

## Disciples 381

### Chapter 381: The Sword Devil

The sudden appearance of the tentacles took Ye Tianxian by surprise. She tried to block the incoming tentacles with her wave-like energy.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

The tentacles slammed against Ye Tianxin's energy wall violently.

Yu Shangrong shot toward Ye Tianxin with his sword in hand at lightning speed. "I slay Fiend Zen cultivators for breakfast!"

Bzzt!

A fan-shaped energy shot out from the Longevity Sword. Yu Shangrong wielded the Longevity Sword with both hands and swung it downward. At this moment, the terrifying power of the Longevity Sword seemed to be fully displayed. The energy seemed to cut off the black Golden Lotus avatar.

Bam!

The avatar cracked.

Kong Yuan's eyes widened. His palms remained joined together when he saw the black avatar being cut open. The impact of that attack sent him reeling back. The rope that was tied around him snapped at this moment. He continued to fly backward.

Yu Shangrong did not even deign to spare a glance at Kong Yuan. He knew Kong Yuan was just a corpse, a puppet that was being controlled. He looked at Ye Tianxin behind him who was currently being attacked by the tentacles and said, "Junior Sister, defend with your Golden Lotus."

"Oh."

Yu Shangrong's eyes gleamed at this moment. He began to fly out at blinding speed toward Zhang Yuanshan.

Meanwhile, Ye Tianxin's avatar had retreated. Her Golden Lotus bloomed and kept the tentacles at bay.

In front of Zhang Yuanshan, there were many tentacles. They were like a thicket of vines that kept whipping at the air. The tentacles were shrouded in purple energy.

When Zhang Yuanshan saw that Kong Yuan was sent flying, he instinctively looked up at Yu Shangrong, the Sword Devil.

Yu Shangrong had his back toward the gray sky and he was charging toward Zhang Yuanshan in the air at a 45-degree angle. With every step he took, a ripple would appear under his feet. The golden ripples seemed to distort space itself. As he continued to move, his body seemed to turn blurry. In fact, everything in the surroundings seemed out of focus. It was as though everything was submerged in water. It lent a surreal quality to the surroundings.

This was the sword skill Yu Shangrong was famous for; the Return and Enter Three Souls! The three souls referred to the first sword, the origin radiance, which was the Qi of great purity and the sun. The second soul is the majestic spirit, the transformation of Yin Qi. The third soul is the nether essence, the impurities of Yin Qi. Everyone who cultivated possessed three souls. The origin radiance is the nascent divinity. This was where the Nascent Divinity Tribulation realm derived its name from.

The Return and Enter Three Souls. Three swords and three paths attacked at the same time. The three swords merged as one to sever the three souls, thereby, obliterating the target's body and soul.

Yu Shangrong did not merely have three figures. His clones seemed to possess avatars of their own as well. Three Golden Lotuses descended from the sky.

This scene far exceeded Zhang Yuanshan's expectations. His eyes widened in horror as he watched the three clones merged into one. "Ba Ma! Help! Me!"

A deep voice rang in Zhang Yuanshan's ears. "I've told you that you only have two to three chances... This third chance will cost you your life!"

"You—"

Silence descended on the entire place at this moment.

Zhang Yuanshan wanted to pull on the rope and defend himself with Kong Yuan's corpse. Unfortunately, Kong Yuan was long gone. He laughed maniacally upon discovering this. "Forget it, forget it!"

At this moment, the Longevity Sword pierced Zhang Yuanshan's body. His body trembled violently as he continued to laugh maniacally. It felt as though his soul had been pierced as well. However, he did not stop laughing. The sound of his laughter traveled far all the way to the green jade altar.

Currently, the battle could no longer be seen from the green jade altar. All that could be heard was this maniacal laughter.

Upon hearing this, the Nether Sect's disciples shivered in fear. After a moment, they heard a shout from afar.

"I've been a coward all my life... Today, I, Zhang Yuanshan, will embrace death like an old friend!" Zhang Yuanshan was in the center as his energy spilled into the surroundings. The tentacles whipped around even more violently. This was his true third chance. The ultimate move that Ba Ma had planted in him.

"Sacrificial offering," a peculiar voice said.

Zhang Yuanshan shouted, "Even if I have to die, I'll drag you along with me!"

Once the sacrificial offering was completed, the tentacles shot toward Yu Shangrong and Ye Tianxin in a frenzy. The entire place seemed to be filled with tentacles.

Ye Tianxian had already retreated far away as she repelled the tentacles.

Meanwhile, Yu Shangrong was still at the center of the fight. When he saw the tentacles that seemed to come at him from all directions, he swung his sword fiercely. His sword moved like the wind and merely left vague shadows in its wake as his slashes rained down like a storm. There were no energy blades. The

red shining blade was all that could be seen moving back and forth. A spherical energy formed around him at this moment.

Yu Shangrong's expression darkened. For some reason, the scene of his master training him in sword skills surfaced in his mind... He was told to practice his swordplay under the trees in autumn, and he had to slash at all the falling leaves. During summer, he would be training under the rain and would have to remain dry. In the winter, he was told to train under the snow, and he had to dodge all the snowflakes... He lost count of the number of wooden swords he broke in the process... He would receive a good beating whenever he broke a sword. His master said that a true sword path elite would love his own sword and would never allow his sword to be easily destroyed. It was only when he managed to keep his wooden sword intact that his master granted him the Longevity Sword.

The Longevity Sword bore the blessings of a long life. This was the best gift for the inhabitants of the Nobleman Country who had short life spans.

This sword was everything to Yu Shangrong. He had become one with his sword.

"If you want to kill your opponent, just swing your sword forcefully." Lu Zhou's advice appeared in Yu Shangrong's mind, and he swung his sword at a greater speed.

The tentacles that approached were all cut, and the purple energy was kept at bay by the sword shadows.

From afar, Ye Tianxin was dumbstruck when she witnessed this scene. She knew that her Second Senior Brother was powerful, but she did not expect him to be so powerful to this extent. Then, she looked at the purple energy that permeated the air and the tentacles lashing around before she tossed her Amorous Hoop out.

The Amorous Hoop plunged into the sea of tentacles and released a burst of energy.

The Blue Waves Technique slowed the advances of the tendrils.

At this moment, Ye Tianxin shouted, "Second Senior Brother."

Yu Shangrong made a noise of acknowledgment. His 100-foot avatar shot toward the horizon as it increased in size. Energy blades spread out like the petals of a lotus in the air.

Boom!

The tentacles were severed by the countless energy blades.

At the same time, the Golden Lotus under Yu Shangrong's avatar kept the tentacles at bay like lotus leaves. With the Golden Lotus in the center, the Longevity Sword flew out and continued cutting the tentacles.

With a casual glance, it looked like a vortex had appeared.

The energy of the tentacles seemed to be immediately reduced by a huge margin.

Ye Tianxin felt the pressure around her lift at once. She recalled her avatar, somersaulted in the air before she looked at the scene before her incredulously. 'Is this the Sword Devil?'

Yu Shangrong did not hold back as he wielded and swung his sword. The rapid expansion of his avatar, coupled with the movements of his sword that seemed to form a vortex kept the tentacles at bay.

Gradually, the tentacles began to dwindle and fall in numbers.

Everything was silent again.

Yu Shangrong stood within his avatar. He extended his arms as he tried to control his avatar. The Hundred Tribulations Insight avatar required too much energy to maintain. It was rare for a cultivator to maintain a Hundred Tribulations Insight avatar for such a long time.

Ye Tianxin was still in shock.

After a long while, the purple energy finally vanished.

Zhang Yuanshan's body was nowhere to be seen.

Yu Shangrong pulled his arms back and fisted his hands. His avatar vanished.

The massive Golden Lotus paused slightly.

Yu Shangrong looked at the Golden Lotus. The eight golden and shining lotus leaves spun at a uniform speed. There was a faint sheen of purple on the lotus leaves. With an unbothered expression on his face, he moved his hands, and his dantian's sea of Qi surged. "Close."

The Golden Lotus vanished.

Yu Shangrong hovered in midair as he surveyed the land beneath him with a thoughtful expression on his face.

### **Chapter 382: Of Goals and the Mutated Golden Lotus**

The green jade altar had always been a tranquil place. However, at this moment, all tranquility was lost as the place was destroyed. The rock slabs on the altar were cracked, and the area under the altar was wrecked. If the two opponents did not move their battle further away, the green jade altar would have been completely destroyed.

The Nether Sect's disciples had difficulties calming down witnessing this. Although they could see the battle between Yu Shangrong and the monster. Based on the sound that rang from afar, they could tell the battle was fierce and terrifying.

After a long while, the cacophony of noises finally died down.

The Nether Sect's disciples leaped off the green jade altar. The altar was messy and chaotic. There were holes riddled on the ground as far as the eyes could see. They flew to the distance, following the trail of wreckage that was left in the wake of the battle. Shortly after, they arrived at the epicenter of the battle where the fighting had been the fiercest. Apart from a huge and deep area on the uneven ground, they did not see ant bodies. The trees, grasses, and plants in the vicinity that were full of life had all withered.

"What happened here?"

Everyone looked around their surroundings fearfully.

"There's more than one monster... I saw that person fling another person who was tied to a rope. It looked like a dried corpse," someone said before a retching noise could be heard.

"It seems like a puppeteering and witchcraft technique... This bodes ill for Mister Second, I'm afraid."

"No way... Mister Second's cultivation base is profound. There's no way he'd be defeated so easily."

"In this world, there's bound to be someone who's stronger than you. There's nothing certain in the world. The sect master once said that the power of an individual will always be inferior to the power of a group."

When the disciples recalled the black avatar and the purple and black tentacles they saw on the green jade altar, they shuddered despite the warm temperature.

The disciples were still busy speculating among themselves when a small purple circle rose into the sky nearby. It seemed like a cloud of purple smoke that resembled the shape of Ba Wu, the mount. It looked like a fox. Upon seeing this, the disciples immediately retreated in shock.

The seemingly formed from energy Ba Wu said with a deep voice, "Yu Shangrong must die." Then, the witchcraft circle disappeared along with the purple energy. "Return."

"What do we do now? Do we just leave the green jade altar as it is?"

"We should report this to the sect master first!"

...

"Ding! Killed a target. Reward: 2,000 merit points."

