

Disciples 451

Chapter 451: True Leafed Nascent Divinity

When Lu Zhou saw the balance of his merit points decreased from more than 100,000 to 1,800, he felt his heart ache. A frightening idea appeared unbidden in his mind at this moment. How great would it be if the seven great sects came and attacked the mountain again? He quickly shook his head, dismissing the idea as soon as it appeared. He did not have the means to repel them if they showed up again. His extraordinary power had not even been fully replenished yet, at the moment. If he were to fight, he reckoned he could not even defeat Zhu Honggong, Old Eighth, now.

Lu Zhou had displayed his Nine-leaf Golden Lotus avatar in front of the seven great sects. Anyone who had a working brain would not recklessly provoke the Evil Sky Pavilion before they were powerful enough.

‘Equip,’ Lu Zhou thought to himself.

The Hundred Tribulations Insight avatar dissolved into spots of starlight that swirled around him before they quickly merged with his body. He felt a sudden surge of power entering his dantian’s sea of Qi. His weak dantian’s sea of Qi was filled to the brim by this tidal wave of power. Shortly after, he could clearly feel his Ten Worlds avatar being replaced by the Hundred Tribulations Insight avatar.

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At this moment, Primal Qi surged around the eastern pavilion.

The others at the Evil Sky Pavilion, naturally, sensed this unique disturbance.

Inside the southern pavilion.

Pan Litian, who was reclining on a wooden chair while lazing in the sun, listened to Leng Luo as he bragged. He shook his head and said, “Although I’ve not seen it with my own eyes, I clearly heard the sounds of the battle that night. I believe you.”

Leng Luo chuckled and said, “Old Pan, what do you mean you believe me? I’m telling you the truth. I’m not exaggerating at all. You old thing, do you regret not being able to witness such a scene?”

Pan Litian did not retort, which was unlike him. Truth be told, Pan Zhong had told him about the strange things he saw the night before. There was no one who did not want to see a Nine-leaf cultivator in action. Alas, he was recuperating and lost the chance to see the Nine-leaf pavilion master. Could he possibly head to the eastern pavilion and request the pavilion master to demonstrate it for him? Of course, not.

Leng Luo said, “Looks like the truth of the great limit has been shattered... I consider myself fortunate for living in a time where this happened.”

“I feel the same,” Pan Litian sighed and said, “I thought that I’d loiter around and spend the rest of my days living an ordinary life. To think that I lived to see this day. Interesting...”

As the two of them conversed, the intense disturbance from the eastern pavilion finally reached them.

Leng Luo and Pan Litian looked over at the same time, unsurprised. They were already used to such unique disturbances here.

“The pavilion master is trying out some new techniques again.” Pan Litian shook his head.

“Perhaps... the real method of attaining the Nine-leaf stage is in the pavilion master’s hands.”

Their eyes brightened at once. They were both Eight-leaf elites. Prior to this, they did not think about attaining the Nine-leaf stage at all. They had thought that the Eight-leaf stage was the peak for all cultivators. Now that it was proven it was possible to attain the Nine-leaf stage, how could they not feel excited?

The two of them exchanged a look and nodded in tacit understanding.

...

Meanwhile, Lu Zhou raised a palm. The Hundred Tribulations Insight avatar appeared above his palm. He was experienced in this. He shrunk the avatar to the size of two fists, a feat that required much skill. This was his Hundred Tribulations Insight avatar. It was standing on a Golden Lotus. However, there were no leaves.

The Golden Lotus aside, if Lu Zhou did not take a good look at it, he would have thought it was some low-rank avatar.

Lu Zhou raised his palm until the avatar was level with his face.

The Golden Lotus under the avatar’s feet was spinning.

The next step would be for him to sprout new leaves.

Lu Zhou silently gauged his current Nascent Divinity Tribulation realm’s cultivation base. He could sprout leaves if he wanted to. Hence, he circulated his Primal Qi and sent it into the avatar.

Golden rings of light appeared around the avatar and moved downward in layers upon layers.

His power traveled downward along the radiant rings as well. It grew brighter in intensity.

The surging of Primal Qi inside the eastern pavilion never stopped.

At this moment, Zhu Honggong and Zhao Yue entered the eastern pavilion...

“Nascent Divinity Tribulation realm? Sprouting leaves?”

“No way, the Ten-leaf stage?” Zhu Honggong was startled with a jump.

“No... this is the energy of the One-leaf.” Zhao Yue was also attempting to sprout leaves herself. Hence, she was very familiar with the energy and aura of the process.

“I won’t fall for that. Let’s go!” Zhu Honggong laughed and pulled Zhao Yue out of the eastern pavilion.

There was no point staying in the eastern pavilion. Their master was cultivating. If they disturbed him now, they were just looking for trouble.

The energy that indicated the One-leaf stage and Hundred Tribulations Insight were just a ploy to fool people. Zhu Honggong would not be fooled.

Zhu Honggong was not the only one who had these thoughts. Almost everyone in the Evil Sky Pavilion had similar thoughts.

After all, they were already used to this. Even if Lu Zhou stood before them, activated his avatar, and told them it was truly a One-leaf Nascent Divinity avatar, nobody would believe or question him.

...

Lu Zhou looked on as the shining rings moved downward.

About an hour later.

When the final ring of light faded away, Lu Zhou saw a plump and bright leaf appear on the Golden Lotus.

He did it! Even if it was just a single leaf, Lu Zhou was extremely pleased and satisfied. From this moment on, he was a true One-leaf Nascent Divinity Tribulation realm cultivator.

After sprouting the leaf, Lu Zhou resumed his meditation of the Heavenly Writing scrolls.

...

Early the next morning, Lu Zhou had barely opened his eyes when he heard someone calling out from outside

"Master, Fourth Senior Brother is back!"

"Summon him here."

"Oh."

Lu Zhou emerged from the eastern pavilion with his hands on his back and looked up at the Golden Court Mountain's barrier. Everything was as it should be. In fact, it was even more powerful compared to its former glorious days. He was already missing the Peak Trial Card. What he would give to obtain another Peak Trial Card.

At this moment, Mingshi Yin entered the eastern pavilion and fell to his knees immediately. Then, he prostrated himself on the ground as he said, "Greetings, master!"

Lu Zhou frowned when he saw Mingshi Yin was about to follow in Zhu Honggong's footsteps and flattered him. He waved his hand and said, "That's enough."

"I genuinely wanted to worship you, master. I can't help myself... There is none who's not in awe of your Nine-leaf stage, Master," Mingshi Yin said.

"Are you done?" Lu Zhou looked at Mingshi Yin. He wondered what was going through his fourth disciple's mind. If Mingshi Yin had time to flatter him, he should be cultivating instead.

Mingshi Yin shook his head, no longer dared to continue. He tried to mimic his Eighth Junior Brother but ended up looking like a fool instead. How come his master was not disgusted when his Eighth Junior Brother did this?

“Where have you been these past couple of days?” Lu Zhou asked.

Mingshi Yin quickly explained how he infiltrated the seven great sects, followed Feng Qinghe, and killed him.

When Lu Zhou heard this, he asked in confusion, “You killed Feng Qinghe?”

“I was just lucky... Feng Qinghe burned his sea of Qi and played dead. He sealed his dantian’s sea of Qi and crawled into the forest. However, he was already heavily wounded by you when I found him. That’s how I managed to take him down!” Mingshi Yin said.

The battle that night was too chaotic. It was only natural that there were stragglers. However, Lu Zhou did not expect Feng Qinghe managed to get away. With his Nine-leaf avatar, he would have been able to sense any fluctuation of a slightly powerful Primal Qi. He had to admit; Feng Qinghe was truly cunning.

Little Yuan’er who had just arrived chimed in, “Fourth Senior Brother, how did you manage to tail him? Did you use his tactic as well?”

Mingshi Yin. “...” He cleared his throat and continued saying with a straight face, “Let’s not dwell on the details.”

No matter the method Mingshi Yin used to track Feng Qinghe and kill Feng Qinghe, there was no doubt he had done the Evil Sky Pavilion a huge favor. Lu Zhou definitely would not pick on small flaws. He praised Mingshi Yin. “You’ve done well.”

“Thank you for the kind words, master... I have another thing to report,” Mingshi Yin said.

“Let’s hear it.”

“After killing Feng Qinghe, I ran into an old lady...” Mingshi Yin described the looks of the old woman he met in the valley and told Lu Zhou everything he knew. After recounting his experience, he said, “That old lady is Feng Qinghe’s helper. She wanted to kill me, but fortunately, I was smart enough to mention your great name, master. She was too frightened to do anything after that.”

Although Mingshi Yin’s words were slightly exaggerated, based how his description of the old woman’s stooped figure, skill in manipulating the Expansive Heavenly Energy, being Feng Qinghe’s helper, unfathomable cultivation base, and living in seclusion, Lu Zhou deduced she was once the proud daughter of the heavens who once was renowned among the Confucian sects. Lu Zhou stroked his beard and calmly said her name, “Zuo Yushu.”

“Who’s Zuo Yushu?” Mingshi Yin scratched his head.

At this moment, Leng Luo’s voice rang from behind him.

“It’s only natural that you’ve not heard of her. Zuo Yushu was a cultivation genius of the Confucian sects whose name shocked the heavens 500 years ago. She was said to have the highest possibility of being

the first female saint of Great Yan. However... the Confucian sects wouldn't allow a female to learn its art. Zuo Yushu, headstrong as she was, broke off all relations with the Confucian sects."

Chapter 452

Mingshi Yin scratched his head. He remembered the stern expression on the old woman's face and felt humbled. He thought that she had quite the temper to break off from the Confucian sects. Perhaps, things were more complicated than Leng Luo had let on. He asked in confusion, "They'll only pass it down to males and not females?"

Leng Luo stepped forward and cupped his fists at Lu Zhou.

Lu Zhou nodded in reply.

Leng Luo looked at Mingshi Yin and explained, "Since ancient times, the dynasties ruled the world with scholarly knowledge and martial strength. Education was monopolized. The civilians could only cultivate Body Tempering. If they're lucky, they can enter the Mystic Enlightening realm or the Sense Condensing realm. If they wanted to reach greater heights, they had no choice but to join a sect and work their way up with their talents and efforts. Martial strength alone was not enough to determine the prosperity or demise of a nation. That was where academic institutions came into play. However, the institutions only took in male disciples. When the daughters of wealthy families wanted to learn as well, they could only hire private tutors. In this scenario, the males prospered while the females suffered. As time goes by, the Confucian and Daoist sects thrived, and political and military achievements were made possible."

Leng Luo's words were similar to the information in Lu Zhou's memories. Although he did not expect this world to share similar ways with the ancient times back on earth, compared to earth, Great Yan was not so bad to the extent where males were held in much higher regard than females. Many sects revered female disciples in the cultivation world.

"How preposterous," Mingshi Yin replied.

"500 years ago, Zuo Yushu was highly accomplished in Expansive Heavenly Energy... After breaking away from the Confucian sects, she went into seclusion, and nobody knew what happened to her." Based on Leng Luo's tone, it was clear he admired an expert like her.

Mingshi Yin said, "Well, we can ask her about what happened when she comes, right?"

"She's coming here?" Leng Luo was clearly shocked.

"Yes, she wants to stand up for the Zhencang Branch's Master, Feng Qinghe," Mingshi Yin replied.

If this were in the past, Leng Luo would have been worried on the pavilion master's behalf when he heard Zuo Yushu was planning to come to fight for Feng Qinghe. However, now that he had discovered the pavilion master was a Nine-leaf elite, how could Zuo Yushu possibly be a match for the pavilion master? Therefore, he said, "She overestimates her own capabilities."

Lu Zhou stroked his beard and said, "Let's leave this matter aside for now. Why did you come here, Elder Leng?"

Leng Luo bowed and said, "I'm here to ask about the method to attain the Nine-leaf stage, Pavilion Master."

“ ... ”

The time had finally come. Lu Zhou had thought about this before. He asked, “You want to attain the Nine-leaf stage?”

Leng Luo said, “The door is already before me. If I don’t open it and take a peek, it’ll surely be one of the biggest regrets of my life.” There was no reason for an Eight-leaf cultivator to not attempt to reach the Nine-leaf stage.

Lu Zhou stroked his beard and said, “Currently, there are two methods to attain the Nine-leaf stage that are spreading in the cultivation world. One is to sever your Golden Lotus and sprout leaves again. This is doable.”

Leng Luo looked at Lu Zhou.

Mingshi Yin had a shocked expression on his face. When he was fishing for information outside previously, he had learned that many cultivators who severed their Golden Lotuses managed to survive. However, he had never heard of anyone being able to sprout leaves after severing their Golden Lotuses. If it was truly possible to sprout leaves again, it would bring a revolutionary change to the way people cultivated in the future. Why was his master so sure of this?

Lu Zhou continued to say, “The second way is to choose not to form a Golden Lotus upon entering the Nascent Divinity Tribulation realm. Both methods are viable cultivation paths that lead to the Nine-leaf stage. Those who aren’t at the Nascent Divinity stage can choose the first or second method. Those who are already in the Nascent Divinity realm can only choose the first method.”

Leng Luo asked, puzzled, “Did you choose the first method, Pavilion Master?” He wondered when the pavilion master severed his Golden Lotus, and how he managed to sprout all nine leaves in record time?

“I chose neither,” Lu Zhou said with a straight face.

Leng Luo and Mingshi Yin were perplexed. However, they did not dare to ask any more questions.

Lu Zhou continued to say, “Since all of you possess Golden Lotuses already, you can only choose the first method.”

Leng Luo was shocked. It seemed like severing his Golden Lotus was the only option available to him. However, the problem was making sure he survived the ordeal. He bowed and earnestly said, “Kindly advise me, Pavilion Master.”

In all sects, it was taboo to inquire about advanced cultivation methods or the secret arts like what Leng Luo was currently doing. Moreover, this was about the Nine-leaf stage that everyone desperately wanted to attain. Leng Luo knew very well about this unspoken rule. Therefore, he was cautious with his words. He added, “I do not covet nor have any designs on your position or power. If you’re unwilling to reveal the way, Pavilion Master, I’ll no longer speak about it.”

Lu Zhou calmly said, “It’s nothing. Severing the Golden Lotus is only the beginning... I believe there’ll be a more complete method in the near future.”

Leng Luo and Mingshi Yin felt invigorated when they heard Lu Zhou’s words.

Mingshi Yin said, "In that case, I should sever my Golden Lotus right away. It'd be such a waste to wait until I'm at the Eight-leaf stage to sever it." Severing his Golden Lotus when he was at the Eight-leaf stage and sprouting a leaf again was no different from him severing it while he was at the Four-leaf stage. Why should he not sever his Golden Lotus now?

Lu Zhou shook his head and said, "That might not be the case. Those who are capable of attaining the Eight-leaf stage possess greater control over their cultivation base and technique. They're more experienced as well. That'll work in their favor when they sprout leaves, probably at a much quicker pace compared to others. In fact, the elites might have other benefits as well after sprouting leaves again."

"I'm enlightened," Leng Luo said.

"Thank you for your teachings, master."

"Ding! Instructed Mingshi Yin. Reward: 500 merit points."

Lu Zhou was not surprised to hear this notification. Teaching the Old Age Pavilion was his way of preparing for the future. After all, his true strength at the moment was only in the One-leaf Nascent Divinity Tribulation realm. With the advent of the Golden Lotus-severing era, there would surely be ripples across the cultivation world. There were also Other Tribesmen who eyed Great Yan like a prey. The Evil Sky Pavilion had to be strong enough.

In truth, Lu Zhou knew a third method to attain the Nine-leaf stage and that was to attain it through the conventional way. However, that would take too much of a person's life. It was also not completely verified and was not suitable for the others in the Evil Sky Pavilion. Hence, there was no need to explain this to them. "If there's nothing else, we'll leave it at that."

"I'll take my leave," Leng Luo said.

"I'll take my leave as well, master," Mingshi Yin said.

After the duo left, Lu Zhou returned to his room and continued to meditate on the Heavenly Writing scrolls. Without any Peak Trial Cards on hand, he could only rely on the Heavenly Writing scrolls now.

Before he meditated, Lu Zhou checked his remaining merit points on the dashboard. He had 2,300 points left. Was there a point in saving them?

"Lucky draw."

"Ding! Spent 50 merit points and 20 luck points. Obtained: Disguise Card x 5."

"Disguise Card: You can use this card to disguise your avatar as a Nine-leaf avatar. Lasts for 10 seconds."

The appearance of a new card was a welcome surprise. However, when Lu Zhou read the Disguise Card's description, he found that it was quite useless. Was the system encouraging him to deceive others?

"Well, it's better than nothing."

"Lucky draw."

"Ding! Spent 50 merit points. Obtained Reversal Card x 10."

'I'm lucky today. Could it be that my luck has improved since I just entered the Nascent Divinity Tribulation realm?'

"Lucky draw."

"Ding! Spent 50 merit points. Thank you for your participation."

"..." Lu Zhou continued to try his luck. He spent all his remaining merit points on lucky draws and no longer got any prize. Currently, he had 44 luck points.

He did not have many merit points to begin with. Now that they were all spent, he would not spare any thought on them.

Lu Zhou checked the item column after the lucky draws. The item cards now cost 500 points more. This much was expected. However, there was a new addition to the choices on sale. Disguise Card: 10,000 merit points.

"..." Rubbish among rubbish.

Lu Zhou firmly believed that the system's logic was flawed. The Deadly Strike Card merely cost 4,000 merit points. Who would spend 10,000 merit points to purchase a Disguise Card just to fool another person? Unless, of course, the buyer himself was a fool!

He looked at the avatar column.

Thousand Boundary Swirl: 500,000 merit points. (Note: Nine-leaf avatar required for purchase. This avatar can also be obtained through cultivation.)

Golden Lotus Leaf: 50,000 merit points. (Note: Only applicable for the Eight-leaf stage and below. Leaves can be sprouted through cultivation. One leaf added with each use.)

"..."

Chapter 453: Si Wuya's Aim

'Hold it in. Don't get angry.' Lu Zhou took a deep breath and felt much calmer. Perhaps, it had been some time since he had transmigrated here. In the beginning, he had to assume Ji Tiandao's identity and act like him to protect himself. However, as time went by, he discovered he was being affected by Ji Tiandao's memory.

He looked at the prices on the menu. There was nothing he could afford to buy at the moment, hence, he resumed meditating on the Heavenly Writing scrolls.

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Next morning.

Lu Zhou went out of the eastern pavilion, as he always did, to move his body.

"Master, master, master..." Little Yuan'er called out as she ran over.

Lu Zhou scowled slightly and said, "Do you think that I have a hearing problem?"

“Uh... I’d never...” Little Yuan’er lowered her head obediently.

“What is it?” Lu Zhou inquired. He placed his hands on his back, and his expression was blank as always.

“Seventh Senior Brother wants to see you... He says that he has some things he wants to talk to you about,” Little Yuan’er said immediately.

‘That rascal didn’t change. After suffering so much, he’s finally willing to open up and reveal what he knows?’

The smarter the person, the more arrogant he was. If one wanted to make an intelligent submit, one would have to defeat him in his area of expertise. Lu Zhou was, naturally, aware of this. ‘I’d like to know what information he has for me.’

“Bring him here.”

“Yes, master.” Little Yuan’er turned around and went to the Cave of Reflection.

Shortly after, Little Yuan’er brought Si Wuya to the eastern pavilion.

When Si Wuya arrived at the eastern pavilion, he saw his master standing at the top of the steps with a calm expression on his face. He bowed immediately before he fell to his knees. “This unfilial rascal, Si Wuya, offers his greetings.”

Lu Zhou watched him kneel and said, “Rise to your feet and speak.”

“Thank you, master.”

When Si Wuya stood up, Lu Zhou noticed that Si Wuya did not seem to be in a good state. Si Wuya was paler than normal, his hair was disheveled, and the dark circles around his eyes were prominent. ‘Is this rascal still obsessed over the mathematical questions?’ Finally, he asked, “You can’t solve those problems?”

“I’m ashamed... I... I didn’t expect them to be so profound.” Indeed, Si Wuya felt embarrassed.

Lu Zhou thought to himself, ‘I’d be surprised if you could answer them.’ In the end, he only said, “What business do you have with me? Have you finally thought things through?”

Si Wuya lifted his robes ceremoniously and kneeled again. He did not answer right away. Instead, he kowtowed loudly three times to Lu Zhou. Then, he replied, “I have.”

Lu Zhou glanced outside the eastern pavilion and said, “Inside.”

There were many things that should not reach the ears of the others.

Lu Zhou turned around and entered his room. Si Wuya got to his feet and followed suit.

Little Yuan’er bowed and said with a giggle, “I’ll keep watch, master. I won’t let anyone disturb you.”

...

Inside the room.

Everything was normal.

Si Wuya saw the words on the wall again. 'The bright moon shines over the sea; from far away we share this moment together'.

He scowled. Those words made him feel uneasy. The words nearly penetrated the paper. Clearly, they had been written with a forceful hand. Without consistent practice over the course of eight to ten years, the writer could not have achieved this. However, this was not the time to be paying attention to that.

Lu Zhou sat down on the main chair and stroked his beard as he patiently waited for Si Wuya to speak up. 'You're the one who came looking for me. I have nothing much to say to you.'

Si Wuya kneeled again and said, "Congratulations on attaining the Nine-leaf stage, Master."

Lu Zhou frowned slightly as he stared at Si Wuya. "Is that all?" In other words, he had expected Si Wuya to speak about something else.

Si Wuya prostrated himself and could not help but speak with a shaky voice, "I... I can explain!"

'Sure, you can f*cking explain.' Lu Zhou would have loved to leap into rage and openly curse Si Wuya. However, since he was Si Wuya's master, he needed to maintain his composure. He continued staring at Si Wuya silently for a moment before he said, "Let's hear it."

Si Wuya straightened his back and said, "Do you remember why Second Senior Brother chose to leave?"

"Because I wanted to kill him?" Lu Zhou remembered how Yu Shangrong answered this question. "Was I going to kill you too?"

Si Wuya shook his head and said, "You weren't."

