

Emperor 5281

Chapter 5281: Collision

The ship resembled a continent taking the group for a vacation through space.

Meanwhile, Li Qiye focused on observing the middle-aged man who didn't seem to know the meaning behind the word "fatigue".

Li Zhitian and the others started watching him as well. The youth didn't have a strong reaction, unlike the old servant.

"This is..." The latter thought about a particular legend that had disappeared among the river of time.

He activated his heavenly gaze and could see that the man was not just an illusion. However, was he dead or alive? Or was this a being coming out of a dream?

As for Li Qiye, he had questions at first but after enough time observing the minute details, he obtained an answer.

"Rumble!" Suddenly, the ship shook violently and the group nearly fell over.

It crushed into several stars and came to a halt. As everyone regained their senses and looked ahead, they only saw a thick fog shrouding the path forward. This was akin to a giant reef in the sky, causing the ship to be stranded.

The middle-aged man suddenly jumped off the ship into the fog, disappearing from sight.

“Hey!” Li Zhitian shouted after seeing this.

“What should we do now?” Li Zhitian looked around and noticed that the ship was no longer moving.

“Give it to me.” Li Qiye raised his hand and asked for the ghost face.

Li Zhitian has been holding it the entire time, occasionally taking a look out of vigilance. Thus, he had no problem tossing it over to Li Qiye.

Li Qiye moved to the curved bow and placed the ghost face down where the middle-aged man sat prior.

“Buzz.” He used a supreme law and pinned the creature down into the ship.

He summoned the grand dao in his hand and created a dao blade. He swung it like a master artist swinging his brush. Every stroke flowed seamlessly with exquisite precision. Each detail was as smooth as the flowing clouds, giving spectators a sense of flawlessness.

Just like that, the hideous ghost face was replaced by a beauty in white thanks to Li Qiye’s profound artistry.

Though her hair covered her face, just her curves and outline alone were matchless.

Li Qiye reached forward and released shimmering golden dao essences to create a new foundation for her. With this infusion, she gained a gorgeous and gentle glow - looking like a goddess of the moon.

"Oh my goodness..." Li Zhitian shivered after seeing the lunar goddess and got goosebumps everywhere. This was once a frightening creature with teeth that had nearly devoured him.

Now, Li Qiye molded it into a wonderful work of art. Those in the know found this rather creepy.

"I can't trust beauties from now on." Li Zhitian turned pale, thinking that everything was a lie.

"That's why the wise teaches us to be wary of beauties." Li Qiye glanced at him and joked.

"I think I'm going to be a bachelor for the rest of my life, thinking that there is a venomous snake hidden within every woman." Li Zhitian said.

"That's an issue with your dao heart." Li Qiye chuckled before placing the oar discarded by the middle-aged man into the hands of the peerless beauty.

He created a new talisman and embedded his grand dao within, sealing it into her forehead.

"Activate." He chanted and the woman began rowing.

“Rumble!” The ship escaped from the broken stars and surged swiftly again, seemingly happy to be in motion once more.

“Where are we going now?” Li Zhitian asked while staring at the vast expanse.

“Wake up now!” Li Qiye suddenly shouted with the force of a thunderous bell. The command reverberated inside their mind, causing them to tremble.

They suddenly woke up and found that they were sitting in the meditative pose back in the desert again.

They looked over yonder and saw the tavern on top of the sandy hill. Nothing had changed, not even the massive bones around them.

“Are we dreaming?” Li Zhitian stood up and tried to find the inhabitants of the city.

Unfortunately, he couldn’t find anyone, not even the remarkable ship above.

“That ghost face wasn’t real either?” He asked Li Qiye.

“Real and fake, true and false, who knows?” Li Qiye answered with a smile.

He could tell that Li Qiye knew the actual answer.

“Young Noble, why did you propel the sand ship again?” The old servant brought up something else.

“The joy should continue to soothe the restless souls.” Li Qiye said.

“I see.” The old servant sighed, aware that they were not dreaming but were actually in someone else’s dream.

“Rumble!” The tavern started running again.

Chapter 5282: Wife Killer, Dao Seeker

“It’s running away!” Li Zhitian shouted.

“No need to hesitate, follow it and we can get out of here.” Li Qiye smiled.

The group immediately gave chase and kept a close distance. However, Zhitian had several questions: “What is this thing? Why does it appear in both reality and dreams?”

He was sure that the tavern was the reason for the trunk’s appearance in the dream.

“A few things might not exist in reality but that doesn’t mean they don’t exist. Once you find the connection between reality and non-reality, you’ll be able to travel between them.” Li Qiye said with a smile.

“So this tavern is the connection.” Li Zhitian understood and reflected on the experience.

After a while, he asked: "Who is the person dreaming?"

"The question should be, which one." Li Qiye said.

"So there's more than one." He understood the implication.

"The minds and thoughts of an entire group." Li Qiye elaborated.

"Existences that have once ruled the world." The old servant added.

As for the tavern, it escaped into the fog and evaded the group.

"It's gone." Li Zhitian said.

Li Qiye smiled and entered the screen of fog with everyone else. They didn't see the vast expanse this time - only a grand mountain.

"Hmm..." The old servant became serious and observed the scenery, eventually recognizing the location.

At the very top of the peak, there was a gigantic statue being crucified and immobilized. However, it seemed so vivid - depicting the victim laying on his back with his front exposed. His eyes were pecked out by eagles and his heart was devoured by wild bears, prompting him to howl in agony.