Lu Zhou was in the midst of contemplating something when the notification sounded, causing him to frown slightly. Based on his previous experience, he knew killing a One- to Five-leaf target was worth 1,000 merit points. Killing a Six or Eight-leaf target was worth 1,500 merit points. Why was he suddenly rewarded with 2,000 merit points?

Lu Zhou slowly rose to his feet, remembering Yu Shangrong. Yu Zhenghai and Si Wuya had not been captured yet. It was far too early to consider their return to the pavilion, therefore, their actions would not give him any rewards. Moreover, his current disciples were not capable of this. The only person capable of killing such an elite target could only be Yu Shangrong.

A frown could be seen on Lu Zhou's face as he continued thinking to himself. 'Nine-leaf?' Then, he shook his head, dismissing his thoughts. Although Yu Shangrong was strong and profound, it was impossible for him to kill a Nine-leaf target. Moreover, where could Yu Shangrong find a Nine-leaf target?

'Is it possible that someone came to the same conclusion as I did? Did someone also think about severing the Golden Lotus to defeat an Eight-leaf cultivator?' Lu Zhou recalled Jiang Aijian's words about his experience about reading about this matter during their discussion about the Nine-leaf stage with Leng Luo and Pan Litian the other day. He knew he was not the only one in the world who was trying to figure out the Nine-leaf state. Whether it was Yun Tianluo, Gong Yuandu, or the Great Yan's Imperial family, they were all trying to figure out the Nine-leaf stage. Moreover, apart from Great Yan, there were Lou Lan, Rouli, Qigong, and the other nations. There were plenty of cultivators in the world. It was impossible that nobody had thought about or tried to figure out the Nine-leaf stage.

All of a sudden, Lu Zhou said, "Is anyone here?"

A female disciple appeared inside the great hall. "Pavilion Master."

"Summon Jiang Aijian over."

"Understood."

Recently, Jiang Aijian had been hiding in the Evil Sky Pavilion. News of his death had spread far and wide. Naturally, there were many in the palace who were skeptical of this news, it did not matter.

Jiang Aijian had an extensive information network. Lu Zhou thought it was time to make Jiang Aijian earn his keep.

Currently, news of Jiang Aijian's death had spread all around the place.

...

On a peak 100 miles north of the green jade altar.

The sun shone through the clouds on the forest, painting the forest with a golden light.

"Greetings, Second Senior Brother." Ye Tianxing respectfully and formally greeted Yu Shangrong as she stood behind him.

"There's no need for such formalities, Sixth Junior Sister." Yu Shangrong was carrying his Longevity Sword. He did not turn around. Instead, he was looking at the setting sun. Strangely, the setting sun looked more beautiful and captivating to him than it ever did before. After all, Great Yan was never short of such idyllic sceneries and mountains.

"Second Senior Brother... are-you alright?" Ye Tianxin was still having difficulty wrapping her mind around what she had seen.

The rays of the setting sun fell on Yu Shangrong's body. He did not move as he softly said, "I'm alright."

"Your sword path has widened my horizons, Second Senior Brother." Ye Tianxin praised him.

However, upon recalling the earlier scene, Yu Shangrong shook his head. "It's too insignificant to mention."

"I heard that you've rejoined the Evil Sky Pavilion, Second Senior Brother. I wonder if it's true." Ye Tianxin rarely bothered herself with the cultivation world. She had been cultivating in isolation all this while. She would only go out to run the occasional errand. When she had first heard about this news, she was skeptical.

Yu Shangrong smiled faintly and said, "Mhm."

"So, the hit list... It's true as well?" Ye Tianxin asked in surprise.

At this moment, Yu Shangrong finally turned around. His gaze fell on Ye Tianxin.

Yu Shangrong's gaze made Ye Tianxin feel nervous and tense. Ever since she left the Evil Sky Pavilion and became the Derived Moon Palace Master whom everyone revered, the sixth elite on the black roll, and

the Jadeface Shura whose name alone struck fear in those who heard it, she had never felt as nervous as this.

"Mhm." Yu Shangrong nodded again.

Ye Tianxin was in awe. The hit list that was circulating in the cultivation was filled with elites. They were all impressive people, and yet, they all died by her Second Senior Brother's Sword. Just how strong was he and his techniques?

A gentle smile could be seen on Yu Shangrong's face as he asked, "Sixth Junior Sister... Didn't Master forgive you?"

Ye Tianxin was taken aback, speechless. Her expression turned unnatural. She did not know how to answer the question.

Yu Shangrong had no intention of forcing an answer out of her. "You don't have to answer me if you don't want to..."

In the end, Ye Tianxin replied, "I'm afraid that I won't be able to return to the Evil Sky Pavilion ever again."

Yu Shangrong said, "You have a long life ahead of you. Just be yourself."

"You're right, Second Senior Brother." Ye Tianxin nodded.

"What plans do you have after this?" Yu Shangrong asked.

Ye Tianxin did not answer immediately. Instead, she walked to the edge of the peak and looked down at the forest. She sighed softly with a lost look in her eyes. "I don't know... I'm like a headless fly..." She suddenly felt that she had said too much so she stopped talking.

Yu Shangrong said, "If you don't have a goal now, just find a new one."

Ye Tianxin was stunned. Her thoughts were not as simple as her Second Senior Brother's... However, life was often not complicated. The more one worried, the more one would be restricted. Moreover, it was not like she had no goals. She was just not determined enough to pursue her goals. After a while, she asked, "Are you returning to the Evil Sky Pavilion after this, Second Senior Brother?"

"No." Yu Shangrong shook his head. "After I'm done with the hit list, I'll head north."

"Where are you going?"

"Brackish Mountain."

### **Chapter 383: How Rumors Begin**

Ye Tianxin asked, perplexed, "Brackish Mountain? Where's that?" She had never heard of such a place, therefore, she concluded it must be some remote mountain village.

Yu Shangrong replied honestly, "It's my hometown. It's a place that's only a shadow of its former self. There's nothing but coldness and darkness there..."

Ye Tianxin was even more confused. She wondered why Yu Shangrong would describe his hometown as cold and dark. At the very least, he had a hometown to return to. The fairfolk had nowhere to return to. Upon thinking about this, she asked with a sigh, "Second Senior Brother, do you blame me?"

"I've heard about what happened," Yu Shangrong said.

Ye Tianxin was happy with his answer. It seemed like her senior brother did not blame her. She suddenly remembered her conversation with her Seventh Junior Brother, Si Wuya, and asked, "Second Senior Brother, do you believe that someone in this world can live for 2,000 years?"

Yu Shangrong was slightly taken aback. This question had an edge to it when it was directed to a Nobleman. After all, for Noblemen, it was already a luxury being able to live to 1,000, let alone 2,000. "Why? Do you believe it?"

"Second Senior Brother... I've been looking for an item all this time. It's called Cheng Huang. There are many that said that anyone who rides on Cheng Huang will live for 2,000 years. Despite looking for it for so long, my search has borne no fruit," Ye Tianxin replied.

If Ye Tianxin had told anyone else about this, they would have persuaded her to stop her futile search. However, Yu Shangrong was different. He firmly believed one needed to have goals to achieve before one's death. He smiled faintly and replied, "Don't lose your determination, and keep searching..."

"What... What if the chances are slim?"

"It's better than none."

Ye Tianxin was speechless. It was true. A slim chance was better than none. She bowed. "Thank you for your counsel, Second Senior Brother..."

Yu Shangrong nodded. "The sun is setting... You should head back, junior sister."

"Mhm. Take care, senior brother." Ye Tianxin bowed again before she turned around and left.

Gradually, darkness descended.

Yu Shangrong did not move. He looked on silently as the sun set behind the mountain. He gripped his Longevity Sword tightly as he stood riveted to the spot.

Bam!

A crack appeared in the rock. The Longevity Sword was wedged between it. Yu Shangrong sat down cross-legged as he joined his palms together.

Whizz!

His Hundred Tribulations Insight avatar appeared. However, its size was not huge. In fact, it was only half his height. He had intentionally made his avatar as small as it could be. He raised one palm, facing up, before his avatar hovered above his palm. It resembled a golden statue on a Golden Lotus. However, the Golden Lotus was no longer purely gold. Instead, it was mottled with purple spots that seemed to be spreading. It seemed as though the purple spots were pest had infested the lotus leaf.

Yu Shangrong circulated his Primal Qi. His Golden Lotus spun rapidly and shone brightly.



Whizz!

After a round of treatment, the purple spots merely showed signs of slowing down after being suppressed by his powerful cultivation base. They did not disappear.

Yu Shangrong frowned slightly. He did not achieve this victory easily. In fact, it was slightly difficult compared to his other battles. Even when he sparred with his Eldest Senior Brother in Radiant Cloud Forest back then, he was not forced to use all of his might. In his opinion, Zhang Yuanshan was only the sect master of a second-rate sect, someone cowardly who stubbornly clung to life. He should have been able to deal with Zhang Yuanshan with just a single sword strike. Who knew Zhang Yuanshan would give him so much difficulty?

“A grand shaman from Lou Lan?” Yu Shangrong muttered to himself and scoffed, “You’re lucky that you encountered me and not...” He did not finish his sentence. He recalled his avatar, and with a push of his feet, he flew northward.

...

After the battle on the green jade altar ended, the Nether Sect’s disciples wrote about it to their sect master, Yu Zhenghai, who was in Yi Province.

“Notify the other branches. Just say that things bode ill for Mister Second after his fight with Zhang Yuanshan.”

At the very least, this was what they thought based on their observation. Their words could be interpreted in many different ways that all seemed to mean the same thing. Yu Shangrong could be hurt, gravely injured, missing, died... There were many ways to interpret their words...

That was how a new rumor began to spread in the cultivation world.

The major sects of the cultivation world sighed in relief. Public opinion was powerful enough to melt metal. When there were enough people spreading the rumor, there was no longer any need to verify its authenticity.

As time passed, the rumor became more and more exaggerated. Every storyteller would add their own twist to it.

“In the battle on the green jade altar, the Sword Devil, Yu Shangrong, couldn’t defeat Zhang Yuanshan and was grievously wounded.”

“Why did the cowardly rat, Zhang Yuanshan, suddenly attack?”

“The Sword Devil had been too full of himself. In the end, he met his demise.”

“The era of the Evil Sky Pavilion is about to come to an end...”

