

Disciples 391

Chapter 391: Rumors Abound and the Mutated Golden Lotus

Lu Zhou was puzzled. 'What are all these monks doing here?'

Apart from Zhou Jifeng and Pan Zhong, his disciples and the other old men were not present on the scene.

"Greetings, Benefactor Ji." The monks bowed in unison.

Lu Zhou remained silent as he waited for Xu Jing's explanation.

Xu Jing said, "The Heaven Choice Temple has recruited 2,000 new disciples. I've called them over as reinforcements, but the battle had already ended when they arrived. However, they arrived just in time to help with the clearing of the corpses. We're fortunate to have accomplished what was entrusted to us. The foot of the mountain is now cleared."

Lu Zhou nodded when he heard this. He was pleased. It was not a bad thing to have them help out around these parts. He replied curtly, "I see."

Xu Jing seemed embarrassed as he said, "However, many trees and plants near the foot of the mountain are half-withered. I've tried the Merciful Ark of Salvation, but it did not help."

The withering of the plants was within Lu Zhou's expectations. Fortunately, the purple mist had been quickly dispersed. Otherwise, all the plants on Golden Court Mountain would wither and the mountain would be barren. He was deep in thoughts at this moment. He finally decided to restore the barrier should the chance presented itself. Without the barrier, the defenses of Golden Court Mountain were too weak.

Xu Jing said, "Benefactor Ji, the Buddhist prayer beads are too precious of a gift. I can't take it without earning it. Kindly take it back, Benefactor Ji." He removed the prayer beads from around his neck and respectfully presented them to Lu Zhou with both hands.

Lu Zhou glanced at the Buddhist prayer beads. Was any of his disciples thinking of becoming a monk? 'Who should I give this to if not a monk?' Finally, he said, "I've never liked monks, but your performance is worthy of praise. Since I've given you the prayer beads, I won't take them back."

Xu Jing was slightly taken aback by this. When he received the prayer beads yesterday, he thought it was a ploy by the Evil Sky Pavilion to temporarily bribe them for their help. He did not expect to keep it. When he heard Lu Zhou's words, a contrite expression appeared on his face. His benefactor had sincerely offered him a gift, and yet, he had questioned the benefactor's motives. "I'm ashamed of myself!"

Was this the bearing and thoughts worthy of an erudite monk? Xu Jing was so ashamed he wished the ground would open up and swallow him.

Lu Zhou who did not spare any thoughts to his matter was rather speechless when he looked at Xu Jing. He finally understood why his disciples greatly disliked those on the Noble Path. The people on the Noble Path assumed too much and thought too highly of themselves. 'I'm just giving you the prayer beads because you've been of help to me. Moreover, the prayer beads aren't worth much.'

To each his own.

Xu Jing wore the prayer beads around his neck. He lifted his monk robes and kowtowed piously. "On behalf of the Heaven Choice Temple, I thank you, Benefactor Ji."

Xu Jing's disciples, naturally, could not stand by idly when their master was kowtowing. They kowtowed at Lu Zhou as well.

"Ding! Received a genuine kowtow from 1,020 individuals. Reward: 10,200 merit points."

'Hm?' Lu Zhou was surprised to hear this notification. He suddenly remembered that Xu Jing mentioned something about the Heaven Choice Temple having many new disciples. A repeated kowtow would not give him any points. The arrival of 1,020 new disciples was a pleasant surprise.

Lu Zhou suddenly felt that it was a good decision to have given the Buddhist prayer beads to Xu Jing.

However, the Heaven Choice Temple was reborn with the Evil Sky Pavilion's help and was different from the other sects. He could not possibly expect the others to kowtow at him genuinely just because he gave them something.

...

Over the next two weeks, Xu Jing insisted on staying to show his gratitude. He thoroughly cleaned the Evil Sky Pavilion. Apart from the withered plants at the foot of the mountain, which they could not do anything about, everything was tidied up by the monks. Even the steps were spotless.

...

Early one day, Lu Zhou had just finished meditating on the Heavenly Writing scrolls.

At this moment, Mingshi Yin entered the eastern pavilion with a letter in his hand. He bowed, clearly irritable, as he said, "Master, a letter from Jiang Aijian."

Lu Zhou could sense the annoyance in Mingshi Yin's tone, but he did pay him any mind. "Read it."

Mingshi Yin opened the letter and read, "Old senior, has the Evil Sky Pavilion been trampled by a minor witchcraft cultivator? What's the situation? The major sects of the cultivation world are talking about how half of Golden Court Mountain withered overnight. This isn't good news..."

When he read this, Mingshi Yin muttered to himself, "Excuse me, we crushed them."

"Go on." Lu Zhou's voice remained calm.

Mingshi Yin did not dally. He continued to read aloud, "I must remind you that you should be wary of the alliances between the sects on the Noble Path. Also, I have an important piece of information... Ba Ma's death has reached Lou Lan. The royals of Lou Lan are infuriated. They sent several hundred cultivators to Rouli Nation for an alliance... Where do you think they're headed?"

'I'll clobber this long-winded fellow the next time I see him,' Mingshi Yin thought to himself before he continued to read the letter, "They went to Liang Province. Coincidentally, your first and seventh disciples are headed north. Si Wuya's information network in Great Yan is wider than mine, but in the Other Tribes and Lou Lan, he's no match for me... Ha-ha-ha..."

After reading that, Mingshi Yin said, “Master, shall we summon Jiang Aijian here? I don’t think he made himself very clear.”

“No need.” Lu Zhou walked out of the eastern pavilion. He stroked his beard, lost in thoughts.

Great Yan had defeated Lou Lan many times. In the recent exchange, Lou Lan even had to offer one of their princesses for a marriage alliance. The marriage alliance was, naturally, a good thing. However, nobody expected that Mo Li would go so far as to turn into a woman and become the consort of Liu Huan, the Second Prince. Clearly, she had planned to infiltrate Great Yan and take it down from inside. Now that Mo Li and Ba Ma were dead, how could Lou Lan not be furious?

Back then, Ji Tiandao had lived through the period where Great Yan was in conflict with the Other Tribes. However, he rarely involved himself in those affairs.

“Master, I suspect that Lou Lan and Rouli are trying to invade Liang Province with this opportunity... Jiang Aijian is a prince, after all. This is their matter,” Mingshi Yin said.

“After Liu Gu ascended the throne, he neglected to manage the empire. Even when the Second Prince died, he didn’t make a move. I don’t think things are as simple as you think they are,” Lu Zhou replied.

“If that’s the case, isn’t Eldest Senior Brother just exposing his back to his enemies?” Mingshi Yin asked.

“Hm?” Lu Zhou glanced at him.

Upon hearing that, Mingshi Yin realized he had said the wrong thing. He hastily added, “Oh, right, he deserves it... If they’re defeated, it’ll be the perfect opportunity to capture and interrogate them.”

“Are you trying to decide my matters for me?” Lu Zhou asked.

“... I dare not!”

Lu Zhou no longer spoke. He decided to just go with the flow. Clearly, there was something amiss with how Liu Gu seemed unbothered with the affairs of the world. In that case, what was the Imperial family waiting for?

“Send word to Jiang Aijian. Tell him to investigate the Imperial family’s research on the Nine-leaf stage.”

“Yes, master.”

“Tell him that I’ll take back Dragonsong and the Demon Sword if he refuses to cooperate.”

“That’s great! Uh... yes, master!” Mingshi Yin bowed.

Lu Zhou nodded and said, “I’ll check on Pan Litian and Leng Luo. I’ll leave the rest to you. If there’s nothing urgent, there’s no need to report to me.”

“Yes, master!” Mingshi Yin bowed again.

...

On Brackish Mountain in the snow-covered northern borders.

The cold spring wind blew, and yet, everything was quiet in the Melilot Graveyard. It remained unaffected by the roaring of the wind.

Whizz!

Yu Shangrong summoned a miniature Hundred Tribulations Insight avatar on his palm. He shook his head as he looked at it. Two-third of the Golden Lotus was now covered in purple spots. He could early feel his avatar had lost more than half of its strength. Moreover, the purple spots were still continuing to spread.

Yu Shangrong sighed softly. "This is my fate... I started with the melilot, and I'll end with the melilot."

Chapter 392: Regrets and Cutting the Golden Lotus

Brackish Mountain was usually shrouded in darkness. Without knowing when it began, it never stopped snowing as well. In a snowy land that had lost sunlight along with the biting cold, it was difficult for people to be compelled by the scenery.

The cold wind entered the graveyard through the only opening on the ceiling. It howled like a war horn. At the same time, it sounded as though the bones in the Melilot Graveyard were lamenting their fates and lives that were filled with regrets.

Everyone in the Nobleman Nation sought longevity. They wanted to go against the heavens, change their fates, and break the bonds of their shackles. Now, everything laid in ruins.

Yu Shangrong sometimes wondered why the heavens treated them differently when they were all humans? He left this place in his youth to change his fate. With his mortal legs, he traversed the lands, ventured through dangerous forests, and cultivated... He was finally at the peak of human cultivation. He would be lying if he said that he did not feel wronged in the slightest.

Wuu...

The wind's howling intensified.

It pulled Yu Shangrong back from his thoughts. He rose to his feet and surveyed his surroundings. He looked at the ingenious design of the graveyard and shook his head. He looked at the wall on which the word 'longevity' was carved. He felt slightly emotional.

Clack.

With a crisp sound, the characters moved.

'A contraption?'

Several dozen projectiles shot from the walls to the sides. Yu Shangrong did not even have to use his Primal Qi. He only needed his protective energy to keep the projectiles at bay. They were weak projectiles. They were arrowheads forged by the hands of men. They were refined, solid, compact, and exquisite. They were truly works of art, and yet, they could do nothing against cultivators.

The projectiles fell harmlessly to the ground.

A hidden bracket appeared on the wall.

Without hesitation, Yu Shangrong pressed it.

The second stone door slowly slid open, revealing a round space. The lighting in this room was better than the previous one. However, the howling of the wind was still audible. His ears were growing accustomed to the humming sound.

There was a round stone table in the center of the round room. A brocade box rested on the table. The box was surrounded by withered melilots. Perhaps, it was due to the passing of time, the melilots only left behind vague outlines. The physical bodies had rotted away long ago.

Yu Shangrong waved his sleeve softly. The melilots and dust scattered. He looked at the brocade box. Petals of a melilot decorated the lid of the box. He did not think much about it and waved his arm again.