This process would repeat every day. His eyes and heart would grow again only to be eaten once more. After the long years, he turned into a statue that only knew two things - pain and scream.

“Eagle Peck Peak.” The old man murmured its title.

“This is the legendary place, virtually sure-death for intruders?” Li Zhitian became startled.

The old servant nodded.

“So he’s the supreme sword emperor, right? To be chained and tortured here for eternity.” The youth stared at the pinnacle.

This was a legendary peak in the six continents. In reality, it had existed long before the formation of the continents. However, few in history could enter and leave this place alive.

According to the tales from a distant epoch, a swordsman roamed the land and earned the title of emperor with his dao.

During his unbeatable prime, he fell in love with the daughter of an older emperor - a supreme beauty of that era.

They enjoyed happiness together but this didn’t last. The emperor was not pleased with stagnation; his heart devil convinced him to kill his beloved wife in order to reach the next level.

This naturally invoked the wrath of his father-in-law who gathered an alliance of other emperors and monarchs, ending up with his capture.

The ancient emperors sealed him into this peak with the ultimate curse - never being able to reincarnate until the end of time.

His imprisonment and cries lasted for numerous eras until the great calamity. With the destruction of the thirteen and the formation of the six continents, the curse was lifted and he became a statue.

Rumor has it that even during the worst period, he still didn't give up on the sword dao. He endured the pain while continuing to sharpen his mind.

Thus, in spite of his current state, his sword dao had accumulated enough to turn the peak into its embodiment.

Only the strongest could survive the rampant sword energies. They tried to learn his sword dao but most found that this was impossible. The geniuses capable of this returned and lamented the waste of time: "Its murderous intent is uncontrollable, falling into an evil path is inevitable."

"We should walk around it, right?" Li Zhitian asked.

"Let's go take a look." Li Qiye smiled and climbed the peak.

Li Zhitian and the others took a deep breath. They channeled their merit laws and grand dao, resulting in a protection barrier.

They had heard of stories about conquerors and dao lords failing before, not daring to underestimate it.

They saw bones starting at the base. These victims stood no chance and were instantly cut down by sword energies.

The higher up they got, they saw fewer bones. These ones brimmed with divinity - clearly mighty cultivators who eventually faltered.

The climb continued and all three sensed terrifying slashes, wanting to eviscerate everything under the heaven. Each strand of energy could pierce an unprotected dao fruit.

Both the old servant and Li Zhitian started feeling sharp pain everywhere; their barriers were not fully working.

Once they made it to the ridge, True Bear couldn't withstand it any longer. The sword energies here could instantly kill a regular ancestor.

Chapter 5283: A Mere Branch

Dragon lords dying would just be another day at Eagle Peck. Dao lords and conquerors would have a hard time as well; some mighty ones had fallen here.

Thus, True Bear with his three dao fruits couldn't withstand the sword energies despite having a runic beast armor blessed with the power of the bear star. Blood oozed out between the cracks of his armor. Death was only a matter of time.

Li Qiye noted this and raised his hand, adding a symbol resembling the primordial tree. It exuded primordial particles and made the armor impregnable.

He didn't help the old servant and Li Zhitian since they could handle this much.

The old man had an azure aura allowing him to traverse through time and space, expertly evading the rampant energy slashes.

Li Zhitian had a majestic grand dao. His dao heart was tough and the sacred fruits blessed him with their power, preventing any serious injury.

Nonetheless, he started sweating when they got close to the peak. The energy blades were infinitely close to his heart but he didn't utter a single cry of pain.

Li Qiye nodded approvingly after seeing his unyielding nature. As for the old servant, he still didn't have any problem at this point.

"Clank!" The hymn of a sword alone could disperse the soul.

Li Zhitian felt a sharp pain and immediately formed a mudra to seal his own heart, preventing the sword intent from piercing him.

The old servant finally reacted strongly, stomping on the ground and forming an independent domain around him.

They looked up and saw a black-robed man sitting on a boulder. He had a thin and sharp face; his cheeks seemed as if they were carved with a blade. He sat still and straight, emitting a chilling presence like the dead.

An unadorned black sword lay on top of his knees. The scabbard seemed to be made from two pieces of iron clamped together. The blade was rather thin and seemed fragile, lacking sharp edges.

However, the sword intent from it was second to none. This was more than just a weapon; the two of them were death incarnate.

When they saw him for the first time, they felt as if their throat had been pierced. Merit laws and techniques couldn't stop it. Of course, the sole exception was Li Qiye who still had a smile.

Li Zhitian knew that he would have been killed in the blink of an eye despite being a supreme genius.

"If you wish to pass through here, leave your life behind." The man uttered coldly in a matter-of-fact manner, not bothering to look at the group.

"Unfortunately, your sword might be sharp but it is not qualified to kill me." Li Qiye said.

This prompted the man to raise his head and take a look at Li Qiye. Sure enough, only the empty eye sockets could be seen. The moment anyone saw the darkness in the holes, they would already be dead.

"You wish to block my blade?" The old man said emotionlessly; his voice resembled a sword being scraped against a sharpening stone.

“Not difficult to block the blade of someone who had taken the wrong path. The sword is killing you, not me.” Li Qiye said.

“My sword is killing me?” He stared at Li Qiye.

“The path of the sword is as grand as the heaven itself while yours is a mere branch. You have overestimated yourself and erroneously tried to prove your dao.” Li Qiye went on.

“One move for each person.” He didn’t become angry and simply stated.

“Do you all wish to try?” Li Qiye asked the group.