Since Yu Shangrong did not appear since then, it added to the credibility of the rumor.

...

Under the cover of night, in a graveyard.

A black figure hovered in the air. Its feet were only half a foot above the ground. It flew around the graveyard at this low altitude as its body emitted a dense purple fume.

The sound of soil loosening rang in the air.

The black figure flew back to its starting point and landed on the ground. He nodded with satisfaction. He held two ropes with a single hand. At the end of the rope was Kong Yuan who was still dressed in his monk's robes. On the other end was Zhang Yuanshan who was dressed in his Daoist robes.

"The witchcraft spell has taken effect... Yu Shangrong will vanish from this world. Next, it'll be the Evil Sky Pavilion's turn... Junior sister, I will drag the entire Evil Sky Pavilion down to accompany you in the other world."

...

Seven days later. In the great hall of the Evil Sky Pavilion.

Lu Zhou had been meditating on the Heavenly Writing scrolls for quite some time. His extraordinary power was now completely replenished. He was thinking about the Nine-leaf stage when Mingshi Yin walked into the hall with a letter in his hand.

Meanwhile, Little Yuan'er was practicing her control over the Nirvana Sash inside the great hall.

"Fourth Senior Brother, look at this... I can mold the Nirvana Sash into various shapes now! Master taught me..."

"That's great." Mingshi Yin gave a perfunctory reply and walked swiftly into the great hall. "Master, a letter from Jiang Aijian." He opened the letter as he spoke.

Jiang Aijian was efficient indeed compared to the old men from the Old Age Pavilion who were only skilled in bragging and flattery. He had only been gone for seven days, but there was already a result.

Mingshi Yin read, "Old senior, there's no need to investigate the matter you've entrusted me to investigate. The entire cultivation world is saying that things don't look well for the Sword Devil after losing to Zhang Yuanshan. However, the veracity of the rumor has yet to be confirmed. I'll try to verify the rumor as fast as I can. The other thing I want to report to you is that the Nether Sect has conquered Yi Province. Wei Zhuoyan is an impostor, after all. He doesn't have the power to quell the disturbance in Yi Province. There's more to say, but I'm running out of space. Please turn to the back of the letter..." Upon reading the last sentence, Mingshi Yin frowned. 'What's he playing at? There's more on the back of the letter? I didn't notice anything when I opened the letter...'

In any case, Mingshi Yin cleared his throat and continued reading, "With rumors of Golden Court Mountain's barrier disappearing, Mister Second's unknown state, and your approaching great limit, you should be careful of the Noble Path forming an alliance. It's been a long time since I've penned a letter to you, old senior. If I can get another good sword as compensation, I'll surely be more motivated. Ha-ha-ha..." Mingshi Yin's expression turned stiff when he read the end of the letter. Only the first part of the letter was useful. He felt as though he should not have even bothered to read out the second part of the letter.

Mingshi Yin said to Lu Zhou, "Rumors, these are all rumors... With Second Senior Brother's cultivation base, there's no way Zhang Yuanshan would be able to even touch a strand of senior brother's hair. Moreover, Zhang Yuanshan is nothing but a coward."

However, Lu Zhou did not share the same opinion. Based on the reward he obtained, the matter seemed more complicated. He was only certain that Zhang Yuanshan had died. However, he was not sure if Yu Shangrong was unharmed. After all, up until now, none of his disciples had died so he was not sure if the system would even notify him of his disciples' deaths.

Lu Zhou slowly rose to his feet. He stroked his beard and paced as he said, "Your Second Senior Brother prefers to act alone. He doesn't like to write letters."

"You're right, master. He's a grown man. He should know better to report on his well being every once in a while," Mingshi Yin said.

"Let him be." Despite Lu Zhou's words, he truly did not wish for any harm to come to Yu Shangrong. If he were to lose such a great helper, he would definitely have trouble coming to terms with it.

After a while, Mingshi Yin bluntly asked, "Master... What should we do about Eldest Senior Brother? He has conquered Yi Province now. Clearly, he plans to against the Imperial family."

Lu Zhou did not answer Mingshi Yin. 'I'd like to capture that rascal as well and ask him about what happened in the past...'

The problem was, things were not so simple... The Nether Sect had many branches and hidden bases. After his battle with Yu Shangrong in Radiant Cloud Forest, nobody knew where Yu Zhenghai was hiding at the moment. Yi Province was huge. It would be like looking for a needle in a haystack. Moreover, the Nether Sect had expanded its forces from tens of thousands of members to hundreds of thousands of members in a short time. There were also the Four Great Protectors who were all skilled in their own right. They also had Si Wuya as the brain of the operation.

Lu Zhou stroked his beard as he pondered this. He had never met Yu Zhenghai since he transmigrated here. They had several close encounters, but that was it. The sect master of the greatest fiend sect under the heavens ran away quicker than most. 'Am I that terrifying?'

"Have Jiang Aijian pay more attention to Yi Province... If there's time, I'll go to Yi Province and personally capture that rascal."

"Yes, master." After saying this, Mingshi Yin's eyes darted around as he said, "Master, with the rumors going around, people are going to assume we're a pushover. I ask for permission to descend the mountain and beat those people."

At this moment, Duanmu Sheng walked in with his Overlord Spear in hand. "You're thinking of playing outside, aren't you?"

"Of course not!" Mingshi Yin said.

Mingshi Yin was about to expound on his loyalty when the heavy thud of someone falling to their knees rang in the air.

"Greetings, master!"

### Chapter 384: Cannot Be Found Anywhere

Mingshi Yin frowned. He turned around and saw Zhu Honggong kneeling on the ground. 'This won't do. I really must find some time to give Old Eighth a good beating...'

"Greetings, Fourth Senior Brother, Third Senior Brother... Eh, Fourth Senior Brother, you look more handsome compared to yesterday." Zhu Honggong boldly kowtowed as he greeted Mingshi Yin and Duanmu Sheng.

Mingshi Yin. "... He did not reply, but he thought to himself, 'Oh, well. I'll forgive you this once.'

Zhu Honggong walked up to them and said, "Master, I have a report to make."

"Let's hear it."

"I received a letter from the traitor, Si Wuya. He thinks that I'm still as easily manipulated as before. He has no idea that under your meticulous care and guidance, I've become extremely smart..." Zhu Honggong said, not forgetting to flatter Lu Zhou while he was at it.

"Cut to the chase. Read the letter." Duanmu Sheng raised his Overlord Spear.

Zhu Honggong opened the letter at once and read, "Dear master, allow me to pay my respect to you..."

Duanmu Sheng walked up to Zhu Honggong suddenly and grabbed his collar, lifting him up from the ground. "That's about enough."

Tears streamed down Zhu Honggong's face. "It's true... That's what the letter says!"

"..."

"Enough." Lu Zhou frowned.

Duanmu Sheng hastily let Zhu Honggong go.

The two of them kneeled on the ground, worried their master would take his anger out on them.

Lu Zhou glanced at both of them, feeling too lazy to reprimand them. With a wave of his hand, he picked the letter up with his energy and brought it to his hands.

Even if Zhu Honggong was the bravest man in the world, he would never dare to stop the letter from flying toward his master.

Lu Zhou read the contents of the letter. As it turned out, the letter contained information about what happened between Yu Shangrong and Zhang Yuanshan. Si Wuya seemed to have the answer to the matter of Yu Shangrong killing a high-reward target. However, Lu Zhou was still worried.

Mingshi Yin asked curiously, "Master, what does it say?"

Lu Zhou waved his hand and tossed the letter away.

Mingshi Yin caught the letter and read it. His brows knitted as he read the letter. "Second Senior Brother fought Zhang Yuanshan on the green jade altar? Zhang Yuanshan was the sacrificial offering of the grand

shaman, Ba Ma? Things aren't looking good for Second Senior Brother? Ba Ma is planning to make a move against the Evil Sky Pavilion to avenge Mo Li? Master... This traitor, Si Wuya, cannot be trusted!"

"Fourth Senior Brother is right! We shouldn't believe the words of a traitor!"

Lu Zhou stood up and looked at the three of them as he said, "Si Wuya should be telling the truth." After all, he had the 2,000 merit points he was rewarded with to confirm some of Si Wuya's words.

Mingshi Yin and Zhu Honggong did not dwell on the matter anymore. Since their master had said so, there was no need to think otherwise. Both of them nodded and said in unison, "You're wise, master."

Duanmu Sheng held the letter in his hand and read it. He said, "... Ba Ma is the greatest witchcraft genius in Lou Lan. Throughout the years, Lou Lan's strength has improved tremendously thanks to Ba Ma. What should we do about Second Senior Brother?"

The three of them appeared worried. Moreover, even Jiang Aijian's letter spoke about the rumors that were spreading.

Zhu Honggong said, "Master... I have another report to make."

"Let's hear it."

"Many low-rank cultivators appeared at the foot of Golden Court Mountain yesterday. I saw that they were trying to make a scene so I chased them away," Zhu Honggong said with a smile, clearly waiting to be praised.

'Make a scene? This dimwit is spouting nonsense again! Who would dare to make a scene near Golden Court Mountain?'

Mingshi Yin frowned and said, "Dimwit, didn't you ask them what they were doing?"

Zhu Honggong scratched his head. "They were saying something strange has happened... and they wanted our help, but we're not running a charity here!"

Mingshi Yin secretly rejoiced in Zhu Honggong's misfortune. 'Old Eighth, Old Eighth, I don't think you're aware of master's new style of doing things.' However, he was surprised to see his master did not seem to be angered.

Lu Zhou paced back and forth. The withering of the plants should have something to do with witchcraft. Ba Ma was probably plotting something again. When he recalled the content of Si Wuya's letter, he began to worry about Yu Shangrong. If this were to happen in the past, there was no need for him to worry about Yu Shangrong with Yu Shangrong's cultivation base. However, something felt different this time. As Yu Shangrong's master, how could he sit back and do nothing?

When Mingshi Yin saw his master deep in thought, he knew what his master was thinking. He bowed and said, "I'm willing to investigate this incident."

Zhu Honggong bowed as well. "I'm willing to accompany Fourth Senior Brother down the mountain to investigate this matter."

Lu Zhou's gaze fell on both his disciples. If this had happened in the past, he would not have hesitated to delegate this task to them. However, he had to consider Ba Ma, the grand shaman, who was behind all this. Even Yu Shangrong had a difficult time dealing with Ba Ma, would it not be akin to sending Mingshi Yin and Zhu Honggong to their deaths if he allowed them to take on this mission?

