

Disciples 491

Chapter 491: Sprouting Another Leaf

When he first transmigrated here, Lu Zhou had a hard time cultivating due to his body. He had made it this far by relying on his item cards. Now that his body had been strengthened, the speed of his cultivation was much better than before.

Item cards were just item cards, after all. A fake Nine-leaf elite could fool the masses for a time but not forever.

With the dawn of the Lotus Severing era, people had begun to cultivate diligently. Apart from the trillions of humans, they were also the Other Tribesmen. Surely, there would be geniuses who would eventually attain the Nine-leaf stage. If he did not have true strength, how was he going to face the future that was unfolding at a magnificent scale?

Lu Zhou flipped his palm. When the resonance sounded, a miniature avatar materialized above his palm; it was a One-leaf Golden Lotus Nascent Divinity avatar.

The single leaf seemed lonely. Perhaps, he too used to putting on an act. When he finally saw this one lonely leaf, he could not help but feel extremely weak.

Lu Zhou shook his head; this was not the time to lament at his weakness. He focused on the Golden Lotus and circulated the Primal Qi within his dantian's sea of Qi.

The avatar changed. Golden rings of radiance appeared on the avatar and moved down.

Sprouting a leaf was like nurturing a tree. When the nutrients and conditions were right, the plant would sprout and grow. The more leaves it had, the better the plant would grow.

Sometimes, Lu Zhou wondered about the names of the Nine-leaf and Ten-leaf stage as recorded in the books. There were also records of the next realm after the Nascent Divinity realm: the Mysterious Heaven realm. In that case... Why were there so many cultivators stuck at the Eight-leaf stage, unable to move to the Nine-leaf stage? What were the secrets contained in the world of the Nine-leaf stage? Countless predecessors must have peeked into the realm before. However, they were all buried under the tides of history.

...

Secluded inside the Evergreen Palace, the Emperor, Liu Gu, was also working hard to sprout leaves.

Liu Gu, who commanded the Divine Capital and the Imperial guard, was well equipped to sever his lotus and to cultivate as quickly as possible.

The attendant hastened all the way into the Evergreen Palace with a platter in his hand. He passed through layers of defenses and entered the study. He kneeled on the ground and respectfully said, "Your Majesty, the Big Dipper Academy has refined another leaf-sprouting pill."

Liu Gu, who was sitting on the floor with his legs crossed, opened his eyes and looked at the pill on the platter. "One pill?"

"It takes a long time to refine a leaf-sprouting pill. Huge amount of labor and resources are needed. President Zhou said they did their best." The attendant's voice was shaking as he spoke.

There was a moment's silence.

Then, Liu Gu raised his hand and brought the leaf-sprouting pill toward him.

"Here's my decree. The Big Dipper Academy is to focus all its resources on refining leaf-sprouting pills. The Imperial family will supply all materials needed. All resources, except the Imperial guard, are to be made available to them."

"Understood." The attendant left the study reverently.

The room was silent again.

Liu Gu raised his hand. When his Primal Qi surged, an avatar appeared.

The brilliant golden avatar illuminated the entire room. There was no Golden Lotus under the floating avatar. Four bright golden leaves were spinning around the avatar.

Liu Gu nodded in satisfaction. He raised his hand and sent the newly refined leaf-sprouting pill into his mouth.

He clenched his fist.

Boom!

The avatar dispersed.

The effects of the pill should be kicking in soon.

He was just about to start cultivating when his eyes snapped open. He shouted, "Men!"

An attendant started. He ran into the room, bumping into the walls and doors as he stumbled into the study. He looked up and saw a fuming Liu Gu.

"Y-your... Your Majesty!"

"The leaf-sprouting pill's effect isn't strong enough. What's the reason for this?" Liu Gu asked.

"Your Majesty... President Zhou himself refined this pill and packaged it before sending it here. This is the best pill of all the leaf-sprouting pills," the attendant said nervously.

Liu Gu frowned deeply, puzzled. 'Could this be due to my improved realm?'

The higher the realm, the more difficult it was to improve. This was the general rule that never changed since time immemorial.

However, the effect of this pill was outrageously weak.

After pondering on it, Liu Gu said, "You're dismissed."

"Understood." The attendant felt suspicious as well. However, he, naturally, dared not question the emperor. He hastily retreated from the room reverently.

...

Outside the Big Dipper Academy.

An academy disciple carried a chamber pot and walked out of the academy.

"Make way, make way..." The academy disciple continued walking.

Several disciples covered their noses and gave way.

"That reeks! What's wrong with you? Can't you do this when no one is around?"

The academy disciple looked up with a chuckle and said, "I-I'm sorry."

"Why haven't I seen you before?" The sour face disciple walked over.

"I'm new. Otherwise, I wouldn't be doing this."

"Is that so? Let's see your paiza."

If this were in the past, he would not have bothered with such a lowly character. However, this was a unique time for the Big Dipper Academy. Strict measures were in place. They could not allow any careless mistakes. Everyone coming in and out of the academy had to be checked.

"Sure." The academy disciple with the chamber pot produced a paiza and passed it to him.

"Mister Ri? