

Disciples 441

Chapter 441: Having Lived a Long Life, I Have Slain a Million Demons

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Under the assault of the Fiend Extermination Alliance disciples, Duanmu Sheng retreated. He looked in the direction of the Evil Sky Pavilion while noting the numbness of his arms. He was not alone in this.

The disciples of the seven great sects looked at the Evil Sky Pavilion as well. Someone was shooting arrows from the shadows. It was not as simple as the arrow that had killed Jue Yuan. The arrow that killed Liu Rushi was much smaller. Liu Rushi did not even have a chance to unleash his skills! How could the disciples not be terrified?

A cloud of panic seemed to descend on the seven great sects. They were still stumped by this baffling turn of events when an energy arrow as thick as a tree trunk shining with a golden light shot out. It was glowing so brightly that it was difficult not to notice it.

Whizz!

The arrow's speed was so fast that its noise was extraordinarily loud.

"Our turn!"

A powerful archer had to use his own hiding spot well while figuring out where the enemy's archers were. It was easy for an archer to expose his own position.

The energy arrow that was as thick as a tree trunk seemed to carry the hopes of the seven great sects with it. From the westernmost part of the forest, it sailed toward the Evil Sky Pavilion in the east.

Everyone's eyes were trained on that energy arrow.

The dark area in the Evil Sky Pavilion was instantly illuminated by this enormous energy arrow. At this moment, they thought they saw the figure of an old man standing casually before the pavilion.

The old man raised his wizened hand that glowed blue as though he was wearing a blue glove.

"Capture hand seal!"

Boom!

Sparks flew as though someone had set off fireworks. The energy arrow was caught by the old man and soon vanished.

"Old Villain Ji?"

"It's the old villain!"

"He's the one who fired that arrow!"

"Stand back!"

The seven flying chariots retreated. Their disciples retreated as well. If they could put more distance between them, the impact of the energy arrows would lessen as well. However, this move shook the

morale of their side. Many of the seven great sects' disciples were frightened and fell to the ground due to their legs weakening.

In fact, many of them who joined this assault had done so in the heat of the moment. They only realized how terrifying the Evil Sky Pavilion was now that they were on the battlefield. Let alone Old Villain Ji, just these few people were enough to intimidate the seven great sects!

"Greetings, Pavilion Master!"

"Greetings, master!"

The voices of the Evil Sky Pavilion's members greeted Lu Zhou in thunderously loud voices.

Lu Zhou nodded and stroked his beard. His eyes were fixed on the forest far beyond the seven great sects. He projected his voice. "Ji Yuanchang, why are you hiding? Since when did you become such a coward?" Clearly, this question was not directed toward the seven great sects.

Ji Yuanchang was an old Godly Archer who was closest to his great limit. He did not affiliate with any sect for the longest time and produced many outstanding disciples in the past. The leader of the Divine Capital's three Godly Archers, Chen Zhu, was only a disciple of his disciple.

As a Godly Archer, it was impossible for Hua Yuexing to not know the name Ji Yuanchang. She stared at the dark forest with a shocked expression.

Feng Qinghe replied in Ji Yuanchang's stead, "Old senior Ji is a Godly Archer, it's par for course that he doesn't show himself. Old Villain Ji, aren't you hiding as well?"

"Then, I shall show myself." Lu Zhou stroked his beard as he stepped forward on air. He slowly emerged from the darkness before the Evil Sky Pavilion. With every step he took, a radiant circle would appear. He walked with ease and composure. A few dark strands of his hair glinted in the moonlight among his white-silver hair. Under this circumstance, Lu Zhou's appearance seemed like an exact copy of Ji Tiandao when he had just transmigrated here.

The disciples of the seven great sects inhaled deeply. Their eyes were wide open as they stared at Lu Zhou in the sky. Although they could not see his face, based on his long robes, white hair, and the attitude of the members of the Evil Sky Pavilion, they were certain the old man was the master of the Evil Sky Pavilion, the all-powerful great villain who dominated the world under the heavens!

Lu Zhou gauged his remaining extraordinary power. The first arrow that killed Jue Yuan had used up one-fifth of his power. Jue Yuan was a dying man to begin with. The arrow merely expedited his death. The second arrow that killed Liu Rushi, the Sect Master of the Core Heart Sect, used one-third of the Heavenly Writing's extraordinary power. Liu Rushi was a formidable opponent, after all. Then, he had used up one-third of his extraordinary power to catch Ji Yuanchang's arrow. In other words, he was left with slightly less than one-third of his extraordinary power. For this reason, he decided to reveal himself. With this, he would probably be able to lure all his enemies out into the open.

Just as Lu Zhou had expected, Ji Yuanchang could not restrain himself when he heard Lu Zhou's words. He hovered above the forest and loudly said, "Old villain! You killed my disciple's disciple. I'll end you with my own hands this very night!"

Ji Yuanchang, a powerful individual who had lived for several centuries, raised his bow and arrow.

“Chen Zhu was from the Other Tribe, Sanye... Are you fighting for an Other Tribesman?”

“Nonsense. I can definitely tell if he was an Other Tribesman or not!”

Lu Zhou shook his head. He completely ignored the leaders of the seven great sects before him. He stepped forward and said indifferently, “I thought you’d be a reasonable man since you’re the patriarch of the Godly Archers. Alas...”

Lu Zhou flipped his right palm. A mini vortex appeared above it.

There was a surge of Primal Qi that the seven great sects clearly felt. They retreated at once.

“Fall back! Fall back now!”

The disciples of the seven great sects were scared out of their wits by this.

“Stand your ground! We will succeed in this battle or die trying! Defectors shall be persecuted and killed!”

With that statement, the disciples of the seven great sects were cowed. They reluctantly stayed put. Could they fall back now? Of course not!

“This is our last chance before his great limit! Anyone who steps back will be cut down!” Feng Qinghe’s voice was laced with his Expansive Heavenly Energy. It stabilized the mental states of the disciples.

Yes, this was their last chance since the old villain’s great limit was approaching. They were already so far in, could they really back out now?

Meanwhile, Lu Zhou moved his hand and tossed the vortex out.

The Great Seal of Fearlessness!

There was nothing within sight that was to be feared.

The shining golden seal shot toward Ji Yuanchang at a swift speed.

Ji Yuanchang cried out and nocked an energy arrow. This scene was reminiscent of Chen Zhu who did his best to resist at Measure Heaven River. The disciple’s disciple and the master were similar. He grew stronger as his opponent was stronger, and he would kill a god if he was facing a god.

Bam! Bam! Bam!

Several energy arrows hit the hand seal and merely caused a weak ripple on its surface. It did nothing to slow its advance.

The hand seal sailed past between two flying chariots.

Swoosh!

One-third of both flying chariots were damaged by the Great Seal of Fearlessness.

Dozens of disciples who did not know how to fly fell to the ground.

Loud resounding wails rang in the air.

The Great Seal of Fearlessness shot past the flying chariot and continued to sail toward Ji Yuanchang.

At this moment, Ji Yuanchang finally realized something was amiss. He immediately flew into the distance as if his life depended on it.

The Great Seal of Fearlessness seemed to have eyes of its own.

It struck Ji Yuanchang's body at lightning speed.

Smack!

Ji Yuanchang disintegrated into ashes before they scattered in the air.

The forest was quiet as a graveyard now.

The disciples of the seven great sects lost all ability to think and breathe.

The confidence and morale that Feng Qinghe had so roused with great difficulty were shaken again. Under such circumstances, was it possible for one to maintain their composure?

This was a Deadly Strike Card. Lu Zhou did not even consider the cost. He had to take out this elite who could fire arrows from the shadows, no matter the cost!

Lu Zhou stepped forward again.

Feng Qinghe's gaze was sharp and cold, but his heart was racing. His scalp prickled and turned numb. At this juncture, he had no other choice but to force himself to act. He said commandingly, "Disciples willing to sacrifice their lives for a good cause, charge!"

The cultivators around the seven flying chariots swarmed toward Lu Zhou like flies.

"Master!"

"Pavilion Master!"

On the Evil Sky Pavilion's side, Duanmu Sheng and Little Yuan'er were the only ones who had been conserving their strength. Leng Luo was only left with enough energy to run away. When they saw this, they wanted to fend off the attackers. However, they could only stare at Lu Zhou helplessly at this moment.

A ripple spread out with every step Lu Zhou took. A Blue Lotus emerged under his feet, and his body shone with a faint blue light. 'Having lived a long life, I have slain a million demons. They'll have to pay a heavy price for this even if they're from the seven great sects.'

Chapter 442: New Leaves

With a Dao-transforming Divine Court realm cultivation base, none of the Nascent Divinity realm elites would have taken him seriously in the past. There was a saying in the cultivation world; 'those below the Nascent Divinity realm were maggots'. Cultivators who had not entered the Nascent Divinity realm were destined to be minor characters. In any case, regardless of cultivations, since time immemorial, the strong had always looked down on the weak. For example, those in the Divine Court realm looked down

on those in the Brahman Sea realm, those in the Nascent Divinity realm looked down on those in the Divine Court realm, and Five-leaf elites looked down on Four-leaf elites...

However, on this day, everyone from the Evil Sky Pavilion and the seven great sects did not dare to underestimate Old Villain Ji who was only in the Divine Court realm. Many elites had tried to probe his cultivation base to find out if his cultivation base had deteriorated. They arrived at the conclusion that he was in the Divine Court realm.

At this moment, Lu Zhou looked at the cultivators who were swarming toward him apathetically. The Blue Lotus under his feet and its shadow grew bigger and bigger. Then, the Blue Lotus blossomed. Its power spilled into the surroundings like a tidal wave.

To gain the power to silence everything, to maintain and manifest samadhi. Like light and shadow, permeating everywhere while staying still in samadhi.

When the Blue Lotus blossomed, the cultivators who were flying toward Lu Zhou were sent flying back.

The members of the Evil Sky Pavilion widened their eyes in shock when they witnessed this scene. No matter how many times they watched Lu Zhou make a move, he never failed to broaden their horizons.

