

Disciples 251

Chapter 251 Offer A Sacrifice

Lu Zhou did not even look at the ten nuns as he continued walking toward Wu Nian.

When the ten nuns gathered in midair, Mingshi Yin moved at lightning speed, Little Yuan'er unfurled her Nirvana Sash, and Duanmu Sheng brandished his Overlord Spear.

On the cloud-splitting chariot, Hua Yuexing held her breath. Her eyes glinted resolutely as she widened her feet and got into position. "Leave the rest to me..."

The Separation Hook glinted coldly in the light and shot at one of the nuns.

The Overlord Spear pierced another nun.

Not to be outdone, the Nirvana Sash took down a nun as well.

The three of them heard Hua Yuexing's words so they no longer acted after taking out one target each.

"Ding! Killed three Divine Court realm targets. Reward: 300 merit points." "This is a sin! A sin!" Wu Nian's eyes reddened as she looked at her ten disciples. She wanted to save them, but alas, everything happened too quickly. She could not react in time.

Seven arrows formed by energy shot out and sailed through the air at a rapid speed. They flew in different directions, landing on the seven remaining nuns from Cloud Shine Nunnery. The seven nuns fell to the ground and spat out mouthfuls of blood.

Hua Yuexing said awkwardly, "I'm sorry... I... I still need to work harder."

Mingshi Yin said, "You're doing fine. You just need a little more force behind your strikes."

"Thank you for your compliment, Mister Fourth."

Meanwhile, Lu Zhou did not hesitate and raised his right hand. With his cultivation base in the Divine Court realm, he was invincible to someone who had his or her cultivation sealed. He gathered Primal Qi in his palm before an energy seal appeared. Then, he struck Wu Nian's dantian.

Boom!

Wu Nian grunted and rolled across the ground.

Lu Zhou withdrew his hand and placed them on his back before he said, "The Jade Horsetail Whisk's owner shouldn't tarnish herself with the filth from the secular world nor should she concern herself with the affairs of men. She should remain steadfast in the face of fame and riches. This is a small punishment for you." After he finished speaking, he tossed the Jade Horsetail Whisk to Little Yuan'er who was standing behind him.

Little Yuan'er deftly caught the horsetail whisk. She remembered her master had promised to give her the Jade Horsetail Whisk. She had longed for the weapon even though it had been given away. However, now, as she studied the horsetail whisk and recalled it had been used by this despicable old nun, she felt

repulsed by it. "Master, since I have the Nirvana Sash, you can give this to senior brother!" she hurriedly said before tossing the horsetail whisk to Duanmu Sheng.

When Duanmu Sheng saw this, he hastily sent out a wave of energy and pushed the horsetail whisk away. He sent it toward Mingshi Yin and said, "Old Fourth, you can have it..." When he recalled the junk that Mingshi Yin wielded, he thought the Jade Horsetail Whisk would be a huge improvement.

Mingshi Yin looked at the horsetail whisk with a hint of distaste as he said, "No, no, no. This weapon doesn't suit me..." He hurriedly raised his hand and sent it toward the cloud-splitting chariot. "Let Elder Hua have it."

Hua Wudao frowned. It was true that horsetail whisks were usually used by the older generation, but they were mostly used by Daoist priests or monks. He was neither a Daoist priest nor a monk. What use would he have for this? For this reason, he shook his head and said, "This should be given to someone else."

The female cultivators onboard the flying chariot beamed as they looked at it.

For cultivators at their levels, such an item was something they had always dreamed of owning. It was something they could only obtain by chance. Regardless if it was a horsetail whisk that did not suit them, they still wanted it.

Although Hua Yuexing wanted the Jade Horsetail Whisk as well, her desire was not as strong compared to the female cultivators.

The onlookers watched with their mouths agape. An item that most people spent their whole lives seeking was treated with such little value by the people from Evil Sky Pavilion! They were tossing it around like a piece of trash that nobody wanted. They could only shake their heads, vexed. Lu Zhou glanced at it and said in a deep voice, "Preposterous!"

Silence descended.

Little Yuan'er was startled. She lowered her head and said, "I've made a mistake."

"Take the Jade Horsetail Whisk." Lu Zhou sounded calm, but his tone brooked no arguments.

Upon hearing this, the female cultivators onboard the flying chariot dismissed their thoughts about the horsetail whisk. They did not think it was unreasonable. After all, with their cultivation bases, would they even be able to use the Jade Horsetail Whisk to its full potential? Moreover, an innocent person might get into trouble for possessing a valuable item. If they did not have the strength to hold onto the weapon, it was better for them to be without it.

At this moment, Wu Nian sat up with great difficulty. She looked at Lu Zhou who stood near her but did not say anything. She turned to look at Luo Xingkong's corpse, the Bright Mirror's effects were completely gone. Her eyelids twitched. "I've made a mistake..."

Luo Xingkong's body gradually changed color... His skin turned black as though he was burned by a black flame.

The Cloud Shine Nunnery was not the only helper that the Heavenly Sword Sect sought out. They seemed to have colluded with other forces as well based on the sudden appearance of the black flame.

It was too late for Wu Nian to regret her actions. She knew why Luo Xingkong was injured. It seemed to be the ace up his sleeve.

The onlookers were shocked.

“What’s that?”

“Some arcane art that Luo Xingkong cultivated?”

The Heavenly Sword Sect disciples were puzzled by this as well.

Lu Zhou looked at Luo Xingkong. “A sacrificial offering?”

Hua Wudao recognized this as well. He cupped his fists and said, “We shouldn’t linger for much longer. Kindly board the chariot, Pavilion Master.”

Lu Zhou nodded.

Sacrificial offerings were carried out to draw forth some greater power. In other words, before Luo Xingkong came, he had already sold his body or soul to someone. Someone must have laid a trap on the Lotus Dais.

Lu Zhou surveyed his surroundings. He had waited so long for the Heavenly Sword Sect’s accomplices to show up but only Cloud Shine Nunnery had shown up. Would the stronger accomplices show up? The onlookers seemed to have noticed something was amiss as well even though they could not exactly figure out what was wrong. They began to look around uneasily. Some of the more timid cultivators quickly took the chance and fled from the Lotus Dais.

At this moment, a flying chariot could be seen flying away next to the third pavilion.

“The Nether Sect’s flying chariot?”

“The Nether Sect is here?”

“Well, they’re leaving now! They’re running away!”

The flying chariot flew away at top speed. In fact, the Nether Sect’s flying chariot was not the only one. Many cultivators were fleeing the Lotus Dais in small groups. “Run! Something bad’s going to happen!” That was how human psychology worked. People would usually follow the crowd. Moreover, they could see Luo Xingkong’s body was being used as a sacrificial offering.

The entire place descended into chaos.

Lu Zhou rose into the air and surveyed the surroundings again.

Little Yuan’er grew energetic when she saw the Nether Sect’s flying chariot. “Master... That’s the Nether Sect’s flying chariot, should we give chase?”

Lu Zhou shook his head. The Nether Sect’s flying chariot had flown away quite a while now, how were they going to catch up to it?

Mingshi Yin and Duanmu Sheng rose into the

air.

Boom! Boom Boom!

At this moment, a series of explosions rang in the towering pavilions around the Lotus Dais. With the dais at the center, a mass of black energy began to roll out.

Hua Wudao cupped his fists. "It's the power of the sacrifice... A grand shaman is controlling his puppet."

Lu Zhou calmly returned to the flying chariot. He placed his hands on his back and continued looking down at the scene below. 'Is this Luo Xingkong's source of confidence?' He speculated inwardly. 'Is this Mo Li's doing?'

However, Mo Li was injured. She could not have unleashed strength comparable to a grand shaman. A grand shaman was equal to an Eight-leaf cultivator.

Among the fleeing cultivators, a few of them could be seen being shrouded by the black mass of energy.

Hua Wudao looked at the scene and said, "A controlling technique. Looks like the Heavenly Sword Sect had been preparing for this for a long time."

"This is to another party's benefit..."

Little Yuan'er, Mingshi Yin, and Duanmu Sheng returned to the flying chariot.

Behind a rock near a pavilion in the distance.

Si Wuya silently looked at the flying chariot above Lotus Dais. "It seems like the Heavenly Sword Sect went all out..."

"Sect master, it's dangerous here. We should retreat. The Lotus Dais is now under the control of a grand shaman. The cloud-splitting chariot wouldn't be able to escape.

"No need." Si Wuya shook his head. "Let's wait for a while."

Chapter 252 The Heavenly Sword Sect's Hidden Trump Card

The nine huge pillars around the Lotus Dais burst forth with energies that resembled black chains and transformed into a huge black net.

"Run!"

"Those b*stards from the Heavenly Sword Sect!"

It was impossible that the Heavenly Sword Sect did not have a trump card since they were bold enough to lure the Evil Sky Pavilion here. It seemed like they had risked their lives to exact revenge.

This was all part of Luo Xingkong's plan. Although the sacrificial offering was successful, alas, the fight to the death was slightly different from what he had imagined.

At this moment, the cloud-splitting chariot started moving... "Old villain, you won't be able to escape." A peculiar voice rang from the crowd before a cackle sounded across the Lotus Dais.

Lu Zhou raised a hand. "Stop."

The cloud-splitting chariot came to halt.

The nine pillars covered a wide area. The insides of the pavilions and the upper and lower parts of the Lotus Dais were surrounded by the towering pillars. In other words, the black net was meant to capture everyone here. This included the onlookers on the petals of the Lotus Dais.

Heads began to fly near the Lotus Dais.

The cultivators who had been shrouded by the black gas began to kill everyone around them.

The people's cultivation bases were too low so there was no way for them to defend themselves.

The black puppets wreaked havoc everywhere they went.

The Lotus Dais was in complete chaos. There were too many people around.

Lu Zhou remained expressionless as he watched this scene.

Meanwhile, Hua Wudao and Hua Yuexing frowned at this. They were formerly from the Noble Path after all. They could not accept such a killing method.

The grand shaman controlled the puppets and increased his own powers by devouring the others. This was a truly vicious method.

Lu Zhou was not worried. He was only worried that the person behind this would not show himself. He continued to wait. It did not matter if the flying chariot could leave this place or not. He planned to wait for the mastermind to appear and use his Deadly Strike card. A grand shaman would be worth at least 1,500 merit points.

"Master... there's no need to save them! These people would've paid to see things escalate. Their lives or deaths have nothing to do with us!" Mingshi Yin said.

Little Yuan'er chimed in, "That's right... I'm sure they were cursing us before we arrived."

At this moment, one of the black puppets seemed to have gone berserk as he lunged at the cloud-splitting chariot like a fierce beast. The black gas seemed to sizzle as he made his move.

Duanmu Sheng shouted angrily, "Get lost!" He tossed his Overlord Spear out!

Bam!

The puppet's facial features were hidden by the black gas. Only his eyes that were glowing unnaturally green could be seen. The puppet raised his arms and parried the Overlord Spear, sending it spinning.

Duanmu Sheng raised his hand, and the Overlord Spear flew into his hand.

Lu Zhou said apathetically, "Take care of this."

"Yes, master!" Duanmu Sheng was dissatisfied with his failure. Since his first attack did not do the job, he would attack again. He flew out of the flying chariot, energy rippled out from the tips of his toes into the surroundings. Based on this, one could see how fired-up he was. When he made a move, he would go all out.

Bam! Bam! Bam!

Duanmu Sheng advanced on the puppet with a crushing force. Thousands of spear shadows struck.

“Let me at him as well!” Mingshi Yin was eager to join in the fray. He did not hesitate and shot toward them.

Little Yuan’er giggled before she said, “I want in as well!” She activated her Cloud-treading Boots and wrapped herself in the Nirvana Sash as she charged toward the other three black puppets.

Hua Yuexing raised her bow and fired. Feathered arrows took form between her left index and middle fingers.

Twang! Twang! Twang! Her shots landed true on numerous puppets below them.

However, the puppets only staggered backward for a moment and did not fall.

Hua Wudao said, “Hit their critical spots.”

“Mhm.” Hua Yuexing fired her arrows again.

At this moment, more and more puppets appeared near the Lotus Dais.

Hua Wudao noticed the abnormality in this and said, “It’s not only the sacrifices... Those who are killed will also be controlled!”

Zhao Yue had been focusing on maintaining the flying chariot’s flight. When she heard Hua Wudao’s words, she exclaimed in shock, “The dead can come back to life?”

“This isn’t some resurrection technique... Ordinary cultivators have to circulate Primal Qi and condense it into energy to move objects. Witchcraft relies on Formations, Formation veins, and rituals to manipulate the Primal Qi in the natural environment and control a person’s heart and mind...” Hua Wudao explained, “Even an elite such as Leng Luo could be controlled, let alone these small fries.”

Zhao Yue said, “However, it’s still meaningless. These puppets have such a low cultivation base, they won’t be able to do anything to us.”

“No.” Hua Wudao shook his head. “A dead cultivator can only be killed if we kill the spellcaster or if we kill them with overwhelming power. They can’t feel pain, and they’re fearless. They no longer have the capacity to feel fear like normal humans. Meanwhile, this sacrificial offering’s Grand Formation will continue to absorb the power of the dead. A grain of sand can become a mountain. We shouldn’t underestimate them.”

Zhao Yue cupped her fists and said, “I see.” Lu Zhou remained silent as he observed the battle below. He thought to himself, ‘Where’s the grand shaman hiding? What relationship does he have with Mo Li? Or is this the Fourth Prince who’s exiled to the borders whom Hua Yuexing mentioned? As long as I can take the grand shaman out, there’s no need for us to fear anything.’

Bam! Bam! Bam!

Duanmu Sheng charged forward as a terrifying energy surged out of his body. Thousands upon thousands of spear shadows finally destroyed a puppet. "This is f*cking tiring... Why are these puppets so difficult to kill?!"

Bam!

Mingshi Yin's Separation Hook destroyed a puppet at this moment as well. He said, "Just destroy the witchcraft spell. They're already dead to begin with."

The others looked at Mingshi Yin.

Mingshi Yin moved back and forth at lightning speed. He aimed his attacks at the black energy veins on the puppets' bodies.

Realization dawned on everyone at this moment.

"Old Fourth is indeed intelligent!" Duanmu Sheng quickly attacked another black puppet nearby with his Overlord Spear.

More black puppets fell. However, even more puppets took their places.

There were as many as 50 black puppets on the Lotus Dais.

Hua Yuexing continued shooting at the weak points of the veins. Although her cultivation base was low, her archery skills were shocking. From a distance, she had dealt with many puppets without having to move around like Duanmu Sheng and the others.

The puppets fell. The black gas rose from their bodies and was absorbed by the chain-like energies above them.

'No merit points?'

'This means the dead cultivators were in the Brahman Sea realm or below. This isn't worth it...' Lu Zhou shook his head. Fortunately, he had many disciples doing the fighting for him. If he had to deal with the puppets with his item cards, he might not even know how he died.

Hua Wudao was not an expert in offense, therefore, he chose to stay on the flying chariot.

As expected, more and more puppets began to lunge at the flying chariot.

"Six Compatible Seal." Hua Wudao's Six Compatible Seal immediately appeared with a dazzling light that enveloped the flying chariot.

The black puppets rammed onto the seal and were instantly repelled.

From afar, Si Wuya frowned when he saw this.

"Hua Wudao seems like he has had a breakthrough in his cultivation? Did he manage to get rid of his weak points?"

The nine towering pillars shook. At the center of the web of black energy, a black circle began to appear.

Si Wuya's frown did not ease as he muttered, "They're trying to capture energy like this?"

It was common knowledge that Formations could not be laid on the Lotus Dais. However, the sacrificial offering technique had worked along with the nine pillars. Who knew Luo Xingkong would be willing to offer his life as a sacrifice?

The nine pillars were now the sacrificial offering's strength! "Sect master, the Nether Sect has returned! Should we greet them?"

The Nether Sect's flying chariot could be seen hovering near the third pavilion.

"There's no need for that."

"Understood."

Si Wuya looked at the Nether Sect's flying chariot and wondered to himself, "Eldest Senior Brother, will you lend them a helping hand?"

Chapter 253 Power

The Six Compatible Seal expanded and contracted.

The cultivators were repelled by it. Upon seeing this, the cultivators on the ground were shocked. They did not have time to feel amazed by the Evil Sky Pavilion's strength and were doing everything they could to leave the Lotus Dais as soon as they could. Alas, the towering pillars around the Lotus Dais had been shrouded by a black chain-like energy that seemed to bar them from escaping. It seemed as though they had been trapped in an extremely big cage. Hua Wudao looked at the shining black energy chains and said, "Don't worry, Pavilion Master, as long as I'm here, I can guarantee the flying chariot's safety." Lu Zhou nodded slightly. With Hua Wudao's strength and cultivation base, it would not be a problem for Hua Wudao to protect the flying chariot. He found it puzzling that the opponent was only using witchcraft to control weak puppets despite the grand display. It was obvious this would not be able to take down the Evil Sky Pavilion. As he looked around, he discovered nothing was left of Lu Xingkong's body except for a puddle. Lu Xingkong who was a cultivation elite had sacrificed himself and offered up a huge amount of energy. Meanwhile, Duanmu Sheng, Mingshi Yin, and Little Yuan'er took out many puppets. As for the low-level cultivators who were fleeing on the ground, they looked like sheeps awaiting slaughter. The only thing they could do was to keep trying and dodging the attacks. Fortunately, cultivators were much more resilient, physically and mentally, compared to mere mortals.

Bzz!

The black energy chains crackled as though electric currents ran through them. A dark blue light glinted on their surfaces. Hua Wudao exclaimed in surprise, "They're trying to kill everyone in the compound in one fell swoop... How vicious!"

More dead cultivators who were controlled by the witchcraft spell continued to lunge at Lu Zhou's three disciples in a frenzy. One of the puppets roared, "You won't get away!"

Lu Zhou was not worried about his disciples' safety.

The puppets would occasionally charge at the cloud-splitting chariot as well. However, none of them could breach the Six Compatible Seal.

“What’s that?” Zhao Yue suddenly cried out. Since she was manning the helm, she had the best view. She had seen something flashing at the point where the black energy chains intersected

“A power convergence point... It’s where the power is the strongest and weakest at the same time,” Lu Zhou said.

Hua Wudao nodded. “Indeed. The other party intends to destroy all of us with that power.” “Is it really that powerful?” Zhao Yue could see the puppets were not strong at all. “The terrifying thing about witchcraft isn’t its might, but the corrosion to one’s will and body...”

“What should we do now?”.

Bzzt!

The sounds of the black chains crackling grew louder. Hua Wudao said with a sigh, “The Buddhist Great Meditation Dharani, the Daoist Heart Cleansing Mantra, or the Confucian Expansive Heavenly Energy can suppress this. Although the Yun Sect has Daoist roots, I’ve only studied the Six Compatible Seal and have never learned mantras. I truly regret it now...”

The Buddhist, Daoist, and Confucian schools had split into many branches after all. It was impossible to master everything. Zhao Yue surveyed the scene before she said to the female cultivators onboard who were helping to keep the flying chariot afloat, “Don’t be afraid. Since master is here, there’s no need for us to fear witchcraft.”

Lu Zhou’s expression did not change. However, he thought to himself inwardly, ‘I can’t do anything if I don’t see the spellcaster...’ Was it possible that everyone, along with him, would get caught up in this?

Bzzt!

The sound of crackling from the black energy chains was even louder than before.

The low-level cultivators on the ground seemed to have noticed this as well. They felt a greater sense of danger at this moment. They began to group up to fend off the endless stream of puppets. At this moment, the point where the chains intersected shone dazzlingly. Everyone’s attention was immediately focused on it. The light was as bright as the sun, and it hurt to keep their eyes opened. All of a sudden, the puppets stopped moving. They stood ramrod straight as black gas rose up. The shadow of a figure flitted past the energy that shone as bright as the sun before a thunderous and forceful roar rang in the air. Rarrghh! “The lion’s roar sound technique! It’s not a grand shaman?” Hua Wudao immediately activated his Nine Cuts Six Compatible Seal.

The nine huge scripts shone with a golden radiance and blocked the soundwave.

Mingshi Yin and Duanmu Sheng activated their protective energies and retreated until they were near the pillars. On the other hand, Little Yuan’er seemed to be unaffected. Her Cloud Feather Raiment was shining faintly as it negated the sound technique.

Mingshi Yin was filled with envy as he looked at Little Yuan’er.

Logically, an elite at this level would not stop at just one sound technique. However, the figure did not unleash any more techniques. Lu Zhou said apathetically, “It’s not human.” When he looked at the figure, he did not see any information at all from the system that suggested the figure was human.

Mysterious and peculiar beasts could be found everywhere in Great Yan, the Misty Forest, and Rongbei. Although humans came up with an encyclopedia of wild beasts, no one would dare to claim that it contained all the beasts under the heavens.

“It’s not human? How’s that possible?” Zhao Yue was puzzled. ‘Even if it’s not human, it can’t have materialized out of thin air, right?’

Lu Zhou looked at the shadow in the ball of light and said, “It’s a projection.” Hua Wudao nodded, “A kind of witchcraft... This spellcaster is surely a rare genius cultivator.” The Formation on the Lotus Dais and the sacrificial and offering Formations that were laid down beforehand using the nine towering pillars, and the precise control was perfect. These suggested the mastermind was a genius. The shadow’s deep voice rang in everyone’s ears. The figure spoke slowly, and its voice was muffled as though the speaker was underwater. “Are you the Evil Sky Pavilion’s master?” Lu Zhou replied, “Who are you?”

The shadow did not answer the question. Instead, it said, “I hope you’ll be able to break through this Formation.”

If this had been a normal battle, the cultivators would not have given the witchcraft spell this much time to activate. Although witchcraft was powerful, its flaw was glaringly obvious. It needed a long casting time. However, once it was successfully cast, it was absolutely terrifying. The energy chains began to shake, and the buzzing noise intensified at this moment.

The shadow figure said confidently, “It seems like I’m going to defeat the greatest elite in Great Yan today.” Several clusters of purple energy flew toward the flying chariot. “I’ll block them!” Duanmu Sheng, Mingshi Yin, and Little Yuan’er moved at the same time. Meanwhile, the puppets made their move as well, holding three of them back. They had no choice but to deal with the puppets.

Faced with the incoming balls of energy, Lu Zhou flew toward them head-on.

“Pavilion Master!”

“Master!”

“Old senior!”

The shadow figure exclaimed in shock, “What?”

To gain the power to silence everything, to maintain and manifest samadhi.

As soon as Lu Zhou left the flying chariot, the Heavenly Writing’s extraordinary power activated just as he had willed it. His body seemed to glow with a faint bluish light at this moment, and an azure lotus appeared under his feet and carried him forward.

“This...”

Although Hua Wudao was experienced and knowledgeable, he was still baffled by this sight. ‘Who would manifest their lotus but not their avatar?’ This was his second time seeing this azure lotus. The first time he had seen it was when Lu Zhou was cultivating in seclusion. When the azure lotus’ power surged out, it had shattered his Nine Cuts alimmediately. Howuld he not feel shocked upon seeing it again? “Is this the power of the barrier?” This was the only explanation he could come up with.

Dozens of purple energy beams shot toward Lu Zhou, but they were all kept at bay by the azure lotus and light.

Like light and shadow, permeating everywhere, while staying still in samadhi.

The shadow sounded slightly agitated as it commanded, "Stop him!"

The puppets rose into the sky immediately and charged at Lu Zhou. When Hua Wudao saw this, he could already guess the outcome when he recalled the scene when the hidden chamber exploded and the terrifying blast that erupted when the azure lotus bloomed.

Little Yuan'er, Mingshi Yin, Zhao Yue, and Duanmu Sheng's attention was focused on the azure lotus beneath their master's feet.

Meanwhile, the brightness of the point where the black energy chains intersected peaked.

Dozens of puppets lunged at Lu Zhou when the azure lotus bloomed. Its petals unfurled as an energy rippled into the surroundings like a great wave. This was the power of muting! All the puppets fell to the ground and were destroyed in just an instant!

The shadow in the ball of light said in a frightened and trembling voice, "Th... This power..." Before it could finish its sentence, the intersection point was overwhelmed by the azure lotus and disappeared.

The black energy chains snapped and shattered like glass. At the same time, the blue light shone on the Lotus Dais, causing the black energy to fade into nothingness.

Lu Zhou did not look down at the situation below. Instead, he was looking straight ahead. After a while, he still did not hear any notifications from the system.

The blue lotus' light gradually disappeared, and silence gradually descended on the Lotus Dais.

'Is it possible that this power isn't enough to kill the grand shaman with a strike?' Lu Zhou remembered Hua Wudao and the others had suffered minor injuries back in the hidden chamber. However, his power, at that time, was not nearly as strong as it was now. This time, he had unleashed everything he had. Logically, the grand shaman should have been killed.

At this moment, Lu Zhou suddenly sensed that most of his Primal Qi had been depleted. 'Hm? Hold it, stay in the air! Don't f*cking fall! There's a huge crowd here, I can't fall!' Lu Zhou turned around slowly with his hands on his back to survey the surroundings 'Hm? Where are the others?'

Mingshi Yin was thrown back on a pillar with his limbs spread apart. Duanmu Sheng had stabbed the Overlord Spear into the ground and was holding onto it for support. Even Little Yuan'er, with her Cloud Feather Raiment, was hiding behind a pillar as though she was frightened.

The flying chariot... Lu Zhou frowned slightly. The flying chariot did not seem to be in good shape. It was teetering, and there were a few cracks on it.

Hua Wudao was kneeling on one knee near the helm. He held the helm with one hand while he maintained the Six Compatible Seal with the other. His face glistened with sweat.

Lu Zhou felt helpless. This grand technique did not discriminate between friends and foes! He looked down. The low-level cultivators, on the other hand, were unscathed. They had hidden among the lotus petals and were spared from the impact.

Now that things seemed to have calmed down, they walked out of their hiding places and looked up into the sky. They saw the nonchalant Evil Sky Pavilion's master hovering in the air.

"Thank you for saving us, patriarch!" "Thank you for saving us, patriarch!"

The crowd fell to their knees in unison.

"Ding! Received genuine praise from 225 people. Reward: 2,250 merit points."

It was better than nothing. Lu Zhou treated this as compensation for taking out the grand shaman. Finally, he looked at the kneeling crowd and said with a flick of his sleeve, "Well? Get lost!"

The crowd dispersed without any hesitation, in a hurry to leave this perilous place. "Thank you so much!"

"Who said that the Evil Sky Pavilion's patriarch is a person who commits all sorts of crimes?! From this day on, the patriarch is the person I respect the most!"

The disciples were stunned by these words. All of a sudden, the sound of an explosion rang from one of the pavilions near one of the Lotus Dais' pillars. How strange...

Lu Zhou looked in the direction of the sound. "A flying chariot?" The Nether Sect's flying chariot swayed and teetered as it flew away!

"Master, the Nether Sect's flying chariot has been hit by your almighty strength... I'll go after it!" Duanmu Sheng moved quickly. With two steps, he leaped into the air.

Lu Zhou did not speak. In his current condition, he could not possibly give chase.

Behind a tree near another pavilion.

Si Wuya frowned. His eyes were filled with disbelief. He clenched his fists until his knuckles turned white. "The power of the barrier? As expected, master has absorbed the power of the barrier!" "Sect master, the old senior is still strong. The factions from the Noble Path have deserted this place. Isn't this the outcome you want?" "No..." Si Wuya raised his hand and said, "Quite the opposite. Once the power of the barrier is depleted, what's going to happen then?" "Understood! I'll send someone to continue monitoring the movements of those from the Noble Path."

...

On the Lotus Dais Lu Zhou slowly moved to the cloud-splitting chariot. Outwardly, he seemed to be in perfect condition. He said, "Man the helm." Mingshi Yin leaped up and moved to the chariot's helm. He did not waste any time and began to channel his Primal Qi to stabilize the flying chariot.

Hua Wudao exhaled in relief. He removed his palm from the helm and cupped his fists at Lu Zhou without saying anything. Meanwhile, an expression of reverence could be seen on Hua Yuexing's face. If

she did not personally witness it, she would not have believed the Evil Sky Pavilion's master was so powerful! It was completely beyond her imagination.

"Master, the Formation veins on the flying chariot's left side are slightly damaged. We might experience some turbulence during our flight." Lu Zhou nodded. "No matter."

"I'll try to control the speed... It won't be a problem for us to return to the Evil Sky Pavilion."

Little Yuan'er said, "Third Senior Brother isn't back yet!"

"We don't have to wait for him!" Mingshi Yin knew in the depth of his heart that his Eldest Senior Brother would not act viciously toward his Third Senior Brother even though his Eldest Senior Brother had left the Evil Sky Pavilion. For this reason, he decided there was no need to wait for Duanmu Sheng. Hua Wudao cupped his fists. "Pavilion Master, may I ask... that azure lotus..."

Lu Zhou raised a hand and interjected, "All the techniques under the heavens share certain similarities... Whether it's from the Daoist sects, the Buddhist sects, or the Confucian school... they're all a means to the same end. The predecessors compiled books and discovered cultivation paths. The successors learn, achieve breakthroughs, and invent new things..." Hua Wudao bowed. "I've learned something new today. I thought I was merely unlucky for losing to you 20 years ago... Now, it's clear to me that the difference between us isn't only in our cultivation bases... I truly regret my past attitude." Lu Zhou stroked his beard and did not say anything. He walked up to the helm and saw the towering pillars growing smaller and smaller behind the chariot.

It was a grand shaman who had created the sacrificial offering Formation with the towering pillars... However, it seemed like this was all the so-called genius could do.

The towering pillars were completely destroyed. The power of the technique had destroyed everything on the Lotus Dais. Fortunately, the cloud-splitting chariot had been behind Lu Zhou and was protected by the Nine Cuts Six Compatible Seal. On the contrary, the Nether Sect's flying chariot was not that fortunate. It was not spared from the impact even though it was far away. Moreover, it did not have the protection of someone like Hua Wudao who specialized in tortoiseshell techniques. The further it flew, the greater the cracks on its hull grew. Crack! Crack! Crack! "Sect master, the flying chariot's about to break!" "Don't stop!" Yu Zhenghai ordered with a grim expression on his face, "Don't you dare stop!"

Chapter 254 Senior Brother Has No Choice

Creak! Creak! Creak!

The flying chariot made creaking noises and the cracks grew.

Hua Chongyang, the Azure Dragon Hall's First Seat, was personally manning the helm. He could not help but break out in cold sweat. Even a skilled housewife would be troubled by an empty stove. No matter how skilled he was at manning the helm, there was not much he could do if the flying chariot was damaged. He had no choice but to slow down as the cracks grew. He could no longer endure it and finally said, "Sect master, the flying chariot can't take it anymore."

“Shut up!” Yu Zhenghai’s expression was still grim. They had to escape even if the flying chariot fell apart. Fear still lingered in his heart when he thought about the blooming azure lotus. He was confused. How and why was his master still so strong at his age? In any case, he could not go wrong with fleeing! Hua Chongyang mustered up his courage and said, “What I mean is, with the flying chariot’s speed, we’re better off flying on our own...” “Hm?” Yu Zhenghai stood up. He walked up to the helm and looked down.

The flying chariot teetered and continued moving slowly.

‘How’s this different from a mere mortal running on land?’ Indeed, it was better for them to fly on their own.

Yu Zhenghai placed his hands on his back and said, “Abandon ship.” “As you command, sect master.” The Nether Sect’s disciples leaped out of the flying chariot without wasting any time. When Hua Chongyang saw Yu Zhenghai was still standing in the flying chariot, he said, “Sect master, we can always build a new flying chariot.” He did not say if they lost their lives here, then, everything would be over.

Yu Zhenghai nodded and leaped out. Similarly, Hua Chongyang left the flying chariot as well.

Swoosh!

The teetering flying chariot instantly fell from the sky as soon as Primal Qi was cut off. Yu Zhenghai and Hua Chongyang hovered in the air and looked at the flying chariot one final time. At seemingly the same time, not far away from the falling flying chariot, a muscular figure brandishing the Overlord Spear was fast approaching them. Duanmu Sheng shouted, “Traitor!” He wielded the Overlord Spear in his right hand and leveled it with his body that was flying parallel to the ground. A cone-shaped energy began to form at the tip of his spear... Yu Zhenghai moved and focused his gaze at the figure. ‘Oh, it’s Third Junior Brother, not master. That’s good...’ He remained in his spot and raised a hand. His right palm was shrouded in a thick energy seal.

Bang! Bang! Bang! Yu Zhenghai parried the Overlord Spear’s blows. ‘Hm?’ Yu Zhenghai was inwardly shocked. He grunted and struck with palm.

Bam!

The Great Dark Heavenly Palm!

This palm strike was several times larger than the one before. It flew toward Duanmu Sheng like a massive cake.

Their energies collided.

Duanmu Sheng felt his arm go numb. He flipped in midair and slowly descended. Upon seeing this, Hua Chonguang said, “Leave this to me.”

“No need.” Yu Zhenghai descended slowly.

The three of them descended at the same time. The Nether Sect’s disciples quickly gathered and stood behind Yu Zhenghai and Hua Chongyang. Both parties faced off.

Duanmu Sheng stabbed his Overlord Spear into the ground.

Bam!

Duanmu Sheng looked straight at Yu Zhenghai and said, "Traitor."

Yu Zhenghai shook his head. "Third Junior Brother... How many years has it been? Your temper is still the same."

"It's better than yours," Duanmu Sheng retorted. "Where's master?" Yu Zhenghai looked past Duanmu Sheng "Master has ordered me to bring you back... If you're willing to admit you're wrong, he might spare you your life." Duanmu Sheng was not like Mingshi Yin; he did not mince his words when he spoke. Yu Zhenghai did not rise to his current position without good judgment. He saw it was empty behind Duan Musheng and felt himself relaxed. He said, "Third Junior Brother, your Divine One Technique has improved greatly. If I didn't use my Great Dark Heavenly Palm earlier, I would've been injured." "Cut the nonsense... I'm asking if you'll come with me?" Duanmu Sheng did not fall for Yu Zhenghai's diversion tricks. Yu Zhenghai sighed and shook his head. "I have no choice... There are many in the world who want me dead. The Noble Path and the Fiend Path wish that I'm dead..." "... " Duanmu Sheng was puzzled. He looked at his Eldest Senior Brother with a blank expression. He did not know why his Eldest Senior Brother would suddenly spout random words. Yu Zhenghai continued to say, "Isn't there a place for me in this wide world?" He could tell Duanmu Sheng was confused. He heaved another long sigh before he said, "I guess you don't understand my words. How wonderful if Old Seventh were here... He's sure to understand how I feel."

Duanmu Sheng replied with a straight face, "If he were here, I would've captured him first."

"Can you though?" Yu Zhenghai asked.

"Well..." Duanmu Sheng looked at Hua Chongyang who was standing next to Yu Zhenghua. Although Hua Chongyang did not make any moves, he could tell Hua Chongyang was an elite. Moreover, Hua Chongyang was an elite who was stronger than him. Even if Hua Chongyang was not here, he knew he could not win against Yu Zhenghai. He had only chased after Yu Zhenghai to try his luck, hoping that Yu Zhenghai was injured by his master's grand technique. Alas, luck was not on his side. Finally, he asked, "Are you the mastermind behind the incidents on the Lotus Dais and the Heavenly Sword Sect?"

Yu Zhenghai chuckled and said in distaste, "My Nether Sect working with the lowly Heavenly Sword Sect? The Heavenly Sword Sect is one of the top targets that my sect wants to annihilate."

"The Heavenly Sword Sect has long lost its strength since the demise of its sect master, Luo Changfeng. Luo Xingkong was only holding onto his final breath... This was a great opportunity for the Nether Sect to take them down," Yu Zhenghai said. "You wanted to help master?" Duanmu Sheng was slightly surprised. "No..." Yu Zhenghai shook his head. "I'm helping myself."

"What's your objective?" Duanmu Sheng asked. Yu Zhenghai smiled faintly. He walked up to Duanmu Sheng... Duanmu Sheng took a step back despite himself. "Don't be afraid." Yu Zhenghai patted his shoulder. "Is master doing well?"

"He's fine." A wary expression could be seen on Duanmu Sheng's face.

"Really?" "Of course, it's real. If you think he's not fine, why are you running away?" Duanmu Sheng retorted. "... " Yu Zhenghai was rendered momentarily speechless. He quickly regained his senses and

said with a smile, "Have you ever seen anyone running away so slowly?" The term 'running away' was hardly befitting of a discussion between elites. Duanmu Sheng scratched his head and said, "You're right... if I were you, I would've abandoned ship and ran away a long time ago." Hua Chongyang was speechless. Yu Zhenghai's expression was calm as though he was talking about the weather.

The two of them remained silent for a moment before Yu Zhenghai suddenly said, "Did master speak about me?"

Duanmu Sheng shook his head. He had wanted to add, 'Why would he? Your name does nothing but angers him.' Moreover, none of them dared to recklessly mention Yu Zhenghai's name in front of their master. "Then, did he speak about Second Junior Brother?" Yu Zhenghai asked again. "No," Duanmu Sheng replied.

"That's good..."

Yu Zhenghai patted Duanmu Sheng's shoulder again and said, "You should return..." Duanmu Sheng regarded Yu Zhenghai seriously and said, "Give me half a year..."

"For what?"

"Half a year later, we'll have a match," Duanmu Sheng said. Yu Zhenghai nodded and praised him. "It's good that you're bold enough to challenge me... Continue to work hard when you return." "I'll defeat you," Duanmu Sheng said. Yu Zhenghai frowned slightly as he said with a sigh, "That's what your Second Senior Brother said as well."

Chapter 255 Old Seventh and the Five Mice

"Second Senior Brother's talents far surpass mine, but does it surpass yours, Eldest Senior Brother?" Duanmu Sheng asked, slightly confused. He vaguely knew about the conflict between Yu Zhenghai and Yu Shangrong. Recently, it seemed like the tension between them was mounting. Yu Shangrong had challenged many elites and had never lost a single fight. Yu Shangrong's cultivation base and strength should be comparable with Yu Zhenghai, so why was the outcome not decided?

"Of course not." Yu Zhenghai turned around with his back facing Duanmu Sheng. Then, he said, "I hope you won't repeat your senior brother's mistake." "... " Duanmu Sheng was rendered momentarily speechless. He knew he was talented and was diligent. However, he paled in comparison to his Second Senior Brother. It seemed like even his Second Senior Brother was no match for his Eldest Senior Brother so how could he be a match for his Eldest Senior Brother?

After Yu Zhenghai finished speaking, he leaped up from the ground and rose into the sky. Hua Chongyang cupped his fists at Duanmu Sheng and hastily followed his sect master.

The Nether Sect's disciples left the area with uniform movements as well.

Duanmu Sheng looked at Yu Zhenghai's retreating back. 'Is he really not running away?'

Yu Zhenghai was not flying very fast. It seemed like he was strolling in a park with Hua Chongyang following closely behind him. Since he had ascertained his master was not coming, he was, naturally, very relaxed. This was the outcome he had hoped for. "Sect master, the Heavenly Sword is nothing now."

What's our next move?" Hua Chongyang asked. "We should pick on the weaker ones," Yu Zhenghai replied.

Yu Zhenghai came to halt, placing his hands on his back as he surveyed the mountains and rivers before him. His mood seemed to have gotten better. He asked, "How's Bai Yuqing's recuperation coming along?" "I'm afraid he won't be participating in any battles for the coming half a year," Hua Chongyang said. Yu Zhenghai sighed softly and said, "It's my fault. I've been too lenient with Second Junior Brother..."

Hua Chongyang shook his head as well, feeling slightly helpless. Although he and Bai Yuqing were elites, they were powerless before an unpredictable super-elite like the Sword Devil. At the Nascent Divinity Tribulation realm, beyond the Five-leaf stage, there's a huge difference in strength with every addition of a leaf. Finally, Hua Chongyang asked, "Should I search for Mister Seventh?" "No need." Yu Zhenghai shook his head. "Second Junior Brother is most probably still by his side." Upon hearing this, Hua Chongyang fell silent and hastily lowered his head. He did not want to share the same fate as Bai Yuqing, he did not want to be injured and spend half a year recuperating. And that was if he was lucky. Sword Freak Chen Wenjie did not even have the chance to recuperate and directly ascended to heaven. "Send someone to investigate the people behind the sacrificial offering Formation on the Lotus Dais... Meanwhile, try to contact Seventh Junior Brother."

"As you command, sect master. And if we run into Senior Sword Devil?" "Avoid him."

The two of them no longer dallied and flew away.

Half a day later, at the Evil Sky Pavilion.

The cloud-splitting chariot had finally arrived at the Evil Sky Pavilion.

The journey was relatively smooth with everything taken into consideration.

Before they could even alight from the flying chariot, Pan Zhong ran up to them with a hand on his chest.

"Pavilion Master, Elder Hua... You're finally back!" Pan Zhong said with one knee on the ground. When he saw Pan Zhong's anxious expression, Mingshi Yin leaped off the flying chariot and asked, "What's the matter?" "Th... Th... Thief..." Pan Zhong was so flustered that he stumbled over his words. A flush could be seen on his face. "Thief?"

Pan Zhong took a deep breath and finished his sentence. "There was a thief in the Evil Sky Pavilion!"

"Nonsense... Who dares to steal from the Evil Sky Pavilion?" Mingshi Yin said. Pan Zhong said, "Uh, you'll have to ask Senior Leng Luo about that... Fortunately, he was there at that time!"

There were many under the heavens who wanted to get their hands on the treasures in the Evil Sky Pavilion.

Lu Zhou's expression remained calm. He looked at Golden Court Mountain's barrier. Although the barrier was merely left with one-third of its strength, no ordinary thief would be able to breach the barrier. He walked ahead with his hands on his back and light movements. Although he had depleted most of his strength, he was still in a good condition. Soon after, he arrived in the great hall.

Many female cultivators were already waiting in the great hall.

Leng Luo stood up and cupped his fists at Lu Zhou and Hua Wudao before sitting back down. Lu Zhou returned to his seat in the great hall, the seat that was above the rest. He said nothing.

Leng Luo broke the silence. "The thieves are the Five Mice from Upper Prime City... They were the ones who caused the internal feud in Upper Prime City back then. I led the four Dark Knights and quelled the disturbance there, but the Five Mice were nowhere to be found. I really didn't expect them to come to the Evil Sky Pavilion." He paused for a moment before he said, "How bold of them!" Hua Wudao nodded. "The Upper Prime's Five Mice are skilled in theft and are extremely cunning. Their name in the cultivation world is second only to Yanzi Yunsan. The only difference is Yunsan acts alone while the Five Mice act in a group."

Mingshi Yin was puzzled. He asked, "How did they get past the barrier?" No matter how weak the Golden Court Mountain's barrier had gotten, ordinary thieves would not be able to breach the barrier. Leng Luo said, "The Five Mice are skilled in theft because they'd mastered an arcane art. This arcane art shares some similarities with the Dao Invisibility art that I learned. In the past decade or so, the Five Mice have infiltrated many sects, breaching the barriers and stealing from them... That's how they gained their moniker, the Five Mice."

Lu Zhou nodded. He remembered when he captured Yanzi Yunsan with the Binding Cage, but Yanzi Yunsan had escaped into the ground. Thieves usually had their own unique methods. They were a cunning bunch.

At this moment, Pan Zhong came in and said, "Pavilion Master, we've carried out an inventory. Only a few pieces of trash from the east pavilion are lost."

'Trash?'

Everyone was baffled.

'Why would someone steal trash?'

"Nothing else is missing?" Mingshi Yin asked. "No... Perhaps, they got frightened halfway through?" Pan Zhong felt they were rather courageous for even attempting to steal something from the Evil Sky Pavilion. "When Senior Leng showed up, they fled."

Mingshi Yin nodded as he stroked his chin and said, "That makes sense."

When Lu Zhou and the others left, only a team of old and weak men were left on the mountain. It was only natural they failed to capture the Five Mice. This incident was not serious nor was it negligible. It was negligible because nothing of import was lost, but it could not be considered as not serious since it was related to the Golden Court Mountain's barrier. If they did not mend the barrier, even if the Five Mice were killed, there would still be other mice coveting the Evil Sky Pavilion's treasures. Moreover, the barrier was still continuing to weaken.

Lu Zhou felt it was meaningless to mend the barrier now. He did not have enough strength to do it himself, and it would take his disciples several years based on their cultivation base. In a few years, the Noble Path would make an attempt on Golden Court Mountain under the notion that his life was almost up. For this reason, he did not want to waste a Peak Form Trial Card just to mend the barrier. Leng Luo

said again, "I have something on my mind, but I wonder if it's appropriate to say it." "Speak," Lu Zhou said. "The Black Knights have fought the Upper Prime's Five Mice before... Their strength and cultivation bases aren't profound. They usually work together to preserve their own lives. I suspect..." Leng Luo paused before continuing, "The Upper Prime's Five Mice are very much connected with the Evil Sky Pavilion's seventh disciple, Si Wuya." "Why do you say that?" A baseless speculation would hardly convince others after all. There had to be solid reasoning behind it.

Leng Luo said, "Many years ago, I heard the Five Mice encountered the Darknet. For the Five Mice to infiltrate the Evil Sky Pavilion without stealing anything... It's clear they have an objective in mind. They must have come here for the Peacock Plume. Since they failed this time, I'm afraid this won't be the last time we see them."

Master... This traitor is behaving arrogantly even with his cultivation base restricted. I seek permission to descend the mountain and bring him back here for questioning!" Mingshi Yin said. Lu Zhou stroked his beard as he went into deep thought.

Chapter 256 A Rascal Has No Right To Negotiate

Lu Zhou shook his head and said, "Can you find him?"

"Uh..." An awkward expression appeared on Mingshi Yin's face. The last time he tried to track Si Wuya, it took him a long time and he went through a lot of trouble to find Si Wuya. After scaring the snake by beating the bush, Si Wuya was surely on his guard now. It would not be easy to find Si Wuya. Moreover, he knew he was not as smart as Si Wuya.

At this moment, Lu Zhou remembered the box in the east pavilion. He stood up slowly and said, "That'll be all."

The others rose to their feet and cupped their fists at him.

In a secluded hut.

Si Wuya sat inside with his legs crossed. "Sect master, there's a letter from the Five Mice." "They failed?" Si Wuya opened his eyes. He knew if they had been successful, they would not have sent a letter but returned with the Peacock Plume. "Yes... The leader of the Five Mice, Bai Qingyun, says in the letter that they ran into Leng Luo in the Evil Sky Pavilion and had to retreat." "Leng Luo... Master even has someone so prideful under his control..." Si Wuya shook his head. "That person repelled the Black Knights with a single move at Slender West Lake. The Upper Prime's Five Mice have been captured by him before as well. It's understandable for them to fear Leng Luo. Forget it."

"Then, the Peacock Plume..."

"We won't get another chance."

If they did not succeed when they had that perfect opportunity, they would not likely succeed at another time.

"However... the Five Mice did bring this back." The subordinate produced a bunch of wastepaper from his pocket. Si Wuya flattened the paper... The drawing of a box appeared before his eyes. Although it

was only a draft, he could still recognize it. He smiled faintly and said, "Send word to the Evil Sky Pavilion."

The second day, in the Evil Sky Pavilion.

Inside the east pavilion.

Lu Zhou did not amass much extraordinary power overnight. He opened his eyes and called up the system dashboard.

Merit points: 19,380

'I obtained 7,550 merit points on the Lotus Dais... Alas, I'm still more than 600 points short from being able to purchase the Eight Methods Connected.' Lu Zhou was not particularly determined to buy avatars. It was just that based on his understanding of the system, he had a feeling that it would be much more difficult for him to strike the jackpot in the lucky draws in the future. However, such is human nature; even if one knew the chances of winning were low, they would still feel compelled to try their luck.

"I'll make five draws..." After five draws, Lu Zhou sighed softly. He muttered, "As expected. I should just save up to purchase the avatar."

Lu Zhou was about to continue studying the Heavenly Writing when a voice rang from outside. Zhao Yue stood outside the pavilion and bowed. "Master, a letter from Si Wuya." "Read it."

Lu Zhou projected his voice to her. Zhao Yue said, "Si Wuya mentions that he has information about the box that you want to unlock... However, he has a request. He wants the Peacock Plume and for you to remove the Binding Mantra in exchange for the information." After a moment's silence, Lu Zhou said in a deep voice, "Rascal!"

Zhao Yue sensed her master's fury and hastily said, "Please stay your anger, master."

"The rascal thinks too highly of himself... Does he think he can negotiate with me just because he has left Golden Court Mountain?"

"You're right, master. Si Wuya is too audacious!" Zhao Yue said. There was a brief moment of silence before Lu Zhou said, "Any word from Jiang Aijian?" It did not seem to be in Jiang Aijian's character to not send word after such a long time. "In reply to your question, Master, Jiang Aijian hasn't sent a reply yet," Zhao Yue said. "Very well. You're dismissed." "I'll be taking my leave." After Zhao Yue left, Lu Zhou checked the mission list on the system dashboard. Under the mission of instructing his disciples, the clue about the key was not shown as completed. He thought about it and decided to search his memories for information on the box. Perhaps, he might find some clues. Alas, many of the memories were too distant in the past and were blurry at best. He did not find anything even after searching for a while. He wondered out loud, "Could this have something to do with the lost memories as well?"

Since his transmigration, Lu Zhou had gotten used to this wizened body. He was not worried that he would grow old since he had the Reversal Cards. However, it seemed like there was no way for him to recover his memories.

After pondering about it for some time, he made no progress. Hence, he shook his head and went back to studying the Heavenly Writing.

The next morning.

Lu Zhou barely opened his eyes when Zhao Yue came with a letter in her hands.

Zhao Yue saw her master making some strange movements in the east pavilion's courtyard and did not dare to interrupt him. She waited for a while before she finally walked up to him, bowed, and said, "Master, a letter."

Lu Zhou stopped what he was doing before he asked, "Who's it from?"

"Initially, I wanted to read it, but the contents seem important. I didn't think it's appropriate for me to read it. Therefore, I quickly brought it here," Zhao Yue said.

"Read it." "Understood." Zhao Yue opened the letter and read, "I was foolish yesterday and hope that you'll forgive me, master. Although I have left Golden Court Mountain, I have never thought of making an enemy out of you. As a token of my sincerity, I have ordered someone to send the information to you." After she finished reading the letter, she put it away and said, "Indeed, there's a nun at the base of the mountain requesting an audience. I suspected Old Seventh is up to no good so I didn't grant her entry. I await your orders, master." "A nun?" Lu Zhou was puzzled. "From the Cloud Shine Nunnery."

When he heard the words, 'Cloud Shine Nunnery', Lu Zhou was outwardly calm. However, he was puzzled. Was this... fate? His memories of the Cloud Shine Nunnery were strangely vivid. Nonetheless, he did think the nunnery had anything to do with the key.

"Let her in."

"I'll bring her here." Zhao Yue left the east pavilion.

Lu Zhou continued stretching his limbs.

A short while later, Zhao Yue led a nun to the east pavilion.

"Master, this is Senior Nun Xuan Jing from the Cloud Shine Nunnery."

"Xuan Jing of Cloud Shine Nunnery is here to see the old benefactor."

Lu Zhou stopped what he was doing and looked at the nun.

She wore humble nun's robes, a cap, and held Buddhist beads. She was slightly old, a hint of silver could be seen in her hair. Lu Zhou said apathetically, "Stand up and speak." Xuan Jing rose to her feet. She took out a scarlet brocade box from her sleeve and said, "Returning this to its owner." Lu Zhou waved his arm. The brocade box flew into his palm. Xuan Jing said slowly, "Master Jing Yan left this behind... When I was informed that you were searching for it urgently, I quickly came to return it." "Jing Yan left this?" "You left this at Cloud Shine Peak after the discourse on the peak. Alas, after all these years, you didn't come to retrieve it, old benefactor," Xuan Jing said. Lu Zhou looked at the brocade box in his hand. He conjured up some energy. With a pop, the box opened up...

"Ding! Completed the mission: Searching for the lost key 1/1. Reward: 1,000 merit points."

Indeed, an antique-looking key was contained in the box. Perhaps, it was an item from the distant past, his memory of it was blurry.

Lu Zhou stowed the key away and asked, "What's the situation at the Cloud Shine Nunnery right now?" "Speaking of that, I would like to thank you for punishing Wu Nian... Wu Nian disregarded the Cloud Shine Nunnery's rules and committed crimes everywhere. She got what she deserved. Now that she has lost her cultivation base, she's no longer the abbess of the Cloud Shine Nunnery," Xuan Jing said. This outcome was expected.

Lu Zhou nodded and said, "How did you find out that I was looking for this urgently?" Xuan Jing sounded puzzled when she said, "Didn't the Evil Sky Pavilion's Benefactor Si send word about it?"

Zhao Yue chimed in, "As expected, it's that traitor." "Traitor?" Xuan Jing was puzzled. Zhao Yue said, "It has nothing to do with you, senior nun. You've been in the nunnery for a long time, it's understandable that you're not aware of certain things. If there's nothing else, you're welcome to leave."

Chapter 257 Opening the Box

Zhao Yue did not know about her master's relationship with the Cloud Shine Nunnery. After the incident on the Lotus Dais, her impression of Cloud Shine Nunnery was not favorable even though Xuan Jing was polite and had even criticized Wu Nian. Moreover, the Evil Sky Pavilion was not somewhere Xuan Jing should be.

Xuan Jing straightened her fingers and said, "I have something else to say."

"What is it?"

"The Jade Horsetail Whisk is the foundation of Cloud Shine Nunnery's foundation. If it's possible, I hope the old benefactor can..." Lu Zhou interrupted her and said indifferently, "I gave the Jade Horsetail Whisk to Jing Yan. Did she not tell you this?" "Well..."

"If I can give her the Jade Horsetail Whisk, then, I can take it back," Lu Zhou said.

Since Lu Zhou had made his intention clear, Xuan Jing no longer dared to make any request. A helpless expression appeared on her face as she sighed. She could not blame the Evil Sky Pavilion for this. If Wu Nian did not act recklessly, they would not have been in this situation in the first place. Finally, she straightened her pam again and bowed before she said, "Do take care, old benefactor. I'll be taking my leave now." After that, she left the pavilion.

"I'll be taking my leave as well, master." Zhao Yue left right after the nun.

The east pavilion was silent again.

Lu Zhou went into the pavilion and saw the box in the corner. He waved his arm. The box flew toward him. He took out the key from the scarlet box. When his fingers touched the key, a cold sensation seeped into his skin. It seemed like the key was forged from extraordinary materials. No wonder it remained the same in the outside world without being corroded.

The keyhole on the box was not huge.

Lu Zhou held the slim box in his hand before he inserted the key and turned it.

Click!

A clicking noise sounded. It sounded like the noise of someone's neck being snapped.

Shortly after, the veins on the surface of the box shone brightly. The dark radiance that seemed like an electric current shot out from the keyhole and traveled through the veins on the box's surfaces.

"What a masterful design!" Lu Zhou praised.

When the electric-like radiance faded, another clicking noise rang in the air.

The box opened along the veins on the top side and split in half. Perhaps, it had been sealed for too long, a rotting smell wafted out of the box.

Lu Zhou waved his hands to fan away the stench. "Ding! Obtained Open Heavenly Writing remnant sheet x1."

"Ding! Obtained old parchment drawing."

"Hm?" Lu Zhou touched the Open Heavenly Writing remnant sheet... The sheet dissolved into spots of light and vanished.

He looked at the system dashboard. On his item inventory, there was a new addition; Open Heavenly Writing remnant sheet (part one). He remembered that he obtained an Open Heavenly Writing from the Sky Fragments before this. In other words, these were pieces that would allow him to activate the next technique. He was greatly motivated by this.

"Old parchment drawing." Lu Zhou turned his attention to the old parchment drawing at the bottom of the box and picked it up. He placed it on the table carefully. The outer layer was already rotting away. Lu Zhou removed the outer layer and slowly unfurled it... just to find a blurry drawing. The old drawing was huge. It covered the entire surface of the table.

Lu Zhou wondered if it was a treasure map.

"A map?" Although it was blurry, Lu Zhou could still tell it was a map. It seemed to be a map of one of the central regions of Great Yan. The outline of the area resembled Great Yan so greatly that he knew he was right.

Lu Zhou paced with his hands on his back. He studied the map and pondered over it. He knew about the functions of the Open Heavenly Writing... However, he did not know what this map was for. He could not even see it clearly, and there were no markings on it... There was nothing to indicate mountains or rivers... After observing it for a short while, he found nothing special about this map. He placed the old drawing back on the table.

Then, he returned to his usual spot and sat cross-legged. He opened the system dashboard.

Merit points: 20,230 points.

There was an excess of 230 points.

Lu Zhou did four lucky draws... As he expected, he got four thank-you messages. It was fortunate that he had 20,000 merit points left. He did not feel much spending his merit points. 'Should I continue to draw

or buy the Eight Methods Connected? No, no, I can't think like a gambler.' Lu Zhou considered it briefly. He was safe in the Evil Sky Pavilion for now... Moreover, he had enough item cards. Even if the Noble Path were to attack Golden Court Mountain at this moment, he could easily repel them.

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The avatar could be bought at any moment. After all, he did not have any bottlenecks in regard to his cultivation base. If he achieved a breakthrough, his strength would increase rapidly. He was in no hurry. He decided to check the price of the items.

Meanwhile, inside the secluded hut.

Si Wuya opened his eyes and muttered, "Fortunately, the Peacock Plume is safe."

He lowered his head and parted his robes. He looked at the 'bind' character on his chest. The blood-red script showed no signs of fading. He frowned deeply. "Why is this mantra so peculiar?"

Up until now, he had tried several methods, and yet, he was not able to break the mantra.

At this moment, a grey-robed subordinate flew in and kneeled on one knee before he said, "Sect master, Mister First is here,"

"Bring him in." Si Wuya was about to rise to his feet when he heard Yu Zhenghai's hearty laughter. "Seventh Junior Brother, we meet again..."

Si Wuya cupped his fists and said, "Greetings, Eldest Senior Brother." "We're both brothers. There's no need for formalities. Look who I brought with me." Yu Zhenghai turned to face the entrance. An old man in a Daoist hat and robes walked in with a horsetail whisk in his hand.

Si Wuya looked at him and exclaimed in surprise, "Daoist priest Yun Shan?"

"Daoist priest Yunshan is one of the Celestial Masters Sect's experts in mantras. I went through many troubles to invite him here," Yu Zhenghai said.

"Thank you for going through the trouble for me, Eldest Senior Brother."

The Daoist priest, Zhang Yunshan cupped his fists and said, "I know Mister First personally. Due to the recent conflicts between the ten great sects and the Evil Sky Pavilion, I couldn't simply leave the mountain. Please forgive me for the delay, Mister Seventh." Although he said he knew Yu Zhenghai personally, who knew if it was the truth? However, Si Wuya did not think it was necessary to dwell into this matter. He finally said, "Thank you for coming." Yu Zhenghai turned to ask him, "Are you confident, Daoist priest Yunshan?" Zhang Yunshan said, "I've been studying mantras for nearly a century. I won't go so far as to speak about my expertise, but there's always a way to break mantras."

"That's great!"

"Do show us." Daoist priest Zhang Yunshan and Yu Zhenghai walked into the secluded hut.

Si Wuya removed the clothes from his upper body, and the 'bind' character appeared before Zhang Yunshan's eyes.

Zhang Yunshan inspected the 'bind' character. He nodded as though he knew what was going on. "I'm quite sure I can break this mantra in just a moment."

"I'm relieved to hear that." Yu Zhenghai stood with his hands on his back.

Zhang Yunshan stood behind Si Wuya.

Si Wuya understood what he wanted to do, and he sat down with his legs crossed.

Zhang Yunshan raised his right hand. A golden energy seal that resembled a script appeared on his palm before he brought his palm down on Si Wuya's back.

Chapter 258 There's No End To Disciplining His Disciples

The moment his palm connected with Si Wuya's back, something peculiar happened. A blast of energy shot out from Si Wuya's back.

Bam!

At such a close range, Daoist Priest Zhang Yunshan could not react in time. He did not even have time to protect himself when the backlash in the form of a golden light hit him squarely in the chest, sending him flying back.

The secluded hut was a wooden structure to begin with. When Zhang Yunshan hit one of the pillars at the back, he broke it immediately.

Si Wuya felt nothing as he turned around to look.

Yu Zhenghai was shocked. He hastily walked over to the back of the hut to have a look. "Daoist priest?"

Zhang Yunshan was in agony and his expression was twisted from the pain. However, when he heard Yu Zhenghai's voice, he hurriedly looked up and forced a smile on his face before he said, "I'm fine. I only wanted to test the strength of the mantra so it'll be easier for me to break it."

"That's good... Please carry one." Yu Zhenghai made an inviting gesture.

Zhang Yunshan returned to stand behind Si Wuya. He was wiser now. With his previous experience, he no longer dared to underestimate the mantra. "What a powerful mantra... I've never been hit with a backlash before even though I've broken many Binding Mantras."

Zhang Yunshan put the horsetail whisk in his hand down and raised both of his palms. Two golden energy seals appeared in his hands, and it was brighter than the one before. He stared unblinkingly at Si Wuya's back. Then, before he slapped his palms down, he said in a deep voice, "Break!"

Bam!

When the golden energy seals landed on Si Wuya's back, a burst of energy exploded immediately!

The impact from the collision sent Si Wuya flying forward as he spat out a mouthful of blood!

Similar to before, the Daoist Priest, Zhang Yunshan, reeled back. This time, he spat out a mouthful of blood as well.

“Seventh Junior Brother!” Yu Zhenghai’s expression darkened as he waved his arm. A gentle energy caught Si Wuya and brought him back to his original position before he crashed on the ground. Yu Zhenghai did not have the time to worry about Zhang Yunshan’s condition. He walked up to Si Wuya and examined him...

Si Wuya was pale as blood trickled from the corners of his lips. It was clear that he was injured.

Meanwhile.

“Ding! Punished the rascal, Si Wuya. Reward: 500 merit points.” “Does he think he can break the Binding Mantra?” Lu Zhou shook his head and closed his eyes.

He did not expect things would turn out this way. It seemed that there was no end to disciplining his disciples. He knew that rascal had probably tried to break the mantra, and as a result, was injured by the backlash. This was considered a punishment as well.

Yu Zhenghai frowned. After all, he was the one who brought Zhang Yunshan here. If Si Wuya was hurt, he could hardly shirk off his responsibility. Moreover, Si Wuya had taken the Binding Mantra for him. Not only did he not help Si Wuya undo the mantra, but he had inadvertently harmed him as well. How could he not feel guilty?

“Eldest Senior Brother, I’m alright... This is to be expected.” Si Wuya straightened his back and wiped the blood on the corner of his lips away.

Yu Zhenghai grunted in response. He walked to the back of the secluded hut again and looked down at Zhang Yunshan who was sprawled on the ground before he said, “Zhang Yunshan.” Zhang Yunshan sensed the abnormality in Yu Zhenghai’s tone. His heart skipped a beat as he hastily rose to his feet. He wiped the trail of blood on his mouth away and said, “Please give me another chance! I was careless and didn’t expect the mantra to be this powerful. I have never seen a mantra like this before. Why is there a backlash whenever I try to break it?”

Upon hearing this, Yu Zhenghai said coldly, “The weak have many excuses.”

“Sect Master Yu, what do you mean?” “I’ve given you a chance... Alas, you didn’t treasure it.”

“You...” Zhang Yunshan, naturally, knew what Yu Zhenghai meant.

Yu Zhenghai turned around, his back facing Zhang Yunshan.

Zhang Yunshan said in a deep voice, “You promised that if I break the mantra... you’ll bury the hatchet between the Nether Sect and the Celestial Masters Sect. Are you going back on your own word?”

Yu Zhenghai did not waste his breath with Zhang Yunshan. He waved his arm dismissively and said, “Send him on his way.”

A figure moved quickly to where they were at.

The space seemed to contort, the rippling energy around it was a breathtaking sight to behold.

Bam!

Zhang Yunshan was hit by an energy in the chest before he was sent flying back.

Soon after, Hua Chongyang's figure appeared. "Unfortunately, you didn't break the mantra! On top of that, you wanted to harm Mister Seventh?"

Zhang Yunshan spat out another mouthful of blood. After that, he struggled to get up to his feet before he turned tail and ran. Hua Chongyang continued to say, seemingly unbothered that Zhang Yunshan was trying to escape, "When you tried to break the mantra, you were thinking about planting a new mantra... That's why there was a backlash! You can only blame yourself for your death!"

As soon as Hua Chongyang finished speaking, he vanished into thin air and reappeared above Zhang Yunshan. His avatar materialized, and it raised its fist before bringing it down.

Meanwhile, Si Wuya did not even spare a glance in Zhang Yunshan's direction. He only shook his head and said, "Is that necessary?" Yu Zhenghai said, "I know what I'm doing." "Are you planning to attack the Celestial Masters Sect?" Yu Zhenghai shook his head and said, "This is just an interlude... He wanted to die, and I'm merely fulfilling his wish."

Si Wuya fell silent.

Yu Zhenghai sighed and said, "I didn't expect this mantra to be so powerful... Not even Zhang Yunshan could break it! I nearly harmed you."

"It's nothing," Si Wuya said, "All these years, I've never used my martial strength much anyway."

"With your magnanimity, Seventh Junior Brother... it's truly a shame that you're not in the Nether Sect! The position of strategist is meant for you," Yu Zhenghai said. Si Wuya felt slightly helpless. He had been offered the position of a strategist year after year since he had left the Evil Sky Pavilion. He deftly changed the topic and said, "Second Senior Brother was here not long ago."

"Oh?"

"He wanted me to convey a message to you. He said that the blade needs to be whetted regularly to maintain its sharpness. He wants to have a battle with you in half a year." Si Wuya did not withhold nor twist Yu Shangrong's words and conveyed the message honestly. Yu Zhenghai chuckled.

The sound of Hua Chongyang beating up Zhang Yunshan rang in the air as Yu Zhenghai said, "Just as well. That's what I want..."

Si Wuya asked, "Master said that once we've joined the Evil Sky Pavilion, we're free to do what we want, but we're not allowed to kill one of our own. That's the iron rule of the Evil Sky Pavilion since its foundation. Senior brother, are you really going to do this?"

"You should ask Second Junior Brother this question," Yu Zhenghai said.

"But... you're our Eldest Senior Brother..."

'Yes, you're the Eldest Senior Brother. The eldest should be more accommodating. The eldest should be more tolerant. The eldest should be more resilient.' Whenever Yu Zhenghai thought about this, he would fall silent. This time was no exception.

A moment later, Yu Zhenghai patted Si Wuya's shoulder and walked out of the secluded hut. Before he left, he said, "Let's not talk about such gloomy things. I'll find a way to break that mantra on you.'

“There’s no need to trouble yourself, senior brother... I’ll think of a way to break it myself. This is master’s doing, after all. I’m afraid he’s the only one who can undo this.” Yu Zhenghai stopped in his tracks and said, “What do you plan to do?”

Si Wuya smiled without saying anything. He bowed at Yu Zhenghai and said, “Safe journey, senior brother.”

Meanwhile, Lu Zhou had woken up from studying the Heavenly Writing. He seemed to have remembered something. He stood up and walked toward the table where the old parchment drawing was. He studied it as he muttered to himself, “Place the Open Heavenly Writing’s remnant piece on the parchment drawing...”

He looked at the other parts of the drawing beside the outline that was clearer. “This is the palace where the Open Heavenly Writing’s remnant piece should be, right?”

Chapter 259 Eight Methods Connected

Lu Zhou had overlooked that important point. It should have been clear that the parchment drawing should be placed together with the Open Heavenly Writing. Whether it was the old drawing or the map, they had a common and important function, to mark geographical locations.

Lu Zhou bent forward and studied the old parchment drawing. After a moment, he discovered the blank parts of the old drawing were truly blank. There was nothing hidden there. Apart from that, the blurry parts were only outlines.

Fortunately, Lu Zhou was very familiar with Great Yan. Even if it was not shown on the map, he could make a rough guess based on the position of the palace. “Yang Province, Jing Province, Liang Province, Yi Province, Qing Province, Yong Province...” Lu Zhou counted out loud, “Misty Forest. Rongxi, Rongbei... In the east, there are the seas, the great whirlpool...”

‘Hm?’ The borders were blank. Lu Zhou looked all the way to the edges and moved his eyes to the west. Beyond Liang Province was the western region where the Other Tribes dwelled... There was Rongbei as well. They were all blank.

Lu Zhou returned his gaze to Great Yan’s Divine Capital. It was better to believe than to doubt.

“Zhao Yue.” Lu Zhou’s deep voice traveled out of the east pavilion with forceful Primal Qi.

Zhao Yue was cultivating in the south pavilion’s courtyard. She hastily stopped what she was doing and hurried over to the east pavilion.

“Fifth Senior Sister.” Little Yuan’er appeared in the air with her Nirvana Sash.

“Junior Sister, I have no time to spar with you now. Master just summoned me...”

“You’ve misunderstood me, senior sister. I want to go with you.”

The two of them headed toward the east pavilion. Shortly after, they arrived in the east pavilion.

“Greetings, master.”

“Greetings, master.”

The two of them stood outside Lu Zhou's living quarters and greeted Lu Zhou in unison. Lu Zhou walked out and glanced at them. Then, he said, "Send word to Jiang Aijian. I want him to search for an item that belongs to the Evil Sky Pavilion." Zhao Yue said, "Master, I've been trying to contact Jiang Aijian in the past few days. He has yet to send a reply..."

Little Yuan'er said huffily, "I knew that shameless man can't be trusted!"

Lu Zhou stroked his beard and mulled over the matter. Based on his experience of dealing with Jiang Aijian, he did not think Jiang Aijian was someone who would betray his trust. Moreover, Jiang Aijian was someone who valued his life very much, and he was not one to go around looking for trouble.

Lu Zhou suddenly recalled that Jiang Aijian had previously mentioned Wei Zhuoyan was in Jing Province to quell a disturbance in his last letter. Perhaps, Li Jingyi was there as well. 'He can't have followed them there, right?'

"Since we can't contact him, we'll look for him. Zhao Yue, head to the palace," Lu Zhou said.

Zhao Yue's expression changed slightly. She spoke as though she was caught in a dilemma, "Master... uh, my cultivation base is still weak. Should we send Fourth Senior Brother instead?"

Lu Zhou looked at Zhao Yue suspiciously. She was usually eager to carry out missions. He did not expect her to have moments when she was afraid. "Are you scared?"

"I'm merely worried I would impede your plans, master," Zhao Yue replied.

Lu Zhou finally said, "Summon Old Fourth here."

"Yes, master." Zhao Yue hastily turned around and walked away.

Lu Zhou looked at Zhao Yue's retreating back. She seemed to be flustered and in a rush. This little girl seems to be hiding something.'

However, ever since the incident with Ye Tianxin ended, Zhao Yue's loyalty had been steadily increasing. In fact, it was still increasing. When the palace was mentioned, she seemed slightly afraid, 'Is she related to someone in the palace?'

Lu Zhou recalled the scene when he recruited her. He remembered that Zhao Yue came from humble beginnings. He saw that Zhao Yue's talent for cultivation was great and decided to take her in. She should not have any connection with the palace. 'Looks like I should pay more attention to her after this... For the time being, she can do whatever she wants.'

It would only do more harm than good by keeping them under strict supervision.

"Master, I've achieved some breakthroughs with my Nirvana Sash recently!" Little Yuan'er boasted.

"Is that so?"

"Master... it's been a long time since you've given me some instructions." It was clear what Little Yuan'er wanted.

Lu Zhou stroked his beard and nodded. He had been busy with other matters. It was true that he seldom taught his disciples. "Ask away."

Little Yuan'er bluntly replied, "I want to spar with you and see where I'm lacking through battle."

"..." Lu Zhou remained silent as he continued to stroke his beard. This kind of battle between a master and a disciple could not even be considered as a sparring session... Sessions such as these were only to instruct rather than defeat. This required a profound cultivation base on the master's part since the master would have to see through his disciple's tactics, understand their weaknesses, and consequently, instruct them.

Lu Zhou considered his own cultivation base. 'Forget it. I should just let her play on her own.'

At this moment, Mingshi Yin came in and said, "Greetings, master."

Lu Zhou nodded and said, "Send word to Jiang Aijian... Tell him to find out if there's anything in the palace that belongs to the Evil Sky Pavilion. If he doesn't reply, you should go investigate it." "Yes, master." Mingshi Yin turned around to leave.

Lu Zhou stopped him. "Wait."

"Your orders, master?" Mingshi Yin turned around.

"Your little junior sister has made some improvements lately. You should spar with her," Lu Zhou said slowly

Mingshi Yin nodded and said, "Yes, master... I've been studying the Bluewood Heart Method lately and have improved as well. If there's a chance, I hope you can give me some instructions, master." Lu Zhou said sternly, "Impudent!"

"I dare not... I've made a mistake." Mingshi Yin suddenly realized that he had spoken too boldly. His little junior sister was loved by their master so she could, naturally, make bold requests. He was seeking death by imitating her behavior.

Lu Zhou said indifferently, "Look for your Third Senior Brother."

"Yes, master."

Duanmu Sheng's talent and cultivation base were not inferior to Mingshi Yin. If wit was taken out of the consideration, Duanmu Sheng was, in fact, superior to Mingshi Yin.

'What if Duanmu Sheng comes to ask for instructions as well?' Lu Zhou thought to himself. Hua Wudao's face appeared in Lu Zhou's mind.

However, Hua Wudao was also very likely to ask to spar with him. After all, Hua Wudao had a knot in his heart ever since he had lost to him 20 years ago. 'Who would be fit to instruct Hua Wudao?' Leng Luo and Pan Litian would not be recovering anytime soon. "Wait," Lu Zhou called out to Mingshi Yin again.

"Your orders, master?" Mingshi Yin turned around and bowed again.

"Elder Hua had contributed greatly in the battle on the Lotus Dais. If there's nothing important, let him rest."

‘Hm?’ Mingshi Yin was puzzled. Why did his master suddenly mention Hua Wudao? ‘He’s in perfect shape, right? Why would he need to rest?’ However, since it was the disciple’s duty to obey, he did not question his master. He hastily bowed and said, “I’ll deliver the message to him.”

Mingshi Yin looked at Little Yuan’er meaningfully. The two of them left the courtyard.

After that, Lu Zhou returned to his room. He glanced at the parchment drawing on the table before he turned around and went behind the screen where he sat down with his legs crossed. He called up the system dashboard again.

Little Yuan’er’s request had reminded him that cultivation base was everything to a cultivator.

The problem was if he bought the Eight Methods Connected now, his cultivation base would improve, causing the prices of the item cards to increase. He should have bought more cards before this.

Lu Zhou tapped on the mall tab to check on the prices.

“Hm?” A plethora of curses appeared in his mind. ‘When did the prices go up?’

He remembered checking the price not long ago. Were the opening of the box and the possession of the remnant piece the reason for the price hike? That was the only thing he did recently. If that was the case, his inferences before this were inaccurate.

In other words, the frequency of use, purchases, and the improvement of his cultivation base were only parts of the factors. Perhaps, the most crucial factor in determining the price hikes were the items he gained from the system.

Like a test, it was easy to raise one’s marks from a low point to an average point. It would get progressively difficult to raise after that point.

‘Forget it. It’s a good thing that it increased. I’m only troubling myself by worrying about gains and losses.’

Lu Zhou scanned the prices.

Deadly Strike Card: 1,500

Impeccable Card: 1,000

Critical Heal Card: 600

Thunderblast: 500

Cage Bind: 800

‘Since the prices have already risen, it wouldn’t rise again so soon, right?’

Finally, Lu Zhou decided to buy the Eight Methods Connected.

“Ding! Obtained the avatar, Eight Methods Connected. Spent 20,000 merit points.”

“Equip.”

Lu Zhou closed his eyes and remained silent as he felt the changes in his body from the Eight Methods Connected.

For cultivators, using an avatar for the first time was also an opportunity to cultivate the body. The cultivator's physical body and mind would undergo a transformation. The transformation of the avatar was also the transformation of the cultivator.

Eight Methods Connected were tempered and transformed from the cold, the heat, the incorporeal, the solid, the surface, the inside, the Yin, and the Yang. Once the Eight Methods Connected avatar was formed, the cultivator would gain a high resistance toward the factors mentioned above.

In other words, the cultivator would become healthier and would not easily fall sick. It would be easier for him to survive in harsh environments. Throughout the transformation process, if there was a single step where the cultivator failed to endure it, then, the transformation would fail.

However, for Lu Zhou, there was no such worry. His unique cultivation method meant that he was fated to have a different experience compared to others.

Meanwhile, in a certain hall of the palace in the Divine Capital.

A woman dressed in extravagant scarlet robes was looking at her reflection in the mirror. Then, she coughed softly.

Cre

On the other side of the screen, a man in black with a strange mask on his face appeared with his hands on his back.

"Junior Brother Mo Li... You really gave me a difficult task," the masked man said.

"It's junior sister to you..." Mo Li retorted.

The masked man's expression was indiscernible. He turned away and looked at the scenery outside as he said, "Just because His Highness the Second Prince has this fetish?"

Mo Li was silent. After a long pause, she said, "As long as I can achieve my goals, I'll do whatever it takes."

"The Great Yan's Imperial Family isn't as simple as you think. The Fourth Prince is back... His Highness has another rival now," the masked man said.

"That's why I'm asking for your help, senior brother," Mo Li said.

"I've fought that old villain before... My Tianyu Beast is heavily wounded and won't be able to fight for some time," the masked man said.

Upon hearing this, Mo Li said with a sigh, "I didn't expect the old villain to be capable of that... However, I still believe in you, senior brother... You're the greatest witchcraft genius of Loulan in 300 years. You're currently in your prime... On the other hand, look at that old villain. Everyone in the cultivation world is waiting for his time to run out... Once he's dead, nobody will be able to stop my plans."

The masked man remained silent.

Mo Li continued to say, "My injuries aren't healed yet... I'll have to trouble you for this, senior brother."

At this moment, the voice of a female servant rang in the air. "Milady, His Second Highness summons you."

"Understood."

"His Second Highness said that he would like to meet the genius cultivator you'd mentioned," the servant girl said.

Mo Li chuckled and said, "Senior brother, didn't I tell you? You'll definitely be able to show your might in Great Yan."

Two days later. In the Evil Sky Pavilion.

Inside the east pavilion.

A surge of unique energy fluctuated constantly. Sometimes it was cold, and sometimes it was hot.

Zhao Yue, Little Yuan'er, and Duanmu Sheng felt the fluctuations so they had gathered in the east pavilion.

"What's happening?" "This energy fluctuation... It seems like someone's forming their Eight Methods Connected avatar," Duanmu Sheng said with a frown.

Little Yuan'er placed a finger on her lips and shushed him before she said. "Fourth Senior Brother has said that no matter what strange things happen around master, we should never speak about it and act like we're unaware!"

Zhao Yue nodded and said, "You've got a point... We should act like we didn't see anything."

Whizz!

A more powerful surge of energy rippled out into the surroundings. After a brief moment, Hua Wudao appeared with his hands on his back. He was knowledgeable and experienced, he, naturally, knew what these energy fluctuations meant.

"Eight Methods Connected?"

Chapter 260 This Is A True Elite

Hua Wudao raised his brows in shock as he looked at the surging Primal Qi and energy above the east pavilion. "What's this..." He trailed off as he raised his hand.

Zhao Yue said, "Elder Hua, do you know what's happening?"

In any case, the few disciples could not make sense of what they were seeing. For them, all they knew was their master rarely followed the orthodox way of doing things.

Hua Wudao nodded and said, "Your cultivation bases aren't profound enough yet. Look closely..." He pointed at the roiling and turbulent Primal Qi and the energy that was leaking out into the surroundings. "The Eight Methods Connected tempers the body and will. A cultivator who successfully formed his Eight Methods Connected will experience a huge improvement in his cultivation base. However, the

pavilion master is already at the peak of the Nascent Divinity Tribulation realm and is a peak Eight-leaf cultivator... Think about it, why would he need to form a low-rank avatar like the Eight Methods Connected?"

"Why?" Zhao Yue, Little Yuan'er, and Duanmu Sheng wore humble expressions that showed they were sincerely seeking Hua Wudao for enlightenment.

"He's constantly improving himself," Hua Wudao said confidently and knowingly, "If two cultivators at the same level were to fight without weapons and armor, what do you think will be the deciding factor between the two?"

"Luck?" Duanmu Sheng scratched his head.

Hua Wudao was speechless.

Zhao Yue and Little Yuan'er looked at their Third Senior Brother, Duanmu Sheng, and nodded, seemingly agreeing with his answer.

Hua Wudao coughed before he said solemnly, "It's technique and experience. Look at the Primal Qi fluctuations above the east pavilion, it's cold and warm at the same time. It's like a harmonization of Yin and Yang... They're extremely uniform and stable. A cultivator with little to no talent would easily cause a chaotic flow of Primal Qi when they try to form their avatars. The slightest mistake made during the forming process would cause him or her to fail. Usually, a cultivator would successfully form the Eight Methods Connected avatar within three attempts. Those who succeed on the first try are considered geniuses. Those who succeed on their second try are considered above average. Those who succeed on their third try are average..."

Bam!

The eight forms of energy successfully gathered above the east pavilion. They swirled and connected.

"Your words are an enlightenment to me, Elder Hua. Everything seems clear now... When I first studied the Divine One Technique, I felt that it was extremely difficult. Now, when I'm practicing the opening chapters of the Divine One Method, they're truly much easier. My skills have improved and my experience is an advantage to me during battles." Duanmu Sheng looked at the east pavilion.

"Indeed..." Hua Wudao continued to look at the east pavilion as well.

"That was enlightening." Zhao Yue cupped her fists. The energy gradually calmed down, and the east pavilion was deathly still once again.

"You have a point, Elder Hua." Mingshi Yin walked in at this moment. It was clear he had just returned from running his errand.

"Fourth Senior Brother." Zhao Yue and Little Yuan'er greeted Mingshi Yin.

"I remember when master was cultivating in the hidden chamber, and we accidentally disturbed him. You might not believe this, Elder Hua, but I couldn't even withstand the blast when master connected his eight meridians... If master didn't hold back, I would've been injured," Mingshi Yin said.

Hua Wudao nodded and said, "As expected of a true elite..."

At this moment, Lu Zhou, who had successfully formed the Eight Methods Connected, opened his eyes slowly. He did not expect to take this long. However, there was nothing out of the ordinary apart from it taking longer than he had expected. He did not encounter any obstacles when he was forming the avatar. The circulation of Primal Qi and the formation of the avatar were exceptionally smooth.

Lu Zhou checked his cultivation base... Indeed, it was already at the Dao Controlling stage of the Divine Court realm. He was only one step away from the Dao Transforming stage. At this stage, he could easily master his chosen path of cultivation.

Every cultivator's cultivation path would be decided at the early stages of the Divine Court realm. They were usually of the saber, the sword, archery, the spear, and so on. Many cultivators would usually decide on their cultivation paths early. The true completion of their paths was when they were at the Dao Shaping stage of the Divine Court realm. At the Dao Controlling stage of the Divine Court realm, the chosen path would be manifested through their weapons. This was why heaven-grade weapons were so precious.

"Dao Controlling stage of the Divine Court realm..." Lu Zhou nodded in satisfaction.

Lu Zhou gauged the status of the Heavenly Writing's extraordinary power as well. It was only about one-third of its full capacity, but he was content with it. He seemed to be comprehending the Heavenly Writing at a much quicker pace now.

At this moment, Lu Zhou heard the commotion outside the pavilion. He chided them with his voice that was laced with Primal Qi, "The audacity!"

The soundwave rolled out from the east pavilion, and Mingshi Yin, Hua Wudao, and the others took several steps back.

"Master."

"Pavilion Master." Even someone like Hua Wudao who took pride in his status had to lower his head.

Lu Zhou emerged with his hands on his back as he glanced at the people in the courtyard. "Do all of you have a lot of free time on your hands..."

"No," Mingshi Yin hastily bowed and said, "Master, I've contacted Jiang Aijian... He said the box you asked him to investigate isn't in the palace. As for other items that belong to the Evil Sky Pavilion, he said he needs more time to investigate the matter. Apart from that, he also suspects Si Wuya is investigating him. For this reason, he hasn't been and won't be contacting the Evil Sky Pavilion for the time being."

'It's that rascal again.' It seemed like even the punishment of the Binding Mantra could not make Si Wuya behave.

"Jiang Aijian also mentioned... that he's aware of the incident on the Lotus Dais. He suspects the elite whom you fought is a Lou Lan elite from Rongxi." "A Lou Lan Elite?" Hua Wudao was slightly taken aback.

Little Yuan'er asked in confusion, "Is he powerful?"

“When Lou Lan and Great Yan went to war many years ago, the people were in a terrible situation. Many of them lost their homes. It was all because of the witchcraft cultivators of Lou Lan... Even so, Lou Lan lost heavily... Since that incident, the cultivators of Great Yan no longer underestimated witchcraft,” Hua Wudao explained. “Are there no witchcraft experts in Great Yan?” “Witchcraft itself originated from Great Yan. However, due to its obvious weaknesses, few actually cultivated it. There are only a handful of determined witchcraft cultivators who keep it alive here,” Hua Wudao replied.

Mingshi Yin nodded and bowed at Lu Zhou as he said, “Master, this piece of information should be reliable. We have to guard against him since he’s capable of unleashing such a powerful spell on the Lotus Dais.”

Lu Zhou still had some unanswered questions in his heart. The being he encountered at the energy intersection on the Lotus Dais was not human but some kind of beast. In that case, that person was most probably the beast’s master. He stroked his beard and asked, “Were your movements exposed when you went to the Divine Capital?”

“Absolutely not...” Mingshi Yin said confidently, “Old Seventh is indeed intelligent. However, he won’t go so far as to have someone monitor me while I’m using the toilet, right?”

Everyone looked at him with a disgusted expression on their faces. Although he had a point, the way he had spoken was too crude. In any case, it seemed like Mingshi Yin did not have any trouble covering up his tracks.

Boom!

At this moment, a thunderous noise resonated in the air.

Everyone turned to look in the direction of the sound.

“The back of the mountain. The Cave of Reflection.” Lu Zhou looked up at the barrier. Although it had weakened, it should still be able to hold up. Moreover, the sound did not come from the barrier.

At this moment, Zhou Jifeng sprinted all the way from the back of the mountain. He fell to one knee and said, “Pavilion Master, M-mister Eighth, s-some... something has happened to him!”

Lu Zhou remained silent. He flicked his sleeves and made his way to the back of the mountain as the others trailed after him.

Mingshi Yin mumbled under his breath, “That idiot Old Eighth, can’t he stay still for a second?”

Zhou Jifeng walked next to Mingshi Yin as he nervously said, “Mister... Mister Eighth has lost the z-zen tunic!”