

Disciples 411

Chapter 411: Train with Me

Si Wuya did not bother about the two bootlickers. He walked at his normal pace.

Pan Zhong and Zhou Jifeng followed behind him. They were increasingly convinced that the person before them was the Evil Sky Pavilion's first disciple. He was too familiar with the environment and the routes between the eastern, western, southern, and northern pavilions. He arrived at the back of the mountain as though he had been there 1,000 times before.

The moment Si Wuya arrived, he said without turning back to look at Pan Zhong and Zhou Jifeng, "The Heavenly Sword Sect's first disciple, Zhou Jifeng. The Clarity Sect's traitor, Pan Zhong." He easily identified them.

Pan Zhong and Zhou Jifeng were taken aback.

Before they could respond, Si Wuya continued to ask, "How's everyone doing?"

Pan Zhong did not answer the question immediately. He was thinking this was indeed how the first disciple of the Evil Sky Pavilion should behave.

'Just look at him and listen to his words. How majestic! He's a man of few words, but when he speaks, he asks about everyone's condition.'

Pan Zhong scratched his head and replied, "Thank you for asking, Mister First. I'm doing fine. I like this place very much."

Zhou Jifeng chimed in, "Thank you for asking, Mister First. I'm fine as well. This isn't only a great place, the people here are friendly and approachable as well."

Si Wuya's expression remained neutral as he turned around slowly to study them. He was not offended nor did he reprimand them for not answering his question. Instead, he said, "That's good."

"Mister First, it's cold inside the cave. I'll bring a mattress and a blanket for you at once," Pan Zhong said.

Pan Zhong's voice had barely faded when a loud bang rang from behind.

Pan Zhong and Zhou Jifeng saw Duanmu Sheng who was holding his Overlord Spear. At this moment, he was looking at both of them with a stern expression on his face. They could tell instantly that he was not in a good mood and began to grow anxious.

"Mister First, please don't be angry... Please don't hold this against Mister Third," Pan Zhong said.

Clang!

The Overlord Spear struck the ground.

"You bastard!"

Pan Zhong was taken aback. He did not dare to speak, but he muttered inwardly, 'Mister Third is being too blunt. Indeed, Mister First had left the Evil Sky Pavilion for some unknown reason, but it still takes a lot of courage to publicly call him out on it!'

Pan Zhong was about to plead on Si Wuya's behalf when Si Wuya suddenly bowed and said, "Greetings, Third Senior Brother."

Pan Zhong and Zhou Jifeng were thunderstruck. 'We're dead meat this time. We made another mistake.'

Duanmu Sheng lifted his Overlord Spear and walked over expressionlessly. He glanced at Pan Zhong and Zhou Jifeng before giving both of them a kick.

"Ack!" Pan Zhong and Zhou Jifeng bumped against each other. They looked at Duanmu Sheng with a defeated expression, too afraid to say anything.

Duanmu Sheng said, "What do you mean by asking Mister First to not get mad? Old Seventh, is this how you speak to me?"

There was nothing wrong with a senior disciple instructing a junior disciple.

Pan Zhong and Zhou Jifeng felt like crying.

Si Wuya did not care about their feelings. Instead, he faced Duanmu Sheng and bowed again, "Greetings, Third Senior Brother." He did it much more formally than before.

Duanmu Sheng snorted and said, "How shameless of you to return."

"I'm ashamed," Si Wuya calmly replied.

"All these years, you've caused trouble and unrest in the outside world. In the end, look at how obediently you had to return to the Evil Sky Pavilion? Do you think that everyone else is beneath you just because you're clever?" Duanmu Sheng said, not hiding his intent to mock Si Wuya.

"You're right, Third Senior Brother," Si Wuya replied tonelessly.

Swoosh!

Duanmu Sheng raised his Overlord Spear and pointed it at Si Wuya. "Don't you think that I'll forgive you just because you're talking to me in this manner!"

Si Wuya saw the heaven-grade weapon in Duanmu Sheng's hand. He did not seem overly-surprised. He said with a smile, "I'm injured from the battle in Liang Province's city. You're braver and more valiant than most, Third Senior Brother. I'm sure you won't strike a man when he's down."

Duanmu Sheng said, "I won't be so sure about that."

Swoosh!

Duanmu Sheng grabbed the center of the Overlord Spear's shaft with his right hand while the bottom of the shaft was under his armpit. He pointed it at Si Wuya and said, "Old Fourth is right. There's no need to be fair against a petty and despicable man. Master has told us that there's no such thing as absolute

fairness in the world. Show me just how much you've improved, you bloody traitor..." He thrust the Overlord Spear that glinted in the light. The spear flew out like a dragon.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

Si Wuya tapped the ground with his feet and retreated.

For a time, the two of them engaged each other in battle.

Pan Zhong and Zhou Jifeng hastily moved backward. They observed the battle from the side.

"Brother Pan... I won't believe you ever again," Zhou Jifeng complained.

"Oh, shut up."

Zhou Jifeng wiped the sweat from his face and asked, "Who's more powerful? Mister Third or Mister Seventh?"

Pan Zhong looked at the two disciples and said in a hushed tone, "I'm guessing Mister Seventh. Think about it... He's capable of turning the cultivation upside down. All nine provinces of Great Yan are in chaos right now. We shouldn't judge a book by its cover nor measure the volume of the sea with a pitcher. Besides, I've heard Mister Eighth mention that nobody was able to make Mister Seventh unleash his full strength before."

"Is he that powerful?"

"Just watch."

The two of them ended the conversation.

Duanmu Sheng leaped into the skies. Then, with both hands on the spear's shaft, he dove. Thousands of spear shadows appeared in just an instant.

Imperfect Divine Intervention!

Countless spear shadows stabbed at Si Wuya without rest.

Si Wuya unleashed several shots of energy.

Bam! Bam! Bam!

To Si Wuya's surprise, the spear shadows easily destroyed his energy blasts. The tip was now upon his face, and he quickly raised his hands to defend himself.

Bam!

Si Wuya flipped in the air. He staggered backward. His arms felt numb from the vibration, and his face was pale.

Duanmu Sheng retracted his Overlord Spear. He did not continue his assault. Instead, he said, "Is that all you've got?"

Si Wuya cupped his fists and said, "I'm impressed by your profound cultivation base, Third Senior Brother."

Pan Zhong and Zhou Jifeng were speechless.

Zhou Jifeng rolled his eyes and looked at Pan Zhong skeptically. Based on his expression, it was clear that he would rather wash his hair while standing upside down than believe Pan Zhong's words ever again.

Duanmu Sheng raised his Overlord Spear. He spun it in his hand before resting it on his shoulder. He said, "Go into the cave. Are you waiting for me to invite you in?"

Si Wuya nodded. He did not resist. Without saying another word, he entered the Cave of Reflection.

The back of the mountain was quiet again.

"Your spear skills finally improved, Mister Third!" Pan Zhong said, giving a thumbs-up.

"Finally improved?" Duanmu Sheng's expression looked menacing as he said, "Do you mean to say that I made no improvements before this?"

"..."

"Come... both of you. Forget your meals for a few days. Train with me." Duanmu Sheng did not pursue the matter. Instead, he walked toward them in a friendly manner and placed the Overlord Spear in their hands. Then, he grabbed the backs of their collars and dragged them toward the training place halfway up the mountain.

Pan Zhong and Zhou Jifeng's expressions were pitiful as they let themselves be taken away.

...

At dusk.

Lu Zhou opened his eyes. After meditating on the Heavenly Writing for half a day, his mental state was slightly rebuilt. However, there was still a long way to fully recovering it.

He called up the system dashboard.

Name: Lu Zhou.

Identity: Great Yan human.

Cultivation base: Divine Court realm, Dao-transforming stage.

Merit points: 42,800.

Avatar: Ten Worlds.

Remaining life: 9,763 days.

Item: Deadly Strike Card x1, Critical Block Card x62 (passive), Cage Bind Card x4, Ji Tiandao's Peak Trial Card x1, Whitard (resting), Bi An, Critical Heal Card, x2, Improved Binding Cage Card x2, Improved Critical Heal Card x2, Thunderblast x1, Reversal Card x33.

Weapon: Unnamed, Life Cutter, Jade Horsetail Whisk (refinement needed), Peacock Plume (refinement needed).

Cultivation method: Three Scrolls of Heavenly Writing.

All in all, he did gain from his time in Liang Province. Si Wuya contributed a lot by killing nearly 2,000 Other Tribesmen.

Lu Zhou muttered under his breath, "One more step... I'm one step away from entering the Nascent Divinity Tribulation realm." Only when he was in the Nascent Divinity Tribulation realm would he be considered as truly stepping out into the cultivation world.

Lu Zhou waved his hand casually. The dashboard vanished. When he remembered that he had matters to attend to, he pushed the thought of spending his merit points to the back of his mind. He had sensed someone cleaning outside his room so he said, "Summon Si Wuya here."

"Understood."

Chapter 412: The Rascal's Idea

Shortly after, Si Wuya left the back of the mountain with a Derived Moon Palace's female disciple and made his way to the eastern pavilion. During the journey, he looked at the female cultivator and asked, "Where's your palace master now?"

The female cultivator hastily bowed and said, "Mister Seventh... there is no palace master or the Derived Moon Palace in the Evil Sky Pavilion. Miss Sixth has been banished by the pavilion master a long time ago and hasn't been heard of since. The last we heard of her was when she killed the Five Mice of Upper Prime City and sent the zen tunic here. After that, we've not heard from her."

"Haven't been heard from her since?" Si Wuya stopped in his tracks. As he recalled the information he received before this, he discovered he had arrived outside the eastern pavilion. He wanted to ask about the Evil Sky Pavilion's recent situation but since he was already outside the eastern pavilion, he could only push that question aside for now.

The female cultivator bowed and said, "I'll take my leave."

Si Wuya surveyed the surroundings of the eastern pavilion. It had been a long time, but nothing seemed to have changed. It seemed that he was the only one who had changed. He had grown up, no longer the little boy he was before. His master was also no longer the master he knew from before.