'Then what's your f*cking explanation?!' Lu Zhou was still looking at Si Wuya with a composed expression despite his internal monologue.

Si Wuya said with a trembling voice, "You wanted to kill Second Senior Brother and Eldest Senior Brother..."

Lu Zhou frowned, but something stirred within him.

"Why did I want to kill them?"

Si Wuya knew this part of his master's memories was sealed inside the crystal. Hence, he said, "You wanted longevity and to attain the Nine-leaf stage."

This answer was exactly the same as what Yu Shangrong had alluded to. This proved Si Wuya was not lying.

"Can I gain longevity by killing them?" Lu Zhou's expression was stern. This was not a joke after all. It was a shame that he could not locate the memory crystal. Otherwise, he would not have to rely on others for answers.

Si Wuya glanced at the Four Treasures of the study on the table.

Lu Zhou understood what he meant. He waved his hand and gestured for him to help himself.

Si Wuya stood up, walked over to the table, picked up the brush, and listed the cultivation techniques of the Evil Sky Pavilion disciples on the paper.

Ci Yuan'er, Supreme Purity Jade Slip.

Si Wuya, Great Compassion Poem.

Zhao Yue, Brilliant Jade Technique.

Mingshi Yin, Bluewood Technique.

Duanmu Sheng, Divine One Technique.

Si Wuya placed the brush on the table after he finished writing. He lifted the paper and said, "All these cultivation methods are related to longevity."

The Supreme Purity Jade Slip could grant longevity, the Great Compassion Poem could reverse Yin and Yang, the Brilliant Jade Technique could preserve youth, the Bluewood Technique was like the evergreen trees, and the Divine One Technique could grant life as long as the heavens and the earth.

The descriptions of the cultivation methods were slightly exaggerated, to begin with. For example, 'longevity and life as long as the heavens and the earth'.

Lu Zhou understood the effects of these cultivation methods better than anyone else. When they were listed in this manner, it became clear. However, a thought appeared in his mind. He frowned. 'Is it possible that Ji Tiandao selected his disciples to gain longevity in life?'

What about the rest of his disciples?

Si Wuya continued, "Sixth Senior Sister Ye Tianxin is a fairfolk. The books have written that the fairfolk has Cheng Huang, which is able to grant the rider 2,000 years of life. Second Senior Brother Yu Shangrong, a Nobleman, has a short lifespan." Then, he placed the paper on the table.

"Old Eighth's Nine Tribulations Thunderblast. With every progressive tribulation he overcomes, his insides will burn, and he would lose 50 years of life." At this moment, Si Wuya's voice had turned incredibly soft. Then, he kneeled on the ground and cupped his fists at Lu Zhou. After that, he no longer spoke.

Realization dawned on Lu Zhou at this moment. If he still could not understand, he would have lived for so long in vain.

He chuckled and sneered at Si Wuya as he said, "You're saying that I'm treating all of you as experiments so that I can prolong my life and attain the Nine-leaf stage?"

Si Wuya prostrated himself, flattened his palms on the floor, and touched the back of his hands with his forehead. This was equivalent to him confirming Lu Zhou's words.

Lu Zhou's expression was indifferent, but his heart skipped a beat. Well, technically, that was all Ji Tiandao's doing. Whether it was about shortening or extending his life, this was all part of the effort to understand longevity. So this must also be the reason Si Wuya persuaded Zhu Honggong to run away from the Evil Sky Pavilion as well.

"Is this what Yu Zhenghai thinks as well?" Lu Zhou asked.

"I've promised Eldest Senior Brother that I won't reveal his secrets. Do forgive me, master," Si Wuya replied.

"So you're saying I've treated all of you horrendously?" Lu Zhou asked. He, naturally, did not believe everything Si Wuya said. If it was true, why were all the rascals still alive? Things were much more complicated than he had imagined.

"I dare not!" Si Wuya remained prostrate on the floor.

"I'll ask you again. Why did you leave the Evil Sky Pavilion?" Lu Zhou's voice was stern and laced with warning. His instinct told him Si Wuya was withholding information.

Chapter 454: Cage of Heaven and Earth

Lu Zhou's voice carried with it an immense pressure. It sounded even more majestic and imposing indoors.

Si Wuya shuddered. He still lay prostrated on the ground, unmoving. He had answered this question during their last conversation. At that time, he had said that he wanted to help his Eldest Senior Brother conquer the world and learn the Imperial family's secrets. Clearly, his answer was not convincing enough.

The atmosphere in the room was stifling now. The silence and tension were palpable.

Lu Zhou was in no hurry as he looked at Si Wuya intently.

Sunlight shone into the room and from the balcony and illuminated the place.

After what seemed like hours, Si Wuya finally opened his mouth to speak. However, he found that no words escaped his mouth. His mouth was dry, and he could not make a sound. He swallowed hard before he said, "Before I learned it's possible to attain the Nine-leaf stage, I had thought the so-called great limit is nothing but a tool used by the Imperial family to control the hearts of men. That's why I entered the palace and took on the position of Grand Tutor. Master..." At this point, he lowered his voice and asked, "Do you remember Emperor Yong Shou?"

Lu Zhou did not reply. Emperor Yong Shou was an old acquaintance of his. However, the emperor lived in the highest place in the palace while he dwelled in the pugilistic world.

Si Wuya continued to say, "The inner warehouse was single-handedly built by Emperor Yong Shou... Only the Emperor himself or those who wield the Imperial token could enter. When Yong Shou was still sitting on the throne, he studied the Nine-leaf stage. After his passing, the key to the inner warehouse was lost. Many secrets and objects are buried in the warehouse. Since then, I had been thinking... If the truth is the truth, why is the Imperial family so keen on studying it? Are they trying to defy the truth and the order of nature? The Nine-leaf stage is clearly non-existent, why was it written in the history books? The victor dictates the narrative of history. What are they hiding?"

"..." Lu Zhou's brows creased as he listened to Si Wuya's thoughts. 'This rascal is born for research.'

Si Wuya did not seem like he had reached his main point. He kowtowed again and said, "After all these years, I have painstakingly founded the Darknet and spread its reaches all over Great Yan. I've been investigating from the shadows... That was when I found out that you were not the only one seeking the secrets of the Nine-leaf stage. Yun Tianluo, Gong Yuandu, the King of Mobei, the Other Tribesman's monarch of Lou Lan, the patriarchs of the major sects... They're all researching this... The funny thing is..." Although there was nothing funny, perhaps, it was his habit to use the word funny. It was too late to retract his words. He paused for a moment before he soldiered on. "All of them ended in failure..."

Lu Zhou's expression remained unchanged. He looked at Si Wuya and tonelessly asked, "And?"

Si Wuya's expression turned grave as he said, "I've been thinking about a problem... The Golden Lotus absorbs power, be it Primal Qi or lifespan... If so, where do the powers go?" After he finished speaking, he continued to prostrate himself on the ground and remained silent.

Something stirred within Lu Zhou. If it had been anybody else, or if Ji Tiandao himself were to hear Si Wuya's words, Si Wuya would have been slapped for spouting nonsense and accused of cloud the people's minds.

However, Lu Zhou was a modern man. Although Si Wuya's words surprised Lu Zhou, it was not difficult for him to accept them. It was, indeed, a question worthy of deep thoughts.

The cultivation world had been around for 30,000 years. Ever since the dawn of man's cultivation, countless Eight-leaf predecessors fell before the doors of the Nine-leaf stage. How many were buried under the Nine-leaf stage?

Lu Zhou suddenly remembered something the Second Prince, Liu Huan, had said during the battle at the Obedient Villa. 'If you're intelligent enough, one day, you'll realize that the entire world is nothing but a cage fortified by the cycle of the heavenly ways.'

In Yun Tianluo's memories inside the chessboard, Lu Zhou merely saw the secret of the Golden Lotus. Yet, he did not pursue the matter further. It was just as Si Wuya had said, where did the powers absorbed by Golden Lotuses go? Did it return to the world?!

Lu Zhou said calmly, "Heaven and earth form the cage while the Golden Lotus is the lock."

Si Wuya, still prostrated, hastily said, "Those are only my guesses... Kindly look into this, master!"

"What do you think about my Nine-leaf stage?" Lu Zhou asked.

"Uh..." Si Wuya was at a loss for words. If the Cage of Heaven and Earth was true, how did his master reach the Nine-leaf stage?

Seeing Si Wuya at a loss for words, Lu Zhou said, "Severing the Golden Lotus is akin to getting rid of the shackle... If what you say is true, we'll still be restricted by the cage of the heavenly ways even if we attain the Nine-leaf stage."

"If I may be so bold, when did you attain the Nine-leaf stage, master?" Si Wuya asked while keeping his head lowered. He did not think his master had severed his Golden Lotus. If his master severed his Golden Lotus and formed it again, would his master not be shackled by it again?

"Impudent!"

Lu Zhou's shout startled Si Wuya and made him tremble.

'Are you kidding me? As if I'll tell you the secret to my nine leaves.'

No master, regardless of the sect, would easily give up their greatest secret. This little rascal was bold enough to ask about it. He must have a death wish!

"I was wrong!" Si Wuya said at once.

Lu Zhou glanced at Si Wuya. Although he was slightly pleased by Si Wuya's performance today, he could see Si Wuya's loyalty did not increase much. After a moment of silence, he said, "It's far from enough to deduce that there's a cage of heaven and earth with just these points."

"May I borrow a brush and some ink?" Si Wuya walked up to the table again. He picked up the brush and wrote...

A rustling sound resonated in the air.

After a moment, Si Wuya had completed drawing a map on the paper.

Lu Zhou looked at it. This map was different from the old parchment drawing resting on the table behind the screen. It was crudely drawn, but it had the basic outline of the places around Great Yan.

After completing his drawing, Si Wuya said, "This is Great Yan. The Endless Ocean is to the east. Rongxi lies in the west, and in the north, Rongbei, where the Ten Thousand Other Tribes dwell... This is Blackwood Forest, Misty Forest, and Heaven Moat Forest. With the Heaven Moat itself..."

Si Wuya's artistic skills definitely had room for improvement. However, his thoughts were surprisingly shocking. His strokes were crude, but that did not stop him from outlining the overall structure. It was simple and easy to understand.

After seeing this, Lu Zhou frowned. "A Formation?" However, he quickly dismissed the idea. The Formation was so huge that it would not work, not even if all the cultivators in the world gathered.

Flying from the Divine Capital to Mobei would take several months, at least. Flying from Golden Court Mountain to Blackwood Forest required about a month's flight as well, and then, there was the region of the Other Tribes.

The Endless Ocean; nobody dared to venture there. As the name suggested, there was no end to it.

"It's a Formation, or perhaps, it's a naturally-formed cage. These are merely my guesses... This is all I know" Si Wuya said in a deep voice.

Lu Zhou looked at Si Wuya again. He recalled how Si Wuya was like when he was young. Si Wuya was curious and always had to get to the bottom of things. He had to understand everything. It seemed like Si Wuya did not change in that regard.

There was no shortage of intelligent people in the world, but they seemed to share a common flaw. They all believed they were infallible. Si Wuya was no exception to this.

Lu Zhou looked at Si Wuya and said, "Unfortunately... these guesses aren't correct."