“I do.” Li Zhitian stared at the black sword, fully aware that death was a likely outcome. Nonetheless, he still wanted to test himself against a blade capable of cutting down the apex.

“Yes.” The old servant said, seemingly wanting to do this from the very start.

“Who’s first?” Li Qiye smiled.

“The clumsy bird flies early. I must compensate for my limited abilities with hard work.” Li Zhitian stepped forward.

“Very well, you go first.” Li Qiye patted his shoulder.

“Please give me pointers.” Li Zhitian bowed toward the black-robed man and raised both hands, summoning various affinities such as the yin and yang, even the reincarnation cycle.

Although he was still standing there, he managed to escape the constraint of time and space.

His given name was Zhitian, meaning a boy capable of stopping the heaven. “Zhi” became the focus of his dao - a defensive art capable of preventing anything from approaching him.

Chapter 5284: Not That Impressive

The dark swordsman and Li Zhitian fixed gazes. The latter’s opening move had no flaws to speak of, capable of stopping any offense in existence.

“Clank!” The swordsman unsheathed his sword, revealing a blade as thin as an iron sheet. A sword from the mortal world might be thicker.

However, a mortal couldn’t use something so murderous. The intensity came from the initial thought of murder, far before the lifting of the blade.

This split moment stretched infinitely after coming into contact with Li Zhitian’s grand dao - the thrust pierced through countless eras and worlds.

Unfortunately, Zhitian had underestimated the murderous potential of the thrust. After piercing through numerous obstructions, the thinnest sword intent could still kill anything.

“Pluff!” His eyes became wide open after his throat was pierced, rendering him unable to scream.

He clearly saw his domain stopping the thrust, diluting it down to nothingness. Alas, it wasn’t enough.

“Splash!” Blood gushed out of his neck like a spring during his backward fall.

He didn’t hit the ground because Li Qiye came over to support him, infusing him with primordial light directly at the wound. Its mysteries recovered his vitality and life, pulling him back from the brink of death.

“Thank you, Young Noble.” He sat down on the ground and spoke feebly.

“My turn.” The frightening result didn’t deter the old servant.

He assumed the simple defensive stance again. His movement wasn’t swift either, akin to an old man too weak to raise his hands.

Nonetheless, the moment he finished the stance, he became the center of the cosmo. Anything coming close would be subjected to the heaviest pressure - a perfect defense accounting for all directions.

He suddenly became a guardian, no longer the old man with droopy eyes. Who would call him a servant now? He was clearly an apex conqueror.

In spite of this, the swordsman’s expression didn’t change outside of a faint glimmer. His eyes remained cold as if he wasn’t staring at living beings. All were already dead to his blade.

“Clank!” Another thrust began with the initial thought. The physical act of drawing the blade no longer mattered for a swordsman of this level.

Either way, the old servant was prepared for any type of attack - physical or incorporeal.

“Bam!” The dreadful attack was immediately subjected to immense weight, unable to push through with its momentum.

This gave the old man enough time to slam his palms together to catch the blade. This had enough force to unite heaven and earth while being gathered at a single point.

“Clank!” The weakened thrust still made it through the defense and pierced the old man’s chest. However, this was merely a flesh wound and the blade stopped.

“You may pass.” The swordsman pulled back and sheathed the sword again.

“Nice!” Li Zhitian cheered loudly after seeing the successful stop.

“Just got lucky.” The old servant said before returning to stand behind Li Qiye.

“Not that impressive.” Li Qiye commented.

“Release me and I will show you another.” The swordsman uttered coldly.

“You still won’t be able to kill me after being released.” Li Qiye shook his head.

“Don’t be so sure.” The swordsman responded.

“You are overly confident in using killing as a way to prove your dao. A slanted sword cannot slay me.” Li Qiye elaborated.

The swordsman stared at Li Qiye despite not having eyes. He had no anger, only indifference.

“Without realizing this, your dao will never be complete.” Li Qiye continued.

“The sword must kill, this is the dao.” He argued.

“Your blind trust is pitiful, causing you to fall to your own inner demon. You didn’t become invincible after killing your wife in the nine worlds so you tried again in the thirteen worlds, still didn’t become invincible. You are stuck in a self-inflicted cycle, your sword follows the path but your heart is possessed by demons, how can you ever comprehend the ultimate profundity of this dao?” Li Qiye said.

“I see it already, the dao is complete when everything is dead.” He said.

“Fine, we’ll see which of us will be doing the killing.” Li Qiye smiled and waved his hand: “Come, one decisive move. If you lose, you will not use the sword again.”

“Very well.” The swordsman suddenly erupted with murderous intent, finally resorting to wielding his true power by becoming one with the peak.

Li Qiye stood casually and didn’t bother putting on any defense; his hands hanging down naturally.

The swordsman actually tried to scan his opponent this time but the guy resembled a mortal full of openings.

After a short while, he decided to perform an ultimate slash capable of piercing dao fruits and true fates.

This sword could deliver anyone to death’s door with no possibility of a return trip.

Chapter 5285: Heartlessness Stems From Weakness

The murderous potential of this blade could take down gods and devils, severing everything along the way. This was the limit of the mortal world, intended on piercing Li Qiye’s chest.

Li Zhitian felt his soul leaving his body. This attack was on a whole new other level compared to the one aimed at him.

“Whoosh!” While infinitely close to meeting its target, it suddenly came to a halt.

This was due to Li Qiye gripping it with his index and middle finger. Dao derivations and the various cycles of the world came to an end including the murderous affinity. He only needed two fingers to stabilize the entire universe.

