shen Shi were all in glee filled with smug expressions when they heard this.

"However due to its special mild and gentle nature, there are a few objects out there that can negatively affect it and render it no different from any common wood out there. I found a trace of one of those substances in this wood here. The inquisitor of the case Zheng Hu grabbed a piece of the wood from the table that was broken and it's this piece right here.

First things first, I want to declare unequivocally that this is real earthvine wood, and based on its quality it has been procured from an earthvine tree that is at least 20,000 years old and whose effects can affect everyone up to the peak of the core formation realm. As for the price, mmh well better to let a specialist explain it. Zheng Hu can you call Chief Song Chuanli in, hopefully he isn't in a sour mood from being torn away from his contraptions," Yang Qing couldn't help but say with some worry in his voice.

Zheng Hu quickly rushed outside and came back in with a short old man whose hair was white and a long beard that reached his chest. He had on a white robe that was covered in sawdust which had strange properties to them as there were even a few that would occasionally flicker with purple lightning, while some had a golden glow to them with others changing into a myriad of colors every millisecond.

The old man walked with firm steady steps with his hands behind his back. He had a stern almost impatient and irritated expression on as he made his way over.

"I'm sorry Chief Song for interrupting you from your busy schedule but I need your expertise in something and you are one of the best in this field," Yang Qing said as he stood up to cup his fist with an apologetic smile. Mao Yunru, Yi Jie, and Zheng Hu also respectfully cupped their fist to him. This drew curious looks from the Shen brothers and also Zhong Quan too. They wondered what bigshot this was to draw such a reaction from a judge and the inquisitors. They didn't try to probe his cultivation but from a brief glimpse, they could tell he was just at the late stages of the core formation realm. They couldn't understand why they showed so much deference for an old geezer who seemed he may kick the bucket any time, especially the Shen brothers. In their world and most cultivators' world, strength was the only metric that deserved respect.

"Mmph typical of sheltered cultivators," Shen Tian thought with contempt feeling his heart as he looked at Yang Qing's and the rest's respectful looks.

"You better fund some of my expenses from your discretionary fund Yang Qing for tearing me away from my work for your case. Don't you know we got a few rare materials this time? If I leave too long those old geezers will nab a few more samples for themselves and leave me with none. So be quick about what it is you need." Chief Song Chuanli impatiently said.

"Hehehe I'm in your debt Chief Song as for the funds it will have to wait till after my ceremony. I'll compensate you better then. I called you in for this," Yang Qing said as he tossed over the block of the earthvine wood which Chief Song caught deftly despite looking like he would tip over from any sudden movements. He caught it with his right hand while his left hand was still behind his back.

"Mmh an earthvine wood made from an earthvine tree that is 23,900 years old. The craftsmanship to harvest the timber from its log was subpar only retaining 70% of its original value," Chief Song brought it to his nose as he took a gentle sniff as he closed his eyes.

"The period from the harvest, refining the wood and its subsequent use after that it seems 27- 29 years have passed no its 29 years." He then did something that shocked Zhong Quan even more than he was currently. As Chief Song had got every single detail correct despite Zhong Quan not divulging anything.

Chief Song took a bite out of the wood like it was a piece of bread. His expression which was serene suddenly turned frosty as he spit out the wood with anger.

"Which bastard snuck pollen from the grey phantom deadnettle in there? That thing destroys the very nature of the earthvine wood. No wonder it smelled disgusting and the taste was rotten," Chief Song said as he spat a few more times and tossed back the block of earthvine wood like it was some piece of trash.

"Can you tell how much efficacy the earthvine wood retained after the 29 years Chief Song or was it too degraded for you to tell," Yang Qing asked as he put the block away and secretly evaporated the saliva stuck on his palm from the block.

"Who do you think you are talking to? Before you grew those greedy teeth of yours how many precious kinds of wood do you think passed through my hands? The efficacy was at 43%," Chief Song offhandedly said.

"Is that it? I need to leave," Chief Song asked as he was turning away to leave.

"No wait Chief Song there are a few more things. Zhong Quan what were the dimensions of your table," Yang Qing hurriedly asked as his eyes pleaded with Chief Song to wait who snorted in irritation but acquiesced to the plea.