Si Wuya entered before he came to half outside Lu Zhou's room. He bowed. "Greetings, master."

There was no reply from the room.

Swoosh!

The door was opened by a blast of energy.

Si Wuya understood what this meant. He entered the room. Once inside, he found himself in a spacious and comfortable hall with a scenic view of the mountains. There was a small desk in the center of the hall. An incense burner with no incense at the moment was placed on the table. He saw the Four Treasures of the Study, a bookshelf, and a calligraphy work on the wall...

“Out of the sea, the bright moon rises. Though miles apart, the same moment is shared.” For some unknown reason, Si Wuya felt his heart race when he read this poem. Clever as he was, he, naturally, knew what it meant. He was shocked but did not dare to say anything. He gulped as he looked at Lu Zhou who was sitting cross-legged with his eyes closed. After a moment of silence, he called out, “Master.”

Lu Zhou opened his eyes slowly. His gaze fell on Si Wuya as he said, “Aren’t you ashamed to call me master?”

“...” Si Wuya felt apprehensive. He was starting to feel nervous. After giving it some thought, he chose to kneel obediently.

Lu Zhou asked with an apathetic expression, “Tell me... why did you leave the Evil Sky Pavilion?”

Si Wuya replied solemnly, “I can only realize my true potential outside of the Evil Sky Pavilion.”

“With that ingenuity of yours?” Lu Zhou asked.

“...” Si Wuya said, “I think that I can.”

“You think?”

Si Wuya said, “Now that the nine provinces of Great Yan are in chaos... All I need is more time to make them fall completely. The Imperial family will surely be in disarray. Even the Ten Terminal Formation will be of no use to the Divine Capital when the time comes. With the nine provinces surrounding it, the Divine Capital will be isolated and without help. Its defeat is only a matter of time! One year... One more year is all I need!”

Whoosh!

Lu Zhou suddenly launched a palm seal!

Smack!

It struck Si Wuya across the face.

“Ding! Punished Si Wuya. Reward: 200 merit points.”

This was a rascal who should have been properly educated.

Si Wuya was cut short by this sudden slap.

Lu Zhou snorted and said, “You overestimate yourself. When I made an acquaintance out of Emperor Yong Shou, you were still in your mother’s womb! Do you think the Divine Capital is all Yong Qing has?”

Si Wuya looked up to meet Lu Zhou’s gaze and said, “With Eldest Senior Brother, I know all about the weaknesses of the Eight-leaf stage... Whether it’s the eight chiefs or the Imperial guards, they can’t leave the Divine Capital.”

“So you think you understand the Imperial family?” Lu Zhou asked.

Si Wuya’s voice was softer now as he said, “After I left the Evil Sky Pavilion, I entered the palace, and with a stroke of luck, I became a grand tutor.”

Lu Zhou said mercilessly, "That's not all. You left such a good impression on Yong Ning so that you use her to obtain information in the palace."

"I did not use her!" Si Wuya said vehemently.

Lu Zhou regarded Si Wuya silently. 'Didn't you? Surely, you know the answer to that.'

Such was the nature of man. The more one spoke, the harder the other party would deny and refute it. It was better to disengage and not debate the matter.

Si Wuya fell silent.

After some time, Lu Zhou stroked his beard and said, "You knew what happened with Yu Shangrong. I won't recount it to you again."

When Si Wuya heard the name, his heart skipped a beat.

"Where's my memory crystal now?" Lu Zhou continued to ask.

Si Wuya had expected this question. With wide eyes, he hastily shook his head and said, "I don't know."

"So Old Second lied to me?"

"Uh..."

"You won't tell me?" Lu Zhou rose to his feet. He placed his hands on his back as he stared down at Si Wuya.

Lu Zhou's aura pressed down on Si Wuya, making it difficult for him to breathe. He said, "Master... believe me. You were the one who sealed the crystal. You didn't want anyone to find out about it. You don't even want to know about it yourself. Why would you look for it again when you went through so much trouble to seal it?"

"I've changed my mind," Lu Zhou said.

"That's because you don't have your memories. If... If you find it and restore your memories, you'll... you'll definitely regret it. Moreover..." Si Wuya paused briefly before he gritted his teeth and soldiered on. "Moreover, you should remain on the mountain and spend the next few years peacefully. I promise to be filial to you..." After that, he kowtowed.

"You're saying that my judgments are incorrect, and seeing that I'm going to die soon anyway, I should... let all of you do whatever you want?" Lu Zhou asked.

Si Wuya was taken aback. However, he quickly replied, "If that's the way you wish to interpret my words, master, then, so be it!"

"Impudent!" Lu Zhou waved his sleeve.

An energy seal struck Si Wuya, and he reeled back before crashing through the door.

Boom!

Si Wuya landed in the eastern pavilion's hall.

Lu Zhou waved his sleeve again. Another palm seal sailed in the air.

Bam!

Si Wuya fell down the stairs.

Lu Zhou was in no mood to entertain the system rewards he earned from punishing Si Wuya. He felt his emotions stirring; it was something very close to rage. After striking a few times, he finally stopped.

He suddenly wondered... Did Ji Tiandao's memories affect him, or did he successfully assimilate with Ji Tiandao? Lu Zhou was still Lu Zhou, but Ji Tiandao was no longer the Ji Tiandao of old.

Lu Zhou had no choice. He was already in this position. He had to establish a new path for himself.

After a moment, Lu Zhou walked to the edge of the steps with his hands on his back. He looked down at Si Wuya from above. "You're an unfilial rascal!"

Si Wuya grunted and spat out a mouthful of blood. He did not defend himself and he did not speak. He only supported himself and adjusted his posture, kneeling on the ground. Lu Zhou was his master no matter what. Even if one had justified reasons, it was still not acceptable to curse at one's master.

Chapter 413: One Cannot Succeed Alone

Si Wuya remained silent. He was not angry, and it seemed like he was already used to this. He was not surprised at all. In fact, he felt his master's punishment had been light compared to before. However, his master's words were more succinct now. As he kneeled on the ground, he recalled Mingshi Yin and Zhu Honggong's words about their master's change. The more he thought about it, the more perplexed he became. In any case, it was no longer important at this moment.

Perhaps, the commotion was too loud. Duanmu Sheng, Mingshi Yin, Zhao Yue, Little Yuan'er, Hua Yuexing, and the others rushed over to the eastern pavilion.

There were also many female cultivators who came since they were curious about Si Wuya. They stood in the distance to watch.

Before anyone spoke, Lu Zhou's voice rang in everyone's ears.

"Anyone who dares to plead for him shall receive the same punishment."

He would allow anyone to interfere with him disciplining a stubborn disciple.

Mingshi Yin saw the broken door and said with a smile, "Master, I will never plead for him... In fact, I think he should be heavily punished!"

"..."

The others were not bold enough to say anything.

"You talk a lot." Lu Zhou walked down the stairs.

Mingshi Yin shut his mouth immediately.

It was getting dark. Shadows were creeping up on the eastern pavilion.

Si Wuya was not embarrassed by the crowd. His back remained straight as he kneeled on the ground. He looked at his master who was walking down the stairs, and he saw an old man whose great limit was upon him.

Lu Zhou stood before Si Wuya with his hands on his back. For a fleeting moment, Si Wuya felt as though he had been transported back in time. Back then, he was still young and was told to kneel as a punishment for a mistake he made. Many years had passed since then, and yet, here he was, back in the same position and reenacting the same moment.

"You've plotted extensively to bring chaos into the world. What are you after?" Lu Zhou's voice was much calmer now.

Since the day Si Wuya left the Evil Sky Pavilion, everything he knew about his master was from second-hand reports. Moreover, the Darknet's hands did not reach into the Evil Sky Pavilion. Regardless, he was convinced his master was completely different from how he was in the past. In the end, he replied, "Eldest Senior Brother wants to rule the world so I helped him."

"Just because of Yu Zhenghai?" Lu Zhou regarded Si Wuya skeptically. His tone seemed to turn sharper when he mentioned Yu Zhenghai.

Si Wuya said, "Revenge can only be obtained when Eldest Senior Brother rules the world... Only by crushing the Divine Capital can we..." He stopped abruptly.

Lu Zhou stroked his beard and said, "Did Yu Zhenghai leave the Evil Sky Pavilion purely for the sake of revenge?"

"Yes."

"Do you think I'm gullible?" Lu Zhou's tone was deceptively calm at this moment.

Si Wuya felt an unbearable pressure pressing down on him at this moment.

If it was just for revenge, why did he need to crush the Divine Capital? With the Nether Sect's current strength, it was not impossible to flatten Lou Lan when their members were mobilized in the hundreds of thousands. Lou Lan was a nation ruled by witchcraft. It was still behind Great Yan's cultivators if they went to war.

"I dare not. I have told no lies," Si Wuya replied.

Lu Zhou stared at Si Wuya. He had helped Si Wuya during the battle in Liang Province merely only made Si Wuya acquiesce to returning to the Evil Sky Pavilion. It did not raise nor change Si Wuya's loyalty.

Name: Si Wuya.

Identity: Great Yan human.

Realm: Nascent Divinity Tribulation realm.

Si Wuya was the rascal whom Lu Zhou had nurtured. Each disciple was more stubborn and obstinate than the last.

"Yu Shangrong won't tell me, and you won't tell me, either... Yu Shangrong has never gotten along with Yu Zhenghai. Who do you think is right or wrong?" Lu Zhou asked.

"None of them are right!" Si Wuya answered.

"Eldest Senior Brother is too extreme in his methods. He won't stop at anything to achieve his goals. Second Senior Brother is too sentimental, and he disregards the iron rules of the Evil Sky Pavilion. Although they cannot see eye to eye, they do share one thing in common... They won't treat anyone who insults the Evil Sky Pavilion with any mercy."

Lu Zhou frowned slightly. "Mingshi Yin."

"Yes, master."

"Strike his mouth for me."