Hua Wudao, Duanmu Sheng, Zhao Yue, and Little Yuan'er found this scene rather. Previously, when Lu Zhou was cultivating in seclusion in the hidden chamber, they had attempted to break into the chamber. What they had seen then was rather similar to what they were seeing now. The only difference was the area of coverage and the power were much greater than before.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

The disciples from the seven great sects who were sent flying back spat out mouthfuls of blood.

The tidal wave of power swept over the seven flying chariots as well, causing them to shake violently before they crashed to the ground.

At this moment, the members of the Evil Sky Pavilion realized that the power did not discriminate between friend and foe.

Leng Luo, who was the most experienced among the lot, cried out, "Fall back!"

The members of the Evil Sky Pavilion retreated to a safe place in the air and continued to watch the battle.

"What technique is this?" Hua Wudao mumbled.

"I don't know," Leng Luo replied.

"I don't know as well..." Zhu Honggong replied as well, "Ow... Little Junior Sister, what did you pinch me?"

Little Yuan'er pinched her own cheeks and said, "Oh, it's not a dream."

"..."

At this moment, Lu Zhou had exhausted his Heavenly Writing's extraordinary power. The notifications of merit points kept ringing in his ears.

One Divine Court realm cultivator was only worth 10 merit points. He felt it was too low. There was no reward for killing cultivators in the Body Tempering realm and below.

There were too many of them. Nearly 70% of the cultivators from the seven great sects, including a few Nascent Divinity Tribulation realm elders, were taken down by the Heavenly Writing power. Nearly half these numbers were dead.

Lu Zhou maintained flight in the air and looked down at the other from his high vantage point. He shook his head. He was quite dissatisfied with the Heavenly Writing power because he only killed roughly 30% of those people. There was nothing he could. After all, his attack only contained 10% of his extraordinary power. With that amount of power, it would be difficult for him to kill a slightly powerful Nascent Divinity Tribulation realm cultivator, let alone extraordinary Nascent Divinity Tribulation realm cultivators. In any case, although the attack was too weak for his liking, he managed to put on a great show and looked imposing. Well, as long as he looked good, the other matters were insignificant.

At this moment, the surviving cultivators were retreating.

The nine elders of the Yun Sect were among those who were retreating. They were in great pain.

Meanwhile, Ning Liang, the Master of the Hengqu Branch Master, Feng Qinghe, the Master of the Zhencang Branch, Jia Yuan, the Master of Seven Stars Villa, Miao Yin, the Abbess of Good Fortune Temple, and Shao Jinhan, the First Disciple of Duanlin Branch, maintained flight at a low altitude. Their hands were pressed against their chests as they looked at Lu Zhou in shock. He was too powerful! Five of them clenched their fists and gulped. Without the protection of their flying chariots, they were in a disadvantageous position.

Feng Qinghe gulped. He looked at Lu Zhou who was looking down at them, unable to put his feelings into words. In truth, he did not expect Lu Zhou's earlier attack to do so much damage. He mustered up his courage as he took a deep breath. Now was not the time to nurse his injured ego. He tried to boost the others' morale. "Stay calm... That must've been his original wide-area seal technique. The Celestial Masters Sect and Zhencang Branch's seal eruption talismans can also do it!"

Although the five sect masters of the five sects survived and had yet to summon their avatars, their blood essence was roiling in their bodies due to the attack. They nearly spat out mouthfuls of blood themselves. At this moment, all five of them were trying to stabilize their breaths with their Primal Qi.

The Duanlin Branch's First Disciple, Shao Jinhan, said, "Senior Feng, do you think we'll succeed?"

Feng Qinghe glanced at him and said, "Believe me. In any case, we have no other way out... Pan Litan was powerful, but he was still taken down by our Zhencang Branch."

The others exchanged a glance and nodded, coming to a tacit agreement to become heroes standing atop the bones of their comrades.

Miao Yin, the Abbess of Good Fortune Temple, said, "Just as well... Who should descend to the depths of hell if not I? Disciples, heed my call."

Miao Yin's disciples standing on the ground rose into the air immediately.

Feng Qinghe gave her a thumbs-up and said in a clear voice, "Listen up, everyone! Old Villain Ji won't be able to last for long. This is his dying burst of power. Don't be afraid!" All he needed to do was make sure the disciples from the seven sects remained in position. Whether his claim was true or not was unimportant.

Lu Zhou hovered in the air, trying to think of his next move. 'I only have two Deadly Strike Cards left... Fortunately, I have one Peak Card. Are the elites ever going to come out of their hiding places?' He did not use his Peak Card because the group of elites in hiding would immediately run away after seeing the Peak Card. He would not be able to track them down afterward.

The disciples of the seven great sects were baffled when they saw Ji Tiandao seemingly lost in thought while he hovered in the air. They had no idea what was going through his mind.

At this moment, the disciples of Good Fortune Temple were in their positions. Dozens of nuns straightened their palms by their lips. Their voices droned on and on as they chanted.

Lu Zhou shook his head. "How futile!"

All skills were futile in the face of extreme power.

He flipped his right palm. An item card materialized in his hand; Ji Tiandao's Peak Trial Card.

At this moment, there was a sudden flash of movement in the southeastern corner of the forest. A figure joined his palms and held a talisman between them. Then, he sailed through the air like a fired arrow. "Old Villain Ji! Don't you dare lay your hands on my disciples!"

The Duanlin Branch disciples exclaimed in shock. "Patriarch!"

Feng Qinghe was overjoyed. "Well done, Duanlin Branch's Patriarch... You finally made a move!"

Chang Yan's face was flushed, and his eyes were bloodshot. He was a man who was nearing his great limit, but his appearance seemed abnormal. It was clear he had taken the Primal Fiend Potion. With the boost from the potion, he was now at the peak of his cultivation base.

Everyone watched as Chang Yan attacked. In their opinion, Lu Zhou would be heavily injured, if not die.

Bam!

The disciples of the seven great sects looked on expectantly.

Swoosh!

A cone-shaped energy field appeared before Chang Yan's palms as he flew straight toward Lu Zhou.

Lu Zhou paused as he looked at Chang Yan for a moment. Then, he shook his head and said, "Very well." He shattered the Peak Trial Card in his wizened hand.

The instant the Peak Card shattered, a spot of starlight shot out of his palm and swirled around his body. His weak Divine Court realm dantian's sea of Qi was instantly filled to the brim. Even his Extraordinary Eight Meridians were bursting with power. He knew the elites in hiding would not recklessly show

themselves. In the end, he decided to use the Peak Card to clear the people before him. The appearance of Chang Yan, the Patriarch of the Duanlin Branch, was a welcomed surprise. Ji Tiandao's power at his peak returned to Lu Zhou. In fact, his power seemed to have surpassed that of Ji Tiandao at this moment. "You want to die? I'll grant you your wish."

Lu Zhou's expression remained calm as he raised his right hand that shone with a golden light in Chang Yan's direction.

Bam!

Chapter 443:

Why Is Old Villain Ji So Powerful?

Lu Zhou blocked Chang Yan's all-out attack with his bare hands.

Everything seemed to have frozen over at this moment.

Everyone's eyes were wide open. They did not dare to blink, afraid they would miss a moment of this grand standoff. Everyone was amazed that Old Villain Ji managed to block the attack. As it turned out, he was still standing above everyone, and his cultivation base did not deteriorate. Chang Yan who had taken the Primal Fiend Potion was defeated with just a single hand? Everyone shuddered when they saw this.

"Old villain Ji... y-you." Chang Yan's eyes widened. "Let's die together..."

"You're dreaming." Lu Zhou clenched his fist. A huge Capture hand seal shot out from his palm. It resembled a Buddha hand seal when it grew in size.

Boom!

Scattered ashes and dispersed smoke.

So what if Chang Yan was the Patriarch of the Duanlin Branch? So what if he had taken the Primal Fiend Potion? So what if his strength was at the peak of the Eight-leaf? All it took was one move from Lu Zhou to kill him.

Lu Zhou had made this move to save time. After all, he did not have to worry about his consumption of Primal Qi. He could use the most powerful versions of all his moves as he pleased.

The members of the seven great sects were stunned.

"This..."

"Why's Old Villain Ji so powerful?"

"No... Impossible!"

Even if one had everyone's support, could one remain unafraid when faced with such an elite? Even a stupid person would not stubbornly insist that Ji Tiandao was on his deathbed after witnessing this. The people from the seven great sects were frightened out of their wits. 'We should run!'

Lu Zhou moved swiftly.

The grand technique, Soul Chase.

Bam!

Lu Zhou's palm strike landed on the First Disciple of the Duanlin Branch who had turned around to flee.

Shao Jinhan died immediately, his body falling from the sky.

Lu Zhou did not waste time and cast another technique. Energy swords crashed down on his enemies like a tidal wave.

The Good Fortune Temple disciples who remained in the air were still chanting. Their fly-like voices were too insignificant to mention. They were soon overwhelmed and destroyed by the wave of energy swords and dropped from the sky.

"How... how's this possible?" Miao Yin, the Abbess of Good Fortune Temple, widened her eyes. Her straightened palm was shaking. When she looked up, she suddenly discovered that the old man, who was shining with a golden radiance, was already hovering before her. "Old... Old Villain Ji."

Lu Zhou struck with his palm. "Repent, and you'll be absolved of your crimes. I'll send you on your way on Buddha's behalf." He launched his Nine Cuts Hand Seals successively in the air. They formed a line and pierced Miao Yin's body.

Lu Zhou did not even look at her. He unleashed his grand technique and vanished.

Miao Yin felt a deep sense of helplessness and despair welling up in her heart. Her blood gushed out from the gaping hole on her chest. She tried to circulate her Primal Qi to staunch the bleeding, but she realized that her dantian's sea of Qi was already destroyed by that absolute force. She struggled to raise her arm to manually stop the bleeding, but she failed due to lack of strength. She looked up with a pitiable expression at the Evil Sky Pavilion.

At this moment, the Evil Sky Pavilion disciples jumped into the fray as though they had been injected with an energy booster.

Miao Yin could only watch. The energy swords that filled the skies no longer had anything to do with her. Her life was swiftly draining away, and it would end once she was emptied of Primal Qi. She turned her head at this moment and witnessed a scene that she would bring to her grave.

Whizz!

