

Disciples 261

Chapter 261 The Nine Tribulations Thunderblast

A short while later, Lu Zhou led the others to the Cave of Reflection.

They saw Pan Zhong standing at the cave's entrance with a blank expression on his face.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

As soon as they arrived, they heard the deafening sound of rocks breaking.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

"What?! That's impossible! It can't be possible!" Pan Zhong mumbled in a daze.

"What are you talking about? What's impossible?" Mingshi Yin asked.

"I was the one who restricted Mister Eighth's cultivation base. How did it come undone?" Pan Zhong felt like his confidence had been dealt with a heavy blow. An expression of shock and incredulity could be seen on his face.

"Oh, that. What's there to be surprised about..." Mingshi Yin rolled his eyes.

Bam! Bam! Bam!

Zhu Honggong kept launching energy seals at the walls.

"This is chaotic energy. This is caused by forced cultivation. We must suppress it as quickly as we can," Hua Wudao said when he saw the bursts of energies around Zhu Honggong. "Chaotic energy?"

"Cultivating an incomplete cultivation method would usually cause chaotic energy. The cultivator has to fill in the blanks of the incomplete method to improve his or her cultivation base. If he were a genius, this might be beneficial. However, if he's not, this is what happens," Hua Wudao said.

The words 'incomplete cultivation methods' caused the disciples to shudder. They no longer dared to continue the conversation and only looked at their master.

Lu Zhou shook his head. He looked at Zhu Honggong in the Cave of Reflection and said, "He's making a rod for his own back." After he finished speaking, he walked into the cave.

At this moment, Zhu Honggong looked up and saw his master. "Master?"

He was about to launch a Nine Tribulations Thunderblast from his palms so he quickly and forcibly reversed the direction of his attack and sent the attack to his chest. The blast from the attack sent him reeling several meters back before he crashed on the floor.

"Ouch!" Zhu Honggong cried out as he rolled on the ground.

'At least, he recognized me and stopped himself from hurting me at the cost of hurting himself. He still has a conscience.'

Lu Zhou raised his palm and sent an energy seal over.

Bam!

The gentle energy seal landed on Zhu Honggong's chest.

Zhu Honggong felt as though he had been doused with a bucket of cold water and calmed down. The heat and energy that roiled and surged from his body seemed to subside as well.

Upon seeing this, everyone had a shocked expression on their faces.

Hua Wudao looked at Zhao Yue, Mingshi Yin, and the others. He said, "This is what I mean when I spoke about skill and experience earlier. Zhu Honggong is a Dao Transforming Divine Court realm cultivator after all. The Primal Qi in his body is extremely chaotic so forcibly suppressing it would only make matter worse... Instead, it's much more helpful to use a gentler and weaker energy. Don't look down on that palm strike. If one doesn't have extraordinarily precise control over one's powers, it would be extremely difficult to guarantee the other party would remain unharmed." Zhao Yue said, "I've learned a lot from you, Elder Hua."

Hua Wudao merely smiled and said, "It's nothing worth mentioning... Sometimes, I envy all of you." "Envy?"

"A master merely takes you in while cultivation depends on the individual... The pavilion master is occupied with many matters every day, and perhaps, he might not have much time to instruct you about cultivation. However, the pavilion master's actions are worth much more than verbal instructions or teachings. Alas, I'm getting old, I'm afraid I won't have a chance to learn." Hua Wudao sighed.

"Uh..."

'Why did that sound wrong?'

Nevertheless, Zhao Yue and the others nodded their heads. There was nothing wrong with Elder Hua's words. It merely sounded awkward due to his identity, position, and age. Perhaps, he was just trying to flatter their master?

Meanwhile, Lu Zhou stood with his hands on his back as he looked at Zhu Honggong, Old Eighth, quietly. He was rendered speechless when he heard Hua Wudao's lengthy explanation. In truth, he did not put much thought into the palm strike he had sent out. All he planned to do was calm Zhu Honggong's chaotic energy. He did not really take into consideration whether he would injure Zhu Honggong or not since Zhu Honggong was quite hardy.

After Zhu Honggong caught his breath, he shuddered before he hastily kneeled and said, "Master... you're here!" He thanked the heavens when he recalled how he managed to redirect his attack to himself earlier. Otherwise, he really did not dare to imagine the consequences.

Lu Zhou looked at Zhu Honggong sternly and said, "Speak. What's the matter?"

"Master... Three days ago, the Five Mice came and stole my zen tunic... The zen tunic helps suppress my chaotic energy... Please help me, master!" Zhu Honggong said fearfully.

"The Five Mice of Upper Prime City?"

Zhu Honggong, Old Eighth, raised his voice and spoke in such a righteous tone that it would inspire admiration from people who did not know better, “They wanted to take me away from Golden Court Mountain. However, there’s no way I’d leave them. I resolutely rejected their preposterous request without any hesitation at all! That exasperated the Five Mice so they robbed me of my zen tunic. They’re truly despicable! The sun and moon can bear witness to my loyalty! I hope you don’t suspect my loyalty to you, master!” Mingshi Yin was speechless. ‘Is this the same idiotic Old Eighth I know? He’s really got a glib tongue!’

Lu Zhou asked, “How many levels of the Nine Tribulations Thunderblast have you cultivated?”

“Uh...” Zhu Honggong’s forehead was drenched in sweat as he stammered, “In reply to your question, master... t-the... the seventh, Phenomenon.”

Lu Zhou said disapprovingly, “The audacity... Were you thinking of filling in the blanks for the two remaining levels with your cultivation base and experience?”

“I dare not!” Zhu Honggong quickly kowtowed and said, “I’m stupid. When I cultivated the fourth level, Compassion, and the fifth level, Indifference, something went wrong. My Primal Qi flared up, and I nearly descended into depravity.”

Lu Zhou said, “Hence, that rascal, Old Seventh, took the Heavenly Choice Temple’s zen tunic to suppress your Primal Qi?”

“...” Zhu Honggong seemed like a deflated balloon at this moment. He had no choice but to nod and say, “Yes.”

Mingshi Yin cupped his fists as he stood outside the cave. He said, “Master... We can’t be tricked by Old Seventh. He’s currently afflicted by the Binding Mantra and wants to lure you into making a move.”

“Hm?” Lu Zhou turned around slowly.

“I’m guessing that Old Eighth’s condition can only be managed by a Binding Mantra. Otherwise, this will happen again in the future. Since the Binding Mantra is cast by you, you’ll, naturally, be the only one who’s able to undo it. For this reason, I suspect that Old Seventh has planted some connective spell or seal on Old Eighth to break the mantra that has been placed on him!” Mingshi Yin said.

The so-called connective spell was one of the arcane arts from the Daoist sects. The cultivators who were connected by this art could share the same damage or healing for a certain amount of time. Then, the Buddhist sects improvised on this art and developed the Buddha’s Shine, which was a healing art with an area of effect that could treat many of the wounded at the same time. However, due to the large amount of power needed to cast this technique, it was rarely used.

Zhu Honggong was rendered speechless by Mingshi Yin’s words. Mingshi Yin looked at Zhu Honggong as he ridiculed Si Wuya inwardly, ‘Old Seventh, you can’t even fool me with this trick, do you really think you can fool master? Keep on dreaming!’

“Mingshi Yin has a point,” Hua Wudao said in agreement.

Lu Zhou did not nod nor did he shake his head. Instead, his gaze fell on Old Eighth, Zhu Honggong, as he said, "Old Eighth... I'm waiting for your explanation." Clearly, Si Wuya would not be able to come up with this method if Zhu Honggong did not agree to collude with him.

Zhu Honggong's face was wet with tears as he said pitifully, "Master... I'm wrongly accused! I'm wrongly accused..." "Wrongly accused, my ass... Old Seventh has helped you many times. You have every reason to help in return," Mingshi Yin said. Lu Zhou said, "Inspect him."

After all, an examination was all it took to see if this was true. If there really was a connective spell, Mingshi Yin's suspicion would be proven true. If there was none, then, their suspicion was wrong.

Chapter 262 Harsher Instructions

"I'll do it." Duanmu Sheng tossed his Overlord Spear to Pan Zhong who was standing at the side.

Pan Zhong staggered, nearly falling from the weight of the Overlord Spear. Fortunately, he circulated his Primal Qi in time and managed to carry its weight.

Mingshi Yin made way for Duanmu Sheng to walk into the Cave of Reflection.

With Duanmu Sheng's build, he easily picked up Zhu Honggong like an eagle catching a chick without even using any Primal Qi. He placed a palm on Zhu Honggong before his Primal Qi flowed through Zhu Honggong's body. He said sternly, "Don't move!"

Zhu Honggong did not want to laugh before he could not help it. "I... I'm not deliberately moving, Third Senior Brother, b-but... it..." He laughed again before he said with difficulty, "But... it tickles. I can't help it." Inwardly, he thought to himself, 'Do you think I want this or that I know no shame? There's a crowd gathered here after all. No matter what, I'm still a disciple of the Evil Sky Pavilion!'

Duanmu Sheng ignored Zhu Honggong. He examined Zhu Honggong seriously and thoroughly. He would leave no stones unturned.

Zhu Honggong did not dare to resist with his Primal Qi and allowed his senior brother to do as he pleased.

After a few moments, Duanmu Sheng completed the examination. He bowed at Lu Zhou and said, "Master, I've examined him and didn't find anything suspicious." Mingshi Yin was stunned. 'I'm done for... I was too paranoid. Master is definitely going to rebuke me.'

However, Lu Zhou shook his head and said, "This doesn't mean that spell won't be cast on him in the future. Old Fourth has a point."

"I'm wrongly accused!" Zhu Honggong's face was wet with tears. He had never felt so aggrieved in his entire life.

Mingshi Yin sighed inwardly in relief before he said, "Old Eighth, you can save your breath and stop trying to talk your way out of this. The Five Mice took your zen tunic away and didn't even bring you with them. Do you think Old Seventh will help you? He's only using you."

Upon hearing the words 'zen tunic', Zhu Honggong froze. He cherished that item the most. Taking the zen tunic away as akin to taking his life away. All of a sudden, he looked up and said, "Master... I have something to say!"

"Speak."

"I know you want to punish Seventh Senior Brother... I have a plan!" Zhu Honggong said. Mingshi Yin was confused.

Everyone regarded Zhu Honggong with complicated looks.

'He's trying to propose a plan with that brain of his?'

'It doesn't sound reliable at all...'

"You are proposing a plan? All you can come up with are rotten suggestions," Mingshi Yin said mockingly.

Zhu Honggong smiled sheepishly. He had already gotten used to being mocked so he had developed a thick skin over the years. He said, "Master, I know where Old Seventh and the Five Mice usually meet!"

Zhu Honggong's words shocked everyone.

Mingshi Yin asked skeptically, "Based on Old Seventh's character, how could he have let you know about this secret?"

Zhu Honggong said, "I accidentally found out about it. Moreover, Seventh Senior Brother trusted me back then.'

"So, that's why you turned the other way and are betraying him now?" Mingshi Yin said, pouring a figurative bucket of cold water over Zhu Honggong.

"..." Zhu Honggong wanted to cry. 'Fourth Senior Brother, can you stop saying these things? You'll be the cause of my death one day!' "Where's this place?" Lu Zhou asked. Zhu Honggong's information might not mean anything, but it was better than nothing. Moreover, they had to guard against the possibility of that rascal, Old Seventh, setting up a trap. Even then, Lu Zhou was not particularly worried. All he needed to do was to see Si Wuya. Plots and schemes were like a thin sheet of paper in the face of absolute power.

"Long Breeze Restaurant in Upper Prime City," Zhu Honggong hastily replied. "The Black Knights had quelled a disturbance in Upper Prime City previously, but the Five Mice are bold enough to remain in Upper Prime City?" Zhao Yue asked, surprised. "The most dangerous place can also be the safest place... After all, nobody knew how the mice look like. Even if you ran into one of them on the streets, you probably won't even recognize them. I'm not surprised they meet in Upper Prime City," Mingshi Yin said.

Lu Zhou turned to look at Mingshi Yin and said, "Mingshi Yin." "Yes, master."

"You'll go to Upper Prime City and bring Si Wuya back..."