Click!

The brocaded box opened, revealing several books and pills.

Yu Shangrong picked the books up and casually flipped through them. There was nothing special about the books. They were the cultivation methods of the Buddhist, Daoist, and Confucian sects. Indeed, they would be considered treasures for ordinary people. However, for Yu Shangrong, they were nothing but a pile of useless paper. He would not even deign to look at them twice. Some Primal Qi surged in his palm, and the books were reduced to ashes.

As for the pills, after all this time, their effects had certainly deteriorated. Judging from the shapes of the pills, these pills should have been low-grade longevity pills. Like the books, they were not much use to him. These were indeed precious items to the people of the Nobleman Country in the past. He did not expect them to be placed inside the Melilot Graveyard.

‘Did nobody cultivate or consume these?’ Yu Shangrong sighed softly and smacked his palm down.

Bam!

The brocade box fell to the ground.

Suddenly, a strange item that looked like a painting fell from the bottom of the brocade box.

Yu Shangrong shifted his gaze toward the painting. To be more precise, it was a sheet of paper with various symbols. He suddenly recalled the paper and mission his master entrusted to him. The symbols on the paper he was given seemed to match those on this sheet of paper.

He took out the paper that his master had given and laid it next to the sheet of paper to compare them. Many of the symbols were similar, there was a handful that was complete matches. There were more symbols on the sheet he found. Clearly, the contents on the two sheets of paper were different, but they had been written in the same style.

“Does this belong to master?” Yu Shangrong was curious. Why was his master’s possession here? He did not think that the other items were precious, but he guessed this sheet had to be very precious.

Yu Shangrong studied the symbols on the paper, but he could not understand any of them. In the end, he gave up trying to make sense of it. Then, he folded it carefully and placed it inside his pocket. The fact

that it survived the years quietly inside this box without being affected by the weather proved that the material of this sheet of paper was extraordinary as well.

After that, Yu Shangrong turned to look at the stone door. "Should I head back?"

Then, he walked out of the second stone door.

The howling of the wind intensified.

Yu Shangrong felt that something was amiss. He raised a hand, and his Hundred Tribulations Insight avatar appeared. His Golden Lotus was still tainted by the purple curse.

"Won't it go away?" Yu Shangrong frowned slightly.

If his avatar was fine, he would be able to return to the Evil Sky Pavilion in seven days if he flew at full speed. However, at the moment, he was sure that his avatar would fall apart halfway through his journey. There were many beasts in the wilderness. He would become their prey if he was not careful. Without his avatar, his cultivation base was only equivalent to a Nine-fold Body Tempering cultivator. He could handle manual labor, but he could not hasten his journey and pass through dangerous forests. He did not think that he could count on having the same luck he had in his youth.

When he thought about this, Yu Shangrong stopped. He did not intend to break the door. He crossed his legs and sat down. Then, he circulated his Primal Qi to suppress the erosion of the purple curse. He adjusted his breathing as he entered a meditative state.

...

The entire day passed in just a blink of an eye.

If it were not for the source of light from the Melilot Graveyard's ceiling, it would be difficult to tell that it was already bright outside.

Yu Shangrong summoned his Hundred Tribulations Insight avatar again... Indeed, the spread of the purple spots had slowed. However, this suppression was merely delaying the spread of this poison, it was not a cure. He could not allow this to drag on...

Yu Shangrong had been searching for a way to overcome this throughout the night. Yet, he could not stop the erosion of this curse.

As the Sword Devil who remained undefeatable in the cultivation world over the years, this was his first time feeling powerless and helpless.

Yu Shangrong stood up and passed through the second stone door. He sat down with his legs crossed again to adjust his breathing while he tried to come up with something.

...

On the fifth day, Yu Shangrong summoned his avatar again. The Golden Lotus of his Hundred Tribulations Insight avatar was almost completely tainted. Perhaps, it was due to the pressure of his Golden Lotus's imminent destruction by the curse, a sudden and terrifying thought came to Yu Shangrong's mind unbidden. Sever the Golden Lotus!

He knew the consequences of that act. This was because he did the exact same thing to countless other avatars with his Longevity Sword before. Fiend Zen avatars, Daoist avatars, Confucian Heavenly Energy avatars, Buddha Golden Bodies. Regardless of the avatar, when they were cut by a heaven-grade weapon, the cultivator would be gravely injured. Cutting off his Golden Lotus was akin to committing suicide.

Yu Shangrong was surprised to find his fingers trembling. He tightened his grip on the scabbard of the Longevity Sword. The Sword Devil of the generation was clearly nervous.

Chapter 393: Great Disturbance under the Heavens and the Plan to Capture Disciples

Yu Shangrong maintained this posture without moving. If this had happened to anyone, they would consider their options carefully. Put aside the possibilities of dying, if one were told to sever one's leg to continue living, would one be brave enough to do it?

At this moment, Yu Shangrong was facing such a choice. Although it was not as cruel as severing his legs, severing the Golden Lotus was just as difficult to accept. For cultivators, their cultivation base was their life. Without their cultivation base, they would be a good-for-nothing. It was no different from being dead.

...

Night fell. There was no light at all inside the Melilot Graveyard.

Yu Shangrong held his scabbard. He occasionally lifted the Longevity Sword with his thumb. The sound of the Longevity Sword sliding against the scabbard was exceptionally clear and piercing at this moment. It sounded like a butcher was sharpening his knife.

This went on for nearly an entire night.

When the dim light from above shone into the graveyard, Yu Shangrong's thumb had stilled.

There was a predetermined end to everything. Perhaps, this ending had been written in stone since the day he left Brackish Mountain in his youth.

Was death terrifying? He would die without his cultivation base, sooner or later, anyway.

Zing!

Yu Shangrong lifted the Longevity Sword forcefully with his thumb. With a force greater than before, his Longevity Sword shot into the air.

Yu Shangrong's expression was determined as he rose to his feet and gripped his Longevity Sword. Meanwhile, his Hundred Tribulations Insight avatar illuminated the entire Melilot Graveyard. He did not even look as he swung his Longevity Sword.

Swoosh!

Sometimes, a forceful swing was not used to kill opponents.

After Yu Shangrong swung his sword, he looked at his Hundred Tribulations Insight avatar coldly.

The purple Golden Lotus was detached from the avatar above, independent of one another.

His avatar stayed in the air while the Golden Lotus fell!

Even under such circumstances, Yu Shangrong did not wish to appear miserable. He quickly tapped a few meridian points on his body before he sat with his legs crossed.

The instant he sat, his face turned ghastly pale, and sweat broke out on his face.

The lower half of his avatar fell on the ground and vanished as the upper half merged with his body.

Shortly after, his dantian's sea of Qi underwent a sudden change. He felt as though a tsunami had broken out within himself. How powerful could a person be? He was still capable of maintaining a calm attitude even when he was so close to death. His expression remained unchanged. He was determined and indomitable.

He felt as though he was being roasted inside a volcano. His Primal Qi seemed to be trying to escape its vessel as it ricocheted inside his body. He remained unmoving as a mountain and endured it.

...

Time passed.

After an unknown period of time, Yu Shangrong sensed that his consciousness was still intact. He opened his eyes suddenly. His cultivation base had deteriorated greatly. From the Eight-leaf stage, it fell to the Seven-leaf stage, and then, to the Six-leaf stage.

The Primal Qi contained within his dantian's sea of Qi leaked out slowly.

Five-leaf, Four-leaf, Three-leaf, Two-leaf, One-leaf.

Blood started to trickle from the edge of his lips.

However, Yu Shangrong did not despair from this. On the contrary, a satisfied smile appeared on his lips. Although he was gravely wounded and lost his lotus leaves, at the very least, he was still alive. Without his Golden Lotus, it was only natural for him to be without any leaves. That much was expected.

"That's nothing. All I have to do is to sprout leaves again." His voice sounded confident and lively inside the Melilot Graveyard.

His glory merely existed in his memories now. However, if one failed in life, all they had to do was to start over.

...

Meanwhile, Great Yan's Liang and Yi Provinces were experiencing rapid changes.

Inside the Evil Sky Pavilion.

Mingshi Yin brought Jiang Aijian's letter into the great hall. He looked at his master seated on his throne and said, "Master, Jiang Aijian wrote in his letter that the Imperial family has dispatched the army to Liang Province... The nations, Lou Lan and Rouli, have also sent their cultivators over. With Si Wuya's intelligence, he would not likely miss this. We'd have to wait patiently for any changes in the situation."

Lu Zhou said nothing. Instead, he looked at the value of his merit points on the system dashboard. He was deliberating about the best way to spend them. He was about to capture Si Wuya and Yu Zhenghai. Indeed, he would have to wait and see.

Merit points: 17,900.

Perhaps, he was already used to the system's tricks, Lu Zhou found that he no longer had a temper. He was quite calm.

'It's only 100,000 merit points. I'll just have to take it slow.'

When he saw that his master did not respond, Mingshi Yin left the great hall in a respectful manner.

...

The next day, Mingshi Yin went into the great hall with Jiang Aijian's letter in his hand again. He saw his master painting. This meant that his master was in a good mood. He felt emboldened by this. He walked up to Lu Zhou and said directly, "Master, Jiang Aijian wrote in his letter that the Imperial family has intentionally given up on Yi Province. They sent the Fourth Prince, Liu Bing, to quell the disturbance in Liang Province... However, Si Wuya seemed to have predicted this. The Nether Sect's branches in Great Yan's nine provinces are deliberately wreaking havoc. Currently, the empire is in a mess."

Lu Zhou stopped moving his hand. As expected, these two rascals wanted to cause a great disturbance under the heavens and go against the Divine Capital.

Could they do it? Nobody knew.

If Yu Zhenghai had operated alone, it might have been impossible. However, with Si Wuya's help, the outcome became uncertain. Si Wuya's Darknet was an unbelievably vast force. Even Jiang Aijian was wary of it. Needless to say, everyone else feared it as well.

After muttering to himself for a while, Lu Zhou said, "Did Jiang Aijian mention anything about the Imperial family's research on the Nine-leaf stage?"

"He didn't."

"Remind him."

"Yes, master."

Lu Zhou did not care about the disturbances in Yi and Liang Provinces. Even if the whole world was plunged into chaos, it was nothing but the doings of the Nether Sect behind the scenes. Without clear information, he would not easily make a move.