“...” Si Wuya widened his eyes and looked at the floor in shock. ‘Master knows!’ His heart began to race in his chest.

Lu Zhou placed his wizened and big hand on the area of Blackwood Forest and said, “Pan Litian visited Blackwood Forest before. A great fire lasted for 49 days. If heaven and earth were a cage, this great fire would have damaged Blackwood Forest, and the Formation of the lands would be ruined.” Then, he asked, “You’ve only drawn what you know... Do you know what lies beyond the realm of the Other Tribes?”

Si Wuya remained silent. Incorrect judgments were often made when they were based upon incomplete information.

The room was plunged into silence once more.

In truth, even if Lu Zhou did not point all these out, Si Wuya would have been able to figure it out sooner or later.

Chapter 455: The Mystery Behind Yu Zhenghai’s Death

“Si Wuya,” Lu Zhou suddenly called out.

Si Wuya’s heart skipped a beat as he was pulled back from his thoughts.

“You want to explore the mysteries of the world... and I won’t say anything about that. As for what you’ve said, I’ll make a decision after I find the memory crystal.” Lu Zhou was effectively telling Si Wuya that even if he tried to cover his narration with heavenly flowers, he, as the master, would not easily believe him. If his memory crystal could provide answers, it was imperative that he find it. However, the realm of the Other Tribes in Rongxi and Rongbei was vast. How was he supposed to find it? This was, indeed, a difficult problem.

Si Wuya seemed delighted at Lu Zhou’s response. He did not mind that his master did not believe him. At the very least, his master did not blame him. As for the crystal, all he had to do was to think of a way to find it. Nobody knew the answer anyway. Whether it was the method of severing the Golden Lotus or sprouting leaves without a Golden Lotus, the appearance of a Nine-leaf cultivator would eventually usher in a new era in this world!

Lu Zhou was still thinking about what else to say when two voices rang from outside.

“Greetings, master!”

“Greetings, master!”

One voice was louder than the other. They sounded as if they were straining their voices to see who could speak louder.

Little Yuan’er placed her hands on her hips and said, “Eighth Senior Brother, it’s useless for you to shout. You can’t go in!”

“Little Junior Sister, let me in, and I’ll treat you to something delicious in the future. Come on...”

“No!” Little Yuan’er mercilessly rejected Zhu Honggong.

“...”

The bickering outside made Lu Zhou frown. He waved his hand and opened the door with his energy. Then, he projected his voice, “Let him in.”

Little Yuan’er pulled a face at Zhu Honggong before stepping aside.

Zhu Honggong chuckled and said, “You’re the best, Little Junior Sister. It’d be even better if you smile more often.” Then, he sprinted into the eastern pavilion at once.

Little Yuan’er scoffed. Then, she flew onto a beam outside the eastern pavilion. She sat between the characters of ‘eastern pavilion’ and saw Pan Zhong and Zhou Jifeng approaching as well. She smiled and said, “Hey there, want to come in?”

“Huh? No, we’re leaving! We’re leaving right now...” Pan Zhong pulled Zhou Jifeng and headed in a different direction.

‘Let’s go. She’s trying to use reverse psychology on us. We can’t fall for it!’

The two of them vanished in no time at all.

Little Yuan’er touched her face and pouted as she muttered, “I smiled...”

Meanwhile, Zhu Honggong walked in and fell on his knees before he kowtowed. “Please forgive Seventh Senior Brother, master!” He was here to plead on Si Wuya’s behalf. He had no other intentions or schemes.

Lu Zhou looked at Zhu Honggong and asked, “You’re pleading on his behalf?”

“Master, Seventh Senior Brother isn’t the kind of person you think he is!” Zhu Honggong emboldened himself and explained. “If it weren’t for Seventh Senior Brother, Eldest Senior Brother would’ve died a long time ago. Even Second Senior Brother would’ve difficulty staying alive! Master... Seventh Senior Brother really isn’t the kind of person you think he is!”

Upon hearing this, Lu Zhou frowned slightly.

Before Lu Zhou could say anything, Si Wuya stood up and said, “It’s meaningless to mention those things. Old Eighth, that’s enough.”

“Wait,” Lu Zhou said in a deep voice. Then, he looked at Zhu Honggong and said, “Old Eighth, continue.”

Zhu Honggong’s expression was grim as he said, “Seventh Senior Brother went to beg the old monk from the Heaven Choice Temple to save my life. He kneeled there for three days before the old monk gave him the zen tunic! When I returned to the Evil Sky Pavilion, I decided to help Seventh Senior Brother even if it meant putting my own life on the line... You can choose to punish me, master, but I can’t turn against the person who helped me!”

“Second Senior Brother has a short life to begin with. Seventh Senior Brother was the one who scoured Great Yan to gather the runes and inscribe them on the Longevity Sword. As for Eldest Senior Brother...”

Zhu Honggong had barely started talking about Yu Zhenghai when Si Wuya sternly said, “Shut up.”

Zhu Honggong was so shocked that he fell silent immediately.

Lu Zhou suddenly waved his palm and sent out a hand seal!

Smack!

It struck Si Wuya on the cheek.

Lu Zhou's gaze was pointed as he asked, "Do you think you're great? Do you think you can carry everything on your shoulders? Do you want to be the hero? Fine, I can grant you your wish!" Then, he pushed his palm out.

Si Wuya shuddered as he saw a huge hand seal flying toward him. Yet, he was powerless to resist. He did not dodge. Instead, he chose to close his eyes. 'Just as well. It's over now.'

Bam!

Si Wuya was baffled. He did not feel any pain. Fear lingered in his heart as he opened his eyes. He discovered his body was uninjured as well. However, he noticed the remnants of a shattered chair around him.

Lu Zhou retracted his palm and said, "Zhu Honggong."

Zhu Honggong glanced at Si Wuya. He emboldened himself again and said, "Seventh Senior Brother, I don't understand. What's there to be so secretive about? It's the truth that Eldest Senior Brother had died once! It's also the truth that you've saved him!"

"He died once?" Lu Zhou was puzzled. How could a dead man be revived?

At this moment, Mingshi Yin showed up outside the eastern pavilion.

Little Yuan'er jumped down from her perch on the beam.

Mingshi Yin merely patted her head. She did not bar his way into the hall. As he entered the hall, he said, "It's true that Eldest Senior Brother has died once, and it's also true that Seventh Junior Brother saved his life. Master... You ordered me to investigate the Darknet, and I did... I stumbled across Seventh Junior Brother's personal log. In it, the date of Eldest Senior Brother's death was written there!" He produced a simple-looking note from his pocket and presented it to Lu Zhou with both hands.

When he saw the piece of paper, Si Wuya furrowed his brows as he regarded Mingshi Yin with shock.

Lu Zhou took the piece of paper. The entries read:

"Great Yan Yong Qing, Year 154, March 24th. Eldest Senior Brother died."

"Great Yan Yong Qing, Year 154, March 28th. Poured water on him. Eldest Senior Brother remains lifeless."

"Great Yan Yong Qing, Year 154, April 4th. Poured water on him."

"Great Yan Yong Qing, Year 154, May 2nd. Poured water on him. Eldest Senior Brother came back to life."

Upon seeing Lu Zhou's solemn and grim expression, Mingshi Yin fell to his knees as he said, "I was wrong to not present the personally log right away!"

Zhu Honggong prostrated himself and dared not move.

Si Wuya kneeled with a blank expression on his face.

The dates and the procedure on the personal log were recorded with much details. No matter how cunning Si Wuya was, he could not have possibly prepared this in advance to fool others.

Lu Zhou's heart skipped a beat when he saw the words 'came back to life'. He did not know if he was happy or sad. In fact, he did not know how he should feel or what he should think. He was an outsider, to begin with. He should have been indifferent to all these things. He should not feel pity for the rascal. As a transmigrator, he should be cold and heartless. The world was too huge and the hearts of men were too evil. He could very well lose his head if he was not careful. From the moment he transmigrated here, he knew he could not be soft-hearted. It was not easy to find one's footing in a dog-eat-dog world.

The Evil Sky Pavilion had suffered much since its founding. Even Ji Tiandao, and Lu Zhou, had no choice but to resolutely continue down this path.

There was no need to ask any more questions. It was better to wait for Yu Zhenghai to personally speak about this than to question these disciples in front of him.

Lu Zhou could not lose his composure, and he would not lose his composure.

Mingshi Yin said, "I have another report. A Confucian sect elite, Zuo Yushu, wishes to meet you."

Lu Zhou acted as though he did not hear Mingshi Yin's words. He frowned deeply, his expression indicated that he was deep in thought. Occasionally, his eyes would brighten.

A moment later, Mingshi Yin repeated his words, "Master, a Confucian sect elite, Zuo Yushu, wishes to meet you."

"Send her away."

Chapter 456: The Heroine of Old

Lu Zhou attempted to search for information regarding Yu Zhenghai from his memories. He was also trying to remember anything about the Other Tribes when he visited Rongxi in the past. No matter how he looked at it, his longevity and the Nine-leaf stage were related to his nine disciples.

In the beginning, there were many things that Lu Zhou could not remember. His attempts to kill his disciples, the Heavenly Writing scrolls, attempting the Nine-leaf stage... he thought they were mere coincidences. In hindsight, he could see now that they were more than coincidences. Ji Tiandao clearly sealed his memories about the Nine-leaf stage and his longevity in the crystal. Why would he do that?

Mingshi Yin could tell that his master was lost in thought so he did not dare to disturb his master. He looked at Si Wuya and Zhu Honggong meaningfully before he said, "I'll take my leave now, master."

Zhu Honggong and Si Wuya had no choice but to cup their fists and said in unison, "I'll take my leave, master."

The three of them exited the room respectfully.

Even after the three disciples left, Lu Zhou was still lost in his thoughts.

...

When the three disciples stepped out, Little Yuan'er leaped down from the beam. She giggled before she said, "Hello, senior brothers!"

"Hello, Little Junior Sister."

Mingshi Yin looked at Si Wuya and said, "Old Seventh, you'd do well not to flaunt your shallow intelligence and petty schemes before master. I can help you this once, but I can't help you forever."

Si Wuya asked, somewhat ungratefully, "That's your way of helping me?"

"I thought you pride yourself on being smart. Master has already attained the Nine-leaf stage, why would he care about Eldest Senior Brother? You're dreaming if you think he cares," Mingshi Yin said mockingly.

"I..."

Mingshi Yin did not give Si Wuya a chance to speak as he continued to say, "That's enough. Master may be easily convinced, but that doesn't mean that I'm convinced. Great Yan's Imperial family has challenged the Evil Sky Pavilion numerous times. Do you think master isn't annoyed? If Eldest Senior Brother wishes to fight the Imperial family, it's just as well. He'll be doing the Evil Sky Pavilion a favor. I believe that master won't trouble Eldest Senior Brother for some time."

Si Wuya nodded when he heard Mingshi Yin's words. The atmosphere was too heavy back then, and it had clouded his thoughts. Now that he heard Mingshi Yin's words, he knew Mingshi Yin was right. Therefore, he cupped his fists and said, "Thank you, Fourth Senior Brother."

"You're welcome," Mingshi Yin said.

As soon as Mingshi Yin finished speaking, two wails rang from the middle of the mountain.

