

Daily life 901

Chapter 901 Terms Of The Deal (6)

"The Golden Bamboo Pavilion will not interfere. Shao Ren will be informed of the matter after his breakthrough.." said Lin Guiren, his expression regaining a sense of calm.

Upon getting the confirmation, Wu Mingli nodded, cupping his fists in gratitude.

"Thank you pavilion master for your accommodation.." Wu Mingli said with a tone that was neither too servile, nor overbearing.

He may have a vendetta against Shao Ren but he still had to show a modicum of respect toward Lin Guiren, he was, after all, a domain expert. The world still deferred to the strong, otherwise, why would he have asked for a guarantee from the Jade Leaf Academy?

Without their backing, even if he had the achievements he had today, he would have had to employ other means to get his vengeance.

With his affair against Shao Ren already settled, Wu Mingli turned his attention toward Duan Hu, who though had a taciturn expression from years of experience of masking his true thoughts, was inwardly panicking.

"As for you, Emperor Duan Hu, For the respect my father once held for the Red Maple Empire, in honor of his feelings for it, I will give you two choices.." Wu Mingli coldly said.

"The first option is similar to Shao Ren's, which is a fight to the death in three years, or the second option, I forego the duel and in exchange you right all the wrongs born from the mess you created by behaving like my father did, and punish the wrongdoers and help the oppressed.

Give justice to all oppressed within your empire, like Lin Fei was. Address every grievance be it a recent incident or something over a thousand years ago. For as long as the perpetrator is within your territory, they need to be punished for it.

You may have turned a blind eye to everything that happened, but I am sure as the emperor, you most of all are well informed of every single one of those misdeeds.

As long as you swear here on the heavenly dao that you will right all those wrongs, and give reprieve to those harmed by your inactions, then whatever grievances I have against you can be considered settled..."

"Is the second option a real option?"

Duan Hu's expression visibly showed the disbelief he was in. He would never have predicted Wu Mingli's second option would be that. Even replaying it over his head, a huge part of him felt that the young quasi-palace stage expert had mentioned it in jest just to torment him, but the austere look he had on, as he said it, made the previous emperor think otherwise.

"It is real, Emperor Duan Hu.." Wu Mingli said, especially enunciating the 'Emperor' part.

"It's about time you acted like a true emperor to your people for all the times you did not or if you feel the burden is too much to bear you can always choose the first option.

Personally, on a selfish side, I hope you choose the first option, but this is not for me.." Wu Mingli said with a sigh, as his gaze fell on his mother briefly.

She might not say anything, or show it, but he knew she was deathly worried about today's events and the repercussions it may have on him. She only had him, and as for him, he had her, his master, his two senior brothers, and one senior sister. If anything were to happen to him, she would truly be alone, and he had no doubt she would sooner join him and his father than spend the rest of her life alone.

He had to avenge his father, that was non-negotiable, but he also had to be considerate of his mother. That was in part the reason he made a concession when it came to the previous emperor, Duan Hu, by offering him a second option.

The second option was the middle ground he had come up with as a way to honor both his father and mother. Forcing the Emperor's hand to give justice to the oppressed was his way of honoring his father's spirit of service and protection of the weak, and when it came to his mother if the Emperor chose the

second option, then his mother would not have to worry about him fighting a third stage palace realm expert.

Even though he wanted to end the Emperor's life himself, like he did the commander, the second option was a compromise he could leave with. It was only when it came to Shao Ren that he was unequivocal in his choice. Shao Ren had to die, and by his hands at that.

It took a few seconds for Duan Hu to compose himself, and immediately after he did, he already had the answer to the option he would pick. He had already picked that option even long before Wu Mingli asked him to do so.

Just as he was about to give his response, someone else beat him to it.

"He chooses the second option.." a gentle voice sounded, which though gentle sounding, had a firmness that served as a warning to Duan Hu.

"Why?" Duan Hu asked in confusion, his question directed to the gentle-looking Deng Wei.

"You were about to choose the first option, weren't you?" Deng Wei softly asked, adopting the demeanor of a parent questioning a child, a question they already knew the answer to.

Though Duan Hu didn't answer, his body language, more or less confirmed Deng Wei's guess was right on the mark.

Wu Mingli smirked slightly. He wasn't too surprised that was the option Duan Hu would go for. If he picked the second option, that was no different than becoming an enemy of all the subsidiaries of the Golden Bamboo Pavilion.

Almost every single one of those subsidiaries had bloodied their hands with the citizens of the Red Maple Empire at one point or the other. Very few were not marred with the stain.

If Duan Hu chose the second option, he would have to punish all those organizations, which would in return leave the Red Maple Empire at loggerheads with the Golden Bamboo Pavilion. While they might

not necessarily care too much about their subsidiaries, Duan Hu punishing three-quarters of them would likely not sit too well with them.

While strength was king, face was its mistress. Some people sought greater strength all to gain face, and in certain spaces, strength equates face and vice versa, which was why most powerful organizations went to great lengths to preserve theirs, and he felt that was likely true for the Golden Bamboo Pavilion.

But why had he given Duan Hu that choice despite knowing full well he was likely to refuse it because of its implications attached to it? The reason for that was sentiment. It was something his mother had told him one day when he was having a fit and blaming his father for acting selfishly.

Deep down he knew that his words and thoughts were wrong, but the pits of grief had long robbed him of sanity and replaced it with bitterness, anger, and resentment at everything and everyone.

It was in one of those fits, that his mother told him something he would never forget. When tyranny becomes law, then rebellion becomes duty. While his father's actions may have seemed selfish on the surface, but in its truest essence, it was a reflection of his convictions. Duty had always been a part of who he was and in some sense, it mattered more to him than his life.

Wu Mingli had this childish hope that maybe that spirit had been inherited. The second option was born out of that desire. He hoped maybe if it came down to it, maybe Duan Hu would choose duty instead of avoidance.

Chapter 902 Terms of the deal (7)

But he was wrong, though he expected it. Deng Wei speaking up, now that was a surprise. Wu Mingli didn't know of him, other than what he could infer from the little observations he had made, and one of those observations was that he was a powerful figure, and probably as powerful as his master.

He felt no cultivation base whatsoever from him, and it was the same with Lin Guiren, his wife, or the Imperial Household Manager, the list was long. About the only people whose realms he could feel were Duan Hu's which felt slightly powerful, the other members with complaints whose strengths he could accurately grasp as he was stronger than them, and then there was Yao De's whose presence was slightly weaker than Hao De's. Of all the palace realm experts present, he had the weakest presence, while Lin Duyi and Gong Jie had the same amplitude when it came to the pressure he felt from them, but the highest pressure he felt came from Yang Qing, which he wasn't completely sure was either a result of his cultivation base being that deep and high, or it was a phenomenon born out of some artifact in the courtroom.