What Lu Zhou needed was to stay patient, and patience was what his host, Ji Tiandao, lacked the most.

Before making any move, it was better for him to find out more about the Nine-leaf stage.

...

On the third day...

Mingshi Yin was clearly in more of a rush compared to before. Apart from him, even Little Yuan'er and Duanmu Sheng entered the great hall as well.

"Master, a letter from Jiang Aijian."

"Cut to the chase," Lu Zhou said.

"Jiang Aijian says that Princess Yong Ning will head to Liang Province with the Fourth Prince... The Nether Sect is pincerred by enemies on both sides. It seems that they weren't able to escape." A hint of incredulity could be heard in Mingshi Yin's tone when he read the letter.

Lu Zhou was slightly taken aback. He stopped writing. With a wave of his hand, the letter in Mingshi Yin's hand flew into his own.

Lu Zhou scanned its contents before he said with a frown, "With Si Wuya's skills, they shouldn't have been surrounded this easily... Princess Yong Ning?"

"Princess Yong Ning is only a woman. Why would she go to Liang Province with Liu Bing?" Mingshi Yin was puzzled.

At this moment, Zhu Honggong's loud voice rang from outside. "Greetings, master!"

When Mingshi Yin heard this fellow's voice, he felt annoyed for some reason. He said with a hint of threat, "Eighth Junior Brother, just spit whatever it is you have to say, and be quick about it."

Zhu Honggong chuckled and said, "Master, I know about this Princess Yong Ning."

"Go on." Lu Zhou sat down.

"Princess Yong Ning fancies Seventh Senior Brother... I've only heard Seventh Senior Brother mention her once. I don't know anything else," Zhu Honggong replied.

"An old acquaintance?" Mingshi Yin's eyes widened. "It's no wonder he managed to escape from Han Yuyuan. That's why he knew so much about the happenings inside the palace. That's how he managed to force Jiang Aijian to take shelter inside the Evil Sky Pavilion... He had a princess supporting him all this time! I never took the cultured Seventh Junior Brother to be such a beast!"

"..."

Everyone could hear the envy in Mingshi Yin's words. It sounded like the whining of a single man.

Duanmu Sheng glanced at Mingshi Yin. Then, he blew on his Overlord Spear before he began wiping it with his sleeve.

With a smile, Little Yuan'er said, "Is Sister Yong Ning pretty?"

"I've never seen her before," Zhu Honggong replied.

Mingshi Yin said, "Little Junior Sister, don't interrupt us. Master, this isn't as simple as it seems... It must be a trap by Old Seventh."

Little Yuan'er nodded as though she was a chick pecking for grains.

Lu Zhou stroked his beard as he nodded and considered it. He had two more strengthened Binding Cage Cards, one Deadly Strike Card, and his extraordinary power was sufficient. He had the means to capture Si Wuya and Yu Zhenghai. The problem was... where would they show themselves?

After thinking about it for a moment, Lu Zhou stood slowly. He looked at Mingshi Yin and said, "If you were Si Wuya, what would you do?"

Chapter 394: Embroidered Clothes in the Night

Mingshi Yin stroked his chin and said thoughtfully, "If I were Si Wuya, I would never place myself in harm's way. However, I might just act contrary to convention." After he said this, he felt that something was wrong and added, "If Old Seventh does have a connection with Princess Yong Ning, she might actually show up in Liang Province. As for Eldest Senior Brother... it's not unlikely that he's in danger. I think... Eldest Senior Brother is trying to create a diversion."

Duanmu Sheng was still rubbing down his Overlord Spear like nobody's business.

Lu Zhou nodded. He felt that it was logical. Then, he looked at Zhu Honggong and asked, "What do you think?"

Zhu Honggong said, "Master, you're asking me?"

Without waiting for a reply from Lu Zhou, Mingshi Yin rolled his eyes and said, "Just answer the question." He thought to himself, 'This oaf won't feel at ease unless he's flattering another person. I have to stop this habit of his no matter what.'

Zhu Honggong said, "If I were Seventh Senior Brother, I'll immediately return to the Evil Sky Pavilion, obediently kneel before you, kowtow, and ask for forgiveness!"

Mingshi Yin was speechless. 'That's it. I've had enough!' He kicked Zhu Honggong.

"Ow!" Zhu Honggong stumbled to the side. He said, in pain, "I'm telling the truth..."

Lu Zhou had no intention of punishing Zhu Honggong, but his answer was truly meaningless.

Si Wuya was not Zhu Honggong. Since he chose to aid Yu Zhenghai and make an enemy out of the Imperial court, he must have his reasons.

Also, Yu Zhenghai's departure was similar to Yu Shangrong, but there was also a great difference between the two.

All this could only be resolved once Lu Zhou found the memory crystals.

According to the piece of information Yu Shangrong gave him, since his host, Ji Tiandao, had sealed the memories away, it meant that he did not wish for anyone to know where he stored them.

Si Wuya was the smartest disciple among the nine. If he did not know where it was, it would be impossible for the others to know anything about it.

"Master... I think Seventh Senior Brother will go to Liang Province," Little Yuan'er said.

Mingshi Yin turned to look at Little Yuan'er and asked, "Why?"

‘Did Little Junior Sister have an epiphany?’

“Gut feeling,” Little Yuan’er replied.

“...” Mingshi Yin felt speechless.

‘One of them is stupid, and the other is dumb. Why do I have such juniors?’

Lu Zhou stroked his beard and said, “Why would you have this gut feeling?”

“If Sister Yong Ning is really helping him out, I don’t think he’d stand back and see Sister Yong Ning fall into the hands of the Other Tribesmen, right?” Little Yuan’er said.

Mingshi Yin rolled his eyes and said, “He’s the fastest runner around here.”

The two of them had clashing opinions.

However, this time, Lu Zhou agreed with Little Yuan’er. Although her judgment was based on simple theories of friendship, it was usually such elements that form the most fatal of weaknesses.

Since time immemorial, even the heroes had a weakness for the charms of beautiful women. Would Si Wuya be the same?

...

Meanwhile, inside one of the Nether Sect’s branches far, far away.

Yu Zhenghai was in an exceptionally good mood. He looked out the window with his hands on his back and said, “With Seventh Junior Brother looking after the Nether Sect, the world will be mine sooner or later... Now that all nine provinces are in chaos, I’d like to see what the Imperial family would do.”

“Eldest Senior Brother, this is only the beginning. Let’s not underestimate our foes yet,” Si Wuya replied.

“That dog of an emperor is nothing without the Divine Capital’s Imperial guards and the Ten Terminal Formation.”

Si Wuya said, “In terms of cultivation base, it’s only natural for you to be the best under the heavens, Eldest Senior Brother.”

“Junior Brother, such words mustn’t be said lightly. I’m only bold enough to claim that I’m second best,” Yu Zhenghai said.

Si Wuya did not continue with the topic. Instead, he sat down and looked at the map on the big table before him. With the Divine Capital at the center, the human settlements around it had been labeled. Everything was going smoothly. So smoothly that he found it odd.

When Yu Zhenghai saw Si Wuya deep in thoughts, he asked, “Are you worried about the Other Tribes, junior brother?”

“Eldest Senior Brother, Liu Gu is an extremely patient man. He didn’t even meet the emperor when the Second Prince, Liu Huan, and Mo Li died. In fact, he grounded the Crown Prince, Liu Zhi,” Si Wuya said thoughtfully, “Could it be... that he’s willing to see his own empire trampled upon by the Other Tribes?”

“He won’t.” When the Other Tribes were mentioned, Yu Zhenghai was suddenly angered. He glared and said, “One day, I’ll surely sweep through Lou Lan with my saber, and I won’t return until I’ve killed every last soul of that foul land.”

“Don’t worry, senior brother... Lou Lan rules with witchcraft, which isn’t very powerful when you think about it. We’ll destroy them sooner or later, and you’ll have your revenge.”

Yu Zhenghai remained silent when Si Wuya expected him to speak. Throughout the years, he had learned how to suppress his own emotions.

Si Wuya said, “Mo Li is dead. If we can seize this opportunity and incite a feud... All we have to do is sit back and reap the benefits when the time is right.”

Yu Zhenghai nodded in satisfaction. “Junior brother... In that case, you shouldn’t go to Liang Province. Stay here with me, have a drink, and let’s enjoy the moon together. Isn’t it much better to devise strategies in a tent and watch the tigers fight on another mountain?”

Si Wuya shook his head. “I’ll have to decline. This opportunity is very important, and I must be there... If Jiang Aijian left the Evil Sky Pavilion, my sources inside the palace can no longer be trusted.”

When Jiang Aijian was mentioned, Yu Zhenghai frowned. “The great Third Prince of Great Yan, and he had to give himself some nonsensical name. Aijian? I think he’s despicable, that’s what he is. If I were to see him. I’ll surely teach him a lesson on your behalf, junior brother.”

“...” Si Wuya was not offended by such trivial matters. He shook his head when he heard this. Finally, he stood up, cupped his fists at Yu Zhenghai, and said, “It’s getting late. Senior brother, we’ll meet again.”

Yu Zhenghai said in a slightly disapproving tone, “Are you really going? You can’t be worrying about that Princess Yong Ning, right?”

“Please trust me, senior brother.” Si Wuya did not want to explain himself at length. He bowed at Yu Zhenghai.

When Yu Zhenghai saw how determined Si Wuya was, he shook his head and sighed before saying, “How about this... let my Four Great Protectors accompany you there?”

“Eldest Senior Brother...”

Before he could finish, Yu Zhenghai raised a hand and cut him short. He said sternly, “That’s my bottom line. My cultivation base is already restored. Why would you worry? You, on the other hand, if something were to happen to you, I won’t be able to eat or sleep in peace.”

Si Wuya had no choice but to say, “Thank you, Eldest Senior Brother.”

...

The next morning, the sun shone on the eastern pavilion of the Evil Sky Pavilion.

Lu Zhou opened his eyes. He called up the system dashboard to check his remaining life and merit points.

Remaining life: 6,769 days.

All this while, he had been thinking about the Nine-leaf stage and forgotten all about earning merit points. He was surprised to see that so much time had passed. When he thought about what happened yesterday, he used ten Reversal Cards.

By now, nobody was suspicious about the activities in the eastern pavilion.