Lu Zhou continued to say, "Also, tell the Five Mice that they'd better come here and apologize, or else..."

When Mingshi Yin heard his master's 'or else', he shuddered slightly. He could not afford to be careless with this task.

Si Wuya's cultivation base was restricted. It should not be difficult to capture him. He did not succeed in waiting for the hare by the stump back then. He had been feeling dissatisfied since then. Now that he had been given this information, he had to make good use of it. 'One should always learn from one's mistakes... Second Senior Brother was around that time... I wonder who's going to be by Old Seventh's side this time around?' A peerless genius like Yu Shangrong could not possibly become a personal bodyguard to Si Wuya after all.

"Yes, master!" Mingshi Yin retreated to the side. It was already dark outside, and he was in no hurry to depart.

Zhu Honggong kowtowed and said, "Master... does this count as a merit? Please. Master, senior brother. Please help me retrieve my zen tunic!" Lu Zhou's gaze fell on Zhu Honggong as he said, "Rascal, since you'd withheld information... How do you think we should deal with you?"

Zhu Honggong started. He no longer dared to make any request at this moment, and he hastily said, "I've made a mistake!"

At this moment, realization finally dawned on the others. Zhu Honggong, Old Eighth, had known about the rendezvous point all along and had kept it from them until now. He obviously harbored selfish motives!

"Fifty strokes of the plan... Old Third will be the executioner." Lu Zhou placed his hands on his back and turned around. Fear tightened its grip around Zhu Honggong when he saw his master showed no signs of leaving. Clearly, his master intended to supervise the punishment. These 50 strokes were definitely going to hurt way more than the 100 strokes he received previously. "Yes, master." Shortly after, Duanmu Sheng returned to the Cave of Reflection with a rod in hand. Then, he lifted Zhu Honggong without any preamble and placed him on the stone table.

"Senior brother... Senior brother, softly... softly please..."

"I'm sorry, junior brother... Rules are rules. It's better for me to be heavy-handed. This is for your own good. If people don't abide by the rules of the Golden Court Mountain, how can we regain our former glory?" said Duanmu Sheng

Smack!

"Yowl! Ouch!" A sound akin to pigs being slaughtered rang in the air. "Ding! Harsher punishment of Zhu Honggong. Reward: 500 merit points." Lu Zhou did not even look at Zhu Honggong. He placed his hands on his back before leaving the Cave of Reflection.

"Safe journey, master."

"Safe journey, Pavilion Master."

The others bowed.

The others sighed in relief after Lu Zhou left the Cave of Reflection.

Mingshi Yin said with a smile, "Old Eighth, you brought this upon yourself. You should be grateful that your punishment is only receiving these 50 strokes... That's far better than destroying your cultivation base or killing

you."

"Thank... thank you, senior brother... Ouch!"

Smack! Smack!

Even for cultivators such as themselves, with bodies strengthened by Body Tempering and their protective energies, it would still be painful being beaten in this manner. Moreover, Duanmu Sheng was a straight person, he was not the type to pull his punches. There was no mercy at all when he was beating Zhu Honggong

Tears streaked down Zhu Honggong's face from the beating.

Mingshi Yin shook his head and said with a smile, "I'll think of some way to retrieve the zen tunic for you."

When Zhu Honggong heard this, he was overjoyed. Although he was being beaten by the plank now, he cupped his fists and struggled as he said, "You're... the... Ouch! You treat me the best, senior brother!"

Mingshi Yin no longer looked at him. He turned around and left.

Pan Zhong hastily ran over and said, "You truly have a meticulous mind and outstanding intelligence, Mister Fourth. If you didn't see through the tricks, we would've all been fooled by Mister Seventh... Uh, I mean the traitor."

"Is there anything else?" Mingshi Yin found this strange.

"No... nothing. I'm just, I genuinely admire you, that's all... There are no lies in my words," Pan Zhong said seriously.

"I like that. They're all flattery, but they sound so sincere..." Mingshi Yi said before vanished from sight in just a blink of an eye.

Meanwhile, just outside of the secluded hut.

Si Wuya no longer attempted to break the Binding Mantra like he did before. Instead, he reclined on a bamboo chair and basked in the sun. On the rack next to him, there were various books about mantras. It was slightly messy. "Since when did master learn how to cast such a high-level mantra?" Si Wuya could not find the answer to this question. This confounded him.

He had asked his men to get these books from him so he could look for a way to break the mantra. He had tried most of the methods mentioned in the books. Alas, none of them worked.

At this moment, a grey-robed cultivator, his subordinate, flew toward him from afar. The subordinate landed with one knee on the ground and said, "Sect master, as per your orders, I've investigated the Evil Sky Pavilion, and they have no contact with any Buddhist or Daoist elites."

Si Wuya stood up slowly. He walked along the secluded hut with his hands on his back.

"The Buddhist elite at the holy altar in Runan, the Daoist elite at Measure Heaven River, and the Nine Cuts Hand Seals at Tangzi Town... Even the unknown power on the Lotus Dais, none of these has anything to do with external help?"

Si Wuya had personally witnessed the scene on the Lotus Dais. He was certain the power originated from the barrier.

"There aren't any clues about that yet."

Si Wuya nodded and said with a smile, "In any case, I'm certain my master is looking for new ways... He's the same as ever."

"Sect master, should I continue the investigations?"

"There's no need for that." Si Wuya shook his head and asked, "Did you find out who's the Evil Sky Pavilion's spy?"

"For now, all we know is that he's skilled, but we don't know who he is..."

"What about the palace?"

"We have no clues about that as well... However, we did receive another piece of information. An elite from Rongxi's Lou Lan is now in the palace. That person should be the mastermind behind the Grand Formation on the Lotus Dais."

"Mo Li does have some tricks up her sleeve," Si Wuya said, "That'll be all."

"Understood." The gray-robed cultivator left.

Si Wuya returned to the secluded hut and sat on the bamboo chair. He closed his eyes and briefly rested.

After a while, another subordinate appeared.

"Sect master, a report from Upper Prime City."

"Let me hear it."

"The Upper Prime's Five Mice have stolen Mister Eighth's zen tunic. They said that it's to compensate for their trip to the Evil Sky Pavilion."

The moment the subordinate finished talking, Si Wuya's eyes snapped open. His expressionless face was contrary to his words. "Idiots!"

"Sect master, the Upper Prime's Five Mice aren't members of the Darknet after all. They're difficult to control, should we seize this opportunity to get rid of them?"

Si Wuya did not reply to his subordinate. He muttered to himself for a moment before he said, "Send word to the Five Mice. Tell them that we'll meet at Upper Prime City in two days."

"Sect master, it might not be the best idea to venture out in your current condition. I can carry out the task for you!" the subordinate said.

"It's alright," Si Wuya said, "The elite from Rongxi's Lou Lan is already here. Upper Prime City has been peaceful for too long. It's time we set it aflame."

"Understood! I'll see to it right away!"

The second morning. In the Evil Sky Pavilion.

Lu Zhou slowly woke up from his comprehension state. He checked the extraordinary power and found it half-full. Fortunately, his speed of comprehension had become quicker now. Previously, he needed seven to ten days to completely restore the extraordinary power. Based on his current speed, he would only need five days now. He did not continue studying the Heavenly Writing. Instead, he stood up, walked to the table, and looked at the parchment drawing. The parchment drawing looked no different from yesterday. Only the Divine Capital's palace seemed clearer. The other parts of the drawing were either a blur or a blank.

"Perhaps, the other remnants of the Open Heavenly Writing are inside the palace."

How was he supposed to look for them then?

Although Jiang Aijian possessed remarkable abilities, this task was no different from searching for a needle in a haystack. Moreover, Jiang Aijian did not even know what the Open Heavenly Writing looked like.

'Should I personally make a trip there?' Nobody knew about the Open Heavenly Writing apart from him.

"Master... Old Eighth's still the same. His Primal Qi is still in chaos." Duanmu Sheng's voice rang out suddenly.

"Have Pan Zhong go over there to seal his meridians, dantian, and sea of Qi... If they can't be sealed, fight with him until he runs out of Primal Qi," Lu Zhou said.

"That's a brilliant idea, master. Why didn't I think of that?" Duanmu Sheng was delighted. Then, he mumbled, "It's been a long time since I sparred with someone..."

He was just about to turn around and leave when Lu Zhou asked, "Where's Zhao Yue?"

'Zhao Yue has been behaving strangely as of late. I should pay more attention to her.'

Also, Zhao Yue was the one who usually passed on these messages. Why did Duanmu Sheng come instead?

"Junior Sister Zhao Yue is feeling unwell and is resting in the south pavilion," Duanmu Sheng replied.

'Unwell?' At the Dao Forming stage of the Divine Court realm, ordinary ailments no longer affected a cultivator.

Lu Zhou emerged from the pavilion. He saw Duanmu Sheng standing there respectfully. He said, "Go and check on Old Eighth..."

"I'll head over right away." Duanmu Sheng turned around and left.

Lu Zhou went to the south pavilion.

It was completely quiet there.

“Zhao Yue.” Lu Zhou projected his voice into the south pavilion.

“Ma-master?” A shocked voice rang from inside the room.

However, Zhao Yue did not show her face.

Lu Zhou walked over with his hands on his back but did not immediately enter. He had detected a hint of nervousness and pain in Zhao Yue’s voice. When he was near the door, he felt a dark and cold air. He frowned and waved his arm.

A blast of energy forced the door open, and Lu Zhou’s gaze fell on Zhao Yue immediately

Zhao Yue was not resting. Instead, she was cowering and shivering, huddled up in a corner. Her forehead was drenched in sweat, and her body was constantly releasing cold air. The cold and warmth in the air made her hair wet. A thin layer of ice could be seen on her clothes.

A shocked expression could be seen on Zhao Yue’s face at this moment. She truly did not expect her master would visit at this time. She endured the cold and got up before she knelt on the ground. Her teeth were chattering as she quickly greeted him, “G-greetings, master.”

As soon as Lu Zhou saw Zhao Yue’s condition, he roughly understood what had happened. He shook his head helplessly. These disciples... None of them will ever let me rest.’

Chapter 263 Moon as Bright as Jade

The Brilliant Jade Technique was an interesting cultivation method. Zhao Yue had personally chosen this cultivation method.

At full strength, if she used the circulation method, the surface of her body would go translucent, and she would appear like she was wrapped in a layer of cold fog. When the Primal Qi outside her body turned into energy, there would be an exchange between heat and cold.

It was clear that Zhao Yue had met with an accident. There was nothing wrong with the way she had cultivated, but she had been too impatient and anxious to see results. Without sufficient protective energy to ward off the cold, she would only inflict pain upon herself if she forcibly cultivated.

Lu Zhou stood before Zhao Yue. He said with a sigh, “Reason?”

“I’ve made a mistake... I shouldn’t have been so anxious to achieve a breakthrough,” Zhao Yue said with a lowered head.

“That’s all?”

“I... I d-dare not say,” Zhao Yue stammered.

“Spit it out.”

Zhao Yue nodded despite her apprehension and said, “I don’t know what happened. Ever since I cultivated the completed cultivation method, the flow of my Primal Qi became turbulent. I can’t cultivate as fast as I did before.”

Lu Zhou was puzzled when he heard this. Nothing of this sort had happened to his other disciples. In fact, the other disciples had gained a faster cultivation speed after they were given the completed cultivation methods. Zhao Yue had joined the pavilion before Little Yuan'er did. Even if she was not as talented as Little Yuan'er, she should not have been lagging that far behind. "Don't move." Lu Zhou raised his hand. A gentle Primal Qi rose from his palm before it landed on Zhao Yu.

As Lu Zhou had expected, when the Primal Qi entered Zhao Yue's extraordinary eight meridians, the cold air retaliated and tried to expel Lu Zhou's Primal Qi.

That's not right. This isn't the cold from the Brilliant Jade Technique.' This seemed unique and peculiar. It seemed to have existed in her for a long time now.

Lu Zhou raised a palm again. "Raise your head."

Although Lu Zhou's temper was much different from before, Lu Zhou's imposing manner and things he had done in the past made Zhao Yue feel nervous. After a brief moment, she lifted her head.

Lu Zhou said, "Let me ask you, what cultivation method did you cultivate before joining the Evil Sky Pavilion?"