A powerful resonance of Primal Qi resounded across the battlefield.

Lu Zhou had summoned his avatar. A shining golden Hundred Tribulations Insight avatar towered above everything in the air. This avatar was too tall and too huge. It was 150 feet tall.

Miao Yin instinctively looked at the Golden Lotus under the avatar's feet. With the remnants of her life force and consciousness, she counted. 'One leaf, two leaves, three leaves... seven leaves, eight leaves... N-nine leaves?!'

Realization dawned on Miao Yin. Everything was clear now. She chuckled weakly. 'My death isn't a mistake. Amitabha'

Dust to dust, dirt to dirt.

A blast of energy exploded, and Miao Yin dissolved in the air and was scattered into the surroundings by the wind.

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When the avatar appeared. It expanded, released Primal Qi, and it took up more space.

Several hundred cultivators were felled in just an instant.

Lu Zhou kept unleashing his grand technique, flitting among his enemies.

This was akin to a hyper-powered version of the Dao Invisibility. Leng Luo's heart raced just by watching this. He had thought his skill was second to none when he moved at top speed, leaving afterimages in his wake before killing Fang Wenxian. However, compared to Lu Zhou's avatar that occupied the entire foot of the mountain, he was nothing.

Screams of agony rang in the air.

With the disciples of the Evil Sky Pavilion joining the battle, the Evil Sky Pavilion moved forward with a crushing momentum.

There was no resistance at all.

Hua Wudao muttered, "I think I understand now... The pavilion master must have done it on purpose. No wonder he could easily launch a Ten-script Six Compatible Seal... I feel better now."

Leng Luo looked at the huge avatar and chimed in, "Perhaps, joining the Evil Sky Pavilion is the best decision I've ever made in my life."

Zhu Honggong leaped out and laughed maniacally before he said, "Charge... my brethren, charge... I love this feeling of pushing others around by taking advantage of my position. Charge..."

Hua Wudao and Leng Luo were puzzled. They sighed. 'How did a brilliant person like the pavilion master produce such a third-rate disciple? Is he too used to being a gang leader?'

Meanwhile, Lu Zhou kept an eye on the remaining time of the Peak Trial Card as he unleashed his grand technique again.

"Run! Quick!"

The confidence and morale of the people from the seven great sects were completely crushed at this moment. Lu Zhou's great limit, their detailed preparations, and plans, all of them were futile before Lu Zhou's absolute strength.

"The Grand Formation! Retreat to the Grand Formation!"

The battle shifted into the forest.

Lu Zhou's Nine-leaf Golden Lotus was like a grass cutter as it sliced through the trees.

Jia Yuan, the Master of the Seven Stars Villa, fled like the wind. He activated his avatar and burned his sea of Qi as he ran away in a frenzy.

Boom!

Jia Yuan discovered his avatar had run into something. He looked up and saw a huge avatar blocking his path.

Lu Zhou was hovering inside the 150-foot avatar. "Too slow."

The avatar raised a hand before slapping it down.

"No!" Jia Yuan's avatar shattered like glass by the hand seal. His person was mashed into an unidentifiable flesh pulp on the ground.

Lu Zhou vanished with his avatar again.

The forest within 1,000 meters of the battle was destroyed overnight.

Nearly all of the disciples of the seven great sects were dead by now.

Niang Ling, the Hengqu Branch's Master, burned his sea of Qi and had been maintaining his Expansive Heavenly Energy for a long time now. At this moment, he had mentally broken down. He smacked his forehead repeatedly as he cried out, "We're dead! We're dead! Why? Why?" Rather than being tortured to death under the endless fear, he would rather end his own life.

"Trying to kill yourself? You'll have to go through me!"

Whizz!

The Primal Qi in the surroundings seemed to have frozen over.

When Ning Liang looked up, he saw a huge hand seal falling on him. He did not even see Lu Zhou before he was crushed by the hand seal. He was only a Seven-leaf cultivator. It was an extremely far cry from a Nine-leaf cultivator.

"Formation?" Lu Zhou's avatar swept through the Formation. The Formation veins had just been activated when they were destroyed by this huge avatar.

The remaining members of the seven great sects lost all their will to escape. Many low-ranking cultivators could not take it anymore. They were so frightened that they lay trembling on the ground.

The Formation was laughable. Could a low-rank Formation control a Nine-leaf cultivator?

Lu Zhou hovered in midair with his avatar. He observed the battlefield triumphantly. 'Who's next?'

When Lu Zhou shattered the Peak Trial Card, he did not intend to spare anyone. He looked around, trying to see if there was anyone he had missed. When he turned to look at the battle in the southeastern corner, he saw, amidst a tidal pool of power, a white figure was killing the cultivators from the seven great sects in a frenzy. 'Blue Waves Technique? Ye Tianxin?'

Chapter 444: This is not a Dream

Lu Zhou's 150-foot avatar hovered in the air and towered over everything. He seemed calm, unsurprised by Ye Tianxin's appearance. Ever since he had read the letter Yu Shangrong had entrusted Ye Tianxin to send, he knew Ye Tianxin was still around. However, he had to admit he did not expect her to show at this moment to kill the enemies. Regardless, time was ticking. He did not have time to think about such trivial matters. Moreover, he did not need help from a mere Six-leaf cultivator. Saying that, although she had been banished, at least, she still had some sense. In any case, he was not losing out on rewards even if she was only killing low-rank cultivators. 'Forget it. Let her be.'

The disciples from the seven great sects were easily overwhelmed by the Evil Sky Pavilion's crushing force. Even when the nine elders of the Yun Sect ignited their sea of Qis and activated their avatars, they were like ants trying to shake a tree. It had been a futile resistance. Wherever the Nine-leaf Golden Lotus passed, everything was reduced to dust in its wake.

Lu Zhou unleashed his grand technique again as he shot in another direction. He wanted to confirm if the patriarchs from the other sects were here. He would have a headache if those who were willing to throw their lives away showed up after the Peak Card's effect disappeared.

The 150-foot avatar flitted everywhere.

When Lu Zhou encountered slightly more powerful cultivators, he would mercilessly take their lives.

Meanwhile, Ye Tianxian was resolved to fight her enemies to death. When she was fighting, she saw the huge avatar and was in awe. She suddenly recalled that time when her master captured her and brought her back to Golden Court Mountain. She remembered seeing the same sight in the Evil Sky Pavilion. She thought that she was dreaming back then. The known limit that was achievable by cultivators was the Eight-leaf stage, after all. However, this time, she was sure her eyes were not deceiving her! "Master is already at the Nine-leaf stage! How did he do it? Could it be that Eldest Senior Brother is right? Master had been after the secret behind the Nine-leaf stage before this?"

As she looked at the falling low-rank cultivators, Ye Tianxian suddenly realized her intention to help the Evil Sky Pavilion seemed rather unnecessary. She was clearly not needed in this situation.

Near the southeastern corner of the battlefield, the remaining wave of elders burned their sea of Qis at the same time. They seemed to be engulfed in flames as they scattered.

With a soft grunt, Lu Zhou leaped into the skies with his avatar. In the skies, the Nine-leaf Hundred Tribulations Insight avatar was like a human-shaped sun that illuminated the area within 100 miles.

The cultivators within 100 miles looked up in the direction of Golden Court Mountain.

They were either shocked or awed.

Those who were further away could only catch a glimpse of the light. They did not know what kind of impressive phenomena was happening.

Lu Zhou summoned Unnamed and converted it into a bow. With fluid movements, he wielded the bow with his left hand and pulled on the bowstring with his right hand.

Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh!

Arrows after arrows were shot out.

“A Nine-leaf Godly Archer!” Hua Yuexing was staring intently at Lu Zhou as he fired volleys after volleys of arrows.

It was only natural since everyone wanted to witness the grandeur of a Nine-leaf cultivator.

Hua Yuexing was a talented Godly Archer with a superior capacity for understanding than most, to begin with. Even without a teacher, she reached the Three-leaf stage on her own. For a genius like her, if she had a teacher to, even if it was as minimal as pointing her down a path, it would be a great help to her. Currently, she felt as though she had been enlightened. She worked hard to etch every movement into her mind. This... this would be the goal she worked toward in the future!

The energy arrows accurately pierced the elders who were burning their sea of Qis, and they fell in succession.

‘S... S-so this is the Nine-leaf stage?’ Many cultivators shared this thought the moment before they took their last breath.

Nine shining golden lotus leaves and the huge avatar swept through the battlefield.

In his peak state, Lu Zhou could use his Primal Qi as though he had an unlimited supply. He was constantly moving at top speed and unleashing his grand technique at the same time. He was still left with half of the time limit.

The force of the Nine-leaf stage had exceeded Lu Zhou’s expectations. It was no surprise he was able to crush the seven great sects in such a short time. However, he could not shake the feeling that there were rats hiding in the shadows. ‘Is... Is the Nine-leaf stage too flashy?’

Lu Zhou waved his arm and recalled the Nine-leaf avatar. He descended slowly like a falling feather. He could still feel the surging power in his body. Every time it was spent, it would be instantly replenished.

...

Meanwhile, in a valley 100 miles away from the westernmost part of Golden Court Mountain.

Feng Qinghe, the Master of Zhencang Branch, flew at top speed as he pressed a hand on his abdomen. Among all those from the seven great sects, it seemed like he was the only one who survived. In any case, he did not have the luxury to check if there were other survivors. Fear gripped his heart and threatened to crush it whenever he thought about the Nine-leaf avatar. ‘Why is he a Nine-leaf cultivator? Why is he a f*cking Nine-leaf cultivator?!’

If he did not seize the opportunity created by the chaos when he forcibly burned his sea of Qi forcibly and escape when Old Villain Ji was sweeping through the battlefield, he would have been a corpse by now. He looked at the valley. “Another mile to go.”

He wiped the blood off the edge of his lips and dashed forward. One was bound for good fortune after surviving a great disaster.

At this moment, someone called out from behind, “Sect master! Wait up!”

Feng Qinghe was startled with a jump. He snapped around and immediately stumbled to the ground. His eyes were wide open when he stared at the disciple who was rushing toward him. 'Impossible! There's someone who's as intelligent as me from the Zhengcang Branch and managed to survive?'