The amassing of life energy made Lu Zhou feel energetic. Although he reversed his life for a similar time period, there were still some minor changes in him. If he studied his own reflection, he would look no different from before. However, at a casual glance, he seemed livelier.

Lu Zhou dared not use too many Reversal Cards in one go. If his appearance were to change too drastically, his disciples would surely ask questions. If the changes were minute and gradual, they would not be too noticeable, and his imposing air would not be compromised.

After ten Reversal Cards were used, he was left with 33.

At this moment, the column for his life showed 9,769 days.

‘Not bad.’

Lu Zhou looked at his merit points.

Merit points: 17,900.

It was early in the morning, and he felt rejuvenated. This prompted him to attempt the lucky draws.

He did ten draws in a row and was thanked ten times.

When he did not get any prize, he felt much more awake.

At this moment, Zhao Yue’s voice rang from outside.

“Master, the monks of the Heaven Choice Temple have left at first light. They wanted to bid their farewells to you but were worried that they would disturb you.”

“I see.” Lu Zhou gave it some thought before he waved his arm. The Peacock Plume appeared. With another wave of his arm, it vanished. He emerged from the eastern pavilion and looked at Zhao Yue.

“Call your Little Junior Sister over.” Lu Zhou felt that, perhaps, it was time for him to visit Liang Province.

“Master... Little Junior Sister has been cultivating late into the night and might still be sleeping at the moment. Kindly give me the order if there’s anything that needed to be done.” When Zhao Yue heard about yesterday’s happenings from Mingshi Yin, she guessed that her master must be thinking about going out. Hence, she volunteered herself.

‘Cultivating? That little girl is becoming more and more hardworking.’

It was a good thing. Lu Zhou looked at Zhao Yue and said, “Did you sprout any leaves on your avatar?”

Zhao Yue appeared embarrassed. She said, “I-I haven’t... I’ve just entered the Nascent Divinity Tribulation realm and have been studying the Sky Dagger lately...” She was speaking more quickly now. “I’ll do my best to sprout leaves as soon as possible!”

Without any leaves, the difference in cultivation base would be too great.

‘She’s not the most reliable choice for my protection.’ He considered it for a moment. While maintaining the same expression on his face, he slowly said, “Summon your Little Junior Sister here.”

“Yes, master.” Zhao Yue bowed and left. Inwardly, she thought to herself, ‘Master sure treats Little Junior Sister well. Her cultivation base isn’t too profound, and she’s rude and impetuous at times. However, master’s willing to bring her out with him.’

Chapter 395: The First on the Whitelist

After Zhao Yue left the eastern pavilion, Lu Zhou looked at his hair. There were no drastic changes. However, he could tell he had more black hair now.

There were times when Lu Zhou wondered how his disciples would react if he used enough Reversal Cards and regained his youth overnight. Was Ji Tiandao handsome or ugly in his youth?

Lu Zhou suddenly cleared his throat and shook his head. ‘I’m letting my thoughts run wild again.’

“Master.” Little Yuan’er hopped and skipped in from outside the eastern pavilion. Then, she sprinted over as quickly as a rabbit to Lu Zhou’s side. “You called?”

Lu Zhou looked at Little Yuan’er. ‘The little girl has grown much taller. Her appearance has changed as well.’ She had become more charming and beautiful. She would certainly attract attention if she went out like this.

“Change into some ordinary clothes. We’re going to Liang Province,” Lu Zhou said as he stroked his beard.

Little Yuan’er was, naturally, delighted when she found there was an opportunity for her to go out. She quickly said, “I’ll get changed at once.”

At this moment, Pan Litian appeared in the eastern pavilion.

“Greetings, Pavilion Master.”

“What’s the matter, Elder Pan?” Lu Zhou was puzzled. Pan Litian had suffered heavy injuries during the battle with Ba Ma. He should be recuperating in his pavilion.

Pan Litian said nothing. He walked up to Lu Zhou reverently and made sure that nobody else was around before he knelt on the ground.

Lu Zhou was taken aback. Although he could accept this gesture, Pan Litian’s background made this situation somewhat special. He was once the greatest elite of the Clarity Sect and had many glorious titles. He was never a person who would kneel on a whim.

“What do you mean by this, Elder Pan?” Lu Zhou asked, puzzled.

“I have a favor to ask of you.” Pan Litian cupped his fists.

“Let’s hear it.”

Pan Litian nodded and said, “I wish to plead for His Highness the Fourth Prince.”

Lu Zhou was not surprised to hear this.

When Pan Litian left the Clarity Sect all those years ago, he had been seriously wounded. Fortunately, he was rescued by the Fourth Prince. However, he had served in the military for many years, and the kindness should have been repaid.

"The Fourth Prince, Liu Bing, spent most of his time at the borders. He guarded his post well and is a respectable person in his own right. However..."

Lu Zhou asked in a deep voice, "Why should I be repaying the kindness you received?"

"Uh..." Pan Litian was slightly taken aback.

Lu Zhou said again, "Moreover, I have no quarrel with him. Why do you have to plead for him?"

This seemed to clear Pan Litian's mind right away. It made sense. Liu Bing had no quarrel with the Evil Sky Pavilion. The Evil Sky Pavilion would not raise its hand against him. However, he had needlessly come here to plead for Liu Bing. Awkward.

Lu Zhou walked out of the eastern pavilion with his hands on his back.

Pan Litian patted the dust off his garments. 'Hold up, you're the great villain. Do you even need a reason to attack someone?' However, when he looked up, Lu Zhou was no longer there.

...

A day later in Liang Province's city.

Unlike before, Lu Zhou now wore clothes made from coarse fabric such as those worn by commoners. He blended in perfectly. This could not be helped. Si Wuya was too cunning and had too many eyes working for him. He had to travel undercover. Even having the Old Age Pavilion's members with him could alert the rascal. Traveling on the flying chariot was even more out of the question. It would send the rascal running. He needed to disguise himself perfectly.

When they arrived in Liang Province's city, Lu Zhou and Little Yuan'er were slightly surprised. There were no garrisons or ballistae. However, there were bloodstains on the city walls. Clearly, a fight had just taken place recently. The city seemed lonely and desolate now.

Small groups of cultivators would appear in the skies every now and then.

Thud! Thud! Thud! Thud! Thud!

A group of men charged through the city at this moment. They looked fierce and brutish.

Lu Zhou pulled Little Yuan'er to the side of the street.

The group was running to the top of the city walls. They must be the city's garrison.

"Master, they seem fierce..." Little Yuan'er said.

"Don't mind them."

The two of them continued to walk in the city.

In its battle-ready state, the Liang Province's city seemed desolate. It seemed too much to hope for to find an inn to lodge.

Just when the two of them were looking for a place to stay, a middle-aged man appeared at the end of the street. He looked to the left and right before he whistled at Lu Zhou and Little Yuan'er...

"Old mister," the middle-aged man called out.

"Are you talking to me?"

The middle-aged man walked up to him carefully. He gauged the two of them and said, "You're not from around here, are you?"

Little Yuan'er urged him on. "Just say what's on your mind."

The middle-aged man said, "Liang Province is currently in chaos. I've observed the two of you for a long time. I reckon that you need a place to stay for the night. Come with me... I have a place ready for you."

Naturally, Lu Zhou felt suspicious about this. They had just arrived in Liang Province City. How did this man know that they were looking for a place to stay?

Also, Liang Province would most likely turn into the second Yi Province, which was now in an emergency state. This middle-aged man seemed bold. Since it seemed fishy, something must be fishy.

"You can arrange lodgings for us?" Lu Zhou asked.

The middle-aged man said mysteriously, "It's a mess outside. You'll see what I mean when we get there..."

Lu Zhou's expression did not change. He nodded. "Lead the way, please." They had to stay here for a time anyway since he had to wait for Yu Zhenghai and Si Wuya.

Shortly after, under the middle-aged man's guidance, the three of them passed through several streets and arrived outside a villa.

The middle-aged man moved furtively and whistled at someone in the villa.

Soon enough, two men ran out to meet them.

The middle-aged man said, "There's two more. I'll leave them to you."

"A'ight. Another two."

'Another two?' Lu Zhou had some questions on his mind, but his expression remained neutral. He stroked his beard and said, "Is this the lodging you found for me?"

There were two young men. The one on the left said, "This way, please."

Lu Zhou suddenly felt that this villa resembled a black brick kiln...

Lu Zhou looked at the middle-aged man and said, "Does your master go by the surname Shen?"

"That's right. Do you remember now, old mister?" The middle-aged man seemed excited.

“Shen Liangshou?” Lu Zhou suddenly had some vague idea about this place.

“Heh... Old mister, since you know my master’s taboo name, you should watch your manners. If this were any other house, you would’ve been kicked out,” said one of the men.

Indeed, Shen Liangshou had quite a reputation. Since the cultivation world had a blacklist, it was only natural that it had a whitelist. The position at the top of the blacklist was indisputably taken by Ji Tiandao, the Patriarch of the Evil Sky Pavilion.

If there were black, there would be white.

The first on the whitelist was Sheng Liangshou who did good deeds wherever and whenever he could. He was the only one who could carry out silly, motive-less, and uncalled for ‘good deeds’ such as this one. He was the only one who remained established in Liang Province’s city. The underworld and the officials respected him.

“This way, please.” The man made an inviting gesture again.

Lu Zhou stroked his beard, nodded, and walked in. When he stepped into the villa, a faintly discernible and largely transparent barrier that resembled a huge bubble shrouded the villa.

Lu Zhou and Little Yuan’er were quickly settled in.

The man who led them here glanced at them before bowing and said, “The master has said that anyone who enters the villa must have their cultivation bases examined to prevent any disturbances. I ask for your kind cooperation.”

Lu Zhou glanced at the middle-aged man. He did not expect Shen Liangshou to be this cautious. It was one thing for him to do good deeds, why did he have to examine the cultivation bases of others?

The man produced a gemstone from his pocket.

When he saw the grade of the gemstone, Lu Zhou knew that Shen Liangshou was not new to this. This gemstone was usually used by the major sects or the Imperial family when they recruited their disciples or men. Nobody else would have any use for this item.

“Master... let them test mine. I’m worried they’ll be scared out of their wits by your cultivation base.” Little Yuan’er hopped forward.

When the man who held the gemstone heard Little Yuan’er address Lu Zhou as her master, he said with a smile, “Scare us?”