But whether it was Lin Guiren or the rest, he couldn't feel anything from them, and that was the same feeling he got from his master, who was a domain-level expert. Drawing the same sensation, he could only assume he was a domain expert, and from the introductions that happened earlier, he was suspected to be one of the founders of the Red Maple Empire. Wu Mingli despite being a resident of the Empire, for all those years, had never heard of a founder with his name, he only knew of the six families, but seeing the behaviors of Duan Hu and Gong Jie, he was inclined to believe that he could very well be one of the founders.

He felt slightly bitter inside as a thought crossed his mind as his gaze fell on the young founder. With his strength, had he been around, then his father's fate could have been avoided. Those subsidiaries would not have behaved as they did with someone like him around. However, he quickly pushed those thoughts to the side. What had happened, had happened, and it could not be reversed, things could only move forward.

"I will ensure he fulfills your demand. I can swear on the heavenly dao, if you want," Deng Wei said with a soft smile.

Wu Mingli slightly stunned by the remark, took a few seconds before he gained clarity.

"No, No, there is no need for that senior. Your word is more than enough.." Wu Mingli hurriedly said.

"Thank you for your trust.."

"Thank you for your accommodation, senior.." Wu Mingli said as he cupped his fist.

"With all parties in agreement, as the mediator and officiator, I will ratify the agreement. In three years Wu Mingli and Shao Ren shall have a life-and-death duel to settle a blood debt owed to the former for the death of his father.

The Order shall provide the time and place.

The second arrangement, Duan Hu, with your agreement to the terms set by Wu Mingli, We shall in the capacity as the overseer of this agreement ensure that you uphold your end. Someone from the Yellow plains county will be in charge of the oversight.

They will review all cases with you, but as to what punishments or assistance you may give based on those cases, it will be up to your discretion to decide on how to deal with it.

We will also be sharing the findings of those investigations and judgments thereof, with Wu Mingli..

Are all parties in agreement with the terms?" asked Yang Qing as his gaze fell on Wu Mingli, his mom, Duan Hu, Deng Wei, and finally the team from the Golden Bamboo Pavilion, with his sight specifically focused on Lin Guiren.

"We agree.." they all unanimously answered.

"Good.." Yang Qing said as he formed a seal with his hands which triggered a large array at the center of the sky-like roof. A golden feather filled with countless ancient runes was produced from that array.

Almost all domain experts present, except for Lei Weiyuan and Hou Dehui, had solemn looks on their faces when that feather appeared. Though peaceful looking, the feather radiated with a transcendent power that made the hearts of those domain experts tremble.

Yang Qing grabbed the feather and used it as quill as he wrote something on an ancient-looking parchment. Golden lights flooded the parchment every time he wrote, and by the time he was done, the parchment radiated with an ethereal golden light, and power that made it feel like it was a heavenly edict.

He then grabbed his medallion, and a gold eagle spirit instantly appeared from it and flew into the scroll prompting it to transform into three golden scrolls, one of those scrolls flew over to Duan Hu, the other to Wu Mingli, while the last one transformed into a golden shooting star and phased through the ceiling of the courtroom, disappearing off into parts unknown.

Lin Guiren's eyes narrowed as a terrifying ink of suspicion crossed his mind. Cai Hong and the Imperial Household Manager both had the same look on their faces as they looked in the direction the gold light had disappeared.

"With that, all the agreement among all parties can be considered delivered.." Yang Qing paused briefly as turned his head toward Lin Guiren.

"Do not worry, the notice will not interfere with his seclusion or the tribulation in any way. He will not know it is even there until it is right for him to do so, " said Yang Qing.

"With that, the agreement among the three parties can be considered officially reached and ratified. The enforcement of said agreement now falls on us, which will adhere to as per the terms of the agreement.

Wu Mingli, Madam Zhao Shan, You are free to leave, and thank you for your time and cooperation.." Yang Qing gently said as he cupped his fist.

"Thank you.." Wu Mingli and his mother uniformly said as they both returned the gesture before Xia Ting led them out of the courtroom.

Chapter 903 Work of two figures

As Wu Mingli and his mother left the courtroom Lin Guiren and his wife still had grim expressions. The last scroll that flew toward Shao Ren wasn't just the Order handing out a notification, it had much graver implications.

The Golden Bamboo Pavilion had thousands upon thousands of subsidiaries spread throughout the continent. They had various roles one of which was the spread of the pavilion's influence, with the business they conducted only serving as a tool to further that end.

The subsidiary members had the same role as the outer sect disciples of a sect. They were new blood injected into the pavilion, the same way outer sect disciples of a sect operated, and just like sects, if one of those subsidiaries showed some promise, then their station would be elevated.

They would be brought into the fold and given either the post of an executive or become the branch manager of some of their key branches around the continent. If they continued to improve, they would be made into elders, whose authority across the pavilion was just below that of the founders.

The minimum qualification for an elder was the ninth stage of the palace realm. Every elder at the very least was a late-stage palace realm expert.

The elders were in charge of recruiting and evaluating subsidiary candidates, and it was from within that base that they would try to search for those with the talent to rise up into executives.

The subsidiary phase served as a test for those candidates similar to how sects conducted their tests. A bunch of cultivators would be recruited as outer sect disciples and then they would be given support that was just enough to help them settle and build their foundations and then they would be left to fend for themselves, compete against each other, grow their strength, and at the end there would be a test to see who among them had grown enough to warrant a promotion to the next stage, the inner disciple courts.

The subsidiaries were the same. The Golden Bamboo Pavilion just lent them their name and a few start-up resources, but after that, they were hands-off. Whatever trajectory those subsidiaries followed, was up to them. Whether they thrived, stagnated, got destroyed, or got swallowed, it was up to them, the Golden Bamboo Pavilion would pay them little heed. It would not even avenge them, not unless they got destroyed by an enemy of the Pavilion. In that instance, the pavilion would be forced to act, but anything but that, and they would not act.

The subsidiaries were left to themselves in the wild. The only way to leave the wild and gain the attention of the pavilion was if one of them reached the quasi-palace stage. They were a merchant company, yes, and any true merchant, the one thing the one universal constant all merchants had was they hated making a loss. Whatever they could do to prevent it, they would do it, and in a cultivation world, there was only one sure way of ensuring you would not incur losses and that was to be strong.

Without sufficient strength, no matter how shrewd you were, you would always suffer a loss. If you didn't have the strength to hold onto what you had, others would always take from you. That fact was why the Golden Bamboo Pavilion graded strength above anything else. Yes, they did offer rewards for other achievements that were outside strength, but those rewards were not true acknowledgment from them.