“Bam!” He snapped the sword into two halves, fully surpassing the weapon’s dreadful ability. With that, he used the broken blade to perform his own move.

This attack encompassed the will of piercing - an eternal aim to take down its foe regardless of any conceivable constraint. His will manifested into the blade and pieced the swordsman’s neck, pinning him down to the boulder.

Fresh blood gushed out of the throat. Some flowed along the broken blade and onto the boulder, resulting in a gruesome scene.

His eye sockets finally showed signs of life and emotions as he lay there motionlessly.

“Killing your wives to prove the dao is nonsense, you were merely a slave to your inner demon. The pinnacle of the sword dao has no limit; its only requirement is determination, which you lack. Forsaking emotions for the sake of the sword is the action of a coward.” Li Qiye said.

“A coward...” The swordsman stared at the sky and could see certain faces popping up.

“Atone for your mistake, then you will find the sword dao you’re looking for. Otherwise, you will continue to suffer here.” Li Qiye stared at him and said coldly.

“A coward...” He didn’t seem to hear Li Qiye for he was immersed in old memories.

Li Qiye had left an everlasting seal on the boulder. True atonement was the only way for the swordsman to break free.

"Let's go." Li Qiye told the group.

They walked quietly behind him. Although they knew that he would win, the process still shocked them.

After they were long gone, the swordsman finally looked down. Tears seemed to be building up in his eye sockets.

The group saw a magnificent expanse of mountains before them. Rays of light sprinkled down from the sky and enveloped the entire land, looking like a radiant curtain.

They could see an illusory gateway with stone steps leading up to it. Through the gateway was another world with extravagant buildings and majestic sceneries. Everything had an illusory appearance as if they weren't real.

"Lesser Firmament!" Li Zhitian recognized the area - the reclusive home to many ancient emperors and monarchs. Some were too old to be known by the current generation.

The top cultivators in the four alliances were usually on the move. However, the ones in Lesser Firmament preferred to stay put.

The world had no idea how many emperors were still left in this mystical location. Its actual fighting potential remained unknown.

Rumor has it that these emperors have passed away from old age. Without new conquerors and dao lords to replace them, Lesser Firmament had no choice but to abstain from competing with the alliances.

Of course, some still believed that it remained immensely strong. Nonetheless, time was not on their side. These ancient emperors' lifespans must be running out.

"Young Noble, is this your destination?" Li Zhitian asked since Li Qiye was gazing at it.

Li Qiye only smiled and didn't respond, still walking forward.

Chapter 5286: Remember Drinking Warmed Wine?

As they walked in this bright land, they eventually came across the tavern again. The smell of alcohol wafted in the air.

"There it is again!" Li Zhitian said. It has been around since the start and even showed up in the dreams. It must somehow be connected to their journey thus far.

Once they got closer, they actually saw a worker this time. He sat behind the bar and was a familiar face - the man who rowed the sand boat earlier.

"Pinch me, am I still dreaming?" Li Zhitian activated his heavenly gaze and saw that the man was real. After all, their first meeting was in a dream but now, the guy was outside in the real world.

“We aren’t in a dream.” The old servant shook his head.

Li Qiye sighed and gently gestured for the group to give him space before entering the tavern.

True Bear and the old servant waited outside; Li Zhitian did the same.

Li Qiye sat down in the middle and the man immediately came over to wipe his table clean.

“Bring me a pot of warm wine and a few side dishes.” Li Qiye ordered.

“Sure.” The man responded casually before leaving to prepare.

A while ago, customers just needed to order and the tavern would magically make it happen. Now, it became just like a normal restaurant with a worker.

The group would think that they were in a different place if it wasn’t for their identical appearance.

Just a moment later, the warmed wine and a few side dishes were brought to the table - a plate of stir-fried peanuts, well-seasoned fennel beans, and boiled edamame.

The man then returned to his seat, acting like a bartender just making enough money to get by.

Li Qiye sipped the wine and picked up some beans, arranging them on the table.

“Do you know how many methods there are to write the word fennel?” Li Qiye asked.

“I don’t know.” The man didn’t seem interested in this topic, preferring to slouch on the desk and replaced without enthusiasm.

Li Qiye finished forming a rune with the fennel beans on the table. He then picked up a peanut and crushed the shell before blowing the pieces onto the table. This caused the rune to come alive, constantly changing and evolving just like the grand dao.

The man looked up and stared at the rune before commenting: “Pretty neat...”

With that, he returned to his lazy state, seemingly wanting to have more customers. This caught Li Qiye off guard because this wasn’t part of their agreement. However, the man didn’t seem to be faking it.

“Why don’t you invite your friends in for a drink?” The man asked, only showing interest in making more money.

“They don’t need to.” Li Qiye remained calm and enjoyed his wine with the edamame.

“Remember drinking warm wine?” He eventually asked.

“I finish a pot every day.” The man stared at Li Qiye as if he was stupid.

“Why?” Li Qiye asked.

“Just because I want to, there’s no need for reasons and I have a whole cellar behind me.” The man said.

“Everyone has memories.” Li Qiye stared implicatively at him and continue: “Even a ghost has memories.”

“Nothing to remember here.” The man thought that this guest was rather annoying. Just come and drink instead of blabbering.

“Tip.” Li Qiye smiled and placed a silver ingot on the table.

The man immediately got up and came over, looking excited: “Wait, I’ll get you a plate of stir-fried vegetables.”

“Clang, clang!” He went back inside and got busy with the wok.