"The table was a six-seater table that was 40 inches wide and 72 inches long," Zhong Quan said without a second of hesitation.

"Chief Song can you give me an estimate of the amount of timber used to make something like that and based on the current wood's efficacy what its selling price would be? That's the last question," asked Yang Qing.

"To make something like that from earthvine timber a conservative estimate would be it required 50 of them. One log from an earthvine tree that is 23,000 years old would go for 600 high-grade spirit stones and that log would produce about 400 boards of timber there about.

If I were to convert it to mid-grade spirit stones the 50 boards of timber would go for 75,000 spirit stones but that is only if the wood was processed retaining atleast 90% of its efficacy but the one who did this job retained 70% and I'm even generous in that estimation. The prices would drop to 50,000 stones then when we factor how much time has lapsed and its current efficacy level its worth would be half that so its price would be around 20,000-25,000 mid-grade spirit stones though most shops wouldn't go lower than 20,000 even if it was at 43% efficacy. I hope that is it, I'm going now. I hope those bastards left me the sun-peak cherry wood atleast. If they went too far this old man will have to settle scores with them," Chief Song mumbled to himself like a warrior heading off to a life-and-death battle. He didn't even hear the words of gratitude from Yang Qing.

"Before I forget Yang Qing make sure to come help me on my farm when you have time. It will help you deepen your understanding of the path you are walking on. Yi Jie come along too so this kid actually does something and does not eat all of my fruits. Bring that snow plum blossom wine of yours with you too. I finished the last vat you made me. You can harvest a few things from the farm as payment," Chief Song trailed as he closed the door behind him.

Yang Qing could only smile bitterly at Chief Song's antics. He had always been this way. Erratic and passionate when it came to craftsmanship. He was one of the craftsmen that retrofitted the furniture used in the lower core courts, upper core courts, and some of the superior core courts in the main headquarters and some of the personal offices among many other works around the Order. When it came to botany, processing, and craftsmanship his skills were unrivaled and could match even one in the

domain stage. The breadth of wisdom he has is enough to write books for decades and it still wouldn't cover all that he knew. He was also one of the trainers of the institute. A lot of techniques in handling different kinds of plants had been devised by him that even the alchemist of the Order highly value. He has created a few gold-grade techniques in his road as a craftsman.

Yes, he was only a core formation expert but the only reason for that was because he was an eccentric workaholic. He has postponed breaking through to the palace stage for the past 120 years claiming he was too busy to afford the time he would waste breaking through and solidifying his cultivation base. He would rather spend that time creating furniture and honing his craft and when he feels like taking a break he would give some thought on breaking through. For the past 120 years that feeling never came so he remained at the peak of the core formation realm not taking a step forward.

However, despite being at that stage he had honed his dao path deeper than what even Yang Qing had done. Before Yang Qing broke through to the palace realm, Lei Weiyuan once told him that when Chief Song does decide to breakthrough it would not be a stretch for him to directly reach the peak of the palace realm in a single day and even touch the cusp of the domain realm. His foundations in his dao were that deep and robust. Now that Yang Qing had broken through and was walking in his dao path from interacting with Chief Song he could immediately tell why Lei Weiyuan thought that way. Chief Song's whole body felt like a massive tree that covered a whole kingdom filled with the strength and knowledge of time surpassing each era. He had a density and profoundness to him that Yang Qing wasn't close to matching at the moment.

Chapter 58 58: Displeasure Against The Order

Yang Qing quickly pushed those thoughts away as he focused on the matter at hand.

"As you have heard, the earthvine wood was 23,000 years old, and based on the amount of timber used to make the table you brothers destroyed its worth is between 20,000-25,000. The quote Zhong Quan gave you of 15,000 middle-grade spirit stones was even more than fair on his part.

So the accusation of whether it was true earthvine wood has been disproved and the charges he gave on the broken table have been found to be reasonable. With all these facts in place..."

"WAIT JUDGE YANG QING!!!! What do you mean by fair? Is this how the Order conducts its business? Colluding with the affluent to oppress those in the rogue cultivators because they have no backing other than themselves.