True acknowledgment would only come if one of them reached the quasi-palace stage. It was only then that they would be considered true members of the pavilion, and the pavilion would do its utmost to nurture them, which involved letting them cultivate in their core grounds and even granting them access to precious cultivation resources.

Shao Ren having already garnered enough accumulations and insights to break through to the palace realm, was in one of those precious cultivation grounds. With one of the founders being an accomplished gold-grade formation master, it went without saying that all their key areas were covered in gold-

grade arrays, including the area where Shao Ren was, presently.

One of those arrays was one of obfuscation, and it could shield the area even from the awareness of a soul formation expert, but Yang Qing's actions and words, meant that the scroll he just sent was capable of pinpointing Shao Ren's exact location irrespective of distance, and not only that, the scroll could also breach whatever protective measures they had there, with the same ease. Those gold-grade formations might as well not exist.

That level of exposure where the Order could breach their defenses with ease, irrespective of distance, sent alarm bells in Lin Guiren's heart. If they could penetrate their defenses that easily, how easy would it be for the Order to attack them?

Yang Qing couldn't help but gleefully celebrate inwardly. Lin Guiren and the rest, as seasoned old monsters, were experts at masking their emotions, but it didn't take a genius to guess that his earlier display had left them unnerved. Openly seeing someone breach your defenses was bound to leave someone agitated, especially if said someone was confident in those measures.

Yang Qing gleefully took it all in. He has always been a vindictive and petty person. The debts he owed, he could easily forget them, but the debts he was owed, no matter how small, he would always remember them and record them in his heart.

As he was busy gloating at their misfortunes, he couldn't help but release a heartfelt sigh as he took in the wholesome sight of the courtroom.

What he did wasn't something that could be easily replicated. He had merely been a bystander during the whole thing. Two figures had been the ones running the show, and those figures were two of the most powerful treasures the Order had at its disposal, to the extent that both those treasures stood out even against saint-grade treasures.

Without them, sending the scroll as he did would have been impossible.

Chapter 904 Help from an old friend

One of those treasures was the very courtroom they stood in, or to be specific, the entirety of the black medallion tower. The entire tower was a single entity, and either because it was built from a unique treasure such as the mimicry chaos sky metal, and countless other ascendant grade and saint grade treasures mixed in, but the tower had a sentient spirit, and it was the true protector of the judges, inquisitors and other workers that inhabited.

Why was Yang Qing always adamant about not leaving the headquarters, even when seduced by irresistible offers? It wasn't that he was a strong-willed person that could effortlessly resist temptations. He wasn't, in fact, he was self-aware that he was one of the most weak-willed people in the Order, easily susceptible to bribes. Soft life Yang Qing and Always scheming Yang Qing would not have been born if he was.

Self-preservation was the thing that kept him from succumbing to the Order's 'vicious' attempts, and the source of that self-preservation was the building they were currently in. It was his safe haven, and yes, the countless arrays and the powerful cultivators that roamed its halls contributed to that safety, but his greatest confidence was the building itself and the spirit entity it birthed.

"How strong is that entity?" Yang Qing once curiously asked as his curiosity for the esoteric and the mystic got tickled.

The person he asked told him this, that spirit, in the time it took someone to finish a cup of tea, had sufficient strength to raze ten rank-one organizations, to the ground, destroying everyone and anything. That was the day Yang Qing developed a deep love and veneration for the building and vowed to never leave it.

Of course, behemoths like the Jade Leaf Academy or the Thousand battle hall pavilion were not included in the ten, but rank one organizations, were rank one organizations for a reason, and destroying ten in such a short amount of time was no small feat.

Part of what made the tower such a great threat was its ability to manipulate space and the void as it willed. Distance was immaterial to it.

Yang Qing used that aspect of it to deliver the scroll. The other treasure he used was an old friend, Veiled Destiny.

With its mastery over karma, it could effortlessly track Shao Ren's location, using the strong karmic thread that had linked him to Wu Mingli and his mother.

Karma was a powerful dao of similar rank to time and space, and in terms of difficulty, one could say it was harder than the two. Even now, there was no clear guideline on how to cultivate it, with only those who have reached the later stages of the domain realm rumored to be capable of sensing its power, and even then they couldn't freely manipulate it as they wished, not like Veiled Destiny could. The best they could do was isolate themselves and the areas they were around from being spied on or attacked using it.

Almost every single entity that was capable of using and manipulating karma was born with the ability to do so and was not trained in it, which was what made karmic experts so scary. They had esoteric means of attack at their disposal that one didn't even know how to fight or defend against.

The only sure way one could defend themselves against them was if they had karmic dao treasure, or if you broke through to the soul formation realm. At that stage, one was sensitive enough to respond and even retaliate to its attacks. A late-stage domain expert could defend themselves against it too, but their means were restricted to passive defense.

From the information, Hou Dehui had shared with him about the Golden Bamboo Pavilion, all three founders of the Golden Bamboo Pavilion were in the late stages of the domain realm, and wherever Shao Ren was, there was a high chance, one of those leaders was closeby.

If it had been anyone else but Veiled Destiny they could have likely shielded the location from karmic deduction, but who was Veiled Destiny? Yang Qing knew nothing about its mysterious origins, only that it was powerful enough to deduce even the karma of an early-stage soul formation expert, despite their apparent immunity to karmic deduction. A late-stage domain expert, no matter how deep their accumulation was nothing in its eyes.

As for why he went through all the trouble of sending the scroll like that, it was for deterrent of course. A reminder to the Golden Bamboo Pavilion and the Gold Leaf Empire who exactly they were dealing with, and judging by their solemn expressions, the message had been delivered, loud and clear.

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As Yang Qing was lost in his musings, Gong Jie and Duan Hu were having a private discussion of their own.

"Do you regret letting them live?" Gong Jie derisively asked.

Complex emotions flashed in Duan Hu's eyes as his gaze fell on where Wu Mingli and his mother had stood.

"I am not too sure," he finally answered as he brought his attention back to the stout elder.

"But I do feel regret.." he added. What the regret was about, he didn't expound on it and Gong Jie didn't ask.

"Letting them live.." inwardly thought Duan Hu as he smiled bitterly.

Gong Jie had misunderstood the whole thing and Duan Hu wasn't about to correct him. Back then, it wouldn't have been strange for Wu Mingli or his mom to be eliminated as they left, and Gong Jie had assumed that the only reason they survived the journey was due to him. After all, it wasn't strange when dealing with troublesome matters for one to get rid of the root and the stems to rid oneself of future troubles.

Wu Mingli and his mother being alive, meant someone stepped in and guaranteed their life, and for those involved, few people could do that and he happened to be one of those people, but it couldn't be further from the truth.

The truth of the matter was neither he nor Shao Ren cared much about them. They were inconsequential figures, and an elephant doesn't concern himself with the misgivings of an ant.