"Ow... Easy! The Evil Sky Pavilion isn't a place where you can act as you please... You wretched old lady! You'll regret this!"

"Ahh!" The cries sounded wretched.

Mingshi Yin shook his head and said, "What do we do now? She has forced her way in."

Si Wuya said, "Leave this to me." He turned around and walked down the mountain.

Little Yuan'er, Zhu Honggong, and Mingshi Yin followed him.

From above, an old woman could be seen supporting herself using a cane as she casually made her way up the steps. Meanwhile, Pan Zhong and Zhou Jifeng, with their swollen and bruised faces, kept retreating.

Si Wuya frowned slightly. He remembered Mingshi Yin's words earlier and asked, "This is the Confucian sect elite, Zuo Yushu?"

"That's her." Mingshi Yin spread his hands in a show of helplessness. "This old woman came all the way here using the side path. She should've gone to the nearby town and ask around. You should be cautious. She doesn't believe in the existence of a Nine-leaf cultivator."

"..." Si Wuya initially intended to intimidate the old woman by mentioning a Nine-leaf cultivator. Who knew he would run into an eccentric and stubborn old woman?

Zuo Yushu spent most of her days deep in the valley. She barely interacted with people. When she decided to leave the valley, it was only natural for her to avoid the crowded places. She would never deign to ask the townspeople about the Nine-leaf cultivator.

Shortly after, two more cries resonated in the air.

Then, Pan Zhong and Zhou Jifeng ran up to Si Wuya.

"M-mister Seventh! Quick, st-stop her!"

Although Si Wuya seemed slightly worse for wear with his dark circles and sickly, exhausted appearance, when he straightened his back and his composure returned to him, he looked somewhat dependable.

Thud! Thud! Thud!

The old woman with a stooped posture, Zuo Yushu, finally arrived at the top of the stairs. She looked at the people in front of her before her eyes finally landed on Mingshi Yin whom she was familiar with. She said, "We meet again, young man."

"Uh... Hello, old senior!" Mingshi Yin said unnaturally. He thought old people's visions and memories would worsen, and yet, she remembered him.

Si Wuya said, "Hello, Senior Zuo."

"And who are you?"

"The Evil Sky Pavilion's seventh disciple, Si Wuya," Si Wuya answered honestly.

Zuo Yushu chuckled and said, "I've overestimated his standards. An invalid, an airhead, a fatso... and a dimwit who wanders around. I see he's not picky about the disciples he accepts."

Zhu Honggong and Little Yuan'er were baffled. 'What's with her? And what's with the sudden insult?'

Si Wuya did not seem to take offense. He said, "You wish to meet our master, Senior Zuo?"

Zuo Yushu pointed at Mingshi Yin with her walking stick. "Didn't he tell you the reason I'm here?"

Mingshi Yin said, "Senior, you know the reason behind Feng Qinghe's death. Why must you do this?"

Upon hearing this, Si Wuya could guess what this was about. He said with a smile, "You intend to avenge Feng Qinghe, Senior Zuo?"

"All I want is an explanation. I've promised Feng Qinghe that I'll kill anyone who wanders into the valley without holding back. I spared this young man here on account of your master, but he should give me a proper explanation, don't you think so?" Zuo Yushu said.

Si Wuya nodded. "Why don't I give you an explanation?"

"You?" A contemptuous and disapproving expression appeared on Zuo Yushu's face. She was clearly irritated by Si Wuya's casual attitude.

Si Wuya did not seem intimidated. He said indifferently, "Feng Qinghe, the Master of the Zhencang Branch, colluded with the six great sects and secretly incited the ten elders of the Yun Sect to launch a coordinated attack on the Evil Sky Pavilion. Are you satisfied with this explanation, Senior Zuo?"

Zuo Yushu furrowed her brows slightly. She studied Si Wuya for a moment before she knocked her walking stick on the ground.

Bam!

Web-like cracks spread across the limestone floor. The cracks lit up...

"Script seals?" Mingshi Yin took two steps backward. These runes were the same as the ones inscribed on the plum blossom stumps.

Everyone, apart from Si Wuya, retreated. "You intend on bullying your juniors, senior?"

The glow from the cracks dimmed.

Zuo Yushu said, "I have nothing to say to you. Tell your master to come out..."

"My master is unwell... We'd appreciate your understanding," Si Wuya said.

"I don't think you're giving me enough respect."

"No, no, no..." Si Wuya waved his hand and said, "That's the truth."

"Hm?" Zuo Yushu's expression stiffened. She raised her walking stick. Script seals appeared on her walking stick as well. "Young man, since your master didn't properly educate you in manners, I'll discipline you on his behalf."

Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh!

The script seals shot out from the walking stick and sailed toward Si Wuya.

Si Wuya reached behind him and grabbed Zhu Honggong.

Zhu Honggong, who was suddenly and unceremoniously used as a shield, yelped.

Bam! Bam! Bam!

The script seals landed on Zhu Honggong's chest. He rubbed his chest and said in an aggrieved tone, "Ow! Seventh Senior Brother, what're you doing?"

Zuo Yushu looked at Zhu Honggong in shock and she exclaimed in shock, "You're unharmed?"

Si Wuya only said, "The Confucian sect's Expansive Heavenly Energy is powerful indeed..."

Zuo Yushu could sense the sarcasm in Si Wuya's words. She tightened her grip on the walking stick with her wrinkled hand.

Bam!

She pounded the stick on the limestone floor again as the Primal Qi around her surged. Script seals appeared and spun within ten meters of her.

The others retreated.

Si Wuya was about to say something when a deep voice reached them from afar. "Enough."

Everyone looked toward the source of the voice.

A refined and calm Lu Zhou dressed in long robes appeared before everyone's sight.

"Greetings, master!"

"Greetings, pavilion master!"

Zuo Yushu looked up and saw the old man who was slowly making his way toward them. Apart from shock, a hint of reverence and fear could be seen in the depths of her eyes as well.

Chapter 457: I'll Never Believe You, You Wretched Old Man!

Lu Zhou walked over with his hands on his back. He descended the stairs and stepped on the limestone plaza. He walked past the cracks on the floor.

The others instinctively parted to the sides to make way for him.

Zuo Yushu loosened her grip, and the walking stick fell away from her. As a result, the script seals faded away immediately. She curtsied before saying, "At last, we meet again."

Lu Zhou's expression was as indifferent as usual. When he saw Zuo Yushu's stooping figure, he could not help but sigh inwardly. Some things remained the same, but the people had changed. Time had not been kind to her. So many years had passed in just a blink of an eye. The Confucian sect elite who was once a mighty, rare stone-cold fox in the cultivation world was now a gray-haired old woman. "I see that your temper remains unchanged even after all these years."

"Sorry to disappoint you."

Lu Zhou swept his gaze across his disciples and said, "Well? Greet Senior Zuo."

The other bowed and saluted Zuo Yushu.

Zuo Yushu waved her hand and said, "There's no need." She looked at Lu Zhou and said, "Although I'm from the Confucian sect that's bogged down by rules and protocols, I've never cared much for them."

Lu Zhou nodded. "One doesn't visit a temple without a cause. What brings you here to my place?"

"I'm here to ask for an explanation regarding Feng Qinghe."

"An explanation?"

"Feng Qinghe was the Master of the Zhencang Branch. All these years that I've been living in the valley, the Zhencang Branch has looked after me. Now that something has happened to Feng Qinghe, I can hardly stand aside and do nothing," Zuo Yushu said.

Lu Zhou did not reply immediately. Instead, he walked toward higher grounds nearby.

Zuo Yushu understood Lu Zhou's meaning. She followed him and stood next to him as they looked down at the foot of Golden Court Mountain.

Lu Zhou pointed at the foot of the mountain and said, "There lies the corpses of those from the seven great sects..."

"..." Zuo Yushu was shocked. When she had passed by earlier, she merely felt the ground was uneven and there were many signs of a battle. Not a blade of grass could be seen at all.

"Feng Qinghe should've been among them," Lu Zhou said coldly.

Zuo Yushu asked in disbelief, "So it's true that the seven great sects attacked Golden Court Mountain?"

Lu Zhou sighed and said, "You've been staying in the valley for a long time and are oblivious about the affairs of the outside world. Is it possible that during your journey here you didn't speak to anyone about this?"

"Well..." Well, she truly did not speak to anyone. Otherwise, she would not have arrived here travel-weary and insulting everyone due to her crabby mood. She had roots in the Confucian sect, and reason was held in the highest regard. If reason was on her side, she would travel the world without fear. If it was not, she could hardly take a single step forward.

Lu Zhou rendered Zuo Yushu speechless in just a blink of an eye. It was just as Mingshi Yin had said, it was Feng Qinghe who attacked Golden Court Mountain. In that case, the one who should be demanding an explanation should be the Evil Sky Pavilion, not her.

Lu Zhou's disciples nodded, impressed by their master. The same words, coming from a different person would have a starkly different effect.

Mingshi Yin asked furtively, "Did you notice that Senior Zuo seems humble in front of master?"

"Mhm, yes," Little Yuan'er replied.

"This just shows how awesome our master is," Zhu Honggong said.

"..."

'Flattery is second nature to this dimwit.'

Zuo Yushu was not bothered by the juniors' discussion. Instead, she asked in confusion, "I remember your great limit is close at hand. I didn't expect you to be as spry and majestic as before. How did you defeat your enemies, Brother Ji?"

Under normal circumstances, it would have been impossible to win against the seven great sects. It was clear Zuo Yushu remained doubtful about what she had been told.

Lu Zhou did not withhold any information from her as he calmly said, "To tell you the truth, I'm now at the Nine-leaf stage."

Zuo Yushu's aged eyes widened. The wrinkles on her face twitched as well. Her facial expression changed drastically before it settled on one of disbelief. It was an entertaining sight to watch. 'I'll never believe you, you wretched old man!' She looked at Lu Zhou and said, "Brother Ji, do you think that I'm gullible?"

Lu Zhou did not care if she believed him or not. He glanced at her and said, "If it weren't for old times' sake, the damage you caused to the limestone floor alone would've been enough to earn yourself a death sentence."

"..."

Although Lu Zhou's tone was indifferent, it sent shivers running up everyone's spines. They felt cold as though the temperature in the surroundings had drastically dropped.

Zuo Yushu's old body shivered despite herself. Even a proud daughter of the heavens such as herself would have to lower her pride before Ji Tiandao. She bowed before she asked, "Did Feng Qinghe die in vain, then?"

At this moment, a figure appeared nearby. With a cold voice, he said, "He deserves to die."

The others looked at the newcomer.

It was Leng Luo, who was wearing his silver mask as usual. Speaker. He looked at the stooping Zuo Yushu with his hands on his back.

"It's you?" Zuo Yushu exclaimed in shock.

Leng Luo was not one to care about etiquette. He said, "Zuo Yushu, your only accomplishment is that you rose to fame at a young age. You aren't fit to do as you please at the Evil Sky Pavilion yet."

This statement was valid. Zuo Yushu merely became famous when she was young. In terms of age, she was younger than Leng Luo, let alone Ji Tiandao. Leng Luo had every right to criticize her.

Zuo Yushu said, "Leng Luo, I'm not afraid of you."