You really expect us to trust the judgment of an old man who looks to already be on his deathbed. He is just a senile old man that you have involved in this case to create the illusion that everything was above

board when in the actual sense you had already decided to side with the unscrupulous merchant over there. Some beacon of fairness and justice the Order is. Just wait until we leave here and tell anyone who will listen how the Order really does its job, especially against the rogue cultivating community. I and my brothers won't stand for it, we are not willing to continue with this sham of a case procedure," Shen Shi vehemently said as he scoffed in displeasure. The rest of his brothers seem to be in agreement with him as even Shen Tian spat on the courtroom grounds in disdain.

"Is this sentiment shared by you two?" Yang Qing calmly asked as he stared at the two brothers beside Shen Shi.

"Yes it is," Shen Ding coldly said

"Me too, though I think Shen Shi was a little tame with his words. Shen Shi you really try too hard to be 'refined' like those aristocrats. Like I always say Shen Shi with sufficient strength even a boar could be seen as more of a gentleman than a king.

If we had enough strength do you think we would be put through this farce of a ruling," Shen Tian said as he mockingly smiled.

"The Order is said to be the hotbed of talents but they don't seem much to me just soft cakes puffing themselves up. Just you wait, I'll make sure to grow powerful enough to openly spit at the Order's face," Shen Tian thought as a smile of contempt crept on his face as he dead-eyed Yang Qing.

Zhong Quan's brows frowned in displeasure at the whole thing but they soon smoothed out as he looked at the calm indifferent expression that Yang Qing and the rest had. He could even see a hint of playful craftiness in Yang Qing's eye as he stared at the three brothers.

"Good since you are all in agreement this makes things easier. As rogue cultivators, I would have thought you would have a bit of awareness. How have you stayed alive being so reckless and clueless? That old man you call senile is one of the frontmost figures in craftsmanship who has created a few sentient artifacts and how many materials do you think have passed through his hands from sky grade to ascendant grade. The number is sufficient to bury a whole town and you have the gall to doubt his judgment over a single sky-grade material.

You are lucky he didn't hear your words even I am incapable of surviving one punch from him let alone three puny 4th stage core formation cultivators who have their heads so swollen with pride from surviving insignificant trials that any person from the Order would have blazed through as early stage foundation experts.

Do you think core formation cultivators are enough for the Order to pull tricks and besmirch its name with? even a soul formation cultivator isn't worthy let alone you three.

Besides, do you three think we are children playing cops and robbers here that you can get out of the case procedure anytime you want to?

I asked you beforehand if you were sure you wanted to submit yourselves wholly to the ruling of the court to which you did. Your chance to refuse went away with that agreement and you're in it now. Any act that maligns the ruling or acts in disobedience of it is another penalty much stiffer than what you would have gotten had you agreed to my ruling. You have to prepare yourselves for what comes next. This is the Order and not someplace you can behave however you wish," Yang Qing said with an indifferent expression.

Shen Ding couldn't help but nervously gulp as he wondered if they pushed their luck a bit however Shen Shi and Shen Tian looked undaunted but Shen Tian's body seemed tenser than before and one of Shen Shi's fists was tightly clenched.

"I Yang Qing as a judge of the superior core court hereby exercise the authority vested in me by the Order to pass the verdict on the case between owner of the Earthvine restaurant Zhong Quan vs The three Shen brothers.

Having judged the information at hand to be sufficient to pass a ruling, I hereby declare the defendants Shen Shi, Shen Ding, and Shen Tian guilty of destroying the earthvine table whose worth in middle-grade spirit stones is 20,000- 25,000 spirit stones as valuated by a master grade craftsman Chief Song Chuanli. Owner Zhong Quan's valuation of 15,000 middle-grade spirit stones is found to be fair and above board.

As for the sentence, the Order is willing to pay the amount owed in full to owner Zhong Quan or have the three brothers pay their amount in labor to the restaurant. The amount will be considered paid off when the three brothers have worked for a month. The payment will be 500 middle-grade spirit stones a day is considered to be the standard amount for the remuneration of the services of a 4th-stage core formation expert. Which option would you prefer owner Zhong Quan?" Yang Qing asked.

"Judge Ya.." the three brothers jumped out in fury to oppose the ruling.