“Sigh, I’m being bested by money, looks like I’ve thought too highly of myself.” Li Qiye didn’t know whether to laugh or cry.

It didn’t take long before the man brought a variety of dishes and an additional pot of warmed wine. He had a smile as he sat across from Li Qiye.

“I’ll have a drink with you.” The man put the silver ingot into his chest pocket.

No one hated the feeling of having more money. Since he was in a good mood, he didn't find Li Qiye as annoying.

"Where are you from, Brother?" He asked.

"A rather distant place." Li Qiye said.

"What are you doing here in this rundown place, I hardly see anyone all year round." The man said.

"To find someone." Li Qiye said while staring with a meaningful gaze.

"I'm afraid you won't find anyone in this deserted place." The man shook his head.

Chapter 5287: Midbro

After receiving a good tip, the man was finally in the mood to talk.

"Do you know who you are?" Li Qiye asked while taking and eating one peanut after another from his hand.

"Why are you asking these strange questions? Do you know who you are?" The man stared at Li Qiye.

“Yes, I am Li Qiye, the one who whispers in the dark.” Li Qiye said.

“Li Qiye?” The man scratched his head: “Sounds like a familiar name, I think I heard it before.”

The man clapped and laughed: “I know, this must be a really common name!”

Li Qiye who was sipping the warm wine almost spurted it out after hearing this.

“Li Qiye is not a common name. I am the only one with this name, as far as I know.” He said patiently.

“I don’t think so. Since I found it familiar, I must have heard it so there are other people with this name, don’t be so egotistic. You can’t be the only person with this name even if it isn’t common.” The man said.

“Let’s put my name aside, do you know who you are?” Li Qiye found himself helpless.

“Obviously.” The man opened his eyes wide and said: “I am Midbro.”

“Midbro? Why are you called that?” Li Qiye wanted to touch his forehead to see if he was delirious from a cold. He was frustrated because this guy most likely lost his memories.

“Our family has three brothers and I’m sandwiched in the middle, so Midbro.” The man seemed to be quite pleased, thinking that he was clever with this nickname.

“Uhh...” Li Qiye nearly spat out his drink again and had to wipe his lips while containing the urge to laugh.

“Sigh, maybe I should record your appearance right now. No, you’ll probably try to beat me up later.” Li Qiye murmured sentimentally.

“Beating? I am a cultured gentleman, I do not resort to the fist.” However, the man had an incredible hearing and still caught some words.

Li Qiye recalled when this man stood at the apex and was worshipped by countless cultivators. Now, he became such a cute bartender. Everything became so chaotic.

Li Qiye took a deep breath and ate some more fennel beans before continuing: “Do you know what you’re doing?”

“Can’t you see? I opened this tavern to make a little money to get by.” The man started thinking that there was something wrong with Li Qiye’s intelligence.

Li Qiye could tell that this wasn’t an act.

“Have you ever gone rowing or anything similar?” He asked again.

“Rowing? We don’t even have a small stream here, where am I going to get a boat?” The man shook his head.

'Is this a detached self or avatar?' Li Qiye nodded while thinking to himself.

"But now that you mentioned it." The man clapped and said: "I did have dreams about boating recently, I was rowing a huge boat, massive beyond imagination."

He looked around and tried to give an analogy of its size. However, he couldn't come up with a good one and shook his head: "Bigger than the world, even."

"Was it a good dream?" Li Qiye asked while eating a handful of edamame.

"Don't just eat the beans, have some five-spice beef too, I guarantee you that it is delicious." The man said as he added some to Li Qiye's bowl.

"Can't say anything bad about your cooking skill." Li Qiye commented after eating.

"Of course, I was the best cook among us brothers. I never cooked for them either without getting paid." The man laughed.

"Let's talk about your dreams again." Li Qiye smiled and said.

"Well, I do recall dreaming about the boat a lot." The man tilted his head in contemplation: "Since it's so heavy, my hands got really sore from rowing."

"But you still rowed it willingly?" Li Qiye asked.

“Well, I don’t really know how to answer. In my dreams, I was so exhausted and wanted to abandon ship several times. It’s just that I had to reach the other shore no matter what. Of course, this is absurd because the other shore doesn’t exist.” [1]

“This is who you are, always ready to shoulder even the vast heaven.” Li Qiye sighed and said.

“Don’t be ridiculous.” The man gave Li Qiye the strange stare again: “How can anyone shoulder the heaven? And even if I could, why would I? I’m just a wine seller trying to get by, this is the perfect life right now instead of exhausting myself to death.”

“Someone has to shoulder justice and virtue.” Li Qiye said calmly before crushing a peanut shell and blowing it away.

“Tch, justice and virtue, all justifications to send people to their death. Only an idiot would believe something like that and go for it.” The man said.

Li Qiye stared seriously at him before nodding: “Yes, certain things could only be done by a fool.”

“Anyway, I’m not one to care about the greater good.” The man said: “Those who do grand deeds often have a tragic fate. They end up losing everything and no one will be grateful for it.”

“That is completely true. They will only curse you instead of being grateful. So much hardship only to gain nothing.” Li Qiye sighed.

“You sound like you’re one of them...” The man stared at Li Qiye: “Well, you don’t look the part.”

"I'm the one who instigates others to do so." Li Qiye smirked.

"Tch, that's something a despicable bastard would do." The man said.

"Not the first time I've been called a bastard." Li Qiye nodded: "Too many to count and plus, since I've done so many despicable things already, what's one more?"

"You've become shameless to the point where nothing can harm you anymore, pretty much a demon at this point." The man smiled and said.

