

Daily life 601

Chapter 601 Sudden interruption

"You may think your circumstances are different than theirs but let me ask you this, if you're so sure the fire adler bear will attack you how come it hasn't done so before? Even without reaching the domain realm as a peak palace stage spirit beast, it has the capital to attack you while guaranteeing its life.

In all the time you have been here have you seen it attack you?" asked Yang Qing.

He also wanted to include the obsidian serpents to make his point but considering how they recently massacred the two princes and royal guards, he decided against it.

The room sunk in silence before the king finally spoke up.

"As king, I have to prepare for the worst.." he sighed.

Yang Qing's words were logical and had sound reasoning, but he, those around him at the table down to even the civilian selling pork skewers at a roadside stall, no matter their stations or cultivation bases, as long they were citizens of the Deer Mountain Kingdom they would all be wary of spirit beasts, especially the powerful ones.

The kingdom walls were painted with the bloody memories of how their kingdom almost fell several times over to spirit beast stampedes. They had seen their brothers, sisters, fathers, mothers, best friends, and neighbors get eaten or shredded apart by a spirit beast.

After all they had experienced it was second nature for them to assume a spirit beast would target them for little to no reason though granted one of the spirit beast stampedes they had experienced was because they had truded upon their territories when they were trying to consolidate all the lands and bring it firmly under their grasp.

The storm that was triggered by it shook the kingdom to its very core and the price they paid wasn't something they expected. They lost a king and countless palace realm experts whose numbers they have not been able to replace let alone find those who could match them in abilities.

Back then it was the golden age of their kingdom. Talents that would blind any era they appeared in, all appeared within the same period. There were even hopes of restoring the Ebony Twilight Sanctuary Array because it wasn't only battling talents who appeared but alchemists, artificers, and formation masters. Reviving the array was within the realm of possibility. But all that was shattered.

The kingdom high on its prosperity woke up calamities in their consolidation agenda. Their plan ended up in a ferocious bloodbath that lasted seventeen months without any pause. Spirit beasts who would have been at each other's throats united as they sought to destroy the Deer Mountain Kingdom. If there was ever a time the array would have broken completely it was back then.

The only reason it held on was some of the senior cultivators of the kingdom all went out of the protection of the array and executed all sorts of forbidden arts some even went to the extent of self-detonating, all to stop the ferocious beast tide that was led by eight late-stage palace realm spirit beasts, over a dozen that were at the early to middle stages of the palace realm and countless in the core formation realm.

He wasn't alive back then but from the vivid first-hand description his grandfather gave him, he could imagine how horrific the scene was. A sea of blood that swallowed the kingdom. All one could see or smell was blood, then there were the constant bombarding attacks that carried enough ferocity to shake the heavens and the earth which never stopped raining, and beast roars so terrifying that they made millions wail in despair.

The impact of it never left them. His grandfather was a fledgling core formation expert during the attacks, but even after he broke through to the palace realm he still found himself trembling whenever he recalled those roars that seemed to send one's soul to the very abyss of absolute terror.

After surviving that ordeal, for the next three hundred years no one so much as took a step out of the kingdom. They were all holed up in their own houses, it didn't matter whether you were a palace realm cultivator or a mortal with no cultivation, the trauma swallowed them all.

If palace realm beasts could do so much damage what about a domain realm?

Ever since he got the news his heart hasn't stopped racing and he constantly felt this sickening metallic taste of blood at the back of his tongue. He already had other things to worry about such as the retaliation from the remnant surviving spirit beasts from the battle back then, as there were a few in the palace realm that managed to get away in time. Now adding the fire adler he was at his wits ends.

Seeing Yang Qing's firm look he knew there was no way the Order would intervene. Some part of him even started having dark ideas such as hoping the fire adler bear would recklessly target the branch of the Order first prompting them to act. However, he immediately admonished himself ashamed of his thoughts.

Just as he was about to thank Yang Qing for his time and the Order's assistance with the obsidian serpents since it was one less headache to deal with, the door behind them was slammed open as someone rushed in with erratic qi undulations.

All present craned their necks at the sound of the disturbance. The person who had just rushed in was a woman who looked to be in her early thirties. She was dressed in ornate peacock robes and could be considered excessively beautiful if it wasn't for her livid almost hysterical look.

Her hair along with her robes were flying all over because of the qi undulations being released from her body. Jewels that constellation markings protruded from her skin. The jewels greedily sucked in the spiritual qi from the air and seemed to use them to amplify the body of the woman, which was why despite her being at the tenth stage of the core formation realm, her body's presence was releasing the pressure of a peak stage core formation expert.

"IT'S BECAUSE OF YOU THAT MY SONS ARE DEAD, REVIVE THEM!!!!" madly roared the woman as she charged at Yang Qing.

Chapter 602 Working timeframe

The jewels protruding from her body let out a resplendent glow as they strengthened her body increasing the speed with which she moved from the door.

"Zhi'er what do you think you're doing?" the king said with a sigh as he raised his hand to stop her.

"There's no need for that.." Yang Qing said as pure white lotus shot out from his index finger. Before anyone present could register what had happened, the white lotus had already penetrated the woman's brows.

She immediately stood still as all the chaotic energy and qi surrounding her was immediately quelled. Her rabid-looking eyes immediately regained clarity as calmness seemed to descend upon her.

Yang Qing's display had drawn a lot of gazes from the crowd around him. Instantly stopping the frenzied woman wasn't unexpected since anyone from the group whether it was the king, queen, the family heads, the chancellor, or the imperial secretary could easily replicate such a feat.

The chasm between a palace realm cultivator and one in the core formation realm was insurmountable. The frenzied lady no matter how much power above her cultivation base she released, ultimately was still a core formation expert. A quasi palace stage cultivator would be able to easily suppress her let alone a real palace realm expert.

What shook the crowd was Yang Qing was able to launch his technique before some of them were even able to catch it despite them being there. Those who were able to track his movement were the king, the head of the Zhang family, and finally the head of the Song family who had an imperceptible light flash in his eyes as he looked at the serenity lotus rune that had manifested on the forehead of the frenzied woman.