Feng Qinghe gulped as he watched the disciple who was dressed in Zhencang Branch's uniform running toward him. He relaxed and asked, "How did you manage to escape?"

"I... I played dead."

"Played dead? That means you know the inner breath technique, and that you're, at least, in the Divine Court realm. Not bad." Feng Qinghe praised. He did not have the energy now to gauge the disciple's cultivation base.

"Sect-sect master... Where are we going?"

"That valley up ahead. I've prepared something there." Feng Qinghe shook his head and sighed. "Alas, it won't be of any use. Faced with a Nine-leaf cultivator, what good are all our plans?"

"Huh? Does this mean the Zhencang Branch is done for?!"

"Watch your words!!" Feng Qinghe frowned.

"I-I'm sorry."

"After this incident, you'll be the pillar of Zhencang Branch. You'll be the Grand Elder! Come, help me up," Feng Qinghe said.

"Uh, I'd like to be the sect master," the disciple replied.

"Hm?" Feng Qinghe frowned slightly. There were many who would take advantage of another person's misfortune. After holding this position for so long, he was prepared and not surprised by this kind of situation.

He studied the disciple before him. He could not remember who this person was. Although Zhengcang Branch could not compare to the Yun, Tian, and Luo Sects, it was still a branch with thousands of members. It was impossible for him to remember each and every one of them. In any case, having lost so many of his members, he could not reprimand this disciple like he usually would.

"If you want to become the sect master, you'll need to earn the right and have the strength to match it." Feng Qinghe examined the disciple. "Help me up now."

"Alright..." The disciple helped him up.

"What's your name?"

"I'm Ri... Ri..." He scratched his head. "I didn't think of a proper name..."

'What does he mean?' Feng Qinghe was confused.

There was a sudden cold flash of light...

Zing!

The moment Feng Qinghe was pulled up, the Separation Hook, wrapped in energy, slashed across his chest

Boom!

Feng Qinghe was sent flying by this sneak attack. He flipped in the air. When he landed on his feet, he spat out a mouthful of blood and staggered backward. His eyes widened in shock as he stared at the Separation Hook, clearly seeing through its grade. He coughed violently before he asked in a deep voice, "You're not a Zhencang Branch disciple! Who are you?"

Chapter 445: Shatter Mercilessly

How could he be a disciple of the Zhencang Branch? He feigned a shocked expression before he smiled and said, "Eh? You survived a blow from my Separation Hook?"

"Who are you?" Feng Qinghe took a step back and glanced at the valley.

"That's not important. You're going to die, anyway." Mingshi Yin sneered as he raised his hand. The Separation Hook returned to his grasp. In truth, he had been among the disciples of the Zhencang Branch, from the very beginning. He wanted to infiltrate the enemy's ranks and look for an opportunity to deal a critical blow on his enemies. However, he did not expect to witness that unforgettable scene. Before he could continue to admire his master's shocking and grand power, he tailed Feng Qinghe all the way here. He knew Feng Qinghe was not a simple character.

"Do you think you're Old Villain Ji?" Feng Qinghe said in a disapproving tone.

Mingshi Yin only clicked his tongue and said, "It's no wonder you managed to withstand my master's energy swords. Is it something you're wearing?"

When Feng Qinghe heard this, his heart skipped a beat. "An Evil Sky Pavilion disciple?"

Mingshi Yin could not help but flip his hair and said, "Alright, I'll drop the act."

Feng Qinghe looked over Mingshi Yin's shoulder. He was worried Old Villain Ji would show up. Then, he said, "Comrade, let's talk this over. What do you say to letting me go, and I'll repay your kindness in the future?"

"There's no need for the future."

"What?"

"Remove your clothes, then, allow my Separation Hook to plunge mercilessly into your heart," Mingshi Yin said with a smile.

"You..." Feng Qinghe scowled. "I've already burned my sea of Qi anyway. If you want to die so badly, I'll grant you your wish!" He raised his hand and struck his dantian twice, releasing his meridians. Half of his burnt sea of Qi resumed burning.

...

At this moment, almost all of the disciples from the seven great sects on the battlefield near Golden Court Mountain had been cleared by Duanmu Sheng and the others.

Lu Zhou looked at the time. He had more than ten minutes left. Everything progressed more or less like he had expected them to. He looked around himself before he finally looked at his disciples and calmly said, "Clean this up."

"Yes, master!"

"As you command!"

"Your awesome might know no bounds. May you live to see... Master, you actually attained the Nine-leaf stage! I dreamt about it the other day... Eh? Master? Where did master go?" Zhu Honggong was midway through his ramblings when he discovered his master had disappeared. Then, he cried out, "Third Senior Brother, Little Junior Sister, Fifth Senior Sister... do-don't ignore me!"

Everyone busied themselves and had no time to entertain Zhu Honggong.

Lu Zhou unleashed a grand technique and reached the top of the Evil Sky Pavilion. He found the eye of the Formation and slammed a hand on it, channeling his power into it!

The moon was setting.

"Avatar!"

Lu Zhou activated his Nine-leaf Golden Lotus avatar and stood above the Evil Sky Pavilion.

"What's master doing?" Little Yuan'er pointed toward the Evil Sky Pavilion.

"... He's announcing that he's the greatest elite of all time, of course! There's no one greater than him! Master... your Nine-leaf stage is too cool! From this day on, you'll be my... Ow! Little Junior Sister, you pinched me again..." Zhu Honggong said, cradling his cheek.

When Lu Zhou was channeling his Primal Qi, he looked at the Golden Lotus under his Hundred Tribulations Insight avatar. He studied it for a moment, puzzled. According to the current cultivation theory, it was difficult for cultivators to break free of the restrictions imposed by the great limit.

Judging from what happened to Yun Tianluo, the Golden Lotus would absorb one's cultivation base and life, and it would take at least 1,000 years off one's tab. By severing the Golden Lotus, this could be overcome.

However, when Lu Zhou used the Peak Card, he was at the Nine-leaf stage. He began recalling the events when he had just transmigrated over. When he used the Peak Card for the first time, he was only granted the Eight-leaf stage. The second time he used it was when he captured Ye Tianxin. There were nine leaves back then. However, he did not understand much about the Golden Lotus back then and did not dwell on it. This was his fourth time using the Peak Card. Indeed, it was a Nine-leaf Golden Lotus.

Item Card: Ji Tiandao's Peak Trial Card.

Note: Ji Tiandao's peak state only lasts for 30 minutes.

In other words, Ji Tiandao was already at the Nine-leaf stage back then! However, due to his great limit, he dropped back to the Eight-leaf stage. After Lu Zhou used the Reversal Cards, his physical body was once again back at the state where it could support the Nine-leaf stage. If Ji Tiandao had attained the

Nine-leaf stage long ago, how could he be heavily injured by the elites from the ten great sects during the siege? From this, he could infer that Ji Tiandao had attained the Nine-leaf stage after his battle with the elites of the ten great sects and before Lu Zhou transmigrated over.

After a moment, a huge question popped up in Lu Zhou's mind. 'Where did Ji Tiandao obtain 1,000 years of life needed to attain the Nine-leaf stage?'

Whizz!

Boom!

The Formation shook.

This brief tremor pulled Lu Zhou out of his thoughts and back into reality. He looked up at Golden Court Mountain's Formation. The barrier was lighting up. He continued to channel his Primal Qi at full force into it. Due to the Nine-leaf stage, the Formation was being repaired at an alarmingly fast speed.

...

Inside the Cave of Reflection, Si Wuya was awakened by this huge commotion. He rushed to the mouth of the cave before his path was blocked by something.

He was flustered by the cacophonous sounds of battle and the flashes of light that meant the Evil Sky Pavilion was under threat!

Bam!

He lost count of the times he rammed into the Cave of Reflection's barrier. He had to get out, locate Pan Zhong, and restore his cultivation base.

"Master, oh, master... You're a stubborn, old..."

Bam!

Si Wuya staggered out of the barrier. He did not break the barrier with his strength. It was due to violent tremors from Golden Court Mountain's Formation. The powerful fluctuations had affected the Cave of Reflection's Formation. It was as if the entire mechanism was rebooted. The instant it rebooted, the barrier vanished.

After a moment, the barrier reappeared.

Si Wuya turned around to look, perplexed. He did not have the time to think about the reason behind this. He hastily got to his feet and sprinted into the forest behind the forest.

"I'm the only one... who can save the Evil Sky Pavilion."

Si Wuya had barely made it out of the back of the mountain when the darkened skies suddenly lit up. It was as though dawn had arrived!

The entire Golden Court Mountain, the back of the mountain, the Cave of Reflection, the Evil Sky Pavilion, the forest, and mountain ranges nearby were illuminated.

Golden Court Mountain's barrier had been restored.

Si Wuya stood riveted on the spot. He was awestruck. 'What's happening? What happened to Golden Court Mountain?'

Under normal circumstances, it would take five Divine Court realm cultivators decades to mend the Formation. It would take Nascent Divinity realm elites years if they worked at it every day. Even Eight-leaf elites needed about six months if they worked at full strength. Why did the barrier suddenly appear, fully mended?

Si Wuya walked out of the forest. He looked up and saw a huge avatar towering above the Evil Sky Pavilion. It shone with a dazzling golden radiance!

Under the avatar, a Golden Lotus was spinning slowly. Nine leaves spun with the lotus.

Si Wuya stumbled back in shock. Every time one of the nine leaves pointed at him, he felt as though he was being slapped. He mocked himself inwardly, 'How foolish. My hubris has blinded me. I thought I was the only one who could save the Evil Sky Pavilion. I even said master is a stubborn old man...'

Si Wuya prided himself on his judgment and intelligence. However, at this moment, they seemed to be mercilessly shattered and trampled on by the nine leaves.

Chapter 446: You're Really Powerful

Si Wuya had a wide information network. He was also privy to the background of the seven great sects and the weaknesses of the sect masters. According to his conceptual plan, he would arrange for the Darknet's core member, Ye Zhixing, to send the weaknesses of the seven great sects to the Evil Sky Pavilion. Perhaps, if his master changed his mind, he could be sent to negotiate with the seven great sects. With information that could be used against them in his possession, the seven great sects would certainly be repelled by Si Wuya's words alone. With Yu Zhenghai and the Darknet supporting him outside, Si Wuya was confident that he could pull this off. When that time came, his master would surely regard him in a new light.