"I hope so." Li Qiye took another sip of wine.

"I can see that you have a lot on your mind. I guess it's not easy searching for someone in this remote region." The man said.

"Well, it's not that hard. I'm just afraid that, you know, people change. They all have their own thoughts and aspirations." Li Qiye said.

"Isn't that normal? People want different things. For example, I just want to live a good life, nothing ambitious. I have no problem spending my whole life here." The man said.

"Never had a big dream before? One bigger than the heaven." Li Qiye asked.

“No, dreams are useless. They can’t feed you and might even end up being your downfall.” The man shook his head.

“Well, someone without dreams is no different from a walking corpse.” Li Qiye responded.

Chapter 5288: Grand Saber

“I never had big dreams and I still enjoyed my life.” The man said.

“Don’t you want to make money and just hang around the tavern? That’s a dream too. Small dreams are still dreams.” Li Qiye said.

“You’re right, so I guess that’s my dream.” The man said.

“People build one small dream on top of another. When they pile up, they become a big dream.” Li Qiye said.

“That’s a good point.” The man said before becoming cautious: “You know, I feel that there’s something off about you ever since you got here.”

“What do you mean?” Li Qiye asked while chewing some edamame.

“Well, if I have to put it into words, you are an instigator who will push me into doing something bad.” The man stroked his chin and said.

“No way that a good person such as myself would do that.” Li Qiye smiled and shook his head.

“Who knows? People who talk about dreams are always trying to sell something bad, definitely not to be trusted.” The man remained skeptical.

“Sigh, that hurts. Here I am bringing money to your doorstep yet you call me an instigator.” Li Qiye lamented before taking out another silver ingot and pushing it across the table.

The man’s eyes gleamed after seeing the ingot. He grabbed it for a testing bite before putting it into his pocket and releasing a sigh of satisfaction.

“The customer is always right.” He nodded and said.

“You really have no principles.” Li Qiye couldn’t help but laugh.

“Principles? Can that be sold for money?” The man said with a serious expression.

“To be honest, I don’t hate the way you are now, it’s pretty endearing.” Li Qiye said seriously back.

“I’ve always been like this.” The man said with a puzzled expression.

“Not necessarily. Let’s just say that another version of you would be carrying a long saber to chase me from east to west, wanting to cut off my head.” Li Qiye said.

“Nonsense, that’s not something I would do. My elder brother might do that though, he’s a dry person who rarely smiles. Of course, if that situation actually occurs, it means that you must have done something egregiously wrong.” The man shook his head.

“My only fault is wanting to spread warmth and love everywhere.” Li Qiye shook his head.

“It’s hard to say, what if you kidnap someone’s daughter?” The man slapped his thigh and said: “He would really chase you around with a saber then.”

“Does he have a daughter?” Li Qiye entertained the thought.

“Well, I’m not sure, maybe he does, but then again, maybe not.” The man scratched his chin; his memories seemed a bit muddled.

“Bam!” He suddenly slammed the table, stood up, and pointed at Li Qiye: “But you do look like the type to be kidnapping nice girls! A regular saber wouldn’t be enough, a grand saber would be more appropriate to chop your head off and hang it on the city wall!”

“Calm down, calm down, no one is kidnapping your daughter or any other daughter for that matter.” Li Qiye said.

“Uh... you’re right.” The man snapped out of it and sat down, looking a bit dazed. He glanced at Li Qiye and asked: “You really didn’t kidnap anyone’s daughter?”

“Absolutely not. Just think about it, she’s a grown-up who is rather clever. How can she be kidnapped or tricked so easily? If she had gone with someone, it must be out of her own volition, don’t you think?” Li Qiye said.

"The way you put it does make sense." The man stroked his chin: "She's not a child and definitely not an idiot."

At this point, he shook his head: "Maybe I've drunk too much, getting all worked up over nothing since I don't even have a daughter."

"What about your elder brother?" Li Qiye asked with a faint smile.

"I don't know, we haven't seen each other since we were born, I don't know if he has a daughter." The man scratched his head and said something nonsensical.

"That's strange." Li Qiye responded.

"It's for the best, I got annoyed just looking at him. Do you know when you brought up someone capable of shouldering the heaven? That's him, just a fool who doesn't know how to enjoy life." The man said.

"Everyone carries something on their shoulder." Li Qiye said.

"Not me, I don't care if the sky falls down since taller people will be the ones shouldering." The man shrugged.

"What if it falls on your tavern?" Li Qiye joked.

“We’ll talk about this when it is actually happening.” The man glanced outside and said.

Li Qiye stared at the man and couldn’t help but sigh softly. He went on to peel an edamame pod, not continuing the conversation.

After a brief silence, he said: “You know, you don’t need to be stuck in this tavern forever.”

“Like I said, I’m content here just living a simple life.” The man responded.

“What comes after?” Li Qiye said before eating the edamame beans.

“Nothing.” The man was becoming agitated.

“You know there is something that comes after.” Li Qiye said.

“I just need to make money now, why bother worrying about the future?” The man said.

“I suppose, everyone makes their own choice.” Li Qiye nodded and said.

“You, as well.” The man said.

“I want to, but there is no other choice.” Li Qiye shook his head.

“You got a working head and a working body, so why do you think you have no choice?” The man said.

“Because if I choose, I will cease to be myself.” Li Qiye said seriously.

“What? Why wouldn’t you be yourself?” The man didn’t understand.