"What about me..."

Two other figures emerged as well at this moment.

Hua Wudao pushed a crude wooden wheelchair as he slowly walked to the others.

Zuo Yushu turned to look. Her wrinkled hands were clearly shaking. "Pan Litian?"

Pan Litian broke out in laughter as he said, "I didn't expect anyone to recognize me."

"You're the greatest elite of the Clarity Sect. Of course, I'd recognize you."

"Since you're aware of that... what gives you the courage to wreak havoc here?" Although Pan Litian was seated on the wooden wheelchair, it did not impede him from looking at his surroundings. The limestone floor was cracked. 'How dare she cause trouble here. She must have a death wish.'

"Greetings, Pavilion Master." Pan Litian cupped his fists toward Lu Zhou.

Hua Wudao bowed as well. "Greetings, Pavilion Master."

Although Zuo Yushu did not recognize Hua Wudao, with a glance, she could tell he was not a simple cultivator as well. She did not expect there to be so many elites in the Evil Sky Pavilion.

Zhu Honggong laughed and said, "You look formidable, old seniors..."

"..."

Mingshi Yin was speechless. 'This dimwit is a professional in flattery and courting disaster. I should keep my distance. This is a sickness. It might be contagious.'

Zhu Honggong noticed that he had misspoken as well. Was he not indirectly slighting his master? He quickly slapped himself and said, "I've made a mistake!"

Zuo Yushu frowned slightly. She was finding it more and more difficult to understand how these third-rate youngsters ended up becoming Ji Tiandao's disciples. 'They're not qualified.'

A female disciple walked slowly toward them from afar. She bowed at Lu Zhou and said, "The flying chariot is ready, Pavilion Master."

"Where are you going, master?" Mingshi Yin asked, puzzled.

"Zuo Yushu." Lu Zhou looked at her.

"What is it, Brother Ji?" Zuo Yushu asked, perplexed.

"Since you're here... why don't we go together?" Lu Zhou turned around and left.

Zuo Yushu found this strange. She did not know where he was going. However, she did not dwell on it and followed after him.

Mingshi Yin said, "Old Eighth, take Old Seventh back to the Cave of Reflection."

"Huh?"

"What do you mean by 'huh'? You have no business here."

'You're thinking of tagging along? Fat chance.'

Si Wuya was not interested in this to begin with. He turned around and returned to the Cave of Reflection.

Hua Wudao pushed the wooden wheelchair into Pan Zhong's hands. Then, he boarded the flying chariot with Leng Luo. Pan Litian needed to recuperate. There was no need for him to come along.

...

When they were on the flying chariot, Mingshi Yin volunteered. "I'll man the helm."

"Where are we headed, master?" Little Yuan'er asked.

"The Luo Sect."

Zuo Yushu was puzzled. She said, "The Luo Sect is one of the sects founded by Yun Tianluo. What business do you have there, Brother Ji?"

"Someone I know is passing away. I'd like to say my final goodbye," Lu Zhou said as he stroked his beard.

Zuo Yushu was stunned by his words.

Hua Wudao sighed heavily.

Mingshi Yin initially thought his master was going to give the Luo Sect trouble. After all, the Yun Sect's ten elders were among the forces of the eight great sects. He did not expect them to be merely visiting Yun Tianluo.

Everyone could see how the relationship between Yun Tianluo and the Evil Sky Pavilion was. Yun Tianluo was even willing to surrender the memories sealed within the chessboard to the Evil Sky Pavilion. He would never order the ten elders of the Yun Sect to attack the Evil Sky Pavilion. There must be more than meets the eye here.

However, Zuo Yushu said, "That young man, Mingshi Yin, told me the Yun Sect's ten elders were also involved in the attack on Golden Court Mountain. Aren't you walking right into their trap by going there now?"

"Walking right into their trap?"

"The Three Sects own ten holy lands and 20 peaks which form Formations that overlapped with each other. It's also defended by many elites... The Evil Sky Pavilion is from the Fiend Path. Aren't you worried that something might happen to us if we go there now?"

Chapter 458: Revisiting Old Haunts

Whizz!

When Primal Qi was channeled into the helm, the cloud-splitting chariot buzzed to life and rose into the air.

Nobody entertained Zuo Yushu.

Zuo Yushu felt awkward. With her identity and status, she would have been greatly respected in any other sect. However, in the Evil Sky Pavilion, she was more of a passerby compared to an actual passerby. It was one thing for Ji Tiandao to ignore her, what gave these two minor disciples the gall to look at her disdainfully from the corners of their eyes? As irritated as she was, as a senior who was quite advanced in age and an old friend of Ji Tiandao, she could not possibly hold this against the juniors.

The flying chariot climbed into the air and exited Golden Court Mountain's barrier as it flew toward the southern regions of Great Yan.

...

Shortly after the flying chariot left, a green-robed swordsman could be seen casually making his way to the foot of Golden Court Mountain. It did not take long before he arrived at the foot of the mountain. He stood there and looked up at Golden Court Mountain's barrier. Then, he looked at the sun and wiped

the sweat from his face. Supposedly, an elite with his cultivation base should not be sweating at all. However, he enjoyed this trivial sensation very much now that he had regained his life. This was the only time when he felt that he was truly alive.

“Second Senior Brother,” someone called out to him softly from the forest at the side.

Yu Shangrong turned around in confusion before he saw a white-clad Ye Tianxin emerging from behind a huge tree. “Sixth Junior Sister?”

“Second Senior Brother, I knew you’d come back alive,” Ye Tianxin said.

“Thank you for your concern, Junior Sister. I’m lucky, that’s all.” Yu Shangrong smiled faintly.

“You could’ve worked on your timing, though. Master left in the morning. I don’t know where he went.”

Ever since Lu Zhou wiped out the seven great sects, Ye Tianxin intended to visit her master on the mountain. However, when she thought about the fact that she was no longer a disciple of the Evil Sky Pavilion, she could not find the courage to climb the mountain.

“Why aren’t you going up?” Yu Shangrong asked.

“It’s fine.”

Yu Shangrong knew what was going through Ye Tianxin’s mind. “Do you plan on staying here forever?”

Ye Tianxin replied, “I want to bid farewell before I head west.”

“Cheng Huang?”

“Mhm.”

“It’s a good thing to have a goal. I wish you a smooth journey, junior sister.” Yu Shangrong cupped his fists at her. Then, he turned around and went up Golden Court Mountain.

As she looked at Yu Shangrong’s retreating back, Ye Tianxin felt slightly stunned. She felt that something was strange, but she could not quite put her fingers on it. She sighed. ‘You’re so cold, Second Senior Brother. You didn’t even try to persuade me to stay.’

...

The cloud-splitting chariot was speeding toward the southern regions of Great Yan. It left a tail in its wake like a meteor.

Lu Zhou stood near Mingshi Yin and looked at the mountains and the land.

Zuo Yushu stood beside him and said, “I have a question.”

“Let’s hear it.”

“I’ve made some calculations. Your great limit...”

Before Zuo Yushu could finish speaking, Mingshi Yin suddenly launched into a coughing fit.

Zuo Yushu looked at Mingshi Yin in confusion.

Mingshi Yin turned to look at her with a smile and said, "Senior Zuo... My master is already at the Nine-leaf stage. It's only natural... for my master's life to be prolonged. Can't you see that my master looks younger than before?"

Leng Luo and Hua Wudao looked at Lu Zhou. Now that they studied Lu Zhou's appearance, they were shocked. Indeed, he seemed younger than before.

Leng Luo was still alright... most of his hair was black. However, Hua Wudao's silver mane stood out now.

Zuo Yushu made the comparison quietly. Her heart shuddered. 'Is he truly at the Nine-leaf stage now? If he's truly at the Nine-leaf stage, why isn't he summoning his avatar to dispel all doubts?'

...

In the Luo Sect's holy land, Heaven's Virtue.

The 20 peaks stood in a unique arrangement as the clouds swirled around them.

The layers of barriers formed the foundation of this location's defense.

At this moment, the Luo Sect's youngest elder, the Third Elder, Lu Ping, paced about with a long face. He said as he looked at the other elders, "Second Elder, what do we do now? The patriarch's great limit is near. Yet, the Yun Sect just had to join in the attack against the Evil Sky Pavilion. Even the combined strength of all the elites from the Three Sects is no match against a Nine-leaf cultivator!"

Before this, these other elders had frowned upon Lu Ping for being a lackey of the Evil Sky Pavilion. However, they kept quiet now, having no words to retort. This was especially true for Shan Yunzheng, the Second Elder.

In the end, Shan Yunzheng said, "Now's not the time for this. We should quickly think of a plan. If the Evil Sky Pavilion comes, the Three Sects will have to face the consequences."

"The way I see it, we should join hands with the Tian Sect and exclude the Yun Sect. This is the only way we can preserve our lives," one of the elders said.

Whizz! Whizz! Whizz!

A strange sound rang from beyond the barrier.

Looking up from Heaven's Virtue, ripples could be seen spreading across the huge barrier.

The elders were shocked.

"Enemies incoming!"

Lu Ping squinted as he looked up. He started when he registered what he was seeing. His eyes were wide as he cried out. "It's the Evil Sky Pavilion's flying chariot!"

The others were frightened by his words.

Some of them stumbled backward. Some of their knees weakened. Some even fell to the ground and sat there limply.

The Nine-leaf cultivator was here to seek revenge.

Somebody help!

The inevitable was finally here.

With a grim expression, Lu Ping said, "Stay calm. The Yun Sect's mistake has nothing to do with the Luo or Tian Sects."

The others nodded and felt much calmer.

Lu Ping stepped into the air and summoned his avatar. He passed through the barriers at lightning speed as he flew to meet the cloud-splitting chariot.

A moment later, Lu Ping hovered in midair and said in a clear voice, "Greeting, Old Senior Ji! Forgive me for the lack of hospitality."

The flying chariot paused mid-flight.

Mingshi Yin had the best view. He saw Lu Ping hovering before the chariot. Hence, he beckoned him over. "Come here. You man the helm."

"Gladly!" Lu Ping was overjoyed. At the very least, this meant the Evil Sky Pavilion was not here to seek revenge on the Luo Sect. He flew over to the flying chariot.

Seeing this, Zuo Yushu said, 'As expected of the Three Sects. They're well-educated and have good manners.' She was slightly dissatisfied and disgruntled when she recalled the treatment she received from the Evil Sky Pavilion.

After Lu Ping boarded the flying chariot, he looked at Lu Zhou and fell to his knees with a dull thud. He kowtowed and a loud thud rang in the air. He said, "I'm greatly honored to be able to personally man the helm for you, old senior."

Zuo Yushu was puzzled. She felt a stinging sensation on her face as though she had been slapped. Was this... the pride of the Three Sects?

"That's enough. Come on." Mingshi Yin gave Lu Ping a kick.

"Yes, right away... I've benefited much from this kick, Mister Fourth. I shouldn't have wasted the old senior's time on such trivialities."

Mingshi Yin was speechless. 'F*ck. Is he Old Eighth's relative or something?'

Lu Ping hastily switched positions with Mingshi Yin and manned the helm. The flying chariot passed through the barriers and landed on Heaven's Virtue with familiar movements.