Everyone else was only able to catch the art after it had reached the woman. Such a revelation sent shockwaves through them because it was evidence that Yang Qing's skills far surpassed theirs and by no small margin at that.

Being unable to track your opponent's attacks was the worst thing that could ever happen to you. The stronger cultivators were the more dangerous their fights sometimes it would take just a millisecond of lost concentration for the opponent to take your life.

Yang Qing's lazy and carefree look coupled with his young age had lulled them into thinking he was a junior like the princes forgetting this was someone who had made his bones at the Order. The display was a rude awakening to them.

"Please forgive her for her poor display, Branch Chief Yang Qing.." King Zhou Luan said as he cupped his fists in apology.

"The two princes we lost were both her sons, the shock of it all is still fresh in her mind please don't take offense.." he added.

"I am sorry for your loss Consort Meng Zhi.." Yang Qing said as he stood up placed one of his arms above his chest and bent slightly.

Su Jinjing and Luo Meili also stood up offering the same condolences.

"Can my sons be saved.." the woman weakly asked with the rims of her eyes reddening again from the tears welling up.

"They can't. It's not us refusing. We can't do it for them the same way we can't do it for the inquisitors we lost.

Ressurrection is out of our grasp, sadly.."

Yang Qing couldn't help but say this as he saw whatever little hope Consort Meng Zhi had, get snuffed out. Her face turned pale and her knees seemed to lose their strength as she collapsed on the floor.

The king reacted timely and caught her just as she was about to fall.

"Luan'er it's my fault.." she weakly said as she leaned closer to him.

"Because of my selfish ambitions to make you see me worthy to be your queen, I resorted to even using my sons to further that goal.

All their lives I've never been a mother to them. I never got to know what Lei'er or Peng'er liked or never liked, what their interests were, what they were good at, the struggles they had. I saw nothing...All I thought of them were tools to use to get you to like me enough to make me your queen.

I deserve all this anguish and pain. I wasn't a good mother... I wasn't even a mother to them. I deserve this, but they don't, Luan, they don't.." she said with a weak pained tone that was muffled with her soft cry.

"I know.. They were good sons to the end.." King Zhou Luan said with a sigh.

He lightly pressed on a few of her acupoints which immediately put her to sleep. He waved his hand and immediately after the palace realm guard that was at the door appeared next to them.

He looked a bit ill at ease because of letting the consort through.

"Take her to her chambers and ask Ruo'er to keep her mother company.." said the king. The royal guard acknowledged the order as he gently lifted the soundly sleeping consort and disappeared from the room.

"Once again, I am sorry for the poor display.." added the king as he went back to his seat.

"It's okay. In her position, I think I would react just as she did.." Yang Qing said.

The air in the room immediately turned sombre. The feast and the discussions aside, both the Order and the Deer Mountain Kingdom had suffered fatal losses and Consort Meng Zhi's interruption was a reminder of that.

"The fire adler bear may not necessarily break through to the domain realm in one go.." said Yang Qing in a bid to break the stifling atmosphere.

His statement seemed to have worked as the downcast mood shifted.

"You're certain?!" asked the king with unhidden agitation.

"A senior of mine confirmed it. Based on her experience after observing it, she surmised it would reach the quasi-domain stage but it is not close to that stage yet. It's taking a cautious approach in its breakthrough so even reaching the quasi-domain stage will take considerable time.."

"Do you have an estimation?" asked the head of the Zhang family.

"Depends on the fire adler bear. It has the accumulations for it. From the fluctuations the senior said it could take 20 years to 40 at most.."

Though the king was relieved by the timeline it wasn't all the way through. To mortals, 40 years was a lot, but to them, it was the same as taking a short nap. It flew by so fast.

"The array has 120 years at most before it stops working. Hopefully, the timeframe we've been given is sufficient for us to come up with something.." thought King Zhou Luan.

Chapter 603 Retracing the steps (1)

After sharing what he could, Yang Qing and his group eventually left. From the king to his family, to the family heads and the officials all gave their thanks and exchanged a few pleasantries with him.

Of the group, the princes and princesses were the most enthusiastic about their well-wishes a few of the princesses even tried to use their amorous charm on Yang Qing unlucky for them it was wasted on Yang Qing. This was someone who avoided trouble like his life depended on it.

There was no way he would ever entangle himself with royalty. All they did was swim around in duplicity and mind games trying to gain an advantage over the other person. A constant agenda every second of every day. It was too much for the peaceful soft life-loving Yang Qing. Dealing with Lei Weiyuan and the Order was enough for him he neither had the heart nor the bandwidth to accommodate more.

So despite how breathtakingly beautiful they were or how gifted they were with their words which Yang Qing couldn't deny he liked hearing very much, ultimately he offered a courteous smile that wasn't too warm or cold which was enough to send his message to the princesses, much to their disappointment.

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"This has been a long day.." Yang Qing said with a tired sigh once they had reached the branch.

The imperial secretary brought them back, though Yang Qing accepted the offer only halfway through the journey, the rest, they came back by themselves.

"I couldn't even tell if they were pretending or not. It seems real at the same time not. Aristocrats are scary.

Steely, make sure you grow up to be authentic and genuine. Don't be like them.." Su Jinjing said as she cuddled her spear.

Both Yang Qing and Luo Meili exchanged glances before they both shook their heads with smiles of surrender.

Immediately after they each went their way with Yang Qing heading to one of the secluded lakes in the branch.

Once he reached the area, he gently floated to the center of the lake where he took out a clover that was in the shape of a lamp.

Yang Qing poured his spiritual qi into the clover which caused it to open up revealing a wick that lit up with blue-white flames. The flames had an ethereal and mystic air about them as they danced around as if they were alive.

The lake it was on top of was crystal clear but the flames seemed to have transformed it into a blue-white lake.

" The blue-white clover lamp of stillness should be able to extend the duration I can maintain the Soul lake memory lock seal.." Yang Qing muttered to himself as he sat on a lotus position atop the lake next to the burning clover.