After muttering to himself for a moment, Lu Zhou said, "There's no need to rush. Since he's coming at the Evil Sky Pavilion, he'll come sooner or later..."

When the three disciples heard this, they said in unison, "You're wise, master."

...

10 days passed by in a blink of an eye. Nothing out of the ordinary happened.

On the 11th night, in a graveyard in a forest...

A black figure flew, weaving in and out of the trees.

Many corpses could be seen crawling out of their graves, forming groups as they moved forward slowly. From above, they looked like ants.

Behind the mass of black bodies, a small black carriage flew swiftly at a low altitude. Two men pulled the carriage.

A stocky figure stood atop the carriage. His eyes shone with a green light. He looked at his troops with a pleased expression. These were his troops that he had tirelessly gathered over several days and nights. He said in a deep voice, "Evil Sky Pavilion, I hope you'll be satisfied this time..."

Swoosh!

The black carriage shot past the tops of the black figures, taking the lead in front of the troops of corpses.

...

Meanwhile.

In the sky nearly 10,000 miles northwest from Great Yan's Divine Capital.

A green-robed figure could be seen hovering above a few snow-capped mountains. He surveyed his surroundings. There seemed to be only trees and snow as far as the eyes could see. There did not seem to be any signs of humans at all.

Snowflakes dropped on Yu Shangrong as the wind ruffled his hair. He did not bother to repel the snowflakes. Flecks of white from the snowflakes could be seen on his brows and hair.

Yu Shangrong stood with his arms crossed. The Longevity Sword on his back was gently vibrating as though it could sense something. Against the wind and the snow, he smiled faintly as he said, "I'm home."

He took a step forward in the air. With lightning movements, he appeared several hundred feet away. In the next instant, he appeared on the top of the tallest tree. He seemed to be in a slight daze as he

looked at the slightly sunken land ahead of him. It was a small plain that extended for dozens of miles and was surrounded by mountains. It was completely covered by snow. Under the snow, vines, trees, parts of collapsed walls could vaguely be seen.

Things remained the same while the people have changed.

Yu Shangrong tapped with the tip of his foot.

Crack!

The snow on the tree slid off. The snowless tall tree now stood out among the other snow-covered trees.

Yu Shangrong flew forward. When he was halfway to his destination, he gave a muffled grunt and swayed.

“Hm?” He paused in the air. He lowered his arms and joined his palms together.

Whizz!

A miniature Hundred Tribulations Insight avatar appeared. He moved the avatar that resembled a golden statue to the top of his palm as he looked at the Golden Lotus under the avatar. The purple spots had increased in numbers. Roughly one-third of the lotus was tainted purple. “Witchcraft spell?”

### **Chapter 385: The Melilot Graveyard and the Piles of Bones**

Yu Shangrong looked at the Golden Lotus with a frown. However, the frown disappeared quickly. He was neither afraid, nervous, or worried. He sighed and shook his head. “I’ve been careless.”

The scenes of his battle with Zhang Yuanshan surfaced in his mind again. The only instance his Golden Lotus was exposed to a spell was during his final attack where he had used his sword, avatar, and Golden Lotus to crush the tentacles. He tried to determine the time. In half a month, one-third of his Golden Lotus was tainted... In other words, he had another month left before his Golden Lotus would be completely tainted by the spell. If it came to that, there would be no saving his life.

He moved his hand. The Hundred Tribulations Insight avatar vanished. He continued flying ahead to the center of the plain. His expression was calm as he swung his arm and shot into the sky.

Whizz!

His avatar reappeared! His 100-foot-tall avatar released a blast of hot air. Although one-third of his Golden Lotus was tainted purple, he was still able to release this terrifying burst of power. With this surge of power, the snow around him melted away rapidly and the moisture evaporated. In just a short time, the snow within several thousand meters of him was melted by his Primal Qi.

With the snow gone, the original appearance of the land was exposed. Stalks of melilot could be seen. They grew resilient despite the wind and the snow.

Two fallen stone statues could be seen at the entrance where Yu Shangrong passed by. It seemed to be that of tigers. Due to the damage, only half of their bodies were left.

The trees and grass covered the ground.

Apart from the melilots, there were almost no buildings in sight. Everything from the past seemed to be buried deeply.

A pack of wolves howled nearby.

The birds seemed to be affected by the avatar, and they fled.

The low-rank beasts felt Yu Shangrong's presence and did not dare to approach him.

Yu Shangrong shook his head. With the passage of time, things might remain, but the people have changed.

At this moment, Yu Shangrong saw a pack of wild wolves standing at the top of a mountain as they stared at him.

'They aren't afraid? Interesting!' Yu Shangrong smiled. He dove toward the wolves. Although they were average of wild wolves in the cultivation world, they were not beasts that their counterparts near human settlements could compare to. These wild wolves seemed to be emitting a faint Primal Qi. In terms of speed, they were much faster than ordinary wolves.

When the wild wolves saw Yu Shangrong diving toward them, they turned tail and sprinted toward the distance.

Yu Shangrong's body was practically parallel to the ground as he flew. His energy formed a barrier around himself. He passed by a valley and a patch of forest.

Finally, the pack of wolves came to halt under a mountain peak. It was a 90-degree cliff that was covered with snow.

The pack of wolves howled as they sat on their hindquarters on the snow. They looked at Yu Shangrong who was hovering in the air.

Yu Shangrong chuckled and said, "Is this where you wanted to bring me to?"

The wolves howled as though they were responding to Yu Shangrong.

"Alright. I'll take that as a yes."

The pack of wolves howled again.

"Mhm, thank you for showing the way. We'll meet again in the future."

The wolf pack turned around and left, led by the alpha wolf.

Yu Shangrong looked at the cliff wall before he slammed one hand against it.

Boom!

His energy landed on the cliff face, causing the snow to slide off. The original appearance of the cliff face was revealed in just an instant.

"A stone door?" Yu Shangrong was slightly surprised. He walked closer and saw three huge words on the rock face; The Melilot Graveyard.



'The Melilot Graveyard?' Although Yu Shangrong was strong mentally and spiritually, he could not help but feel shaken when he saw these words. He, naturally, knew what these words meant.

With fuzzy memories as guidance, he raised his right hand and flicked two fingers. A drop of blood shot from the tip of his index finger toward the cliff face.

Splat!

The veins engraved on the cliff face shone. The light spread from the spot where the drop of blood landed into the surroundings.

With this, Yu Shangrong was certain this was indeed a graveyard left behind by the Noblemen.

Whoosh!

The rock door slid open.

Yu Shangrong walked into the graveyard without hesitation.

The moment he entered the Melilot Graveyard.

Whoosh!

The rock door shut swiftly.

He found himself in a dimly lit environment. However, he seemed unafraid and kept his eyes trained up ahead. The scene that greeted his eyes shocked him slightly. Piles of white bones lay on the floor in neat formations.

The melilot bloomed in the day and withered at night. The inhabitants rather stay and hide in a utopia until they die.

Yu Shangrong walked further into the graveyard. When he was in the innermost section, there were finally no bones to be seen.

At the center of the graveyard was a round dais. He looked up but saw nothing apart from a script that was carved on the rock wall. It was the word 'longevity'.

Yu Shangrong shook his head.

The short-lived Noblemen never gave up in their pursuit of a long life... However, reality was often harsh. On average, Noblemen who did not cultivate could only live up to 30 or 40 years, at most. If they cultivated, they would be able to prolong their lifespans slightly. Even an Eight-leaf expert such as Yu Shangrong could only add 500 years to his own life with the help of the Longevity Sword.

In the cultivation world, it was the survival of the fittest. Without sufficient time to cultivate, how could they even think of becoming powerful? This was a vicious cycle in the long run... Each generation was worse than the one that preceded them. The demise of the Nobleman Country was inevitable.

Yu Shangrong was a member of the new generation who did not give up nor submit to his fate...

...

The Evil Sky Pavilion, Golden Court Mountain.

Night was starting to descend on the lands...

A black carriage pulled by two figures flew just above the tops of the trees.

The black mass of bodies was approaching Golden Court Mountain.

“Stop.” The black figure’s deep voice rang from above the black carriage and spread into the surroundings.

The masses of bodies obeyed his order strictly as they stopped moving instantly.

He glanced at the crowd below and spoke casually, “Hengqu Branch’s Grand Elder, Zhang Jin...”

Thud! Thud!

One of the figures on the ground turned around slowly and faced the black carriage. His eyes were lifeless, his face stiff. A scar could be seen on his neck.

Ba Ma produced a talisman, drew a few strokes on it with his hand, and tossed it out. The talisman stuck on Zhang Jin’s body.

“Go.”

Zhang Jin replied mechanically, “Understood.” Then, like a rabid dog, he sprinted toward Golden Court Mountain.

The current Golden Court Mountain was no longer protected by a barrier. These newcomers were, naturally, not hindered.

Zhang Jin had been Hengqu Branch’s Grand Elder when he was still alive. He had a Six-leaf cultivation base. In no time at all, he had arrived at the foot of the Golden Court Mountain. He looked up indifferently before he continued to sprint up the mountain, stirring up a gust of wind as he moved.

“Who dares trespass upon Golden Court Mountain?”

Zhou Jifeng flew past on his sword. He glanced at the intruder and was frightened. He had never seen such a peculiar person.

Zhang Jin did not reply as he continued sprinting.

Zhou Jifeng attacked from the skies. Several energy blades shot toward Zhang Jin.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

The energy blades could not even pierce Zhang Jin’s tough body.

“What...” Zhou Jifeng realized that this was not a monster that he could kill. He hastily flew back to the pavilion on his sword as Zhang Jin continued sprinting up.

**Chapter 386: Being Stabbed at Everyday**

Zhou Jifeng was flying on his sword so his speed would be greater than Zhang Jin who was running on foot no matter what. When he arrived outside the Evil Sky Pavilion, he saw Mingshi Yin and Duanmu Sheng pulling at each other. He quickly landed and cried out, "This is bad, Mister Third, Mister Fourth. A monster is charging up the mountain!"