Zuo Yushu was surprised to see the elders and disciples of Luo Sect gathered on the holy land.

When Feng Yizhi, the Sect Master of the Luo Sect, heard about this, he had sped all the way here without even tidying his hair. Leading the ten elders, he bowed at the flying chariot.

"Feng Yizhi, the Sect Master of the Luo Sect Master, greets the old senior!"

“Greetings, old senior!”

More and more disciples were flocking to the holy land at this moment and greeted the party from the Evil Sky Pavilion.

Upon seeing this, Mingshi Yin was filled with pride. He enjoyed this feeling very much. He could resist lifting his chin up and straightening his back even more.

Leng Luo and Hua Wudao did not seem to be affected by this. However, they were filled with praise. There were no rules or reasons in the world... Reason was on the side with the bigger fist.

Zuo Yushu remained on the flying chariot, stunned. She had experienced many things and was knowledgeable. Even saints of the Confucian sects were rarely given this treatment.

“Master, look! There’s so many of them!” Little Yuan’er was not affected by the welcoming party. She merely liked a lively scene.

Throngs of cultivators swarming toward the holy land in big groups.

The square formations formed a huge energy zone that was approaching the Heaven’s Virtue.

Chapter 459: For the Yun Sect?

The cloud-splitting chariot stopped moving.

If the elites of the Three Sects were to launch an attack on the Evil Sky Pavilion within the barrier at this moment, the consequences would be unimaginable.

The Noble and Fiend Paths had never seen eye to eye. Although the Three Sects were different from the ten great sects, they were one of the most powerful among the Noble Path’s factions in Great Yan. They had 20 peaks and 10 holy lands. Their disciples numbered in tens of thousands. In terms of barriers, the barriers of the Three Sects’ ten holy lands were one of the best in the cultivation world. They could be used to attack and defend.

Zuo Yushu looked at the Luo Sect cultivators on Heaven’s Virtue. For an instant, she had complicated feelings.

Many cultivators hovered above Heaven’s Virtue.

Whizz!

At this moment, a 90-foot avatar flew toward them from afar. It unleashed its grand technique and soon arrived above Heaven’s Virtue from its original position at one of the peaks.

Everyone turned to look at the newcomer.

“Nan Gongwei, the Sect Master of Tian Sect, welcomes the old senior!”

Several thousand Tian Sect disciples bowed in midair. “Welcome, old senior!”

This scene was really extravagant!

Anyone else would have been moved.

During the Evil Sky Pavilion's previous visit, none of these sect masters had shown up. However, at this time, did they dare to not show up?

Mingshi Yin had the urge to beat himself to death. He was too excited about this.

Kindness was always returned tenfold.

Lu Zhou pushed away from the flying chariot and flew out.

The others leaped after him.

There was no ostentatious show of power as the Three Sects disciples expected. However, they held their breaths. They did not dare to breathe heavily as they looked at the old man in front of them.

"Rise." Lu Zhou's voice resounded across Heaven's Virtue.

Everyone else sighed in relief.

They descended.

Although the Heaven's Virtue was vast, the center of the holy land was currently occupied by a lot of people.

Nan Gongwei, the Sect Master of the Tian Sect, stood in the lead.

At this moment, Feng Yizhi, the Sect Master of the Luo Sect, descended as well.

Nan Gongwei and Feng Yizhi bowed in unison.

"What brings you here, senior?" Nan Gongwei asked respectfully.

Lu Zhou's eyes shifted to Nan Gongwei. "Where is the Yun Sect's Yun Wuji?"

As expected.

Nan Gongwei and Feng Yizhi were clearly in a dilemma.

The others exchanged glances and began discussing among themselves in a hushed tone.

Nan Gongwei's expression was slightly sour as he said, "Old senior, the Tian Sect was completely unaware of the Yun Sect's plan. I only found about the Yun Sect's participation in the siege after it happened."

"The Luo Sect had no knowledge of it as well! The Yun Sect is too unbecoming! We will certainly give the Evil Sky Pavilion a satisfactory explanation in regard to this!"

It was nothing new for the Three Sects to disagree among themselves. The current situation was also within expectations. From the moment the Yun Sect caused trouble, the signs of discord had already shown themselves.

"And how do you plan on doing that?" Lu Zhou asked Nan Gongwei and Feng Yizhi in a deep voice.

"Well..."

Nan Gongwei and Feng Yizhi were both sect masters. Both of them had remarkable statuses in the Three Sects. Their words certainly bore significance.

Finally, the Luo Sect's Feng Yizhi bowed and said, "Just say the word, old senior... We'll give you the explanation that you want."

Zuo Yushu was shocked to hear this. To think the Three Sects were pandering to the Evil Sky Pavilion.

At this moment, a disciple flew toward them in great haste. He looked terrified and his face was drenched in sweat. When he descended, he tripped out of nervousness and fell face-forward on the ground. When he picked himself up, he stuttered, "S-sect... S-sect masters... t-this is b-bad!"

Nan Gongwei's expression darkened. He said, "Being flustered is unbecoming of a disciple! What is it?"

The disciple pointed toward the holy land where the Yun Sect was located and said, "T-the... the Sect Master of Yun Sect Master wants to... He... He's going to commit suicide!"

There was a collective gasp from the crowd.

The disciples of the Tian and Luo Sects looked toward Yun Sect.

The people from the Evil Sky Pavilion were the only ones who remained unruffled.

Lu Zhou's expression was indifferent as usual as though none of this mattered to him.

Zuo Yushu, on the other hand, was even more shocked. The expression on her wizened face changed. After all, this meant the Yun Sect truly did attack the Evil Sky Pavilion. Did this mean the Sect Master of the Yun Sect was unable to withstand the pressure of the consequences of his actions?

At this moment, an avatar appeared between the two peaks flanking the Yun Sect's holy land. The avatar had an impressive height of 90 feet! It glimmered with golden radiance and its palms were joined together. A figure could be seen hovering within the avatar. It was none other than Yun Wuji, the Sect Master of the Yun Sect.

A soundwave rolled toward Heaven's Virtue. "Yun Wuji has done wrong against the patriarch. Yun Wuji knows that he has committed a grave sin that can only be atoned by death!"

There were no attacks. Only Yun Wuji's voice. His words were filled with reluctance and helplessness.

Several thousand disciples of the Three Sects looked at the avatar. Their goal was to obtain an avatar like that. There were many cultivators who spent their whole lives cultivating without obtaining an avatar with the height of 90 feet.

Yun Wuji had reached where he was today due to his hard work.

Everyone knew Yun Wuji was a man who struck like lightning and moved like the wind. He was a rare cultivation genius in the cultivation world. He climbed all the way from the bottom of the rank to the highest peak in Yun Sect. He was the only one who knew how much effort he had poured in and how many trials he had to overcome before reaching the peak. Unfortunately, the final step had the difference between heaven and earth.

Nan Gongwei and Feng Yizhi, the Sect Masters of the Tian Sect and the Luo Sect respectively, looked at the avatar expressionlessly. Their hearts were as indifferent as their expressions.

Nobody responded to Yun Wuji.

After a brief moment of silence, Yun Wuji laughed forlornly. "Was I truly wrong? Was I wrong?" Soundwave rolled out again as he spoke. The 90-foot avatar moved swiftly and hovered 100 meters in front of everyone.

Yun Wuji was feeling the pressure from maintaining his avatar for such a long time since it consumed much of his power. However, this was no longer important. At this distance, he saw the Evil Sky Pavilion's Master on Heaven's Virtue, the one and only legendary cultivator to reach the Nine-leaf stage in Great Yan's cultivation world! Although he no longer cared about his life or death and was prepared to atone for his crime with his life, his heart still raced when he saw the pavilion master.

Yun Wuji looked at Lu Zhou who was standing in the holy land. His hair was disheveled, and his voice broke as he said, clearly distressed, "Old Senior Ji... was... was I wrong?"

The others found it difficult to tell if Yun Wuji was going to laugh or cry.

Before Lu Zhou could respond, Nan Gongwei said in a deep voice, "Yun Wuji, you're being irrational."

"I am not! I need answers! What have I done that is not for the Yun Sect's sake? Nan Gongwei! Feng Yizhi! It is beneath me to be at the same rank as both of you!" Yun Wuji spat.

At this moment, Mingshi Yin projected his voice said mockingly, "Not only are you wrong, but you've made a grave mistake."

"Hm?" Yun Wuji's gaze shifted from Lu Zhou onto Mingshi Yin.

"For someone like you, you're not even worthy for my master to take action. How dare you go on and on and act so righteous? Hurry up and die!"

"..."

Mingshi Yin had seen his fair share of cultivators from the Noble Path like Yun Wuji. They always brag about how everything they had done was for the good of their sects. However, the truth was they would conduct shameful activities in the dark. Nevertheless, it did not stop them from singing their own praises and act righteous, trying to project a good image of themselves.

Yun Wuji felt his chest tighten. He had no choice!

When Mingshi Yin saw Yun Wuji's blank expression, he said, "What are you waiting for? The disciples of the Three Sects are waiting for you to kill yourself. Hurry up and die."

Mingshi Yin seemed to be acting out of character. He was clearly more emotional compared to how he usually was. "Aren't you doing this for the Yun Sect? If you don't die, the entire Yun Sect will have to die with you!"

Chapter 460: Regret Upon Separation and the Nine-leaf Lotus

Yun Wuji's loss of his rational mind was merely his final struggle after he decided to die. In truth, since the day it was reported that the combined efforts of the seven great sects and the ten elders have failed, he knew his fate was sealed.

The several thousand disciples from the ten holy lands and the core elites surrounded the Yun Sect. The people of the Tian and Luo Sects were not fools. Having offended a Nine-leaf cultivator, they would never let the main culprit off lightly.

Nan Gongwei and Feng Yizhi had given the Yun Sect many troubles. The conflict between the Three Sects had reached its breaking point.

Yun Wuji was now a sinner of the Three Sects. Not only would he suffer a gruesome end, but he would also be cursed at for the next 1,000 years. How could he be willing to accept this? He hesitated as he looked at Mingshi Yin who was clearly provoking him. His 90-foot avatar wavered slightly. It was incredibly taxing to maintain the Hundred Tribulations Insight avatar for a long time. He knew he had no choice. Otherwise, the Yun Sect would have to pay for it. In the end, he looked at Mingshi Yin and said, "Very well."

"Die over there..." Mingshi Yin said irritably.

"..."

None of the disciples of the Three Sects dared to interrupt. Nobody spoke on Yun Wuji's behalf.

An aggrieved expression appeared on Yun Wuji's face as though he had been wronged. When saw the apathetic expressions on everyone's faces, he suddenly felt that, perhaps, he had made a huge mistake. The more he thought about it, the more aggravated he became. 'Why? Why must I share the benefits with everyone if I succeed? But now that I failed, I have to shoulder the blame on my own?'

The thoughts of men were often as fickle, it could change at a moment's notice.

Yun Wuji suddenly retreated further and further away. 'Kill myself for these people? No, no, it's not worth it!'

The disciples on Heaven's Virtue stared at Yun Wuji while the Yun Sect disciples paid extra attention to him.

Yun Wuji continued to retreat until he was between several barriers.

Whizz!