[Soul lake memory lock seal]

Yang Qing formed a seal that instantly created a whirlpool around him with him at the center. However this whirlpool was different than most, it lacked the ferocity and air of chaos and destruction that typically followed a whirlpool but was instead soft, gentle, and tranquil.

A small seal filled with complex ancient runes appeared on Yang Qing's forehead, which then expanded from his forehead and covered the entire lake as it released a gentle white glow. Yang Qing's eyes instantly transformed into two full moons while his hair turned into a blue color that had a feeling to it that it was made of pure water. The temperature slowly dropped as a white fog appeared around the area.

The scenery suddenly transformed when the seal reached the bottom of the lake. What was once a white and blue lake was now a majestic room filled with ocean lanterns, masterclass tiling and furniture, and a lifelike painting of people making their last stand against a multitude of spirit beasts with a moat filled with blood.

If either Luo Meili or Su Jinjing were to see this they would instantly recognize it as the assembly hall of the Deer Mountain Kingdom. It was a pale grey rendition of the room. The objects and the room itself looked like they were made of grey smoke.

The fog surrounding the area was drawn into the room by the radiant rune that was lighting up at the center of the room. The radiant rune swallowed the fog and then spread it around the room.

Every object touched by the fog would turn more and more distinctive, the more the fog covered it. They turn vivid and distinct like the real thing.

After a few minutes, the room that looked more like a fog memory was now lifelike and indivisible from the real thing. Everything looked real, whether it was the fibrous grains from the furniture, the reflection of the room coming off from the ocean lanterns that released a dazzling rainbow lighting to the room whenever the sun rays fell on them, or the intricate brushwork of the painting on the ceiling, every single aspect of the assembly hall was captured perfectly.

Were someone to step in here they would not be able to differentiate it from the one back in the Deer Mountain Kingdom.

"Now we can begin.." Yang Qing said with a mellow ethereal tone as he stood up.

He waved his sleeves and the fog being recirculated by the radiant rune below churned from his movements and reformed into humanoid shapes, which within seconds had formed into clear bodies of everyone who had been in the assembly room with Yang Qing, including Yang Qing himself.

The scene being depicted was from the moment he stepped into the room.

"This art never ceases to amaze me. Such a pity its demands are too high, even with the strength of my soul I can only maintain it for half an hour without the blue-white clover lamp's help. With the artifact's help, that time only extends to two hours. Hopefully, that should be enough for me to glean something.." said Yang Qing as a white glow that had a hint of solitude and serenity was released from his body.

The white glow seemed to have been a trigger as the scene turned alive and the figures and everything around it started moving.

Chapter 604 Retracing the steps (2)

Yang Qing's moon eyes had complex runes appearing in them as they let out a white smokey glow.

Soul Lake Memory Lock Seal was a soul-based cultivation spell that was a top-tier blue-grade art close to reaching the gold grade.

Despite being a blue grade art the degree of difficulty in mastering it was the same as a gold grade art. You needed at the bare minimum to be at the middle stages of the core formation realm for you to practice it and even then one couldn't do it without a strong soul.

Su Jinjing among Yang Qing's team had the strongest soul so she could practice the technique at the middle stages of the core formation realm but as strong as her soul was even with her cultivation base being at the later stages of the core formation realm she can only sustain the art for ten minutes at most and even then her soul would be left severely overdrafted.

A cultivator's soul was an invaluable attribute to the cultivator. It affected important aspects that control the well-being and growth of a cultivator. One of those things is a cultivator's mental sea of consciousness and subsequently the spiritual sense.

Either of these two is extremely vital towards the growth and survival of a cultivator, and the stronger soul you have the more powerful the mental sea of consciousness or the spiritual sense would be.

Be it an alchemist, weapon, and artifact maker, formation master, or talisman maker, they all needed a powerful mental sea of consciousness and spiritual sense to do their work. In a job where every detail mattered, a powerful sea of consciousness and spiritual sense that would help them monitor every single detail of the process was extremely vital to their growth and success, which was why most alchemists tended to have powerful souls either naturally or slowly built up through meditation techniques that aimed at strengthening the soul.

There are ways and things that could fool your body's senses and even your spiritual senses, but the soul always keeps a true record.

It was with that thought that the Soul Lake Memory Lock seal cultivation art was created. It draws out the memory of everything your soul recorded within a particular time. The stronger the soul, the more is recorded by the soul.

Cultivators had perfect recall and memory of things. They can remember things with extreme clarity no matter how far back they happened.

However that memory is based on what they consciously perceive and there are techniques, special physiques, artifacts and other means out there capable of interfering with that perception. Such a memory is susceptible to tampering but the soul remembers everything even things you yourself may not consciously be aware of.

Extracting those memories was dangerous as it involved digging into your soul, any misstep and your soul could get injured either temporarily or permanently. The Soul Lake Memory Lock Seal reduced those risks to an acceptable level but in return, it was extremely demanding in aptitude and strength of one's soul.

Other than extracting memories, those from the Order used it to seal certain memories as a safeguard should they be captured. That was its primary purpose and what Yang Qing was using it for presently was but an offshoot of its intended use.

Yang Qing slowly replayed everything that happened inch by inch from the moment he stepped into the assembly hall.

He would pause every so often and stare at the different images for a substantial amount of time. He had spent close to half an hour examining the frames that were there the instant he stepped into the assembly hall up to the point the Imperial Secretary stepped in to make introductions.

He then spent the next one and a half hours reviewing the scene where the banquet had started before he finished with the reactions everyone had when Consort Meng Zhi stepped in.

He reviewed everything within her eyes as she rushed in before his attention shifted to the reactions of every single member at the table with his attention settling specifically on the family heads.

When the two hours were up the candle wick from the blue-white clover lamp of stillness went out along with the radiant rune that was rotating at the bottom of the whirlpool. Yang Qing waved his sleeves and the scenery along with the lake immediately transformed and went back to normal.

Yang Qing's gaze and hair turned back to normal immediately afterward.

"It's still strenuous.." he said as he felt mental fatigue wash over him. His mind felt foggy and a little bit dizzy while every part of his body experienced extreme exhaustion.

