

Disciples 201

Chapter 201: Grand Technique, Scram

The Cloud Feather Raiment suddenly burst with azure radiance. When the peculiar energy reached Little Yuan'er, it was completely negated by the azure radiance.

"Cloud Feather Raiment?"

Although it negated more than half of the energy, it still sent Little Yuan'er reeling back. She staggered a few steps backward before she managed to regain her footing on the roof.

Initially, Li Jing Yi thought the energy blast would heavily injure the little girl. However, she did not expect the Cloud Feather Raiment would be so miraculous. 'Just who is this little girl?'

At this moment, the servants in the Ci Mansion's courtyard who were looking at the sky cried out, "Young lady!"

When Little Yuan'er reeled back, she had let go of her Nirvana Sash. She looked at the sky with an extremely shocked expression on her face. "I'm alright!"

When Ci Yuan saw the situation was dire, he rushed toward Lu Zhou's room. Although he was rather courageous, he was still shocked by what he had seen. "Yuan'er is in danger! Please do something, old mister!" He leaned on the door hopefully as he waited for a reply.

...

Lu Zhou was still sitting cross-legged in the room with his eyes shut. Indeed, he had heard the commotion outside. However, he made no reply. There seemed to be a power inside his mind itching to launch into action. It was growing stronger.

Lu Zhou had never felt this before. When he comprehended the Heavenly Writing in the past, all he felt was his mental state becoming clearer and clearer... When he faced the Brahman Lullaby and witchcraft attacks, the extraordinary power was activated passively.

This time, it was different. A mysterious sensation made him feel as if he could control this amazing power. He sensed that he could not stop. If he stopped, it would be difficult for him to get into this state again.

...

Meanwhile, Li Jingyi drew level with the flying chariot. She kept flipping her hands. Thousand upon thousands of energy seals were formed...

"Too late!" A thunderous voice boomed from the flying chariot.

The numerous energy seals were shattered by the terrifying sound technique before they could even take shape. They burst in the air like bubbles.

Bam!

Li Jingyi was hit, and she fell.

Mingshi Yin shouted at Duanmu Sheng, "Third Senior Brother! Don't hold back anymore!"

"Avatar."

Two Hundred Tribulations Insight avatars appeared in midair.

The Separation Hook and the Overlord Spear seemed to penetrate the masked cultivators' chests at the same time.

Little Yuan'er ran along the roof and launched herself into the air. The Nirvana Sash left the two cultivators and flew toward Little Yuan'er like a dragon. She moved toward Li Jingyi. "Senior Brother!"

Little Yuan'er's Seven Stars Cloud Treading Steps were the perfect match for the Nirvana Sash.

"Coming!" Mingshi Yin and Duanmu Sheng's avatars moved swiftly. They planted themselves before the two remaining masked cultivators.

These two had much weaker cultivation bases. They were a far cry from the previous two. They were not even in the Nascent Divinity Tribulation realm!

Little Yuan'er could defeat them on her own, but time was running short...

The Nirvana Sash extended and reached under Li Jingyi like petals from a rose. It supported Li Jingyi to break her fall.

Little Yuan'er approached Li Jingyi. The Nirvana Sash wrapped itself around the two of them as they slowly descended.

"Just what I wanted!"

The huge sword appeared in the skies again. The Great Dark Heaven Memorial?

The sword had grown gigantic.

Li Jingyi looked up with a frightened expression on her face. "Move away!" She quickly pushed Little Yuan'er aside. The moment she broke free of the Nirvana Sash, she turned around in midair.

Little Yuan'er raised her eyebrows. "What're you doing?" She was determined not to fail her master's mission for them. "I must accomplish... what master has asked me to do!"

The Nirvana Sash unfurled again!

"Supreme Purity Jade Slip!"

With nimble movements and a Hundred Tribulations Insight avatar with no leaves, Little Yuan'er appeared next to Li Jingyi.

The Nirvana Sash shielded them from above.

"Little girl..." A terrifying energy surged from Li Jingyi's body.

Boom!

Energies collided above them.

Little Yuan'er and Li Jingyi retreated again.

"I'm alright!" Little Yuan'er pulled her Nirvana Sash back.

Mingshi Yin and Duanmu Sheng took care of their opponents at this moment. They prepared to rush to their aid.

Swoosh

At this moment, a cluster of gray clouds drifted toward them from the northwest of Anyang. They were moving at great speed!

Li Jingyi grabbed Little Yuan'er's hand and descended. "Get ready to retreat! A powerful enemy has arrived!"

The huge flying chariot in the sky sensed the coming of a stronger enemy as well.

Mingshi Yin looked at the gray clouds as he hovered in the air. The clouds were merely a blur from afar. When they got closer, he noticed that they were not clouds, it was a brown flying chariot...

A huge flag was displayed on the huge flying chariot. A Jasper Saber could be seen on the flag that had spiral patterns. The huge characters of the Nether Sect were displayed on the flag as well.

"Master, Yu Zhenghai, the Sect Master of Nether Sect Master is here!"

There was an obvious fluctuation in the impostor's flying chariot's Primal Qi. The black-robed cultivator who sat in the flying chariot opened his eyes. 'Yu Zhenghai is here?' His hands that were on his chest were visibly shaking at this point. His Primal Qi's circulation began to slacken. He wanted to condense his Qi into energy again, but he found that he could not. The Nether Sect's flying chariot was getting closer, and his hand shook even more violently as time passed. "Prepare to retreat."

"Understood."

He looked at the little girl in the Cloud Feather Raiment and said in a deep voice, "Little girl, you foiled my plans. You won't get away with this..."

A purple blast of energy shot out from the flying chariot again! It formed a huge claw that shot toward Little Yuan'er.

"Trying to attack my little junior sister? You'll have to go through me!" Mingshi Yin's Separation Hook and Scabbard spun as they swept toward the energy blast.

The Overlord Spear made a move as well. Thousand Waves.

Swoosh!

However, the Separation Hook and Scabbard and the Overlord Spear passed through the huge purple claw.

"It's no use! This is witchcraft!" Li Jingyi pulled on Little Yuan'er and ran.

The huge claw was closing in on them.

A burst of dense energy shot out from the Nether Sect's flying chariot and it was aimed at Little Yuan'er as well.

At the same time, four figures leaped out of the flying chariot. They moved at lightning speed.

Li Jingyi and Wei Zhuoyan were still unaware of the impostors. They thought the incoming flying chariot was just reinforcement from the Nether Sect.

This was a truly confusing situation.

Li Jingyi sighed and said, "Little girl, since you've saved me once, I'll return the favor now... Take Wei Zhuoyan with you and leave. He mustn't die!" Just as she was about to unleash her grand technique...

Above the roof of the Ci mansion where Lu Zhou was at, a soundwave formed a vortex and erupted with a faint bluish radiance. It shot through the roof into the air.

"Scram."

The word 'Scram' was projected upwards as if the vortex was an oversized loudspeaker.

Mingshi Yin descended.

Duanmu Sheng descended.

Li Jingyi descended.

Little Yuan'er descended as well after being pulled by Li Jingyi.

The soundwave was moving upward, it was best to stay close to the ground.

Those who were in the skies would have the rough.

'To gain the power of speech recognition, even about the unspeakable truths, and understand the words spoken by the tongues of the beings in the different worlds.' This was the Human Scroll of the Heavenly Writing's power of speech.

Lu Zhou felt danger creeping up on him, and his extraordinary power erupted instinctively.

The word 'Scram' sounded like a clap of thunder in every cultivator's ears.

The huge purple claw faded away.

The energy shot that was shot from the Nether Sect's flying chariot dissipated before it could even take form as well.

Cultivators dropped like flies in the wake of the soundwave.

The Four Great Protectors of the Nether Sect retreated in the air with fearful looks on their faces.

On the ground.

The soundwave spread for several miles with the Ci mansion at the center...

Every citizen of Anyang City heard the word 'Scram'.

The rebel army and the soldiers from the Divine Capital heard it as well.

Li Jingyi and the others looked up the instant they touched down.

The flying chariot above the southern gate teetered and creaked...

The flying chariot in the northwest managed to defend itself against this sound technique with the Four Great Protectors defending it. However, they still wore a fearful expression on their faces.

Whoosh!

The flying chariot above the southern gate seemed to have suffered a heavy blow. It was fleeing the scene quickly.

After a long pause, the streets of Anyang were finally silent.

The sun was shining at just the right intensity. Nobody was moving, nobody made a sound.

The people looked around. Some in confusion, some in fear, and some in concern.

Creak...

The Ci mansion's main doors swung open slowly at this moment, and Lu Zhou emerged with his hands on his back.

"Master!"

"Greetings, master!"

Mingshi Yin and Duanmu Sheng fell to one knee.

Little Yuan'er kneeled as well. "Master!"

It was not that Lu Zhou did not want to make a flashier appearance... but he did not have much Primal Qi left. In fact, he did not even know how he managed to unleash such extraordinary power. It practically depleted his Divine Court realm's Primal Qi... His mind was not as rested as it was after he comprehended the Heavenly Writing as well. For this reason, he could only slowly walk out. As he walked, he thought about the ways he could utilize this extraordinary power.

Even then, nobody dared to underestimate this wizened old man. After all, he was the master of the three elites.

The three disciples were still on their knees.

Lu Zhou was at the intersection now, which was ideal for him. He gazed in all four directions. The rebel army was to his left; to his right were Wei Zhuoyan and Li Jingyi.

All eyes were on Lu Zhou at this moment.

Li Jingyi fell to one knee, cupped her fists, and said, "Thank you for repelling the Nether Sect's Four Great Protectors, old senior!"

In the sky...

The genuine Nether Sect's Four Great Protectors hovered in the air and looked at the ground with fear.

"Li Jingyi?" Lu Zhou looked at Li Jingyi who was next to Little Yuan'er.

Chapter 202: Come Down, Eldest Senior Brother

Li Jingyi knew this old man was powerful. There were many strange things in this wide world. There were many peerless elites who had withdrawn from the secular world and did not interfere with its matters. These elites were usually humble since they knew there was always someone stronger than them in this wide world. This was something she had known since she was young. She quickly bowed and said, "My name's Li Jingyi."

Lu Zhou's expression was calm. He did not have to display his might to make the Four Great Protectors retreat in the air despite their profound cultivation bases.

They seemed to have forgotten their reason for being here. For a time, they remained in the air, stunned. They did not dare to descend. 'This unassuming old man is sect master's master?'

The four of them exchanged glances. They were still shaken by the lingering 'scram'... Their sect master had said that the Evil Sky Pavilion's patriarch's life was almost up. His strength and cultivation base would deteriorate rapidly in these ten years. If that was true, how did the old man unleash such a shocking and thunderous grand technique?

Li Jingyi looked at the sky. She discovered the Nether Sect's Four Great Protectors were hovering in the air, seemingly too afraid to descend. It seemed like they were intimidated by the old man. She looked in the direction of the southern city gates again. The rebel army was shaking. Some of them were sitting on the ground. It was clear they were no longer able to battle.

The men on Wei Zhuoyan's side were in no better shape either. They were huddled together and could hardly be called an army. They were like a pile of loose sand. They were in no condition to fight.

Lu Zhou looked up slowly. He glanced at the Four Great Protectors hovering in the sky.

With just glance, the Four Grand Protectors retreated again.

Lu Zhou stroked his beard and said, "Rascal."

'Rascal?' Li Jingyi was slightly stunned.

Although Lu Zhou was only in the Divine Court realm, he could still project his voice. He spoke in a slightly irritable tone, "Well? Are you going to come down?"

There was no other person who dared to address the Sect Master of the Nether Sect in such a manner. The Evil Sky Pavilion's master was the only one who could reprimand Yu Zhenghai like this. He must be the Fiend Path's patriarch who dominated the lands, Ji Tiandao!

Everything was clear now. The old man who had slowly walked out of the Ci Mansion was the current greatest villain in the world.

The Four Great Protectors' faces were etched with shock. They did not dare to descend. They simply kneeled in the air.

“The junior, Hua Chongyang of Nether Sect’s Azure Dragon Hall, pays homage to old senior.”

“This junior, Bai Yuqing of Nether Sect’s White Tiger Hall, pays homage to old senior.”

“The junior, Yang Yan of Nether Sect’s Vermillion Bird Hall, pays homage to old senior.”

“The junior, Di Qing of Nether Sect’s Black Tortoise Hall, pays homage to old senior.”

Li Jingyi regarded Lu Zhou with a complicated gaze. ‘Who else could make his enemies submit without a fight apart from the great villain?’

It should be known that the individuals who were kneeling were the Nether Sect’s Four Great Protectors. They were the First Seats of the Azure Dragon, White Tiger, Vermillion Bird, and Black Tortoise Halls. However, they seemed afraid of this old man.

Mingshi Yin crossed his arms and said, “Eldest Senior Brother, stop hiding. Come on down.”

Li Jingyi took a step back. Her mind went blank. Her gaze swiftly swept past Little Yuan’er, Mingshi Yin, Duanmu Sheng, and before it settled on the Nether Sect’s flying chariot. She took another step back again!

“There’s no need to be afraid.” Wei Zhuoyan had appeared behind her at some point.

Li Jingyi remembered the incident at the center of Bluesun Lake. The Evil Sky Pavilion’s flying chariot flew past them, and the general was never the same since then.

The old Wei Zhuoyan would go on and on about how he did not fear the Evil Sky Pavilion... but fear was actually deeply ingrained in his bones.

Wei Zhuoyan looked at Lu Zhou. As he got closer, he recognized the old man as the person he met in the Evil Sky Pavilion.

The Azure Dragon Hall’s First Seat, Hua Chongyang, said loudly, “My apologies, old senior... The sect master isn’t on the flying chariot.”

“He’s not?”

“The sect master knows you’re here, old senior. Hence, he sent the four of us in his stead.”

When Mingshi Yin heard this, he said with a smile, “I heard your sect master inspires awe throughout the nation and is invincible. I didn’t take him as a coward. Is he worried that master will eat him alive?”

“Uh...”

Mingshi Yin’s words gave Hua Chongyang no grounds to retort. It was the truth after all.

Yu Zhenghai felt the same way as Yu Shangrong. They were informed by Old Seventh that their master was here. There was no way that he would dare to personally come here. It did not matter if he was the master of the greatest cult in the world. Hence, sending his subordinates here was the perfect move.

The Four Great Protectors’ combined strength and cultivation bases were almost equivalent to their sect master. This was showing Lu Zhou enough consideration. Before they arrived, they were filled with confidence. It was a coincidence that they ran into the disturbance in Anyang City and the fake Nether

Sect's flying chariot. However, they did not expect that the four of them combined were less powerful than a 'scram' from Ji Tiandao. Not even their sect master was capable of this. Realization dawned on them. They finally understood why their sect master chose not to come.

They hovered in the air cautiously and obediently. Worst case scenario, they could just turn tail and run. In front of such an elite, running away was nothing to be ashamed of.

Hua Chongyang said, "Please believe me, old senior... The sect master heard that it was Miss Ninth's birthday so he sent us here to deliver a gift. That's all!"

Mingshi Yin and Duanmu Sheng looked at Little Yuan'er at the same time.

Little Yuan'er appeared innocent...

After Hua Chongyang spoke, he mustered up his courage and descended. When he reached a certain altitude, he waved his arm and an embroidered box floated down.

The box was wrapped in energy as it made its way toward Little Yuan'er.

Mingshi Yin flashed a faint smile and said, "I'll get it." He moved at lightning speed and grabbed the box in the air before landing on the ground again. He lifted the box and said, "Little junior sister... If there's something bad inside this box, I'll be able to shield you."

Little Yuan'er nodded. "Mhm. Thank you, senior brother!"

This embroidered box was similar in size to the one Yu Shangrong had given her.

Mingshi Yin opened the box and conjured up a layer of protective energy at the same time. The box did not contain any dangerous poison or trap. Instead, it contained a pair of light green boots.

"The name of this item is the Cloud Treading Boots. Miss Ninth's movements and footwork are among the best in the world. With these boots, she'll certainly be like a tiger that's given wings."

Little Yuan'er beamed when she heard this. She kept looking at the boots within the embroidered box. She said softly, "Senior brother... Senior brother, my..."

"Hm?" Mingshi Yin gave her a meaningful look.

Little Yuan'er immediately quieted down. With an indifferent expression, she said, "Master, I don't want these boots."

Lu Zhou appraised the cloud-treading boots.

The Cloud Treading Boots and the Cloud Feather Raiment were the same; they were not ordinary items. It was rumored that the Cloud Treading Boots were made specifically for the celestials in the heavens. The wearer would be as light as a feather and could soar the skies with the boots. These boots were made from extremely precious twin plumes and asbestos. After the materials were refined, a grandmaster had worked on them.