Yun Wuji's avatar shrunk.

The barriers resonated loudly, creating ripples on the surfaces.

In just a blink of an eye, Yun Wuji shot out of the barriers.

"Hm?" Mingshi Yin widened his eyes. "Hey, hey, hey... he ran away?"

The disciples of the Three Sects were dumbstruck. They looked at the fleeing Yun Wuji, completely frozen like a wooden chicken. They had difficulty believing what they were seeing. Just a moment ago, Yun Wuji was still questioning them in a forceful and righteous manner, but now, he was running away?

“Uh...”

The barriers buzzed.

Yun Wuji flew further and further away. He had been maintaining his avatar for a long time. With his grand technique, he passed through three barriers in just a blink of an eye.

“Master, I’ll chase after him... and...” Mingshi Yin said before he stopped abruptly. He saw Lu Zhou was already nocking an energy arrow.

Bam!

The arrow was fired.

Nobody noticed this since their attention was on Yun Wuji. For a brief moment, they had completely forgotten about the greatest elite in the world.

Zuo Yushu’s attention was caught by the sound of the arrow being fired. When she turned around, she saw the arrow sailing through the air.

The shot was neat and simple.

Everyone widened their eyes when they finally saw the energy arrow passing through the barriers. Its speed exceeded their expectations. When Yun Wuji was the size of a fist in their eyes, the energy arrow landed true! No sound could be heard. After a slight delay, they heard the loud bang.

The sound wave spread out in the horizons.

All they saw was Yun Wuji suddenly coming to a halt in midair. The energy arrow had pierced his back.

Yun Wuji widened his eyes as he lowered his head to look at the energy arrow that pierced through his back to his chest. “How? Impossible! A Nine-leaf... G-godly... Archer?”

Yun Wuji was a Seven-leaf elite, after all. When he was fatally hit, he managed to maintain his altitude. However, this merely lasted for a short while. Shortly after, his Primal Qi leaked into the surroundings from his dantian’s sea of Qi. Yet, the energy arrow did not fade away, stubbornly lodged in his body. Eventually, he could no longer maintain his altitude and plunged to the ground into the forest below, vanishing from everyone’s sight.

“Ding! Killed a target. Reward: 1,500 merit points.”

Silence descended on Heaven’s Virtue.

When Yun Wuji fell, the others were still in a daze. Their eyes were brimming with awe. This included Zuo Yushu. The Ji Tiandao she knew did not have such great mastery of the bow. How did he easily shoot a Seven-leaf elite from this distance? Who else could have achieved this, if not a Nine-leaf cultivator?

The people of the Evil Sky Pavilion felt relieved. This was not their first time witnessing Lu Zhou taking out a Seven-leaf cultivator in a flash. At first, they were awed by his might. In hindsight, they felt there was nothing to be surprised about. After all, what was so surprising about a Nine-leaf cultivator easily killing a Seven-leaf cultivator?

Lu Zhou did not think much about this. When he recalled Unnamed, he gauged the Heavenly Writing's extraordinary power. He was left with half of the power. He had used much more power than necessary just to be safe. If it had been a shorter distance, with Unnamed, he would only need to use one-third of his extraordinary power to kill Yun Wuji. He would never allow Yun Wuji to escape from under his nose.

Mingshi Yin made a spitting noise and broke the silence first. "It would've been better if he had just killed himself. At least, he would be able to retain what little is left of his dignity."

Little Yuan'er chimed in, "That's right Running away like that. He's more shameless than Fourth Senior Brother!"

"..."

Lu Zhou glanced at Mingshi Yin. His expression remained unchanged as he said apathetically, "If he wishes to die, I'll fulfill his wish."

The holy land was quiet once again.

Lu Zhou looked at everyone and asked in a calm tone and a moderate volume, "Who else has anything to say?" However, his words were very domineering.

After a moment's silence, Nan Gongwei, the Sect Master of the Tian Sect Master, bowed and said, "We have nothing to say about this. He deserves to die."

"Yes, he deserves to die!" Feng Yizhi chimed in.

When the two of them bowed, they gulped and wiped the cold sweat off their faces.

As the saying went, 'Boil the hound once it caught the rabbit, hide the bow once the fowls were killed'.

Nobody sympathized with Yun Wuji, he did not deserve any sympathy, after all.

At this moment, the stone door at the secluded cultivation spot in Heaven's Virtue slowly opened.

Yun Tianluo was brought out in a wheelchair. He seemed dispirited. His gaze was lifeless, and his aura was weak.

"Patriarch!"

"Greetings, Patriarch!"

The disciples of the Three Sects bowed.

Nan Gongwei and Feng Yizhi looked over as well.

The crowd parted.

Yun Tianluo seemed as though he was going to breathe his last breath at any given moment as he sat on the wooden chair. He struggled to look up. His gaze was despondent as he looked at Lu Zhou. He managed a faint smile as he said, "I knew... t-that you'd come."

Lu Zhou stepped forward with his hands on his back.

The others backed away from the center of the holy land.

Lu Zhou stood before Yun Tianluo. With a casual glance, he understood the situation immediately. He asked, "Your great limit is already here, and yet, you're still holding on?" He could sense that Yun Tianluo was only left with his final breath.

When he said this, Nan Gongwei, Feng Yizhi, and the disciples of the Three Sects were in turmoil.

Yun Tianluo, however, did not seem to mind as he said, "You can tell, Brother Ji?" After a violent coughing fit, he continued to say, "I have some regrets. That's why... I don't want to leave yet."

Lu Zhou shook his head and said, "Stubborn."

"Yes, I am..." Yun Tianluo nodded.

"You could've lived for a decade more... Who hurt you?" Lu Zhou asked.

As the saying went, 'A single pebble gave rise to a thousand waves'. This was the effect of Lu Zhou's words.

Nan Gongwei and Feng Yizhi looked shocked. They fell to their knees and kowtowed in unison.

"Patriarch, which bastard is so bold as to attack you? Why didn't you tell us?"

"How dare he harm our patriarch! I vow to tear him to shreds!"

Yun Tianluo waved his hand and said, "There's no need."

The two of them were puzzled.

Yun Tianluo said, "Didn't Yun Wuji get what he deserved?"

"It was Yun Wuji?"

"That scoundrel deceived his master and denounced his predecessors! That's how low he had stooped. Men!"

Several elders nearby stepped forward.

"Your orders?"

"Find Yun Wuji's corpse. Let it lie under the hot sun for three days before tearing it to pieces," Nan Gongwei said.

"Understood!" The elders rose into the air and flew toward the forests.

The disciples who heard this shuddered. The Tian Sect's Master was rather vicious once he steeled his heart.

The Yun Sect disciples pulled long faces. They were still feeling uneasy. With the death of their sect master, the conflicts between the Three Sects had completely escalated. What followed would certainly be vicious cycles of vengeance.

At this moment, Yun Tianluo said tonelessly, "Those who have no business here should leave."

"Get lost!" Nan Gongwei said at once.

The disciples of the Three Sects instantly scattered.

Only the core members of the Three Sects were left. Several hundred cultivators, who were mostly elders or greater, remained on the holy land.

Lu Zhou stroked his beard and said, "Do you know why I'm here?"

Yun Tianluo said, "Oh? Perhaps, my sentiments are reciprocated... I thought you're suddenly inspired by kindness, Brother Ji, and came to help me resolve my regret."

"That's not completely untrue. What are your regrets?" Lu Zhou asked. Although his attainment of the Nine-leaf stage had practically nothing to do with Yun Tianluo, he could not think of an excuse. Moreover, he did not wish to explain himself.

Yun Tianluo sighed deeply and said, "I've studied the Nine-leaf stage for many years and longed to pass through those doors. Alas... I've known nothing but failure and am now in this state. I've brought this upon myself, I'm sure of that. Over the past century, there's only one thing that I've done right..." With a deeper tone, he said, "And that's entrusting the thing inside the chessboard to you, Brother Ji."

Lu Zhou's expression remained unchanged, but inwardly, he complained, 'That's too much, you old thing. Do you truly think that my attainment of the Nine-leaf stage has anything to do with your stupid chessboard?'

"All my life, the only thing I wanted is to have a peek into the Nine-leaf stage... That's my greatest regret. Brother Ji, if you can help me resolve this regret... even in death, I'll remember your kindness. Otherwise... I won't be able to rest in peace."

"..."

The words were truly burdensome.

At this moment, Zuo Yushu spoke up. "Yun Tianluo, you've grown sentimental since our last meeting years ago."

Yun Tianluo was stunned. He turned to look at Zuo Yushu. "Who are you?"

"I'm Zuo Yushu."

Upon hearing this, Yun Tianluo widened his eyes. An image of a peerless beauty with fair skin, charming curves, and a moving smile from 500 years ago surfaced in his mind. For a time, he had difficulties reconciling the image in his mind to the old woman in front of him. "Miss Zuo?! It's you?!"

Ughhh!

Mingshi Yin who was standing at the side made a vomiting gesture. However, nobody paid any attention to him

Zuo Yushu frowned slightly. "You'd better change that form of address. I'm worried that I won't be able to sleep soundly at night."

"..." Yun Tianluo looked awkward.

Zuo Yushu was once a popular candidate for marriage proposals. However, the Zuo Yushu back then had an unyielding temperament like a man. She pursued the Confucian path wholeheartedly and had no interests in romantic affairs at all.

500 years have passed. Blue seas had turned into mulberry fields. Her appearance aged. Time changed but not the memories of the past.

“How do you want me to resolve your regret?” Lu Zhou asked.

“I’m not asking for much... All I want is to see what the Nine-leaf stage is like,” Yun Tianluo said.

Upon hearing this, many of the people present had an eager and expectant expression on their faces.

Zuo Yushu was the same. More than anyone else, she wanted to see a Nine-leaf avatar.

Mingshi Yin, Leng Luo, Hua Wudao, and Little Yuan’er wanted to see the Nine-leaf avatar again as well. Seeing it once was not enough for them.

Lu Zhou cursed inwardly, ‘You’re lucky I have the Disguise Cards right now. Otherwise, you won’t be able to die in peace, you old thing.’ Outwardly, he said, “Very well.”

Lu Zhou raised a hand and activated his dantian’s sea of Qi. A Disguise Card appeared in his palm, then, he shattered it. A surge of unique power gathered inside his dantian’s sea of Qi, and his avatar appeared...

Whizz!

There was a strong resonance of power that resounded across Heaven’s Virtue.

The core disciples of the Three Sects widened their eyes. They looked at the 150-foot avatar. Because they were too close, they had to crane their necks to have a look. Even then, they could not see the top of the avatar. Soon after, they lowered their gazes to the huge Golden Lotus that was shining brilliantly. Nine lush leaves were slowly spinning around the Golden Lotus.

Everyone felt their breaths caught in their throats.

This... was a Nine-leaf Golden Lotus avatar! An actual Nine-leaf Golden Lotus avatar?!

Their bodies trembled in excitement, and they were overwhelmed by emotions. This was the goal that many dreamt about. This was an avatar that many wanted to possess!

Its radiance and every blade of leaf were ostentatious and dazzling! Also, how could it be so huge?

Zuo Yushu staggered backward, completely in awe of the Nine-leaf avatar.