"Silence you have no say in the matter. Just stand still and wait your turn," Yang Qing cut them off before they said anything. The three brothers had wanted to speak but they felt some energy surround them and forcefully petrified their bodies. They couldn't even blink their eyes, about the only thing they could do was breathe.

This sudden change made their bodies grow cold. They didn't even understand what happened to them. They just lost all control of their bodies. Fear sunk into their hearts but their bodies didn't show anything.

Zhong Quan noticed there was something strange going on among the three brothers especially when it seemed like their words were quite literally forced down their throats.

"There may be more than meets the eye with this judge. Maybe earlier..." Zhong Quan paused midway as a scarier thought popped into his head as he looked at Yang Qing with more reservation.

"Judge Yang Qing if it's okay with you I prefer the first option. As much as I would have liked to employ the services of core formation experts for a month. Having them around the restaurant may be more trouble than it's worth especially if they don't want to be there. The first option is the safest and most expedient option for me," Zhong Quan humbly said.

"You have nothing to worry about if you chose the second option. The Order has ways to ensure their discipline on the job. So do you still want the first option or will you reconsider?" Yang Qing asked with a smile.

"Thanks for the consideration but I prefer the first option," Zhong Quan said as he offered a smile of gratitude of his own.

"Okay then, Zheng Hu will take you to the restitution and reclamation offices. They will pay you back the amount in full there whether you want it in high-grade spirit stones or middle-grade or even low-grade spirit stones they accommodate all choices and take this with you as proof," Yang Qing said as he quickly drafted a small note in an ancient-looking paper. He stamped it at the end with his gold eagle medallion

which made the writing glow in a pure gold light before the paper rolled itself and a gold eagle spirit appeared and swallowed the paper it then flew to Zheng Hu and parched itself on his shoulder.

Chapter 59: Sentence Given To The Three Brothers

"Now it's time to settle accounts with you three," Yang Qing said with a frosty expression. He had seen his fair share of arrogant defendants who were all too reckless with their words and actions. But this was the first time someone other than him was the target of those actions especially it being Chief Song Chuanli. Of the instructors he was close with, Chief Song was one of them, it was the reason Yang Qing called him despite his fiery personality. In his time at the institute, he had been guided by him and offered support that went even beyond the scope of what a normal instructor would give and he wasn't the only one Xia Boqin the superior core court judge who looked like a noble was one of the few people who were really close with Chief Song in fact he was more of a father to the latter. Hearing someone bad mouth him angered him more than if he was the target. It took a lot of self-restraint for him to not slap them to death right then and there.

"Had you decided to be patient, things may have ended differently for you. Yes, there is no doubt that you three are guilty of damaging owner Zhong Quan's property and you would have to pay the amount required either through labor or spirit stones. But just like I've told owner Zhong Quan the Order would have footed the bill and have you three brothers settle up the amount with us later.

We would have given you sufficient time to pay us the amount in installments with a 1% annual interest charge on the amount with the 1% being charged on the remaining balance each year. Unlike Zhong Quan, we don't have to worry about you three escaping since the Order can track you anywhere in the southern continent.

The other option would have been to have you do some jobs for us. Unlike other places, we don't pay a fixed rate based on your cultivation realm we pay according to the degree of difficulty of the job and the completion rate. So you may have taken a single job that costs 15,000 middle-grade stones and cleared your debt in one day if you completed it successfully which would have opened up an opportunity for you guys. We have a lot of contract work that we offer to rogue cultivators like yourself and the remuneration terms are excellent. We can pay in spirit stones, cultivation resources like herbs, weapons, and pills that are of an equivalent value to the spirit stones or you can choose to be guided on your cultivation arts by some of the instructors from the institute for a set period of time. These options are only afforded to rogue cultivators to ensure you can have a footing in this treacherous world.

Most rogue cultivators who have become renowned in the past a hundred years over half of them was because of the harvests they gained from doing contract work with us. Some were even so good that they were offered a permanent placement with us even though they are not products of the institute.

However, because of your earlier display of utter contempt and disregard for this court, your end will be much graver and harsher.