“Just like how you are not yourself in the dream, rowing the enormous boat in order to reach the other shore despite being exhausted.” Li Qiye elaborated.

“I see.” The man fell into contemplation, seemingly struggling with his thoughts.

After a while, he shook his head and said: “That was just a dream. There is no problem staying in this tavern and living a simple life.”

“Everyone can choose another version of themselves, it’s just that it’ll be an incomplete version.” Li Qiye sighed.

“Are you complete now?” He stared at Li Qiye.

“Yes, this is me, the only version of myself.” Li Qiye nodded.

“That sounds like a tiring and pitiful way to live.” The man commented.

“And that’s why many people prefer to be incomplete versions instead.” Li Qiye agreed.

Chapter 5289: Women Only Slow Me Down

Li Qiye preferred the edamame beans while the man focused on eating meat during their conversation.

“What about your younger brother?” Li Qiye asked.

“Let’s not talk about him, too arrogant and looks down on everyone.” The man didn’t like his siblings, especially the younger one.

“I see.” Li Qiye visualized a particular type.

“Always thinking about grand plans and putting up an act.” The man shrugged and added.

“I want to meet him.” Li Qiye smiled.

“He should be in Firmament, I don’t know the exact location because we were separated from birth.” The man said.

“You three brothers are quite interesting.” Li Qiye said.

“Not really, we’re rather different.” The man murmured.

“Have you thought about coming together again?” Li Qiye stared at him and said.

“Why should we? I don’t even want to see them, it’s too uncomfortable being near each other.” The man refused.

“But you’re still blood brothers.” Li Qiye said.

“Who says that blood brothers need to stay together? Staying with my older brother is suffocating. As for the young one? I don’t even want to look at him, always rolling his eyes and giving people looks of disdain.” He said while rolling his eyes upward.

“You should come with me.” Li Qiye finished the last peanuts before patting his hands clean and said.

“No, I’m busy here, no time to...” The man couldn’t finish before Li Qiye pushed a pile of silver ingots across the table.

His eyes lit up while looking at the shiny pile.

“They’re real?” He wondered how the guy got so rich.

“Of course.” Li Qiye nonchalantly said.

He picked up one of them and bit the corner. Sure enough, the taste was right. He then held one near to his ear as if trying to listen to something. This still wasn't reassuring enough so he picked one more for another bite.

Li Qiye patiently sat there and sipped some wine, not in a hurry at all.

After confirming the silver ingots, the man pulled the pile closer to him and stared at Li Qiye: "You're really giving this to me?"

"Yes, this is enough for you to remarry a pretty wife, have three to five kids or whatever." Li Qiye nodded.

"Bah." He started putting the ingots into his pocket before spitting on the ground: "Who wants a pretty wife, women and children are annoying and will just slow my cooking down. I'm better off alone."

Once he got everything off the table, he patted his pocket with satisfaction, looking like someone who had just belched after a great meal.

"I'll take my tavern and tag along with you, I don't know how long though. I won't be close either, I'll just open shop at a place I like nearby." The man said.

"That's not a problem, just not too far." Li Qiye smiled.

"Then we can head off now, where to?" The man was direct after receiving a handsome tip.

“Firmament.” Li Qiye said.

“... What do you want to do there?” The man had a bad feeling about this.

“Nothing, just going to meet someone.” Li Qiye smiled.

“That’s fine, you go do that.” The man said without any interest.

“Not a problem at all.” Li Qiye nodded.

The two of them left the tavern and were greeted by the rest.

“We’re going to Firmament.” Li Qiye said.

The man raised his hand and the tavern turned smaller, leaping onto his back like a backpack.

“That’s neat.” Li Zhitian commented, wondering about the tavern. Was it a treasure with a sentient spirit? That would explain the automatic drinks and food.

“Off we go.” Li Qiye started the journey with a new member.

Firmament was an ancient fortress city in Lesser Firmament. Its population consisted of countless cultivators and mortals, enjoying the descending radiance.

The group entered and saw how prosperous and live it was.

"I'm gonna find an open plot to open the tavern. Come let me know when you want to leave Firmament." The man didn't want to be around Li Qiye and left without permission.

Li Qiye chuckled and didn't try to stop him.

"What a strange fella." Li Zhitian stared at his departing figure and said softly: "I feel like he's suffering from some dissociative disorder."

Li Qiye only chuckled while the old servant responded: "He would be a matchless existence if he has his memories."

"Why did he forget?" Li Zhitian became curious.

He saw many interesting figures in the dream. However, only this man appeared in the outside world and most importantly, he was absolutely real.

Alas, Li Qiye didn't wish to divulge while the old servant didn't know the answer. Nonetheless, he knew that there were great secrets behind this.

"Alright, let's go find someone." Li Qiye said, aiming to find the younger brother of the tavern owner.

This was easier said than done given the scale of the city. Of course, this wasn't hard for Li Qiye.

They came across a field with many devout worshippers on their knees. A young man sat at the top, surrounded by celestial radiance.

Three thousand worlds bowed in reverence and even the gods would greet him respectfully. Strangely enough, he was not an accomplished cultivator such as a dao lord or conqueror.

There was just something about the youth's aura that was transcending. It wouldn't be an exaggeration to call him an immortal visiting the lower realm.

His extraordinary nature was evident at first glance - an immortal among the mortal world.

Chapter 5290: Firmament Godchild

Of course, this world didn't have immortals so he only had the appearance and aura of one.

If one had to be picky, his only flaw would be the arrogance in his eyes. He kept his eyes upward as if all living beings were unworthy of being in his sight, that nothing in the world was worthy of his attention. He had no interest in anything outside of gazing at the sky.