"A monster?" Mingshi Yin frowned. He suddenly recalled his master's word about Ba Ma trying to take the Evil Sky Pavilion down. He had expected some elaborate and intricate plan, he did not expect Ba Ma was such a rash person who would recklessly launch a frontal assault. "I'll report this to master. Third Senior Brother, you should go have a look."

"Alright." Duanmu Sheng raised his Overlord Spear and glanced at Zhou Jifeng before saying, "Inform the others about this. I'll go have a look."

"Understood."

The three of them parted.

Duanmu Sheng's expression was solemn. He held the Overlord Spear with a backhanded grip as he charged down the mountain. He was barely halfway down when he saw Zhang Jin sprinting up.

Zhang Jin's face was pale, clearly devoid of blood. His body was riddled with wounds as well.

Duanmu Sheng could tell something was wrong and did not hesitate to brandish his Overlord Spear and stab at Zhang Jin. He dove slightly as up to 100 spear shadows that were shrouded with energy stabbed at Zhang Jin's face at lightning speed.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

The spear shadows stabbed Zhang Jin's chest, causing sparks to fly.

'He's tough!' Duanmu Sheng was alarmed. However, he was not afraid. Energy surged out of his body as he continued with a barrage of attacks.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

The fruit of his training under the waterfall was displayed at this moment. His attacks were accurate every single time.

Zhang Jin retreated before he finally reeled back.

The Overlord Spear's attack was fierce.

Clang!

Duanmu Sheng resembled a mountain god at this moment. He stood on the steps with his Overlord Spear in one hand as he looked at the reeling Zhang Jin.

Zhang Jin rolled down the steps. When he was a distance away, he came to a top and rose to his feet again.

"Stand down," an imposing voice said at this moment.

Duanmu Sheng looked behind him. He saw his master riding Whizard's back.

Little Yuan'er, Mingshi Yin, Zhao Yue, and the Old Age Pavilion's Leng Luo, Pan Litian, and Hua Wudao appeared in the air as well. All of them were looking at the scene.

Lu Zhou looked at Zhang Jin with a frown. "Hengqu Branch's Grand Elder, Zhang Jin."

Mingshi Yin asked, "Wasn't he killed by Second Senior Brother?"

"A dead man?" Many female disciples at the back grew fearful at this. 'That's a dead man?'

The young female disciples had limited knowledge about the matters of the world. It was only natural for them to be frightened by this scene.

Leng Luo, Pan Litian, and Hua Wudao thought about witchcraft at once when they saw the scene.

Pan Litian laughed. "It's been a long time since I've witnessed such a witchcraft spell... Pan Zhong, bring Buddhist Master Xu Jing here."

Pan Zhong cupped his fists and flew toward the northern pavilion immediately.

At this moment, the talisman on Zhang Jin's body fell off.

Crackle!

The talisman ignited. However, the flames were peculiar. It formed a purple circle in the air. A voice rang from the circle. "Yu Shangrong has been afflicted by my spell. His days are numbered. If you're powerful enough... I challenge you to a battle beyond this mountain." As soon as the voice stopped, the purple circle vanished.

Leng Luo said as he hovered in the air, "A Voice Projection Talisman... He can control a corpse as well. This person's witchcraft is complicated. He shouldn't be underestimated."

Pan Litian said, "Didn't you hear him? He's confident that Mister Second is going to die. How I'd love to spit on his face right now."

"Do it, then," Leng Luo said provocatively.

"I might just do that!" Pan Litian said. His voice had barely faded as he dove toward Zhang Jin, shrouded in a golden light. His gourd bottle shone with a golden light as well as it circled him.

"As expected of the Clarity Sect's greatest expert... I mean, as expected of the only geezer with a heaven-grade weapon in the Old Age Pavilion," Mingshi Yin praised.

Pan Litian moved swiftly as he dove down. He wielded his gourd bottle with a hand as a fan-shaped energy shot out from the gourd bottle.

Boom!

Zhang Jin remained expressionless as he reeled from the attack.

After sending his target flying, Pan Litian frowned slightly. "The corpse has been fortified by witchcraft... The culprit is a witchcraft genius, alright."

Hua Wudao nodded. "In terms of strength, this person is definitely more powerful than an Eight-leaf cultivator... Yet, the biggest shortcoming of witchcraft is that it needs a long preparation time. If I may say so, I have a suggestion..."

"What is it?" Mingshi Yin asked.

"Let's get on the flying chariot and keep flying for 10 days or a fortnight. The spell will disintegrate once he reaches his limit." Hua Wudao felt that his suggestion was extremely logical and satisfactory. This was a countermeasure that took advantage of witchcraft's shortcomings. If their opponent wanted to throw a net, all they had to do was avoid it. However, he felt that the looks that were directed at him were rather strange. 'Did I say something wrong?'

After Zhang Jin landed, his chest had caved in at the spot where he was hit by the gourd bottle. Even so, he rose to his feet expressionlessly.

"It's nothing but a tough puppet. I'll show you." Pan Litian walked on air again.

"Don't be hasty. Look at what's beyond the mountain..." Leng Luo said.

The others looked.

Under the cover of night, a huge crowd was slowly making their way toward them, emitting a strange aura.

"So many of them!" Zhu Honggong exclaimed in surprise, "Good heavens! Master, I think that we should consider Elder Hua's suggestion."

"You wimp! Grow a backbone, will you?" Mingshi Yin pushed Zhu Honggong aside.

At this moment, Buddhist Master Xu Jing led dozens of his disciples in the air toward them. They formed a neat square formation.

"Amitabha. Finally, I have the opportunity to repay you, Benefactor Ji." Xu Jing looked at the horde of puppets at the foot of the mountain. "I've told my other disciples to hurry over."

"Nice one, old monk..." Zhu Honggong said with a smile.

"All in a day's work."

Lu Zhou looked at the puppets below who seemed to be as numerous as ants and said, "Hua Yuexing."

Hua Yuexing stepped forward from her position at the back. She bowed and said, "I'm here."

"The skies are your territory. You have the Falling Moon Bow. Do your best and try to take out the spellcaster if you can." Lu Zhou flew higher on Whizard. A higher altitude would provide him with a better vantage point.

Hua Yuexing understood what Lu Zhou meant, and she followed him.

Lu Zhou glanced at the situation before flying downward.

Hua Yuexing leaned forward and looked down at her surroundings as well. She raised the Falling Moon Bow and pulled on the bowstring...

Whizz!

With a whistle, the arrow sailed through the air.

It was especially dazzling in the dark of night.

Bam!

The arrow hit a puppet on the ground.

The puppet fell with a thud, but it quickly got back onto its feet.

"I have to take out the spellcaster... These puppets are dead. They'll only rise back up no matter how I attack."

The others understood this as well.

Any intelligent witchcraft cultivator would hide and control his puppets from afar. Who knew where the spellcaster was right now?

Lu Zhou swept his gaze across the forest and said, "Elder Hua, defend the Evil Sky Pavilion."

"Understood." Hua Wudao was not suited for attacks. Naturally, he was happy to be in charge of protecting their home base.

Mingshi Yin said, "Master, why are their bodies so tough?"

Lu Zhou replied, "The spellcaster has absorbed vast amounts of life energy and created a blood pool where their bodies were soaked and refined. However, this technique is extremely evil in nature. The more puppets under his control, the greater the backlash would be for the spellcaster."

Leng Luo added, "He'll lose at least 200 years of his life."

"I'm enlightened," Mingshi Yin said.

"Who cares if they're tough? I'll kill them as they come." Duanmu Sheng tightened his grip on the Overlord Spear tightly as his energy circled him. "Master, I wish to fight!"

Lu Zhou nodded. "Approved." With him here, these disciples would not be in danger. If only Ba Ma showed his face, he would be able to take Ba Ma out with a Deadly Strike Card. All that would be left after that was to clean up the battlefield.

Now that Duanmu Sheng had been granted permission by his master, he seemed to be filled with vigor. He began his assault by summoning his Hundred Tribulations Insight avatar. Along with his 40-foot-tall avatar, he leaped off the mountain.

"Third Senior Brother... is as fierce as ever." Mingshi Yin was slightly speechless by this display. This was the reason why he was reluctant to spar with Duanmu Sheng. 'Who can stand being stabbed at every day...'

### **Chapter 387: Grand Display of Power**

Duanmu Sheng leaped down. His Hundred Tribulations Insight avatar crashed down like a cannonball.

Boom!

A round pit left behind by the impact of the Golden Lotus appeared before everyone's eyes.

Several puppets were slammed into the ground.

"Scorching Field Hundred Strikes!"

"Thousand Waves!"

Hua Wudao who had rushed back could not help but cough and feel like vomiting when he witnessed this scene. He sighed inwardly. 'I can't help but feel anxious for every single day that I have to spend in the Evil Sky Pavilion.' He glanced at Hua Yuexing, who was above the Evil Sky Pavilion. She would fire a few arrows to repel the puppets every once in a while. His mood improved when he looked at her.

Meanwhile, Zhang Jin, the Grand Elder of the Hengqu Branch, rose to his feet and charged out again. He was merely one of many puppets. The puppets felt no pain, fear, or death.

Pan Litian frowned. His Wine Gourd burst with a golden radiance once more as he tossed it out at the puppets.

Little Yuan'er, Zhao Yue, Mingshi Yin, and Zhu Honggong leaped down Golden Court Mountain as well.

For a time, there was a chaotic mess of energy. The area within several hundred meters of the mountain was tumultuous. Energy flew everywhere...

Lu Zhou tapped Whizard's back with the tips of his toes. He stepped into the air as Whizard seemed to vanish into thin air. A mount like Whizard that was accompanied by Auspicious Qi was too conspicuous. It would easily be discovered. Therefore, it was replaced by the more inconspicuous Bi An.

Lu Zhou traveled toward a boulder halfway up the mountain on Bi An's back. He observed the situation from the shadows.

The others nodded when they saw the pavilion master disappear. These were just a bunch of puppets. Indeed, the pavilion master did not need to trouble himself with this.

Unbeknownst to them, Lu Zhou was silently cheering his disciples on from Bi An's back. 'I'm helpless as well. With my cultivation base, the only thing I can do is to wave a flag and shout.'

Lu Zhou muttered to himself as he observed the battle below, "He's willing to give up 200 years of his life just to take down the Evil Sky Pavilion?"