He quickly took out a few herbs that released a chilly and misty glow and consumed them. His pale sweat-dripped skin along with his fatigue-filled eyes slowly looked rejuvenated after he had consumed the herbs, albeit slightly.

Yang Qing wasn't too surprised by the results as overdrawing the soul wasn't something that could immediately be restored by consuming a few herbs even though said herbs were of high quality. You can only completely recover through sleep or meditation. Yang Qing opted for the latter.

Sleeping in the nest of the celestial nesting weaver had ruined his ability to sleep anywhere else. Nothing seemed to come close to its comfort so whenever he wasn't around his abode he would prefer to meditate as opposed to resting.

Time quickly flew by with Yang Qing in silent meditation and before he knew it was already midday the next day.

Luo Meili and Su Jinjing had been alarmed when they saw him miss supper and even breakfast which prompted them to look around for him in case something happened only to find him peacefully meditating next to the lake he had been in.

"Because of how he usually is, I sometimes forget he is even a cultivator.." wistfully said Su Jinjing as she took in the visage of Yang Qing silently meditating.

"It's always surprising to see him like this.." added Luo Meili.

Yang Qing was usually goofy but when a case started or when he was cultivating he always seemed to transform into a completely different person for example presently Yang Qing emitted a transcendent air like that of a banished immortal as he sat there in silent meditation. The elements and everything around him seemed to gravitate towards him.

"Is that any way to talk about your boss.." said Yang Qing with a tone that was familiar yet mystical.

As he opened his eyes, Luo Meili and Su Jinjing so the reflection of the stars, the sun, the moon, the ocean, the land and the vegetation all revolving around each other in a delicate balance before it disappeared.

In that brief moment, they felt a vast ancient aura leak from Yang Qing before it disappeared.

"What time is it?" Yang Qing casually asked as he stretched his back overlooking the surprised looks on the duo's faces.

"Noon.." answered Luo Meili with a strange gaze.

"Noon?! Noon, Noon as in Noon Noon!!!!" Yang Qing frantically yelled destroying whatever immortal image he had.

"Yes, noon.."

"How many meals have I missed?" Yang Qing muttered as he started counting his fingers before it stopped on eight.

"Eight?! I'm afraid that's not right.." Yang Qing said as he stepped onto a mad dash to the kitchen.

"I'll be stepping out for a bit, in case administrator Mo Guang asks, tell him I've left to look into matters concerning the previous branch chief..."

Even though Yang Qing had long disappeared from the vicinity, his voice echoed in the area.

Chapter 605 Visiting the battleground

The instant he arrived at the kitchen like a man with a time-sensitive and dire mission with monumental implications, he immediately asked for all the meals he had missed.

The Chef as if in anticipation of Yang Qing's exact reaction walked out of the kitchen with a tray filled with all kinds of meals from snacks, to meat dishes, to vegetable dishes and soups.

"Feng Ya you know me too well.." Yang Qing eagerly said with saliva dripping from his mouth as he eyed the meals being placed on his table.

With no hesitation, he jumped on them like a beast that had been starved for months on end.

"Feng Ya, I am so glad you're here.." Yang Qing said as he leaned back in his seat with a satisfied smile tugging his lips.

"I'll see you for supper.." Yang Qing said as he left.

Since he wouldn't be back for lunch he made sure to bring some of the dishes Feng Ya had made.

He would rather skip cultivating than miss a meal especially if it was on the Order's tab. For some reason that single fact made the meals tastier and him hungrier for more.

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1100 kilometers away from the Deer Mountain Branch

"This should be the place.." Yang Qing grimly muttered as he looked at the landscape that was the picture of armageddon.

In front of him was a large stretch of land that was filled with chaotic energy of different elements and attributes colliding. The energy seemed to be alive. Yang Qing could sense the emotion contained in some of them. There was anger, wrath, firm determination, pure malevolence, desperation, honor, fear... each energy seemed to be a chronological description of the emotions of those who left them there.

Yang Qing couldn't help but sigh as he took in the sight before him. The Deer Mountain Range no matter which part of it you were always had that verdant life force but where he was things were different.

It was bleak yet chaotic. Different forms of energy were continuously clashing, the ground below was filled with the air of destruction.

The whole ground within 15 kilometers from where Yang Qing was had caved in. It looked like several dozen mountains had been repetitively smashed into the area with terrifying force and momentum, other areas looked like multiple volcanoes had exploded with extreme ferocity that not only burned and destroyed the ground but also shredded the mountain itself apart with the debris flying in every direction charring everything and anything in sight.

The air was hot to the point that one would feel like their lungs were burning, while the smell of blood permeated through every inch of the area.

Anyone who saw the area would instantly know a terrifying battle took place there as indeed it did.

The place Yang Qing stood with an air of solemnity surrounding him was the ground from which the obsidian serpents, the deacons of the Blue Soul Flame Crow Syndicate, the team from the Deer Mountain Kingdom, and lastly the team from the Deer Mountain Branch battled.

Yang Qing raised his hand as he felt the air around it. He could feel the desperation and the tenseness from that fight, it still had not left the area.

The area was south of both the Deer Mountain Kingdom and the Order's branch. After his analysis yesterday, Yang Qing decided to visit the battleground to see if he could glean anything that may complement or supplement his findings from yesterday's interaction.

There were a lot of unanswered questions surrounding the battle from how the Blue Soul Flame Crow Syndicate discovered the area in the first place.

If they had accomplices, who were they and what was it they were after?

What could be so valuable that they would risk coming this close to the branch of the Order?

He didn't know if being here would help him answer any of the questions he had, but he had to try.

Yang Qing closed his eyes and slowly walked through the area. An ethereal and gentle charm was released from his body as he walked. Some of the remnant energy from the attacks would gravitate towards him like some force was pulling them toward him. Yang Qing would stretch his hands with his eyes closed every time they did. He would parse his hands through them like he was passing his hands down a gentle flowing stream.

A green energy filled with vitality would be released from his hands every time he made contact with those energies.