I Yang Qing judge of the superior core courtroom hereby declare Shen Shi, Shen Ding, and Shen Tian guilty of slander and show of contempt to the court and a member of the Order. You are also guilty of being in breach of article 24 of the court's code of conduct the obeisance and compliance of parties involved to the court ruling and its penalties. You submitted yourselves willingly and wholeheartedly to the court's ruling but acted contrary to your agreement putting you in breach of the article hence invoking its penalties.

Maligning a member of the Order with no grounds carries a sentence of 3 years of hard labor. The type of labor is left to the discretion of the judge in charge of the case however as needed the terms may be changed depending on the needs of the Order as at that time. The works may result in your peril and the Order has no obligation to save you should that scenario occur. Any injuries you get during the sentence will not be handled by the Order we will only cater for housing, meals, and provision of all pertinent information to ensure you complete your tasks well. Logistical support will also be provided but only on things concerning the work, combat gear isn't included in this. You will have to depend on yourselves on that end.

In addition, the penalties for breaching article 24 of the code of conduct in courts ruling carry a minimum sentence of 5 years of hard labor in addition to the guilty party paying what is owed in damages as a result of the verdict in their case. For your case, after you serve the 5 years you will still owe the Order 15,000 middle-grade spirit stones that you will have to pay back and the interest will still be charged as long as the debt is still active.

However, depending on the severity of the breach it is up to the discretion of the Judge to decide whether to add more years to the minimum 5-year sentence. I thus have decided to add 2 more years to it making it a 7-year sentence and adding the 3 years of showing contempt I hereby sentence you to 10 years of hard labor.

Shen Shi, Shen Ding, Shen Tian in the period of your sentence the works for your hard labor will be but not limited to:

- You will work as a spirit stone miner for 6 months. The Chief Secretary of mining will decide the mines that you will be sent to and the schedule.

· You will be attached to the alchemy division for 6 months and help them in any way they deem fit in help combating the miasma affecting one of the grounds housing our snow streak branch office found in Snow streak empire.

· For 15 months you will be attached to the rank 5 kingdom the Midnight flower kingdom. They were struck with a flood that damaged almost a third of the kingdom. You are to assist in their efforts to construct dams, retrofit their waterways and improve on other types of infrastructure around the kingdom. You will also assist in their land reclamation, rehabilitation, and restoration measures. A specialist in disaster management from the Order will be sent with you. They will supervise your work and give you guidelines on what and how to do it. With your core formation cultivation bases it shouldn't be too hard for you to complete it within 15 months. Failure to do so and six more months will be added to your sentence.

· The remainder of your sentence will be spent as a support staff to the core courts all around the Order here at the headquarters and the branches. Though based on your capabilities you will only be dispatched to the outer core court and the inner core court. You are to do all that is required of you and any disobedience will be considered another infraction and 3 more months will be tacked on to your sentence. Your schedule and detachment will be decided by the scheduler and shift supervisors of the lower core courts and the upper core courts. For the next seven years and seven months whatever they say goes.

A point of note during the conduct of all these duties you will be graded. You will be graded in terms of your quality of work and completion rate. If you get anything less than 7/10 in the evaluation six more months will be added to your sentence," Yang Qing finished as he removed his energy that had paralyzed the Shen brothers who were currently wide-eyed with their jaws wide open. They had wanted to yell but the feeling of being paralyzed just moments ago was firmly imprinted on them.

"Judge isn't this unfair just because we contradicted your decision," Shen Ding the crafty-looking brother in the yellow robes stiffly asked. His whole body was trembling and pale and he wasn't alone in this. Shen Tian was hit the hardest as his hands despite being deeply clenched till there were blood droplets forming, his shaky knees and hands could not be calmed despite how hard he tried. Everything within him was tingling in fear yelling for him to run and he didn't know why? He was the most intuitive of his 3 brothers and that was one of the reasons they have been able to survive this long. It was his timely warnings and reactions that saved them more than a couple of times from certain death. But it was now screaming at him telling him he was doomed. The earlier contempt and arrogance were gone from the three brothers.

"At the start of the case I did ask you if you were sure you wanted to surrender yourselves to the ruling of the court did I not? You all agreed. If you want I can even replay the photo stone recording of your

agreement if you want. The problem I have isn't even with the disagreement but the manner in which you went about it.