Even if Shao Ren had gone after them, he wouldn't have pursued the matter as he didn't explicitly or implicitly forbid it. Wu Mingli and his mother's surviving was just dumb luck that they were so insignificant at the time that Shao Ren couldn't even be bothered to seek them out.

But now, that insignificant figure had already caught up to them and was now baring his fangs at them, and as long as Wu Mingli survived his duel, which Duan Hu felt the chances were high he would, after all, he had the Jade Leaf Academy behind him, then it wouldn't be too long before he became the inconsequential figure.

He couldn't help but shake his head at how things had turned before he let out yet another sigh as his gaze fell on the three cultivators with complaints, two he recognized intimately, and he knew why they were here.

Chapter 905 Resident of the Bestial Churning Sea

After he was done with his gloating, Yang Qing ushered the next case.

"The next disagreement to be heard will be that of Xiao Gun and Yao Chang whose case is against Branch Chief Yao De, and Commander Duan Mu, but since the latter has already passed, that burden falls on you, Emperor Duan Hu, since it is believed he had been working as your representative on the matter.

Could the two Daoists please step forward.." Yang Qing said as he motioned toward two cultivators.

It was the two cultivators who when they walked in looked wary of their surroundings, especially the people within it. They seemed to be scanning the courtroom for potential exits.

As Yang Qing called them forward, despite the gentleness in his tone, one could tell they were visibly anxious being there, and that anxiety only grew when the court's attention was on them.

One of them was the tall and thin cultivator donning blue robes and had sunken eye sockets, bulging cheekbones, and a downward claw-like nose that gave him a hawk-like look. He had lightly greyed-out hair tied into a slightly messy bun that was held together by a red wood, which Yang Qing recognized to have been wood from a redworm tree, a tree famous for its healing properties, especially against yin-related maladies.

Walking next to him was the cultivator in cyan robes, an average build, and face, and had a heavy scent of herbs on him. Based on the density of the scent, one could assume he was either an herbologist or an alchemist.

Both cultivators were at the peak stage of the core formation realm, and based on their fluctuations, by Yang Qing's estimates, they both had orange grade cores, with the thin and swallow cultivator edging out slightly either in terms of the purity of the grade or his accumulations.

Yang Qing couldn't detect the 'flavor' of dao on them. That meant they still hadn't found the pathway to the palace realm yet, or even the quasi-palace stage. If they didn't, then the peak stage of the core formation realm would be the highest level they would ever reach.

Mustering whatever strength they had, the duo made their way to the center of the courtroom, occasionally lowering their head submissively to avoid eye contact with those present, including even Yang Qing.

Yang Qing couldn't help but sigh when he saw their display. The way they reacted seemed almost second nature to them. A habit they had no doubt gained from repeating the same action over and over for the majority of their lives.

Seeing their demeanor, and how nervous they were only further reaffirmed Yang Qing that he was right to have crossed off becoming an itinerant cultivator from the onset. Most children who had just started their journey, if any one of them was asked, Yang Qing had a feeling that six out of ten would want to become a rogue cultivator.

On paper, it had a romantic charm to it that was appealing to the dreamers. Using the earth as your bed, the skies as your blanket, traveling from west to east, north to south, with nothing but your sword and wine skin, and creating legendary memories in between. To be free and unfettered. Not chained to anything or anyone, but the heavens above and the earth below. There was nothing freer.

Yang Qing born with genes of a proper coward, a trait he no doubt believes he had inherited from his father, and born into a clan of lunatics that provided him with optimal grounds to hone that cowardice, all this factors made Yang Qing the ultimate practitioner in the dao of paranoia.

He was unlike other children who were free to just indulge in their fantasies at a young age. At their age all Yang Qing could think of was how dangerous a situation could be, and the millions of ways things could go wrong, and when it came to becoming a rogue cultivator, he had a million of them.

He greatly dreaded being a rogue cultivator and it was to the point that if he was given a choice between being a lifetime guinea pig of his grandfather and his band of lunatics or becoming a rogue cultivator, he would, with no hesitation, choose the former. He was afraid of it that much and with good reason.

Rogue cultivators were not as free as how they were romanticized to be. Whatever freedoms one has, one immediately loses them the moment one becomes a rogue cultivator. Yang Qing had never seen a more restrained people.

From the moment you wore that cloak, you became an outsider in your continent. You had to be mindful of every step you took so you don't end up offending someone you should not. You could not be too outspoken, you could not be successful, because the moment you are, you get branded a bandit, and get killed and stolen from under the banner of righteousness. Everyone around you was yet another person who could harm you, from the nobles to the prominent sect and clan members, to scions of powerful organizations, down to even your fellow rogue cultivators.

You had to always be alert to the countless dangers around you. You were doomed when you were poor, and you were doomed when you were rich, doomed when in the trenches, doomed when successful.

The only path to survival was lowering your head up until you had enough strength to raise it, and even then, most would still look down on you.

No one who had a choice in the matter would ever choose that path. It was fraught with nothing but tribulation and countless dangers that never seemed to pause, but those who managed to survive it and even thrive in it

The rogue cultivation community was looked down upon by most. They were looked down on even lower than mortals with no cultivation, but all these powerful organizations never took it too far, especially the powerful ones, those ancient rank two organizations and above. They were always mindful of their actions, a habit they reinforced in their members in how they handled the rogue community, and the reason for that was, within the rogue community, there were terrifying individuals whose individual strength could rival that of an entire sect, be it rank one or two.

That reputation wasn't unfounded. At the Bestial Churning Sea, a place filled with the most vicious spirit beast even a domain cultivator would easily lose their life there if they ventured in too deep, the further one went in, one would find a few small islands. When it came to size, Yang Qing's abode was several times larger than any of those islands, but when it came to richness be it spiritual qi, or the natural force of dao, those islands would make Yang Qing's abode look like a pauper's lair.

Those islands were birthed from the origin energy of that sea, which made them rare and extremely precious cultivation grounds filled with all manner of dao natural treasures that one would never find anywhere else, but no matter how blessed and attractive those lands were, some of them lay uninhabited. Reaching them meant traversing over half the sea, and at the mid-way point, even an early soul formation expert would have to be wary, while those islands were further in, located in the most dangerous region of the entire sea, where only the most vicious of those terrifying spirit beasts had built their lair.

No human would ever venture to that place and come back in one piece, let alone dare to cultivate there, all except one person. There was someone, save for just a spear, who ventured into that place, and claimed a single island for himself, and that person was a rogue cultivator, who to date still lives.

If the midway point was dangerous to an early-stage soul formation expert, one could only imagine what horrors lay that deep, and that person had managed to not only reach it but even take one of those places for himself, and build an abode there. Such a feat spoke volumes of the person's ability.