"This energy, it's Hao Da's.." Yang Qing muttered as a blue light that looked like a meandering river moved to his palm.

Despite its gentle-looking exterior, that single strand of blue light would shred apart the body of a middle-stage core formation expert if they were unlucky enough to be caught by it.

It contained a terrifying sword force that was in the shape of a flooding tide.

Yang Qing was intimately familiar with Hao Da's sword intent. It contained the water element however it lacked any of the gentleness associated with the element but instead had its other characteristics such as a sense of boundlessness and relentlessness. A tide that never stopped recedes. It flows continuously smothering and drowning everyone and everything in its path. It had a denseness to it that suffocated even someone's soul.

Hao Da's sword intent was terrifying in that regard. Once released you would feel a sense of suffocation before even the attack fell, and once it did fall, it was a storm after a storm that never let up. His sword intent though wasn't the most destructive as far as sword intents went, it was one of the most versatile Yang Qing had ever seen.

It restrained, suppressed, oppressed, and finally devoured everything it set its sight on. With it Hao Da could fight multiple opponents without being at an extreme disadvantage, his intent was adaptable to different circumstances as it could tear apart not only linear attacks but it could also do things such as restrain and purify miasma by smothering it, and his sword intent's momentum affected even the soul of a cultivator.

Yang Qing had no doubt Hao Da's sword intent played a significant role in why the team were able to fight against the obsidian serpents and the two deacons from the Blue Soul Flame Crow Syndicate for as long as they did.

Chapter 606 Sole survivor

Yang Qing continued his walk slowly his eyes closed slowly sensing the powerful energies around him. He detected yet another powerful energy filled with the profundities of earth. It had the firmness and stubbornness of earth. The energy contained within it was just as masterful and deep as Hao Da's.

"This energy should belong to the Branch Chief. I heard he cultivated an earth-based cultivation art. These fluctuations seem to resemble the Sovereign warrior earth flow descent cultivation art.." muttered Yang Qing as a gold-red silk wisp of light gently drifted to his hand.

The light had the firm stability of the earth but other than that it contained a desolate air of destruction that was ancient.

This was something he had seen with Sovereign warrior earth flow descent cultivation users. They borrowed the force of the earth with every movement and from it they also pulled out an ancient warrior's spirits.

The art itself was perfect in every way except it had one risk, the user ran a risk of having his or her body possessed by the ancient spirit if they were not careful. Every user needed to have a powerful sense of self and willpower to be able to cultivate the art.

They would continuously cultivate the art to achieve resonance with the ancient spirit they had drawn. The spirit that was drawn was unique to each user. It could be a humanoid, a spirit beast, or a spiritual plant. What came out was entirely dependent on the qualities of the user.

With a spirit connected to the earth, they would have the ability to draw the force of the earth and they would also gain some unique abilities from those spirits. The deeper the resonance they had with the spirit, the more power they could exert from those abilities.

Yang Qing could detect a disintegrating power coming from the wisp in his hand, in addition, there was something animal-like about it. He could feel a claw strike behind the disintegrating power.

Yang Qing continued with his walk when the gold-red wisp disappeared from his hand. He continued sensing the qualities of the different energies around him as he walked. He didn't dare use his spiritual sense in this place for the risk of harming his soul. He used his yin-yang peerless jade physique as the conduit for his analysis.

Slowly by slowly, he made it deeper and deeper into the battleground with the energies becoming more powerful, violent, and chaotic.

Glowing Dao glyph markings appeared on his body which formed a protective green-like barrier around his body.

When he went further in he could see a black-purple smoke still eating away at the ground. Yang Qing crouched to one of the crevices producing it and with his hand that was releasing an ephemeral green light, he reached out his hand to the smoke.

The smoke seemed alive as it trembled with an almost lifelike sensation of fear. A radiant ethereal light was immediately released from Yang Qing's hands which covered a portion of the black-purple smoke.

"This should be from the obsidian serpent couple...mmmh, based on the noble aura coming from it, this should be from the male serpent.." Yang Qing muttered to himself as he sensed the intrinsic qualities within the smoke.

He didn't linger too long on that crevice as he moved to another and then another not staying too long in one crevice. Every crevice he went to was specifically releasing the purple-black smoke.

It looked like he was looking for something in particular. He only stopped when he reached a particular stump of a tree that was slowly melting away as it released the purple-black smoke.

As he did before, Yang Qing released an ethereal golden light that encapsulated the purple-black smoke. Though the smoke reacted with a frantic tremble like the other purple-black smoke he had come across this seemed weaker and less alive in some way.

"This should be from the female serpent. Now only the signature of their child is left, hopefully, some traces of it still remain.." muttered Yang Qing before his gaze lingered on the stump of the spring crystal larch tree.

Spring crystal larch trees were usually vibrant, resplendent, and full of life so infectious they transformed those around them by filling them with vibrancy and vigor. The tree looked like a polished gem that contained sun rays within it. One look at them and you would feel refreshed.

Those with the means to sustain them liked to keep them around because of their renewing and refreshing nature and were beautiful to look at. The fact that they only grew in places with at least a high-grade spirit vein meant that not most could afford to keep them.

The spring crystal larch before Yang Qing was but a weathered husk of its former self. It lacked the life and vibrancy common with its kind and all it had was a bleak desolate look and air, however, within it, Yang Qing sensed a stubbornness to hold on.

"You did well to hang on.." Yang Qing said as he placed his hands on it.

"As the only surviving resident of this place maybe you can help me with something, it won't be for free of course.." he added.

Even though he didn't use his spiritual sense, Yang Qing could detect that within that area of utter destruction, that almost withering stump was the only living thing in the area.

He didn't know whether it was because of the vitality dao he cultivated or his yin yang peerless jade physique or both, but he has always been sensitive to life. He never needed his spiritual sense to detect even the slightest signs of it. Conversely, he was also just as sensitive to the aura of death.

A faint weak light flashed for a brief second before it disappeared.

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Whether they were completely sentient or not, no matter the species be it animal, plant, or even the earth beneath his feet, he could always sense their thoughts and emotions more so when he triggered the dao glyph markings of his physique which he sensed seemed to have grown stronger.