"Uh..." Mingshi Yin was slightly taken aback. He hesitated. He did not know why asked him to strike Si Wuya's mouth. His master's abrupt change in mood was too quick.

The other disciples were puzzled as well.

Si Wuya said, "I'll strike it myself." A loud and crisp sound rang in the air when he slapped himself.

"Do you feel wronged?" Lu Zhou asked.

"I dare not."

"Those who insulted the Evil Sky Pavilion weren't given any mercy?" Lu Zhou shook his head and spoke indifferently, "The elites of the ten great sects had attacked me twice... Where were you lot when that happened?"

Si Wuya was at a loss for words.

Lu Zhou's voice grew deeper. "You can't have a single restful night so long as I'm around, can you?"

"I dare not," Si Wuya immediately kowtowed and said in a clear voice, "The attack of the ten elites was impromptu. After that incident, Eldest Senior Brother attacked the sects involved... When Senior Sister Zhao Yue was taken hostage at Runan City's holy altar, Second Senior Brother was the one who went and killed so many elites."

"Since you're unwaveringly loyal to the Evil Sky Pavilion, tell me the truth about the crystal and the Divine Capital," Lu Zhou said.

Si Wuya fell silent.

Lu Zhou had expected Si Wuya to remain tight-lipped. He said, "One cannot succeed alone... I'm the one who cannot rest peacefully at night for having a rascal like you as a disciple."

At this moment, Mingshi Yin walked over. He could not take this anymore. "Old Seventh, what's gotten into you?"

Duanmu Sheng said, "Old Seventh, at this point, what difference does it make if you say it or not? You talk about treating master with filial piety, but is this the attitude a disciple should have?"

The others stayed silent.

"I don't know what Second Senior Brother said... but I believe in my own judgment. If my judgment proves to be wrong in the future, I'm willing to apologize with my life."

Mingshi Yin rolled his eyes. He walked up to Si Wuya and said, "Old Seventh, look into my eyes. Are you bold enough to guarantee that all your judgments aren't wrong? Think carefully before answering me!"

Si Wuya was taken aback. Even the greatest sage in the world would not dare to claim that all of his judgments would not be wrong. He understood this even if he was confident about his judgments. Suddenly, he recalled the scene on the Lotus Dais and the scene above the Obedient Villa. During those two instants, he had felt that perhaps, his judgments were wrong from the get-go. He calmed himself down before he asked a question that Yu Shangrong had asked before, "Master, have you... found a way to attain the Nine-leaf stage?"

Upon hearing this, everyone turned to look at Lu Zhou, waiting for his answer. The answer was too important. It would affect the path of the entire cultivation world.

Among everyone present, Mingshi Yin was the only one who had heard the members of the Old Age Pavilion discussing this topic. Hence, he was calmer than the others.

The entire eastern pavilion was as silent as a graveyard.

Lu Zhou's expression remained unchanged. He stroked his beard with one hand while he placed the other hand on his back.

Chapter 414: Investigations and Alliances

"Indeed, I have found a way to attain the Nine-leaf stage," Lu Zhou replied. His words were like a pebble that gave rise to a thousand waves.

Everyone, except for Mingshi Yin, had an expression of awe on their faces.

Si Wuya who initially looked exhausted suddenly seemed like he had been given a shot of adrenaline. His eyes were wide open as he stared at Lu Zhou. His hands twitched uncontrollably. How was this possible?

Mingshi Yin waved his arm and said, "Even if you're told the way to attain the Nine-leaf stage, would you dare do it? You'll need to sever your Golden Lotus, are you brave enough to do it?"

"Sever the Golden Lotus?" The others exclaimed in surprise.

This method was, naturally, just a conjecture for now. Lu Zhou would prefer it if someone else had tried it before he did. After all, he had many Reversal Cards at his disposal. He could still maintain his lifespan even without attaining the Nine-leaf stage. He hoped his disciples would be able to attain the Nine-leaf stage, but he knew cutting off one's Golden Lotus was akin to suicide. Nobody would dare to attempt unless they were extremely brave. Moreover, there was no guarantee that it would work. As a transmigrator, he knew that to prove his theory right, he would need lab rats to test it out. The problem was who would be bold enough and willing to take on the role of a lab rat?

Mingshi Yin bowed. He looked at Si Wuya and softly asked, "Seventh Junior Brother, do you dare?"

Si Wuya remained silent. He narrowed his eyes and frowned. He suddenly recalled hearing about someone studying ways to attain the Nine-leaf stage during his stint in the palace. If it was true, did this not mean the Divine Capital had an ace up its sleeve?

Duanmu Sheng asked, "Cutting off one's Golden Lotus? What kind of method is that?"

"How would I know? Ask master," Mingshi Yin said as he rolled his eyes.

Lu Zhou stroked his beard and said, "Severing the Golden Lotus is one way of attaining the Nine-leaf stage, however, there's a possibility you might lose your life in the process. Therefore, do not attempt it lightly."

The others nodded.

Lu Zhou looked at Si Wuya and asked, "Are you satisfied with my answer?"

Upon hearing this, Si Wuya shuddered. He kneeled and said, "I dare not!"

"It's the duty of a teacher to address his students' questions... I will answer any question you have," Lu Zhou said.

The others felt Lu Zhou was a magnanimous person when they heard his words. This was how a true master should act.

On the contrary, Si Wuya felt Lu Zhou's words were mocking him. He could not help but shudder in fear. His master was still his master, but was he still the same disciple as before?

Lu Zhou spoke again, "By the way, how long do you think I have left to live?"

"Well..." Si Wuya trailed off. He was, naturally, afraid to speak his mind. Although he and almost everyone thought Lu Zhou's great limit was fast approaching, he did not dare to verbalize his thoughts in front of Lu Zhou.

Without waiting for Si Wuya to respond, Lu Zhou looked at everyone present and loudly asked, "How long do all of you think I have left to live?"

The main hall was as silent as a graveyard at this moment.

Lu Zhou had been wanting to ask them this question for a long time now. He found it amusing. Did humans become stupid, or were they so used to living with these shackles that they did not dare to break them?

Everyone continued to stay silent.

As expected, Lu Zhou knew they would not dare to answer his question. He waved his sleeve and said, "Lock him up in the Cave of Reflection. Seal his cultivation base, and give him 50 beatings with the plank!"

"Understood."

"Ding! Punish Si Wuya. Reward: 600 merit points."

Zhu Honggong walked up to Si Wuya in his own volition. After all, he was on friendly terms with Si Wuya. It was most appropriate for him to escort Si Wuya.

The others looked at Si Wuya and shook their heads. They did not understand why Si Wuya would remain so stubborn and persist in opposing Lu Zhou? Why would he subject himself to such a treatment?

Si Wuya stood up and followed Zhu Honggong. He took two steps before he suddenly came to halt. Without turning back, he said, "Three days ago, the Darknet has received word that the ten great sects have formed an alliance called the Fiend Extermination Alliance. Rumors are rife about Second Senior Brother being killed. Now, the Noble Path is planning on fighting back." As soon as he finished speaking, he left with Zhu Honggong.

Mingshi Yin frowned.

Little Yuan'er pouted and said, "Master, that group of people is too despicable. We must teach them a lesson!"

"How do you plan on teaching them a lesson?" Little Yuan'er scratched her head. She waved her small fist and said, "Capture them and clobber them?"

Naturally, Lu Zhou did not agree to her suggestion. He noted that Little Yuan'er killing intent was no longer as strong as before. After a while, he waved his hand and said, "Let's call it a day."

"Rest well, master!"

"I'll take my leave, Master."

"Mingshi Yin, stay," Lu Zhou said.

The others left the eastern pavilion.

Mingshi Yin glanced at the shattered wooden door on the floor and said respectfully, "I'll fix that."

Lu Zhou nodded and said, "I'm giving you two missions."

Mingshi Yin was overjoyed when he heard that he would be entrusted with two missions. "Just say the word, master. I'll do everything in my power to complete the missions. I'll complete it even if I have to swim across a sea of flames or climb a mountain of blades."

"For the first mission, spread the word about severing the Golden Lotus being the way to attain the Nine-leaf stage," Lu Zhou said.

"Huh?" Mingshi Yin started. They had gone to so much trouble, traveling to the Yun Sect and learning about the way to attain the Nine-leaf stage through the Three Sect's Patriarch's chessboard. Why would they easily reveal this to the masses? He could not understand this at all.

Lu Zhou said, "Severing the Golden Lotus is akin to suicide. Nobody has ever tried it. At the very least, severing the Golden Lotus is equivalent to cultivating all over again. Everything aside, if we can gather information from people who attempt this, we'll have vast knowledge." This was very progressive thinking. Cultivators from the cultivation world in the past would guard their cultivation methods and

theories closely as though they were some peerless treasure. For example, Yun Tianluo would never easily give up his chessboard even if it cost him his life. Due to this behavior, the progress of the cultivation world was greatly limited. Sharing information and knowledge was much more efficient and mutually beneficial rather than building a cart alone in the dark. However, Lu Zhou also knew that even if he would obtain countless information, the price of laying that foundation would be piles upon piles of bones.

"I understand," Mingshi Yin said.

"The second mission is to investigate the alliance between the ten great sects. Keep me updated on this," Lu Zhou said.

"Yes, master!"

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Meanwhile, in the Evergreen Palace in the Divine Capital.

An attendant walked into the study reverently before kneeling on the floor. He held a name list with two hands above his head as he said, "Your Majesty, this is the list of Nascent Divinity Tribulation realm cultivators who died this month."

Liu Gu placed his brush on the table and said, "I won't read it. Read it out for me."

"At once." The attendant lowered the list and read, "There are five Nascent Divinity Tribulation realm cultivators at the Three-leaf stage and below who sprouted leaves by binding their Golden Lotuses with mantras. They couldn't absorb any energy and eventually died when their dantians exploded. There are three Five-leaf Nascent Divinity realm cultivators who used the forced Golden Lotus modification method and died. There was a 900 years old Six-leaf cultivator who consumed a longevity pill and forcibly tried to sprout a leaf but failed." After he finished reading, he remained prostrate on the ground.