Chapter 396: I’m An Idol Too?

Judging by the man’s mannerism, he seemed to have experienced many things. Lu Zhou stroked his beard and looked at the man.

The man added, “Many elites of the Nether Sect have appeared in Liang Province city... I’ve never been afraid of them. Why would I be afraid of you? Little girl, your master should proceed with the test.” He passed her the gemstone.

Little Yuan'er looked at the gemstone. She found it interesting and said, "I want to get tested, too. I have a profound cultivation base!"

This gemstone was quite precious. A mid-grade gemstone's energy would be depleted once it was used eight to ten times. Also, cultivators could rarely fake the results of the tests done by these gemstones.

The man said, "The old mister first."

Lu Zhou waved his arm. The gemstone flew into his hand. The gemstone buzzed and shone.

A look of shock flashed past the man's eyes as he said, "Oh, it's the Divine Court realm. Forgive me for being blind to this." He was polite enough in all appearances, but his expression remained neutral. It could be mistaken as him being sarcastic. 'Ooh, what a profound cultivation base. I'm truly scared.'

In any case, a Divine Court realm cultivator was still not someone whom others could easily cross.

He retrieved the gemstone, looked at Little Yuan'er at the side, and said, "This way, please."

Little Yuan'er was puzzled by this as she asked, "What about me? I'm not tested yet."

However, the man ignored her. He turned around and left. When he turned around the corner, there was a grin on the man's lips. 'If your master is in the Divine Court realm, how profound can your cultivation base be, little girl? You unruly and headstrong girl, you want me to test you, but I won't give in to your request. Tonight, I'll show the two of you just how evil men can be. Moreover, there's no need to waste the gemstone's energy.'

Little Yuan'er stomped her foot angrily and said, "Master, they're looking down on us."

Lu Zhou said, "It makes no difference whether we're tested or not..."

"Oh."

Shen Luangshou was at the top of the whitelist. He did every good deed imaginable. However, Lu Zhou was still surprised to see him boldly remaining in Liang Province. It seemed like Shen Luangshou was not even afraid of the Nether Sect.

...

At dusk.

Little Yuan'er supported her chin with her hands and leaned on the table. She stared at a mosquito flying before her eyes. She raised a hand and shot a needle-like energy blade to kill it.

Whoosh!

The mosquito was sliced in half.

She giggled. "Master, master... I killed a mosquito with my energy blade!"

Lu Zhou opened his eyes to glance at her. Then, he shook his head helplessly. However, he did not reprimand her. After all, this was one of her daily methods of cultivation.

That was how strange people were at times. Some would do all they could to work hard and learn but would never be good at it. Some people would only need to take a single glance and would learn everything. Little Yuan'er probably belonged to the latter group.

Thump! Thump! Thump!

Someone knocked on the door.

"I'll get it." Little Yuan'er ran up to the door and answered it.

A middle-aged man in long gray robes entered the room. He swept his gaze across the room. He glanced at Little Yuan'er. He did not greet them at all and only muttered to himself as he nodded, "Not bad."

There was another man behind him. He was the one who wanted to test their cultivation bases earlier. The man said, "If you think they're good, Mister Zhou, then, they're good."

"Who are you?" Little Yuan'er asked.

"This is Steward Zhou. He oversees the operations of the villa. I'll be taking my leave now. Have a nice chat." The man turned around and left.

Steward Zhou cupped his fists at Lu Zhou. "Old mister."

Lu Zhou looked at Steward Zhou and asked, "Where's Shen Liangshou?"

Steward Zhou frowned. He mused inwardly, 'Master Shen is at the top of the whitelist. It's normal for outsiders to know about him, given his reputation.' However, he did find the old man slightly rude for addressing his master by his name. He did not show any of his annoyance as he calmly asked, "Old mister, should we be direct?"

Lu Zhou stroked his beard with a nod and said, "What's this about?"

"Your granddaughter is of good quality. My master is willing to buy her at a great price." When Steward Zhou said this, there were men outside the room who could be faintly seen passing on messages.

Creak! Creak! Creak!

There were movements on the roof as well.

Clearly, they were being watched.

When Little Yuan'er heard this, she was just about to leap into rage when Lu Zhou raised his hand and signaled for her to stand down.

Little Yuan'er had no choice but to step back resentfully.

"Shen Liangshou is at the top of the whitelist... He has gotten to where he is today by doing good deeds. He has quite a reputation in the cultivation world as well. Why would he have a hand in these shady dealings?" Lu Zhou asked.

Steward Zhou laughed and said, "Old mister, I'm sure that you're an experienced man as well. There's no need to play dumb. Nothing is simple in the world. Do you think that we'd let you stay here for free?"

He had a point. If charity was all they did, even a mountain of gold and silver would not be enough.

“You’re right.”

“The lives of men are like straw, old mister... You’re only in the Divine Court realm. You’ll die by the hands of the Other Tribesmen sooner or later in Liang Province. Why don’t you allow this disciple of yours to go to someone better? You’ll be able to enjoy a comfortable retirement as well. Doesn’t that sound nice?” Steward Zhou asked persuasively.

Lu Zhou sighed and shook his head. “The utmost white is the same as the utmost black. I was surprised, that’s all.”

Steward Zhou chuckled and said, “Compared to the Evil Sky Pavilion, Master Shen merely chose a different path. Beasts live for food while men would die for wealth. They’re fundamentally the same.”

Lu Zhou sneered. “You mentioned Shen Liangshou in the same breath as the Evil Sky Pavilion? Do you think he’s worthy of that?”

“Of course not! Master Shen has always viewed the Evil Sky Pavilion’s Patriarch as his life’s goal... He won’t dare to claim equality with him,” Steward Zhou replied.

Lu Zhou felt slightly speechless now. ‘I’m an idol, too? To think that I have such a fan.’

Steward Zhou continued to say, “I’m telling you all this because you’re in the Divine Court realm. Liang Province is now going through an upheaval. The Nether Sect and the people from Lou Lan and Rouli are lying in wait all over the place. With your cultivation base, the most you can do is to preserve your own life.”

Lu Zhou nodded. “What if I refuse?”

As soon as Lu Zhou spoke...

Bam!

The doors were pushed open. Several cultivators came in. Two cultivators carried a corpse and flew in the other direction.

Lu Zhou glanced at them. He discovered they were not weak. Each of them was, at least, in the Brahman Sea realm.

Steward Zhou, who was standing before him, was in the Divine Court realm. His aura was also complete. Lu Zhou reckoned he was in the peak Divine Court realm.

Aside from these people, there must be Nascent Divinity Tribulation realm elites as well since this vast villa remained standing amidst the chaos.

Steward Zhou looked at them with a smile. “If you refuse, old mister, I’m afraid that I’ll have to take her by force.”

Lu Zhou shook his head. He waved his hand helplessly at Little Yuan’er...

“I commend you for your bravery.”

“Hm?”

Steward Zhou was a peak Divine Court realm expert, after all. He suddenly sensed an aura from the old man before him. It was a majestic aura that not even his master possessed. He moved backward at once and circulated his Primal Qi. He was just about to make a move when Little Yuan’er was already upon him.

She was smiling. It seemed like she did not even use her energy.

“We’re wrong! She’s a Nascent Divinity Tribulation elite!” Steward Zhou exclaimed in surprise.

With this, the cultivators outside rushed toward them.

Bam!

Before Steward Zhou could get a good look, Little Yuan’er landed a kick on his chest. Her leg shot up. Like a cannonball, Steward Zhou was launched into the air, crashed through the ceiling, and rammed into the two cultivators on the roof. A hole appeared on the ceiling, and he fell back down through the hole.

Bam!

He fell before Little Yuan’er. He was sprawled on the floor and could not move at all.

Little Yuan’er was bored. She muttered, “So weak.”

“...”

Chapter 397: Killing a Person is as Simple as Making His Head Roll On The Ground

It was getting darker as the sun was setting.

Little Yuan’er’s sudden strike stunned the cultivators outside the room. They stood riveted to the ground as they stared at the young lady before them with incredulity. This was especially true for the man who wanted to test their cultivation bases earlier. He stood near the door with wide eyes like a wooden chicken. He knew Steward Zhou’s strength well. Steward Zhou was in the peak Divine Court realm, and yet, he was sent flying with just a kick from the young lady? What was this?

Everyone inside and outside the room fell silent for some time. They were staring at the young lady before them with wide eyes.

Steward Zhou launched into a coughing fit as he was sprawled on the ground. As he coughed, he spat out a mouthful of fresh blood.

“Master, he’s not dead yet. Can I give him another kick?” Little Yuan’er requested.

“...”

Her request made Steward Zhou cough up another mouthful of blood. A book should not be judged by its cover nor should a person be judged by their looks. This little girl seemed innocent and pure, and yet, she was terrifying.

Steward Zhou raised a hand and pointed an accusatory finger at the man who was supposed to test their cultivation bases.

The man fell to his knees immediately, fumbling over his words. "I, I..." He wanted to say that he had no idea that the little girl's cultivation base would be greater than her master.

Lu Zhou looked at Steward Zhou who was sprawled on the ground before he looked at the other frightened cultivators around him. He said, "If you wish to live, tell Shen Liangshou to meet me."

At this moment, several figures gathered outside the door.

Lu Zhou was surprised to find that there were these many cultivators in the small Liang Province's city.

Steward Zhou sat up and said with a deep voice, "Don't come in!" He inhaled deeply and calmed his spirits. He pressed on his chest as he asked, "Old-old mister... Do you really want to go against Master Shen?"

Without waiting for a reply from Lu Zhou, Little Yuan'er said, "You're annoying. My master will meet anyone he wants. Do you have a problem with that?" As she spoke, she waved her fist.

Steward Zhou flinched. 'This little girl doesn't seem to be the reasonable kind.' He looked at Lu Zhou who seemed indifferent to all this. He hoped that the old man in the Divine Court realm would say something.

Before he could say anything, Lu Zhou said, "I will meet Shen Liangshou tomorrow morning... I won't repeat myself."

The steward was stunned.

At this moment, Little Yuan'er summoned her Hundred Tribulations Insight avatar. Her ten-foot avatar suddenly appeared. The resonance of her Primal Qi made the cultivators in the area shiver despite the temperature.

"Good gracious... A Nascent Divinity elite!"

"A leafed avatar... this... this... this..." The man was still holding the gemstone in his hand. Currently, he was ghastly pale.