Yang Qing stretched his index finger over the stump and a green drop filled with a myriad of lights immediately formed at the tip of it containing an aura of life capable of supporting a whole ecosystem.

Spring of resplendence

The moment the drop made contact with the stump, the aura of vitality contained within the drop immediately burst forth within the body of the crystal spring larch, and all the damage and miasma and other energies eroding its body were all purged in an instant.

The overflowing life energy within the drop then spread to every part of the stump, restoring and revitalizing it with a speed too fast for the eye to catch. The withering root was immediately restored and strengthened even further.

Massive web cracks appeared within the ground as the renewed root ballooned in size and started burrowing in all directions.

The life aura that was burning lowly like a candle wick about to go out was instantly renewed and now burned like the flaming sun.

The stump that was barely hanging on started shedding off as a more radiant crystal formed from within with vivacious light swimming within it.

Inch by inch the crystal reformed as it moved upwards while releasing air that carried the promise of life and renewal. It felt like the earth was breathing again after a period of slumber and bleak darkness.

Within seconds the stump had transformed into a mature fully formed tree filled with lush leaves that released the scented fresh air of the vibrancy of spring while the crystal that formed its body released a warm gentle glow that welcomed all into its embrace filling them with liveliness and a sense of excitement and jubilation to welcome the season of spring.

The swimming lights within its crystal body that seemed to dance with playful joy, the earthy refreshing scent of the lush emerald leaves, and the gentle rustling of the leaves created an intoxicating atmosphere of relaxation and invigorating beauty of nature's essence.

Yang Qing couldn't help but sigh at the scene before him. He always felt a sense of awe and humility in such scenes. Whether it was his peerless jade physique or the crystal spring larch all these were gifts bestowed upon them by nature itself. Cultivators couldn't replicate it no matter how powerful they seemed.

Every time Yang Qing saw its essence in action, he couldn't help but be awed by it. Him getting the yin yang peerless jade physique was one of the greatest things to happen to him. Even cultivating the myriad world universal resonant light cultivation world cultivation art was an unexpected fortune for him. It helped him see and experience a world he would have never imagined.

The leaves of the crystal spring larch rustled with excitement almost as if to thank Yang Qing.

Yang Qing gently placed his hands on its back with a smile as he sensed the jubilant emotions within.

After a few seconds, he took his hands off the bark as he delved deeper into the area.

"I'll need your help in a bit.." Yang Qing said as he walked in with his eyes closed to which the crystal spring larch released colorful lights in response.

Chapter 606 Sole survivor

Yang Qing continued his walk slowly his eyes closed slowly sensing the powerful energies around him. He detected yet another powerful energy filled with the profundities of earth. It had the firmness and stubbornness of earth. The energy contained within it was just as masterful and deep as Hao Da's.

"This energy should belong to the Branch Chief. I heard he cultivated an earth-based cultivation art. These fluctuations seem to resemble the Sovereign warrior earth flow descent cultivation art.." muttered Yang Qing as a gold-red silk wisp of light gently drifted to his hand.

The light had the firm stability of the earth but other than that it contained a desolate air of destruction that was ancient.

This was something he had seen with Sovereign warrior earth flow descent cultivation users. They borrowed the force of the earth with every movement and from it they also pulled out an ancient warrior's spirits.

The art itself was perfect in every way except it had one risk, the user ran a risk of having his or her body possessed by the ancient spirit if they were not careful. Every user needed to have a powerful sense of self and willpower to be able to cultivate the art.

They would continuously cultivate the art to achieve resonance with the ancient spirit they had drawn. The spirit that was drawn was unique to each user. It could be a humanoid, a spirit beast, or a spiritual plant. What came out was entirely dependent on the qualities of the user.

With a spirit connected to the earth, they would have the ability to draw the force of the earth and they would also gain some unique abilities from those spirits. The deeper the resonance they had with the spirit, the more power they could exert from those abilities.

Yang Qing could detect a disintegrating power coming from the wisp in his hand, in addition, there was something animal-like about it. He could feel a claw strike behind the disintegrating power.

Yang Qing continued with his walk when the gold-red wisp disappeared from his hand. He continued sensing the qualities of the different energies around him as he walked. He didn't dare use his spiritual sense in this place for the risk of harming his soul. He used his yin-yang peerless jade physique as the conduit for his analysis.

Slowly by slowly, he made it deeper and deeper into the battleground with the energies becoming more powerful, violent, and chaotic.

Glowing Dao glyph markings appeared on his body which formed a protective green-like barrier around his body.

When he went further in he could see a black-purple smoke still eating away at the ground. Yang Qing crouched to one of the crevices producing it and with his hand that was releasing an ephemeral green light, he reached out his hand to the smoke.

The smoke seemed alive as it trembled with an almost lifelike sensation of fear. A radiant ethereal light was immediately released from Yang Qing's hands which covered a portion of the black-purple smoke.

"This should be from the obsidian serpent couple...mmmh, based on the noble aura coming from it, this should be from the male serpent.." Yang Qing muttered to himself as he sensed the intrinsic qualities within the smoke.

He didn't linger too long on that crevice as he moved to another and then another not staying too long in one crevice. Every crevice he went to was specifically releasing the purple-black smoke.

It looked like he was looking for something in particular. He only stopped when he reached a particular stump of a tree that was slowly melting away as it released the purple-black smoke.

As he did before, Yang Qing released an ethereal golden light that encapsulated the purple-black smoke. Though the smoke reacted with a frantic tremble like the other purple-black smoke he had come across this seemed weaker and less alive in some way.

"This should be from the female serpent. Now only the signature of their child is left, hopefully, some traces of it still remain.." muttered Yang Qing before his gaze lingered on the stump of the spring crystal larch tree.

Spring crystal larch trees were usually vibrant, resplendent, and full of life so infectious they transformed those around them by filling them with vibrancy and vigor. The tree looked like a polished gem that contained sun rays within it. One look at them and you would feel refreshed.