Liu Gu nodded and said, "Bury them ceremoniously. Every one of their families will be compensated with 10,000 catties of gold and 1,000 acres of fertile land."

"Your Majesty, what if they refuse?" the attendant asked after mustering up his courage. Cultivators who had entered the Nascent Divinity Tribulation realm, and likely their families, rarely cared about material things.

"That's the most I can offer as compensation. I'll leave the rest to you."

"Understood."

Chapter 415: Huge Waves

The attendant left the study as reverently as when he came.

The study was once again quiet.

Liu Gu returned to his table. He picked up his brush and moved it across the canvas forcefully. The brush eventually broke the paper. He threw the brush on the table with a loud thud.

Two eunuchs who were startled by the noise hurried to the table.

Liu Gu said indifferently. "Clean this up."

"At once."

Half a day later, Liu Gu was going through the memorials when the attendant hurried into his study with an emergency report in his hand. His forehead was wet with sweat as he held the report with two hands above his head as he said, "Your Majesty, a report from Liang Province."

"Read it." Liu Gu did not bother with personally reading it.

The attendant unfolded the report and read, "The ten cities of Liang Province have fallen. They've been conquered by the Nether Sect. General Xiang Lie has fallen in battle. His Highness, the Fourth Prince, and the six generals have perished!"

Liu Gu frowned when he heard the report. He did not even frown when Liu Huan, the Second Prince, died.

The attendant waited on the Emperor every day so he was familiar with Liu Gu's temper. The quieter Liu Gu was, the more uncomfortable and anxious he became. The air in the study felt as though it was laced with poison. He felt if he inhaled too deeply, he would definitely die. The study was so quiet now that he could hear his own heartbeat.

After a moment of silence, Liu Gu finally said, "I see."

The attendant was relieved. A reply was better than none. He mustered his courage and said again, "Your Majesty, I have another matter to report."

"What is it?"

"There's a rumor going around that the cultivation world has found a way to attain the Nine-leaf stage," said the attendant.

Liu Gu who was slightly troubled by the earlier report turned around immediately. His eyes were wide as he asked, "What method is it?"

"Apparently, if a cultivator cut off his Golden Lotus and manages to survive, he can sprout leaves again and attain the Nine-leaf Stage," the attendant replied.

If Liu Gu had heard this report in the past or someone had told him about severing one's Golden Lotus to attain the Nine-leaf Stage, the person who had spoken about it would have been beheaded without a doubt. However, at this moment, he believed this rumor.

After Emperor Yong Shou passed away, Liu Gu had ascended the throne. He had neglected to govern the empire and focused on attaining the Nine-leaf stage. He had utilized the empire's resources and spent centuries on research before he finally discovered the Golden Lotus was what was preventing cultivators from attaining the Nine-leaf stage. He had tried various methods; binding the Golden Lotus with mantras and modifying the Golden Lotus, for example. He had even once thought about cutting off the Golden Lotus, but he quickly dismissed the idea. And yet, currently, such a rumor was spreading in the cultivation world now? There would be no waves without the wind. There must be a reason for this.

“Who spread the rumor?” Liu Gu asked.

“It started from a relay station in the Divine Capital. This information spread throughout the entire Divine Capital in half a day. However, many people don’t believe it. Your Majesty thinks about this topic day and night, I dare not delay in bringing this news to you. Kindly give your informed decision on this matter, Your Majesty,” the attendant said.

“Has anyone attempted it?” Liu Gu asked.

The attendant shook his head.

Liu Gu fell deep into his thoughts.

The attendant did not dare to move nor did he dare to rashly speak.

The method of severing one’s Golden Lotus was akin to committing suicide with a blade. It was normal for people to be apprehensive.

Liu Gu had spent many years researching this. He had lost count of the number of Nascent Divinity Tribulation realm elites who had died during the research. On the bookshelf behind him, there was a space dedicated to the lists of names of people who had died for the sake of his cause.

Since the heavens had limited humans’ cultivation bases to the Nascent Divinity Tribulation realm, it was only natural for there to be more and more Nascent Divinity Tribulation realm cultivators as time passed by. Even so, not everyone could attain the Eight-leaf stage, let alone the Nine-leaf stage.

After pondering over it for a moment, Liu Gu finally said, “This is my decree. Gather 100 men who are willing to sever their Golden Lotuses.”

“At once.”

It was not difficult to find these men. Great Yan had no shortages of citizens. Those at the One-leaf stage could participate as well. It did not necessarily have to be Eight-leaf experts.

Ordinary cultivators might be willing to sever their Golden Lotuses. However, there were many who were on the brink of deaths such as old men whose great limit was fast approaching, cultivators who were heavily injured or were terminally ill, or those who had nothing left to love for. Rather than dying without a cause, these people would naturally think it was better to sever their Golden Lotuses and try to attain the Nine-leaf stage. As long as the reward was huge enough, there would be no lack of brave men.

After the attendant left, Liu Gu raised one hand. A miniature Hundred Tribulations Insight avatar appeared above his palm. It was standing on an Eight-leaf Golden Lotus, and it shone with a golden light. The eight leaves were full and plump. The radiance of the Golden Lotus was dazzling.

Liu Gu’s eyes flashed. If severing the Golden Lotus worked, it meant he would have to give up on his Eight-leaf cultivation base and start over. He wondered if he would be able to do it.

...

The Divine Capital was the core of Great Yan.

The cultivators under the heavens gathered in the Divine Capital and some were scattered across Great Yan's nine provinces.

The rumors of severing one's Golden Lotus to attain the Nine-leaf stage spread like a wildfire and caused a huge commotion.

Both the Noble and Fiend Paths had been racing to study the way to attain the Nine-leaf stage. Shortly after the rumor had spread. People had been divided into three factions; the lie faction, the radical faction, and the trial faction.

This rumor had also reached the Nether Sect's branches as well.

Hua Chongyang, Bai Yuqing, Yang Yan, and Di Qing stood in a row with their heads lowered.

Yu Zhenghai was pacing with his hands on his back.

"Please punish us, sect master! We weren't able to stop Mister Seventh!" Hua Chongyang was the first to fall to one knee.

"Please punish us, sect master!" The others followed suit and dropped to one knee as well.

The Nether Sect had won in the battle of Liang Province. Their victory was beautiful and brilliant. All ten cities of Liang Province were now under the Nether Sect's control. However, Yu Zhenghai was not happy at all. A somber expression could be seen on his face, and he would frown intermittently. He looked at his four subordinates who were kneeling and could not bring himself to punish them. In the end, he punched the wall next to him to vent his frustration.

Boom!

Yu Zhenghai did not use any Primal Qi. Relying on his fist and strength alone, he made the wall crumble. His expression was dark as he muttered, "Without Seventh Junior Brother, how am I supposed to unify the lands? Am I supposed to believe the rumor about severing one's Golden Lotus like all the fools out there?"

The Four Great Protectors remained kneeling on the ground. They did not even dare to breathe loudly.

After a moment of silence, Hua Chongyang said, "Mister Seventh insisted on returning to the Evil Sky Pavilion. We couldn't stop him. Moreover, the old senior's cultivation base is terrifyingly profound. Even an elite such as Xiang Lie could not survive a single strike from the old senior."

"All of you, rise." Yu Zhenghai turned around.

The four of them rose to their feet.

Yu Zhenghai said with a sigh, "Since he's insisted on returning, I'll respect his decision." What could he do anyway? Could he rush to the Evil Sky Pavilion to bring Si Wuya back?

"Sect master, what's our next move?" Hua Chongyang asked.

"Seventh Junior Brother drafted a plan to isolate the Divine Capital before he left for Liang Province. He has come up with different simulations of possible outcomes. Regardless of which of his plans we use, as

long as we follow one of his plans, the sect will conquer the Divine Capital, sooner or later,” Yu Zhenghai said.

Upon hearing this, Hua Chongyang sighed before he said, “Mister Seventh was a huge asset to the sect. What a shame...”

The other three shook their heads as well.

...

Achoo!

Perhaps, it was due to the cold wind blowing in the Cave of Reflection, Si Wuya whose cultivation base had been sealed sneezed.

“Zhu Honggong prepared a set of clothes for Si Wuya. He massaged Si Wuya’s shoulders as he asked with a chuckle, Seventh Senior Brother, why won’t you reveal the location of the crystal?”

Si Wuya glanced at Zhu Honggong and asked, “Did master send you to gather information from me?”

“Seventh Senior Brother, with my brains, what kind of information do you think I can glean from you? If master wanted to send someone, he would’ve sent Fourth Senior Brother,” Zhu Honggong replied.

Si Wuya shook his head and said, “You’re just recently returned to the Evil Sky Pavilion, but I see that your bootlicking skills have improved.”

“I don’t agree with your words, Seventh Senior Brother... How can you equate bootlicking to honesty? This is a great insult to me,” Zhu Honggong said.

“...” Si Wuya, naturally, did not believe Zhu Honggong. How could Zhu Honggong fool him? “That’s enough. To be honest, the only thing I know is that the crystal has found its way to Rongxi. It’s not in Great Yan.”

Chapter 416: The Whereabouts of the Crystal

Zhu Honggong was all smiles. He stood behind Si Wuya and massaged Si Wuya’s shoulders with great care. He pounded on Si Wuya’s back softly with his fleshy fists from time to time as he asked, “Rongxi? Seventh Senior Brother, with your brains, it shouldn’t be difficult for you to retrieve the crystal for master, right?”

Si Wuya turned to look at Zhu Honggong. He said, “Old Eighth, have you become unswervingly loyal to the Evil Sky Pavilion already?”

Upon hearing this, Zhu Honggong chuckled and said, “I think the Evil Sky Pavilion is a much better place compared to before... Look at the four pavilions. There are more people here now. There are food, drinks, and places to sleep. If you so wish, you can have a young lady by your side to accompany you to watch the sunrise or the sunset. There are also a few shameless old farts who brag every day...”