The heavens were said to be fair, whatever they took, they gave back in kind in another form and vice versa. The path of a rogue cultivator was a highly treacherous path, fraught with dangers all around, those who not only survive but also thrive in it, end up reaching heights that others could only ever dream of.

Their abilities and accumulations are terrifying to behold. In fact, when it came to the domain realm, almost seven out of ten rogue cultivators who reached the qualifications for it, ended up surviving its tribulation and breakthrough.

They may not have the highest numbers overall, but they had the highest success rate. But that was only if you were strong enough, talented enough, and lucky enough to survive and grow on that path.

The sad news was, that not many could endure it, let alone survive it. Most end up dying in the early phases of that path, while others ... well others end up broken by it, afraid to ever look up at the sun and they stall, forever bound in that darkness, unable to take even a single step, forward, till all they are is broken shells of themselves who are constantly fearful of everything around them like the two cultivators that stood before him, who looked like they wanted nothing more than to hide themselves under the marble floors of the courtroom or dash through the door that was behind them.

Chapter 906 Transcendent walker

"Yin Yang genesis; Lark Serenity Aria.."

Yang Qing's pupils had a subtle shift to them as a lark bathed in pure light flashed in them.

"Daoist Xioa Gun, Daoist Yao Chang, thank you for stepping forward.." Yang Qing gently said to the two rogue cultivators whose heads were still hanging low. But upon hearing Yang Qing's voice, the nature of it emboldened them to look up, and when they did, as they gazed into his pupils they felt the sense of unease, apprehension, and the tenseness that had grown to the point of even choking them, start to leave their body.

As they looked at Yang Qing, they could a tranquil force emanating from him with them being slowly sucked into that sense of tranquility. Before they knew it their vision suddenly changed, where Yang Qing once sat now featured a lark with pure white feathers that emanated with the charm of the moon and something else, that gave it an otherworldly presence.

Its wings' gentle flap produced a melody with an archaic power to it and a gentle calmness that subverted their imagination. They could feel and see the materialization of that melody transform into a gentle gust of wind brimming with warmth envelope them and in doing so filled with them with a peace they had never known before.

All the wariness, and accumulated fatigue they had built up their entire lives was washed away by that melody within that gust of wind. Their minds felt unencumbered, and their souls felt refreshed.

The average-height cultivator whose body was filled with the scent of herbs started tearing up as the illusion of the lark disappeared, and the courtroom went to its original view.

"Thank you.." said that cultivator as he used his sleeves to wipe away the tears in his eyes.

His partner next to him, the cultivator with the hawkish features, though he didn't cry, was just as heavily impacted as he bowed to the waist toward Yang Qing.

Gong Jie had a puzzled look on his face due to the reactions of the two cultivators. He couldn't make heads or tails of why one of them was crying and the other was bowing within a few seconds of being called.

For a second there he had thought they had gone mad from fear. It was visible to everyone present how petrified they were. From the way they walked, to the rest of their body language down to the movement of their qi. The tenseness of their qi was like that of a wounded and cornered animal. It was erratic.

But sensing it now, their qi was smooth, their bodies seemed relaxed and the look in their eyes had changed somehow. A curious glint flashed in his eyes as his gaze fell on Yang Qing. Seeing the reactions of the two cultivators, whatever had happened to them was likely tied to Yang Qing.

He alternated his gaze between Yang Qing and the two cultivators trying to see if he could discover a clue. Eventually, he gave up and decided to just ask their founder what happened.

"Founder, what happened to the two of them?"

"Peace.." Deng Jie calmly answered.

"Peace?" Gong Jie asked in stupefaction.

"Yes, peace... The reason they are so emotional is because Judge Yang Qing gave them something they have craved deeply all their life, but they could never feel it..." Deng Wei paused as his gaze fell on the two rogue cultivators before it went to Yang Qing. He too seemed to have been slightly affected by the display.

"From the moment they were self-aware, they have likely never known peace. Always being wary of everything around them, afraid that something bad would happen to them if they let up even once, and the world constantly proving them to be right to be wary.

Living under the constraints of such a burden for days, to weeks, to months, to years, to centuries, to a millennium... The toll it takes is anything but light. Who knows how much the two of them have accumulated, its weight I have no doubt is more than enough to drive many to near insanity.

You remember how it was for you when you ventured alone to look for me?"

Gong Jie nodded grimly as his back tensed up a bit. Those years were anything but easy, especially for someone short-tempered. It was okay to act how he wanted when he was within the confines of the Red Maple Empire, after all, he was part of one of the most powerful ruling families in the Empire, which let him behave how he wanted, and he also had a peak stage core formation cultivation base to rely on, which was more than enough capital within the Empire.

He who had never left the Empire, naively started his journey thinking he could act how he wanted, only to be given a rude awakening a few months in. He realized how terrifying the outside world was when he almost died at the hands of someone with a lower cultivation base than him and only survived thanks to the protective treasures he had been given by the Gong clan leader.

Things only went downhill from there and it wasn't long before he had lost his boisterous personality and was acting no different than the two rogue cultivators. The fear got so much that he finally broke and got into a fight with someone he shouldn't have, all in the hopes that the death that would come from it would end his misery, only things didn't quite go as planned. He ended up being used as bait in the Bestial Churning Sea and was exposed to a new deeper level of fear that he never thought possible.

That whole journey had left him broken. Though it had been the reason he managed to breakthrough to the palace realm, that desperation, he never wanted to have that experience again, even if it meant that he would not get to improve his cultivation base.

That experience was something he would rather not revisit, and yet he only endured it for a century, unlike the two rogue cultivators. Who knew how much they had seen or experienced, unlike him, they didn't have an anchor of a family like he did when things got really bad for him.

They had to face that storm knowing they had nothing to rely on but themselves. Gong Jie knew if it was him, he would not have endured it for as long as they did or as good as they did, even with how fidgety they had been. He would have long lost his life, or his mind, or both.

Seeing the empathic look Gong Jie had on, Deng Wei continued,

"So you can understand why they are like that. That burden getting washed away, all that fear, bitterness, and frustration. It's like they are breathing and living again. While they still have to contend with that world again the moment they leave here, at least for this moment, they get to know what it feels like not living under such a suffocating sensation. They get to see life on the other side, which to them is more precious than even a saint-grade treasure.."

As he finished, Deng Wei couldn't help but sigh in gratification as his gaze fell on Yang Qing. Yang Qing hadn't just offered them reprieve, but he had cleansed and restored their souls in that brief moment, and such a feat was a work of wonder, especially when Deng Wei felt the nature of the underlying power within said action.

When he walked into the courtroom, he did feel some slight affinity to Yang Qing, a kind of resonant, which led him to the assumption that maybe Yang Qing had the bloodline of the treefolk like him.