Lu Zhou said, "Tell Yu Zhenghai to come if he wants to apologize."

The Four Great Protectors sighed in relief when they heard this. They stood up and cupped their fists at Lu Zhou as they said, "We'll certainly convey your message."

The four of them retreated and returned to the flying chariot. Up until now, the Four Great Protectors maintained the air of an elite. Their movements were neither hurried nor slow. However, when the flying chariot turned around, it resembled a frightened fish as it shot toward the distance like it was running away from a predator.

Wei Zhuoyan sighed in relief as well. He cupped his fists at Lu Zhou and said solemnly, "Thank you, old senior." He no longer put on the air and the might of a supreme general.

Li Jingyi bowed as well. "Thank you, old senior..."

Lu Zhou looked at Li Jingyi and asked, "Where's Jiang Aijian?"

Li Jingyi was taken aback by this question. She suddenly remembered the little girl had mentioned her name before this. She announced that nobody was to touch her or Wei Zhuoyan. Clearly, the old man knew who she was. In that case, it was meaningless to lie. She bowed and said, "Skylark Pagoda."

Mingshi Yin frowned slightly. "This Jiang Aijian... He has left the Imperial family. Is he going to make master travel there to meet him?" He asked, "What's he doing there?"

"Fishing. He says he likes fishing... and has been fishing at Skylark Pagoda for the past few days. I don't know any further details," Li Jingyi answered honestly.

Lu Zhou nodded before he said, "Let's head to Skylark Pagoda then."

The streets of Anyang were deserted as Lu Zhou left with his hands on his back.

Mingshi Yin looked at Wei Zhuoyan's soldiers and said, "Don't tell me you can't handle this group of trash." By trash, he meant the rebel army.

When he passed by Li Jingyi, Mingshi Yin slowed down and said, "Will you consider joining the Evil Sky Pavilion?"

Li Jingyi merely bowed without giving a reply.

Mingshi Yin had to leave it at that to catch up with the rest.

Little Yuan'er did not leave immediately. She bade the people of the Ci family farewell before she left. When she passed by Li Jingyi, she said in a hushed tone, "Big sister... listen to me, you must cut ties with Jiang Aijian. He's too shameless."

"Uh... thank you, little sister. I'm not exactly close to him," Li Jingyi replied with a nod.

"That's great. Goodbye... By the way, you're the first stranger whom I don't dislike..." Little Yuan'er said with a giggle before she skipped off to find the others.

Duanmu Sheng was curt with his words. He cupped his fists and said, "Farewell."

Little Yuan'er was the only one who believed Li Jingyi when Li Jingyi said that she was not close to Jiang Aijian. How could it be true since Jiang Aijian was willing to ask them to help her?

When Lu Zhou and the others left, Wei Zhuoyan's soldiers slumped to the ground. Their backs were drenched in cold sweat. They had been immobilized by that sound technique earlier. Then, they had been in close quarters with those villains... It was good enough that they did not die from shock.

Wei Zhuoyan chided them with a tone that was laced with anger. "Get up!"

His sudden shout shook everyone. Nobody knew why he was angry.

Li Jingyi's gaze turned cold as she said, "Only a powerless person would take his anger out on the people around him."

Wei Zhuoyan fell silent. After a moment of muttering to himself, he asked, "You know Jiang Aijian?"

"I do."

Wei Zhuoyan's expression turned unnatural as he said, "He's one of the three great Sword Freaks. He values the sword as much as his life, and his love for swords is ingrained in his bones. I've heard nothing but bad things about this man."

"What does it have to do with you?"

"Don't forget... I may be an impostor, but I'm still the Commander-in-Chief of three armies," Wei Zhuoyan said as he walked ahead and surveyed the chaotic rebel army and masked cultivators. He seemed more confident now as he waved his arm and said, "Those who caused this disturbance... will be executed!"

...

Meanwhile, the Nether Sect's Four Great Protectors steered their flying chariot back to Pingdu Mountain at top speed.

When the flying chariot arrived above the mountain, a figure suddenly appeared before the flying chariot. The man walked on air and onto the stern. His hands were placed on his back, and he had a proud air about him.

The Four Great Protectors stepped forward and bowed. "Greetings, Sect Master."

"How did it go?" Yu Zhenghai seemed to be very interested in their answers. After all, he had never sent all four of his Great Protectors on a single mission...

The Azure Dragon Hall's First Seat, Hua Chongyang, bowed and said, "In reply to your question, Sect Master, the gift has been delivered... I've also met the old senior."

"Oh?"

"The old senior is tremendously strong. Even the four of us aren't a match for him," Hua Chongyang said.

When Yu Zhenghai heard this, he said in a low voice, "Tell me everything. Don't spare the details."

The Four Great Protectors did not dare dally. This was the first time they had seen Yu Zhenghai looking so solemn.

Hua Chongyang cupped his fists. He recounted the series events, starting from them riding the flying chariot to Anyang, encountering the rebellion, attacking the rebels, and being pushed back by the word 'scram'. He spared no details. He described the grand technique, Scram, in greater detail, especially about the power it packed. He was very close to reenacting the scene where countless cultivators were pushed back by that technique.

Upon hearing this, Yu Zhenghai mumbled, "A grand sound technique..."

There were many who were skilled in sound techniques. However, those capable of unleashing a grand sound technique were few and far between.

Yu Zhenghai was the Evil Sky Pavilion's first disciple. He knew his master better than anyone else. He could not recall his master ever unleashing a grand sound technique. He paced back and forth as he contemplated this before he suddenly remembered the information that he obtained from Si Wuya. 'Is it really possible that the old man is cultivating techniques from different sects?'

If it had been anyone else, Yu Zhenghai would not believe he or she would be capable of cultivating techniques from other sects to perfection. However, Ji Tiandao was different...

'Perhaps, it's one of master's friends?' Yu Zhenghai asked, "Are you sure you saw my master?"

"We were slightly far away and didn't have a clear look of his face. However, we're certain he's Old Senior Ji."

"How so?"

"We saw Miss Ninth wearing the Cloud Feather Raiment..."

'Cloud Feather Raiment...' It was not that Yu Zhenghai did not believe his trusted subordinates. He merely did not want to miss out on any details. He nodded. He chuckled before he said, "Second Junior Brother... I've truly underestimated you."

"Sect Master... we didn't see Mister Second when we were at Anyang."

"Second Junior Brother has always preferred to operate alone... With your strength, you must never provoke him," Yu Zhenghai said.

"We'll remember your words, sect master."

When he thought about Yu Shangrong, Yu Zhenghai shook his head and sighed softly.

The Azure Dragon Hall's First Seat suddenly realized that he should not have brought this topic up. He hastily bowed and changed the topic. "Miss Ninth likes the Cloud Treading Boots very much."

"Really?"

"I dare not lie..." Hua Chongyang saw the barely-concealable look of delight in Little Yuan'er's eyes when the gift was presented.

Yu Zhenghai smiled widely and said, "The Cloud Feather Raiment is but a protective gear that does nothing but takes blows... It's only natural for Little Junior Sister to like the Cloud Treading Boots better."

“You’re extremely wise, sect master.” The Four Great Protectors bowed in unison.

Yu Zhenghai asked again, “Where are they now?”

“We did not dare follow them... However, when I returned, I received word from the Azure Dragon Hall that Mister Seventh is on his way to the Skylark Pagoda,” Hua Chongyang said.

Bai Yuqing said, “It’s rumored that the Skylark Pagoda has nine floors, with each successive floor taller than the one before. There are Formations everywhere. The person who manages to climb to the top floor will apparently receive a treasure. I wonder if it’s true?”

Chapter 203: Skylark Pagoda

Yu Zhenghai turned around and walked to the edge of the flying chariot and looked down at Pingdu Mountain.

When they saw their sect master was quiet, the Four Great Protectors dared not continue the topic regarding Ji Tiandao. They had never spoken to their sect master about the Evil Sky Pavilion until now. They knew their sect master was the first disciple of the Evil Sky Pavilion and possessed unfathomable strength. If they had not been dispatched to Anyang for this matter, they would not have the opportunity to discuss the Evil Sky Pavilion with their sect master. After all, their sect master had never talked about the Evil Sky Pavilion.

The Azure Dragon Hall’s First Seat, Hua Chongyang, recalled something and said, “Sect Master, the old senior has a message for you...”

“What is it?”

“If you want to apologize, you’d better personally come,” Hua Chongyang repeated the words he heard. At the same time, his heart thumped wildly in his chest. He was not sure if Yu Zhenghai would be angered by these words.

Yu Zhenghai’s expression was as calm as his emotions. He said loudly, “How can I give up before accomplishing my grand ideals?”

“We’ll follow you until death!” Yu Zhenghai’s four subordinates said in unison.

Yu Zhenghai nodded in satisfaction. Then, he said, “Do you know who it was that impersonated the Nether Sect?”

Hua Chongyang replied, “They were only there for a brief moment. Their flying chariot and methods are similar to ours. Other than the mysterious expert onboard the flying chariot, the others are weak.”

Bai Yuqing said, “They’re skilled in mimicry. Even the Dark Heaven Starlight was similar to yours, sect master... When we arrived, we discovered them using witchcraft spells as well. It’s most probably a powerful witchcraft practitioner.”

Yu Zhenghai asked, “Is it Mo Qi, the Sect Master of Clarity Sect?”

"It's true that Clarity Sect's Mo Qi has the advantages of 100 sects... However, he doesn't seem to be skilled in witchcraft. I heard there's a powerful witchcraft practitioner in Great Yan's palace," Hua Chongyang said.

"There's another possibility..." Bai Yuqing chimed in, "The Clarity Sect's Mo Qi might have aligned himself with the palace, and there was more than one expert on the flying chariot!"

The speculations were logical. However, they were just speculations. They needed evidence. If they were off in their calculation even by the slightest bit, it would most certainly affect Nether Sect's subsequent plans.

The Nether Sect had planned each step carefully to reach where it was right now. They played it safe and eventually grew to their current scale. They could not afford to stumble over such trivial details.

Hua Chongyang proposed, "Give me three days. I'll get to the bottom of this."

"Very well." After Yu Zhenghai finished speaking, he turned around to look at the mountain terrain before his eyes finally shifted to the direction of Skylark Pagoda. He, naturally, knew about this place. Hua Chong Yang's words were not wrong. Each of the nine floors had its own Formations. Cultivators would frequently visit the pagoda to try their luck at obtaining the treasure.

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The Skylark Pagoda was not located in Anyang City. Instead, it was located northeast of Anyang City. It was a paradise for cultivation near Nine Tune River's mouth, and it was not protected by the city. The scenery of Skylark Pagoda near Nine Tune River was captivating. It was a utopia that was reminiscent of the immortals' dwelling place.

When Lu Zhou and his three disciples were fast approaching Skylark Pagoda in the air, their attention was caught by the scenery. The mountains, the tranquil forests, the river... There were all kinds of insects, fishes, and birds.

Mingshi Yin asked in confusion, "The waters of Nine Tune River are muddy with no fish all year-round. Is Jiang Aijian pulling our legs?"

Duanmu Sheng said, "You think he has the courage for that?"

Mingshi Yin nodded and said, "Jiang Aijian is an intelligent person. He doesn't seem like the type to do something so foolish. Skylark Pagoda is a peculiar place... We should proceed with utmost caution." At the same time, he thought to himself, 'Since master is here, what is there to fear?'

"Look, it's Skylark Pagoda!"

The towering Skylark Pagoda appeared within their sight at this moment.

"As expected of Skylark Pagoda... It's so tall." Mingshi Yin had never been here. When he laid eyes on Skylark Pagoda, he was awed by its height.

Lu Zhou had been here several times before. To be more precise, Ji Tiandao had been here several times before... However, his recollections of this place were blurry at best. He descended, and his three disciples followed suit.

Mingshi Yin looked at his master in confusion. They had flown here at a very slow pace. It was almost unbefitting of a Nascent Divinity Tribulation realm cultivator. However, he did not dare to question his master. He had thought, perhaps, his master was getting old and preferred to travel at a steadier and more comfortable pace. His master was probably also being considerate to them since he could have left them in the dust if he had ridden on Whitzard.

Swoosh!

A figure flew overhead. It shot toward a branch and perched on it.

A chuckle could be heard as the figure's voice rang in the air. "It's been a while. I miss everyone so, so much. The distinguished, elegant, handsome, and confident Jiang Aijian, at your service."

Jiang Aijian carried his sword as he stood on the branch in a lazy manner.

Lu Zhou regarded him calmly. With his hands on his back, he said, "My patience is limited."

Upon hearing this, Jiang Aijian shuddered and hastily said, "Alright, alright, I'll be down in a second. See? I'm really obedient." He leaped down and pointed to a nearby pavilion and said, "Old senior, shall we?"

They made their way to the pavilion as Jiang Aijian busied himself with wiping the bench with his sleeve. Then, he said, "Have a seat, old senior."

Lu Zhou did not hesitate and sat down.

Initially, Jiang Aijian had intended to sit across Lu Zhou, but when he saw Lu Zhou's glare, he chose to stand instead. He did not even have anything to lean on. All the pillars had been taken by Mingshi Yin, Duanmu Sheng, and Little Yuan'er.

Lu Zhou did not bother himself with the scenery beyond the pavilion. His eyes were trained on Jiang Aijian.

Jiang Aijian felt goosebumps rising on his skin, and he quickly said, "Old senior... please don't stare at me like this. It's kind of embarrassing."

Lu Zhou stroked his beard and said, "Say what you have to say."

Jiang Aijian put away his frivolous attitude and mustered up some courage. He sat before Lu Zhou and said, "Firstly, I want to thank you for helping Li Jingyi, old senior."

"Is Li Jingyi your woman?"

"She's a friend."

"So... how do you plan on repaying the favor?" Lu Zhou narrowed his eyes, looking like a predator that was eyeing its prey.

Jiang Aijian gulped. He felt goosebumps rising on his skin again. He produced a brocade box from his chest pocket and placed it on the table.

Everyone shifted their gaze toward the box.

What a strange day! It seemed like everyone was gifting brocade boxes.

Jiang Aijian's brocade box was exquisite and fine. "Open it, old senior."

Lu Zhou waved his arm, and the brocade box opened. "A Sky Fragment." The content of the box was an item that he was looking for, one of the eight Sky Fragments. It was curved and more battered than the one in his possession.

Lu Zhou glanced at the mission list on the system dashboard. Search for Sky Fragments (2/8)...

When Mingshi Yin, Duanmu Sheng, and Little Yuan'er saw the Sky Fragment, they were slightly surprised that Jiang Aijian was capable of such a feat.

"This is what I obtained from the palace's warehouse. When I first visited, I discovered there was a Sky Fragment there, but I paid no mind to it. I heard you're looking for Sky Fragments so I visited the warehouse again. Although the Sky Fragment is a fragment, it's a unique weapon as well. It can easily pierce through energy and can be used to harm your enemy when their guard is down," Jiang Aijian said.

Lu Zhou nodded and put the fragment away.

"Ding! Retrieved Sky Fragment. Reward: 100 merit points."

It was a surprise to find a fragment in the palace's warehouse.

'This is a windfall. In addition to the targets Mingshi Yin and Duanmu Sheng killed in the Anyang rebellion, I've earned 1,900 merit points so far.'

Lu Zhou asked, "Is Yunsan in Skylark Pagoda?" Lu Zhou asked.

Jiang Aijian said with a smile, "I'll have to ask you the same question, old senior... Everyone says that the Evil Sky Pavilion's seventh disciples, Si Wuya, has an information network that extends to every corner of Great Yan. He let slip that a certain treasure will appear in Skylark Pagoda, the Giant Silkworm Gloves. Coincidentally, the Giant Silkworm Gloves are what Yunsan likes the most. The gloves were initially in the possession of the Yun, Tian, and Luo Sects. Yunsan prides himself on being the only descendant of the Pickpocket Sect, but he couldn't steal this item. However, now it's suddenly made known that the Giant Silkworm Gloves are in Si Wuya's hands. Old senior... You're not the one behind this, are you?"

Lu Zhou did not deny it. He nodded frankly.

Jiang Aijian scratched his head, speechless.

Lu Zhou stared at Jiang Aijian and said, "Is this why you called me here?"

"No, no... Of course, not." Jiang Aijian straightened his back and cleared his throat.

Mingshi Yin and the others were speechless. Jiang Aijian had gone on and on for half a day, and he was only going into the main topic now?

Jiang Aijian said, "Old senior... I want to know which side will you choose?"

"Hm?"

Jiang Aijian waved his arm casually. A few pebbles flew toward him and landed on the stone table before him. "This is the First Prince, the Second Prince, and the Third Prince... Oh, no, this doesn't count... This is the Fourth Prince, the Fifth Prince... and Lady Jade."

As he looked at the five pebbles on the table, Lu Zhou said indifferently, "Continue."

Jiang Aijian said, "I don't think you'll pick the First Prince since you've never met him. The Second Prince's subordinate, Mo Li, views you as a thorn in the flesh, the Fourth Prince is exiled to a border garrison post and doesn't have much support in the palace, the Fifth Prince is meek and won't amount to anything great, and Lady Jade despises the Evil Sky Pavilion. Eh, you don't have a choice, old senior! Just as well... So long as you don't meddle in the palace's affairs, I'll feel relieved, old senior."

"..."

Jiang Aijian had taken the liberty to analyze the choices and answered his own question for Lu Zhou.

This rendered everyone speechless.

Lu Zhou stroked his beard and finally said, "Is the palace already in chaos?"

Jiang Aijian sighed before he said helplessly, "The power struggles in the palace will surely spread outside one day... Anyang is a good example of this."

"Since you've left the palace, why did you meddle in Anyang's affairs?" Lu Zhou asked.

"Well..." Jiang Aijian scratched his head and said, "As I said, Li Jingyi is my friend, I can't possibly watch her die."

"If Li Jingyi dies, Wei Zhuoyan will die. The three armies will have no leader, the Second Prince will act out of anger, the Imperial family will be in ruins, and the world will be plunged into chaos... I think you're suited for the throne for having such considerations," Lu Zhou said.

When Jiang Aijian heard this, he hastily waved his hands and said, "I'm not that ambitious... What I yearn for is simple. I want to be alive and to wield the sword."

Mingshi Yin and Little Yuan'er could no longer refrain from laughing out loud. This fellow was indeed cheap.

Lu Zhou looked at the sword in Jiang Aijian's arms and said, "Dragonsong?"

Jiang Aijian shrunk back instinctively even though he knew it was useless. He placed Dragonsong on the table.

Its scabbard was wrapped in a layer of cloth. When the cloth was removed, the most striking dragon carving could be seen on Dragonsong's scabbard.

Zing!

The sword was drawn, and it gleamed in the light.

Jiang Aijian often admired the sword in this manner. His glazed eyes told the others that he was infatuated and mesmerized.

A sword freak was a sword freak after all.

"A good sword." Lu Zhou nodded.

Jiang Aijian said, "I think so too... I have never seen such a nice sword in my life..."

"Is it sharp?" Lu Zhou asked.

"It is..." Jiang Aijian seemed proud. "To test its sharpness, I've lost weapons that were almost close to heaven-grade. Weapons that are earth-grade or lower were like tofu."

"That's good." Lu Zhou raised his hand. An exquisite and delicate sword materialized above his palm.

Unnamed spun and glowed faintly, shrouded by energy.

Jiang Aijian hastily sheathed Dragonsong, wrapped it with the cloth, and closely hugged it against his chest. He chuckled and said, "There's no need for you to do this, old senior. If both swords are broken... It won't be worth it."

"Forget it." Lu Zhou did not force Jiang Aijian when he saw Jiang Aijian seem to genuinely care for the sword. He recalled Unnamed.

Lu Zhou stood up slowly, placed his hands on his back, and looked at Skylark Pagoda.

A group of cultivators appeared in the air. They were flying toward Skylark Pagoda from the other side of the Nine Tunes River.

Jiang Aijian stood up and looked at the cultivators in the air as he said, "They're here... Let's go have a look."

Mingshi Yin saw the cultivators as well. "Master, there are so many of them, things might get messy. Should I go ahead first?"

"It's alright." Lu Zhou shook his head.

Yanzi Yunsan was a cunning person. Mingshi Yin might not be able to catch him with his abilities. Back then, Yunsan had managed to escape after being surrounded by the Yun, Tian, and Luo Sects.

Yunsan's cultivation base was not profound, but he was a renowned master thief and a troublesome opponent.

Lu Zhou turned around and left the pavilion. He walked toward Skylark Pagoda along the path.

When Mingshi Yin saw Jiang Aijian nonchalantly crossing his arms, he calmed down as well.

...

At this moment, many cultivators were gathered in front of Skylark Pagoda. There were cultivators from the Mystic Enlightening realm to the Divine Court realm.

From the ground, the top of the towering Skylark Pagoda could not be seen. It took up a wide area of land, and the higher floors were shrouded by clouds.

"It's rumored that a short sword is kept on Skylark Pagoda's ninth floor. I wonder who'll be able to obtain it."

"Let the best man win... Brains are more important than brawns to bypass the nine Formations. I heard that a Nascent Divinity Tribulation realm expert from the Divine Capital was ejected from the seventh floor. On the contrary, a Brahman Sea realm cultivator made it to the ninth floor and obtained a treasure."

The cultivators looked up at Skylark Pagoda.

At this moment, a cultivator was sent flying out from the third floor of the pagoda. He threw out a mouthful of blood as he fell.

The cultivators backed away. They showed no signs of sympathy for the challenger. They only watched as he fell on the ground.

Jiang Aijian shook his head and straightened two fingers as he said, "Old senior, let me tell you a secret... There's no short sword at the top of Skylark Pavilion. Instead... they're Sky Fragments... and there are two of them. Although Sky Fragments are no match for heaven-grade weapons, two fragments brought together can be reforged... If the forging is done right, it'll surely be a heaven-grade weapon."

Mingshi Yin frowned slightly. He looked around and said, "No wonder there are so many people here who would throw their lives away just to climb the pagoda..."

At this time, another few cultivators were sent flying out of the sixth and seventh floor of the pagoda.

The observers on the ground shook their heads and sighed. "I'm afraid nobody will make it to the ninth floor this year."

A sly expression could be seen on Jiang Aijian's face as he said, "Old senior, why don't you give it a try? I'm sure it'll be a piece of cake for you to pass the nine Formations."

Lu Zhou turned to look at Jiang Aijian and said, "Are you here for the short sword?"

"No, no, you misunderstand me! We're talking about the nine Formations of Skylark Pagoda after all... In any case, two Sky Fragments are what awaits you at the top of the pagoda. They can be a heaven-grade..." Jiang Aijian stopped speaking mid-sentence when he felt the eyes of the other cultivators on him. "Uh, I got carried away and spoke too loudly. Carry on, carry on..."

A commotion broke out at the entrance of Skylark Pagoda immediately...

"It's Sky Fragments!"

"This time, the treasures are Sky Fragments!"

Chapter 204: Strength Does Not Lie in Numbers

The cultivators began discussing among themselves at the mention of Sky Fragments.

The Evil Sky Pavilion might disdain the Sky Fragments since they were merely earth-grade items, they were not even weapons. Yunsan had only managed to obtain them because Ji Tiandao had discarded them back then.

However, to others, the Sky Fragments were extremely precious. They might not be weapons, but they were excellent for forging weapons. Even a weapon forged from the millennium frost iron might not be able to compare with one forged from Sky Fragments. Moreover, everyone coveted its ability that could slice through energy.

However, the forging process was too tedious. Therefore, it was more likely that the cultivators at the base of Skylark Pagoda would sell the Sky Fragments or trade them for something else.

Lu Zhou looked at Jiang Aijian knowingly.

Jiang Aijian shrugged and said, "Alright... I deliberately did that." He pointed at the group of cultivators in front and said, "They have the numbers... The nine Formations of Skylark Pagoda can't be breached by brute force."

Mingshi Yin said with a smile, "So, when they get to the top and retrieve the Sky Fragments, we'll swoop in, kill them, and take the fragments for ourselves, is that it?"

"You're truly wise, Mister Fourth." Jiang Aijian gave Mingshi Yin a thumbs-up.

Mingshi Yin did not accept the compliment. Instead, he asked, "How do you know there are Sky Fragments at the top?"

"The master of Skylark Pagoda... is a friend of mine." Jiang Aijian spread his arms.

Mingshi Yin resisted the urge to charge at Jiang Aijian and beat him up. 'If he's truly your friend, can't you just head to the top floor and retrieve the fragments?'

Jiang Aijian seemed to know the thoughts running through Mingshi Yin's mind. He said, "The nine Formations of Skylark Pagoda are always activated. They'll only vanish after a certain period of time... It's only then that we can head up and retrieve it. Look at Nine Tune River. When it's spring tide, the Formations will vanish."

Mingshi Yin nodded and said, "I'm surprised by how knowledgeable you are."

"Thank you for the compliment, Mister Fourth."

The cultivators at the bottom of Skylark Pagoda were eager to make a move. Many of them were already gathering at the entrance. It did not take long before cultivators began to make their way into the pagoda.

At the same time, there were also many cultivators who were sent flying out. Many of them had too many distracting thoughts in their minds due to their eagerness to obtain the treasures and were ejected on the first floor. All of them crashed heavily to the ground.

The news about the Sky Fragments spread fast. Some cultivators who were in the vicinity rushed over when they heard about it.

Jiang Aijian was slightly speechless. He nodded and bowed as he said, "It's an accident... I didn't think that there would be so many people."

"It doesn't matter," Lu Zhou said with his hands on his back. Indeed, the size of the crowd did not matter to him. They were merely a bunch of small fries. He might not even have to make a move himself. Moreover, he was not in a hurry. After all, he was waiting for the Pickpocket Sect's Yanzi Yunsan.

'Will he come with all the fanfare here?'

Lu Zhou was now a hunter. A good hunter needed the patience to wait for the appearance of his prey.

"You've got to be kidding me! The nine Formations are tougher than last year's. I made it all the way to the third floor last year, but I only got to the second floor this year!" Some cultivators began to complain.

"That's a matter of course. If the Formations didn't improve, there would be many people who make it to the top floor... Do you think there is someone so generous in this world that they would give away treasures for free?"

Someone sighed. "I guess I'm not fated to obtain this treasure. I'm leaving."

"Wait! Those who failed... either pay up or leave an item behind." There was a cultivator at the base of Skylark Pagoda who managed the people entering the pagoda. He was also tasked with collecting payments and items from the challengers.

Mingshi Yin said to Jiang Aijian, "Your friend is quite the businessman."

"He's one of the richest men in the Divine Capital. Where do you think his wealth comes from?" Jiang Aijian replied.

Jiang Aijian was the Third Prince. It was not strange that he knew such a person from the Divine Capital.

Mingshi Yin looked at the cultivators who sent flying out. He sneered and said, "What's the use of having numbers on their sides? None of them made it."

Jiang Aijian scratched his head. He could not say anything. It was a fact after all. He could only blame the cultivators for not being diligent enough.

"Old senior, what do you think?" Jiang Aijian turned to look at Lu Zhou.

The young cultivators who challenged the pagoda were not as experienced as Lu Zhou. It was possible for him to have some sort of plan.

Lu Zhou looked at Skylark Pagoda and said, "Clear your heart of distracting thoughts."

"That's all?" Jiang Aijian was puzzled.

Lu Zhou said nothing else. He was not here to be a teacher.

Bam!

Bam!

Two thunderous sounds rang from above, attracting everyone's attention.

Two cultivators were sent flying out from the eighth floor of Skylark Pagoda. At the same time, energy rippled out into the surroundings.

Many people exclaimed in shock before they retreated.

When the two individuals were sent flying out, they flipped in the air and sent waves of energy out from their palms before they slowly descended on the ground.

“Amazing!”

The crowd erupted in applause.

They managed to climb to the eighth floor and had the energy to preserve themselves when they were ejected. Clearly, these two were elites.

When the two individuals landed, they staggered slightly before they managed to stabilize their footings.

“How was it?” someone asked.

“Yeah, tell us about your experience and thoughts...”

Some cultivators walked up to them, wanting to know more.

One of them wiped the sweat from his forehead. He gulped before he said, “Tough... It was tough...”

“That’s all?”

“I advise all of you to give up.” The man sighed and shook his head. “I’ve never seen such a difficult Formation in my life...”

Based on the fact he made it up to the eighth floor, it was clear he was more knowledgeable about Formations compared to the others.

“Aren’t you going to give it another try?”

“There’s no need for that... It’s impossible for anyone to make it to the ninth floor... I’ll say this now, it’s up to you to believe me or not.” He had failed and thought it was a waste of breath to say anything else. He turned around and walked to a nearby pavilion.

The cultivators exchanged glances. The person’s words were disheartening, and it affected them somewhat. After all, someone who made it all the way to the eighth floor was convinced he could not proceed further. One could imagine how difficult the Formation must be.

“Master... Can I give it a try?” Little Yuan’er leaped forward.

Lu Zhou nodded calmly.

Little Yuan’er was playful in nature. She could hardly restrain herself. Since she had been behaving recently, Lu Zhou would not be unreasonable.

“Thank you, master... I’ll show them.”

“Good luck, little girl!” Jiang Aijian said with a smile.

“Shut up! Who’re you calling little girl?” Little Yuan’er glared at him.

Jiang Aijian shrunk back instinctively. ‘My, my... She didn’t change at all. I shouldn’t cross her.’

Little Yuan’er walked toward Skylark Pagoda.

Jiang Aijian said, “Old senior, this little girl...”

Before Lu Zhou could even reply, Mingshi Yin said, “I advise you against provoking her... You might not be a match for her now.”

Jiang Aijian changed his words and waved his hands as he said, “All the best, great aunt!”

Mingshi Yin was baffled by Jiang Aijian. Was Jiang Ai Jian truly Great Yan’s Third Prince? Was he really one of the three Sword Freaks?

When Little Yuan’er approached the entrance of Skylark Pagoda, many people were gathered there. Most of them were burly men. Initially, she wanted to scare these men away by displaying her strength. However, she remembered her master’s words so she said, “Excuse me.”

Jiang Aijian was speechless. ‘She’s the very embodiment of a person who’s meek and polite in public but a tyrant at home!’

The cultivators were smart enough to make way for her.

Little Yuan’er stood out in her Cloud Feather Raiment. She was sixteen and acted natural and unrestrained.

“This young lady looks valiant.”

“Judging by her clothes and looks, it seems like she has an extraordinary background...”

“Perhaps, she’s the young miss of a wealthy family in Anyang City. It’s quite rare to see a young lady who’s as well-balanced and educated as her.”

Little Yuan’er walked into Skylark Pagoda without paying any attention to the people around her.

The sentry at the entrance glanced at her before lifting his halberd and said, “Welcome.”

Most of the cultivators were gracious enough to let her enter first and did not make a fuss.

Everyone watched as Little Yuan’er entered the pagoda. The only thing left was to wait for the result.

Jiang Aijian crossed his arms and asked, “Old senior, aren’t you worried at all?”

“Why should I be worried? If she doesn’t make it, she’ll just be sent flying out. Best case scenario, her Primal Qi might be disturbed for a few days. Worst case, she’ll be injured for half a year. It’ll be fine,” Lu Zhou said as he continued to wait for his prey. To begin with, he was not bothered with the Formations.

Jiang Aijian was slightly puzzled by Lu Zhou’s nonchalance. “Aren’t you looking for the Sky Fragments?”

Lu Zhou did not deign to reply to Jiang Aijian.

“Master...” An excited voice rang from one of the floors of the Skylark Pagoda’s floors.

The voice caught Lu Zhou's attention. He looked in the direction of the voice and saw Little Yuan'er was already on the fifth floor. She was standing on the edge and seemed to be hopping around, clearly having the time of her life.

The onlookers were dumbfounded. They rubbed their eyes before looking at her again. They thought they had seen wrongly. However, upon looking again, indeed, they saw the young lady on the fifth floor. Moreover, based on her condition, she did not seem exhausted at all. In fact, she seemed unaffected.

"How's this possible?" The other cultivators were perplexed.

Jiang Aijian regarded Little Yuan'er, who was on the fifth floor, with shock as well... Only a short time had passed from the moment Little Yuan'er entered the pagoda until now. It seemed like she did not stop at all as she climbed up.

Mingshi Yin said indifferently, "Among the Skylark Pagoda's nine Formations, the first three are illusions, the fourth and fifth are confusion, the sixth and seventh are inner demons, and the eighth is hallucination... There's no way little junior sister will be impeded by the first few floors."

Jiang Aijian nodded and said, "Very well..."

Little Yuan'er was naïve and pure. There were no distracting thoughts in her heart.

If the challenger purged his heart of all distracting thoughts, he would not be disturbed as he made his way to the eighth floor.

This was all within Lu Zhou's expectations.

"I think the ninth floor won't be easy. The trial on the ninth floor is a test of intelligence. Even I had a hard time passing, smart as I am," Jiang Aijian said. His voice had barely faded when a sound rang from above.

Everyone looked up.

The sound was accompanied by a ripple of energy that spread into the surroundings.

The cultivators looked disappointed. Usually, this meant that the challenger had failed.

There were consequences for failing.

"Judging by the sound, it's the eighth floor. It can be considered as a great achievement to climb to the eighth floor..."

"The other guy made it to the eighth floor as well. Perhaps, there's a new Formation on the ninth floor."

"Let's ask the young lady when she's here."

Many people felt pity for Little Yuan'er.

At this moment, a green figure suddenly appeared at the top of Skylark Pagoda, shocking everyone.

Their eyes widened in shock as they looked at Little Yuan'er standing on the ninth floor.

Little Yuan'er clapped her hands excitedly.

The bottom of the Skylark Pagoda was silent.

After a brief moment, someone exclaimed in surprise, "She's up there!"

"She made it?!"

She was holding a brocade box as she waved her arms.

The other cultivator who sat in the pavilion stood up with an incredulous expression on his face. His face slowly turned red from embarrassment. He hastened over and stood behind Lu Zhou and the others. He wanted to know how this young lady made it all the way up to the top floor.

The other cultivators had the same thought in mind. They were ashamed that a young lady had beaten them.

Jiang Aijian clicked his tongue in wonder when he saw this. He clapped his hands and said, "What do you know?"

"You have a question?"

"The ninth floor's trial is a test of wit... My friend told me that only three individuals are able to solve it in the Divine Capital. Is the little girl so smart?" Jiang Aijian stroked his chin. He could not understand this.

"You're overthinking," Mingshi Yin said.

"Do enlighten me, Mister Fourth."

"All you need is a kick."

Jiang Aijian was speechless.

Puh!

The cultivator who previously made it to the eighth floor spat out a mouthful of blood.

"Eh? What's wrong, brother?" Jiang Aijian turned to look at him.

It was impossible for him to not feel infuriated. He had been so close... Most of the challengers were stuck on the eighth floor. Only a handful managed to make it to the ninth floor.

Everyone thought the ninth floor's trial was the hardest, but in truth, the ninth floor... was the simplest. All it needed was a kick.

After the brief exclamation of surprise...

"The Formations are broken, and the item has been claimed... Skylark Pagoda will see you again next year."

After this announcement was made, some cultivators charged forward, intending to surround Little Yuan'er who was on the Skylark Pagoda's ninth floor.

The remaining cultivators were taken aback by this development and quickly retreated.

An innocent person would get into trouble for possessing a treasure.

“Little girl, you shouldn’t take the Sky Fragments!” There were more than ten cultivators who had charged at her. Clearly, they had planned this beforehand. This was a common scene at Skylark Pagoda.

Usually, the challengers with no background or strength who passed the ninth trial would be forced to give the treasure to others.

Duanmu Sheng and Mingshi Yin did not move. Cultivators of this level did not warrant their involvement.

“Nirvana Sash!”

Above Skylark Pagoda, the Nirvana Sash unfurled like blooming red flowers.

Bam! Bam! Bam!

The Nirvana Sash made a circle.

With a flurry of movements, all of the cultivators were hit. They reeled back and spat out blood.

Little Yuan’er was walking and dancing in the air with the Nirvana Sash wrapped around her at this moment.

“A heaven-grade weapon!”

Those with sharp eyes immediately recognized the Nirvana Sash’s grade.

Little Yuan’er laughed. “You dare to try and snatch something away from me? I’ll kill you!”

The Nirvana Sash retracted and shot out rapidly... As the cultivators reeled back, they were hit by the Nirvana Sash in the chest.

Jiang Aijian took a step back, seemingly afraid. “When did the little girl grow so strong?” She was covered in heaven-grade items and had achieved a breakthrough in her cultivation base. She was much more powerful than when he had first met her.

Little Yuan’er’s display of strength was so powerful that she intimidated the others.

The remaining cultivators stood aside passively.

Bzzt...

At this moment, above the Nine Tune River, a flying chariot that resembled a phantom appeared in everyone’s sight. It passed through the sea of clouds, the forests, the mountains, and the Nine Tune River before it came to a stop several hundred meters above Skylark Pagoda.

The cultivators at the bottom of Skylark Pagoda held their breaths as they looked up at the flying chariot in the sky.

At this moment, a grey-robed cultivator emerged from the flying chariot with a brocade box in his hands. He walked on air and slowly descended.

Little Yuan’er was currently at the top of Skylark Pagoda. She had the best vantage point. For a time, she was also attracted by this phantom-like flying chariot.

The mysterious cultivator exuded a peculiar aura. His head was covered in a hood. With his back to the sun, his appearance was hidden.

Chapter 205: Hua Yuexing, One of the Divine Capital's Three Godly Archers

The cultivators at the base of Skylark Pagoda had weak cultivation bases. All they knew was that the newcomer was an elite. They did not know what his actual cultivation base was.

Smart and strong cultivators would usually conceal their auras and would not easily expose their own cultivation bases.

In any case, this scene was enough to intimidate the people here.

Little Yuan'er held the brocade box in one hand and held onto the Nirvana Sash with the other. She looked at the cultivator who was slowly making his way toward her with a curious expression.

Mingshi Yin said, "Master... I'll go and give junior sister a hand."

"There's no need for that." Lu Zhou said. His instinct told him Yanzi Yunsan was about to make an appearance. He was most probably hiding in the shadows while keeping an eye on the happenings. He might even be among this group of cultivators.

Yanzi Yunsan was only an alias. Nobody knew his real name nor did anyone know how profound his cultivation base was. He might be in the Brahman Sea realm or the Nascent Divinity realm.

The mysterious cultivator stopped when he was dozens of meters above Skylark Pagoda. He bowed slightly. After he straightened his back, he waved his hand lightly. "Congratulations on the anniversary of your birth, Miss Ninth. As ordered by my sect master, I'm here to present you with a gift."

A wave of gentle energy carried the brocade box toward Skylark Pagoda.

The cultivators at the bottom of Skylark Pagoda observed this scene in shock.

'Who is this young lady? Why is the mysterious cultivator so respectful toward her?'

Jiang Aijian smiled faintly. "The Evil Sky Pavilion's Si Wuya truly lives up to his name... The treasure contained within that brocade box must be the Giant Silkworm Gloves."

Everyone looked on as the brocade box floated slowly toward Little Yuan'er.

Little Yuan'er looked on expectantly as the brocade box made its way toward her. Her Eldest Senior Brother gifted her the Cloud Treading Boots, and her Second Senior Brother gifted her the Cloud Feather Raiment. What would her Seventh Senior Brother give her?

The brocade box was close at hand.

Whoosh!

A hook shot toward the box from a small boat on Nine Tune River.

The line of the hook resembled a fishing line as it sailed through the skies toward the brocade box.

Jiang Aijian smiled as he said, "The fish has taken the bait." With a tap of his feet, he shot toward Nine Tune River at lightning speed.

Naturally, Mingshi Yin and Duanmu Sheng would never allow themselves to lag behind.

The two of them flew up as well. Like dragonflies tapping on the water's surface, they sped across the river toward the small boat on Nine Tune River.

Everyone exclaimed in shock.

"Three Nascent Divinity Tribulation realm elites!"

Lu Zhou was not interested in the brocade box. Instead, he regarded Jiang Aijian curiously. Ever since he met Jiang Aijian, he had never seen him attack. He was slightly surprised to discover Jiang Aijian was not inferior to Mingshi Yin.

Bam!

Jiang Aijian was the first person to reach the small boat.

The hook that went straight for the brocade box was suddenly retracted.

Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh!

Several hooks from the pavilion, Skylark Pagoda, and the bottom of Nine Tune River shot toward the brocade box at the same time.

They were too quick for the others to react.

"There's no one on the boat," Jiang Aijian said.

Mingshi Yin switched directions...

Hundred Tribulations Insight.

Mingshi Yin unleashed his Hundred Tribulations Insight avatar without any hesitation. At the same time, he unleashed his grand technique and shot toward his little junior sister. He had a feeling that if Yanzi Yunsan wanted to get his hands on the Giant Silkworm Gloves, he would not have just prepared simple hooks. It was possible that Yanzi Yunsan might target his little junior sister as well.

Meanwhile, Jiang Aijian flew toward the pavilion.

Duanmu Sheng brandished his Overlord Spear in one hand as he plunged into the river.

Bam!

The hook latched onto the brocade box.

Little Yuan'er looked around herself. She saw her Fourth Senior Brother flying toward herself and said, "Yunsan's not here!"

Mingshi Yin frowned slightly. 'If he's not in Skylark Pagoda, where's he?'

The Nirvana Sash flew toward the brocade box. Little Yuan'er would never let her gift be stolen under her nose.

The Nirvana Sash was a heaven-grade weapon after all. It reached the brocade box and wrapped around it in just an instant.

Little Yuan'er leaped into the air.

Meanwhile, the others saw a man-sized kite flying toward her.

"Yunsan, you won't get away!"

Jiang Aijian unsheathed his sword!

Zing!

When the sword was unsheathed, a majestic dragon's roar rang in the air.

Dragonsong moved at lightning speed and slashed at the kite.

Lu Zhou's gaze remained on the kite.

Bam!

The sword hit the kite.

The cord was severed, and the kite fell.

"Nobody?" Dragonsong returned to Jiang Aijian under his control. Yunsan's cunningness exceeded his imaginations.

The brocade box was pulled back into Little Yuan'er's arms by the Nirvana Sash.

The cultivators at the bottom of Skylark Pagoda watched with their mouths agape.

The cultivators on the flying chariot did not want to get dragged into this. They returned to the flying chariot with swift movements. In just a blink of an eye, it vanished before everyone's sight.

When Little Yuan'er saw the flying chariot making a run for it, she stomped her feet instead of feeling happy that her Seventh Senior Brother had given her a gift. "Hmph! You may run now, but I'll catch you on master's behalf one day."

Splash!

The Overlord Spear that was shrouded in energy spun before it broke the surface of Nine Tune River. Duanmu Sheng followed from behind and shot into the air, creating a huge wave. He returned to his master's side as he said, "He's not underwater as well."

Dragonsong returned to its sheath as well.

Meanwhile, Mingshi Yin landed at the base of Skylark Pagoda.

With the addition of Little Yuan'er, there were four elites.

The surroundings of Skylark Pavilion were deathly quiet.

The kite fluttered as it fell on the ground as though nothing had happened.

Jiang Aijian carried Dragonsong and walked toward Lu Zhou. He cupped his fists and said, "I'm sorry, I couldn't catch him."

Mingshi Yin returned as well and shook his head.

Duanmu Sheng was completely drenched. His hair was wet. His muscular build and the Overlord Spear made the other cultivators retreat. He snorted and Primal Qi surged out. The scalding heatwaves instantly evaporated the water on him.

"He's cunning indeed." Lu Zhou shook his head.

Little Yuan'er returned to the top of Skypark Pagoda. She eagerly opened the brocade box and saw a pair of delicate, exquisite, and pristine gloves.

Bam!

A black arrow shot out of Nine Tune River. The tip of the arrow was wrapped in shining golden energy. An energy seal that resembled a rounded Eight Trigrams revolved around the black arrow...

"Look out!"

It was too sudden.

Lu Zhou stroked his beard and said, "He's skilled with contraptions?"

Yanzu Yunsan did not have any other way of accomplishing this aside from setting up contraptions.

With Mingshi Yin, Duanmu Sheng, and Jiang Aijian's cultivation bases, it was impossible for them to miss any signs of living things. Duanmu Sheng had even investigated the river.

Little Yuan'er turned around and wrapped herself with the Nirvana Sash that shielded her like a red barrier.

Lu Zhou was not worried that Little Yuan'er might get hurt.

With the Nirvana Sash, Cloud Feather Raiment, and her Nascent Divinity Tribulation realm cultivation base, she could instantly put up a defense on par with the Six Compatible Seal.

However, this scene was too shocking.

The cultivators at the base of Skylark Pagoda thought the black arrow was going to take the young lady's life.

However, another shocking thing happened.

Whoosh!

In a forest path more than 100 meters away, a scarlet arrow shot toward her at a greater speed.

Bam!

The feathered arrow was also wrapped in energy.

When it hit the black arrow, a loud explosion rang in the air.

The two energies collided and erupted.

The black arrow snapped in half and fell.

Everyone else was attracted by the scarlet arrow. They looked in the direction from where it was fired on the forest path.

The cultivators were silent, they did not breathe loudly.

Creak, creak, creak...

Creaking sounds could be heard from the forest path.

Little Yuan'er was puzzled when she did not feel the impact from the black arrow so she unwrapped the Nirvana Sash. She put an arm around the brocade box and leaped off the pagoda.

"Master! I'm glad I didn't let you down! I have successfully retrieved the Sky Fragments," Little Yuan'er said.

"Very good," Lu Zhou said calmly.

Little Yuan'er was delighted when she heard her master's praise.

On the other hand, Lu Zhou was not particularly happy.

"Ding! Recovered Sky Fragments x2. Reward: 200 merit points."

He had obtained the Sky Fragments but did not catch Yunsan. Where was he going to find the remaining four fragments?

Creak, creak...

The creaking from the forest path was getting louder. There were also sounds of deliberate footsteps.

All of a sudden, a deep and firm voice rang loudly in the surroundings. "Lady Jade has arrived. Those who have no business here should leave!"

At the edge of the forest, an extravagant palanquin marched into sight. The golden curtains, ornaments, and the choice of colors seemed exotic. A beautiful girl dressed in white garments walked next to the extravagant palanquin. She held a dainty bow in her hand.

The palanquin continued creaking. The two rows of soldiers marched before it. They marched up to Skylark Pagoda and crossed their halberds.

"Those who have no business here should leave!"

The cultivators at the base of the pagoda shook their heads and left in the direction of the pavilion. They gathered there and observed from afar.

Lu Zhou and the others did not move.

The area before Skylark Pagoda was now empty.

The two rows of soldiers lifted their halberds.

The creaking palanquin arrived at the pagoda.

Lu Zhou's gaze fell on the girl beside the palanquin.

Name: Hua Yuexing

Race: Human

Cultivation base: Nascent Divinity Tribulation realm

...

"Halt —"

The palanquin was lowered. The curtains parted. Graceful and poised with a golden crown on her head, Lady Jade slowly emerged. She placed her hands in front of herself and walked with a straight back. She was elegant and dignified. The dark marks on her eyes that were similar to eyeshadow were her most striking feature as an Other Tribesman.

Two maidservants hastily walked up to her and supported her from the sides. Lady Jade walked up to Lu Zhou. With a smile on her face, she nodded and said, "Greetings."

Lu Zhou surveyed his surroundings through his peripheral vision and discovered Jiang Aijian had disappeared. 'Forget it. He must be worried that his identity will be exposed. Let him be.'

"You recognize me?" Lu Zhou said calmly. He was not affected by the aura of Lady Jade and her company at all.

When she greeted him, an audible gasp could be heard from the nearby pavilion.

'Who is this old man? Even Lady Jade is treating him politely!'

Lady Jade smiled and said, "Shall we talk in the pagoda?"

At this moment, the people manning the pagoda bowed and said, "This way, please."

Lu Zhou glanced at Hua Yuexing before he walked into Skylark Pagoda.

Since the Formations had been broken, the group did not meet with any resistance when they entered the pagoda. They easily made their way up to the ninth floor. They were facing Nine Tune River with their backs toward the mountains. Indeed, this was a good place to have a conversation.

The two of them sat down.

Mingshi Yin, Duanmu Sheng, and Little Yuan'er sat behind their master.

On Lady Jade's side, there were only a handful of soldiers, the two maidservants, and the archer, Hua Yuexing.

"One of the Divine Capital's Three Godly Archers, Hua Yuexing," Lu Zhou said nonchalantly.

Upon hearing this, a shocked expression appeared on Mingshi Yin and the others' faces.

That shocking arrow that had intercepted the black arrow that was fired from Nine Tune River was breathtaking.

When Hua Yuexing heard Lu Zhou's words, she was slightly stunned. Then, she cupped her fists while standing and said, "I'm surprised you know my name, senior."

Lu Zhou nodded and said, "If I'm not mistaken, you're originally from the Luo Sect."

Hua Yuexing's beautiful face reddened. She took a step back. Betraying one's sect was not something to boast about after all.

Lady Jade covered her face and chuckled. She said, "Old Pavilion Master, there's no need to make fun of a junior... Hua Yuexing is a skilled archer, and she's a woman. She can't possibly roam the lands on her own. Serving the Imperial court with her skills is her destiny."

Lu Zhou nodded.

To each their own. There was no need to force someone onto another path.

"Speak then. What are you here for?"

"I'm here to explain several misunderstandings to you, Old Pavilion Master... First, the assassin sent to Anyang, Shen Zhou, under the alias Wang Fugui, isn't one of mine. Someone's trying to make me take the blame and sow dissent among our ranks." She paused slightly before continuing, "It's true I'm from the Western Regions and that my sisters have died under Mister Second's hands. However... I do not hold it against the Evil Sky Pavilion. You're a good judge of character, old senior, I would never dare lie to you."

When Lu Zhou killed Wang Fugui back then, he did wonder if someone was trying to sow dissent. However, he had no way of proving it. A dead man could not come back to life. However, he, naturally, would not believe her just because she said she was telling the truth.

Lady Jade continued, "Second, after Shen Yuan's death, the Evil Sky Pavilion has had a few conflicts with the palace. All that has nothing to do with me. Regarding this... Hua Yuexing can vouch for me."

Lu Zhou stroked his beard and said calmly, "Why would I believe Hua Yuexing?"

"Well..." Lady Jade said awkwardly, "I speak the truth. Old Pavilion Master, you have fought with the elite from the palace before. It's easy to tell the truth from the lie."

There were no signs of witchcraft on Lady Jade. If she truly dared to go against the Evil Sky Pavilion, she would not have shown up at Skylark Pagoda.

However, Lu Zhou shook his head and said, "How did you know I'd be here?" Not many knew he was coming here.

Lady Jade said, "I've heard about the unrest in Anyang City. Apart from the Evil Sky Pavilion's master, I cannot think of any other person capable of making the Nether Sect's Four Great Protectors submit."

Lu Zhou stood up slowly and looked at everyone. He placed his hands on his back and walked to the edge of the pagoda. He looked down at Nine Tune River.

Skylark Pagoda's ninth floor was only surrounded by low railings. The scenery was practically unobstructed here.

Lu Zhou said, "In that case, do you know why I'm here?"

Lady Jade shook her head and said, "I'm merely here to clear up the misunderstandings... I don't know about anything else."

"Yunsan stole something of mine."

"Yunsan? The only descendant of the Pickpocket Sect, skilled user of Cloud Picking Hand technique, Yanzi Yunsan?"

"That's right."

"I've heard that he's sly. The Luo Sect, where Hua Yuexing was from, couldn't catch him... I'm afraid it won't be an easy task to capture him, old senior," Lady Jade said.

"He's only a rat in the shadows. If I make a move, he won't be... able... to... escape!" Lu Zhou's last words were enunciated slowly and clearly.

His expression remained indifferent as he raised his hand. A glowing item card appeared in his hand. He looked at the pavilion at the base of the pagoda...

A vortex appeared and swirled in an anti-clockwise direction. It glowed with a golden radiance. A square cage instantly took shape and flew toward the pavilion.

Mingshi Yin, Duanmu Sheng, and Little Yuan'er walked up to the edge as well. They were surprised at their master's sudden attack.

At the same time, they looked at the palm strike in shock.

Hua Yuexing and the handful of soldiers were stunned as well.

When the square cage descended from the skies, the Primal Qi shockwave rippled outward.

Bzzt –

In the pavilion, the cultivator who made it to the eighth floor previously wore a shocked expression on his face before he moved away swiftly. 'Drat, I'm exposed!'

He shot toward the forest.

The cage grew in size.

This person was none other than the only successor of the Pickpocket Sect, Yanzi Yunsan!

Yunsan laughed out loud. He ran as he said, "I'm sorry, Old Senior Ji. This technique can't do anything to me... From this day on, the name Yanzi Yunsan will spread across Great Yan!

What a feat it was to escape from the hands of the greatest villain in the world.

Chapter 206: Nowhere to Run, Yanzi Yunsan!

The cultivators in the pavilion scattered. They looked at the incoming cage and exchanged glances among themselves.

“Run! That’s the Evil Sky Pavilion’s great villain!”

“The Evil Sky Pavilion’s villain is here?”

“What are you still standing there for? You good-for-nothing, you wet your pants?”

At this moment, the cultivators finally realized who the young lady who had easily made it to the ninth floor was. Young lady of a rich family, well-educated, and well-rounded girl... Nonsense! Nothing was more terrifying than a polite villain!

The cowardly cultivators’ knees buckled. It was difficult for them to move.

At this moment, more than half of the cultivators had disappeared. Only a brave few remained hidden behind the pillars.

Meanwhile, Yanzi Yunsan took off, shooting through the forest.

Lu Zhou stood on top of Skylark Pagoda. His range of sight was widened due to his high vantage point. Even so, Yunsan’s speed truly exceeded his expectations. To be safe, he swung his arm again and threw another two Binding Cage Cards into the air.

In addition to the first one, there were now three activated Binding Cage Cards.

Lady Jade and Hua Yuexing were stunned.

‘What sort of techniques is this? It has such a long range of attack? Witchcraft? Some sort of arcane art? Perhaps, it’s a secret technique only Godly Archers know?’ Hua Yuexing, one of the Divine Capital’s Three Godly Archers, racked her brains but still could not think of any Godly Archers’ skills that were like this. Although there were many techniques she had yet to master, she had studied many books when she was in the Luo Sect so she was privy to many Godly Archers’ techniques. This was unprecedented and never-seen-before.

Mingshi Yin seemed to have read Hua Yuexing’s mind. He said, “Since you want to clear the misunderstandings with the Evil Sky Pavilion, why didn’t you make a move earlier?”

Upon hearing this, Hua Yuexing’s heart skipped a beat. Lady Jade was taken aback as well.

Hua Yuexing hastily bowed. “I was distracted. Please forgive me, senior.”

Lu Zhou waved his arm and said, “Forget it.”

Even if Hua Yuexing made a move, she might not be able to hit Yunsan. Yunsan’s cunning had far exceeded his expectations.

The Binding Cage Cards had locked onto their targets. It would depend on luck whether they would land true.

As Lu Zhou looked at the Binding Cages that were flying further and further away, he said indifferently, “Can you get away?”

He waved his arm. A deep roar rang from the pagoda's vicinity.

In just a moment, Bi An charged toward him from the clouds.

"A legendary mount!" Lady Jade, Han Yuexing, and the soldiers at the bottom of the pagoda stared at Bi An with their mouths agape. Bi An's appearance and speed were nothing like anything they had ever seen.

On the contrary, Lu Zhou's disciples were already used to this.

Lu Zhou leaped to the side, and Bi An obediently caught him on its back before it chased after Yunsan.

"We'll wait for your good news, master!" Lu Zhou's three disciples shouted in unison.

Even with three Binding Cage Cards, Lu Zhou was not certain they would hit Yunsan. After all, probability could never explain the fate and experience of a person with the most rotten luck. Initially, he had thought he would let Yunsan go if the cards did not hit their target. However, he changed his mind when he heard Yunsan's words.

The great master of the Evil Sky Pavilion, the greatest villain in the world, would never let Yunsan go.

With Bi An here, it would be easy to deal with this matter. All Lu Zhou had to do was follow the Binding Cages. After all, they had already locked onto Yunsan. Yunsan might be cunning, but could he outrun Bi An?

Lu Zhou rode on Bi An as it pursued the three Binding Cages like the wind.

The first Binding Cage was now ten meters wide, and it was still expanding.

The Binding Cages continued to fly after their target.

Bi An had moved so quickly that it caught up to the cages in just a blink of an eye.

Lu Zhou surveyed the mountain terrain as he sat atop Bi An. The forest was too dense. The canopies obstructed his view.

Fortunately, Lu Zhou was now in the Divine Court realm. It seemed that Bi An's wildness effect was negligible and did not affect him much.

Lu Zhou lowered his altitude.

...

At this moment, the three Binding Cages could no longer be seen from Skylark Pagoda.

Everyone waited silently.

...

Meanwhile, Yunsan flitted in and out of trees. He chuckled. "Even when the Yun, Tian, and Luo Sects joined forces, they couldn't catch me... You think you can catch me from that distance?"

It had to be said that Yunsan's speed was shocking.

After sprinting for about 20 miles, Yunsan finally slowed down. His cultivation base was only in the Divine Court realm. However, in terms of speed, he was on par with a Nascent Divinity Tribulation realm expert. He made no stops along the way. His pursuer would need to use a grand technique to catch up to him.

The deeper parts of the forest laid further north. It would be much easier for him to find a place to hide there. After a while, he relaxed and decided to stop.

“Evil Sky Pavilion... Patriarch of the Fiend Path... I... Wait, what... What is that?” He was still crowing about his triumph when he sensed something falling from above. He looked up and saw a massive, square cage descending from the skies.

Regardless of how profound one’s cultivation base was, they would still be shocked by this sight.

Yuansan had never seen such a thing before.

Bzzt!

The Binding Cage was about to land on Yunsan when it suddenly rippled and vanished into thin air.

Yunsan was puzzled. ‘It disappeared?’ He was still mulling over the cage’s disappearance when a second cage shining with golden light appeared.

Yunsan trembled before he began to move again. This was too strange. He recalled the scene back at Skylark Pagoda, at that time, the Evil Sky Pavilion’s patriarch had casually cast a technique similar to this golden cage.

“Yunsan...” A voice rang from behind Yunsan. He turned around instinctively and was greeted by the sight of Bi An baring its fangs and claws as it charged at him.

Lu Zhou stood on Bi An’s back. His energy shield was streamlined.

“Sh*t!” Primal Qi surged out of Yunsan’s body, and he ran even faster.

Bi An lunged as it roared loudly.

Bam! Bam! Bam! Bam! Bam!

Several trees crashed in Bi An’s wake. In just a second, it knocked into Yunsan’s back.

Bam!

Yunsan grunted in pain and spat out a mouthful of blood as he fell forward. Then, he suddenly vanished into thin air.

“A ground escape technique?!” Lu Zhou ordered Bi An to stop. He was in no hurry at all.

The second and third cages reached Yunsan at this moment as well.

Lu Zhou understood ground escape techniques very well. When the cultivator was underground, his speed would decrease tremendously, and the consumption of his Primal Qi would increase.

With Bi An here, Yunsan would be hard-pressed to escape even if he sprouted wings.

The second cage dropped down 20 meters before Lu Zhou. Then, it vanished. The hit was not triggered.

The third cage arrived. It was like a net that covered heaven and earth. Web-like lines appeared on the ground and zeroed in on the target from all directions. Clearly, the hit rate had been triggered this time.

This was extremely reminiscent of the situation back in the Evil Sky Pavilion when the Binding Cage captured Fan Xiuwen. It was as impressive, if not more.

Although the Evil Sky Pavilion was spacious, it could not compare to nature itself.

Lu Zhou saw that the landing spot of the third cage was different from the second cage even though it was not by much. It moved about 20 meters forward before it dropped down.

From the skies, it was like a net was dropped onto the dense forest. Hundreds of trees were instantly fell by the web. The fallen trees and debris were caught in the net until the net suddenly transformed into a square cage, and they were all ejected.

Soon enough, a square patch of barren land was formed in the middle of the forest.

Bzzt –

The golden shining cage seemed to be electrified as it sank into the ground.

“Ahh!” A loud wail rang from below ground.

The Binding Cage had captured its mark.

Lu Zhou ordered Bi An to descend. After he dismounted, Bi An obediently trotted to the side and sat down.

Lu Zhou walked over to where the cage had landed with his hands on his back.

Cultivators who were imprisoned by the Binding Cage would have their cultivation bases sealed. It was the same for Fan Xiuwen. Therefore, Lu Zhou was not afraid of Yunsan escaping. He waited patiently as he stroked his beard.

It did not take long before Yunsan’s deep and muffled cries rang from beneath the ground. He... He seemed to be crying...

Lu Zhou projected his voice. “Yunsan, are you still trying to run away?”

Yunsan did not seem capable of talking apart from crying.

Lu Zhou waved his arm. Bi An gave a guttural growl as though it was excited. Then, it ran over and began clawing at the ground.

In no time at all, Bi An dug Yunsan out of the ground.

Yunsan was so frightened that he called for his parents when Bi An bared its fangs at him.

“No, no, no... Old senior! Have mercy! Please spare me, old senior!” Yunsan kept begging for mercy. When he saw the greatest villain standing beside him, he could not help but tremble. He had never been

this afraid in his entire life. He wanted to move, but he could not. He was firmly bound by a shackle that seemed to be molded to his body.

“Take him away.” With that, Bi An carried Yunsan between its jaws.

...

Meanwhile, everyone, apart from Mingshi Yin, Duanmu Sheng, and Little Yuan’er, waited anxiously in Skylark Pagoda.

After a while, Lady Jade finally said, “The old senior is advanced in age. Isn’t it a bit too much for him to personally capture Yunsan?”

Mingshi Yin said confidently, “You don’t have to worry. Master’s abilities can shock the heavens. I’d be damned if Yunsan can escape from this.”

“I meant no offense, please forgive me.”

...

Lu Zhou rode on Bi An and returned to Skylark Pagoda from the north.

Bi An could be seen carrying a person in its jaws. It was the only successor of the Pickpocket Sect who was running away just moments ago, Yanzi Yunsan.

The cultivators who did not run away witnessed this scene.

“Yunsan is caught!”

“The only successor of the Pickpocket Sect is caught!”

Somehow, the Evil Sky Pavilion earned the respect of these cultivators. The sole successor of the Pickpocket Sect was renowned for his cunning. He was even capable of escaping the joint pursuit of the elites from the Yun, Tian, and Luo Sects after he stole from them.

In terms of cunning, he was much more cunning than the leader of the Black Knights, Fan Xiuwen. Fan Xiuwen had strength on his side, and he could deal with various situations easily. Yunsan, on the other hand, was in the Divine Court realm. He could be regarded as peerless for being able to achieve this.

Lady Jade stood up suddenly.

Hua Yuexing tightened her grip on her bow instinctively. Her knuckles whitened.

Bi An flew into Skylark Pagoda and spat Yunsan out. It did not care about Yunsan’s life.

Lady Jade was in awe.

“Your amazing powers know no bounds throughout the ages”

‘It’s one thing to say that his powers know no bounds, but what’s with throughout the ages?’

While they waited on the pagoda, Lady Jade felt that Duanmu Sheng and Little Yuan’er were normal. However, Mingshi Yin was unpredictable with his scathing remarks that were capable of sowing discord.

Duanmu Sheng and Little Yuan'er merely bowed.

Lady Jade bowed and said, "That's a shocking display of strength, old senior. It's a breathtaking sight to witness."

Hua Yuexing cupped her fists without saying anything.

Lu Zhou walked up to the stone table, stroked his beard, and sat down. His gaze fell on Yunsan who was lying on the floor. "Yunsan, I'll be asking you questions... All you have to do is to answer them."

"Yes, yes..." Yunsan got up with great difficulty and kneeled on the floor. He did not even dare to breathe heavily.

"Where are the remaining Sky Fragments?" Lu Zhou asked.

Yunsan gulped. He lowered his head and answered, "Three of them are in the palace, but two of them were placed in Skylark Pagoda... One of them is in the Clarity Sect's Mo Qi's hands. The other one is with the Temple of Great Emptiness..."

The Temple of Great Emptiness's Sky Fragment must have been the one that was given to the Heaven Choice Temple's monk, Xu Liao. As for the three fragments in the palace, Little Yuan'er had obtained two of them, and Jiang Aijian had removed one from the warehouse. There were still three fragments unaccounted for.

Lu Zhou remained silent. He waited for Yunsan to continue.

Yunsan looked up and stole a glance at Lady Jade who was sitting at the side. He spoke again, "The other three..." He stammered and could not string a full sentence together.

Mingshi Yin went up and kicked him. "Stop dallying! Spit it out!"

Yunsan muttered, "I... I should... Should I say it or not..." He did not know if he should reveal what he knew.

At this moment, Lady Jade who sat at the opposite side of the stone table, said coldly, "Don't you even know what you should and shouldn't say?"

Lu Zhou shifted his gaze from Yunsan to Lady Jade. "Do you know how I know he's Yunsan?"

Lady Jade's heart skipped a beat. However, the smile on her face did not falter as she said, "I'm only a woman who knows nothing about cultivation. I have no idea."

Realization dawned on Mingshi Yin at this moment. He smiled as he said, "I get it."

"Explain it to them." Lu Zhou was feeling lazy to speak at length.

"The hooks, kite, and the contraptions in the river had to be set up beforehand... Since Skylark Pagoda's master is from the Divine Capital, he could easily be involved with the people from the palace. Yunsan alone couldn't have done that. This means there's someone else backing Yunsan..." Mingshi Yin said.

Lady Jade applauded and said, "That makes sense... If that's the case, who could it be?"

"Someone who holds a grudge against the Evil Sky Pavilion. Someone who knows Skylark Pagoda well..." Mingshi Yin said.

At this moment, Yunsan suddenly leaped out of the window.

Exclamations of shock could be heard at the bottom of the pagoda.

Hua Yuexing said angrily, "Running away? Not so fast!" She pulled on her bowstring. Energy surged and formed a shining golden arrow.

Twang!

Han Yuexing did all this in a breath.

Bam!

The Overlord Spear's thousands of shadows blocked the arrow. Duanmu Sheng did a somersault in the air and shattered Hua Yuexing's energy arrow.

Meanwhile, the scarlet Nirvana Sash shot out and caught Yunsan in midair.

Little Yuan'er pulled the sash tautly as though Yunsan was a kite she was flying. She said with a smile, "Master... Isn't that amazing?"

Yunsan's cultivation base had been sealed. He could not run away even if he leaped out of the window like this. In that case, why did he try to run?

Lu Zhou looked at Hua Yuexing and said, "Were you trying to silence him?"

Hua Yuexing took a step back. She trembled. "I dare not. I merely wanted to help you, old senior!" Indeed, she was a Godly Archer, but in close quarters, Duanmu Sheng could take her life away at any moment.

Skylark Pagoda was now eerily silent, and the atmosphere was extremely tense.

Even Lady Jade found it difficult to breathe. She did not expect things to turn out his way.

Lu Zhou rose to his feet and walked to the edge of the pagoda with his hands on his back. He looked at Yunsan, who was suspended in midair, and said, "Do you think I won't know just because you don't say it?"

After Lu Zhou finished speaking, he raised a hand and condensed energy on his palm...

At this moment, Hua Yuexing's bow began to shake.

Bzzt!

"Old senior!" Hua Yuexing was shocked.

Bam!

A green figure flashed before Hua Yuexing. Mingshi Yin's sudden palm strike landed on her.

Hua Yuexing grunted and reeled back as her bow flew toward Lu Zhou.

Chapter 207: Seven Days? Lady Jade Was Harmed?

This development exceeded everyone's expectations.

The two maidservants were so frightened that they had fallen to the ground, trembling. Meanwhile, the soldiers were flustered, unsure if they should charge forward.

Hua Yuexing was one of the Divine Capital's Three Godly Archers. She was of the same status as Li Qing, a Black Knight, and Chen Zhu, Mo Li's subordinate.

Both Li Qing and Chen Zhu were dead. Hua Yuexing was the only one left, but she had just been hit in close-range by Mingshi Yin!

Mingshi Yin said with a smile, "You dare play tricks? I'll have your life for this..." The Separation Hook and Scabbard appeared in his hands and gleamed coldly.

Lady Jade was ghastly pale at this moment. She hastily bowed and said, "Old senior, wait!"

Lu Zhou placed Hua Yuexing's bow on the stone table and said indifferently, "Let her come."

Mingshi Yin and Duanmu Sheng retreated to the side obediently.

Hua Yuexing staggered. She was almost mortally wounded by this hit.

Fortunately, Mingshi Yin had held back.

Lady Jade's voice rang in the air. "Come here."

Although Hua Yuexing was slightly reluctant, she flew up and returned to the pagoda. She looked at Lu Zhou, Mingshi Yin, and the others nervously.

Lady Jade stood before Lu Zhou. She bowed again and said, "I had no choice... but to do what I had to do."

"Oh, you're confessing?" Lu Zhou asked.

Lady Jade said with a sigh, "Indeed, Yunsan is one of mine..."

With her admission, everything became clear.

Since Yunsan was Lady Jade's subordinate, he, naturally, did not dare to say anything. Moreover, it was clear Hua Yuexing planned to silence him.

Lu Zhou gave Little Yuan'er a signal.

Little Yuan'er swung her arm and tug on the Nirvana Sash, yanking Yunsan back into the pagoda. She asked with a grin, "Master... Should I break his legs so that he can't run anymore?"

Yunsan shuddered.

Little Yuan'er did not push the matter when she saw Lu Zhou remaining silent. She pulled a face at Yunsan before she moved to the side.

Lu Zhou's gaze fell on Yunsan again. He said, "Speak."

Yunsan shuddered. He kowtowed at Lady Jade before saying, "The remaining three fragments are with Lady Jade... Please forgive me, Lady Jade! Forgive me, Lady Jade!"

If they did the math, there were four Sky Fragments in the palace... Lu Zhou had already obtained the fragment that Jiang Aijian retrieved from the warehouse and did not have to consider that.

Lady Jade sighed and said, "Old senior, Hua Yuexing's bow was forged from the Sky Fragments... I kept this a secret because I didn't want to deepen the misunderstanding between us. I was unaware that Yunsan would exploit his association with me to set up various contraptions in the vicinity to get his hands on the Giant Silkworm Gloves."

The disciples looked at the bow on the stone table and were slightly shocked. They now understood why their master attacked Hua Yuexing. He had noticed this from the start.

Lu Zhou remained silent.

Lady Jade hastily continued, "If I wanted to make an enemy out of the Evil Sky Pavilion, why would I come to Skylark Pagoda. Isn't that tantamount to seeking death?"

Skylark Pagoda was silent again.

Even the simple act of breathing seemed difficult.

Hua Yuexing cupped her fists and said, "If that weren't the case, I wouldn't have acted against Yunsan as well."

When they arrived, they saw the huge arrow wrapped in energy shooting toward Little Yuan'er. It was Hua Yuexing's arrow that stopped the attack.

Hua Yuexing spoke again, "I'll return the bow to the Evil Sky Pavilion immediately!"

Mingshi Yin mumbled, "That's more like it."

If the forging was done correctly, two Sky Fragments could form a heaven-grade weapon. However, the supplementary materials needed were extremely rare as well.

Lu Zhou did not expect the three Sky Fragments to produce a mere earth-grade bow. It was truly a waste. He waved his arm and put the bow away.

"Ding! Recovered Sky Bow. Re-refinement needed. May obtain Sky Fragments x3."

Meanwhile, Lu Zhou glanced at the progress of this mission. Recovering Sky Fragments (7/8). This went much smoother than he expected. He initially thought that the Sky Fragments would be scattered all over the world, and it would cause him great pains to find them. He did not expect the people of the outside world would view items that he discarded as rare treasures. If the others had thought it was trash as well and tossed them aside, it would have been much more difficult to locate them.

There was one final fragment left.

Lu Zhou looked at Yunsan and said, "Yunsan, I'll give you a chance to live."

When Yunsan heard he would be given a chance to live, he hastily kowtowed at Lu Zhou. His forehead knocked loudly on the floor as he said, "Kindly give your instruction, old senior! I'll do anything to stay alive!"

"I admire those who are courteous the most," Lu Zhou said slowly, "Since you gave the Sky Fragment to the Clarity Sect, you'll be the one to retrieve it."

Yunsan was taken aback.

When he saw that Yunsan had fallen into a daze, Mingshi Yin said, "If you're not going... Just as well, it's been a long time since I've smelled fresh blood." As he spoke, he stretched his limbs.

Upon seeing this, Yunsan shuddered. He, naturally, did not dare to refuse and said, "I'll go, I'll go..."

There were many elites in the Clarity Sect. It would not be easy to retrieve the final Sky Fragment from the sect. Yunsan was skilled in theft. Even if he could not ask for it, he could still steal it and bring it back. If it were not for the Binding Cage Cards, Lu Zhou would have to expend more effort and time to catch a master thief like Yunsan.

Yunsan spoke fearfully, "Old... old senior, I can go to the Clarity Sect... but, uh, can you, un-unseal my cultivation base?"

Mingshi Yin hastily said, "Master, I have something to say." When would he be able to show off if not now?

"Speak."

"Yunsan is skilled in stealing techniques. If we unseal his cultivation base, it might not be easy to capture him again. He was even bold enough to brag in your face. A despicable man like him is capable of anything," Mingshi Yin said, "However, he won't be able to use his skills if his cultivation base remains sealed. I can place a Primal Qi seal on him so that he won't be able to run away."

Lu Zhou nodded. It was an approval of Mingshi Yin's suggestion.

Mingshi Yin cupped his fists at Lu Zhou and went to Yunsan's side. He raised a hand, and a beam of Primal Qi appeared. The green Primal Qi formed a unique seal.

Bam!

He slammed it into Yunsan's body.

Puh!

Yunsan spat out a mouthful of blood.

This seal was unlike ordinary seals. Ordinary seals could be forcibly shattered by cultivators who were stronger than the seal user. However, Mingshi Yin's seal was etched on the target's marrow and meridians. It was impossible to remove. However, this unique seal's effect had a time limit. This was its flaw.

Lady Jade was taken aback when she saw Mingshi Yin use the special seal on Yunsan. This meant she would not be able to use Yunsan for the time being. As long as the seal existed, Yunsan was the Evil Sky

Pavilion's pawn. However, she could not do anything about this. Her current priority was to resolve the misunderstanding with the Evil Sky Pavilion. If there was a need, she would rather sacrifice Yunsan. Hence, her expression remained indifferent throughout the process.

"Master... It's done. However, this seal will only last for three months..." Mingshi Yin said.

Lu Zhou stroked his beard and nodded. He looked at Yunsan and said, "I'll give you seven days."

Yunsan was taken aback. He stammered, "Is-Isn't it three months? Se-seven days... Isn't it too short?"

Mingshi Yin said, "You have no right to haggle... If you don't bring back the Sky Fragment in seven days, I'll track you down. I'll find you no matter where you are. I'll dig a hole that's three feet deep, flay you alive, and pull out your tendons before I cut you up into eight chunks..."

"..."

Yunsan had never been caught before. Now that he was captured by the Evil Sky Pavilion, his confidence was heavily impacted. There was only one emotion left in him at this moment; fear. He said, "Seven days... Fine, seven days it is..."

Lu Zhou waved his arm.

The cords of Binding Cage dissolved into spots of light like fireflies and eventually vanished.

Lady Jade looked at the unique technique and exclaimed in wonder, "You truly have amazing abilities, old senior. It's no wonder the Evil Sky Pavilion stands tall to this day."

Lu Zhou was, naturally, unmoved. He had become immune to flattery after listening to too much of it.

When Binding Cage disappeared, Yunsan was delighted to find his Primal Qi returning to him. He hastily kowtowed and said, "I'll... go to the Clarity Sect right immediately."

Time was short... Yunsan was only a Divine Court realm cultivator. It would be near impossible for him to retrieve an item from the Clarity Sect without a plan.

"Get lost then." Mingshi Yin waved him off.

Yunsan leaped off Skylark Pagoda and sped into the forest. Soon after, he vanished from sight.

Lady Jade forced a smile on her face before she said, "Old senior, I have something else to attend to. I'll take my leave now."

"Wait." Lu Zhou stood up slowly.

Lady Jade was slightly stunned. She forced a smile and said, "Is there something else, old senior?"

"It seems like you're not very sincere." Since earlier, Lu Zhou had felt something was amiss, based on his conversation with Lady Jade, but he could not quite put his finger on it.

"Not very sincere?" Lady Jade appeared confused. She did not know what he meant.

"Have you met Mo Li before?" Lu Zhou asked.

“Naturally, I’ve met the Second Prince’s consort. However, Mo Li has always kept to herself. She rarely interacts with other people,” Lady Jade. She seemed to have noticed something as she added, “Don’t worry, old senior. My heart is with the Emperor. I’ll never collude with the likes of them.”

Lu Zhou remained silent as he looked at Nine Tune River with his hands on his back.

Her words were clear, but her sincerity was not.

At this moment, someone said mockingly from the eighth floor of the pagoda, “Wow, I never thought I’d see the day where Lady Jade is so submissive.”

Jiang Aijian’s voice was too unique to miss. His very voice invited others to give him a good beating. Unfortunately, they could not see through the floor.

Jiang Aijian continued, “Old senior... Yunsan is one of Lady Jade’s subordinates. If Lady Jade didn’t support him, he wouldn’t dare to covet the Giant Silkworm Gloves. If she goes unpunished, I’m afraid that it’ll tarnish the Evil Sky Pavilion’s reputation.”

Lu Zhou looked calm.

Mingshi Yin nodded when he heard this and said, “I’m surprised you’re capable of saying such sensible words. The Evil Sky Pavilion has always paid its debts. I mean, we’ve always clearly distinguished between gratitude and grudges.”

Lady Jade understood what he meant. She took a step back. Her maidservants and soldiers planted themselves before her. Hua Yuexing moved next to her as well.

The comfortable atmosphere turned tense again.

Jiang Aijian continued, “The old senior has already seen through your act... Are you going to keep this up?”

The others were puzzled by this statement.

Suddenly, Lady Jade’s expression darkened. She began to emit a purple smoke. A familiar-looking red lotus appeared on her forehead. However, she did not attack. She merely had a murderous expression on her face...

The purple smoke spread into the surroundings...

“Lady Jade!”

The others conjured their protective energies to keep the purple smoke at bay. They were worried it was poisonous.

As the purple smoke spread, the golden lotus^[1] on Lady Jade’s forehead faded. The murderous expression faded from her face as well.

Hua Yuexing was perplexed by this. “This is...”

At this moment, Jiang Aijian walked up from the eighth floor with a smile on his face.

The purple smoke dissipated in the air, and Lady Jade fell.

The two maidservants quickly caught her.

Lu Zhou appeared calm.

His disciples, on the other hand, were shocked.

When the purple smoke appeared, they thought she was some powerful witchcraft practitioner and had prepared themselves for a fierce battle. They did not expect that Lady Jade would faint as soon as the red lotus on her forehead faded away.

“Jiang Aijian... You knew she was being controlled all along?” Mingshi Yin asked, feeling slightly speechless.

“Of course... I had to keep a low profile. She could see everything through Lady Jade’s eyes,” Jiang Aijian flipped his hair and said, “After all, I do stand out. It won’t do for me to be recognized.” He did not say anything about him being the Third Prince.

The maidservants, soldiers, and Hua Yuexing did not recognize Jiang Aijian. They merely looked at him indifferently. They thought this newcomer must be someone from the Evil Sky Pavilion as well. It would certainly explain his shamelessness.

Hua Yuexing exclaimed in shock, “You’re saying that Lady Jade was being controlled?”

“Of course.” Jiang Aijian rolled his eyes at her. “Lady Jade isn’t a cultivator. She’s a mere mortal. She can roam the palace without restriction and serves the most powerful man under the heavens. If I were Mo Li, I wouldn’t let this opportunity slip past my fingers.”

Hua Yuexing staggered backward. She quickly touched her face and hair. She was worried that she was being controlled as well.

Mingshi Yin said, “Since she was being controlled, why didn’t she attack us through Lady Jade? After all, she’s only a puppet.”

Jiang Aijian raised his fingers and said, “First, I think Mo Li is injured. Second, witchcraft spells only have 60% of its efficacy when unleashed through a puppet. She has no choice but to retreat in the face of an expert like old senior. Hence, she proposed a truce through Lady Jade to buy herself some time to recuperate. In a way, Lady Jade is a victim as well. With such ruthlessness, it’s a shame that Mo Li didn’t join the Evil Sky Pavilion.”

Several pairs of eyes instantly landed on Jiang Aijian.

‘Such heavy killing intent!’ Jiang Aijian hastily said, “Uh... I mean, she’s only treading the small path which is evil... the great path is the Fiend Path.”

That was more like it.

Although the Evil Sky Pavilion was of the Fiend Path, they would never do something as despicable as this.

Jiang Aijian glanced at the unconscious Lady Jade and said, “Well? What’re you standing there for? Take your Lady Jade with you and leave!”

The two maidservants hastily propped Lady Jade up and went down the stairs.

Lu Zhou did not stop them. Instead, he sat down slowly and looked on as the maidservants brought Lady Jade away.

Hua Yuexing wanted to leave as well, but Jiang Aijian said, "You can't leave."

"Huh?"

"What? Do you want to return to Mo Li and become one of her talons?" Jiang Aijian asked.

Hua Yuexing was stunned.

Lu Zhou stared at Jiang Aijian as if he was looking at his prey. He spoke slowly, "Liu Chen."

Jiang Aijian shuddered. He started when Lu Zhou called him by his real name.

Chapter 208: The Right to Join the Evil Sky Pavilion! Where Is Si Wuya?

Jiang Aijian did not like to put on airs. However, he was usually forced to. This time, it was the same. After putting on airs, he immediately regretted it. Why did he have such a big mouth? Why must he meddle? This did not suit him! The great villain must have seen through this farce. Even if he stayed out of this, things would have still ended the same way. Moreover, the person before him was the greatest villain in the world. There were three little villains as well. Anyone of them could have easily taken his life.

Jiang Aijian chuckled sheepishly as he stood before Lu Zhou and bowed slightly. He licked his lips before he said, "Old senior... I'm Jiang Aijian, Jiang Aijian of the pugilistic world."

"You're quite the schemer." Lu Zhou sat before the stone table, staring at Jiang Aijian.

"Old senior... This is a collaboration! Don't you think things worked out for both of us?" Jiang Aijian asked.

"I don't think so."

When Lu Zhou returned to Skylark Pagoda, he did some calculations. He used three Binding Cage Cards to capture Yunsan. Although they were his old stock, the prices of the item cards had gone up. Yunsan's cultivation base was only in the Divine Court realm. Capturing him did not award Lu Zhou with any merit points. In a situation where accumulating merit points was becoming more difficult, this was a huge loss for him.

Jiang Aijian forced a smile and said, "I can't be blamed for what happened today. If you want to blame someone, you should blame your seventh disciple, Si Wuya. He's the one setting the stage from the shadows."

"All I know is you were the one who summoned me here," Lu Zhou said.

Jiang Aijian was rendered speechless. Alright, he was wrong. He glanced at Hua Yuexing, who was standing there in fear and trepidation. He suddenly had an inspiration and said, "I have something that'll make you feel better, old senior."

“What is it?”

Jiang Aijian walked to Hua Yuexing and said, “Hua Yuexing... I initially planned to bring you out of the palace and restore your freedom, but now... let me direct you to a brighter path.”

“Huh?”

“Join the Evil Sky Pavilion,” Jiang Aijian said.

Mingshi Yin said disapprovingly, “I’m not trying to belittle her, but with her skills... She’s just like the general workers in Evil Sky Pavilion. Even Zhou Jifeng’s more powerful than her.”

Hua Yuexing felt offended that they were talking about her as though she was not there. She had cultivated in the Luo Sect since she was young. She did not like swords, blades, or fists... She could not help but fall in love with the bow and arrows. From the moment she picked it up, she could not stop herself. She ended up becoming Luo Sect’s Godly Archer. She joined the palace after leaving the Luo Sect and had served in the palace since. She eventually made a name for herself and became one of the Divine Capital’s Three Godly Archers. However, she was young and did not have much experience in killing enemies on the frontlines. That was why she was ranked third among the three Godly Archers of the Divine Capital.

“General worker? No way...” Hua Yuexing said.

“What? Do you want to spar with me? Bring it on. I don’t discriminate between males and females. Don’t cry when you’re hit.” Mingshi Yin raised his hand, the Separation Hook materialized and spun above his hand.

When she saw the heaven-grade weapon, Hua Yuexing took a step back. She was clearly frightened. After all, she had been attacked by Mingshi Yin earlier. This was a case of once bitten, twice shy.

Jiang Aijian said, “Don’t underestimate her. Hua Yuexing is highly talented in archery. It’s a shame that she followed the wrong person.” He turned and said to Hua Yuexing, “If you want to join the Evil Sky Pavilion, show them some moves.”

“I won’t join the Evil Sky Pavilion.” Hua Yuexing rejected the proposal directly.

“Uh... why?”

“I’d rather be punished in the palace than join the Fiend Path.”

Jiang Aijian sighed and shook his head. He said in a brotherly manner, “Trust me... The conflicts within the palace are much more complicated than the affairs of the outside world. Besides, Lady Jade’s witchcraft spell has been lifted. Mo Li is a dangerous person. Don’t tell me you’re thinking of going back to the Luo Sect?”

Hua Yuexing regarded Jiang Aijian with a complicated look. She felt as if this man knew everything. She said, “Who are you?”

“That’s not important...” Jiang Aijian placed his hands on his back and began to pace back and forth.

After a while, Mingshi Yin could not stand it and sent a kick his way. "Cut the crap. You're only a prince. Get to the point!"

"..."

Jiang Aijian patted his buttocks and said, "I'm a prince, give me some face, will you? Alright, I'll settle this now."

"You're... a prince?" Hua Yuexing's eyes widened.

"... who keeps a low profile." Jiang Aijian pulled her to the side and whispered something to her.

Perhaps, Hua Yuexing was too young. After listening to him, she nodded and walked toward Lu Zhou. She said respectfully, "I, Hua Yuexing, am willing to join the Evil Sky Pavilion. Please accept me, old senior."

Lu Zhou looked at Hua Yuexing. Then, he stood up and said, "You don't have the rights yet."

Hua Yuexing was speechless. She flipped her right hand and raised her left hand. A bow and arrow formed by energy appeared in her hands. An energy arrow appeared between her index and middle fingers.

Bzzt –

She turned around and fired the arrow at a bird on a tall tree outside the pagoda.

Twang!

The arrow sailed through the air and landed true. The bird fell into the forest.

Mingshi Yin, Duanmu Sheng, and Little Yuan'er were inwardly shocked by this display.

This was their first time witnessing someone forming energy without the need for a weapon.

Lu Zhou glanced at Hua Yuexing and said, "Too weak."

Hua Yuexing was not willing to give up. She bowed and said, "Please lend me a weapon."

Condensing qi into energy without a weapon would always be weaker.

Lu Zhou raised his hand, and the Sky Bow appeared on the stone table.

Hua Yuexing took the Sky Bow and walked to the edge of the pagoda. She searched for a target...

When she held the bow, her eyes were set, and her expression was calm. She felt her confidence returning. This time, she pulled on the bowstring with her right hand. She condensed qi into energy. An energy arrow that was sharper, thinner, and clearer was nocked on the bow. She adjusted her breathing. As a Godly Archer, aim was not everything that was required of her. She needed good eyesight as well. Everything in her sight was targets. She loosened her grip.

Twang!

The first arrow was fired into the forest.

This arrow was loud and startled dozens of birds in the forest.

Hua Yuexing pulled on her bowstring again. Dozens of energy arrows hit the flying birds.

"Nice shot!" Jiang Aijian clapped his hands despite himself.

Pa! Pa! Pa!

Except for Jiang Aijian's applause, it was quiet in Skylark Pagoda. His monotonic claps sounded exceptionally awkward.

Mingshi Yin, Duanmu Sheng, and Little Yuan'er looked at him in unison. They looked at him as though he was a madman.

"Come on, you have to admit it was a nice shot," Jiang Aijian said.

Lu Zhou shook his head and said, "Real archery is honed on the battlefield... You have the talent, but you're not sharp enough. You're still some ways from being qualified to join the Evil Sky Pavilion..."

The moment he finished speaking, Lu Zhou waved his arm and recalled the Sky Bow. "Jiang Aijian, I won't hold this against you since you helped me recover a Sky Fragment. Don't forget our promise."

"Safe journey, old senior."

At this moment, his mount, Whitzard, flew in from the clouds.

Lu Zhou leaped onto its back nimbly.

Little Yuan'er ran over as well.

Mingshi Yin and Duanmu Sheng shook their heads helplessly. Judging by the looks of things, they would have to fly again. This was too tiring.

Whitzard traveled through the air in the direction of Anyang City.

Mingshi Yin and Duanmu Sheng followed closely behind it.

...

Hua Yuexing was stunned. For a time, she did not know how she should react.

Jiang Aijian said, "Go after them. You don't have anywhere else to go... Remember what I said, the palace has no place for you nor does the Luo Sect. The Noble Path won't take you in as well... You have no choice besides the Evil Sky Pavilion."

"Oh." Hua Yuexing flew after them. She was an archer to begin with. She was no stranger to speed. Perhaps, she wanted to prove herself so she chased after them earnestly.

Mingshi Yin and Duanmu Sheng looked behind and saw her.

Mingshi Yin came to a halt in midair as he said, "Master has said that you're unqualified to join the Evil Sky Pavilion..."

"I want to prove that I am," Hua Yuexing said resolutely.

“Aren’t you worried that I’ll kill you?” Mingshi Yin threatened.

Hua Yuexing was startled. She did not dare to get too close, that was why she had followed them from a distance.

Meanwhile, Whizard moved at breakneck speed. It left them in the dust in just a blink of an eye.

Lu Zhou stood on Whizard’s back as he looked down at the terrain.

“Master, what’s that?” Little Yuan’er pointed at a flying chariot that hovered above the forest on the other side of Nine Tune River.

Lu Zhou ordered Whizard to slow down.

Little Yuan’er who had a keen eye said, “That’s the flying chariot of the person who gave me the gift earlier in Skylark Pagoda!”

Was that not, Old Seventh, Si Wuya’s flying chariot?

“Is Seventh Senior Brother here?” Little Yuan’er wondered.

Lu Zhou remembered what happened during these few days. He said in a deep voice, “Rascal.”

Whizard switched directions and proceeded toward Nine Tune River. Bathed in auspicious Qi, Whizard shot through the skies at an amazing speed.

When Mingshi Yin and Duanmu Sheng saw this from afar, they stopped to look.

Hua Yuexing did the same.

Whizard was too flashy after all.

When it got closer, the cultivators on the flying chariot were scared witless.

“Oh, no! The old senior has noticed us!”

“Run!”

The flying chariot turned around quickly.

Unfortunately...

Lu Zhou said, “Running away?” He flipped his hand. A Thunderblast Card appeared, and he tossed it out. His target was, naturally, the flying chariot.

A vortex appeared and charged toward the flying chariot.

A lightning bolt descended from the heavens...

Rumble!

The lightning bolt was wrapped in energy as it struck down at the flying chariot.

The flying chariot’s movements stopped. It creaked and teetered perilously in the air.

Crack!

The flying chariot shattered and dropped from the sky.

Hua Yuexing was rooted to the spot in shock when she saw this. She knew she was inexperienced when she witnessed Lu Zhou capture the master thief, Yunsan, with his techniques. However, she did not personally see how Yunsan was captured. Currently, she acutely felt her inexperience as she watched this Thunderblast that could shock the heavens and the earth and make devils and deities cry. Moreover, this attack was launched from afar. Compared to this, her multiple arrow shots seemed insignificant.

Mingshi Yin exclaimed in awe, "Nobody can stop master when he's on a roll. Seventh Junior Brother is going to lose some important assets today."

Duanmu Sheng crossed his arms and said, "If Seventh Junior Brother is on the flying chariot, I don't think he'll be able to escape."

With Whitzard here, even if Si Wuya had an extra pair of wings, he would not have been able to escape. Under such circumstances, Si Wuya might not even have as much of a chance as Yunsan had.

"Old Seventh is risking a lot this time... To think he's bold enough to keep an eye on Skylark Pagoda from here." Mingshi Yin seemed to be enjoying himself.

Whitzard flew through the air.

Many of the cultivators leaped off the flying chariot when it fell. The low-level cultivators could only conjure up simple energy shields and fall.

Those with Brahman Sea realm cultivation bases and above could move in the air and control the pace of their descent.

"Rascal, show yourself!" Lu Zhou's voice resounded in the air. He did not earn much merit points at Skylark Pagoda this time. However, if he could capture Si Wuya, it would not be too much of a loss.

The cultivators were shaking in fear and shock as they scurried away in all directions. Their sect master had reminded them over and over again to stay away from Ji Tiandao. They were not to put up any resistance. This had become a rule of the Darknet. Currently, there was only a single thought in their heads and that was to run away as quickly as possible. They ran for their lives.

Nobody replied to Lu Zhou.

Lu Zhou glanced at fleeing the cultivators. None of them had cultivation bases greater than the Divine Court realm.

Since Si Wuya, Old Seventh, obtained the Peacock Plume and cultivated the complete Great Compassion Poem, his cultivation base should be in the Nascent Divinity Tribulation realm now. Otherwise, it would have been impossible for him to keep his position as sect master with a mere Divine Court realm cultivation base. This meant that Si Wuya was not among these people.

"Yuan'er."

“Alright.”

Little Yuan’er had been itching to jump into action. She leaped off Whitzard’s back. She was like a wolf that was let loose among a herd of sheep. The Nirvana Sash danced in the air as it unfurled.

The cultivators who could not run quickly enough were bound by the Nirvana Sash.

There were those who put up a fight as well. Little Yuan’er simply knocked them out cold. The terrifying qualities of a heaven-grade weapon were fully displayed at this moment.

Little Yuan’er loved the feeling of trampling on the weak. Moreover, since she had gotten her master’s approval, she did not hold back. However, she did not kill.

Lu Zhou stroked his beard and nodded. He was pleased. ‘Now there’s a promising disciple.’

If this had happened in the past, these people might not be so lucky.

A short while later, Mingshi Yin and Duanmu Sheng caught up to Lu Zhou.

When Mingshi Yin saw the scene, he gulped before asking, “Third Senior Brother, do you think little junior sister will torture us in the future?”

Duanmu Sheng remembered the scene when Little Yuan’er first got the Nirvana Sash. He scratched his head and said, “I don’t think so... Little junior sister has grown up.”

“I hope so.”

At this moment, the sounds of wailing rang from all directions.

Many of the cultivators were captured by Little Yuan’er. She tossed them into a pile. All of them were bound by the Nirvana Sash.

Lu Zhou descended slowly. He gave Whitzard a pat.

Whitzard growled and waited in its spot.

“Master, should I beat them up? I guarantee they’ll reveal Seventh Senior Brother’s location!” Little Yuan’er said.

Lu Zhou waved his hand to signal her to stand back.

Little Yuan’er retreated to the side.

With his hands on his back, Lu Zhou said, “I’ll only ask each question once. If there’s one wrong answer... You’ll have to pay the price.”

The group of cultivators shuddered. They were facing the greatest villain under the heavens. This person was also their sect master’s master. Their sect master had told them to cooperate and not to put up any resistance.

“Where is Si Wuya now?”

“Old... Old senior... We’re... only here on orders. The sect master has always been mysterious... We don’t know w-where he is. I’m being honest!”

“Why were you hiding here?”

“The sect master has ordered us to observe the situation after presenting the gift to Miss Ninth.”

Lu Zhou stroked his beard and contemplated this. This meant Si Wuya had planned all of this. What was his true objective?

Mingshi Yin bowed and said, “Master, Old Seventh has gone too far this time! How dare he use the Evil Sky Pavilion as his pawn! I’m willing to stay here and track him down. I swear that I’ll capture him!”

“I’m afraid that you might not be a match for Old Seventh,” Lu Zhou said with his hands on his back.

It was not only a problem of cultivation base. In terms of schemes, Mingshi Yin had always been sharp, but he was petty.

Chapter 209: This Is For Your Own Good

Mingshi Yin said indignantly, “We don’t know who’s stronger.”

Duanmu Sheng said, “You’re different from before, Fourth Junior Brother. During our recent sparring sessions, I noticed you’re able to endure much more compared to before.”

“...” Mingshi Yin turned and glanced at Duanmu Sheng. ‘That sounded wrong somehow.’

Lu Zhou ignored the duo. He looked at the bound Darknet members and said, “Go and tell your sect master that if he knows he has done wrong, come and see me personally.” After he finished speaking, he leaped onto Whizard’s back.

Mingshi Yin found this strange. He bowed and said, “Master, is this it?”

“Do you have a good plan?”

“I feel it’s better to tie them all up on the mountain and kill one of them each day. If Seventh Junior Brother values them, he might show up,” Mingshi Yin said.

Lu Zhou ignored him. If things were so simple, he would have disciplined his disciples long ago. Would there be a need for him to drag it out until today?

The Darknet members fell to their knees in fear and cried out for their parents.

Mingshi Yin was annoyed to no end by the noises they made.

“Have mercy! We’re only paid to do this... We’ve never even seen the sect master’s face.... Please spare us, old senior!”

“You’re paid?” Duanmu Sheng was puzzled.

Mingshi Yin nodded and said, “The real Darknet isn’t a group of set individuals. They’re people spread out in all sects and corners of the world. They might be fishermen, mess cooks, or some grand official in the palace... The Darknet has offended many people since its founding. They would not gather all their members in a place. It’ll only make it easier for their enemies to wipe them out in one fell swoop.”

“Seventh Senior Brother is truly smart... I mean, cunning!” Little Yuan’er exclaimed.

Lu Zhou leaped onto Whizard's back.

When Little Yuan'er saw this, she recalled her Nirvana Sash and leaped onto Whizard's back as well.

"In that case, I'll leave this to you." Lu Zhou looked at Mingshi Yin. He ordered Whizard to leave the forest, and they continued on their way to Anyang.

"Huh?" Mingshi Yin was perplexed.

Duanmu Sheng walked over and patted his shoulder before sincerely saying, "Old Fourth, it's all up to you now. I believe in you." After that, he flew away as well.

The moment Duanmu Sheng left, Mingshi Yin immediately gave himself a slap. "Me and my big mouth!"

Mingshi Yin looked at the Darknet members. "I'm in a bad mood today... I can only vent my frustrations on you."

There was a flurry of movements. Bluewood grew, and wails were heard.