Si Wuya regarded Zhu Honggong with skepticism and did not say anything. Based on his expression, he clearly did not understand Zhu Honggong’s words.

Zhu Honggong continued to say, "I like the way things are right now."

Si Wuya pushed Zhu Honggong's fleshy hands away and said, "Are you trying to find out about crystal's location from me?"

"I'm not. Honest."

Si Wuya said, "There are five nations in Rongxi. There are Wuxian, Lou Lan, Sushen, Changgu, and Qigong. Master was the one who lost the crystal. Where are we supposed to begin looking for it among the five nations? Besides, nobody can guarantee that the crystal hasn't been opened. Perhaps, it has already found its way to the seven nations of the Other Tribes in Rongbei."

"If master's the one who sealed it, I think it won't be easy for anyone to unseal it," Zhu Honggong said as he scratched his head.

"As Fourth Senior Brother has said, how can any of you be sure that your judgments aren't wrong? Nothing is certain in this world," Si Wuya said.

Zhu Honggong nodded his head in agreement. However, he soon found a flaw in this reasoning. "In that case, why didn't you tell the truth? Master won't deliberately make things difficult for you."

"The truth might sound offensive in master's ears," Si Wuya replied.

"..."

Si Wuya's voice had barely faded when a cold scoff rang from outside the cave. "Seventh Senior Brother, to think that I'd spoken in your favor... Is that what you think of master?"

Little Yuan'er appeared at the mouth of the cave in green robes. She looked at Si Wuya with a slightly annoyed expression as she said, "If it weren't for master, you would've died!"

"Little Junior Sister?" Si Wuya seemed awkward. "I didn't mean it that way."

"Sure you did." Little Yuan'er's breathing seemed to grow heavy with rage as she said, "You pompous prick!" Then, she spun on her heels and left without waiting for an explanation from Si Wuya.

Zhu Honggong and Si Wuya exchanged a glance.

Si Wuya sighed and said, "Even Little Junior Sister misunderstood me..."

Zhu Honggong did not dare to say anything.

Si Wuya shook his head. Another person made no difference. He was used to this. "Old Eighth, tell me about the current situation of the Evil Sky Pavilion."

"Oh," Zhu Honggong scratched his head and said, "Let's start with the old farts, then..."

...

Inside the eastern pavilion.

After meditating on the Heavenly Writing scrolls, Lu Zhou sensed that his extraordinary power was almost replenished. He felt slightly relieved. He stood up and looked at the old parchment drawing on

his table. Apart from the clearly labeled locations, the rest were still a blur. He could not see anything. However, the outline of Wuxian Mountain was much clearer now.

‘Is Yu Shangrong on Wuxian Mountain?’ Lu Zhou thought to himself as he stroked his beard. After pondering about it for a moment, he decided that there was no point dwelling on it for now. Hence, he turned around and sat with his legs crossed again. He opened the system’s dashboard and checked his remaining merit points.

Merit points: 44,200.

He needed more than 50,000 merit points to purchase the Hundred Tribulations Insight avatar. Without putting much thought into it, he said in a low voice, “Lucky draw.”

“Ding! Spent 50 merit points. Obtained Reversal Card x10.”

Reversal Cards?

Lu Zhou understood now. In the early stages, the rate to win a grand prize was high in lucky draws. Now, it was providing rewards in line with the user’s needs.

‘Would you give me an avatar?’

Lu Zhou did 20 consecutive draws. He was thanked for his participation 20 times. Feeling helpless, he gave up trying. It had been a long time since he had won something of value from the lucky draws. Recently, he had been getting Reversal Cards.

Lu Zhou checked his item column. He gritted his teeth and bought two Deadly Strike Cards. With that, he had spent 6,000 merit points. ‘As for the others... Forget it!’ He did not think that they were worth buying compared to the Deadly Strike Cards. The Deadly Strike Card was his true trump card for now.

Lu Zhou was still mulling over his next move when Zhao Yue appeared outside the eastern pavilion. “Master, a letter from Jiang Aijian.”

“Read it.”

Zhao Yue unfolded the letter and read aloud, “Old senior, there are two things that I wish to clarify. First, I’ve made some headway with the investigations of the palace’s Nine-leaf research. Indeed, someone’s been researching the Nine-leaf stage in the palace. However, it’s being done with great secrecy, and my sources can’t seem to find out anything else. The only thing we know is that there’s a huge dark faction in the Divine Capital doing it, and they’re very guarded. In my opinion, they must be annoyed to no end when you spread word about severing one’s Golden Lotus to attain the Nine-leaf stage, old senior. Second, the Noble Path is starting their Fiend Extermination Plan. You should be careful. Lastly, what did you think of Li Jingyi’s presence in Liang Province’s city? Ha ha ha.”

Zhao Yue’s expression turned slightly unnatural after she finished reading the letter. She said, “Master, Jiang Aijian’s letter reminded me of something.”

“Let’s hear it.”

“When I was in the palace, I heard someone say that the current Emperor has never appeared in court. When my royal grandmother was sick, not once did I see the Emperor. Eunuch Li told me that the

Emperor is tied down with various affairs and important matters. I wonder what could be more important than the situation in Liang Province City and my royal grandmother's health?" Zhao Yue was clearly puzzled.

Lu Zhou's voice rang from inside. "Indeed. He has more important matters to attend to." There were always those who valued a certain thing over others. Sometimes, they would even sacrifice the people around them.

When Zhaoyue heard this, she shuddered inwardly. She recalled her time in the palace. Apart from rules and restrictive etiquettes, there was nothing but coldness. It felt like there was no human touch in the palace at all.

...

Ten days later.

The news about severing one's Golden Lotus to attain the Nine-leaf stage spread further and further away.

After a period of quarrels and arguments, the lie faction grew larger.

The lie faction was of the opinion that severing one's Golden Lotus was a big hoax. The basis for their opinion was that as many as ten cultivators had died after severing their Golden Lotuses during the past ten days.

The trial faction insisted those people had died because they were on the brink of death anyway. Those people could not survive the damages incurred from severing their Golden Lotuses since they were weak to begin with.

Both factions were firm in their beliefs.

There were also cultivators who proposed more advanced theories about severing the Golden Lotus. The theories were along the lines of severing a Golden Lotus before it sprouted leaves or shattering the avatar and abandoning the Golden Lotus, among others.

...

Under the Melilot Graveyard, it was pitch-black.

Yu Shangrong had forgotten how long he had been here.

He flipped his hand, and a little golden avatar appeared above his palm. He felt he had enough Primal Qi to attempt sprouting the second leaf.

"Open."

A radiant circle appeared around the avatar and traveled downward. Unlike before, the radiant circle did not drop all the way to the base of the avatar's feet.

Yu Shangrong had understood an important point. Since he would sprout leaves without a Golden Lotus, he could just disregard the Golden Lotus.

As his Primal Qi surged, the radiant circle seemed to be filled with energy. His avatar completely illuminated the dry well!

Chapter 417: The Scroll of Heavenly Writing Is Returned

In all aspects, Sword Devil Yu Shangrong was a rare sword genius in the cultivation world. Whether it was Mobei's Sword Slave Wang Haichao, the First Sword of Qing Province's Daoist Master Wang, the western region's Lou Lan's Sword Emperor Yue Zhengrong, all of them had died by his sword.

There were too many cultivators who liked to cultivate the sword, but those who reached great heights were few and far in between.

Yu Shangrong knew every step like the back of his hands. He could feel his avatar's power growing as it grew taller and bigger. Radiant circles of energy moved downward with smaller gaps between them. The resonance of his avatar grew louder as well.

Whizz! Whizz! Whizz!

Yu Shangrong was now calmer compared to when he was sprouting his first leaf. He was convinced he would be able to reach the Eight-leaf stage even without his Golden Lotus. It was just a matter of time.

As more energy poured in...

Boom!

A loud explosion sounded, and Yu Shangrong's avatar grew bigger. A Two-leaf avatar had a height of about 20 feet. When his avatar grew, it was only natural that the little well was unable to contain it. Fortunately, avatars were formed from energy. It was up to him if he wanted the avatar to destroy his surroundings.

Boom!

His energy crashed against the walls before everything returned to normal.

Yu Shangrong raised a hand with Primal Qi shrouding it before he converted it to energy. A shining golden light illuminated his surroundings again. He studied the melilots. Unfortunately, it was impossible for them to survive in the dry well for such a long time. They had already withered.

The short-lived people of the Noblemen Country never gave up on their pursuit for longevity. This was the case in the past and in the present. There was a time when Yu Shangrong had been contemptuous of this pursuit. He was of the opinion that death was part of the cycle of life. Everyone would die at some point after all. Later in life, he began to realize the value of being alive.

Yu Shangrong summoned his Hundred Tribulations Insight avatar again.

Whizz!

A miniature avatar without a Golden Lotus floated in front of him. Two leaves surrounded the avatar now. He had clearly entered the Two-leaf stage of the Nascent Divinity Tribulation realm.

Yu Shangrong smiled. "That went well enough."

The sprouting of the first leaf had been a gamble as it was fraught with uncertainties. However, the second leaf had proven that it was possible to continue cultivating even after severing one's Golden Lotus.

Yu Shangrong looked up. He tried to sense his Longevity Sword's location after circulating his Primal Qi.

Bzzt! Bzzt! Bzzt!

The Longevity Sword vibrated slightly before becoming motionless again.

"Not quite there yet." Yu Shangrong sat down and crossed his legs again. The time needed and difficulty of sprouting another leaf from this stage onward would multiply. However, he currently had no other choice other than to quickly raise his cultivation base in this dry well.

"Second Senior Brother?" A voice reached Yu Shangrong's ears from outside the mountain. It sounded faint and distant, mixed with the noise from the snowstorm. He would have missed it if he was not carefully listening.

Yu Shangrong's ears twitched. He projected his voice with Primal Qi and said, "Sixth Junior Sister?"

"Second Senior Brother, is it really you?"

The snowstorm was still raging outside Wuxian Mountain. The mountains and trees in the area were covered in snow. Ye Tianxin hovered outside Wuxian Mountain in her white robes.