If they had met anywhere else but the courtroom, he would have been able to verify it easily with his abilities, but here, it was a tall order. Other than the surface level of information, Yang Qing was completely isolated from deduction. It was as if there was a powerful veil or ward around him that hid all the relevant things about him.

That isolation prevented Deng Jie from digging deeper into the resonance, but now, he didn't know the spell Yang Qing had used on the two cultivators, but he could tell its nature, which more than confirmed to him that his guess had been off the mark.

Yang Qing didn't share the same treefolk bloodline as him, and the resonance he felt was not a bloodline-related one, but a dao resonance. That impact was greater than if Yang Qing had a treefolk bloodline, because dao resonance meant, whatever dao Yang Qing practiced was of the same root as that of treefolk.

Dao resonance wasn't a common thing, it wasn't easily triggered. There were countless Daos out there, and countless cultivators who though may cultivate different techniques, the Dao pathway they choose may be similar, but such cultivators may not trigger a resonance, the only way they would trigger one is if the Dao they both practiced was a supreme grand dao.

It was only the supreme grand Dao that could trigger dao resonation. What was the supreme grand Dao? One could think of it as the highest grade of Dao, the very threads that held the operation of a world. Time and Space were supreme grand Daos, and so were other esoteric forms like Destiny, Fate, and Karma.

Supreme grand dao could be considered the ultimate form of Dao. Mythical creatures were a terrifying force to behold because they each had a natural affinity to one of the supreme grand Daos, with some even capable of manipulating two like the Kunpeng that could manipulate space, and the primordial water dao, which was the ultimate form of the water dao.

The things they could do, the abilities and powers they could display, it was to a stupendous degree that even words couldn't describe it, nor imagination capture it, and all of it was because of their attunement with the supreme grand Dao.

The treefolk had an affinity with the Dao of life which gave them absurdly long life spans, high vigor and vitality, and high sensitivity towards the form life takes and its manipulation. To them what constituted as life was a broad concept, for example, to them, the Dao could be considered a breathing living entity as would an animal, a plant, or a human, and the treefolk's sensitivity to life made them expert practitioners and manipulators of different forms of Dao.

Deng Wei had only managed to touch upon that power because of the assistance of the red maple spirit that helped unlock a bit of his bloodline, and when it did, it was like a whole new world had been opened to him. Even now, as a middle-stage domain expert, he still felt marveled and inferior to the world that lay within the pathway of the supreme grand Dao. That path was called the path of the transcendent, and few ever had the opportunity to walk on it let alone gaze upon it.

Sensing regular Dao was difficult enough as it required a significant degree of talent, wealth, and comprehension, with greater demands being placed on talent and comprehension, but when it came to the supreme grand Dao, the degree of difficulty grew infinitely.

Only ten in a million cultivators could actually sense the supreme grand dao, and of those ten, only four would sense it well enough to actually internalize it and pursue its path, and even then it was an upward battle, with the degree of difficulty being as hard as scaling the heavens. For Deng Wei, the only reason he could sense the pathway was that his treefolk bloodline gave him a right of access to it, and even then when he started out it was vague. It only became clearer when he used various resources and help from a few powerful friends to improve the degree of purity of his bloodline.

Having felt its power himself, he was intimately aware of how difficult it would be to grasp that power without a cheat like the bloodline of a mythical creature flowing through your veins, yet Yang Qing had done just that. Relying on nothing but himself, he had earned himself the right to walk on that path, and based on the arcane and primordial nature he felt when he executed his art, the ticket Yang Qing had wasn't any less than that of a pure-blooded mythical creature.

His understanding of it may still be in its infancy age, but the purity of what he had access to was similar to that of those mythical beings. Such a feat was capable of shaking the hearts of not only Deng Wei, but also Lin Guiren, Cai Hong, and the Imperial Household Manager, Liu Guan who understood the difficulty and implications of such a feat, especially Lin Guiren, whose eyes flashed with an emotion that was akin to envy.

"A transcendent walker.." he thought as his look of envy was quickly replaced by determination.

Every domain expert present knew what it meant to touch upon the supreme grand dao. Not every domain expert was a transcendent walker, but for transcendent walkers, provided they lived, were all guaranteed to step into the domain realm, and when they did, their foundations and abilities were terrifying to behold.

Myths and legends were built from people like them.

When they walked into the courtroom, they may have looked at Yang Qing as just another talented cultivator from the Order, but now, with his identity as a transcendent walker, he could no longer be seen as such because it was already set in stone that provided nothing unexpected happened, he would become a peer soon enough. They couldn't overlook him, especially the couple whose son had an altercation with him.

Chapter 907 Of that I have no doubt

As the domain experts were lost in their thoughts, Yang Qing was lost in his own, too.

"The art's effects seemed to have improved drastically than I expected!" he thought as he contained his surprise while examining the effects on the two rogue cultivators.

The cultivation spell he had just used, Yin Yang Genesis: Lark's serenity aria, wasn't a spell he learned in some cultivation scroll or talisman somewhere but rather was an innate spell that came from his peerless jade physique, the Yin Yang Jade Nature Bones. Every peerless jade physique user would

suddenly acquire innate abilities tied to their physique similar to how spirit beasts, spiritual plants, or those born with natural physiques would have innate abilities.

Yang Qing received a few innate traits and spells when he broke through and the spell he just used had been one of them.

In the early days after he had just unlocked it, the spell's ability was restrained to just offering him protection against abilities that disrupted the mind while also offering him a certain level of sensitivity to different ranges of killing intent directed at him.

As he improved his cultivation base, the range of those abilities grew to the point that when he was in the foundation establishment stage, the art's effects evolved from granting him extreme sensitivity to even mild killing intent to sensitivity to the state of other living being's soul, especially if it was tainted either by miasma or was injured somehow.

However, even if he knew it, he still couldn't do anything about it. The art relied solely on the strength of his soul. As a foundation establishment cultivator, even though his soul was more powerful than most, owing to the innate benefits afforded by his peerless jade physique, it was not strong enough for him to heal someone's soul of the various maladies he saw.

His soul's strength at the time could only support the spell's restorative features on himself. Only when he broke through to the core formation realm did he finally have an active effect on others. He could finally do something about the disorders he saw in other people's souls but only up to a degree.

The degree of the effect he had, improved as his cultivation base grew. When he was at the late stages of the core formation realm, using the spell, he could finally even affect heart demons and mental demons, whilst also accurately judging the strain of someone's soul state.