Those with the means to sustain them liked to keep them around because of their renewing and refreshing nature and were beautiful to look at. The fact that they only grew in places with at least a high-grade spirit vein meant that not most could afford to keep them.

The spring crystal larch before Yang Qing was but a weathered husk of its former self. It lacked the life and vibrancy common with its kind and all it had was a bleak desolate look and air, however, within it, Yang Qing sensed a stubbornness to hold on.

"You did well to hang on.." Yang Qing said as he placed his hands on it.

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Yang Qing stretched his index finger over the stump and a green drop filled with a myriad of lights immediately formed at the tip of it containing an aura of life capable of supporting a whole ecosystem.

Spring of resplendence

The moment the drop made contact with the stump, the aura of vitality contained within the drop immediately burst forth within the body of the crystal spring larch, and all the damage and miasma and other energies eroding its body were all purged in an instant.

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Chapter 609 Fortune that brings misfortune

"I am sorry Spring.." said Yang Qing as he looked at the destruction around him that was still ongoing.

Though it would take considerable time, Yang Qing could cleanse the area of the violent energies wreaking havoc on each other and their surroundings, but with the case still fresh he couldn't do it.

Considering the state it was currently in, the special inquisitors were likely not done with the location. Yang Qing couldn't tamper with that.

"While I can't restore this place to what it once was at the moment, maybe you could do it.." Yang Qing said as he transmitted something via the resonant chain.

"This art is called the golden earth luminescence resurgence art. You may not understand it at the moment but just follow the pattern that I am showing and slowly by slowly you'll gain familiarity with it.."

Yang Qing created a pseudo-image of himself in the consciousness of the crystal spring larch which he used to circulate the art he had just transmitted.

The movements were slow, a deliberate move from Yang Qing. Along with the movement Yang Qing's pseudo-image muttered an incantation that went along with his circulations.

"Since I don't know when I will be back here again after my tenure as branch chief is over, I might as well leave the whole thing here.

Launching the soul lake memory lock seal again in just a day. I didn't think I'd work this hard..." muttered Yang Qing with a tired sigh as his pupils turned into two pristine white full moons accompanied by a transformation of his hair that turned white.

Yang Qing's expression turned solemn as he was basically launching two intricately sensitive arts at the same time when just one required extreme concentration on his part.

Using the resonant chain as a conduit, he created a seal within the consciousness of the crystal spring larch.

Various lights interweaved together around the pseudo figure of Yang Qing eventually transforming it into a golden tree that looked like it had been sculpted from the flames of the sun while the ground below it transformed into a radiant earth that surged like the waves of the ocean.

A scroll appeared in front of the tree and swallowed the tree and surging earth.

"You can access it with a thought, spring. I will come by over the next few days to help you gain a little bit of understanding in it and then you can continue by yourself.." Yang Qing said as he canceled both the soul lake memory lock seal and the myriad thoughts resonant chain art.

Beads of sweat could be seen forming on his forehead after he had canceled both arts. He had not sustained the arts for long but he felt like he had done a mental taxing activity for months on end without stopping.

Luckily the expenditure this time was not as high on his soul as it had been the previous day. After a few seconds, the exhaustion started leaving Yang Qing's body with his soul constantly renewing itself.

"Spring, I'll come by tomorrow. Thank you for everything.." Yang Qing said as he patted the crystal spring larch on his way out.

The cultivation art he had just shared with it was one of the few good cultivation arts he had managed to find on his numerous visits to the cultivation market.

At the time he had bought a brown marble stone that had a pleasant smell which he thought would improve the taste of his soup if he boiled the soup together with the marble stone.

He had used his spiritual sense to see if there was anything special with the marble stone. He was half hoping for there to be a legendary tantalizing ingredient stored within but sadly other than the gentle aromatic scent it released there was nothing special with the marble.

After haggling he eventually managed to get the stone for 15 middle-grade spirit stones. He tried fiddling around with it after buying it, unreconciled that there was nothing special with it, but after a dozen failures, he decided to use it as a renewable condiment for his soup.

The taste was better than he expected and that 15 middle-grade spirit stones looked like a great steal. It was only later when he was boiling meat from a pumice-scaled crocodile that he accidentally unlocked something within the marble.

Pumice-scaled crocodiles were notorious for their ability to withstand high temperatures thanks to their pumice coating. Other than their outward hardness, they had the most tender flesh that just a wiggle of the tongue was enough to break them apart.

Yang Qing like he always did, used his yang flames to boil the pumice off the crocodile meat he had on hand while the marble was in there. His flames immediately got swallowed by the marble which melted away revealing a golden wood that had the rich smell of earth with inscrutable markings on it that seemed to resonate with Yang Qing's yang flames.

Without much investigation on his part since his flames seemed to work like a key, he discovered a low tier blue grade cultivation art within that wood, and that art was none other than the golden earth luminescence resurgent cultivation art.

It was a meditation art that synchronized the user's body with the earth and the sun using the user as the midpoint between the two. Over time it strengthened the user's body and mind by making their souls burn like the sun's flames and their bodies were as robust as the earth.

The user would gain passive immunity to poisons and miasma, especially yin-related poisons and miasma. That immunity even extended to corpse miasma.

It was a great and versatile technique to have except it was a slow-burn cultivation art that required the user to be still for long periods for them to have any harvest. During the day one absorbed the rays of the sun and during the night one absorbed the essence of the earth making one complete cycle.

It required complete stillness which was perfect for ascetics and now the crystal spring larch. The requirements of the technique coupled with its already natural ability to draw energy from the stars including the sun made the art perfect for it even if it was built with human cultivators in mind. It solely being a meditation art eliminated those racial hurdles.

Yang Qing had a feeling that the crystal spring larch would have unexpected changes thanks to the art. As he was leaving he couldn't help but sigh when his thoughts fell on the meditation art. He always had a bittersweet association with it.

On one hand, he managed to get a low-tier blue-grade cultivation art for cheap but on the other hand, he lost the perfect renewable condiment. The marble couldn't restore itself and he didn't have a clue on the materials or technique involved in creating it.