However, now, it seemed like a joke. The greatest joke under the heavens!

Si Wuya had, on several occasions, guessed that his master had already learned about the secrets of the Nine-leaf stage. He had even spoken to his Eldest Senior Brother about this. Unfortunately, both of them found it hard to believe. The 'truth' had been ingrained in their minds, after all. If one were told the sun rose from the south, one would not believe it unless one witnessed it.

Si Wuya looked at the huge avatar. Apart from the metaphorical sting he felt on his cheeks, he felt really embarrassed to the extent that he did not dare to show his face.

Did a Nine-leaf cultivator need help? In the face of absolute strength, plots and schemes were laughable.

Whizz!

The barrier was brightly lit at this moment.

The Golden Court Mountain's barrier and the avatar brightened up the night sky.

The Evil Sky Pavilion seemed to regain its former glory.

...

Meanwhile, Lu Zhou did not stop there. Instead, he kept channeling his Primal Qi. He kept hearing notifications about the rewards from instructing Si Wuya, but he had no time to deal with that.

Lu Zhou did not pay any attention to what was happening on the ground. Instead, he was fully focused on channeling his Primal Qi into the Formation. He wondered, 'Is the rascal working on those questions inside the Cave of Reflection again?'

Lu Zhou needed the Formation to be completely stabilized. After all, the power from the Peak Trial Card would be wasted if it was not used. When the time limit was exceeded, all the extra Primal Qi he possessed would disappear.

...

Si Wuya suddenly remembered something. 'Where are the people from the seven great sects?'

He took a deep breath and ran toward the western side of the mountain. He stood up high as he looked down. To his delight, the radiance from Golden Court Mountain and the avatar lit up the forest. As far as his eye could see, there were signs of battles past.

There were ditches left behind by countless energy swords, craters in the shapes of Golden Lotuses, and the bodies of the disciples from the seven great sects strewn haphazardly across the land. It was a magnificent sight to behold!

Si Wuya was in awe as he murmured, "Is this the power of the Nine-leaf stage?"

...

A mile from the valley.

Mingshi Yin regarded Feng Qinghe with slight surprise and said, "What do you know? I'll have to give it to you, you do have many tricks up your sleeves. The seven great sects have now become your fodder."

After his sea of Qi was burnt, Feng Qinghe's expression changed as he said darkly, "You chose to turn away from the path of heaven and barge into hell."

Mingshi Yin gestured with a finger. He said with a straight face, "I'm so afraid."

This infuriated Feng Qinghe. He wanted to tear Mingshi Yin into pieces. There was a time limit after one's sea of Qi was burned. He no longer wasted words and lunged at Mingshi Yi at lightning speed.

Bam! Bam! Bam!

Hand seals rocked the air!

Mingshi Yin nimbly dodged the attacks. He jeered. "Faster, faster... You're injured, and it's slowing you down."

Feng Qinghe's judgment was clouded by his rage. His attacks grew in ferocity and scale.

Several rounds later, Mingshi Yin was finally feeling the pressure. After all, how could he fight against such an elite with his current cultivation base? If Feng Qinghe were not heavily injured by his master earlier, he would not be so bold as to challenge Feng Qinghe.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Mingshi Yin kept retreating into the forest.

Swoosh!

Feng Qinghe suddenly retreated as well. He scanned the forest before him and asked, "You deliberately led me here?"

"You're smart." Mingshi Yin nodded.

"Alas... you're too green."

Whizz!

Feng Qinghe summoned his avatar. Due to his burnt sea of Qi burnt, he had to deal with Mingshi Yin in the shortest time possible. The longer this battle dragged on, the more unfavorable it would be for him. He originally had a Seven-leaf cultivation base. It had, naturally, deteriorated after he burned more than half of his sea of Qi. He was now only a Six-leaf cultivator, at most. If this had been any ordinary circumstance, it would have been easy for him to kill a Six-leaf cultivator. However, the current situation was unique. He had to go all out. It should be enough to deal with Mingshi Yin.

Feng Qinghe flattened his palms. Talisman scripts appeared and swirled before they shot toward Mingshi Yin with his avatar.

"Amazing! I'll run —" Mingshi Yin was not stupid. He would not butt heads with Feng Qinghe. He tapped the ground lightly with his feet and leaped into the forest at lighting speed.

The trees seemed to have come to life as they barred Feng Qinghe's way.

Boom!

A part of the forest was instantly flattened by the avatar and the talisman scripts.

Feng Qinghe hovered in the air within his avatar and looked down.

Mingshi Yin's voice reached him from afar, "Hey, over here."

Under a huge tree to Feng Qinghe's left, Mingshi Yin was gesturing toward him with a finger.

Feng Qinghe wasted no words and shot two hand seals out from his palms. Then, he dove after the hand seals along with his avatar.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Feng Qinghe's attacks missed.

Mingshi Yin successfully dodged Feng Qinghe's attacks. If he could not beat Feng Qinghe, dodging was the best course of action.

After some time, Feng Qinghe finally discovered something was amiss. He could not afford for this to drag on. He had never met anyone as cunning as Mingshi Yin before.

Feng Qinghe gauged his sea of Qi. He brought out a stack of talismans from his pocket before he drew his index finger across them. His Primal Qi surged out and ignited the talismans. Then, he tossed them down.

The forest caught fire in just an instant.

When he saw the fire was not burning fiercely enough, Feng Qinghe repeated the move and tossed out more talismans. The talismans flew in different directions into the forest. Then, he climbed higher, feeling pleased. He looked down at the burning land, looking out for other elites who might be lurking in the vicinity.

“Wow! You got me!” Mingshi Yin was choking from the smoke. He immediately wrapped himself in energy and ran toward the valley. There were no trees and no fire there. It was as though he had turned into the wind.

“Running away? Die!” Feng Qinghe joined his palms and tossed dozens of talismans out. The instant the talismans were ignited, Formation veins seemed to appear in the air. It shone with a golden light before it transformed into talisman seals. The talisman seals were locked onto Mingshi Yin.

Feng Qinghe launched an all-out attack with his avatar as he charged toward Mingshi Yin. Although he was only at the Six-leaf stage right now, his 70-foot tall avatar was not something ordinary cultivators could hope to fight.

His avatar buzzed, and he stomped his foot.

Under the crushing difference between realms, tricks and schemes were meaningless.

Boom!

Feng Qinghe and his avatar landed. A round crater appeared under the Golden Lotus. He was convinced that his opponent had been flattened. He laughed heartily. “A disciple of the Evil Sky Pavilion? You should blame your rotten luck for your death.” He had lost all the elegance fitting of a sect master. His words were also beginning to lose sense. After all, none of the nine Evil Sky Pavilion disciples had been killed by the Noble Path or anyone for that matter. Even Zhu Honggong, with his weak cultivation base, always managed to escape unscathed from perilous situations. He felt that the coordinated attack from the seven great sects on Golden Court Mountain was the best chance they could ever get. Yet, his ambitions were mercilessly crushed by the Nine-leaf villain. The achievement of killing an Evil Sky Pavilion disciple served as a great motivation and source of comfort to him. He continued to laugh maniacally. Finally, he raised his hand and sealed his dantian’s sea of Qi again. Then, his avatar vanished.

Boom!

A loud crash resonated in the air as a figure shot out of the round crater.

Feng Qinghe reeled back.

Mingshi Yin raised a hand. The Separation Hook was hovering above his palm. “You’re powerful indeed... So powerful that you made me use one-third of my strength.”

Feng Qinghe made an error in judgment. A frown could be seen on his face when he landed. He endured the pain and said through gritted teeth, "Ground escape technique?"

"It's something I picked up. An insignificant skill, really." Mingshi Yin slowly moved toward him.

Chapter 447: The First Nine-leaf Cultivator Under the Heavens

Feng Qinghe survived Nine-leaf Old Villain Ji's sweeping attack, and yet, he was outsmarted by a mere Evil Sky Pavilion disciple. There was no way that he was willing to accept this. He tapped his dantian and pushed off from the ground before he charged toward Mingshi Yin. "We'll die together then..."

Whizz!

Mingshi Yin suddenly summoned his avatar!

Feng Qinghe glanced at Mingshi Yin's avatar and said in a deep voice, "Three-leaf? You overestimate your capabilities!"

Bam! Bam! Bam!

Feng Qinghe continuously launched hand seals from his palms.

Mingshi Yin suddenly landed. His avatar rose half a meter before falling again. The Separation Hook in his hands collided with Feng Qinghe.

Boom!

Mingshi Yin felt his arms go numb. However, he was not pushed back. Instead, Feng Qinghe was the one who reeled back.

Feng Qinghe had been leaning forward as he charged so he reeled from the impact at once. His eyes widened as he stared incredulously at Mingshi Yin who was coming at him through the air. "Four-leaf?"

A smile spread across Mingshi Yin's face. The heaven-grade weapon in his hand gleamed coldly as he said, "You're not bad. You managed to force me to use two-thirds of my strength!"

Feng Qinghe felt his scalp prickle. He had underestimated his opponent! He did not let his power erupt since he wanted to keep the burning of his sea of Qi to a minimum. He continued to struggle. "You can't kill me!"

Mingshi Yin faded out of focus and vanished.

Feng Qinghe's chest tightened. In this brief moment where he was reeling back, he was frightened. Was this truly the strength of a Four-leaf cultivator?

Whoosh!

A light flashed for a moment.

Feng Qinghe landed on the ground and saw the cold light.

Mingshi Yin's afterimage appeared in his wake, and just like that, the battle was over.

With a faint smile, Mingshi Yin raised his Separation Hook and studied it. He shook his head, picked up a leaf, and wiped the blade of the Separation Hook.

Feng Qinghe chuckled and said, "I told you... You can't kill me."

Mingshi Yin ignored him. He walked toward the valley. He wanted to see what the trump card Feng Qinghe had prepared in the valley.