Zhang Yuanshan had been an Eight-leaf cultivator when he was alive. This meant Ba Ma was not weak. Was it possible that Yu Shangrong was held hostage by Ba Ma after Yu Shangrong had killed Zhang Yuanshan? Lu Zhou did not think it entirely impossible.

Meanwhile, Pan Litian repelled Zhang Jin once more as he muttered under his breath, "He's unbelievably tough."

Leng Luo unleashed his Dao Invisibility skill on Zhang Jin. He launched a barrage of attacks. Several palm seals struck Zhang Jin's body. Then, he said, "Old Pan, hit him on the back of his head."

"Alright, I'll listen to you just this once." With Leng Luo's cooperation, Pan Litian let out a burst of energy. His Wine Gourd spun as it shot out. It grew in size and shone with a golden radiance. He cried out, "Sleeping on the Mountains!"

Bam!

Pan Litian's Wine Gourd hit Zhang Jin on the back of his head.

Crack!

The crisp sound of something cracking rang in the air.

The puppet Zhang Jin flailed his arms and seemed to be in a frenzy. However, soon after, he felt backward, seemingly at his last breath.

"What do you think about my Sleeping on the Mountains?" Pan Litian asked.

Leng Luo asked skeptically, "Is there such a technique in the Clarity Sect?"

"I improvised," Pan Litian shamelessly replied.

"..." Leng Luo moved swiftly. He vanished from sight and shot down the mountain like a specter.

"Isn't that a cool name?" Pan Litian leaped down and ran after him.

Leng Luo moved to Duanmu Sheng and the others and said, "Aim for the back of their heads."

"As expected of Elder Leng. You're so knowledgeable," Mingshi Yin said politely before he moved at lightning speed. He gripped the Separation Hook tightly and charged into the horde of puppets.

Bam! Bam! Bam!

Finally, the puppets were falling.

From her position above the Evil Sky Pavilion, Hua Yuexing began to aim for the backs of the puppets' heads with her energy arrows. However, it was rather difficult for her to land a shot since she had to wait for the puppets' backs to face her before she could even take aim. Even then, she managed to take down a few puppets.

Meanwhile, on the boulder, Lu Zhou sighed. The puppets were dead people. As expected, he was not rewarded with any merit points from killing them. He was beginning to dislike witchcraft.

At this moment, Lu Zhou saw Buddhist Master Xu Jing walking in the air above the horde of puppets. A few dozens of disciples stood behind him.

"Amitabha. The bodhi tree isn't a tree, the clear mirror isn't a mirror."

Xu Jing and his disciples opened their mouths and chanted in unison. In just an instant, the chants buzzed in the air.

"The Grand Enhancing Buddhist Technique, the Bright Mirror."

With Xu Jing led the other monks to chant, a huge circle spread out and shone brightly as it spun. Then, it dropped down slowly.



Lu Zhou had seen Wu Nian use this skill on the Lotus Dais previously. He did not expect its power and range would increase so dramatically when so many monks worked together.

When the circle of light descended on the ground, the light would flash as the monks chanted.

Lu Zhou stroked his beard and nodded. Although Jiang Aijian was lazy and carefree, he could still offer up good suggestions sometimes.

With this battle, Xu Jing and his monks' values had risen. After all, it would have been more difficult if Xu Jing and his disciples were not around.

The people who were battling below were all elites of Evil Sky Pavilion. Leng Luo, Pan Litian, Little Yuan'er, Duanmu Sheng, Mingshi Yin, Zhao Yue, Zhu Honggong surged with energies after being boosted by the Bright Mirror. Soon after, the foot of the mountain was filled with emerging avatars.

As the battle continued, a shining monk could be seen hovering at a corner.

...

Meanwhile, Ba Ma frowned upon seeing this. "A Buddhist sect?"

He saw his charging puppets fall as they engaged their powerful opponents. Although he remained expressionless, his fists were tightly clenched.

He waved his right hand. "Old villain... I don't think that you'll be willing to watch them drown in a sea of corpses..."

A purple radiant circle flew toward the monk who pulled on his black carriage.

The monk's eyes snapped open, and he stared at the sky blankly.

"Kong Yuan... Go! They're all your enemies. Let your hatred run wild!"

Kong Yun was dead, but he seemed to understand Ba Ma's words. His eyes widened.

Boom!

With lightning-fast movements, he left Ba Ma's witchcraft circle and charged toward the square formation of Xu Jing and his monks. Black palm seals appeared in the air.

"Look out!" Hua Yuexing cried out, projecting her voice. She fired three consecutive shots at Kong Yuan.

Bam! Bam! Bam!

Her energy arrows struck the black palm seals, and they vanished.

Meanwhile, Lu Zhou frowned slightly when he saw this.

'An Eight-leaf puppet. He's really going all-out...'

Witchcraft was never pleasant. The higher the level of the puppet Ba Ma controlled, the higher the price he would have to pay.

Lu Zhou remembered the withering plants that seemed to have increased lately. 'Borrowing life from the heavens?'

At the same time, Xu Jing chanted, and a Ward Mudra appeared. He activated his Buddha Golden Body.

Whizz!

Boom!

Kong Yuan's black palm seals collided with the Golden Body and the Ward Mudra.

Their energies caused turbulence in the air.

Xu Jing's disciples retreated.

"Hold your positions! Do not separate!"

Kong Yuan reeled from the backlash.

Pan Litian shot toward Kong Yuan with movements like a swallow. "I'll be your opponent!" Although he had not completely recovered his cultivation base, he was still once an Eight-leaf cultivator. It was only fair for an Eight-leaf cultivator to fight another Eight-leaf cultivator. With his Wine Gourd, it should not be a problem for him to hold Kong Yuan off. Kong Yuan's Primal Qi would run out sooner or later.

Lu Zhou looked at the numbers of the remaining puppets. Even with his disciples' effort, their number was only reduced by one-third. He thought about it for a moment before he moved his arm and said, "Xu Jing, catch."

Before Xu Jing could determine what it was, he caught the item that sailed toward him. When he saw the item in his hand, he said, "Prayer beads?"

"They're Buddhist prayer beads. It once belonged to Kong Yuan. Although it has already acknowledged an owner, it's still better than nothing."

When Xu Jing heard this, he was overjoyed. "I don't dare to receive any more of your goodwill, Benefactor Ji!"

In Lu Zhou's eyes, that was a rubbish weapon. Not only was it useless to him, but it even had to be refined for it to acknowledge a new owner.

On the contrary, Xu Jing treated it like a treasure. There was no way he would not feel excited by it.

### **Chapter 388: Human Hands and Heaven-grade Weapons**

Xu Jing placed the prayer beads carefully on his right palm before covering it with his left palm. He said, "Thank you, Benefactor Ji."

With these Buddhist prayer beads, Xu Jing's strength and cultivation base would greatly improve so long as he cultivated well. When the time came, restoring the glory of the Heaven Choice Temple would no longer be a mere pipe dream.

Lu Zhou stroked his beard indifferently as he observed the situation at the foot of the mountain.

With the Buddhist prayer beads in his hands, Xu Jing's aura seemed to have changed. "Regain formation."

"Understood."

Xu Jing wore the Buddhist prayer beads around his neck. When his Primal Qi surged, the Buddhist prayer beads sensed the influx of Primal Qi and shone faintly. A golden light shot out.

"Bright Mirror."

The disciples behind Xu Jing chanted the sutra along with him. They sounded louder than before.

A huge radiant circle appeared below Xu Jing's feet. A new enhancing-energy seal was formed. The magnificent pattern and dazzling golden radiance descended on the ground again.

Once again, the strength of the members of the Evil Sky Pavilion was boosted. They felt invigorated. They looked up at the group of monks in the skies.

Zhu Honggong said excitedly. "Old monk, I'll treat you to a drink someday!"

"Amitabha." When alcohol was mentioned, Xu Jing frowned. He was a monk and could not partake in alcohol.

Meanwhile, Pan Litian sent Kong Yuan flying with a strike from his Wine Gourd. He was trying to hit the back of Kong Yuan's head.

However, Kong Yuan was not like the other puppets. He was far superior in terms of strength, cultivation base, and reflexes. Also, he would occasionally summon his Fiend Zen avatar, which made his opponents wary of him.

Kong Yuan glared at Xu Jing who was hovering in midair. When he saw the prayer beads around Xu Jing's neck, he seemed furious. He went berserk as he launched a barrage of black palm seals at Pan Litian.

Pan Litian's cultivation base had not recovered yet. He barely managed to hold Kong Yuan down with his Wine Gourd, he could not fight directly against Kong Yuan. Under these circumstances, he could only dodge.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Black palm seals sailed in the air, and Pan Litian continued to dodge to the best of his abilities.

"Old Pan, are you alright?" Leng Luo maneuvered his way through the horde of puppets with his Dao Invisibility Technique.

Just as a dozen of puppets charged at Pan Litian...

Whizz!

A 100-foot avatar pushed them away.

Pan Litian replied, "I can manage!"

The Bright Mirror extended toward them. It immediately bolstered Pan Litian's spirits. His dantian's sea of Qi felt much more comfortable as well.

For a time, the ground was strewn with corpses.

Lu Zhou stood on Bi An's back as he surveyed the area before him. Then, he looked at the forest in the distance.

Kong Yuan had emerged from that part of the forest. Lu Zhou concluded Ba Ma should be hiding inside a Formation in that forest as he maintained control over the puppets.

With the support of Bright Mirror, the Evil Sky Pavilion gained the upper hand. The puppets' movements were clearly slower.

Meanwhile, Little Yuan'er picked up her pace. With her 10-foot-tall avatar, she crashed through the puppets and sent them flying with her kicks. She blew raspberries at them.

"Little Junior Sister, why are you pulling faces at them? It's not like they can understand you." Mingshi Yin shot past Little Yuan'er.

Little Yuan'er said, "I just felt like it!"

Up above, the unbroken sutra chant resounded throughout the mountain.

Beyond the trees, inside the witchcraft Formation, Ba Ma cursed in a low voice, "Bald donkey!"

With a wave of his right hand, a purple radiant circle shot toward Zhang Yuanshan.

Zhang Yuanshan's eyes widened.

With a deep voice, Ba Ma said, "Go and kill them all."

Zhang Yuanshan left Ba Ma and charged at the members of the Evil Sky Pavilion.