He had other innate attributes that gave him the ability to determine the state of someone's soul, but when it came to effecting change, none was better than Lark's serenity aria, whose ability got more stupendous when he broke through to the palace realm. Whereas when he was in the core formation realm where though he could see those mental and heart demons, and even have an effect on them somewhat, the effect was no different than using a salve on a serious injury. He could only slightly soothe the strain and damage left by them but when he reached the palace realm, that effect catapulted.

He could restore the damages done by those mental and heart demons, while at the same time revitalizing the spirit of its victims, by restoring it to its original 'flavor' before it got contaminated by the heart and mental demons, and in doing so, the victim could seamlessly rid himself free of those mental demons, provided they were willing.

That particular effect of the spell was useless on him, but it had a great effect on others, and it was an aspect that was highly appreciated at the Medical Valley as the spell's effects were effective on anything with life, from cultivators to artifacts with spirits.

What made Yang Qing shocked though was the ease and rapid effect of the spell when he executed it. When he was using he was only looking to alleviate some of the mental pressure the two cultivators were under by stirring their spirits slightly and revitalizing their souls a bit. He was in no way targeting the demons that had laid them captive.

Even with his new found abilities, and the two of them being weaker than him, it would have taken considerable effort and time for him to restore them to the point that they could rid themselves of those shackles, but what he was seeing was exactly that. The souls of the two cultivators were bright, and full of life, and when he was executing the art, he felt something shake within him as a soft ethereal power blended with the spell as he was casting it, and next thing he knew, the spirits of the two peak stage core formation experts had been revitalized. "It must be because of that jade tree.."?muttered Yang Qing, increasingly certain of his guess. The nature of his qi and the effect of all of his spells had changed ever since he woke up from his coma. Though his understanding was still rudimentary, he could tell that deep within him, something had been unlocked, he wasn't sure what, but it had completely changed his entire being somehow.

He couldn't help but sigh at the thought of his insane grandfather being right. It went without saying that he knew all these changes were brought about by his physique. As much as it pained him to admit it, his grandfather was right in saying there was more to the peerless jade physique than met the eye. There were tonnes of mysteries left to uncover from it.

"But all of that will have to wait.." thought Yang Qing as he brought his attention back to the courtroom only to find himself puzzled at the gazes he was getting from Deng Wei, Lin Guiren, and Liu Guan.

"What's with them? Do I have something on me?" Yang Qing curiously wondered as he quickly used his palace sense to check his body and robes for any changes.

"Lei, does he know?" asked Hou Dehui with an amused smile on his face as his gaze fell on Yang Qing.

"You know he doesn't. As per the Order's policies, he will only be made aware of it when he is in the later stages of the palace realm.

If that brat knew, knowing his personality, he would be using any chance he got to flaunt his abilities even more than he does, but not before he makes more noise at the salaries and remuneration department about how he needs to be given better consideration.

He would have long milked it for everything it's worth.."

Hou Dehui couldn't help but chuckle lightly at the remark as he said,

"Of that, I have no doubt.."

...

Yang Qing unaware of the discussions happening around him, after confirming there was nothing wrong with his robe, and that he was still as handsome as ever (self-proclaimed), moved the case along.

"Xiao Gun, Yao Chang, would you please?" Yang Qing said with a gentle tone and an encouraging smile. He may have cleansed them of the accumulated fatigue and stresses to their soul, but whatever phobias they had, they were still there. The experiences of all they had gone through and endured up to this point, were still there, the only difference now, was they had a bit of clarity and breathing space from it.

Yang Qing had not eliminated their ability to feel fear or anxiety, he just healed the accumulated toll it had on them and gave them a chance to face off against it.

The duo took a second to compose themselves before the herbal scent-filled cultivator nodded at the tall and thin cultivator as a sign that he should go first, who threw a helpless smile before nodding agreeably.

Out of habit, he lowered his head slightly as he subconsciously reached for his waist only to realize that the sword that had always been there, was absent today, having been confiscated before he was

brought to the courtroom. It wasn't that he had any intention to use it, just that its presence would have served as a great pillar of support in such an unnerving situation.

"M.m.. My name is Xiao Gun, and I'm a rogue cultivator, originally from Haishu village, a fishing village in Duck Lilly Kingdom. I have been a rogue cultivator since I was eight years old.." said the hawk-faced cultivator.

He started slightly nervous, but as he talked more, he gained a sense of calm and comported himself well. One could hardly believe he had been the trembling twig from before.

Infected by his composure, the other rogue cultivator stepped forward.

"My name is Yao Chang, also a rogue cultivator, and was once a member of a small clan in the Bluefish Kingdom, called the Yao clan," Yao Chang as his tone and expression turned melancholic.

"They are not there anymore.." he added, before stepping back, leaving the stage to Xiao Gun.

Xiao Gun comfortingly patted Yao Chang on the back, before he straightened his robes slightly at the chest as a way to prepare himself for the testimony.

"The reason I am here today is because 65 years ago, a friend of ours, also a rogue cultivator, by the name of Fu Yong, was robbed and assaulted whilst he was out on business in Red Maple Empire.

The identity of his robbers was, City Guard Commander of the Red Maple Empire, Duan Mu, who was working at the behest of Branch Chief Yao De.

Together, they wanted to rob Fu Yong of a legacy he had on him. A legacy belonging to the Verdant Water Crane Sect..." said Xiao Gun.

Chapter 908 Sacred Kirin Manor

Xiao Gun clenched his fists lightly as a glint of pain, anger, and helplessness flashed in his eyes before it transformed into a renewed will.

"I, Fu Yong, and Yao Chang have known each other for close to 800 years, and in that time we formed a deep bond from surviving countless life and death situations with each other..." Xiao Gun said as he smiled fondly, possibly recalling a memory of the trio.

"When you become a rogue cultivator, you have no one to rely on but yourself. The experiences you have make you wary of almost everyone you come across. Those within established organizations look at you with disdain, while when it comes to your fellow rogue cultivators, you can't trust them either.

The life and experiences of our kind are not easy, especially on the mind. Whether one admits it or not, recognizes it or not, it does something to us, and almost always the effect isn't good. Some end up twisted because of it.

There have been cases of some rogue cultivators, because of the bitterness and resentment they have accumulated from being shunned and mistreated, turning that anger on other rogue cultivators to the point of openly attacking one whenever they came into contact with one, with others even going to the extent of capturing some and torturing them..."

Xiao Gun paused as fear from a long-distant memory flashed in his eyes briefly, and he wasn't the only one, Yao Chang had the same reaction too.

"Us three brothers, I, Yao Chang, and Fu Yong knew each other because we all got kidnapped at the same time by the same rogue cultivator. He was at the late stages of the foundation establishment realm, while we were in the early stages.

We were all kidnapped at different periods. Of the three of us, Yao Chang was the one who was grabbed earliest, while I followed later. When he grabbed me, Yao Chang had already been there for almost three years, and after me, Fu Yong was brought in three months later.

We were all taken under the same guise. The rogue cultivator in question was a skilled alchemist who purported himself as a kind figure. At markets frequented mostly by rogue cultivators, he sold pills and potions at an affordable rate and even had bonus services such as providing free check-ups as he had some skills in medical cultivation too.

For rogue cultivators like us who constantly flirted with death and always had to penny-pinch every resource we had, someone like him is a boon for us. So it wasn't hard for us to let down our guard around him.

This is not to say that we were careless around him. In our way of life, you become inherently suspicious of everything and everyone, but if there's in anyone skilled enough to breach that line it would be one of our own, as they know exactly how we think and judge situations.

Tan Song, his name was. He worked me for two years. Though he offered friendly rates on the pills and potions, it wasn't overly friendly to the point that it would trigger alarm bells in my mind, as occasionally he would ask for favors in return, such as sourcing a certain herb for him, or as additional manpower when he went harvesting and the like.

Asking for favors was his way of lowering our guards, after all, an overly kind person would trigger the highest suspicion among our kind. We would more easily trust a villain than we would a saint.

Tan Song asking for favors as a form of repayment, helped reduce that suspicion, which was why a few years later when he asked me to acquire a certain herb for him at a particular location, I didn't think much of it. It wasn't something I hadn't done a million of times before, and I assumed it would be the same as all the other runs I had done before.." Xiao Gun paused briefly before he continued.

"Only this time, it wasn't. The location he had sent me to was one of his abodes, which was powered by a carefully laid array and hallucinogenic red mist spider lily flowers that paralyzed me the instant?I stepped foot in there.

Once captured, he took me where he had the rest, who just like me, were rogue cultivators. He would experiment with various recipes on us. If it wasn't for the euphoric look he had on his face whenever his failed recipes tormented our bodies, or the look of disdain he had whenever he grabbed us to experiment on us, I would have mistaken him for just a passionate alchemist who was too cheap to buy pill slaves, or pay someone to willingly be a guinea pig for his recipes.

The hate he had for us was clear as day, I never knew his full story, only that at least hundreds of rogue cultivators died at his hands.

Eventually a few years later, thanks to the noble efforts of a desperate member who couldn't take it anymore, we found a window to escape. Fu Yong, Yao Chang, and I partnered up and eventually, we managed to get away from him.

A few others got away too, and with it the news of what Tan Song had been doing. He got killed by a core formation rogue cultivator whose sworn brother had been one of his victims.

As for us, having survived that ordeal together, we developed a sense of kinship. Though because of that very same ordeal, and the experience we had with Tan Song, we could never completely trust one another. But that did not stop us from working together.

Without sufficient strength to prop yourself up against this world, you need the help of others to act as you support, otherwise, by yourself, you will cave and break under its massive weight.

Thus we three brothers found the perfect balance of acting as each other's support whilst also having a healthy sense of wariness towards one another, and because of it, we created a system.

Every harvest we made be it ruin exploration, diving into mysterious realms, or scavenging to other places of fortune, we made clear guidelines on what our roles would be, and in case the exploration bore fruit, how the split would be, and since we couldn't fully trust one another completely, we reinforced it through the services of a third party, the Sacred Kirin Manor..." said Xiao Gun.

The Sacred Kirin Manor was a niche rank two organization whose members numbered not more than twenty, and who practiced an esoteric art, that was centered on an elusive form of Dao, the Dao of Oaths which is rumored to be a vein of Dao tied to the heavenly Dao itself.

Every member was believed to have the bloodline of the Sacred Light kirin. Kirins were believed to be emissaries of righteousness, and the sacred light kirin especially, was believed to be the flesh and blood incarnation of the heavenly Dao itself. It served as a balancer in the world at the behest of the heavenly Dao and was rumored to have the ability to sermon a lightning tribulation to punish those who broke that balance.

It was unknown how true that rumor was as a sacred light kirin has never been cited, but if it really did exist, then that would make it one of the most dangerous creatures in the entire world. Lightning

tribulations could ignore all defense a cultivator might employ, all was useless before its might, and no matter what preparations you made, you would still be filled with dread the moment it appeared.

Yang Qing could remember how suffocated he had felt when those clouds appeared above him either when he was breaking through to the core formation realm or the palace realm. While he went through the lightning strikes smoothly and easily, he knew it wasn't the same for others, as there have always been recordings of those who died under their tribulations be it the core formation one, or the one in the palace realm.

It was when it came to the domain realm, that the danger of the tribulation was universal. Unlike the tribulation of the core formation realm or the palace realm where as long as you had a sturdy and deep foundation and accumulation you were guaranteed to have a smooth experience to the point that Yang Qing shamelessly bathed in it with smugness when it came to the domain level tribulation things were not that easy. A heaven-defying genius stood the same chance of dying as did an average cultivator.

If the sacred light kirin could control such a calamitous tribulation at will, how terrifying would it be as an opponent? Every domain expert who survived their tribulation did not do it unscathed, and the number of tribulations was set. As far as Yang Qing knew, there were nine of them. As long as you endured the nine, you were through.

What would happen to those domain experts if they had to endure twelve, fifteen, or thirty? The answer was simple, they would die. This was what made the sacred light kirin potentially so terrifying, luckily it could not be proven that they existed, but what was true was the Sacred Kirin Manor had the ability to enforce agreements between parties.

Yang Qing didn't know how they did it, only that it had something to do with the esoteric art they cultivated. Those who violated the terms of the agreement even slightly would face the wrath of the heavens, which in simple terms meant a white light in the form of a kirin would strike them down and kill them on the spot, no matter where they were.

Most prominent merchant groups liked to use their services, and the Order did too, on a few agreements here and there. When it came to hiring their services they were a particularly odd bunch, for what they offered, they never charged that much, and only charged a third of the value of what was in the agreement which could be paid in whatever form the client wished be it treasures, spirit stones, or even render a service to the manor that was equivalent to the value, they would accept.

Yang Qing had once asked a few of the seniors at the Order if they did that because they were just ascetics who were indifferent to fame and wealth, and the response he got was, that the manor's true payment was the agreement itself.

The Dao they cultivated grew in strength from every agreement they supervised, and it would be invaluable so, if the agreement was adhered to. The agreement benefited them just as much as it was to the parties.

Yang Qing couldn't help but sigh at the measures Xiao Gun and the rest took. Defying even a single clause in the agreement would be counted as a violation, no matter how small, and it would invite the lightning's full wrath.

The punishment was indiscriminate whether it was a small violation or a big one, the ferocity of the strike would be the same. Taking those agreements, no matter how beneficial, was extremely risky as it was no different than surrendering your lives to the agreement.

He could see the mistrust of the three cultivators, yet the desperation to work together.