Feng Qinghe frowned. He was about to turn around when he felt a cold sensation on his neck. A breeze brushed against his nape. He seemed to feel some liquid flowing down his neck, and he instinctively reached out to touch it. His fingers were stained with blood. At this moment, a searing pain spread from his neck throughout his body. He wanted to howl in pain, but he could only choke. He felt his life slipping away as he lay on the ground.

Although Mingshi Yin knew that there was some treasure preserving Feng Qinghe's life on Feng Qinghe's body, he did not rush to remove it. He was being cautious. For a cultivator like Feng Qinghe, it was likely that he would launch a final attack with his dying breath. Since Feng Qinghe managed to escape from his master's attacks, it meant that Feng Qinghe was not simple. He might look casual, but he had put a lot of thought and effort into his actions. Indeed, Feng Qinghe wore some kind of protective suit, but his neck was exposed.

A moment later, Mingshi Yin was inside the valley.

The floor of the valley was scattered with densely packed tree stumps that resembled a plum blossom formation. Various veins were carved onto the tree stumps. With the night sky as a contrast, the veins glowed strangely.

Beyond the tree stumps, there was a simple and lone wooden hut.

If Mingshi Yin did not search for it or if he did not have a guide, he would not think there was a place like this here. He did not rush forward to inspect it. After all, Feng Qinghe had said he had a hidden trump card here. It was likely a trap.

Creak!

The door of the wooden hut swung open. An ancient and deep voice rang in the air. "Pardon my lack of hospitality though you've traveled far."

Mingshi Yin could sense the power behind the voice. He took two steps backward and said, "I didn't mean to intrude, senior."

"Eh?"

Thud! Thud! Thud!

An old woman with a stooped back emerged from the wooden hut. She leaned on a walking stick and was walking slowly. When she finally stepped out of the hut, she looked at Mingshi Yin. The moonlight was dim, but her vision did not seem to be affected. After taking a long look at him, she shook her head and said, "Young man, did you kill Feng Qinghe?"

Mingshi Yin's heart sank. To think that she was capable of making that judgment from such a distance.

The old woman seemed to have seen through Mingshi Yin's apprehension and confusion. She laughed in her deep voice before she said, "I've lived in this valley for many years now. Nobody has ever stumbled upon this place... Feng Qinghe was the only one."

"You're from the Zhencang Branch?" Mingshi Yin was prepared to flee at a moment's notice. However, since he did not seem to sense any killing intent from this old woman, he tried to talk to her.

"Well, you can say that," the old woman replied.

"In that case, I'll be taking my leave."

"Hold up," the old woman said, "I promised Feng Qinghe one thing."

"And what is it?"

"I'll do everything within my power to kill those who venture into this valley," the old woman replied.

"..." Mingshi Yin was speechless. Curiosity really killed the cat. If he had known about this, he would not have ventured in here at all. "Wait, wait, wait, old senior! Feng Qinghe was trying to kill me. I was forced to defend myself!"

The old woman looked up at the moon at the entrance to the valley. "If you can kill Feng Qinghe, you must have a profound cultivation base. I won't bully you just because you're young. Let's have a fair fight."

"No, no, no... You think too highly of me, senior," Mingshi Yin did not hesitate to humble himself as he said, "It was just a fluke. I had gotten lucky." After he finished speaking, he clamped a hand over his mouth. Did he not just admit that he had killed Feng Qinghe?

"..." The old woman nodded slowly. She walked from the wooden hut to the plum blossom stumps and said, "You're brave."

"I'm not." Mingshi Yin retreated.

"I hope you won't hold this against me in your death... I must do what I have promised." The old woman sighed softly. "It's fine if you're slightly weaker. Things will proceed much more smoothly." She continued forward, aided by her walking stick.

The moment she stepped among the plum blossom stumps, the two stumps before her shone. Talisman seals hovered above the plum blossom stumps.

"Feng Qinghe challenged my master without knowing his own strength. He has only himself to blame for his death..." Mingshi Yin said, "My master isn't a pushover." That sounded awkward, but now that he was cornered, he blurted out whatever came to his mind.

"Your master?"

"My master is the Evil Sky Pavilion's Master, Ji Tiandao."

Creak.

The old woman stopped in her tracks. She seemed distracted.

Mingshi Yin relaxed. 'As expected, master's name is truly powerful. She must be shaking in fear now.'

"How's your master doing recently?" the old woman asked.

Mingshi Yin gave it some thought before he said smugly, "My master is already at the Nine-leaf stage. He's the first Nine-leaf elite under the heavens!"

Swoosh!

A wooden stump shot out from the ground. With a ring of Expansive Heavenly Energy around it, it flew toward Mingshi Yin.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Mingshi Yin raised his hands and struck with his palms.

Boom! Boom! Boom! Bam-bam-bam!

Every time they clashed, a burst of Expansive Heavenly Energy would ripple out.

At the same time, Mingshi Yin kept retreating as he parried the wooden stump! He was alarmed. The old woman was much more powerful than he had imagined!

The old woman said, "Little brat who's still wet behind the ears, do you think I'm gullible?"

Chapter 448: Glory

A wooden stump was all it took for the old woman to render Mingshi Yin helpless to fight back. He was suitably shocked. 'Since when did Zhencang Branch have such a grand elite?' Based on Feng Qinghe's words, this old woman was his hidden trump card.

This place was at least 100 miles from Golden Court Mountain. It was considered extremely remote. The trees grew wildly around here, and the valley hid it from view. Being this removed from human settlements and without protection from Formations, the wild beasts in the wilderness would be enough of a headache. The wooden hut and plum blossom stumps seemed old. The weed was taller than most men. Clearly, this old woman had been living here for a long time now. This was not a hidden trump card. Feng Qinghe was merely grasping at straws.

"Old senior... I would never dare to lie to you. My master is truly at the Nine-leaf stage!" Mingshi Yin said.

"You're still lying?" The wooden stump before the old woman rose into the air again, releasing a ring of script seals before it flew toward Mingshi Yin again.

Mingshi Yin leaped away. He summoned his heaven-grade weapon, the Separation Hook.

Bam! Bam! Bam!

Mingshi Yin swung the weapon twice and cleaved the wooden stump in half. After the veins on the wooden stump were damaged by the weapon, they lost their effects.

The old woman seemed puzzled when she saw the weapon in his hands. She said, "Heaven-grade weapon, the Separation Hook?"

Mingshi Yin landed and looked at the old woman as he asked, "You recognize this, old senior?"

"You're his disciple."

"..." As it turned out, the old woman did not believe Mingshi Yin at all from the very beginning despite his efforts to convince her of the veracity of his words.

As expected of an experienced and old cultivator. She would not be easily fooled. It was practically useless to try and play tricks against someone of this caliber. If he was honest enough, perhaps, she would consider sparing him out of consideration for his master.

"Old senior, how should I address you?"

"I have left the cultivation world and do not trouble myself with the affairs of the world. After this is settled, I'll seal the valley off and won't have any more interactions with the outside world," the old woman replied.

"..." Mingshi Yin knew the old woman's strength was profound. With his limited knowledge, it was only natural he did not recognize her.

"Old senior, since I can't run anyway, you can take a look for yourself if you don't believe me. Feng Qinghe's corpse is there," Mingshi Yin said as he pointed outside, "Feng Qinghe attacked the Evil Sky Pavilion by working with the six great sects. My master attacked them out of anger."

The old woman glanced at him. "He hasn't reached his great limit?"

"He's alive and kicking."

"Lead the way."

The two of them went to where Mingshi Yin had been fighting moments ago. The one-mile path seemed to stretch on forever. Mingshi Yin dared not tell the old woman to walk faster. He merely followed her obediently from behind. After a while, they finally reached the location of the battle.

When the old woman saw Feng Qinghe's corpse, she paused and sighed. She studied the corpse for a moment before she straightened her back and said, "Come here."

"Are you talking to me, old senior?"

"Do you think I can talk to ghosts?"

"Oh..." Mingshi Yin obediently walked over. 'Well, you can't blame me for mistaking you talking to Feng Qinghe's soul.'

The old woman grabbed his wrist. A faint pulse of Primal Qi swirled in the air and instantly faded.

"Four-leaf?"

"I know right? I was wrongly accused. With my cultivation base, how could I have possibly killed the Seven-leaf Feng Qinghe?" Mingshi Yin said.

The old woman fell deep into thought. The Four-leaf Mingshi Yin could never bridge a three-leaf gap and defeat Feng Qinghe. Besides, Feng Qinghe had also burned his own sea of Qi. Mingshi Yin was not even a

Five-leaf cultivator. He was not considered a grand cultivator as well. Even a Seven-leaf peer would not be so bold to underestimate Feng Qinghe.

"Old senior, I have something to say, but I'm not sure if it's appropriate for me to say it." Mingshi Yin could tell that she was wavering and decided to strike while the iron was hot.

"What is it?"

"With regard to the information about Feng Qinghe colluding with the six great sects to attack the Evil Sky Pavilion, you may verify it later. Feng Qinghe had fled all the way here with the intention of leading my master here. He harbors ill intentions, and yet, you're still helping him?"

The old woman frowned. 'This brat has a point.'

"I'll take your word for it, for now... but if you mention the Nine-leaf stage again, I'll kill you," the old woman said.

"..." Mingshi Yin's heart skipped a beat. 'What a vicious old lady.' However, even he would not have believed someone had attained the Nine-leaf stage if he did not witness it with his own eyes. It was natural the old woman did not believe him.

"Thank you, old senior. May I go now?" Mingshi Yin asked, preparing to leave. He knew the more he spoke, the more mistakes he was going to make. It was not wise for him to stay here any longer than necessary. He decided to leave as soon as the opportunity presented itself. He prioritized his life above all else.

"Wait."

"..." Mingshi Yin turned around.

The old woman said, "I've promised Feng Qinghe, after all. Regardless of the sins he had committed, it'd be wrong for me to go back on my words. A few days from now, I'll visit the Evil Sky Pavilion and have a chat with your master... Come to think of it, it's been a long time since I've met him. I'd like to resolve my regrets before either of us gets buried six feet underground."