Little Yuan'er laughed. She pointed at the man and said, "Are you scared out of your wits now? What a cowardly person... Master, show them your avatar! Let them have the shock of their lives!"

Lu Zhou. "..."

Lu Zhou looked up at the huge hole in the ceiling. He raised his hand and softly knocked Little Yuan'er's head. He reprimanded her, "Behave yourself."

Little Yuan'er hastily covered her head and dared not make any other requests. "I've made a mistake, master."

Lu Zhou left the room with his hands on his back.

When one of the cultivators saw this, he immediately understood what was happening and said, "I'll prepare a new room for you."

Little Yuan'er hopped over the threshold. She pulled a face at the man with the gemstone. "I've almost forgotten... You're not worthy to see my master's avatar!" After she said this, she followed her master to the other room.

When the two of them left, Steward Zhou and the tester exchanged glances.

The man was close to tears as he held the gemstone closely. "Steward Zhou... please... please have mercy... That old... old man is t-truly in the Divine Court realm... I swear if I lie, I'll die a gruesome death—"

Steward Zhou's eyes were bloodshot. Little Yuan'er kick had gravely injured him. He could judge for himself if Lu Zhou was truly in the Divine Court realm or not.

Steward Zhou looked at the cultivators in the courtyard and ordered, "Notify Master Shen... Tell him to come here, quickly..." Then, he looked at the man with the gemstone. "You can get lost now."

The meaning of 'get lost' in the Shen Villa meant that he would be reduced to a blind, deaf, and dumb person, if not dead. The dealings of this place would never be allowed to be leaked to the outside world. 'Get lost' was merely an indirect way of saying things.

When the man heard this, his face turned ashen as he lowered his head.

...

Night fell.

Lu Zhou meditated on the Heavenly Writing scrolls inside his room.

After a while, he suddenly heard the notification from the system.

"Ding! You've meditated on the contents of the Heavenly Scroll 100 times. Reward: Open Heavenly Writing Scroll (middle)."

Lu Zhou opened his eyes. He was slightly surprised by this. He remembered that meditating 100 times required a long time. It seemed like a long time had passed. He had two Open Heavenly Scrolls now. All that was left was the 'back' scroll. He reckoned that the final piece was on Brackish Mountain. This reminded him of Yu Shangrong.

Lu Zhou sighed. Yu Shangrong had not changed since his youth. No matter what happened, he would not make a sound. He would insist on taking care of things himself. He hoped that nothing untoward would happen to Yu Shangrong.

Then, he closed his eyes and continued meditating on the Heaven Writing scroll.

Time passed by without him noticing.

The skies were still dark.

Torches were lit in the courtyard.

Shortly after, there were buzzes of resonance.

Someone was summoning their avatars. To put it more aptly, there were many who were trying to summon their avatars.

Lu Zhou did not move. He was unaffected.

About six cultivators hovered above the villa. They surrounded a miniature flying chariot, which was just the right size to fit a single person.

Lu Zhou sensed the intense surges of auras outside. Although he could not see it, the resonance of the surging auras meant that there were at least two Nascent Divinity Tribulation realm elites.

Indeed, Shen Liangshou was skilled.

The flying chariot landed. The other cultivators landed as well.

“Who dares to wreak havoc in my Shen Villa?” The voice was deep and forceful. Clearly, he had deliberately raised his volume for intimidation effects.

‘Is Shen Liangshou an elite cultivator as well?’ Lu Zhou waved his hand casually. The door was blasted open by his energy.

The villa was illuminated by torches. Apart from the Brahman Sea realm cultivators, the courtyard was occupied by the flying chariot and several cultivators.

Shen Liangshou sat with his back straight on the flying chariot.

Lu Zhou walked out of his room with his hands on his back. He swept his eyes across the area. Apart from Shen Liangshou who was a Nascent Divinity elite, the cultivators around him were also in the Nascent Divinity Tribulation realm. The others were only in the Divine Court and Brahman Sea realms. They were too insignificant to mention.

“Are you Shen Liangshou?” Lu Zhou asked.

“How dare you?!” The soundwave rolled across the courtyard.

Steward Zhou felt invigorated. A relieved expression could be seen on his face as he endured the pain.

The one who spoke was the greatest elite under Shen Liangshou, Feng Ping.

When Feng Ping heard Lu Zhou mention Shen Liangshou’s name, he shouted and leaped out.

“Killing a person is only a matter of making his head roll on the ground. You should consider the master before you hit the dog!” Feng Ping leaped and launched dozens of palm seals in the air.

Lu Zhou shook his head helplessly. He was about to use the Heavenly Writing scrolls’ extraordinary power when Little Yuan’er moved with her Seven Stars Cloud Treading Steps. She unfurled her Nirvana Sash.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

The palm seals were repelled.

Little Yuan'er placed herself before Lu Zhou. She pointed at Feng Ping in the air and said, "Hey, do you think that you're worthy of fighting my master?"

After she said this, Little Yuan'er moved with her Seven Stars Cloud Treading Steps and left several afterimages in her wake as she lunged at Feng Ping.

Lu Zhou did not stop her... Coincidentally, he wanted to see her recent improvements.

For a time, energies shot throughout the villa as the two opponents engaged in a fierce battle.

Little Yuan'er shot to the left and right. It was as though the skies were full of her figures.

Steward Zhou and the others registered looks of fright on their faces when they saw this.

'That little girl is powerful. To think that she's evenly matched with Feng Ping.' Steward Zhou regretted his actions greatly now. He realized that he had offended a great individual because of a low-level mistake by his subordinate. Usually, if they knew they were dealing with an elite cultivator, they would have treated them politely and would never try to take advantage of them.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Little Yuan'er grew more and more excited and invigorated as the battle dragged on. Her laughter resounded throughout the villa.

Feng Ping felt more frustrated the longer he fought. He was a Four-leaf Nascent Divinity elite, after all. And yet, he was being held back by a little girl.

Whizz!

He activated his avatar!

The Nirvana Sash wrapped around Little Yuan'er as she reeled. "You lowlife! How dare you rely on your avatar?"

When there was a difference in realms, attacking with one's avatar was often the best choice.

Feng Ping snorted. He clapped his hands. Several palm seals were launched at Little Yuan'er.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

She defended with her Nirvana Sash again. The palm seals dissipated under the power of the Nirvana Sash.

"It's a heaven-grade weapon..." On the flying chariot, Shen Liangshou's eyes brightened. However, he quickly adjusted his expression as though nothing had happened and spoke loudly, "Stop."

Feng Ping had no choice but to recall his avatar and landed beside the flying chariot.

Shen Liangshou looked at the calm Lu Zhou who was standing by the door and said, "Old mister... Cutting off a person's avenue to earn money is as grievous a crime as killing his parents... Why don't we sit down and talk things through?" As he spoke, his eyes were trained on the scarlet Nirvana Sash on Little Yuan'er's body.

Lu Zhou stroked his beard and said, "I'll give you an opportunity to atone for your sins." His tone deepened as he continued to say, "First, destroy your cultivation base. Second, answer my questions honestly. Third, as long as I'm here, all of you will do my bidding."

Chapter 398: Yield

Lu Zhou had already thought of these words when he was meditating on the Heavenly Writing scrolls.

Since Shen Liangshou was at the top of the whitelist, regardless of the nature of his activities, they had nothing to do with him. However, he could not let this incident slide. These three punishments were reasonable enough.

When Shen Liangshou and the others heard this, they frowned.

The other cultivators in the villa exchanged glances.

This man had spoken in such a brazen manner before their master. Where did he get his confidence from?

An ominous feeling rose in Steward Zhou's heart. He took two steps back, slightly worried. He was already injured to begin with. If they were to fight, he would only be on the losing end.

Instead of being offended, Shen Liangshou laughed. He applauded and said, "Old mister... That joke isn't funny at all."

"I never joke," Lu Zhou said with a straight face.

Sheng Liangshou frowned slightly. "There are only a handful of individuals in the world who can impress me. For as long as I've lived, I've only been impressed by two people."

"Oh?"

"The first is the current Emperor, Yong Qing." When he said this, he made no movements. He opened his mouth again and cupped his fists. "The second person is the Evil Sky Pavilion's Patriarch. That's who I admire."

"..."

'Steward Zhou wasn't lying. He's really taking me as his idol.'

It was quite ironic for the first person on the whitelist to admire the person on the top of the blacklist.

Little Yuan'er broke out in peals of laughter and said, "In that case, you should kneel and grovel before my master!" She said this earnestly and seriously.

However, it sounded extremely mocking to Shen Liangshou.

"Feng Ping." Shen Liangshou waved his hand.

Feng Ping had a sharp look in his eyes. With swift movements, he left an afterimage in his wake.

Dao Invisibility and Expansive Heavenly Energy?

Everyone was staring at Feng Ping who had unleashed all his strength.

Little Yuan'er was about to make a move when she saw her master raise his palm. 'Since master's making his move, everything is settled now...'

A purple electric light shone in Lu Zhou's hand. He curved his arm and pushed forward. It was not a Deadly Strike Card, it was Thunderblast!

A palm seal that was buzzing with bolts of purple lightning shot forward.

"A Divine Court realm cultivator?" Feng Ping thought nothing of this. He kept his eyes on Lu Zhou. Just when he was about to touch Lu Zhou, the purple Thunderblast fell on him.

Bam!

He was hit squarely on the chest. Before he could even unleash his Dao Invisibility or Expansive Heavenly Energy, he was sent flying. His mind turned blank. While he faced the skies, he saw a purple lightning bolt descending from the skies. He croaked, "Thunderblast?"

Boom!

Thunderblast connected with its target.

Feng Ping spat out a mouthful of fresh blood skyward before crashing on the ground loudly. His dantian's sea of Qi felt as though it had been heavily hammered by someone. He lost all means of fighting back.

The fatality rate of Thunderblast was low. However, the rate for it to land a heavy blow was not bad, and it was triggered this time.

The entire courtyard was as silent as a graveyard.

Steward Zhou's knees buckled. He fell to the ground. His face was ashen. 'Is this the Divine Court realm? Is this still the f*cking Divine Court realm? How can a Divine Court realm cultivator deal such a heavy blow to a Four-leaf Nascent Divinity elite like Feng Ping? You've got to be kidding me!'

Steward Zhou was not the only one who was shocked. Shen Liangshou was shocked as well.