The current Zhang Yuanshan was different from when he was alive. Terrifying tentacles shot out from his arms as he lunged toward Little Yuan'er who was closest to him.

"Trying to capture me? Dream on! Seven Stars Cloud Treading Steps." Little Yuan'er retreated.

Zhang Yuanshan stretched his arms out. His voice sounded vile and cold as he said, "You can't get away!"

"Nirvana Sash!" Little Yuan'er's Nirvana Sash danced in the air, shrouded in energy. It positioned itself before her.

At the same time, Duanmu Sheng's Thousand Waves appeared to help her.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

A thousand spear shadows struck Zhang Yuanshan's chest. The heaven-grade weapon struck the same spot, causing a dent. He retreated.

"Thank you, Third Senior Brother." Little Yuan'er flung her Nirvana Sash out and repelled the puppets around her.

When the puppets reeled back, several powerful energy arrows came from above the Evil Sky Pavilion and hit the backs of their heads.

The puppets fell and no longer moved.

Little Yuan'er raised her thumb in the general direction of the top of the Evil Sky Pavilion. "Sister Yuexing has some skills."

Hua Yuexing smiled despite herself after receiving the compliment. She felt much more confident now.

Zhang Yuanshan had been boosted after all. He was an Eight-leaf expert after all. It was already a commendable feat for Duanmu Sheng to keep him at bay.

As expected, Zhang Yuanshan leaped to the side in a different direction and flew toward Xu Jing in the air.

Xu Jing frowned. "Ward Mudra! Golden Buddha Body!"

When Zhang Yuanshan lunged at Xu Jing again, he made a shocking move. He hit his sea of Qi with his palms.

"This is bad! Retreat!" Xu Jing and his disciples retreated in a square formation in the air with his Golden Body and Ward Mudra. For this reason, the Bright Mirror was deactivated.

"Self-destruct?" This was similar to what Leng Luo experienced when he faced the Ten Shamans. He snorted and pushed away from the ground, leaving several afterimages in his wake. "I'll be your opponent!"

Zhang Yuanshan hit his own sea of Qi again.

Leng Luo activated his avatar at this moment as well and positioned himself between Xu Jing and the monks.

Boom!

With Zhang Yuanshan at the epicenter, a blue explosion rippled out as a purple mist hung in the air and descended on the surroundings.

Whizz!

Whizz!

The Evil Sky Pavilion disciples' at the foot of the mountain activated their avatars and kept the purple mist at bay.

...

Ba Ma swept his gaze across the members of the Evil Sky Pavilion and their shining heaven-grade weapons...

Duanmu Sheng wielded the Overlord Spear.

Zhao Yue wielded her Sky Dagger with a backhand grip.

Little Yuan'er had her Nirvana Sash wrapped around herself.

Zhu Honggong wore his boxing gloves.

Pan Litian's gourd bottle was circling around him.

Hua Yuexing was shooting with her bow from afar.

What an ostentatious and luxurious lineup. Such opponents should be killed while they were still inside the cradle.

Ba Ma suppressed his excitement as best he could. These future elites would all die by his hands today.

With the purple mist descended on the land, Ba Ma extended his arms and looked up at the skies. With a trembling voice, he said, "For Lou Lan... Junior sister, our sacrifices were worth it."

...

The purple mist obscured Leng Luo's vision. He used his Eight-leaf avatar to block the backlash from Zhang Yuanshan's self-destruction. He immediately recalled his avatar as he reeled back.

Xu Jing and his disciples continued to retreat in a square formation. The Bright Mirror was shattered by the impact.

Meanwhile, Pan Litian and the monk, Kong Yuan, climbed even higher as they fought.

The purple mist surrounded them. Kong Yuan was unaffected. He suddenly lunged.

Pan Litian realized things were not looking good and flipped his body immediately.

Bam! Bam! Bam!

"Old Pan!"

"Elder Pan!"

Kong Yuan growled and dove. His black Fiend Zen reappeared.

They had not witnessed Yu Shangrong slicing the Fiend Zen with his sword before. If they did, they would have been shocked by Yu Shangrong's terrifying strength. However, the Fiend Zen that should have been destroyed by the sword had made a comeback. It seemed like the dead were no longer staying dead.

The Fiend Zen avatar's black figure crashed toward Pan Litian.

"Thousand Catties Defense!" A round barrier emerged from the gourd bottle in Pan Litian's hand.

Bam!

The Fiend Zen crashed into the barrier.

Pan Litian fell. His blood essence boiled, and his old face flushed from the effort.

Thud!

Pan Litian fell to the ground.

The others from the Evil Sky Pavilion quickly gathered around him. They formed a circle around Pan Litian.

“What is this mist?” Mingshi Yin asked.

“Blood curse!” Leng Luo said.

“Blood curse?”

“Blood essence from a powerful cultivator is mixed with that of the spellcaster’s to cast this spell. If we’re hit by the blood curse, we won’t be able to move anymore,” Leng Luo said grimly.

“What a pain!” A scornful expression appeared on Mingshi Yin’s face. “We can only hold it off with our energies.”

Without the enhancement from the Bright Mirror, their Primal Qi seemed to be depleting more quickly.

After Pan Litian was repelled, Kong Yuan turned toward Xu Jing and his disciples who were still in a square formation. His face, which was devoid of blood and expression, was terrifying. With his black avatar, he charged toward Xu Jing and the others.

Lu Zhou frowned. He did not think that it was worth it to use a Deadly Strike Card on a target who was already dead. He finally said, “Stand back.”

### **Chapter 389: Slash Again**

Initially, Lu Zhou planned to wait for Ba Ma to appear before killing Ba Ma with a Deadly Strike Card. However, after he considered the current situation, he realized Ba Ma’s preparation had exceeded his expectations. This was not as simple as forfeiting 200 years of life, Ba Ma had practically given all his life for these puppets. If another Eight-leaf puppet were to appear, there was no doubt that Ba Ma had already given his life.

Although Kong Yuan was nothing but a corpse now, his affinity with the prayer bead still existed. He seemed to be able to sense the prayer beads’ location as he charged at Xu Jing and the others. His huge black avatar resembled a meteor in the air.

Leng Luo retreated with Xu Jing and the others. They landed behind the boulder. The person who stood before them was none other than Lu Zhou who looked calm and indifferent since the beginning. They wondered what method the pavilion master to block the terrifying Fiend Zen attack. Regardless, they could only trust him.

Everyone looked up at Kong Yuan.

Lu Zhou flipped his wizened hand. The item that materialized in his hand was not a Deadly Strike Card... Instead, it was Unnamed. Unnamed was emitting a faint blue and purple light. It was the Heavenly Writing scrolls’ extraordinary power. The instant the black Fiend Zen avatar was upon him, he activated the power of past lives.

Lu Zhou swung his sword forcefully. From the lower-left corner, Unnamed drew a diagonal line to the upper-right corner.

Zing!

It was a simple and direct move, like a mere mortal swinging his arm. However, the air seemed to freeze over.

To everyone's surprise, the black Fiend Zen avatar cracked as though it was as fragile as a sheet of paper.

If the Sword Devil, Yu Shangrong, had witnessed this, what would his thoughts be? He only managed to cut the Fiend Zen avatar down after unleashing all his strength and techniques. And yet, his master cleaved it in two with just a casual swing of his hand. How was this even logical?

When the avatar disintegrated, the cultivator would usually be heavily injured as well. Kong Yuan was already dead. When his avatar was sliced open, black power leaked out as he reeled back. However, shortly after, he lunged at Lu Zhou again. A corpse had nothing to fear.

Lu Zhou said disapprovingly, "How futile!"

"Originating from nothing, but coming from everything. Living in samsara... I'll send you into samsara with this strike."

Kong Yuan shot toward them. He attempted to tackle the frail-looking old man with his tough body.

Bzzt!

The purple mist seemed to freeze in the air.

Suddenly, a purple mist shot out from the forest. A soundwave rolled out into the surroundings. "Restriction!"

The people of the Evil Sky Pavilion were shocked. They looked at the mist around them. The mist formed a huge net that cut off all their possible routes. The puppets on land did not relent in their attempts to attack them.

Ba Ma finally appeared. "I'll exchange my life for a shackle from which no being will be able to escape from. Die!"

Kong Yuan was upon Lu Zhou.

"Pavilion Master, look out!" Hua Wudao wanted to rush over and activate his Six Compatible Seal, but he was too late.

Lu Zhou glanced at Ba Ma who was hovering above the scene. He nodded in satisfaction. 'Finally, he shows himself.'

At this moment, Lu Zhou chose to use an Impeccable Card. This time, the Buddha Golden Body did not appear. Instead, a ten-script Six Compatible Seal appeared. He stood on the Eight Trigrams, and the ten scripts on his body shot out swiftly as they expanded. Heaven, earth, life, death, water, fire, being, non-being, and separation.



Bam!

The purple mist that initially shrouded the Evil Sky Pavilion was instantly scattered by the terrifying ten-script Six Compatible Seal.

Hua Wudao looked up, speechless. Was this still his Six Compatible Seal? Was this the Daoist Seal that he studied and created?

Each script was an individual attack. Apart from the round shield, there were energy seals formed by the ten scripts that struck at Kong Yuan precisely. The ten scripts spun and landed ten consecutive strikes.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Kong Yuan managed to hold his own when the first three scripts struck him. However, when the fourth to the sixth script hit him, he fell backward. When the ninth script struck, his body was blown up into pieces. By the tenth strike, his ashes had already scattered in the air.

Perhaps, Lu Zhou was lucky. Usually, the Impeccable Cards were more defense-oriented.

Kong Yuan who had been on collision course with the ten scripts finally died.

‘If I can kill you once, I can kill you twice.’

A shocked expression appeared on Ba Ma’s face. “You’re not affected by the Restriction?”

Lu Zhou glanced at the purple mist. He did not waste words with Ba Ma. He brought his left hand up, and a Deadly Strike Card appeared in his palm. A miniature vortex spun in an anti-clockwise direction.

“I’ve been waiting for you.” Lu Zhou had never loathed witchcraft as much as he did today. He was filled with so much loathing that he did not even want to waste another word.

Ba Ma widened his eyes. He sensed the alarming and terrifying power in Lu Zhou’s palm. He said hoarsely, “In that case, let’s die together...” Instead of retreating, he advanced. He charged toward Lu Zhou with the purple mist.

Lu Zhou did not fear Ba Ma. Up until now, he had not activated his Critical Block Card. Even without using the Heavenly Writing’s powers, Ba Ma could not do anything against him. However, Ba Ma, naturally, had no way of knowing that his enemy was a terrifying individual who was armed with all kinds of trump cards.

10 seconds passed in a blink of an eye.

The ten-script Six Compatible Seal vanished.

The Deadly Strike Card replaced the Six Compatible Seal and launched forward.

The Sole Diamond Seal, the Great Blitz Treasure Seal, the Magic Gourd Seal, the Sun Moon Seal. These seals corresponded with the Power, Energy, Harmony, Healing, Intuition, Awareness, Dimension, Creation, and Absoluteness. The packed scripts surrounded the great seal.

The others held their breaths at the sight of this. Although this was the second time they saw Lu Zhou unleashing this skill, they were still in awe and disbelief.

One of the great palm seals of the Daoist Sect collided with Ba Ma like a normal attack.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Similar to Kong Yuan, Ba Ma resisted obstinately. When the eighth palm seal struck his body, something different happened. The mist around him scattered. His face was illuminated by the radiance of the Nine Cuts Hand Seal.

At this moment, everyone saw Ba Ma's appearance. From his forehead to his chin, every inch of his face was covered in cuts. The edges of his eyes had been cut as well. Blood was trickling out of his seven orifices.

At this moment, it felt as though time itself had stopped.

"Ding! Killed a target. Reward: 2,000 merit points."

When he heard this notification, Lu Zhou knew that Ba Ma was dead. However, Ba Ma had cultivated his own body to continue attacking even after his death, similar to his puppets.

Lu Zhou thought about using the Great Seal of Fearlessness to grind Ba Ma into dust just to tie up loose ends.

When the ninth palm seal struck his heart, Ba Ma's eyes were filled with incredulity. However, he was no longer breathing.

"A blood-cultivated body..." Leng Luo reminded Lu Zhou.

Lu Zhou shook his head. He stepped forward and said confidently, "If I can slice you once, I can slice you again."

### **Chapter 390: There is Virtue in All Living Things**

Who was an expert?

Lu Zhou gave the others an earnest demonstration of what it meant to be an expert.

Leng Luo and Pan Litian had trouble keeping Kong Yuan at bay. However, Kong Yuan seemed so defenseless before Lu Zhou.

They suddenly remembered a question in their minds. Everyone had been talking about how the Patriarch of the Evil Sky Pavilion's great limit was at hand. Every year, they guessed and they probed, but they were never right. Every time, they would find an excuse to attack. The excuse was the truth that everyone believed in; the 1,000-year limit.

Under ordinary circumstances, a cultivator's cultivation base would deteriorate rapidly in the final 100 years of their lives. How did the pavilion master manage to maintain his cultivation base? There was another possibility; the Evil Sky Pavilion's Patriarch had truly found a way to attain the Nine-leaf stage.

If they had not seen this with their own eyes, they would never believe that the Evil Sky Pavilion's Master was capable of such a terrifying display of power.

The three men of the Old Age Pavilion thought of the same phrase at the same time; the villains had returned to his peak. Perhaps, at the pavilion master's level, his control over his powers had returned to his natural state.

There was no grand execution or flashy display of energy bursts.

Just like before, when Ba Ma charged toward Lu Zhou, he drew Unnamed across Ba Ma's body. Just like what he told Yu Shangrong; if he wanted to kill his opponent, all he had to do was to swing his sword with force alone. Unnamed's sharpness exceeded the understanding of the people gathered present on the scene.

Crack!

A sound that resembled bamboo plants being hacked off rang in the air. It was crisp and satisfying.

The satisfaction they felt could hardly be put into words. The people of the Evil Sky Pavilion felt, for the first time, just how wonderful this cracking sound was. It was so wonderful that the weights immediately lifted from their shoulders.

The witchcraft genius of Lou Lan, Ba Ma, had died.

The surroundings of the Evil Sky Pavilion fell silent.

Lu Zhou looked at the blood-cultivated body on the boulder and felt no sympathy. Witchcraft had light and dark sides. Unfortunately, Ba Ma chose the path of darkness.

"Your amazing might knows no bounds, master! My horizons have been widened!" Zhu Honggong was the first to break the silence.

The others looked at Zhu Honggong.

"Uh, can't help it... can't help it..." Zhu Honggong scratched his head. When he did that, he cried out in pain. The chiseled surface of the boxing gloves proved to be hazardous.

This was not the time for flattery. After all, they could still see the puppets moving forward albeit at a slow pace. Without the spellcaster controlling them, the puppets surrounded them like robots.

There were too many of them. They had shocking defenses as well. If they were to kill the puppets one by one, who knew how long it would take?

Lu Zhou looked at the purple mist in the sky and the avatar under him. He stroked his beard and said, "Whitzard."

Roar!

Whitzard, standing on auspicious clouds and bathed in Auspicious Qi, flew above the purple mist.

The scene that unfolded during the battle with the Ten Shamans was reenacted.

Hua Wudao widened his eyes. He looked at Whitzard scattering its Auspicious Qi.

The purple mist was being pushed down by the Auspicious Qi until it was on the ground.

Without the support from the purple mist, the puppets fell to the ground.

The process took quite a while. When the purple mist was completely gone, and all of the puppets had dropped to the ground, Whizard let out a long howl... As though it knew it had completed its mission, it flew back and vanished into the darkness.

Lu Zhou noticed that Whizard's status was shown as resting on the dashboard. He guessed that it would last seven days again.

The others looked in the direction where Whizard vanished. They were slightly stunned. They rubbed their eyes.

'Isn't this too great of a prank? Why wasn't this done sooner?'

Naturally, Lu Zhou had his own intentions. If he unleashed Whizard, Ba Ma would most likely turn tail and run. Taking care of Ba Ma before these puppets was the best course of action. As he looked at the puppets on the ground, he shook his head. He had lost a lot in this battle. There were no rewards of merit points, and he brought much trouble upon himself. That was not all. The purple mist had absorbed half of the plants' lifespans in the area. Many trees were now dried and withered.

Xu Jing took a few steps forward and slowly descended to the ground. He looked at the corpses strewn on the ground and sighed. He straightened his palm and said, "Amitabha!"

"Old monk, what's there to be Amitabha-ing about?" Zhu Honggong was creeped out by the bodies.

"They were controlled by Ba Ma and had no quarrels with me while they were still of this world. All of this is that grand shaman's mistake."

Zhu Honggong nodded, "I think you have a point."

Xu Jing turned around in midair, faced Lu Zhou, and said, "Benefactor Ji, virtue lies in all living things. Everything comes in a circle in its own time. I'm willing to set up an altar at the foot of the mountain to help these souls find peace. Please grant your permission, benefactor."

Lu Zhou surveyed the surroundings. The dead deserved respect. In the end, he replied, "Alright."

"Thank you, benefactor." Xu Jing straightened up and said in a clear voice, "On behalf of the deceased, I thank all the benefactors here."

"Old monk, you're something else... I'll leave them to you, then."

"It is but my duty."

Mingshi Yin looked at Xu Jing and said, "You're the first monk whom I can actually tolerate."

Lu Zhou returned to the Evil Sky Pavilion.

"Safe journey, Pavilion Master."

"Safe journey, master."

When Lu Zhou was finally out of sight, the others sighed with relief.

“Old Pan, are you alright?” Leng Luo noticed Pan Litian’s exhausted state.

“I won’t die from this.” Pan Litian gripped his Wine Gourd tightly. He coughed twice before he rose to his feet.

Pan Zhong flew down to support Pan Litian. He said, “Don’t push yourself too hard when your cultivation base isn’t restored yet.”

Pan Litian was not angered by this. He laughed. “However... in many circumstances, you can only know if you’re capable of surviving an ordeal when you push yourself to the limit.”

“Don’t try to fill my head with wild arguments. I’ll help you get back.”

The other disciples looked on as Pan Litian and Pan Zhong flew back to the Evil Sky Pavilion.

At this moment, Hua Yuexing descended from above the sky of Evil Sky Pavilion. She recalled her Falling Moon Bow and shook her head. She had much work to do. Throughout that battle, she had only killed a limited number of puppets.

Hua Wudao walked up to her and said, “Don’t give up. Those were the pavilion master’s direct disciples. They can’t be compared to the conventional standard of talent.”

“Oh.”

...

Meanwhile, Lu Zhou returned to the eastern pavilion.

The two swings of his sword did not seem to contain great power, but it did deplete two-third of his extraordinary power. After all, the power was capable of besting an Eight-leaf opponent. Moreover, this was on top of wielding Unnamed.

He flipped his palm. Unnamed hovered above his hand.

The black rune?

Lu Zhou remembered the scene in the Mausoleum of Swords. Unnamed had absorbed all of the Demon Sword’s black runes and converted them to its own energy. Was it sharpened because of this?

With a thought, Unnamed turned into a hammer. It was not covered in runes when it took the shape of other weapons. He put Unnamed away.

Lu Zhou cleared his mind of distracting thoughts. He sat with his legs crossed and entered his Heavenly Writing’s meditation state.

This time, he used a Deadly Strike Card and an Impeccable Card. The number of item cards he had was decreasing. Judging by the current prices, he would run out of cards sooner or later. All he could rely on was the extraordinary power. He had to think of a way to improve his cultivation base.

...

Early the next morning.

Lu Zhou had just opened his eyes when a voice reached him from the other side of the door.

“Master, Xu Jing requests an audience.”

“Alright.” Lu Zhou stood up and gauged his extraordinary power. It had merely increased a little after a night’s worth of meditation. He was slightly worried about the pace of his meditation. Could this have something to do with the fourth Open Heavenly Writing scroll? Would the pace improve with every opened scroll? However, he did not dwell upon this. Instead, he left the eastern pavilion.

He stood outside the great hall and saw a lively scene.

A crowd was gathered between the two majestic stone pillars outside the great hall. They wore monks’ robes.

Golden Court Mountain was not a small mountain. There were several thousand square meters before the great hall. However, it was completely occupied by the monks.

‘What is this about?’

The great hall faced the east so the morning sun shone on the Evil Sky Pavilion.

Lu Zhou walked slowly toward them.

Xu Jing emerged from the crowd, straightened a palm, and said, “Amitabha.”