Zhao Yue shook her head and said, "None."

"Don't lie to me."

The eyes were the windows to the soul.

Zhao Yue felt frightened seeing Lu Zhou staring at her with such intensity. She would not dare to lie. She said, "I'm telling the truth!"

Lu Zhou nodded. He stroked his beard and said, "I gave you the Brilliant Jade Technique. How many levels have you mastered?"

Zhao Yue replied, "I'm stupid and have only managed to master six levels. I'm not too familiar with the seventh level yet. The eighth and ninth levels that you'd taught me are difficult to understand, and I haven't got the time to cultivate them yet."

In that case, the two final levels of the cultivation method were not responsible for her current state. At most, they might have only triggered the problem.

The cold poison within Zhao Yue's body was the cause of her condition.

"Think about it again. Before you cultivated the Brilliant Jade Technique, have you ever met with another cultivator and cultivated someone unknown cultivation method? Or were you wounded?" Lu Zhou asked.

The origin of the cold poison remained a mystery. However, there was no doubt that it did not just appear out of thin air.

Zhao Yue was not the most talented among nine disciples, but she was still better than those people outside. If she had cultivated properly, she would not have made a basic mistake such as this. It was likely that the cold poison was caused by someone else.

Zhao Yue was lost in thoughts. After a while, she said softly, "I was nine when I joined the pavilion... There are many things that I can't remember clearly." "What about the time before that?" Lu Zhou asked.

It was easier to sort out the events after she joined the Evil Sky Pavilion. However, she would have to recall whatever happened before that.

Zhao Yue was stunned. She appeared flustered.

Lu Zhou said with a slightly pointed tone, "Are you hiding something from me?" "I dare not!"

Zhao Yue immediately bowed down and stammered, "S-some... S-someone told me that... that... that I was from the palace. However, I don't believe it." From when she began to speak until she finished, she kept shaking her head as though she was in denial.

"Who told you this?" Lu Zhou asked.

"I don't know him. However, I can tell he's an elite. He should be from the palace as well... I've just met Junior Sister Tianxin at that time. Junior Sister Tian Xian asked me to activate the Formation, and I met the person on Bluesun Mountain... You're aware of what happened after that, master," Zhao Yue replied.

Lu Zhou would never forget how Ye Tianxin led a group of cultivators to ambush them on Bluesun Mountain.

Ye Tianxin was, perhaps, the boldest of his nine disciples. Now that Lu Zhou had thought about it, he wondered if Ye Tianxin, who had been chased out of the Evil Sky Pavilion for such a long time now, was still alive.

"Since you're from the palace, you should begin your investigation with the palace," said Lu Zhou.

Zhao Yue had the opportunity to investigate the palace before this, but she gave the chance to Mingshi Yin.

"I abide by the Evil Sky Pavilion's rules. I've severed my ties with my past once I joined the Evil Sky Pavilion. I dare not violate that," Zhao Yue said.

"If I'm not mistaken, the cold poison that's afflicting you is from the Dark Yin Palm... That's an extremely dark Daoist seal. Aren't you going to find out about it?" Lu Zhou asked.

Zhao Yue shook her head.

Lu Zhou's gaze fell on the jade pendant that hung on Zhao Yue's waist. He recalled the scene when he recruited disciples. This was the jade pendant she had been carrying since she was a child. Now that he thought about it, it did seem suspicious. How could it be possible for someone from a humble family to have such a precious jade pendant?

"You there."

"Your orders, Pavilion Master?" a female cultivator said from outside the door. "Bring Hua Yuexing here." "Understood."

Shortly after, Hua Yuexing appeared in the south pavilion. When she was outside Zhao Yue's room, she bowed and said, "Greetings, Pavilion Master!"

Lu Zhou emerged with his hands on his back and asked, "How long did you serve in the palace?"

"In reply to your question, Pavilion Master, less than a year."

"Throughout that time, did you meet any elites who are skilled in the Dark Yin Palm?"

"Dark Yin Palm?" Hua Yuexing appeared puzzled. She shook her head and said, "I've never met such a person... However, there are many elites from various sects in the palace. It's not impossible that there might be an elite who's skilled in the Dark Yin Palm there."

This answer was no different from not having an answer.

"Forget it... You're dismissed." Lu Zhou waved his hand.

"I'll take my leave then." Hua Yuexing turned around and left the south pavilion. Outside the pavilion, she mumbled to herself, "The Pavilion Master is really gentle..."

Lu Zhou returned to the room. He looked at Zhao Yue's pale face and said, "Sit up straight."

When Zhao Yue heard this, she was overjoyed. She hastily kowtowed and said, "Thank you, master!"

Loyalty +5%.

She hastily sat up straight and crossed her legs.

Lu Zhou walked to her back and sat down with his legs crossed.

His cultivation base was only at the Dao Controlling stage of the Divine Court realm. Yet, Zhao Yue was already at the Dao Transforming stage of the Divine Court realm. Since she could not repel the cold poison, it was definitely impossible for him to do so. For this reason, he tried to use the extraordinary power. Even if he failed, it would be no loss to him.

"Don't resist."

"Understood."

Lu Zhou raised his palm. Primal Qi surged out of his palm like the tide. At the same time, he felt the extraordinary power of the Heavenly Writing following his command. It merged more smoothly with his Primal Qi now...

Bam!

His Primal Qi flowed through the Door of the Corporeal Soul, the Heart Transporter, and other acupuncture points into her major meridians.

Without any warning, Zhao Yue suddenly spat out a mouthful of blood. She merely grunted. She did not move away nor did she resist. Without warning.

Zhao Yue merely grunted. She did not dodge or resist.

As expected, the cold poison retaliated at once. Lu Zhou said indifferently, "Preposterous... A mere cold poison is trying to retaliate?"

Chapter 264 The Elite Beside the Big Shot

The arrow that was nocked had to be fired.

While Lu Zhou circulated his Primal Qi, the extraordinary power of the Heavenly Writing erupted. The transparent Primal Qi seemed to be tinged blue and was extremely magnificent. It looked like blue fireflies were hovering around his palm.

In just a blink of an eye, the cold poison in Zhao Yue's meridians was gradually cleared by Lu Zhou's Primal Qi and the Heavenly Writing's extraordinary power.

A thin layer of fog appeared on the surface of Zhao Yue's body, and heat rose from the top of her head.

In just a short moment, the cold poison in Zhao Yue's meridians began to weaken at an alarming rate before it disappeared completely. Warmth spread through her body, and the thin layer of ice on her clothes and body quickly melted away from the heat.

Meanwhile, Hua Yuexing who had just left the south pavilion was lost in her thoughts. The more she thought about it, the more puzzled she became. Perhaps, during her stint in the palace, she was used to doing everything Lady Jade told her to without questioning the reason. Now that she had joined the Evil Sky Pavilion, she found herself doing the same thing.

Hua Yuexing stopped in her tracks and mumbled to herself, "Why did the Pavilion Master ask me that question?" She scratched her head, unable to figure it out.

At this moment, she saw Pan Zhong and Pan Litian.

Pan Zhong had seen Hua Yuexing standing outside the south pavilion from afar. He walked over, cupped his fists, and said, "La-lady Hua... Hello."

"What did you call me?" Hua Yuexing frowned.

"Oh, that's not what I meant... Elder Sister Hua..." Pan Zhong corrected himself.

Hua Yuexing felt speechless.

Pan Litian smacked Pan Zhong's neck, resenting Pan Zhong for failing to meet his expectations. He said, "Lady Yuexing." He corrected Pan Zhong's form of address and gave him a scornful look. His expression seemed to say that it was no wonder that Pan Zhong was still single.

Pan Zhong cupped his fists awkwardly and said, "Lady Yuexing."

Hua Yuexing was not a person who would fuss over minor matters. She cupped her fists at the two of them in response.

Pan Zhong asked, "Have you seen the pavilion master?"

"Do you have some business with him, senior?" Hua Yuexing looked at Pan Litian and asked.

Pan Litian said, "I was fortunate enough to be gifted the Sable Magnolia. Now, my dantian's sea of Qi is open... I should thank him in person for this act of charity."

"You've recovered your cultivation base, senior?" Hua Yuexing had heard about the stories and legends about the Clarity Sect's greatest elite, Pan Litian. Such a person only existed in the stories her elders told her. When she heard that his cultivation base had recovered, she was, naturally, shocked.

Pan Litian shook his head and said, "I wouldn't say it's recovered. It'll take time. In five years' time, I should be able to regain my full strength."

Pan Zhong nodded with a smile.

Pan Litian had been conversing with Pan Zhong lately. Hence, they had grown closer. However, Pan Litian still refused to admit he was Pan Litian. For this reason, Pan Zhong only thought this senior treated him better because they were both formerly from the Clarity Sect. They acted like long lost acquaintances without regard for each other's ages. Sometimes, they did not even act like a senior and a junior. Pan Litian did not seem to mind it as well.

"Congratulations, old senior," Hua Yuexing said.

"You haven't told me where the pavilion master is. I went to the east pavilion and the great hall, and yet, I couldn't find him," Pan Litian said.

Hua Yuexing answered, "He's in the south pavilion. He should be coming out soon."

"Thank you."

"Thank you, Lady Hua... Damn it..." Pan Zhong hastily gave himself a slap. It had been a slip of tongue.

"..." Hua Yuexing only looked on helplessly. She returned to the south pavilion with both of them.

Just as three of them arrived at the south pavilion, a faint blue energy rippled out from Zhao Yue's body like a huge wave into the surroundings. "Look out!"

Hua Yuexing, Pan Litian, and Pan Zhong activated their protective energies at the same time. They formed transparent shields that protected them from the wave of energy.

Bam!

Alas, their barriers only lasted for mere seconds before they shattered like glass.

The three of them staggered backward before the wave slowly subsided. They looked at Zhao Yue's room with a frightened expression on their faces.

"Uh..." Pan Zhong was speechless.

Hua Yuexing was baffled, and she wondered out loud, "What power is this?"

Pan Litian stood up slowly. He looked at the barrier in the sky.

"The power of the barrier."

"No wonder..."

“Why is the Pavilion Master using the barrier’s power?” Hua Yuexing could not understand this.

She was not the only one who was confused. Even the knowledgeable and experienced Pan Litian was puzzled.

At this moment, Lu Zhou emerged from the room with his hands on his back. He swept his gaze across Hua Yuexing, Pan Zhong, and Pan Litian before it lingered on Pan Litian. “How does it feel to have your cultivation base back?”

Although it was a long way to go before Pan Litian would regain his full strength, at least, he had hope now.

Pan Litian bowed and said, “I came to thank you for your kindness, Pavilion Master... From this day on, my life belongs to the Evil Sky Pavilion.”

Hua Yuexing and Pan Zhong looked at Pan Litian in unison.

Lu Zhou noticed that Pan Litian’s loyalty was steadily increasing as well. His words were a testament to his attitude.

When Pan Litian said this, he was neither servile nor domineering, neither rushed nor slow. He was calm and collected. There was power in his words when they were said with this attitude. A person’s resilience would reveal itself in the midst of difficulties while a person’s loyalty would reveal itself in the midst of hardships.

Pan Litian was the first person who had stated his loyalty with such words. Sincerity aside, it was rather pleasing to the ears.

Hua Yuexing and Pan Zhong, on the other hand, appeared awkward. In their minds, they thought to themselves, ‘Ginger gets spicier as it ages. Compared to him, we’re green as grass.’

Pan Litian continued, “When I went to the east pavilion earlier, I felt a powerful surge of energy spreading out... Your cultivation base truly widened my horizons, Pavilion Master. I’ve never seen such a unique power before. I’m afraid you’re the only one under the heavens who can pull this off.”

Hua Yuexing and Pan Zhong were puzzled.

Lu Zhou remained silent. After all, Pan Litian had spoken the truth.

Lu Zhou suddenly remembered that Pan Litian was somehow who had traveled far and wide. Pan Litian’s knowledge was not inferior to his own. He asked, “When Zhao Yue was young, she was hit by the Dark Yin Palm and was afflicted with cold poison. Have you heard about this before, Elder Pan?”

“Dark Yin Palm?” Pan Litian frowned as he thought about it before saying, “The Dark Yin Palm is an extremely sinister Daoist technique. Indeed, I know of one such person who uses the Dark Yin Palm.”

Lu Zhou remained silent.

Hua Yuexing and Pan Zhong looked over at the same time.

Pan Litian did not merely travel far and wide. It was said that he was in frequent contact with some individuals in the palace after he had left Clarity Sect. However, nobody knew what he did during his time away.

“That person is Li Yunzhao, an elite by the Empress Dowager’s side.” “Li Yunzhao?” Hua Yuexing’s eyes widened.

At this moment, Zhao Yue’s hacking coughs rang from the room. When the coughs subsided, she said weakly, “Master... I remember now. The person who came to see me was Li Yunzhao.”

Chapter 265 The Disturbance at Upper Prime City and the Divine Capital

Lu Zhou did not enter the room nor did he turn around when he said, “Are you sure?”.

“I am,” Pan Litian smiled and said, “Li Yunzhao is a famous eunuch by the Empress Dowager’s side... He has Daoist roots. He had cultivated some arcane arts and descended into depravity. However, he benefited from the misfortune, and somehow, his cultivation base improved by leaps and bounds. The Daoist sect chased him out to preserve their reputation. Many years later, he became a great elite.”

Lu Zhou was slightly taken aback. He did not expect Li Yunzhao to be a famous eunuch. However, he did not find it strange that there were so many elites in the palace even though he had not been frequently going to the palace or fought any of the palace elites. Perhaps, the palace elites were wary of his title as the greatest villains under the heavens, or perhaps, they were restricted by the palace’s rules. Who knew?

Lu Zhou was certain an elite like Li Yunzhao lived a good life in the palace even if he was just a eunuch. There would be no shortage of people trying to curry favor with him after all. Alas, not being a true man was probably a source of regret for Li Yunzhao.

Finally, Lu Zhou said, “Why would Li Yunzhao harm you when he had looked for you previously?”

“I don’t know.” The cold poison within Zhao Yue’s body had just been dispelled so she was still weak. Even her voice sounded weak when she spoke.

Lu Zhou shook his head and said, “Forget it. Rest for two days.” He waved his arm and left the south pavilion after he finished speaking.

Zhao Yue rose to her feet with great difficulty. A stunned expression could be seen on her face as she walked to the door and looked at her master’s retreating back. His words had greatly shocked her. ‘Master... master is concerned about me?’

Zhao Yue coughed again before her breathing began to gradually stabilize. “It’s gone?” She was greatly surprised. Previously, she was unaware that she was afflicted with a cold poison. She had assumed it was the effect of the Brilliant Jade Technique. The heat and the cold she felt were in line with the Brilliant Jade Technique after all. After cultivating it to its peak, the layer of frost on her skin would be able to intimidate her enemies. Apart from that, she really did not expect the cold poison was from the Dark Yin Palm.

Zhao Yue circulated her Primal Qi again and let it course through her extraordinary eight meridians. It flowed smoothly without obstructions. The self-healing effects from her Primal Qi was a lot more obvious now.

When she recalled her master's words earlier, she felt remorseful. Compared to this, the sufferings she had endured before seemed insignificant.

"Ding! Instructing Zhao Yue. Reward: 200 merit points."

What was considered as instructing? A senior instructing a junior, and the strong instructing the weak. That was instruction.

When Lu Zhou received the notification, he was slightly surprised, but he did not find it strange. He continued on his way to the great hall as Pan Litian and Pan Zhong followed after him.

After Lu Zhou entered the great hall, he slowly sat down before asking, "Elder Pan, do you know Li Yunzhao well?"

Pan Litian cupped his fists. "I've been in contact with people from the palace after I left the Clarity Sect... To tell you the truth, I joined the army back then and went to the frontlines. I killed countless enemies at Rongxi. For this reason, I seldom run into people from the palace. I don't know much about Li Yunzhao..."

Pan Zhong was slightly startled when he heard this. He did not expect this dirty-looking beggar to have such a glorious past that was worth bragging about.

Although cultivators joining the army were not a rare occurrence, most cultivators chose to focus on cultivating. Usually, there would only be five to six cultivators, a grand cultivator, and 100 to 1,000 mortal commanders in a 10,000 strong army. Most of the cultivators were not very talented in cultivation and had merely undergone Body Tempering and Mystic Enlightening. Hence, they chose to join the military in hopes of bagging achievements. However, it was unexpected for an elite like Pan Litian to join the army as well.

"With your cultivation base, you could've turned the tide of the battle... Surely it would've been easy for you to achieve glory when warring at the frontline?" Lu Zhou asked. What he meant to ask was why Pan Litian was an old beggar when he had definitely contributed greatly to the war?

"After I left the Clarity Sect, my cultivation base quickly weakened... At that time, I stopped being an elite," Pan Litian said.

Pan Zhong exclaimed in shock, "Old Pan, did the Clarity Sect do something to you?"

Pan Litian had gotten accustomed to this form of address. He replied, "There's no point talking about it."

Lu Zhou said, "In any case, I'll have to personally visit the Divine Capital."

Upon hearing this, Pan Litian was quick to reply, "I'm willing to accompany you."

Lu Zhou nodded and said, "You're dismissed."

"I'll be taking my leave." "I'll be taking my leave as well."

Pan Litian and Pan Zhong left the great hall after that.

Lu Zhou stroked his beard as he observed the two of them. He was slightly surprised at how easily they had gotten along and their smooth transitions to the Evil Sky Pavilion. Well, in any case, that was how a person from the Evil Sky Pavilion should be.

Lu Zhou called out softly, "Yuan'er."

"Master." Little Yuan'er skipped into the great hall as she waved her Nirvana Sash around.

"Is there any news about Old Fourth?"

"No. Fourth Senior Brother only departed to Upper Prime City early in the morning. He should just be arriving now," Little Yuan'er said.

Lu Zhou stroked his beard and nodded, still seated. After a while, he said, "I'm tired."

"Oh... I'll be taking my leave."

Lu Zhou had wasted some of his extraordinary power to help Zhao Yue purge the cold poison from her body. He had to replenish what he had lost in two days. Without the item cards, the extraordinary power from the Heavenly Writing was the biggest ace up his sleeve.

As for Zhao Yue's past, that investigation would have to wait.

Two days later, in Upper Prime City. Inside a room on the third floor of Long Wind Restaurant.

Si Wuya leaned against the railing as he looked at Upper Prime City through a window.

Upper Prime City was once the temporary capital of Great Yan. However, currently, it was only a pale reflection of its former glorious self.

The Five Mice had plunged Upper Prime City into turmoil and chaos. On top of that, the rebel army had also caused a disturbance here and nearly destroyed the city. Alas, those were not the last of the disasters that awaited Upper Prime City. An ill fate loomed ahead of Upper Prime City again.

A grey-robed cultivator bowed and said, "Sect master, our men are in place. We can move out once you give the order,"

Si Wuya glanced at him before looking out the window again and said, "Zhixing, how long have you been with me?"

Ye Zhixing was slightly taken back by this question. He did not know why his sect master would ask him such a question. However, he replied, "Ten years."

"So, it's been ten years..."

"I swear to follow you to death, sect master!" Ye Zhixing said.

Si Wuya sighed and shook his head, "Zhixing... tell me... am I making a mistake?"

Ye Zhixing hastily bowed and said, "Why do you say that, sect master? It's all thanks to you that the Darknet survives until today, sect master. You're the one who stopped the tens of thousands of

cultivators in Rongbei, you're the one who supported Mister First from the Nether Sect, and you're the one who burned down the Black Forest..."

Si Wuya raised a hand to stop Ye Zhixing from continuing. Every time these topics were brought up, Ye Zhixing would act as though he was speaking about some precious treasure. "Maybe it's just me, but I feel there are too many things that are out of my control..."

Ye Zhixing regarded Si Wuya with a complicated look in his eyes before he said, "You can't lose your confidence..." Then, he fell to one knee.

Zing!

Ye Zhixing drew his sword out and expressionlessly said, "Sect master, I'll kill whoever you tell me to... I won't hesitate even if you ask me to go to the... Evil Sky Pavilion!"

Si Wuya frowned and said, "Impudent!"

"I've been careless with my choice of words. I don't dare to disrespect the Evil Sky Pavilion. Please forgive me, sect master."

"Stand up." Si Wuya would never punish his trusted subordinate. After all, it was all thanks to the core members that the Darknet was successful today.

"Thank you, sect master!"

Si Wuya looked out the window again. "The Upper Prime's Five Mice... When will they be here?"

Ye Zhixing bowed and said, "We've promised to meet this morning. However... I... I wonder if I should say this..."

"Speak."

"The Five Mice have robbed Mister Eighth's zen tunic without your approval. This will surely anger the old senior. Mister Eighth has always been..." Ye Zhixing paused. He was looking for a word that sounded better than cowardly but to no avail. He could only hem and haw as he searched for the right word.

"I understand what you're trying to say... Are you worried that Old Eighth will reveal the rendezvous point?" Si Wuya asked.

"You're intelligent, sect master." Ye Zhixing cupped his fists. "You have a close relationship with Mister Eighth. We should stop using some of our common rendezvous points. I'm worried that the old senior would send someone out of anger..."

Si Wuya said with a smile, "Fourth Senior Brother is the only one who's difficult to deal with, but he can't do anything to me as well."

"What if the old senior personally comes?"

"All we have to do is run." Si Wuya's tone was flippant when he said this. There was no hint of embarrassment in his voice when he spoke.

Ye Zhixing did not think it was embarrassing as well. After all, in the face of a peerless elite, fleeing was nothing to feel ashamed about.

A figure flitted past the roof at this moment, disappearing as soon as it appeared. A few afterimages appeared in its wake before disappearing like the wind as well. It seemed to deliberately appear in Si Wuya's sight. The others did not seem to notice it. After a while, the figure appeared again opposite him.

"You have a sharp eye, sect master." A man with black gloves and a mustache sat lazily on the floor.

"Lu Qiuping... are you here alone?" Si Wuya asked.

"Yes, I'm enough. Big brother said you're too cunning. Who knows if you'd set a trap to catch all of us in one fell swoop?" Lu Qiuping who was sitting lazily on the floor was one of the Five Mice who was skilled in escaping.

Si Wuya said, "So, how's it going to be?" "According to our rules, you'll have to compensate us, regardless if we fail or succeed," Lu Qiuping said with a smile.

Ye Zhixing scoffed. "According to the Darknet's rules, those who failed their missions should be punished. How dare you ask for payment?"

"I'm not one of you... Your rules don't apply to me."

"We're not members of the Five Mice as well. So don't go applying your rules on us," Ye Zhixing retorted. "Are you looking for a fight?" Zing!

Ye Zhixing drew his sword. The sword glinted coldly in the light. It reflected the sunlight onto Lu Qiuping's face. Lu Qiuping continued sitting as he chuckled. "Hey, hey, I'm just kidding. There's no need for you to draw your sword."

"Surrender the zen tunic," Si Wuya demanded.

"The zen tunic is with big brother. It's not with me. Don't give me that look. I only came here to greet you. You're a disciple of the Evil Sky Pavilion after all. Since we can't cross you, we can only hide from you. From this day on, all ties between us are severed. We don't owe each other anything," Lu Qiuping said. Upon hearing this, Si Wuya's expression remained unchanged, "The reason I contacted you was because I believed in your abilities, and I'd hoped you'd be of some use..."

"Hm?" Despite Si Wuya's blank expression, Lu Qiuping could sense the abnormalities in Si Wuya's voice.

"I had no intention of holding the failure of your mission in the Evil Sky Pavilion against you, but you shouldn't have taken the zen tunic of all things."

"What do you mean?"

Si Wuya flicked the wine cup in his hand. The wine cup drew a perfect arc in the air and fell on the streets.

Crash!

It shattered.

Ye Zhixing steeled his gaze as his sword vibrated.

Zing!

The entire room was shrouded in an unique energy.

Lu Qiuping's expression changed drastically. He stomped his feet and leaped up into the air with nimble movements at lightning speed. A flash of green energy in his palm repelled the energy that shrouded the room.

Two grey-robed figures approached him.

Bam!

Lu Qiuping fell. However, he managed to pass through the roof, as slippery as an eel. Ye Zhixing exclaimed in surprise, "As expected of a member of the Five Mice..."

Si Wuya was in no hurry. He remained seated as though nothing had happened. "We can make our move now."

"Understood." Ye Zhixing produced a black cylinder from his pouch, lit it at the window, and a projectile was fired.

A deafening whistle sounded in the air, accompanied by a flash of light.

This caught the attention of the pedestrians on the street. All of them stopped to look.

There were dozens of small groups that consisted of cultivators at several corners on the street who began to move. They did not attack the common folk as they headed to a specific location.

Upper Prime City was plunged into chaos at this moment!

The instant Lu Qiuping, one of the Five Mice, landed, he saw two gray-robed cultivators coming at him. "Si Wuya... just you wait!" His voice had barely faded when he turned around and bumped into someone.

A man with a mustache wearing clothing of the Other Region grabbed Lu Qiuping's arm and spoke stiltedly in Great Yan's language, "Y-you... You... bumped into me?" "Get out of my way! Scram!"

Crack!

The man in the Other Region clothes put more force into his grip. "Ahh!" Lu Qiuping felt as though his bone was shattered.

The man in the Other Region clothes hastily said, "I-I-I'm sorry... I-I didn't do it on purpose."

Lu Qiuping wanted to cry! He was no idiot. There was no way this person was a mortal if he could easily break the arm of a cultivator who had undergone Body Tempering. However, he had no time to waste with this man. His pursuers were hot on his heels. He would be done for if he was caught. He turned, wanting to flee.

"Do... D-don't go!" The man in the Other Region clothes did not loosen his grip.

Lu Qiuping's expression darkened as he said, "Big brother... Can you please release your grip on me now!"

"I... I... I can't."

The gray-robed cultivators were already on the ground as they flanked both of them.

Upon seeing this, Lu Qiuping knew things were not looking good for him. There was a flash of green in his hand as he drew closer to Lu Qiuping

The man in the Other Region clothes widened his eyes. "Oh, no, are you planning to kill me?" Despite his words, his grip tightened even more

Crack!

With that, Lu Qiuping's entire arm was broken! The blade in his hand, which shone with a strange light, fell to the ground. He shrieked. He wanted to move, but he could not at all. No matter how he pulled and struggled, he could not free his arm at all.

The grey-robed cultivators approached them and cupped their fists. "Thank you for helping us, strong man!"

The man in Other Region clothes waved his hand and said, "It... It... It's nothing."

"May I know your name? Since you helped us capture this thief, we'll surely visit you to thank you."

"Y-you're welcome. My s-surname is Ri."

As soon as that man in the Other Region clothing finished speaking, Ye Zhixing supported Si Wuya as they emerged from the third floor's window and descended slowly.

Tears streamed down Lu Qiuping's face as he endured the pain in his arm and said, "St-strong man... surely we can discuss this?" Smack!

The man from the Other Region slapped Lu Qiuping and said, "I have n-nothing to say to you."

Chapter 266 To Help Master

Lu Qiuping could have sworn that he saw stars after he was slapped. His cheek stung from the hit.

The initially quiet street began to turn lively. The occasional sounds of fighting and swords clanging rang in the air. Soon after, a fire broke out. Smoke billowed in the sky above the city.

After Si Wuya landed, he smiled faintly before he said, "Fourth Senior Brother, why the disguise?"

'Fourth Senior Brother?' An expression of shock appeared on the two grey-robed cultivators and Ye Zhixing's faces.

Lu Qiuping, whose arm was broken, looked up frightfully. Indeed, the person was the Evil Sky Pavilion's fourth disciple, Mingshi Yin.

“Old Seventh... you can see through this disguise as well?” Mingshi Yin rolled his eyes. He had completely changed his appearance, the way he spoke, and the way he dressed. However, Si Wuya still managed to see through the disguise with just a glance.

“There aren’t many who would go by the surname Ri,” Si Wuya said. “...” Mingshi Yin did not dwell on the matter. Instead, he said, “Old Seventh, I caught a mouse for you. Aren’t you going to thank me?” Lu Qiuping’s knees gave way. If Mingshi Yin had not been holding his arm with a death grip, he would have fallen a long time ago. He felt as though he was going to wet his pants. Si Wuya said, “Thank you, Fourth Senior Brother.”

Lu Qiuping said, “Big brother, one should spare a life whenever possible...”

“Shut up,” Mingshi Yin glared at Lu Qiuping and said, “You dare ask me to spare your life after stealing from the Evil Sky Pavilion? Keep on dreaming!” Lu Qiuping looked at Si Wuya and said, “... The Five Mice has no quarrel with the Darknet. I’ll tell you what, there’s no need for any payment between us. Rules are written by men and can be changed by men. What do you say?”

“Ouch!” Lu Qiuping cried out in pain when Mingshi Yin tightened his grip on his arm again.

Mingshi Yin’s voice was deep as he said threateningly, “I’m not from the f*cking Darknet... Stop talking about stupid rules or the Darknet.”

Lu Qiuping was rendered speechless.

Si Wuya spread his arms in a helpless gesture.

The Evil Sky Pavilion’s disciples who left the pavilion founded their own organizations and did not join each other’s sects. Mingshi Yin was not a member of the Darknet so the rule did not apply to him. Even if he were a member of the Darknet, he was still likely to not follow the rules. He asked, “Where’s the zen tunic?”

Lu Qiuping said as he endured the pain, “I don’t have it... I’m only here to meet Sect Master Si. We won’t meddle in the Evil Sky Pavilion’s affairs from now on. Please have mercy, brother.”

“Who’s your f*cking brother?! You’re sh*t to me!”

“Ahh!” A wail that was louder than before resounded in the street.

This time, Mingshi Yin broke Lu Qiuping’s leg with a kick before he let go of Lu Qiuping’s arm.

Lu Qiuping fell limply to the ground. Mingshi Yin removed his fake mustache and tossed his jacket to the side, revealing his original appearance. Then, he said with a smile, “Keep an eye on this mouse... I have business with your sect master.”

Ye Zhixing raised his sword and said, “Mister Fourth, please forgive me for not being able to agree to your request.” “Get lost,” Mingshi Yin said with a straight face. After all the delay, he was getting impatient.

Si Wuya said calmly, “Zhixing, stand down.”

“Sect master?”

“Are you going to disobey me?”.

“I dare not!” Ye Zhixing retreated to the side.

Si Wuya walked over with his hands on his back and stood in front of Mingshi Yin. There was barely half a meter between them.

When Mingshi Yin saw Si Wuya put his hands on his back, he followed suit. He felt more like an elite in this pose. Si Wuya smiled and said, “Fourth Senior Brother, would you care to take this inside?” “Spare me. Second Senior Brother isn’t here today. Nobody’s here to protect you.” Mingshi Yin was determined to capture Si Wuya this time.

“Perhaps, you’ll change your mind after listening to me, Fourth Senior Brother.”

“In that case, I won’t listen... I know you’re good at leading others astray. I say, even without your cultivation base, your subordinates are still so loyal. What have you been feeding them?” Mingshi Yin said before he turned to look at Ye Zhixing and said, “Hey there, you with the sword, are you interested in joining the Evil Sky Pavilion? No, wait, you aren’t qualified. Forget it.”

Ye Zhixing was puzzled.

Si Wuya said, “Since you know my cultivation base has been sealed, senior brother, do you think I’d leave myself vulnerable?”

“Hm?”

The smoke grew thicker. The sounds of fighting nearby intensified as well. Some cultivators that could fly took their fights to the skies.

Mingshi Yin was baffled. ‘Why is Upper Prime City suddenly in chaos?’

Ye Zhixing said, “Mister Fourth... To tell you the truth, we have 3,000 men here in Upper Prime City at the moment.”

Mingshi Yin’s expression remained calm as he said disapprovingly, “Are you trying to threaten me? You’re a bunch of insignificant small fries... Old Seventh, let’s hear what kind of marvelous story you’ve come up with this time.”

Si Wuya said, “This way, Fourth Senior Brother.’

They went up the stairs of Long Wind Restaurant.

Two grey-robed cultivators guarded Lu Qiuping. They did not give him an opportunity to run away.

The Long Wind Restaurant was deserted.

The two of them sat down opposite each other.

“Speak...” Mingshi Yin said impatiently.

Si Wuya waved his hand.

A subordinate served them tea.

Si Wuya said, "Actually, I knew you would come, senior brother. And yet, I chose to come to Upper Prime City anyway. Do you know why?"

"I'm not a tapeworm in your stomach. How would I know?"

"Upper Prime City is now in chaos. General Shang, who's stationed here, will definitely be flustered," Si Wuya said. When Mingshi Yin heard this, he said, "What are you trying to do?" "Fourth Senior Brother... If I were to tell you, will you give up on capturing me?" "Ptooeey! Do you think you have the right to bargain with me?"

"You might not believe this... However, I came to Upper Prime City to help master," Si Wuya said.

"I wonder why I'm having difficulties believing your words," Mingshi Yin said sarcastically.

"The Evil Sky Pavilion's barrier is weakening. The Noble Path is eyeing the Evil Sky Pavilion as though it's their prey..."

Si Wuya raised his teacup, took a sip, and said, "My men are everywhere. I received some news..."

"What news?"

"The palace is organizing an unprecedented mission to annihilate the Evil Sky Pavilion." Despite his words, Si Wuya was exceptionally calm. From his expression, it was clear that it did not matter to him if Mingshi Yin believed him or not. He continued drinking from his teacup casually.

"The Evil Sky Pavilion is no stranger to all these vengeful and futile missions. We'll kill them as they come," Mingshi Yin said.

Si Wuya shook his head and said, "I'll admit that master is still powerful. However, even if you can fend them off this time, do you think you can fend them off forever? Senior brother, I'm sure you know the answer as well as I do. There's no need to fool yourself." Mingshi Yin fell silent.

Si Wuya continued to say, "Apart from the siege by the ten great sects, the palace had a hand in the incidents at the Measure Heaven River's Chen Zhu, Tangzi Town's Ten Shamans, and the Grand Formation on the Lotus Dais... Mo Li alone has brought so many troubles to the Evil Sky Pavilion. The Evil Sky Pavilion is too eye-catching lately. All the factions who have conflicts in the palace are now united against the Evil Sky Pavilion. Let alone five years, do you think the Evil Sky Pavilion would still be as glorious in two years' time?"

Mingshi Yin said with a frown, "We'll talk about the future in the future."

"The future?" Si Wuya shook his head. "If it were anybody else, I would've been too lazy to explain. However, since you're my senior brother, I have no choice but to be honest with you. Moreover, you're intelligent so I won't be able to fool you."

"You can save your flattery for someone else," Mingshi Yin said.

Si Wuya smiled. He poured a cup of tea for Mingshi Yin. "Currently, the ten great sects on the Noble Path aren't what they once were. The Clarity Sect is gone, and the Righteous Sect is barely staying afloat

with Zhang Yunshan's help. The five Buddhist sects put their own safety above everything else. With master's powers, I don't think they'll dare to make any movement in the near future. However, the palace isn't like the ten great sects... You must know what's keeping Great Yan going until this day."

The answer was obvious. If the palace's strength was inferior to the ten great sects, the elites of the ten great sects would have taken control of the palace.

"Is the palace that powerful?" Mingshi Yin asked skeptically.

"Do you know what moves the human heart?" Si Wuya asked confidently.

Mingshi Yin shook his head.

"Power, status, gold, wealth, women... Cultivation base, cultivation methods, reputation, treasures that could be encountered but not sought, and the world."

"How profane and materialistic." "Men aren't saints. How many of us aren't materialistic? If you're not, why don't you give me your Separation Hook, Fourth Senior Brother?" Si Wuya chuckled as he said, "I'm just joking. Anyway, back to the topic, the palace is able to provide all these things, therefore, they're able to attract many elites from all over the world. Don't forget, senior brother, the Imperial guards have never left the Divine Capital. Even when there was a rebellion in Anyang City, the Imperial guards were not mobilized."

The Evil Sky Pavilion possessed many heaven-grade weapons and cultivation methods. The ten great sects might not even be able to compare to the Evil Sky Pavilion. Naturally, there were many who envied the Evil Sky Pavilion.

Mingshi Yin shook his head and said, "At the end of the day, you're trying to say that the Evil Sky Pavilion will, one day, fall, am I right? You said you're trying to help the Evil Sky Pavilion... Is this the method that you have in mind?"

Smoke permeated the Upper Prime City, accompanied by the sounds of killing. Many cultivators were shot down from the skies.

Si Wuya stood up. He looked out the window and said, "This is a sacrifice that has to be made... Upper Prime City's General Shang is stationed here. If he dies, Upper Prime City will surely be plunged into chaos. Wei Zhuoyan has led the three armies to Liang Province... The palace will not mobilize the Imperial guards so they'll probably mobilize other forces to quell the disturbance here. With this, the palace, naturally, won't have time to deal with the Evil Sky Pavilion. If it doesn't work the first time, I'll do it the second time. If the second time doesn't work, I'll do it ten times. I'll continue doing it until it works."

Mingshi Yin spat out the water he just drank. He laughed before he said, "This is your grand plan? Maybe I'll believe you if I lose my brain." He thought to himself, 'With great difficulty you created such a vast network of information and founded the Darknet. You have capable subordinates in your sect as well. And yet, you're telling me this is all you're up to? I'd be a fool if I believe you!'

Si Wuya had expected Mingshi Yin to doubt him. He poured Mingshi Yin another cup of tea. He continued talking in a strange tone, "If ten times won't do, I'll try 100 times. An ant hole can cause the

collapse of a great dike. A 100 feet room can burn from smoke from a gap... When that day comes, no one would be a threat to the Evil Sky Pavilion.”

Mingshi Yin was puzzled. After a moment’s silence, he smacked the table in front of him. He chuckled and said, “I think I understand now... I didn’t know that you had such ambitions. Do you think that everything will go according to your plan? You say you’re trying to help the Evil Sky Pavilion, but it’s only an excuse to save your hide!”

“I have no such ambitions.” Si Wuya shook his head.

“If not you, then, who?” As soon as Mingshi Yin spoke, his mind suddenly went blank as realization dawned on him. He slumped back against the chair. A person’s broad back appeared in his mind. The answer was clear.

“You think that my method is child’s play... In that case, do you have any better idea, senior brother?” Si Wuya asked.

“...” How could Mingshi Yin have any suggestions in regard to this matter? If he did, the Evil Sky Pavilion would not have been under siege twice.

Clop! Clop! Clop! The hurried sound of hooves rang from the streets.

It seemed like the soldiers were here to quell the disturbance!

Ye Zhixing took a look outside before he turned to look at Si Wuya, cupped his fists, and said, “Sect master, it’s time to leave.”

“Alright.” Si Wuya looked at Mingshi Yin and said, “It’s good that Eldest Senior Brother has such ambitions... At the very least, the Evil Sky Pavilion won’t be attacked like before.”

After that, Ye Zhixing supported Si Wuya as they leaped out the window.

Mingshi Yin raised his teacup. He nodded despite himself and mumbled, “He has a point...” He continued drinking before his mind suddenly cleared. ‘Wait a minute! The plan can still be carried out even if he’s captured! I was f*cking fooled again!’

Mingshi Yin hurriedly leaped out of the window, but Si Wuya was nowhere to be seen.

Meanwhile, two grey-robed cultivators tossed Lu Qiuping onto the ground. They bowed in midair.

“Mister Fourth, there’s no need to give chase... I’ve never seen the sect master telling another person this much. In truth, even if the sect master didn’t explain himself, you still wouldn’t be able to capture him.”

Whiz! Whiz!

Two Four-leaf avatars appeared.

Mingshi Yin looked at them disdainfully when the two avatars combined and became a Six-leaf avatar. They unleashed a grand technique and a burst of light flashed before they disappeared before Mingshi Yin’s eyes.

Mingshi Yin glanced at Lu Qiuping and asked in a deep voice, "What're you looking at? Do you want me to gouge your eyeballs out?"

"No, don't... M-mister Fourth, please don't!" Lu Qiuping wanted to cry, but no tears came out.

At this moment, Mingshi Yin saw a familiar-looking messenger bird flying toward him from afar. "Hm? A letter from junior sister?"

The messenger bird recognized Mingshi and flew toward his raised hand, and a letter appeared in his hand.

A frown appeared on Mingshi Yin's face when he read the letter's content. "No way... Master's going to the Divine Capital?"

What kind of place was the Divine Capital? It was a place where elites gathered. It was where the Imperial guards were stationed.

According to Si Wuya, Old Seventh, the various factions in the palace were united to deal with the Evil Sky Pavilion. Was it not akin to walking into a lion's den if his master were to go to the Divine Capital now?

"Which idiot was it that gave master this idea?!" Mingshi Yin destroyed the letter and grabbed Lu Qiuping's collar before he flew toward the Divine Capital.

As Mingshi Yin flew above the city, he saw the city was in complete chaos. He shook his head and sighed. To prevent himself from being mistaken as an enemy, he circulated his Primal Qi and rose even higher up into the sky. He looked in the direction of the Divine Capital and cursed under his breath, "It's so f*cking far away..."

Lu Qiuping continued to plead, "M-mister Fourth... Please spare me!"

Mingshi Yin scoffed before he said, "You dare steal my junior brother's zen tunic..." Then, he chuckled. However, a hint of anger could be heard in his chuckle.

Lu Qiuping broke out in cold sweat. He hastily said, "I'll ask my big brother to return the zen tunic! It can be done! It can be done!"

Mingshi Yin shouted, "Silence!"

Half a day later, in the forest outside of the Divine Capital.

Whitzard descended slowly.

"Master, the Divine Capital is up ahead." Little Yuan'er leaped off Whitzard.

Lu Zhou looked in the direction of the Divine Capital. He stroked his beard and nodded.

Little Yuan'er ran up to Whitzard's side. She supported Zhao Yue who had leaped down and said, "What did I tell you, Senior Sister Zhao Yue? Whitzard is much more comfortable than the flying chariot!" Zhao Yue nodded. Perhaps, she had just recently recovered, her expression was slightly unnatural. She looked in the direction of the Divine Capital before she said hesitantly, "Master... are... are we really going to the Divine Capital?"

Lu Zhou said apathetically, "This is related to your past. We can't afford to be careless."

Chapter 267 Eldest Senior Brother's People

Since her master had already spoken, Zhao Yue did not voice her opinion. Zhao Yue was not overly interested in this trip to the Divine Capital. She was barely freed from the cold poison after all. She was more interested in cultivating more than anything else.

Little Yuan'er, on the other hand, was more eager to go out and play than cultivating. The Divine Capital was one of the busiest places in Great Yan after all. She had been wanting to visit the capital for a long time now. It was a pity, prior to this, that her master did not bring her here. Now that she had the chance to visit, how could she not feel delighted?

They kept a low profile. The three of them did not travel in the flying chariot. Moreover, it was damaged and needed repair.

When three of them entered the city, amazing architectures, organized streets, and the bustling crowd exceeded their expectations.

Even Lu Zhou was surprised. However, he had no interest in these things. He ordered, "Let's go."

Little Yuan'er had no choice but to calm her excitement and helplessly followed her master.

Zhao Yue, on the other hand, was obedient. She followed her master without complaints.

"Master, where are we going?" Little Yuan'er asked.

"The Prince of Qi Mansion." "The Prince of Qi Mansion?" Little Yuan'er confused.

Zhao Yue walked up to Little Yuan'er and whispered, "He's an acquaintance of master."

"Hm? Master has a friend like this?"

Zhao Yue shushed her as she trembled in fear. She did not know if she should laugh or cry. 'I should stay away from you. I'm not you, after all... I'm not as loved by master like you.' If she had said this, she would have been heavily punished.

The two of them stole a glance at their master. When they noticed that their master was not angered, they sighed in relief.

Lu Zhou continued walking as he stroked his beard and said, "Yuan'er."

Thud!

Little Yuan'er suddenly fell to her knees. She covered her ears with her hands and said, "Master... I've made a mistake! I won't do it again!"

The pedestrians started looking at them.

'Why is she kneeling in the middle of the street?'

‘What a peculiar group!’

Lu Zhou turned around with a questioning expression on his face. ‘Why is this little girl kneeling all of a sudden?’ “Get up,” Lu Zhou said indifferently.

“I say, old mister... This isn’t right. Your granddaughter seems like a nice lass. Look at how cute she is. How can you treat her so coldly?”

“Yeah... This little girl immediately admitted her mistake and even kneeled on the ground. Compared to the ungrateful brat in my house, she’s an angel.”

“Little girl, get up quickly. Your grandfather is old. His mind must be muddled as well.”

Lu Zhou was speechless. “These passersby sure are creative and imaginative.”

‘They’re such an annoying bunch.’ Little Yuan’er suddenly rose to her feet in a huff. She stomped her foot on the ground.

Boom!

The ground cracked. The crowd immediately stepped back. They were so shocked that their mouths were agape.

‘What the... how contrary to her appearance.’

‘What a fierce young lady!’

“One more word about my grandfather, and I’ll beat you up!” Little Yuan’er said angrily.

The crowd immediately scattered. ‘Our kindness is treated as ill intention. Why were we so nosy anyway?’ Lu Zhou stroked his beard and nodded. He was pleased with Little Yuan’er’s actions. Before this, she would have threatened to kill those people’s families. This time, she only threatened to beat them up. It was truly a huge improvement. “Keep up,” Lu Zhou said. “Oh.” Little Yuan’er and Zhao Yue sighed with relief at the same time.

When the two of them passed by an intersection, Little Yuan’er pointed at a few low-ranked cultivators who carried sabers and said, “Master, those people are from the Nether Sect.”

Lu Zhou looked in the direction in which she pointed.

Little Yuan’er said, “The Nether Sect is the largest fiend sect in Great Yan. Many factions would stay out of their way as much as they can. Yet, they’re bold enough to be recruiting members in the open. Isn’t the imperial family going to do anything about this?” “There’s no need to care about this.” Lu Zhou shook his head and continued further into the city.

Zhao Yue said, “The Nether Sect is, indeed, a fiend sect, but to the Imperial family, the Nether Sect is no different from the ten great sects of the Noble Path. They just stay out of each other’s businesses. The Nether Sect recruiting disciples is no different from the Noble Path recruiting disciples in their eyes. Naturally, the Imperial family won’t meddle in this... Moreover, knowing Eldest... the traitor’s methods, I’m sure that he went through the right people beforehand.”

“Oh.” Little Yuan’er nodded despite not understanding anything.

The Nether Sect had never interfered with the Imperial family's business on the surface. They had been assimilating smaller fiend sect's in the dark.

When they walked past the city area, they found themselves in a residential area. Their surroundings were much quieter as well.

With Lu Zhou's foggy memories as a guide, the three of them made their way to the Prince of Qi Mansion. It did not seem to have changed at all throughout the years.

"Master, I'll go knock on the door."

It was the residence of a high-rank individual, after all. The number of steps before the door alone was more than that of ordinary homes.

Before she could even knock, the doors creaked and swung open slowly.

Several house servants emerged from the Prince of Qi Mansion. Eventually, an aged butler stepped forward and asked, "Who are

you?"

Little Yuan'er turned to look at her master.

"Where's Qin Jun?" Lu Zhou asked calmly.

The butler was incensed. How could this visitor have the nerve to address his master by his name. This was no ordinary butler. He had been in the Prince of Qi Mansion for two decades and was deeply loved by the members of the mansion. He was meticulous and thorough with his work. He remembered most of their visitors, up to their appearance and preferences. He was also a man who could read other people. He narrowed his eyes as he sized Lu Zhou up.

'Hm?' The butler's eyes suddenly widened! He seemed to have some recollection of this man. He no longer dared to act carelessly. He bowed and greeted Lu Zhou, "Greetings. If I'm not mistaken, you're from the Golden Court Mountain, right, old mister?"

This butler was highly intelligent and a high EQ. He did not ask for a name nor did he mention Lu Zhou's name and bring up the title of the greatest villain. Instead, he only asked about the place Lu Zhou was from. That way he could avoid offending Lu Zhou.

Lu Zhou stroked his beard and nodded. "You recognize me?"

Upon receiving confirmation from Lu Zhou, the old butler did not hesitate. Thud!