Shen Liangshou's cultivation base was only one leaf higher compared to Feng Ping. He was among the ranks of Five-leaf grand cultivators. However, against the old man who defeated Feng Ping with a single strike, his confidence wavered. Alas, he could not back down at this point. He waved his hand.

The other cultivators hovered in the air. They moved forward and surrounded Lu Zhou and Little Yuan'er.

"Stubborn." Lu Zhou shook his head.

Little Yuan'er rolled her eyes and said, "You're so stupid. Since you admire my master so much, shouldn't you be begging for forgiveness right now?"

'Hm?' Shen Liangshou sneered and said, "Little girl, don't you think for a moment that I'm a gullible person. I'm at the top of the whitelist, after all. Seize them!"

With his order, the cultivators advanced upon them.

Naturally, Shen Liangshou would not believe her. He had a portrait of Ji Tiandao in his study. It was a face that he looked at every single day. The old man before him looked nothing like Ji Tiandao!

Lu Zhou could not be blamed for this. After all, Ji Tiandao never cared about his appearance. On top of that, his hair was usually disheveled due to his old age, and he had a fiery temper. In contrast, this gentle old man who had an erudite air about him looked completely different.

When the cultivators advanced, Shen Liangshou flew into the air from his flying chariot.

“Bi An.”

Roar!

Nobody knew which corner did the roar originate from.

Bi An charged out of the shadows. It lunged at the cultivators around it.

The cultivators were scared out of their wits. They were plunged into disarray at once like a platter of loose sand.

Bi An was enough to deal with these low-ranked cultivators.

“Ding! Killed a target. Reward: 10 merit points.”

“Ding! Killed a target. Reward: 10 merit points.”

Lu Zhou did not care about the meager number of merit points. Instead, he was looking at the flying chariot that had just risen into the air.

Shen Liangshou said, “I will remember this debt... We’ll meet again.” He was confident that he could escape on his flying chariot.

Lu Zhou’s expression remained unchanged. He raised his left hand before he lifted his right hand. He condensed Qi into energy. A faint bluish bow took form. A blue energy arrow materialized between his index and middle fingers as well.

Originating from nothing, and from it comes everything. Living in samsara and learning from it.

The scene of him penetrating the clouds and shooting down the mount Ba Wu played in his mind.

The extraordinary power of the Heavenly Writing scrolls was wrapped around the arrow.

Bam!

The energy arrow was released. It sailed through the air like a blue fireworks show. Its radiance was accentuated by the moonlight as it formed a long tail behind itself.

Shen Liangshou heard the peculiar incoming sound behind himself. He turned to look. “What’s that? Energy arrow?”

He activated his avatar at once! He covered his body in his protective energy.

The energy arrow seemed as though it was piercing through tofu as it pierced Shen Liangshou’s avatar and his dantian’s sea of Qi.

With a crack, the flying chariot shattered.

Shen Liangshou fell from the skies.

Little Yuan'er jumped up and down as she clapped her hands. "It's a hit... Master, I want to learn archery as well!"

Lu Zhou shook his head. He was not quite satisfied. If he had attacked with Unnamed, he would have killed a Five-leaf elite. He used the same amount of power, one-third of his extraordinary power. When he used it with Unnamed back then, he killed the Sword Freak Luo Changqing with the power of past lives. However, at the moment, he could only shoot down the Five-leaf Shen Liangshou. Without a heaven-grade weapon and at this range, the intensity of his attack was much weaker. However, the arrow had penetrated Shen Liangshou's dantian's sea of Qi. This was equivalent to destroying his cultivation base.

Boom!

Shen Liangshou crashed onto a roof and rolled off it. When he fell to the ground, he regarded Lu Zhou with a frightful expression.

At the same time, Bi An had already cleared the cultivators.

The villa was silent again.

Lu Zhou stroked his beard as he looked at Shen Liangshou on the ground and said, "I gave you a chance... but you didn't cherish it."

Shen Liangshou's expression was extremely dark. He withstood the pain pulsing from his dantian's sea of Qi and asked, "Are you from the Luo Sect?"

Little Yuan'er said, "Ptooeey! Not the crappy Luo Sect."

Lu Zhou did not mind. He spoke with a deep voice, "Do you yield?"

Shen Liangshou was sprawled on the ground. "I do. I really do."

Chapter 399: Ten Thousand Tribes

Shen Liangshou could sense the Primal Qi in his dantian's sea of Qi had been destroyed by that peculiar arrow. He was frightened and in pain. After he said the word 'yield', he spat out another mouthful of blood. He struggled as he sprawled on the ground for a while before he finally calmed down.

Lu Zhou raised a hand, and several energy blades flew toward Shen Liangshou.

Bam! Bam! Bam!

The energy blades hit Shen Liangshou's meridian points. His pain subsided almost immediately. He wiped the sweat off his face, his arrogance and anger from earlier had completely vanished.

Bi An who had finished showing off his might flew in a circle in the sky before it landed again.

The ones who were left standing in Shen Villa were only mortals and low-rank cultivators.

Lu Zhou glanced at Bi An, thinking that the mount was rather interesting. It was smart enough to pick targets who would reward him with high merit points. He checked the system dashboard. To his dismay, he only gained 200 merit points. The path of earning merit points by killing Divine Court realm targets or below was extremely slow.

Meanwhile, Steward Zhou and Feng Ping lay on the ground, unmoving. They had completely lost the ability to fight.

Shen Liangshou sat up. He rubbed his eyes. When he saw Bi An with its terrifying appearance, he instinctively shrunk back.

Lu Zhou stroked his beard, shook his head, and asked, "When did you start this shady business?"

Sheng Liangshou wiped the sweat off his face and said, "Old... Old mister, I-I'm merely trying to make a living. I've only just started!"

Lu Zhou was not interested in that. After all, it had nothing to do with him. "Tell me about the situation in this city."

Little Yuan'er found a chair from the room and placed it behind Lu Zhou like a sensible child.

Lu Zhou sat down and regarded Shen Liangshou calmly, ready to interrogate him.

Shen Liangshou was no longer in pain. However, when he recalled what happened earlier, he was still overwhelmed with fear. He gulped before he asked, "The situation in the city?"

Lu Zhou stroked his beard as he waited for Shen Liangshou's answer.

Shen Liangshou considered it for a moment before replying, "Chaotic, extremely chaotic... Before your arrival, the members of the Nether Sect battled the city's garrison. There were many casualties."

"What about the Other Tribes?" Lu Zhou asked.

Shen Liangshou frowned when the Other Tribes were mentioned. "There were many from Lou Lan and Rouli from the western region... However, I don't know about the Other Tribes."

It was understandable that Shen Liangshou did not know much about this. Otherwise, he would not even have a chance to do anything before Great Yan's Imperial family swept in and took care of them.

"Are these the only tribes?" Lu Zhou asked in slight confusion.

"There are five nations in Rongxi and seven in Rubei... They've always behaved themselves. Apart from Lou Lan and Rouli, I've never heard about the presence of the Other Tribes here," Shen Liangshou answered truthfully.

Lu Zhou stroked his beard and nodded. He began sorting through Ji Tiandao's memories.

Since Emperor Yong Shou defeated Rongxi and Rongbei, Great Yan had attained the position of dominance. The Other Tribes in Rongxi and Rongbei reorganized themselves. From countless scattered nations, they formed the five nations of Rongxi and the seven nations of Rongbei. These 12 nations had always existed in subservience to Great Yan. They paid tithes and offered their princesses for marriage alliances. These 12 nations did not lose their rebellious streak, however. They would frequently trespass

upon Great Yan's borders over the most trivial of matters. The Fourth Prince, Liu Bing, spent most of his time at the borders to deter the nations so they had been able to enjoy some peace as of now.

"Where's the Fourth Prince, Liu Bing, now?" Lu Zhou asked.

Shen Liangshou was shocked. He looked at Lu Zhou skeptically and replied, "I only heard that His Fourth Highness led an army of 300,000 men and 5,000 cultivators. His troops are divided to defend the ten cities of Liang Province... I don't know which city he's currently in. Five of Liang Province's ten cities are protected by Formations, five of them aren't... His Fourth Highness won't put himself in harm's way."

Lu Zhou felt that Shen Liangshou was honest enough. He stood up slowly, stroked his beard, and said, "Find out about this with your resources. If you do this well, I'll spare you."

Shen Liangshou was overjoyed to hear this. He hastily bowed and said, "At your service, old mister."

...

That night, Sheng Liangshou could only stay in the villa. He did not stay far. He stayed in the room next to Lu Zhou. It was a restless night for him. After losing his cultivation base, he spent his waking hours feeling worried that his subordinates might stab him in the back. In Liang Province, the people would swallow you whole and leave nothing behind. There was no such thing as reason.

Shen Liangshou wanted to live even after his cultivation base was destroyed because he had a way to restore his cultivation base. Although it was a slightly difficult feat, he, at least, had hope. He was at the top of the whitelist after all. This title alone gave him the means to find a way to restore his dantian's sea of Qi such as the sable magnolia. However, before anything else, he had to come up with a way to protect himself. The safest place would be next to the old man.

...

The next morning.

Shen Liangshou immediately sent his men to gather information from the ten cities. He poured all his effort into this task.

When afternoon arrived, Shen Liangshou approached Lu Zhou respectfully. "Old mister, I've had my men investigate the matter... His Fourth Highness is most probably in the City of Mo in the northern parts of Liang Province."

He dared not leave before he got a reply. After waiting for a moment, he heard a voice from inside the room.

"Any movements from the Nether Sect?"

"I heard that Yu Zhenghai, the Sect Master of the Nether Sect Master, and his Four Great Protectors have gone to the City of Mo as well," Shen Liangshou said with a sigh, "The Nether Sect has plunged the whole world into chaos. Yu Zhenghai is also the Evil Sky Pavilion's first disciple. His cultivation base is terrifying. With him personally making a move, the Fourth Prince won't stand a chance even if he has powerful soldiers at his disposal."

"Continue your investigations."

“Understood.”

...

Another day passed.

On the third day, Shen Lianghou stood at the door and reported, “Old Mister, there have been great changes in the ten cities of Liang Province. The Nether Sect has engaged the Fourth Prince in a battle. Both sides have suffered great losses. The five cities that aren’t protected by Formations are conquered by the Nether Sect overnight. I’m afraid they’ll make their way here soon...”