"This youth is something else." The old servant said with admiration.

"Firmament Godchild." Li Zhitian became startled and recognized this legendary figure.

The three Tians were famous as the supreme geniuses of the upper continents. They didn't let down everyone's expectations either and excelled at cultivation.

However, Li Zhitian knew that there was someone else looming above them - Firmament Godchild.

Strangely enough, this person didn't care about cultivation, preferring to observe the sky. Others found this to be a waste of time and a misuse of his innate talent. He didn't give a damn.

At this time, a fat merchant came closer and requested a fortune reading.

"Practice good deeds and accumulate virtues, do not damage your ancestors' grace any further." The godchild said without bothering to look at him.

"This lowly one engages in good deeds every day and has not committed any wrongdoings." The merchant hurriedly replied.

"I'm sure you perform plenty of good deeds with Widow Liu to the south of the city." The youth responded.

"Preposterous!" The merchant's expressions soured.

“What did you just do on her bed before coming here? Get lost, you won’t live past fifty if you keep this up.” The godchild didn’t hold back.

The merchant turned red and put down some money before scurrying away.

“Immortal, this humble woman wishes prosperity and wealth for my son, please show me the way.” An old woman who dressed plainly and poor offered her savings.

The godchild didn’t bother to look at the woman either. He said: “If you’re seeking wealth, go out and turn left to find the god of wealth’s temple. Why care about money, just hope that your son is filial and treats you with kindness, leave.”

Despite being scolded, the woman still kneeled and hit the ground with her head several times before leaving.

An ancestor from a famous sect also performed a similar gesture of respect before asking: “I wish to find our ancestral heart mantra to the south but do not know the way. Please guide me, Immortal.”

“Rubbish.” The youth said: “Your mind is chaotic and full of unnecessary thoughts. Even if I lead you to the scripture, it will only end up causing qi deviation. Focus on cultivating your heart and nurturing your character, the scripture will be within you.”

The normally imperious ancestor still left behind treasures despite the harsh critique. He kowtowed repeatedly before leaving.

In fact, a king from a neighboring country came for advice. He approached and bowed his head before inquiring: “I seek the proper art of governing...”

“Don’t bother since you’re surrounded by tigers and jackals. You’re not governing anything, only inflicting suffering on your people.” The youth interrupted.

The king could only bow and thank him for his guidance. He left behind a payment before leaving with a dejected look.

Someone else came forward but couldn’t say anything before receiving a comment from the youth: “Your future is boundless, cherish it and avoid arrogance. Off you go.”

The majority of visitors weren’t lucky enough to receive kind words; some were even scolded. Nonetheless, they paid respect and left behind treasures before leaving.

“He’s accurate.” Li Zhitian whispered to the group.

The godchild’s astounding accuracy caused both mortals and cultivators to seek his advice eagerly. Despite knowing that the response might be unfavorable and harsh, they still thought that the trip would be beneficial.

Therefore, whenever he appeared in public, people always flocked to him for his golden mouth and iron verdict.

He treated everyone with the same disdain, whether it be a poor mortal or a brilliant conqueror. Most importantly, they needed to obediently listen as well, aware of his accuracy.

Li Qiye played nice this time and waited in line. It took a long time before it was finally his turn.

This time around, the godchild finally averted his gaze from the sky to stare at the smiling Li Qiye.

“Okay, this is it today, leave now.” He waved his hand and told his worshippers to leave, not caring about their long wait thus far.

It didn’t take long before only Li Qiye’s group was left. Li Qiye took out a few bronze coins and tossed them in front of the godchild’s chair: “Give me a divination.”

The godchild’s expression immediately turned sour as he retorted: “You gave my worthless second brother a mountain of silver and this is what I get?”

“Mere external possessions, the bronze coins and silver ingots are the same for only the sky exists in your eyes.” Li Qiye smiled.

“Pfft.” The godchild scoffed and said: “What sky can I look at when you’re blotting it out?”

“Just look at me then.” Li Qiye replied.

“The only thing I see right now is an ugly face deserving a beating.” The godchild said.

“I don’t mind if that is your wish. I’m afraid it might be a little difficult though.” Li Qiye patted his face.

“Li, your arrogance knows no bounds!” The godchild clenched his fists, itching to beat Li Qiye up.

"I'm just speaking the truth. You can't lay a finger on me with your tiny frame. You three brothers must merge together again." Li Qiye said.

"Get lost, I'm not falling as your trick. And afterward, stay as far away from me as humanly possible." The godchild sneered.

"Sigh, my kindness is misunderstood." Li Qiye said: "So what if you can peer into the heaven? You're still just a fortune-teller, unable to grasp the future."

"Those who still trust you have something wrong in their brains, haven't you caused enough misery already?" The godchild said.

"Indeed, it wasn't a good outcome. I'm sorry." Li Qiye sighed and said.

"A cat shedding tears for a mouse. I don't need your fake kindness. Leave if you actually feel bad about it for nothing good comes from your visits." The godchild said.

"Not necessarily, I think my helping you three merge together again is a good idea." Li Qiye said.

"I'm living a great life right now with my insight into the heaven and the world. Why should we merge?" The godchild didn't buy it.

"Then you can only play the role of an observer, nothing more." Li Qiye said with a smile.

"I'd be foolish to listen to you, I rather be an observer than to be controlled by you." The godchild said.

"You underestimate the goodwill in my heart." Li Qiye responded with a smile.