He fell to his knees immediately, kowtowed, and said, "Greetings, o-old mister!" As smart as he was, he carefully avoided using titles that might offend the guests.

Little Yuan'er and Zhao Yue were startled by this sight. Their master was widely known in the world as the greatest villain and had a bad reputation. Even those who had nothing to do with the Evil Sky Pavilion would do their best to avoid him when they heard his name. And yet, this old butler kneeled and kowtowed. It seemed like their master did have some special relationships with this place.

Zhao Yue said, "Answer the question."

Little Yuan'er nodded and parroted Zhao Yue, "Answer the question."

There were many rules in the palace. They were not even in the Imperial City yet, but people here would kneel at a moment's notice.

The old butler said, "I... have seen... Old mister's portrait in my master's room!"

"My portrait?" Lu Zhou searched his memories. He remembered the scene where he met the Prince of Qi, Qin Jun, for the first time. He did not recall leaving behind any portraits. He guessed Qin Jun must have hired an artist to draw it. 'Oh, well, that's unimportant.'

Lu Zhou had used the Reversal Cards, and there had been some changes in his appearance, but his bearing did not change. This old butler was, indeed, special for being able to recognize him. If he had more Reversal Cards in the future, he would grow younger. At that time, most people would be hard-pressed to recognize him.

"This way please, old mister!"

The old butler knew how to treat his guests well. He knew the status of his guests and did away with announcing their arrival beforehand. He hastily got to his feet and made an inviting gesture.

Lu Zhou nodded, pleased. Then, he strode into the Prince of Qi Mansion.

In the living room.

The old butler served them the best tea the mansion had to offer.

Lu Zhou did not mind these things. Instead, he asked, "Where's Qin Jun?"

The old butler stood at the side and spoke respectfully, "To answer your question, old mister, my master has gone to the Imperial city. He would be back in half a day. Meanwhile, please make yourself comfortable."

The butler's voice had barely faded when an energetic and loud voice rang in the air. "Old Hong... I was told we have a few honored guests?"

Chapter 268 Old Acquaintance, Gaining from Risks

The old butler, Hong Fu, turned around and looked out the door. "Young Master, Young Lady."

The incomers were an elegant young man and a graceful young lady, followed by four servant girls. As soon as they entered, they saw Lu Zhou sitting in a dignified manner on the seat of honor.

According to the rules of the host, even a distinguished guest could not take this seat without a good reason.

However, before the young man could speak, Hong Fu said, "Young Master, we must be respectful. Even if the master's here, he should still be courteous."

Hong Fu was truly a skilled man. He knew the young master was immature and was quick to act recklessly so he had spoken first before the young master could say anything to cause unnecessary trouble.

The young man, Qin Shuo, nodded and toned down his haughty demeanor. Old Hong had served the mansion for many years and had always been a cautious man. Based on his words, it was obvious they had to treat this guest with respect. Therefore, although Qin Shuo did not know this guest, he bowed at Lu Zhou and said, "Greetings, Old Mister."

Lu Zhou raised his teacup and paid no heed to him. He found it meaningless to talk to people of no importance.

Qin Shuo's attention was drawn to the tea. Was this not Big Red Robe, the tea that his father loved the most? Even if a notable person from the Imperial city was here, his father would not easily serve them the Big Red Robe that he had been keeping for a long time. Hong Fu's expression froze for a second before he walked up and made an inviting gesture. "Young Master, the old mister has traveled far to be here. Why don't you adjourn to another

place?"

"Old Hong, you..."

"Listen to me this once. If you want to find fault with me after this, I will have no complaints." The young girl beside him said, "Brother, Old Hong has stayed by father's side for 20 years. That's more than you or I have been with father. If this is Old Hong's wish, then, we should listen to him."

Qin Shuo nodded. He bowed deeply at Lu Zhou, Zhao Yue, and Little Yuan'er again. "Have a good rest, old mister. I'll be taking my leave."

"Watch your step, Young Master."

Qin Shuo and the others turned around and left.

When Qin Shuo and his little sister turned the corner, he frowned.

"Brother, what're you worried about?"

"I'm not worried about anything... I'm sure Old Hong has his reasons. I'm merely wondering what kind of person that old man is that Old Hong is acting like this."

"Well, we'll find out once father returns, right?"

"You're right. Let's go..."

The two of them left.

Old Hong returned to the living room and said, "I've prepared three rooms. You can make yourselves comfortable there, old mister and young ladies."

Lu Zhou stood up. He placed his hands on his back and began to pace. He surveyed the surroundings and said with a sigh, "It has been 20 years... I thought things would be different, but they seem to remain unchanged."

Old Hong nodded and said, "My master is someone who's nostalgic."

"How's Qin Jun's status in the palace?" Lu Zhou asked.

Since Qin Jun has not returned, Lu Zhou decided to obtain information from Old Hong. After all, Old Hong had been serving the Prince of Qi Mansion for a long time. He must know something "To tell you the truth, the schemes, plots, and deception in the palace have become too much. My master refrains from taking part in it. He has always kept himself out of it and kept himself aloof. He's not very powerful, but he's respected," Old Hong said.

Lu Zhou asked categorically, "Do you know Li Yunzhao?"

As soon as that name was mentioned, Old Hong's expression changed slightly. "Old Mister, he's a notable figure by the Empress Dowager's side... Although he has no actual authority, many nobles would curry favor him due to his special position. He's definitely someone with power."

Lu Zhou nodded and no longer said anything. Old Hong would not be able to tell him what he wanted to know.

Meanwhile. Mingshi Yin flew with Lu Qiuping, one of the Five Mice, in tow. Halfway along his journey, he became exhausted. "What's master thinking by going to the Divine Capital at this time? It's too far away. He has a mount, and I have nothing. When will I get there?"

Lu Qiuping smiled ingratiatingly and said, "In that case, you can just let me go like a fart... I guarantee... that I'll return the zen tunic right away."

"Shut up! Do you think it's as simple as the zen tunic?" Mingshi Yin tightened his grip on Lu Qiuping again.

Lu Qiuping broke out in sweat from the pain. He pulled a face and said. "There are so many treasures in the Evil Sky Pavilion... Surely, you won't miss one item? Why do we have to do this? If I die, my big brother will be furious. My second, third, and fourth brother are much more accomplished in stealing than I am. They'll surely avenge me. When will this vicious cycle end... ahhhh..." His voice distorted in the end as Mingshi Yin tightened his grip again.

Mingshi Yin said in a deep voice, "How dare the Five Mice threaten the Evil Sky Pavilion? Did you know the zen tunic is what keeps my Eighth Junior Brother alive?"

"Huh?"

"Taking the zen tunic is the same as killing my Eighth Junior Brother! To tell you the truth, in my eyes, the Five Mice are dead men, or mice, walking!"

"..." Lu Qiuping's mind went blank, and he fainted.

Mingshi Yin glanced at him and cursed, "Trash." It was a bother to travel with Lu Qiuping. The Divine Capital was huge. He could not possibly meet his master while carrying this trash. "I should return to the Evil Sky Pavilion first before heading to the Divine Capital."

The Upper Prime City, the Evil Sky Pavilion, and the Divine Capital were positioned like a triangle.

Mingshi Yin decided to return to the Evil Sky Pavilion first since it was not too far away. He did not waste any time and headed to the Evil Sky Pavilion with Lu Qiuping in tow.

Upper Prime City, Long Wind Restaurant.

Upper Prime City was in complete chaos at the moment.

Fires broke out everywhere.

Four figures shot past the roofs, the streets, and some corners where the soldiers and some cultivators could not see. They arrived at the base of Long Wind Restaurant at lightning speed.

Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh!

The four of them stopped and looked at Long Wind Restaurant.

“Big brother, this is where fifth brother promised to meet Si Wuya.”

“Let’s check it out, Be discreet.”

“Understood.”

One of them went up to check, another stayed behind to keep an eye on the surroundings while another acted as the messenger.

The eldest brother was the only one who stood at the base of Long Wind Restaurant as he waited for the results.

In just a moment, the three of them returned.

“Big brother, there’s no sign of fifth brother.”

“Si Wuya isn’t here as well.”

The fourth brother ran up to them and cried out, “Big brother... big brother, I found this! It’s fifth brother’s dagger!”

The eldest brother took the dagger and glanced at it. He scoffed and said, “That Si Wuya, does he think I don’t dare to act against him just because he’s a disciple of the Evil Sky Pavilion?”

“Big brother, fifth brother must’ve been captured,” the second brother said.

“I reminded him to be wary of Si Wuya, but he wouldn’t listen. That man is extremely cunning and treacherous. He has plenty of schemes in his mind,” the eldest brother said with a sigh.

“Big brother, we’ll follow your orders. What should we do now?” The three of them looked at their big brother.

He muttered to himself for a moment before he looked in the direction of Evil Sky Pavilion and said, “The monk can run, but the temple can’t. Since Si Wuya broke the rules, we have no obligation to behave righteously as well.”

“Big brother, what do you mean?”

The eldest brother swept his gaze across the three of them and said, "The Five Mice of Upper Prime City have never pulled any major stunts. I'm asking you now, do you dare to pull a major stunt now?"

An expression of excitement appeared on the remaining three men's faces. All they had done was commit petty theft. They would sneak in, steal some stuff, and avoid being caught. The Noble Path viewed them as rubbish and rats. The people mocked them as a useless group who were constantly on the run, and everyone wanted to beat them up. Who knew these mice would be bold enough to steal a Buddha's lamp wick? They wanted to let loose after playing it safe for so long. Surely, there were many others who felt the same way about their own lives. The Five Mice were no exception. To gain, one must take risk.

There was no one who did not covet the Evil Sky Pavilion's treasures.

Moreover, the Five Mice had succeeded once.

"Let's retreat for now."

The four of them left Upper Prime City at top speed.

Chapter 269 Prince of Qi, Qin Jun

Dusk in the Divine Capital.

In the Prince of Qi Mansion.

The old butler, Hong Fu, prepared rooms for the guests and waited at the main door. He was fidgeting like ants in a hot pan. He paced back and forth in front of the doors.

When Old Hong saw a servant running over, he did not wait for the servant to come closer before he asked, "Is master back yet?"

"No. I've tried to search for information, but it seems like there's an important matter. Master won't be leaving the Imperial city yet."

"Send someone to tell him it's urgent."

"Butler Hong, commoners can't go in. How can I tell him it's urgent?" The servant appeared helpless.

Old Hong nodded and sighed. There was no way to force these things. The servants were of low birth. It was already a grace for them to be granted entry into the Imperial city. They should not be asking for the moon.

"Old Hong."

"Young Master?" Old Hong regarded his young master, Qin Shuo, with a puzzled look. Qin Shuo approached Old Hong. He looked around in surroundings before he whispered, "Tell me, who are these honored guests? Nobody's here right now."

Old Hong seemed to be caught between a rock and a hard place when he heard this. He said, "Young Master, it's not that I don't want to tell you, but this matter is extremely important. Even if I die, I can't cause trouble to the Prince of Qi Mansion. Please don't ask me about this again, Young Master!"

“The more you act like this, the more curious I get... The Divine Capital is so vast, and yet, I can’t think of anyone who’s able to make you so nervous. You even served him father’s Great Red Robe!” Qin Shuo said in a hushed tone, “If you can’t explain this, father is sure to punish you.”

Old Hong said, “Young Master, I dare to guarantee with my head that this matter of great importance, When master returns, everything will be cleared up.” “Alright. I’ll wait then.” Qin Shuo decided to wait with Old Hong.

Old Hong was highly valued by the Prince of Qi. Even if Qin Shuo was angry at Old Hong, there was nothing he could do to Old Hong. At most, he could only scold Old Hong, and Old Hong would unlikely hold it against him, considering their statuses. However, that would be childish and meaningless. Qin Shuo was the young master of a noble family after all, he had a sense of propriety.

Clop! Clop! Clop!

A horse-drawn carriage came into view.

When Old Hong heard the sound, he cried out joyfully, “Master is back!”

The other servants came out as well and waited there for their master.

The carriage moved toward Old Hong, Qin Shuo, and the others.

The carriage finally came to a stop.

“Master, you’re finally back!” Old Hong was the first to speak.