'Regrets? What regrets?' Mingshi Yin was curious. He flashed a smile and said, "I'll surely convey your message to my master." After saying this, he took one final and fond look at Feng Qinghe's corpse. He initially wanted to strip Feng Qinghe of the treasured vest. However, it seemed best to leave it for now. It was stained with blood and reeked of sweat. Mingshi Yin could never bring himself to wear something like that. Then, he quickly vanished from among the trees.

The old woman looked in the direction of the forest. She shook her head lightly and muttered, "What a waste of your cultivation base to have recruited such a cowardly disciple."

...

Golden Court Mountain's barrier lit up. It shone so brightly that the civilians in Tangzi Town looked toward Golden Court Mountain. After a short spell, the radiance of the barrier dimmed.

Lu Zhou stopped channeling his Primal Qi into it, and it returned to normal.

The barrier that seemed like a screen in the sky became transparent. It glittered with faint blue light every once in a while.

The notification about the Peak Trial Card's time limit reached Lu Zhou's ears. He felt the surging power in his body quickly receding before it completely vanished. His cultivation base returned to the Divine Court realm. It had been a wonderful feeling, he was sorry to see it end.

With movements as light as a feather, Lu Zhou slowly descended from the top of the Evil Sky Pavilion to the ground.

"Greetings, master." Si Wuya ran up to Lu Zhou. He fell to his knees at once and kowtowed. He was trembling slightly and was drenched in cold sweat. He seemed frightened. His forehead remained on the ground, he was too afraid to meet his master's eyes.

Lu Zhou asked in a deep voice, "Who gave you the permission to leave the Cave of Reflection?"

"I know I'm wrong. The barrier of the Cave of Reflection disappeared. I was only thinking of helping the Evil Sky Pavilion. I wasn't thinking straight back then, and I have no intention of escaping! Please believe me, master!" Si Wuya said, still lying prostrate on the ground.

"Help the Evil Sky Pavilion?" Lu Zhou said with a slight hint of derision. "With your cultivation base?"

"I..."

"Do you think the seven great sects would be threatened by you?" Lu Zhou asked.

Si Wuya was rendered speechless. At the end of the day, check and balance were built on the basis of brute force. The seven great sects had been prepared to die. Even if he had a silver tongue, could he really persuade them to call off the attack? After witnessing the battlefield, Si Wuya was greatly shaken. The seven great sects were even bold enough to take on a Nine-leaf cultivator. Would someone like him be able to bring them under control?

At this moment, Leng Luo, Hua Wuado, Duanmu Sheng, and the other disciples returned to the Evil Sky Pavilion. They landed before the great hall. When they saw Lu Zhou standing there, everyone bowed in unison.

"Greetings, Pavilion Master."

"Greetings, master!"

"Master... Ah?!" Before Zhu Honggong could begin to flatter Lu Zhou, Duanmu Sheng placed a firm hand on his shoulder.

The others immediately felt relieved, inwardly thanking Duanmu Sheng. Someone should have put a stop to Old Eighth a long time ago.

Lu Zhou stroked his beard with a nod and said, "Lock him up."

"Understood."

Si Wuya behaved respectfully. He returned to the Cave of Reflection with Zhou Jifeng.

Lu Zhou looked at the moon. He initially had many things he wanted to delegate to them, but it was getting late. Hence, he said, "Let's call it a day."

"Rest well, Pavilion Master."

"Rest well, master."

Lu Zhou waved his sleeve and returned to the eastern pavilion.

Nobody would dare move before the Nine-leaf cultivator excused himself. Everyone held their breaths and maintained their bowing postures. Even Leng Luo and Hua Wudao were no exception.

Chapter 449: Amaze the World with a Brilliant Feat

Inside the study of the Evergreen Palace, the Divine Capital's Imperial city.

The current Emperor, Liu Gu, was writing with his brush.

The hurried noise of an attendant's footsteps rang in the air.

Liu Gu stopped writing instinctively. He rested his brush on the table and looked toward the door.

Before the attendant even entered the room, he kneeled and said, "Your Majesty, our scouts have reported that the seven great sects were wiped out by the Evil Sky Pavilion. They were powerless to resist."

Liu Gu had expected it to end in mutual defeat. No matter how powerful Old Villain Ji was, he could not possibly hold his own against so many elites. With the Duanlin Branch's Patriarch, Chang Yan, making his move while putting his own life on the line, it should not be a problem for them to gravely injure Lu Zhou. The remaining Evil Sky Pavilion disciples were nothing to be afraid of. This way, the greatest threat to the Imperial family would disappear. However, the attendant said the seven great sects were powerless to resist?

Liu Gu's brows were tightly knitted together as he said in a deep voice, "Repeat what you just said."

The attendant's voice was trembling as he said, "Our scouts reported that the seven great sects, I mean, the eight great sects, the Yun sect included, have been wiped out by the Evil Sky Pavilion, and they were powerless to resist." He was close to tears, afraid Liu Gu would send a hand seal toward him. After all, it would not be the first time for something like that to happen. The former attendant had died in this manner.

Attending to the monarch was like attending to a tiger. This had been the case since ancient times.

Liu Gu seemed calm outwardly, but no one could imagine how terrible he was when angered. "How could this be? Did Si Wuya and Yu Zhenghai return?" This was the only possibility he could come up with.

The attendant gulped. He had been mulling over this before he came here. He had rehearsed a hundred times. Finally, he said, "Old... O-old Villain Ji is already at the Nine-leaf stage!"

This time, Liu Gu did not make the attendant repeat his words. He was shocked. It was as though his soul had left his body.

The study was extremely quiet now. The air seemed so heavy that it pressured its occupants. It was difficult to breathe.

The attendant dared not say anything. His body was shaking uncontrollably.

For what seemed like hours, Liu Gu made a show of his amazing endurance. As though nothing had happened, he asked, "What's the progress with our research on severing the Golden Lotus?"

"Y-your Majesty... Th-there are ten survivors. O-one of them is trying to sprout leaves again."

"Good." Liu Gu returned to his desk. He kept a tight lid on his emotions as he calmly asked, "What's the situation of the battle at Liang Province?"

"The men from Rouli and the members of the Nether Sect are engaged in an intense battle. Yu Zhenghai has gone to Liang Province. He shouldn't be able to stir up trouble for a while," the attendant said, feeling much more at ease.

Liu Gu picked up his brush again, dipped it in ink, and wrote on the paper the word 'unify'. At the final stroke of the character, he drew a forceful upward stroke...

Swoosh!

The character for 'unify' seemed to have come to life. A golden radiance wrapped around the word. The script seal flew toward the attendant who was at the door. It pierced his head in a blink of an eye.

Liu Gu did not even deign to look at the attendant. He merely heard a sound like a fruit that had fallen on the ground. He continued writing the words 'ten thousand tribes'. After finishing, he placed his brush back onto the table. Without a trace of emotion, he said, "Take him away."

"At once."

The attendant's head had exploded. Even at the moment of his death, he did not understand why Liu Gu had killed him.

Yu Zhenghai's Nether Sect was wreaking havoc across the nine provinces. What was Yu Zhenghai not being able to stir up trouble at the moment supposed to mean? Was this not an embarrassment to Liu Gu?

...

The Divine Capital was the most flourishing city of Great Yan. It was also the part of the empire where news traveled the fastest. It was not strange for Liu Gu to be the first person to learn about it.

Such a great battle could never be kept a secret for long.

Soon enough, the news of the Evil Sky Pavilion's Patriarch having attained the Nine-leaf stage spread throughout the Divine Capital. Then, with the Divine Capital as the center, it spread throughout the nine provinces.

For a time, the Evil Sky Pavilion's brilliant feat amazed the world.

...

At a certain relay station in the Divine Capital.

Several cultivators were talking over drinks.

“Who would dare stand against the Evil Sky Pavilion if it becomes the greatest force under the heavens in the future?”

“As expected of the place I admire. If I can enter the Evil Sky Pavilion one day, I’d be willing to give up ten years of my life.”

“Forget about it... With your talents, you might not even be hired as a help.”

The others roared with laughter.

The stances of the cultivators changed quickly. Those who initially supported the Evil Sky Pavilion naturally became even more supportive and fanatic.

Those who opposed the Evil Sky Pavilion were silenced.

At this moment, an elegant and poised man asked, “Pardon me, but is there really a Nine-leaf cultivator?”

“Comrade, I can tell you’re not from around these parts. There’s no doubt about it, the Evil Sky Pavilion’s Patriarch is at the Nine-leaf stage!”

“He severed his Golden Lotus?”

“Don’t think that he did... The method of severing the Golden Lotus was only recently made public. There’s only a handful who survived the act, and they’d had to sprout leaves all over again. Hence... I suspect that the old villain has some other method.”

Someone nodded and chimed in, “That’s right. Severing the Golden Lotus is only one of the ways. I heard that some major sects are trying to suppress the forming of their Golden Lotuses from the moment they stepped into the Nascent Divinity realm and are focused on forming leaves instead... Some tried to restrict their Golden Lotuses with the aid of potions. There are more and more ways to do this now.”

The cultivators nodded.

The elegant and poised man smiled and said, “Thank you.”

He stood up and was about to leave when the waiter of the relay station stopped him and said, “Hello there, that’d be two pennies for the refreshments.”

The man was taken aback. He rummaged through his pockets and said helplessly, “I’m sorry. Today doesn’t seem to be a good day. I will pay you in the future.”

“Huh? Dear customer, there are many others here as well. We’re only a humble business...” the waiter said, clearly being put in a difficult situation.

The man searched his pockets again. Once more, his hands came up empty. As the saying went, ‘A cent would be the bane of a hero’.

The waiter caught sight of the sword he carried and said, "Why don't you leave your sword behind as collateral?"

When the sword was mentioned, the cultivators in the surroundings looked at the sword immediately. Those with keen eyes could tell that it was a good sword. They knew what a sword meant to a swordsman. A swordsman would never part with his sword.

"I'll pay for him." A graceful lady appeared at the side of the relay station. She tossed two pennies to the waiter.

The man glanced at her and said, "Thank you."

The cultivator must be impoverished. A woman even had to pay for him. The others felt embarrassed on his behalf.

The lady suddenly bowed and said reverently, "Please accept me as your disciple, Mister Second."