Hua Yuexing, who was observing from a distance, frowned and mumbled, "Is His Highness the Third Prince lying to me? Didn't His Highness say the villains of the Evil Sky Pavilion aren't terrifying?" She did not dare to go any closer. After her experience in Skylark Temple, she had become wary of Mingshi Yin. Not only did he have mood swings, but he had a tendency of losing his temper as well.

After giving it some thought, Hua Yuexing looked at Duanmu Sheng's back. "Mister Third is the most normal one..." She quickly gave chase to him.

...

Meanwhile, in the Nether Sect's base on Pingdu Mountain.

"Seventh Junior Brother... aren't you worried about master's wrath by doing this?" Yu Zhenghai asked.

Si Wuya cupped his fists at Yu Zhenghai who was sitting on the throne and said, "Eldest Senior Brother, the disturbance in Anyang City has nothing to do with me. All I did was pass the message along. If master's going to get angry about this, then so be it."

Yu Zhenghai rose from his seat. He placed his hands on his back as he said, "I'm curious... What sound technique was it that was capable of pushing all four of my Great Protectors back in just an instant?"

"How would I know if even you don't know what it was, Eldest Senior Brother." Si Wuya paused slightly before continuing, "However, master has been alive for a millennium. It's no surprise that he has a trick or two up his sleeve. After all, even the ten great elites couldn't do anything to him after surrounding him twice."

"You have a point." Yu Zhenghai paced back and forth. "I heard the cloud-splitting chariot is flying again, and the Ten Shamans' Great Predecessor Formation in Tangzi Town was completely broken... In your opinion, why did master do that?"

In Yu Zheng Hai's opinion, an elderly person like his master should stay in Evil Sky Pavilion, conserve his strength, and live out the rest of his life comfortably. It was not logical to attract this much attention.

Si Wuya stroked his chin as he mulled over this. His Darknet, indeed, covered the lands. However, the Evil Sky Pavilion was the only place that he could not reach. He remembered Zhu Honggong, Old Eighth, and said, "I don't have an informant in the Evil Sky Pavilion so it's hard for me to say... However, there's no need to worry, Eldest Senior Brother. I think master didn't deliberately meddle in the rebellion in Anyang City. His actual target must've been Yunsan."

Yu Zhenghai was slightly puzzled by Si Wuya's words. "Junior Brother Wuya, do you think I'd acted against Wei Zhuoyan as well?"

Si Wuya shook his head and said, "You misunderstand me, senior brother... It's true that you have the motive to act against Wei Zhuoyan. If Wei Zhuoyan dies, even if Great Yan isn't plunged into chaos, there would certainly be an upheaval in the Imperial family as the power struggles erupt. However, with the Emperor around, the five princes can't do anything substantial. You've always been cautious and steady, Eldest Senior Brother, and you would never make such a low-level mistake."

When Yu Zhenghai heard this, he smiled brightly. "I like the sound of your words..."

"You flatter me, Eldest Senior Brother."

"Junior brother, master left the Evil Sky Pavilion for the Sky Fragments... Do you know how special they are?" Yu Zhenghai asked.

"Sky Fragments can easily slice through energy shields. They are also the best materials for forging heaven-grade weapons... Apart from that, there's nothing special about them," Si Wuya said. However, it did not make sense to him. If the fragments were nothing special, why would the Evil Sky Pavilion expend so much effort just to look for them? Alas, he had no way of obtaining information from the Evil Sky Pavilion. All he could do was make wild guesses.

Yu Zhenghai looked in the direction of the Evil Sky Pavilion. He sighed softly. 'We're doing this for your own good.' At this moment, he seemed to remember something and summoned his subordinate.

"Yes, sect master."

"This is my order. All those who harassed the Ci family during the Anyang rebellion will be executed according to the Nether Sect's rules."

"Yes, sect master."

Si Wuya said with a smile, "Little junior sister is truly fortunate to enjoy such care from you, Eldest Senior Brother."

Yu Zhenghai smiled. "Little junior sister's cultivation base isn't profound, and yet, she was brave enough to fight Second Junior Brother. She deserves a compliment for her show of courage."

"You have a point, Eldest Senior Brother!"

At this moment, a voice rang from outside. "The Azure Dragon Hall's First Seat requests an audience."

"Let him in."

A short while later, the Azure Dragon Hall's First Seat, Hua Chongyang, entered the Nether Sect's great hall. When he saw Si Wuya, he cupped his fists toward him before he turned to face Yu Zhenghai and said, "Sect Master, I have information about the incident in Anyang."

"What is it?"

"The one who impersonated the Nether Sect is Clarity Sect's Mo Qi."

Upon hearing this, Si Wuya rose to his feet immediately. He did not seem surprised. Instead, a knowing smile appeared on his face.

Yu Zhenghai reacted in the same manner.

Si Wuya cupped his fists and said, "Congratulations, Eldest Senior Brother... This is a great opportunity from the heavens."

Yu Zhenghai spoke with a deep voice, "This is my order. Take down the Clarity Sect within a month."

When Hua Chongyang heard this, he was greatly invigorated and said, "Understood! We won't let you down, sect master. We'll take down the Clarity Sect within a month!"

Si Wuya said, "The Clarity Sect's Mo Qi is already injured... The Clarity Sect's elite, Pan Litian, is nowhere to be found. All that's left is the Seven-leaf elite, You Hongyi. With the Four Great Protectors' strength, taking down the Clarity Sect is only a matter of time."

Yu Zhenghai had been waiting for this great opportunity. The Nether Sect could have forcibly taken down the Clarity Sect. However, the price he would have to pay was too great. He was not a reckless person who would act without a plan. He said, "Pan Litian... I hope he'll show up."

Nobody knew where Pan Litian went. It was rumored that Pan Litian was of the same generation as the Black Knights' Fan Xiuwen. It was said that he left the Clarity Sect for some reason and decided to roam the lands. There were accounts of his sighting at Misty Sea and Rongbei. There was no doubt that Pan Litian was the oldest elite from the Clarity Sect.

Ever since Yu Zhenghai made a name for himself, he had longed for a worthy opponent like his Second Junior Brother, Yu Shangrong... He hoped that Pan Litian would be a worthy opponent as well. Naturally, he never considered his master at all.

...

Lu Zhou did not stay in Anyang. He allowed Little Yuan'er to say goodbye to the Ci family before they returned to the Evil Sky Pavilion.

The rebellion in Anyang had already happened. As for where the Ci family would be moving to... nobody knew.

They arrived at the Evil Sky Pavilion in the afternoon.

Lu Zhou had no time to deal with the trivial matters in the Evil Sky Pavilion. He went straight into the hidden chamber to comprehend the Heavenly Writing. When he was in Anyang, he had used all of the

Heavenly Writing's extraordinary power. Hence, he decided to cultivate in seclusion and comprehend the Heavenly Writing.

Lu Zhou glanced at the dashboard. He had 14,170 merit points left.

If Mingshi Yin and Duanmu Sheng did not kill the four impostors in Anyang, he would have lost much more merit points during this trip. After considering the Thunderblast Card he used on the flying chariot, he felt the loss was acceptable.

'Let's stock up on some cards!' He would be incurring a huge loss if their prices rose again after he comprehended the Heavenly Writing.

Lu Zhou called up the system dashboard. He bought three Deadly Strike Cards, which cost him 2,400 merit points. As expected, the Deadly Strike Cards' price rose to 1,000 points per card. In other words, he would not be earning anything by killing Four-leaf cultivators or those who were weaker.

He bought three Impeccable Cards, which cost him 1,800 points. He used the Impeccable Cards less frequently so their prices remained the same for now.

After that, he bought three Binding Cage Cards, which cost him 1,500 merit points. The price rose to 600 points apiece after his purchase.

The strange thing was, there were no discernible patterns in the price hikes.

The margin of increase of the Binding Cage Cards' price was lower. Purchasing three of them should offer him a certain degree of safety.

Lu Zhou looked at the Thunderblast Card and shook his head. He did not plan on buying Thunderblast Cards.

He bought three Critical Heal Cards, which cost him 1,500 merit points, and the price remained the same.

After he finished stocking up, Lu Zhou glanced at his remaining merit points again. He was left with 6,970 points. It would only be wishful thinking for him to buy the Eight Methods Connected avatar that cost 20,000 points with the merit points he currently had.

Item: Deadly Strike Card x4, Impeccable Card x4, Critical Block Card x7 (passive), Binding Cage Card x4, Refining Talisman x2, Ji Tiandao's Peak Trial Card x1, Whitzard, Bi An, Sky Fragment x7, Critical Heal Card x3.

Lu Zhou felt at ease. At the very least, he did not have to worry about any threats in the near future with this stack of cards. Moreover, he did not have to worry about the price increment for now.

Lu Zhou closed the system dashboard and entered his Heavenly Writing comprehension state.

...

Two days passed in just a blink of an eye.

At the foot of Golden Court Mountain.

An old man who was dressed like a beggar carried a gourd of wine. He swayed as he walked toward Golden Court Mountain's barrier. He looked at the barrier and chuckled. As though he was drunk, he muttered, "So... so bright..."

The old man continued walking until he was dozens of meters away from the barrier. He chuckled foolishly as he took a swig from his wine gourd and burped. "Eh, young lady... why are you... kneeling here?"

The young lady was none other than Hua Yuexing, one of the Divine Capital's Three Godly Archers.

Hua Yuexing looked at him expressionlessly and said, "Old man, this is not a place to be begging... This is the Evil Sky Pavilion. If you value your life, you should leave as quickly as you can."

When the old beggar heard this, he chuckled. "This... is the Evil Sky Pavilion? You, why aren't you afraid?"

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Hua Yuexing turned away. She looked at the ground and said, "Why should I be afraid? I'll be joining them soon anyway."

Upon hearing this, the old beggar seemed to sober up slightly. He smiled and said, "The people under the heavens are usually afraid of the Evil Sky Pavilion. They'd do everything in their power to..." He burped before he continued, "... stay away... You're a funny one to want to join them."

"There's no other place for me in Great Yan." Hua Yuexing was about to continue when she suddenly shook her head. "Why am I telling all this to a beggar? You should be on your way. When the people from the mountain come and kill you, I don't want to be blamed."

The old beggar's expression remained indifferent. He walked to Hua Yuexing and sat next to her. He lifted his wine gourd to have a drink but discovered it was empty. He shook it strongly to eke out the few remaining drops. He smacked his lips before he turned to look at Hua Yuexing again and said, "Young lady, you look like a kind soul to me. Heed my advice, you're not suited for the Evil Sky Pavilion." As soon as he finished speaking, he burped again.

The scent of alcohol wafted in the air.

Hua Yuexing covered her nose and shuffled to the side. She thought to herself, 'What does it have to do with you if I join the Evil Sky Pavilion? What a busybody!'

The old beggar smiled and said, "Young lady, talk to me..."

"About what?"

"Why do you want to join the Evil Sky Pavilion?"

Hua Yuexing glanced at the old beggar. She remembered the things that happened in the Luo Sect, and she shook her head. "I have nowhere else to go."

There was a hint of helplessness in her words that reminded the old beggar of himself. Did he have a place to go? No. The four corners of the world were his home. The sky was his blanket, and the earth

was his bed. He made a living by begging. However, she was a young lady... It would not do for her to live like him. He looked at the Evil Sky Pavilion again, looking sober at this moment.

After a while, the old beggar coughed and asked in a seemingly dazed state, "Young lady, is this Golden Court Mountain?"

Hua Yuexing felt slightly speechless. She said, "Old man, I'm begging you, can you not disturb me? Please go somewhere else!"

"I'm not going anywhere." He instinctively raised his wine gourd before he remembered it was empty. "Life is colorless without booze. It's a bore."

Hua Yuexing rolled her eyes. 'Not only is he a beggar, but he's a hopeless alcoholic!'

The old beggar looked at the Evil Sky Pavilion and said, "I wonder if there's any good wine on Golden Court Mountain."

"..."

"I'll go and check. Perhaps, they might find it in their kind hearts to let me have a sip." The old beggar rose to his feet clumsily and patted the dust off himself.

This was an awkward scene.

A beggar was a beggar. He was filthy and unwashed, and yet, he was patting dust off himself.

The old beggar walked toward Golden Court Mountain's barrier. He thought that he could pass through and ended up slamming his face against the barrier. He staggered back from the impact and fell.

Hua Yuexing covered her eyes. She felt the pain just from looking at him.

The old beggar cried out, covering his nose as he rolled on the ground.

Hua Yuexing shook her head and said, "Why must you do this to yourself?"

At this moment, a female cultivator appeared on Golden Court Mountain's steps. She hurried down the mountain toward the entrance and said, "Mister Third has said that the old senior is cultivating in seclusion. He won't see you. You should leave."

The female cultivator's attitude was not bad. It made Han Yuexing feel more at ease. She bowed at the female cultivator. "Sister, please convey my message to them. Tell them that Hua Yuexing won't leave until she's accepted into the Evil Sky Pavilion."

"Why do you have to do this..."

"Please, sister."

The female cultivator sighed and shook her head.

"Wait up." The old beggar rose to his feet, his hand still covering his nose. He walked over slowly and lifted his wine gourd. "I want to have a drink..."

The female cultivator frowned...

At this moment, the red Nirvana Sash sailed across the skies and exited the barrier.

The old beggar was flustered and fell on his butt.

Little Yuan'er appeared in the air. She pointed at the old beggar and said, "We have no wine here, get lost!"

"What a fierce little girl!" The old beggar exclaimed, seemingly frightened.

Little Yuan'er retracted her Nirvana Sash and looped it around herself. It seemed like she was showing off. "And you... quit staying here! If master says he won't accept you, he won't accept you!"

"I'm willing to wait." Metal and stone would yield to sincerity.

"You can wait all you want then." Little Yuan'er returned to the Evil Sky Pavilion with the female cultivator.

The old beggar shook his head. He touched his swollen nose tentatively and decided to lie on the ground. He yawned and said, "I'm tired... I'll take a nap before I leave." Shortly after he lay down, he began snoring.

...

Three days later.

Inside the Evil Sky Pavilion.

Lu Zhou opened his eyes slowly. He could clearly feel the Heavenly Writing's extraordinary power returning to him.

He did not leave Anyang empty-handed. At the very least, he had a basic understanding of the Heavenly Writing.

The Three Scrolls of Heavenly Writing stated from the beginning that it was a different kind of cultivation.

After countless rounds of comprehension, Lu Zhou finally got a grasp on the cultivation method...

Comprehension was akin to sensing Primal Qi. Obtaining the extraordinary power was akin to absorbing Primal Qi and condensing it into energy. However, the extraordinary power was clearly more powerful than energy. He remembered the power of speech he unleashed in Anyang City and nodded with a pleased expression on his face. The only downfall was that he could only unleash it once after comprehending the Heavenly Writing for such a long time. It was a shame.

Lu Zhou shook the thoughts out of his mind. It was meaningless to think about these matters right now. He could only deal with the Heavenly Writing as he went. There were no past experiences he could draw insights from.

He glanced at the system dashboard out of habit. 6,970 merit points.

His current luck points were at 89.

That was enough.

'The first time was 33 points and the second time was at 66 points. If this pattern holds true, could the third time be 99 points?'

"Lucky draw."

"Ding! Spent 50 merit points. Thank you for participating. Luck +1."

He did nine more draws and bumped his luck points up to 99.

Lu Zhou stopped. To be honest, he felt nervous. Although he was now Ji Tiandao, and his frame of mind was largely different from his past life, he could not help but feel as if he was a young man again when faced with the lucky draws.

Lu Zhou took a deep breath and calmed down.

"Lucky draw."

"Ding! Spent 50 merit points. Thank you for participating. Luck +1."

Lu Zhou frowned slightly. He was relatively calm. Fortunately, he had prepared himself for this...

It seemed like arithmetical patterns could not be applied here.

"Lucky draw."

"Ding! Spent 50 merit points. Luck points reached 100. Obtained Improved Binding Cage Card x5, Improved Critical Heal Card x3, Reversal Card x5."

"Improved Binding Cage Card. Hit rate: 100%. Not sold."

"Improved Critical Heal Card. Heal rate: 100%. Not sold."

Lu Zhou did some calculations in his heart. 100 luck points were equivalent to 5,000 merit points. If he did the math, it did not seem like he had struck a big jackpot. Well, at least he did not incur a loss. He was satisfied with the improved item cards. After all, they could not be bought. The only regret he had was not getting anything special from this round of lucky draws. 'Let's leave it for another time.'

At this moment, Zhao Yue's voice rang from outside the chamber. "Master, Yunsan is here."

"What's the situation?" Lu Zhou asked. If Yunsan had failed his mission, there was no need for him to meet Yunsan.