He wouldn't dare admit this out loud even among friends and family for fear of receiving a beating but deep down he knew he would rather have the marble than the blue-grade meditation art. His peerless physique already gave him immunity to all kinds of poisons across a wider range than even the art itself. He didn't need it.

But when it came to the marble, it gave him something he didn't know he needed until he had it. His homemade soup experienced leaps in flavor thanks to the marble and now he couldn't savor that taste. He barely even makes soup anymore because he can't stand the grief it brings.

"Hopefully something good comes out of the sacrifice.." Yang Qing wistfully thought as he made his way to his final stop of the day which was the location of the parasitic purple flower spore sycamore.

Chapter 610 Are you trying to rob me?

Yang Qing had two goals for visiting the parasitic purple flower spore sycamore tree; one he hoped to harvest some of its fruits which was a great wine ingredient and the other was no one knew the lay of the land better than the locals.

The parasitic purple flower spore sycamore tree was among the list of perilous zones that they had shared with the Deer Mountain Kingdom.

If compared to the rest, it was the least perilous zone in the area. Other than its hypnotizing and parasitizing effects, it wasn't considered to be a dangerous being considering most of its victims were usually corpses.

The reason Yang Qing thought it would be a good source of information was because of its nature. The main body was weak and mostly subdued its opponents through befuddlement, paralyzing, and illusory techniques.

If one was immune to its means and made it to the main body they could easily destroy it without the slightest of resistance.

To ensure its safety other than the mind-based attacks, it was great at gathering information around its immediate surroundings and even further. It releases millions of spores which when spread about act as sensory carriers for the main body along with the parasitizing effect that they have.

The spores are unassuming and can seamlessly meld with any surroundings they are deposited under making them excellent collectors and carriers of information.

Yang Qing hoped to 'buy' some of the information it had and with what he had to trade he was sure it would even sell out its closest kin with no hesitation for the chance to acquire.

Yang Qing chuckled in glee as he rubbed his hands on a handful of green leaves that had a gentle cloak of green flames surrounding them.

The flaming leaves in his hands were his guarantee. With them in hand, he could ask the parasitic purple flower spore sycamore tree to give up three-quarters of its branches, leaves, flowers, and fruits in exchange for the leaves and it would gladly do so feeling it had gotten the better of the deal.

Yang Qing with an anticipatory glee on his face quickly made his way to its territory.

It was quite a fair distance from the battleground so it took him fifteen minutes of flying at full speed before he reached its territory.

Yang Qing halted when he was at the periphery of its territory. Before him was a picturesque scene of verdant trees, lush vegetation, crystal clear stream, birds and insects moving about the colorful flowers collecting nectar while an innocent-looking doe bent down to take a drink from the stream so pure and clean it would incite thirst from anyone no matter how perched you were.

However, all this was nothing but an illusion created by the parasitic purple flower spore sycamore tree.

The true scene was completely different. It was rocky with no vegetation in sight and the only thing in place was a cavern that had been hollowed out at the top where a pink mystical crown could be seen.

"Its illusory abilities are quite something.." muttered Yang Qing as he saw the scene around him change from the picture of tranquility it was before to a picture of terrifying havoc. Before him stood a tiger that was the size of a mountain radiating a ferocious aura surrounded by the baleful aura of one that had slaughtered millions.

It was so palpable that Yang Qing could smell the stench of blood being released from its mouth as it let out an earth-shattering roar.

Of course, it was nothing but an illusion but it was capable of fooling the senses. Anybody below the palace realm would likely fall victim to it without a struggle or even knowing that they had fallen victim to an illusion.

"Sorry to intrude on your territory. I haven't come with ill intentions. I was hoping we could have a chat. My name is Yang Qing.." said Yang Qing as he walked inside the cavern ignoring the massive tiger that was jumping at him that puffed into smoke once it reached his body.

Yang Qing couldn't help but sigh when he saw the breathtaking view that was inside the cavern. It was in stark contrast to the dry desolation that was outside.

Inside the cavern was a small pond that was crystal black. It made one feel like they were staring at the night sky that had just a little bit of moon radiance shine on it and the center of that lake was a 15-meter tree that was the highlight of the whole cavern.

The tree had pink leaves and purple flowers that let out a radiant ethereal and charming luster. The lighting and beauty of its leaves and flowers reflecting against the dark back made it seem like within the cavern was a night festival with celebratory colorful lanterns lit all around.

The flowers released white spores that twinkled like the stars in the sky. The whole tree was a work of magnificent beauty surrounded by enchanting floral scents and a gentle ambiance that melded perfectly with the silence of the cavern.

One look at it and Yang Qing felt the urge to drink wine as he indulged his nostalgic memories.

Yang Qing took a step forward and the leaves and flowers fluttered with a sense of alarm which prompted Yang Qing to stop.

"Like I said I haven't come with ill intentions I have just come here to talk.." Yang Qing gently said as his gaze lit up when it fell on the more than a dozen crystalline red fruits with stripes of purple and white that were growing on the tree before.

"All ripe!!!" thought Yang Qing with unconcealed excitement.

The tree seemed to have sensed something from Yang Qing's gaze as its branches and leaves started trembling immediately which prompted Yang Qing to smile in embarrassment.

"I am willing to trade this.." Yang Qing said as he took out a handful of leaves surrounded by a green flame.

The purple flowers instantly burst open as the millions of spores exploded out of them. The ink-black pond rippled from the radiant energy being released by every part of the tree that made even the cavern tremble.

A small smile tugged on Yang Qing's lips when he saw the reaction.

"Give it to me..." an alluring charming voice sounded immediately after.

One of the fruits rippled and immediately transformed into a lady who was of similar age to Yang Qing. She looked to be in her twenties and had pink hair that reached to her waist, a purple floral dress, deep black eyes, and an enchanting beauty capable of capturing every soul that set eyes on her.

The lady instantly launched herself toward Yang Qing with her fervent gaze locked on the green flaming leaves in his hands.

Just when she was inches away from Yang Qing she felt a force lock her in place as a calm empyrean voice instantly quelled the frantic emotions within her.

"Are you trying to rob me?"