Yu Shangrong was surprised. He projected his voice with Primal Qi again. "Sixth Junior Sister, this is a remote place. Why are you here?"

Ye Tianxin appeared delighted. She looked at Wuxian Mountain and said, "I'm traveling around Great Yan in search of Cheng Huang. I was traveling westward from Mobei and reached the northwestern regions... The people here told me that Wuxian Mountain is in the area. I remember you talking about coming here before so I decided to drop by... I didn't expect to actually find you here."

Yu Shangrong smiled faintly and asked, "Did you manage to find Cheng Huang?"

"It's not easy," Ye Tianxin looked at Wuxian Mountain and said, "Second Senior Brother, I sensed Primal Qi waves from this spot earlier. It's the same as the aura that killed Zhang Yuanshan on the Green Jade Altar but much weaker. What happened?" She knew Yu Shangrong was inside the Wuxian Mountain when she sensed the aura. She was perplexed when she waited but saw no signs of Yu Shangrong. He should be out by now.

Yu Shangrong calmly replied, "I've severed my Golden Lotus, and I have to sprout my leaves again."

Ye Tianxin was, naturally, shocked. She asked incredulously, "Second Senior Brother, you-you... you severed your Golden Lotus?"

"My Golden Lotus was tainted by witchcraft so I had to cut it off. From the looks of things now... everything's going well." Yu Shangrong's tone remained casual and calm.

"I'll get you out of there!" Ye Tianxin let out a burst of energy. A tidal wave of Primal Qi was changed into energy that landed on Wuxian Mountain.

Boom!

The Blue Waves Technique blasted a huge rock to smithereens.

"There's no need for that." Yu Shangrong stopped her.

"Why?"

"I need to sprout my leaves again in the Melilot Graveyard... It's not safe for me to go out now," Yu Shangrong said. It was the truth. He had made many enemies in the cultivation world, and they were all powerful individuals. It would be dangerous for him to venture out now. It was better for him to stay here and take his time to cultivate and sprout leaves. It would not be long before he would be at his peak again!

Ye Tianxin shook her head and sighed. "The entire cultivation world is talking about the method of severing one's Golden Lotus. Second Senior Brother, you should've been more patient! You're too reckless"

"Severing the Golden Lotus?" Yu Shangrong found this odd. "I've never told anyone about this. How was this method made public?"

Ye Tianxin recounted everything that happened and the rumors that had been circulating in the cultivation world.

Yu Shangrong was shocked. "It's possible to reach the Nine-leaf stage after severing the Golden Lotus?"

"That's right," Ye Tianxin replied.

"It's true that I've severed my Golden Lotus, but I never told anyone that it's possible to reach the Nine-leaf stage this way... Don't believe the rumor, junior sister." Yu Shangrong remembered how his Golden Lotus was corrupted by witchcraft. Perhaps, the witchcraft cultivator sensed he was still alive so the cultivator spread the rumor in hopes to see if cultivators would survive after severing their Golden Lotuses.

"Second Senior Brother, why aren't you injured?" Ye Tianxin was puzzled. She really felt it was a shame that she could not see her senior brother with her own eyes.

"It's a long story, and it's unimportant."

"..." Since Yu Shangrong did not want to talk about it, she did not pursue the matter. Moreover, she did not have the courage to sever her Golden Lotus. "Very well..."

...

During the next three days, Ye Tianxin remained close to Wuxian Mountain and would chat with Yu Shangrong. Although Yu Shangrong's current cultivation base was inferior to Ye Tianxin's, he was more experienced in other matters compared to her. Throughout this period, Ye Tianxin humbled herself to be educated by her senior brother and had gained much.

On the fourth day, Ye Tianxin planned to bid farewell to Yu Shangrong. She was going to head west.

When Yu Shangrong heard that Ye Tianxin was leaving, he hastily said, "Sixth Junior Sister, can you bring one thing back to the Evil Sky Pavilion for me?" He raised a palm. An energy seal launched the Open Heavenly Writing Scroll out of the well toward the light source.

Ye Tianxin sensed the surge of Primal Qi. She leaped into the air and hovered above Wuxian Mountain.

The energy seal brought the Open Heavenly Writing scroll out of Wuxian Mountain.

Ye Tianxin moved at lightning speed and caught the Open Heavenly Writing scroll as the energy seal vanished. She did not descend immediately. Instead, she landed near the opening from which the scroll flew out. Then, she projected her voice. "Second Senior Brother, what's this?"

Yu Shangrong could clearly hear Ye Tianxin's voice now. He looked up at the beam of light. Although it was quite a distance away, he could distinctly see a shadow. Her voice reached his ears clearly now. "It belongs to master."

"Understood... I'll see that it reaches the Evil Sky Pavilion," Ye Tianxin replied.

"Thank you."

"There's no need for that. Thank you for enlightening me these few days, Second Senior Brother." Ye Tianxin bowed in midair.

This time, Yu Shangrong did not reply to her. He only closed his eyes.

Ye Tianxin's appearance reminded Yu Shangrong that although the mountain was located in a remote place, it did not mean there were no experts around. The waves of energy from him sprouting leaves might attract the attention of some elites.

Ye Tianxin tucked the scroll away and flew south. She had to return south before continuing west.

Chapter 418: Cutting Lotus and the Patriarch

Ye Tianxin made her way south. She flew for a day and a night, traversing countless mountains and snow-covered plains before she saw the first signs of a human settlement. She came to halt and hovered in the sky. Her black hair was white from the snow, and she was dressed in all white. If one did not pay close attention, one would not be able to see her. She did not continue flying. A world of black lay before her while a world of white was behind her. The cold place was not always black while the warm place was not always white. After taking in the snowy scenery for a while, she finally continued on her journey. She circulated her Primal Qi and shot like a meteor toward the human settlement that was faintly discernible in the snow.

...

At this moment, the cultivation theory of severing one's own Golden Lotus to attain the Nine-leaf stage had spread throughout Great Yan's cultivation world. It had also spread to the Other Tribes in Rongxi and Rongbei.

The Other Tribes had always worshipped the fist. When they learned of this cultivation theory, the 12 nations gathered their Nascent Divinity cultivators and began experimenting.

...

At a certain relay station in Great Yan.

Several cultivators were chatting over wine. After three rounds of drinks, they were running out of conversational topics.

"Comrade, you're saying that severing one's Golden Lotus is the way to attain the Nine-leaf stage? However, you're claiming that it's a pseudo-Nine-leaf stage. What do you mean by that?" One of the cultivators asked a man who was dressed in bizarre clothes.

"What else could it be other than a pseudo-Nine-leaf stage? How can an avatar be an avatar without a Golden Lotus? Who knows if one can form a Golden Lotus again after severing it? Perhaps, if it's possible, then, one could be considered as attaining the true Nine-leaf stage," the man in the bizarre clothes replied.

"You have a point... However, the problem is, can anyone survive after severing their Golden Lotuses?"

"There must be a way around that... There are many who will die regardless if they sever their Golden Lotuses or not. If it were you, you'd give it a try as well, no?"

"You have a point." At this moment, a man on the side cupped his fists at the man in bizarre clothes and said, "You're knowledgeable, comrade. May I know your name?"

"Well, my name's of no significance, but my surname is Ri..."

"Comrade Ri, listening to your speech is better than reading for a decade."

"..." Mingshi Yin shook his head. He had no choice but to accept the compliment. He said, "You mentioned that the ten great sects have rallied together and formed the Fiend Extermination Alliance?"

"Well, technically, it's only seven great sects right now. The Righteous Sect, Clarity Sect, and Heavenly Sword Sect have been annihilated a long time ago," someone said.

Mingshi Yin said disapprovingly, "Aren't the seven great sects actively seeking deaths by challenging the Evil Sky Pavilion?"

Upon hearing Mingshi Yin's words, the others turned to look at him. They did not agree with Mingshi Yin's words.

The moment his voice faded.

"Comrade Ri, the Evil Sky Pavilion's Patriarch's great limit aside, the seven great sects aren't what they used to be."

"Oh?" Mingshi Yin behaved as though he was willing to listen to him speak.

"Think about it... The ten great sects had failed numerous times in their attempts to defeat the Evil Sky Pavilion. They had failed terribly twice. This time, they'll surely be more cautious. I'm sure they would be better prepared as well."

Mingshi Yin nodded. "You have a point."

"The other sects aside, two days ago, the disciples of the Duanlin Branch managed to invite their Patriarch out of seclusion.

"Patriarch?"

"The Sword Devil, Yu Shangrong, killed their sect master, Chang Jian. Their patriarch, Chang Yan, has no choice but to make a move... The senior will surely not let this matter slide, not when his young heir was killed."

Mingshi Yin laughed when he heard this. He said mockingly, "He has one foot in the coffin, how is he going to oppose the Evil Sky Pavilion? I remember that Chang Yan's cultivation base has already deteriorated, right?"

The man sitting opposite Mingshi Yin furtively looked to his left and right before he said, "Those are different times. Do you know why nobody is giving the Duanlin Branch trouble although it isn't protected by any barriers?"

"Isn't it because of the heavenly moat?"

"What good would a moat do? It's because..." The man lowered his voice and said, "The Duanlin Branch is in possession of many Primal Fiend Potions!"

"..." Mingshi Yin widened his eyes as he looked at the man and said, "The Duanlin Branch isn't a major branch. The ten great sects are but a joke. Where did they get the Primal Fiend Potions from?"

"I don't know, but that's what I heard, anyway," the man said with a chuckle.

"Do you know about the other members of the Fiend Extermination Alliance, then?" Mingshi Yin asked.

"The others are minor sects that are too insignificant to mention. The larger sects are busy studying the theory of severing the Golden Lotus."

At this point, Mingshi Yin finally rose to his feet and said, "Thanks."

The man grinned and said, "Comrade Ri... do you think... you can be so kind... as to pay the tab for us?"