"..." The others were taken aback.

With a gentle expression, the man said, "I'm sorry. I don't accept disciples."

The lady immediately stood up and spread her arms. She said passionately, "My name's Qin Ruobing. I've admired the Evil Sky Pavilion since I was a little girl. I humbly implore you to accept me as your disciple, Mister Second!" Then, she fell to her knees immediately.

The others were shocked.

"I remember now. She's the daughter of the Qin Jun, Prince of Qi!"

"That's her? Then this must be..."

Yes, he was the Evil Sky Pavilion's second disciple who had flown all the way from Wuxian Mountain without taking a break, Yu Shangrong. He happened to pass by the Divine Capital and had stopped to rest.

Swoosh!

The cultivators there immediately prostrated themselves as they trembled.

The waiter was scared out of his wits. He considered his options before he finally mustered his courage and took out the two pennies that he had received. Then, he walked to Yu Shangrong and said in a mixture of excitement and fear, trying hard to string up coherent sentences, "I... ha-have been conceited and blind! Please... please... please..."

"You've rightfully earned that." Yu Shangrong smiled faintly.

"Right... right... rightfully earned." The waiter was greatly shocked. He did not expect the Evil Sky Pavilion's second disciples to be so approachable and reasonable.

The other cultivators had difficulty believing this as well.

Yu Shangrong maintained his smile as he patted the waiter's shoulder. Then, he looked at Qin Ruobing and said, "The path of cultivation is difficult and fraught with dangers. You're born into a life of luxury, and thus, aren't fit for cultivation."

"M-mister Second."

Zing!

The Longevity Sword left its scabbard.

Under the shine of the sun, the sword gleamed with faint scarlet light that made it look even more extraordinary.

The relay station was a place where information and knowledge were exchanged in breadth and depth. The cultivators gathered there looked at the Longevity Sword before them fearfully.

"It's really him. It's Sword Devil Yu Shangrong!"

"He's not dead?!"

Chapter 450: Hundred Tribulations Insight

Yu Shangrong had flown all the way from Wuxian Mountain. He was unaware of the great tribulation that Evil Sky Pavilion had experienced. Hence, he had been flying at a normal speed. With his cultivation base at the Three-leaf Golden Lotus stage now, he had planned to keep a low profile. He planned to leave the Divine Capital as quickly as he could. However, he kept hearing the others mentioning rumors about a Nine-leaf Golden Lotus. There was nobody in the world who cared more about the Nine-leaf stage than the Eight-leaf experts. He was no exception to this. Therefore, he decided to rest at the Divine Capital's relay station to learn about the rumor of the Nine-leaf.

After half a day of asking around, Yu Shangrong gained a rough understanding of the entire matter. To sum it up in one sentence, his master had wiped out the eight great sects in his Nine-leaf form. Whether the rumor had been distorted or exaggerated, he would be able to confirm it once he returned to the Evil Sky Pavilion. What he wanted to find out the most was if the Evil Sky Pavilion remained standing. He did not expect to meet someone who recognized him here.

Before this, Yu Shangrong had met this girl once. He had been strolling around the Divine Capital with his Eldest Senior Brother back then. They spent the night in the mansion of Qin Jun, the Prince of Qi. That was how he had met her. He was unaware of her obsession with the Evil Sky Pavilion.

The hovering Longevity Sword barred Qin Ruobing's path. She dared not move forward.

Yu Shangrong turned around, his back facing Qin Ruobing. He said tonelessly, "Don't think too highly of yourself. It'll only hurt more when you fall. Farewell." If he did not reject her mercilessly, he would only be doing her harm.

When Yu Shangrong stepped forward, the Longevity Sword automatically returned to its scabbard.

There was no cultivator who dared to offend such an individual unless they had a death wish. The cultivators looked on as Yu Shangrong left. Their gazes were filled with admiration and awe. This was how a true swordsman should behave.

Even the relay station's waiter, who was a mortal, thought highly of Yu Shangrong now than before. He was used to being treated rudely by his customers who were mostly low-rank cultivators and would even be treated as their punching bag. In contrast, this elite, the Sword Devil whose very name struck fear into the hearts of many, was so approachable. There was too huge of a difference between their characters.

"I feel like I'm dreaming. I spoke to Sword Devil Yu Shangrong!"

"He's not a devil, he's a modest gentleman... A true sword path elite."

"To see is to believe. He was rumored to be a villain who kills without batting an eyelid. Heh, those must've been stories made up by those who are jealous of him."

"Those people on the hit list were all despicable and shameless. I, for one, hope that the Sword Devil would continue building on that list. Things will be much more interesting that way."

...

The appearance of the Nine-leaf Golden Lotus had overshadowed the rumor about severing one's Golden Lotus. The rate at which this news spread had also exceeded expectations.

Far in Liang Province, the Nether Sect's Four Great Protectors were initially preparing their men to meet the people of Rouli on the battlefield. However, everything came to an end in just a night.

Yu Zhenghai had difficulty believing this. He looked at his Four Great Protectors who were also his most trusted helpers. "Hua Chongyang, you're the one I trust the most. Who's spreading this rumor?"

"Sect Master, we've ordered the members of our various branches to find out about this. There's indeed a Nine-leaf cultivator. It's unlikely that this is made up," Hua Chongyang replied.

From the side, Bai Yuqing chimed in, "The Evil Sky Pavilion was attacked while we were fighting the people of Rouli. That's too much of a coincidence. Someone must be behind this."

Hua Chongyang said, "The sudden retreat of the Other Tribes must've been due to the rumors about a Nine-leaf cultivator as well. This is good news for us. We can focus our efforts on fighting the Imperial family now."

Upon hearing these words, Yu Zhenghai frowned. He did not seem too happy. He paced about the room, seemingly flustered and ill at ease. Then, he asked, "What's the situation at the Evil Sky Pavilion now?" It would not matter if he could conquer the entire world now, the appearance of a Nine-leaf cultivator would throw a wrench in his plan.

Hua Chongyang said, "We've confirmed that the attack by the seven great sects had failed. Golden Court Mountain's barrier is restored. A Nine-leaf... Nine-leaf cultivator is probably more powerful than we imagine."

"..." Yu Zhenghai was not at all pleased that his master was growing stronger. If anything, he felt extremely frustrated. How was he supposed to deal with the Imperial family? He could hide in one of the nine provinces of Great Yan. Yet, if he wanted to rule over Great Yan, he would have to fight the Imperial family, sooner or later. At that time, what would he do if his master came looking for trouble with his Nine-leaf Golden Lotus? He truly did not know what to do.

Hua Chongyang seemed to understand Yu Zhenghai's thoughts. He said tentatively, "Sect master, Liang Province is practically under our control now. Why don't you... hide in Qing or Yang Province?"

When the situation at Liang Zhou calmed down, Yu Zhenghai's location would be easily exposed if he remained here.

Yu Zhenghai frowned. He stopped pacing and said with a stern expression, "Me? Hiding?"

Would the great master of the largest Fiend Sect need to hide?

Hua Chongyang realized that he had said something wrong. He bowed and said at once, "It... it was just a suggestion."

"Out of the nine provinces in Great Yan, the Divine Capital aside... I believe that they will be controlled by the Nether Sect soon enough. What are the more difficult places to conquer as of now?" Yu Zhenghai asked.

"Jing Province. The layout of the land is treacherous. There are many mountains and the growth of vegetation is thick. It's also protected by a Formation. It's an easy place to defend but not to attack," Hua Chongyang replied.

Yu Zhenghai nodded. "In that case, I'll oversee the operations in Jing Province myself."

"That's brilliant, sect master... With you handling it, there's no reason for us to not be able to conquer Jing Province. I'm willing to man the helm and personally escort you to Jing Province tomorrow, sect master," Hua Chongyang said.

"Brother Chongyang, you've been stretching yourself quite thin lately. Allow me to go in your stead," Bai Yuqing said.

"I think both of you are quite exhausted. I'll do it," Di Qing said.

"No, no, no, three of you have worked harder than I did. I'm the youngest. It's only right for me to man the helm," Yang Yan chimed in,

Yu Zhenghai glanced at his four subordinates before he said, "Hua Chongyang will come with me. The rest of you, stay here and defend the City of Mo in Liang Province. If you see that Rouli elite, Karol, kill him at once, regardless if he's seeking peace or begging for mercy."

"As you command, sect master," Bai Yuqing, Di Qing, and Yang Yan said in unison.

Hua Chongyang seemed slightly delighted at this arrangement. He bowed and said, "In that case, I'll make the necessary preparations..."

"There's no need for that."

"Sect master, what do you mean?"

"We'll leave right now." Yu Zhenghai turned to look in Jing Province's direction with his hands on his back.

"Understood!"

...

In the eastern pavilion of the Evil Sky Pavilion.

After two days of rest, Lu Zhou's mental state was slightly restored. The Heavenly Writing's extraordinary power was replenished as well. At this moment, he was surprised to be notified of a 1,500 merit points reward.

Did Yu Shangrong kill someone again? Or was it Mingshi Yin?

Back at the Obedient Villa, Mingshi Yin had killed a Five-leaf cultivator when he was supposedly at the Three-leaf stage. Lu Zhou would never believe that someone could kill another cultivator who had two leaves greater than himself. Clearly, Mingshi Yin had concealed his true strength. In any case, Lu Zhou benefited from this.

Lu Zhou called up the system dashboard and checked his merit points.

Merit points: 102,300.

He seemed to have gained more than 60,000 merit points from this battle. Compared to what he obtained in the past, this was a huge jackpot.

As always, Lu Zhou was in no hurry to purchase the avatar. Instead, he decided to try his luck at the lucky draw. After ten consecutive draws, and ten 'thank you' messages, he felt humbled. He could clearly sense that the probability of striking a prize was much lower compared to before. He remembered that he had only gotten an avatar once. Since then, he had never been able to win anything decent.

After considering it for a moment, Lu Zhou chose to purchase the Hundred Tribulations Insight avatar.

"Ding! Spent, 100,000 merit points. Purchased the Hundred Tribulations Insight avatar."

"Ding! A new Hundred Tribulations Insight avatar. May sprout one leaf right away."