“Investigate some more.”

Shen Liangshou bowed and left.

On the fourth day, before the sky turned bright, Shen Liangshou hastened to Lu Zhou’s door, unlike his usual behavior. He said, “Old mister, please leave Liang Province’s city now... Liang Province City’s Formation is now under the control of the traitor... The Nether Sect has already breached the city gates.”

As soon as Shen Liangshou finished speaking, the sound of thundering hooves resounded through the city. There were also groups of cultivators flying in the air.

Smoke rose and billowed, and killing intent seemed to permeate the air.

Liang Province’s garrison was being pushed back.

Ten Worlds avatars popped up in the streets as they advanced. Although they were not as powerful as Hundred Tribulations Insight avatars, against cultivators in the Divine Court realm and below, the Ten Worlds avatar was a potent killing weapon.

The Nether Sect was in no short supply of these cultivators.

The sweeping attacks from the Nether Sect captured or killed the individuals who resisted.

Shen Liangshou was fidgeting as if he had ants in his pants when a gust of wind blew above his head...

Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh!

Dozens of cultivators appeared above the villa.

“I am Yu Hong, the Second Seat of Nether Sect’s Azure Dragon Hall. Those who follow me will prosper, and those who resist will perish. Cultivators, step forward.”

The Nether Sect’s mode of operation was to control its members with a hierarchy.

Shen Liangshou did not expect the Nether Sect to arrive here so soon. Now that he had lost his cultivation base, he had no way to defend himself. He was worried to no end. He looked at Lu Zhou’s room.

Yu Hong glanced at Shen Liangshou. “You’re hurt?”

“Y... ye... yes...” Shen Liangshou wanted to point at Lu Zhou’s room, but he was not bold enough.

“Take him!”

Two cultivators descended from the sky and held Shen Liangshou in place.

Creak!

The doors opened.

Lu Zhou emerged from the room with his hands on his back. He looked at Yu Hong, the Azure Dragon Hall’s Second Seat, who was hovering in the air.

Yu Hong gauged the aura of the old man. He shook his head and said, “Regardless of the person, we won’t let anyone who opposes the Nether Sect go.”

At this moment, Little Yuan’er ran out of the room. She pointed at Yu Hong in the air and said, “Watch your tone when you’re talking to my master!”

Chapter 400: Other Tribesmen

Yu Hong was taken aback. Most cultivators would try to resist, this was especially true of elites in the Nascent Divinity realm and above. They usually had the support of their sects. Therefore, the Nether Sect chose to conquer the Clarity Sect, the Righteous Sect, and other major sects. They absorbed the various elites to intimidate other grand cultivators. This way, the other grand cultivators would not dare to make rash moves. Meanwhile, in Great Yan, the Nether Sect could focus its attention on dealing with the Imperial family.

As for the cultivators they encountered during the chaos, such as these people before Yu Hong, they would usually capture them to avoid any unwanted developments in the future. When things were calmer, they would release those who were supposed to be released and kill those who should be killed. Conquering a city was a cruel undertaking, after all.

Si Wuya hatched this plan for the Nether Sect in hopes that no one would seize the opportunity to cause trouble.

Yu Hong gauged the aura of the young lady who had suddenly appeared as well. He frowned. ‘Early stage Nascent Divinity realm? Why is there a Nascent Divinity realm cultivator in Liang Province?’

In the end, he said, “I’m Yu Hong, the Second Seat of Nether Sect’s Azure Dragon Hall. I don’t know why two of you are here in Liang Province’s city, but I would ask for your kind cooperation and follow my men.” He had always respected experts.

“The Nether Sect’s Yu Hong?” Lu Zhou only knew about the Four Great Protectors in general. He did not take much notice of them. In his opinion, these lesser characters were not worthy of his attention, after all.

Yu Hong was not offended. He asked, “Do you not know about the Nether Sect, old mister?”

Little Yuan’er was just about to say something when Lu Zhou stopped her. ‘This little girl can easily ruin things with her mouth.’

Lu Zhou stroked his beard and said, “I know a thing or two.”

Yu Hong cupped his fists to his left and said, "My sect master is the Evil Sky Pavilion's first disciple. He's also one of the rare Eight-leaf elites in the cultivation world."

The person Lu Zhou wanted to meet right now was Yu Zhenghai or Si Wuya. Before he achieved that, he could not disclose too much information about himself. After muttering to himself for a while, Lu Zhou said, "I'll go with you."

Little Yuan'er. "...". She really did not understand the thoughts in her master's mind. Was there a need for her master to do this? However, she knew her master had his reasons for everything he did. Therefore, she did not object and obediently followed Lu Zhou and stepped forward.

"Thank you for your cooperation."

Lu Zhou, Little Yuan'er, and Shen Liangshou left the villa, being led by Yu Hong and his men. Meanwhile, Steward Zhou and Feng Ping who were too injured to walk were carried by ordinary sect members.

...

By afternoon, the Nether Sect had successfully conquered Liang Province's city.

Lu Zhou, Little Yuan'er, and Shen Liangshou were sent to the reserve army encampment where Liang Province usually assigned its cultivators.

Yu Hong accompanied them along the way.

At the encampment, Lu Zhou saw about 50 cultivators in and below the Brahman Sea realm.

It seemed like Lu Zhou and Little Yuan'er had the most profound cultivation bases among the people here. It was no wonder Yu Hong gave them preferential treatment.

As for Shen Liangshou, without his cultivation base, even the ordinary sect members had no trouble guarding him.

Yu Hong said to Lu Zhou, "Don't worry. I'll have to ask you to bear with this for a few days. When we've conquered all ten of Liang Province's cities, you'll be released."

Lu Zhou asked, "Can the Nether Sect conquer the City of Mo?"

Yu Hong replied with a hint of disapproval, "Why not? To tell you the truth, we have the Evil Sky Pavilion's Mister Seventh on our side. The Nether Sect will rule the world. It's only a matter of time."

"I remember that the City of Mo is guarded by the Coiling Dragon Formation. How are you going to deal with that?"

Yu Hong was taken aback. If this had happened at any other time, he would have struck the cultivator who doubted the Nether Sect. However, these two had profound cultivation bases, especially the little girl by the old man's side who seemed like an airhead but had a Nascent Divinity realm cultivation base. It was always better to appease these elites at pivotal moments such as this. So, he said with a smile, "I believe in the sect master and Mister Seventh's abilities." After he said this, he turned around and left.

The other cultivators swarmed toward Lu Zhou and Little Yuan'er after Yu Hong left. They gave Lu Zhou a thumbs-up.

"I'm impressed. You're bold enough to speak to the Second Seat of the Nether Sect's Azure Dragon Hall with that tone."

"Old mister, we're merely outsiders. Why would you ask about those things? Be careful that you're not burned by the fire as well."

"That's right... We're well-fed here. Let them fight their battles. I don't care who the world belongs to so long as I have food in my mouth."

Clearly, most of the cultivators were indifferent about this. After all, who would dare to stand up under these circumstances? Who would dare to oppose the Nether Sect?

Lu Zhou ignored these low-ranked cultivators. His goal was to capture Si Wuya and Yu Zhenghai. He could not care less about other matters. He called up the system dashboard and inspected the mission column.

Like before, apart from Ye Tianxin, Yu Zhenghai and Si Wuya did not appear. The other six main missions were about instructing his disciples.

Shen Liangshou who was standing nearby said with a sour expression, "Old mister... about our agreement..."

"I've always kept my words."

"Thank you, old mister." Shen Liangshou bowed.

Lu Zhou no longer looked at him. He knew that Shen Liangshou wanted his protection by staying close to him. Now that dangers lurked in all corners of Liang Province's city, Shen Liangshou might lose his life.

...

At dusk.

A soundwave rolled across the entire camp.

"The Other Tribesmen have invaded. Those of the Nether Sect who are in or above the Brahman Sea realm, follow me." Yu Hong flew past in his avatar. His 40-foot avatar was dazzling.

The Nether Sect cultivators rose into the air immediately. They followed Yu Hong and flew toward the city walls in the north.

"Invasion from the Other Tribes?" Shen Liangshou appeared shocked.

Little Yuan'er saw the cultivators rising into the air and she clapped her hands excitedly. If this had happened in the past, she would have made a fuss about going to watch the show. She loved bustling scenes, but she was slightly anxious as well. When she remembered her master's admonishments, she immediately calmed down. Although she was a Nascent Divinity Tribulation realm elite and the ninth disciple of the Evil Sky Pavilion, she had never witnessed such a scene. She instinctively grabbed Lu Zhou's arm.

Lu Zhou stroked his beard and said, "There's no need to be afraid." He appeared calm, but inwardly, he mused that he should have brought Mingshi Yin along as well. The little girl was inexperienced, after all.

The others exclaimed in surprise. They pointed at the near 1,000 cultivators who were flying toward the other end of the city. It was a majestic sight to behold. The top of the city walls was already filled with cultivators.

Someone sighed. "Such is war..."

There some who sighed and some who were amazed. Those who liked to watch a good show undoubtedly enjoyed this.

...

At this moment, there were also many Nether Sect members who were running on foot in Liang Province's city. The ground shook as they ran through the streets. The general people were alarmed by this.

Whizz!

Whizz!

A huge avatar appeared at the city walls.

"A 70-foot avatar! Heavens! A Six-leaf elite!"

The avatar's height surpassed the city wall. Although the man maid city was towering and majestic, it dimmed in comparison to a 70-foot avatar.

...

"The Other Tribesmen are here!"

The others looked at the sky in the north.

Around the huge avatar, black figures were swarming around it like flies as they attacked the avatar.

The avatar was moving toward Liang Province's city.

"They're from Rouli!"

If there was a tribesman from Rouli, it was only natural for there to be someone from Lou Lan as well.

Shen Liangshou looked around himself and said, "Old mister, the Nether Sect no longer has the time to care about us. This is a great chance for us to escape."

Lu Zhou glanced at him and said nothing.

Shen Liangshou wanted to leave very badly, but in his current state, he would be cut into a million pieces if he were to try to escape on his own.

Someone said with a clear voice, "A 70-foot avatar! It must be one of the Nether Sect's Four Great Protectors. It should be either Di Qing or Yang Yan..."

"We can't see anything from here!"

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

Some of them flew to the tops of the nearby buildings, and some flew to the treetops to watch.