The others looked at Mingshi Yin hopefully. They had been sharing a lot of information with the man with the surname Ri over the past few days. He even went on and on about how powerful the nine villains were, especially Mingshi Yin, the fourth villain. It was interesting to listen to him speak in the beginning, but they slowly grew bored. Since he had obtained all kinds of information from them, it was not too much to ask him to pay for their bill, right?

Mingshi Yin glanced at all of them before he said, "What are you talking about? I'm being magnanimous by not asking you to pay for my drinks, and yet, you want me to pay for your drinks?" He did not wait for their replies and left as soon as he finished speaking.

The others were dumbfounded.

...

The Evergreen Palace in the Divine Capital.

Liu Gu held a brush to a piece of paper in his study as usual. With swift and forceful strokes, he wrote the words, 'Unify Ten Thousand Tribes'.

An attendant entered the study at this moment. He kneeled before he said, "Your Majesty, the results of the first group of cultivators who attempted to sever their Golden Lotuses are out."

"Let's hear it."

"There are ten cultivators who severed their Golden Lotuses. There was one Three-leaf, five Two-leaves, and four One-leaf cultivators. Nine of them died from the pain, and only one survived." A hint of excitement could be heard in the attendant's voice when he spoke.

Liu Gu was still wielding his brush as he said in a deep voice, "Repeat."

"There were ten cultivators..."

"The final part."

"One survived," the attendant said.

The muscles on Liu Gu's cheek clearly twitched. A hint of excitement could be seen in his eyes. He had carried out the experiment to determine if it were possible to survive after severing one's Golden Lotus. After years of research, he knew that Golden Lotuses absorbed both power and life. If a cultivator could live after severing his Golden Lotus, this problem was solved.

Liu Gu was the monarch of an empire. He held the reigns of Great Yan in his hands. When he heard this, he could hardly remain unmoved. Throughout the years, he had racked his brains researching the Nine-leaf stage. He had experimented with life and various unconventional methods, but none of them succeeded. He was starting to grow apathetic. However, now, it seemed like his research was showing results. How could he not feel excited?

"Congratulations, Your Majesty!" the attendant said, "The survivor has a strong build. His talent and foundations are better than the rest. That's why he survived... I've sent the Imperial physician to tend to him."

"Very good." Liu Gu gave a high compliment.

The attendant was overjoyed to hear this.

Liu Gu said again, "Keep him alive, no matter the cost."

"Understood."

"Compensate the families of the deceased according to the agreement," Liu Gu said.

"Understood."

The Divine Capital had always kept these experiments a secret. Nobody knew about it. This time was no exception.

The attendant left the study cautiously, looked to the left and right, and headed in a different direction.

...

Inside the study, Liu Gu felt more invigorated than he had ever been. "If one can survive after severing the Golden Lotus, what about sprouting leaves?"

They had to do more experiments regarding the next step. It was now proven that it was possible to survive after severing one's Golden Lotus. They could work to improve the survival rate. Whether it was with the help of pills or arcane arts, so long as the cultivator was alive, he could sprout leaves again.

Liu Gu looked at the words he wrote. 'Unify Ten Thousand Tribes'. He felt heroic and passionate at this moment. "When I'm at the Nine-leaf stage, even if there are ten Nether Sects, they will be nothing to me."

...

In the eastern pavilion of the Evil Sky Pavilion.

Lu Zhou stood up slowly after meditating on the Heavenly Writing scrolls. The Heavenly Writing's extraordinary power was completely replenished.

At this moment, Zhao Yue's voice rang from outside the pavilion. "Master, someone's at the foot of the mountain to deliver something to you."

"What is it?"

"A parcel. I think it's... some sort of document... and some dessert."

Dessert? Lu Zhou's curiosity was piqued. All these years, none of his disciples had ever offered to make delicious treats for him. The situation had only improved when the female disciples of the Derived Moon Palace chose to stay on the mountain.

"Bring it to me."

"Understood." Zhao Yue opened the doors carefully. She saw her master standing before the French windows. She placed the document and desserts on the table.

Lu Zhou turned around to look at the delivered items. When he saw the special papers, he walked over with a slightly shocked expression on his face. It was the Open Heavenly Writing Scroll.

"Ding! Obtained Open Heaven Writing (back). Will you combine the Open Heavenly Writing Scrolls?"

Chapter 419: Educating Si Wuya

The system's notification proved Lu Zhou right. He was not in a hurry to merge the Heavenly Writing Scrolls. Instead, he looked at the tuckahoe pies at the side.

Zhao Yue smiled. "It seems like these are sent by Sixth Junior Sister."

Tuckahoe pies were one of the desserts Ye Tianxin was most skilled at making. When Ye Tianxin was still on the mountain, she frequently made them for her master. Also, it was thanks to this that Ye Tianxin obtained the Amorous Hoop that she wanted ahead of time.

Lu Zhou was surprised that Ye Tianxian still remembered this. Alas, the current Ji Tiandao was no longer the Ji Tiandao of old. He did not like tuckahoe pies. Hence, he waved his hand and said, "Share it among yourselves."

Zhao Yue said in confusion, "Huh? But Sixth Junior Sister made them for you. I dare not accept it."

"I have no appetite." Lu Zhou blurted out the first excuse that came to his mind.

When Zhao Yue heard this, she bowed and said, "Thank you, master." However, inwardly, she was worried. 'Master's losing his appetite... It's said that this often happens in old age. Is master's great limit truly near?'

Aside from cultivating, Zhao Yue would also keep up with the news in the outside world. It was only natural for her to worry, what with all the rumors being circulated. She was not the only one who was worried about Lu Zhou. The other disciples and the Old Age Pavilion had often discussed their plan should the Noble Path come knocking.

Zhao Yue took the tuckahoe pies and said, "There's a letter as well."

"I see." Lu Zhou glanced at the letter inside the parcel.

Zhao Yue dared not stay for a moment longer. She left the room respectfully.

Lu Zhou picked up the letter, opened it, and scanned through it. It read, "Dear Master, your disciple, Ye Tianxin, delivered these items to the Evil Sky Pavilion as requested by Second Senior Brother. Second Senior Brother is afflicted by a curse and has severed his Golden Lotus. He's now trapped inside the Melilot Graveyard and is recuperating there while sprouting his leaves again. Second Senior Brother wants to tell you that everything's fine. Regards, the unfilial rascal, Ye Tianxin."

After reading the letter, Lu Zhou frowned. Primal Qi surged in his hand, and he burned the letter into ashes.

'So, severing one's Golden Lotus and surviving is possible?'

Lu Zhou sat down slowly. He remembered the rumors he heard before this. He shook his head and mumbled to himself, "Stubborn." His unyielding attitude was reminiscent of a young Yu Shangrong. He would always solve and carry the problem he encountered on his own.

At the moment, the Noble Path was forming an alliance to attack Golden Court Mountain. Lu Zhou initially wanted to summon the Old Age Pavilion to discuss the matter of severing Golden Lotuses. Then, he thought it would only be detrimental to the Evil Sky Pavilion if word of it got out. Besides, the success cases were too few and could hardly serve as references. Since the theory was already widespread, all he had to do was wait for the results.

At this moment, Zhu Honggong appeared outside the pavilion. He bowed and said, "Greetings, master!"

"Come in." Lu Zhou stood with his hands on his back and walked to the window before looking out.

Zhu Honggong opened the doors and entered. He bowed again as he said, "Master, I have good news."

"Let's hear it."

"I've learned much about the memory crystal from Seventh Senior Brother." Based on Zhu Honggong's current expression, he was clearly waiting to be praised.

Lu Zhou turned to look at Zhu Honggong and said again, "Let's hear it."

Zhu Honggong relied on Si Wuya the most when he was on Tigerridge Mountain. Si Wuya had secretly helped Zhu Honggong on more than one occasion as well. The two of them were closer than most. It was normal for Zhu Honggong to be able to glean information from him.

"He said that he has no idea about the whereabouts of the crystal. It might be in Rongxi or Rongbei. He has no way of knowing since you were the one who sealed it," Zhu Honggong said.

Lu Zhou stroked his beard and nodded. "Continue."

"He said that there are many things that aren't what we think them to be. He's not afraid of being misunderstood or carrying the blame since he's used to it," Zhu Honggong said, "Master, why do I have the feeling that Seventh Senior Brother is treating us all like fools?"

With his hands behind his back, Lu Zhou said, "He thinks too highly of himself."

"That's right. He acts as if he's the smartest man in the world and everyone else is stupid," Zhu Honggong said.

Lu Zhou turned around and stared at Zhu Honggong before he said, "Gossiping behind another person's back. Go out and receive your punishment." He had to educate Old Eighth since Old Eighth had this two-faced behavior.

When Zhu Honggong heard this, he instantly shuddered. He initially wanted to ask for forgiveness, but when he remembered what his Fourth Senior Brother told him, he hastily said, "I've made a mistake."

"Ding! Punished Zhu Honggong. Reward: 200 merit points."

...

In the afternoon, Lu Zhou appeared in the Cave of Reflection.

There was a small crowd gathered outside the cave. The three elders of the Old Age Pavilion and his disciples were there as well.

Pan Litian stood up and cupped his fists at Si Wuya as he said, "I've lost this match... My chess skills have always been lacking."

"Thank you for letting me win." Si Wuya's expression remained unchanged. "The matters of the world are like a game of chess. There are times where life experience doesn't translate into superior chess skills."

"I'm enlightened."

The female disciples around were filled with awe.

"Mister Seventh, you're truly intelligent. You're skilled in music, chess, writing, and drawing. Elder Hua has lost, Elder Leng has lost, even Elder Pan has lost."

“The game of chess is over. What’s the next match going to be? I want to continue watching.”

“...” As he listened to the female cultivators’ discussion, Si Wuya shook his head and said, “There’s no need.”

The others regarded Si Wuya in confusion.

Si Wuya said with a calm expression, “Having an intense match with a competent opponent is something to be excited about. Forgive me for being blunt... but our exchanges have been slightly boring.”