Do you think you could hide your true thoughts from me? From the moment you stepped into this court you had utter disregard and contempt for it and the people in it. It's okay if you think it but you decided to push it further and act on it treating this place and the people in it as your backyard.

If you do something you must prepare yourselves for the consequences. You even had the gall to threaten to smear our reputation out there. Do you think the Order is fragile enough to be affected by the rumblings of core formation experts how laughable," Yang Qing coldly said.

"However since I'm feeling magnanimous I'll give you three a chance. You can use that strength you seem to be so proud of," Yang Qing said as a small innocent smile curled up. Zheng Hu on seeing this could only mourn for the three brothers. He knew that harmless-looking smile and what it entailed all too well.

Chapter 60 60: Ten Second Chance At Acquittal

"What is the chance?" Shen Shi the brother in the blue robes hesitantly asked with other brothers mirroring his show of concern. What Yang Qing just mentioned was like a dehydrated person seeing a clear single drop of liquid that they are not sure is even water but if it was it would save them from their current situation.

"Well, it is a simple thing really. I will give you two options. In option one I am willing to drop all the charges against you and the Order will still pay the 15,000 middle-grade spirit stones and you won't have to pay us a dime. In exchange, all you have to do is to survive for 10 seconds. If you fall unconscious or die then it's your loss but if you survive and maintain your consciousness it's your win and I'll even heal any injuries you incur in those ten seconds.

As for option two, it's an even simpler choice that is to do what you should have done earlier and just accept the results of the ruling and take the punishment that you have incurred as a result of your actions and make the most of it. If you keep your noses clean, be diligent and attentive in your work with a few recommendations your ten-year sentence may be reduced or you may harvest something even more beneficial from doing every work that is asked of you. But all this is predicated on your attitudes going in.

However, you should know should you decide to go with option one and fail, two more years will be added to your sentence. So your sentence will be 12 years instead of 10 for hard labor.

"I'll give you five minutes to decide," Yang Qing said as he leaned back comfortably on his chair.

If it was any other day the three brothers would have gladly chosen option one but they remember being paralyzed in just microseconds. That display of power couldn't help but worry them. They felt they were given poison in one hand and flammable liquid in the other to quench their thirst.

The three brothers huddled together as they argued back and forth in low voices. Before the five-minute deadline was up it seemed like they had come to a consensus however their faces did not show the relief one should have from making a major decision. It was pale, filled with beads of sweat, and fraught with worry.

Shen Ding and Shen Tian nodded to their brother Shen Shi who nodded back in acknowledgment as he moved forward to face Yang Qing.

"Judge Yang Qing if it doesn't offend could we please clarify a few things before we give you our decision," Shen Shi humbly said.

"Sure you can seeing that your lives are on the line here, gathering as much information as one can is par for the course whenever one is making such life-altering decisions. So what is it you want to ask Shen Shi, like I said I'm feeling magnanimous today so I will accommodate you as much as I can TO A POINT," Yang Qing cheerily said as he narrowed his eyes when towards the end of his statement.

The brothers flinched a bit when they heard Yang Qing mention their lives were on the line. When this day started they had no idea it would go this way.

"Thank you for the favor Judge Yang Qing," Shen Shi said as he bowed in gratitude.

"The thing we wanted to know is what do we need to survive against if it's a person who would it be against, and the power level of the attack and can we use any means available to us to defend against the attack," asked Shen Shi

"The attacker would be me since I'm the one passing the sentence," Yang Qing smiled gently as he said this which sent shivers down the spines of the Shen brothers. Shen Shi couldn't help but look back at his

two brothers with deeply worried and questioning eyes. The eyes seemed they were asking the question "Do we still go through with this."

In their eyes facing Yang Qing was the worst possible choice. Before the paralysis incident, they didn't give Yang Qing much thought or fear in any regard. In fact to them in the whole courtroom, the one who had the scariest vibe was Yi Jie and the one with the least presence was Yang Qing. He just seemed like a young man sitting comfy in his chair lapping in luxury. But after the paralyzing effect, they had to reevaluate the danger factor of the green-haired youth before them. During their discussion, Shen Tian repeatedly warned them how his intuition kept repeatedly warning him of impending doom and all of it was centered on Yang Qing.