A middle-aged man in an official outfit and cap alighted from the carriage.

“Father.” Qin Shuo bowed.

Qin Jun waved his hand. He looked at the anxious Old Hong and said, “Old Hong, what’s wrong? You’ve always been calm and level-headed. Why are you acting out of character today?” Qin Jun frowned when he saw the anxious expression on Hong Fu’s face.

Qin Shuo smiled and said, “Father, we have an honored guest in the mansion. Old Hong served him your precious Great Red Robe... You can’t blame him for feeling nervous.”

‘Hm?’ Qin Jun frowned slightly. “What’s the meaning of this?”

Old Hong came to Qin Jun’s side and was about to whisper into his ear.

Feeling helpless, Qin Shuo turned away.

Qin Jun bowed slightly and moved his ear closer to listen.

As soon as Qin Jun heard Hong Fu’s words, his exhaustion seemed to have vanished and became energetic as his eyes widened in surprise. “Is it true?”

“Master, I won’t make a mistake when it comes to this,” Old Hong said confidently.

Qin Jun’s hands trembled slightly.

His son, Qin Shuo, noticed this. His heart sank as he wondered, 'Is the old guest really some notable figure?'

Qin Jun hastily said, "Summon our direct kinsmen into the mansion, and make it quick."

"Understood!"

Qin Shuo was even more baffled when he saw his father running into the mansion with an anxious expression on his face. Even when the Emperor visited, his father was not even flustered. Was this person even greater than the Emperor? Fear rose in his heart and he trailed after his father. He was a direct member of the family so he, naturally, had to be there as well.

The sun was setting.

The Prince of Qi's direct kinsmen had gathered in the courtyard in neat rows in a short amount of time. His wife, concubines, and the elite cultivators appeared confused.

"Why did master summon all of us here?"

"I heard that there are some important guests in the mansion."

"However, is there a need to make a big deal out of it? Moreover, this is too sudden!"

They remembered that the last time they laid out such a big welcome party was when the Emperor visited. How could they not feel puzzled?

"Silence." Qin Jun's voice rang in everyone's ears. "Without my permission, no one is to speak."

The others bowed.

Qin Jun turned around and headed toward the courtyard where Lu Zhou was staying. The others followed carefully behind him. They soon arrived at the courtyard.

Old Hong spoke softly, "The old mister is inside..."

Qin Jun nodded. He walked up to the doors. Then, he bowed deeply and said, "Greetings, old mister."

The entire place was as quiet as a graveyard. The others could not understand why their master was behaving so respectfully. They wondered about the identity of the person in the room? Who was it that warranted such respect and courtesy from their master? Naturally, none of them dared to verbalize their thoughts. They kept quiet and waited for the reply.

"Enter." The voice was calm and light. Soon after, he added, "Alone."

"Understood." Qin Jun dared not be careless. He turned, waved his hand dismissively, and said, "That's all for today. Go back to whatever you're doing."

After going through so much trouble to summon everyone here, they were now dismissed without being given a reason. They became even more confused. Even then, nobody dared to disobey their master.

When the courtyard was finally cleared, Qin Jun respectfully opened the door. When he walked up to Lu Zhou, he kept his back bent as he looked at the floor and greeted him, "Greetings, old mister." Then, Qin

Jun stole a quick glance at Lu Zhou was admiring the paintings and literary works in the room. 'It's him.' Although Qin Jun had already been told about Lu Zhou's arrival, he still felt nervous,

Lu Zhou scanned the works in the room and quickly lost interest.

"If you like them, old mister... I can give it to you as a gift from my humble mansion," Qin Jun said.

Lu Zhou had no care for these secular things. He shook his head and said, "Sit."

"I dare not. I'll stand." Qin Jun's heart trembled in fear.

"It's been 20 years. Has your cultivation base improved?" Lu Zhou asked, not bothering to probe Qin Jun's cultivation base.

"Thanks to your instructions many years ago and after diligently cultivating, I managed to enter the Divine Court realm. I'm not talented, I'm afraid I've disappointed you, old mister," Qin Jun said.

Lu Zhou nodded. He walked up to the table and sat down. He looked at Qin Jun.

"I'm honored that you came to visit my mansion. If there's anything you need, old mister, I'll do my best to help you," Qin Jun said bluntly.

"I'm pleased with your achievements." Lu Zhou did not beat around the bush as he said, "Do you know Li Yunzhao?" When Qin Jun heard this, he was slightly stunned. He asked, "Li Yunzhao is a prominent figure by the Empress Dowager's side. It's only natural for me to know who he is." "Very well," Lu Zhou continued to say, "Tell him to meet me here."

Chapter 270 Dark Yin Palm Eunuch Li

Stunned, Qin Jun hesitated about the question he wanted to ask.

Still, he was worried that the Old Mister might get offended by his question, so he was in a dilemma.

"Can't you do it?" Lu Zhou asked calmly.

"It's not that..." said Qin Jun with a bow, "Li Yunzhao's cultivation base is unfathomable. He's a rare elite in the palace and he almost never leaves the palace."

Lu Zhou said nothing.

Qin Jun realized that he had said something wrong. Only a mediocre person would find excuses for himself. He hastily added, "Don't worry, Old Mister. I'll surely bring Li Yunzhao here."

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"If there's nothing else, you may leave," Lu Zhou said.

Qin Jun hesitated for a moment before saying, "If I may be so bold to ask you a question, Old Mister?" "What is it?"

"Lately, it's been rumored in the cultivation world that the Golden Court Mountain's barrier is weakening and will be broken in five years. The major sects of the Noble Path are eyeing it like prey so

that they can get their hands on the Evil Sky Pavilion's treasures when the time comes, and they'll surely leap at the chance to attack. Is that...true?"

The Prince of Qi lived in the Divine Capital, after all, thus he could be regarded as someone within the palace walls. Because the bulk of the information he obtained was by word of mouth, he could not easily verify their authenticity. He wanted to ask if that was true.

After a moment's silence, Lu Zhou answered, "It's true."

Qin Jun cursed softly and said, "These so-called Noble Path sects are truly detestable." Lu Zhou did not expect this from him. "Great Yan's imperial family would've wanted me to die sooner...Aren't you worried that the walls might have ears when you say that?" "There's nothing to be afraid of. I am what I am today because of what you've given me, Old Mister. If I'd been like them, I'm worse than livestock!"

The people in the Prince of Qi Mansion were not as simple as they seemed!

Each one was more eloquent than the last. When he compared them to his own disciples, none of them had the same resolve as Qin Jun.

Lu Zhou derided his host in his mind.

Unfortunately, even with Qin Jun having such an attitude, it was not enough. Moreover, his cultivation base was only in the Divine Court realm.

"I was just using you back then. The illness that was ailing you was nothing to me," Lu Zhou said as he searched his memories.

"Use?" Qin Jun bowed and said, "There isn't a single person within the palace walls who isn't using someone else."

He had long been numbed about such matters after witnessing scum and filth on a daily basis.

"You're an optimist, I see."

"You flatter me, Old Mister."

Qin Jun did not dare exchange more witty remarks. He bowed and said, "Rest well, Old Mister. I'll be taking my leave."

Lu Zhou waved his arm without a word.

Night fell.

The entire Prince of Qi mansion was quiet. Just when Lu Zhou was getting ready to study Heaven Writing...

"Qin Ruobing requests an audience with you, Old Mister."

'Hmm?'

Lu Zhou found it strange. Who would be bothering him at this hour?

This silly move did not seem like something he would have expected from a member of the Prince of Qi Mansion. He felt that there must have been some other matter.

He then said, "Come in."

Creak...

The young lady, whom he had met only once in the hall earlier, appeared. However, she was wearing different clothes now. She seemed less dignified and sophisticated. Currently, she seemed to be a plain and simpler person. Nonetheless, her facial features were still delicate and pretty, and she could be considered a beauty.

"What's the matter?" Lu Zhou merely gave her a glance before closing his eyes again. Qin Ruobing knelt obediently and said, "When I found out that you're from the Evil Sky Pavilion, I came here to apologize, Old Mister."

Lu Zhou said nothing. If he had been a petty person, she would not even have the chance to apologize right now. Besides, she did not exactly go against him in the hall, so there was no need for her to apologize for anything. Qin Ruobing touched the floor with her forehead and said, "If I may be so bold, please, take me as a disciple, Old Mister!"

As she said this, she kowtowed again.

Lu Zhou opened his eyes slowly and looked at Qin Ruobing, who was sincerely kowtowing to him.

Her cultivation base was only in the Sense Condensing realm. For someone of her age, her talents were simply ordinary.

"Where did you get such boldness?" Lu Zhou said drily.

"Well..."

Qin Ruobing felt slightly frightened. She mustered her courage and continued, "I have heard many stories about the Evil Sky Pavilion since I was young. From that moment on, I made up my mind to become a cultivator like an Evil Sky Pavilion disciple. I've only been admiring one person my whole life...and that's you, Old Mister! Please, be my master!"

Bam!

Her forehead touched the floor.

In the end, she was only a passionate worshipper who had only heard legendary stories about the Evil Sky Pavilion since she was young. As someone who transmigrated here, he naturally knew about the existence of such people. Moreover, the old villain Lu was an unrivaled cultivator under the heavens, hence it was impossible for him to not have a single fan.

However, he did not expect the young lady of the Grand Prince of Qi Mansion to be one of them.

'Hehehe.' Lu Zhou did not know if he should be happy about this. 'A disciple? Her talents are rather mediocre. Besides, these nine disciples are giving me enough trouble as it is.'

Just when he was about to reject her...

The Prince of Qi, Qin Jun, ran into the room. He swept his gaze across the scene, walked up to Qin Ruobing, and gave her a firm slap across the cheek. "How dare you?! Who gave you permission to intrude upon the Old Mister's room?"

Qin Ruobing was stunned. Having never been hit her entire life, she did not expect her father to hit her now over something like this.

Although she felt wronged, she dared not say anything. She could only press her hand to her cheek...

Qin Jun knelt to the ground, cupped his fists, and said, "Please, forgive me, Old Mister. My daughter is ignorant of courtesy and rules. I'll see to it that she gets punished harshly for this!"

Lu Zhou appeared calm on the surface. However, he sighed inwardly. She was his fan, after all. This slap alone was enough as punishment for her.

"Let's call it a day." Lu Zhou waved his hand.

"Get up and get out!" Qin Jun barked with a suppressed volume. He tugged on Qin Ruobing and left the room.

When Qin Jun exited the room, he closed the door behind himself.

Then, Lu Zhou closed his eyes and meditated upon Heaven Writing.

When he meditated on Heaven Writing, he could now sense the situation and movements inside and outside the room. This was unlike before, whereby he would be completely absorbed in the text and be oblivious to everything that was happening around himself.

Therefore, Lu Zhou felt at ease.

On the morning of the next day, when Lu Zhou opened his eyes, he sensed that someone was waiting for him outside his room. He asked in a deep voice, "What is it?"

"I'm the butler, Hong Fu. The master has left the mansion early in the morning for the imperial city. He shall be back in less than two hours."

'You can count on that old butler to get things done right.'

In truth, Lu Zhou knew that he had been waiting outside his door for about an hour now.

Since the butler was unsure of a cultivator's habits, he had chosen to wait here ahead of time.

Lu Zhou got off the bed with his hands behind his back. He waved his hand and a gust of energy opened the doors.

"Two hours..." Lu Zhou mumbled. Hong Fu hastily bowed and said, "Eunuch Li is a prominent person by the Empress Dowager's side. He'll have to obtain the Empress Dowager's permission to leave the palace." Lu Zhou nodded. Without caring about the method Qin Jun would employ, he walked out calmly.

Refreshed after a night's rest, he now had roughly half of his extraordinary power's full capacity.

Two hours later, a voice could be heard from outside the living room. "Eunuch Li, this way, please."

Lu Zhou looked outside the doors of the living room.

Little Yuan'er and Zhao Yue flanked him.

The butler Hong Fu bowed and said, "Old Mister, Eunuch Li is here."

At this moment, in a tall hat, dressed in long robes with silver hair and a bony build, Li Yunzhao appeared at the door.

This was the elite cultivator by the Empress Dowager's side, Eunuch Li of the Dark Yin Palm.