The others were embarrassed. If they had won even a single match against Si Wuya, they could have refuted his words. However, he had won from morning until now. The others were thoroughly defeated.

The victor would always be in the right. No matter what the loser said, it would only sound like excuses.

Just when Si Wuya was about to return to the Cave of Reflection, Lu Zhou’s voice reached his ears.

“Feeling satisfied with yourself?”

The others turned around immediately in the direction of his voice.

“Greetings, Pavilion Master!”

“Greetings, master!”

Lu Zhou walked with his hands on his back.

The crowd parted for him.

Si Wuya did not expect his master to suddenly show up. He humbled his attitude at once. The look of pride on his face faded away as he bowed and said, “Master.”

Lu Zhou walked toward Si Wuya and stood before him. He stared at Si Wuya. “Do you think that you’re very smart just because you’ve won against them?”

“I dare not!”

Lu Zhou glanced at the items around him. There was a mind game that resembled Huarong Road, a die that would normally be seen on a gambling table, and a set of Go. How could the people of the Evil Sky Pavilion win against Si Wuya in these games?

When Lu Zhou recruited him, Si Wuya was already a regular at various gambling dens. When he was ten, he was a prodigy whom the gambling dens respected and feared.

Lu Zhou kept his eyes on Si Wuya.

Si Wuya’s pride was different from Yu Shangrong’s. Yu Shangrong’s pride originated from his bones. It was born out of confidence in and respect for his own sword skills. On the other hand, Si Wuya’s pride was not only built upon a sense of self-acclaimed superiority, but it was also built upon tearing others down. This disciple had to be educated and disciplined.

Lu Zhou looked at Si Wuya and said, “You’re adept in solving riddles. I just so happen to have a few that I’d like to consult you about.”

When he heard the word 'consult', Si Wuya fell to his knees in a haste. "I've made a mistake!"

Chapter 420: Difficult Problem

Lu Zhou stroked his beard as he looked at Si Wuya who had just fallen to his knees and said, "If you can answer me, I'll regard you as my teacher."

"..." Si Wuya trembled inwardly. He felt a chill ran up his spine. If his master was anything like his old self, he would have rained down punches and kicks upon him. His master would not have bothered to ask him questions. He could wrap his mind around his master's change in attitude.

The others who were watching were also shocked by Lu Zhou's words. Lu Zhou must be confident to say these words to Si Wuya.

Si Wuya did not dare to say anything. He did not even dare to look up.

Lu Zhou stroked his beard and considered it. As a transmigrator, he could ask questions about calculus, world-class mathematical problems, or conjectures of the School of Names, but he felt that it would be meaningless. Apart from thoroughly putting Si Wuya in his place, it was not a good way of educating Si Wuya. It was the duty of a teacher to resolve his students' confusions. After muttering to himself for a while, he finally said, "The people in power shouldn't fear a scarcity of resources but rather it's unequal distribution... If I only have eight weapons, how should I distribute them among my disciples?"

Si Wuya was taken aback. He was at a loss over how to answer the question.

The others exchanged glances as well. How were eight weapons supposed to be divided among nine disciples? How could the distribution be equal? Would a weapon still be a weapon if it was split? If he killed one of his disciples, would it be even?

"Answer me," Lu Zhou said commandingly in a deep voice as he looked down at Si Wuya.

Lu Zhou seemed to be intentionally putting Si Wuya in a tight spot, but the others thought there was more meaning to this than meets the eye. Would Si Wuya be bold enough to answer? Would he revolt and attempt to become his master's teacher?

"Everything in the world has a source... In that case, what's the origin of the world?" Lu Zhou asked again.

Upon hearing this question, Si Wuya shuddered.

Lu Zhou said in a deep voice again, "Answer me."

"..." Were there answers to these questions? The elders of the Old Age Pavilion kept shaking their heads. Let alone them, even Si Wuya could not answer this question.

Many years ago, someone had asked this question in the cultivation world. However, the explanation proposed was so vague that it could be applied in any situation. Since the advent of cultivation theories of the Buddhist, Confucian, and Daoist sects, there had already been heated debates about similar matters. If there had been an answer, there would not have been such a wide gap in understanding.

“Can’t you answer it?” Lu Zhou looked down at Si Wuya.

Si Wuya shook his head. He would never dare to claim that he was a great scholar. He had the pride, but he did not have the guts.

“If it’s something vague, the others might think that I’m bullying you...” Lu Zhou stroked his beard as he pondered on it. He suddenly remembered about the issue of severing the Golden Lotus. Was the truth valid just because everyone believed it? Galileo experimented with two iron balls by allowing them to fall at the same time in his quest to challenge the truth. In a similar way of thinking, was it a must for the Golden Lotus to exist? Which came first, the chicken or the egg?

With these thoughts in mind, Lu Zhou asked again, “Cultivators formed Golden Lotuses to enter the Nascent Divinity realm and sprout leaves to improve their cultivation bases. Let me ask you this, which came first, the Golden Lotus or the leaf?”

Si Wuya was slightly taken aback. Was this question difficult? It sounded simple enough. When a cultivator formed the Hundred Tribulations Insight avatar, it was a given for them to form a Golden Lotus before sprouting leaves. However, he only dared to answer the question in his heart and not out loud.

The others found this strange as well.

“How can there be leaves without a Golden Lotus? It’s only natural for the Golden Lotus to exist first,” Hua Wudao said.

“If the method of severing the Golden Lotus is real... It’s also possible for one to sprout leaves before forming a Golden Lotus,” Pan Litian said.

“The problem is nobody has succeeded yet.”

The others began discussing this matter in earnest. When they returned to the topic of severing the Golden Lotus, they wondered if it was possible that the method was flawed to begin with? Throughout these few days, the Evil Sky Pavilion had also obtained some information from the outside world. So far, those who severed their Golden Lotuses had died.

Si Wuya did not need to answer the question because the answer was obvious.

Lu Zhou had expected everyone to have these thoughts. If his second disciple, Yu Shangrong, had not successfully severed his Golden Lotus, he would not have asked this question. He looked at Si Wuya calmly. All he had to do was throw questions at him. When Yu Shangrong returned, the answer would be obvious.

“Think carefully before you answer my question.” Lu Zhou was about to turn around and return to the eastern pavilion when Zhao Yue walked over with a letter in hand.

“Master, a letter from Jiang Aijian.”

“Read it.”

Zhao Yue unfolded the letter and read aloud, “Old senior, the method of severing the Golden Lotus has reached the palace. The palace gathered a hundred men to experiment on. During the day, ten of them

severed their Golden Lotuses, and only one person survived. Old senior... I have a feeling that I'll be witnessing history. Hahaha..."

Zhao Yue did not want to read the letter. She had always been annoyed by the 'hahaha' at the end of the letter. When she looked up, she discovered everyone was looking at her with a stunned expression. She was annoyed by the 'hahaha' so she was distracted.

The end of the letter stated that one person survived.

Everyone fell silent.

Finally, Pan Litian asked, "This means that it's truly possible to survive after severing one's Golden Lotus..."

"So, the leaf came before the Golden Lotus?"

Perhaps, the young cultivators did not understand the question. However, Leng Luo, Pan Litian, and Hua Wudao realized that the problem lay with the Golden Lotus.

Si Wuya frowned, an incredulous expression could be seen on his face. Just a second ago, he was convinced he had the right answer. However, now, his answer was proven wrong like a slap to his face. This was much more hurtful to him than if he were to be physically beaten.

Lu Zhou glanced at Si Wuya. He remained silent and left for the eastern pavilion.

"Safe journey, master."

"Safe journey, Pavilion Master."

The others merely glanced at Si Wuya before leaving the back of the mountain.

Zhu Honggong was the only one who remained. He walked up to Si Wuya's side and said, "Seventh Senior Brother, you're finally back. Can't you just lay low for a while?"

With his master gone, Si Wuya returned to normal. "How am I supposed to lay low?" Si Wuya asked, "These people are outsiders, after all. As an Evil Sky Pavilion disciple, I must never bring shame to the pavilion."

Zhu Honggong scratched his head. "You seem to have a point... Are you truly unable to answer master's questions?"

Si Wuya replied with a disapproving tone, "It's only a vague question. It's normal for someone to not be able to answer the question."

"Seventh Senior Brother, have a good rest. I'll be taking my leave."

...

When he returned to the eastern pavilion, Lu Zhou walked up to the table, picked up his brush, and drew a Golden Lotus on the paper.

After scrutinizing it for a moment, Lu Zhou stroked his beard and nodded.

It was proven that severing one's Golden Lotus was a feasible feat. The next step was to improve the survival rate. Surely, the collective wisdom of the people under the heavens could find a better way to achieve this. Relying on the strength of a group was better than fighting alone. Just when he was about to meditate on the Heavenly Writing scrolls, he heard a voice from outside.

"Greetings, master! May you live forever and ever!"

"Come in." Lu Zhou, naturally, knew it was Zhu Honggong, his eighth disciple.

Zhu Honggong entered the room and knelt on the ground before he said, "Master... I have a feeling that Seventh Senior Brother isn't quite willing to accept the outcome!"

"Unwilling?" Lu Zhou regarded Zhu Honggong in confusion. Even he himself could not answer those questions, let alone Si Wuya. What was there to be unwilling to accept?

"He says your questions are vague, and that it's normal for anyone to be unable to answer them," Zhu Honggong said tentatively.

Lu Zhou frowned. As expected, Si Wuya, this rascal, was a tougher nut to crack than Yu Shangrong.

'I'll see what I can do about it.' He suddenly remembered the fear he felt from being dominated by mathematics. His wizened face twitched despite himself. There was no need to pose the seven greatest mathematical problems of the world or ask any questions related to high-end technical fields. After all, Lu Zhou could not even prove or answer them himself. At the end of the day, Si Wuya would still be unconvinced.

Lu Zhou waved his hand, and a paper flew toward him. He raised his brush and wrote a mathematical problem in this world's language. The paper rustled as the brush flew across the surface. After he finished writing, he put down his brush and said, "Take this to him."

"Yes, master."