Yang Qing ignoring the looks they were giving in each other went on,

"As for the power level it will be just this much," he said as he raised his right index finger which drew confused looks about what he meant.

"What I mean by that is I'll just be using this finger to attack and the strength of what you'll be facing will be the amount of power stored in just this one finger. I don't think it will be more than a full-blown attack of a 1st stage core formation expert," Yang Qing said as he wriggled his index finger like a harmless worm.

"As for your last question, you are free to use whatever means you have available to defend yourselves. You won't be facing the attack separately but together. So use whatever you can, whatever you have I have no objections against," Yang Qing put the most generous and magnanimous look he could give.

"Can we choose to face a different person's attack?" Shen Shi asked with a pleading expression.

"Like I said I'm the one passing the judgment so it will have to be me. Besides I can tell you for a fact I'm the better choice compared to the rest. Your odds of surviving my attack are higher as compared to the rest. Yi Jie will likely dismember your arm and legs and leave you crippled for life, Mao Yunru will break your minds and you're guaranteed to live as idiots the rest of your lives as for Zheng Hu he is young and rambunctious he may torch you alive and cripple your foundations or leave you in a state you wish you were dead," Yang Qing patiently explained like a caring elder.

The three brothers couldn't help but eye the rest once they what Yang Qing said. Yi Jie was still aloof, Mao Yunru had a cold indifferent look which was unlike her as she was always the gentle-looking one as for Zheng Hu he was smiling but he had a malevolent look on his face as he licked his lips. The brothers stared once more at each other before they nodded firmly.

"We choose option one," Shen Shi said with some resolution in his voice.

"You're sure?" asked Yang Qing.

"Yes, we are. We are rogue cultivators, our whole lives have been built on taking risks. If there's a chance we can get out of this we will fight for it. We will take this moment as a tempering experience to experience the might of the Order. We may be a lot of things but cowards isn't one of them," Shen Shi said with a valiant expression. His general-like aura burst out of his body which helped his other brothers calm themselves. It took only a few seconds for the three brothers to shed their earlier worried looks and wear looks of brevity and calm indifference.

Yang Qing couldn't help but admire their current looks whatever their deficiencies and rudeness they were atleast true to themselves to the very end.

"Good, I'll give you a few seconds to prepare yourselves," Yang Qing said as he leaned forward and supported his head on his left palm as his right hand was laid on the table with his index finger pointed downwards. He looked more like someone who was getting in the best position to daydream than someone about to attack.

Shen Ding removed something from a round white gem-like amulet he wore that looked like a worn-out round marble. A pavise shield appeared in front of him. The shield was 10 meters tall and 3 meters wide it was enough to shield the three brothers completely. It was made of dark grey wood and covered in blue-white fur and the head of a white wolf which had a completely black sclera was attached at the center of the shield.

Yang Qing at a glance could tell the shield was an upper mid-grade sky-rank weapon. It would be able to defend against the blow of a normal 7th-stage core formation expert. The fur and the head was from a dark cinder white wolf which was famous for the balance it had in offense and defense. It produces a dark flame that corrodes the qi of an opponent's attack while its white fur toughened every time it absorbed qi from its surrounding. The grey wood in the shield was from a tenfold cedar. It would magnify the effects of whatever was attached to it tenfold and had a natural ability to draw in qi. This shield was another one of the reasons the Shen brothers survived this long as rogue cultivators.

The Shen brothers decided to go the full defensive route. Their weapons had been confiscated but they were left with the shield. Even if they were allowed to have their weapons back they would still choose to go with the shield rather than disperse their strength in different attacks they'd rather consolidate it in a solid defense. Their goal was only to survive which narrowed down their choices.

They hurdled up behind the shield as they started to madly circulate their qi as they transmitted it into the shield.

"WE ARE READY JUDGE YANG QING," they all roared as they tried their spirits. Shen Tian's skin transformed into a rock rhino's hide, meanwhile, Shen Ding had a metallic golden glow in his skin as for Shen Shi there were fissures on his skin spewing lightning.

"Okay then," Yang Qing's soft voice traveled over.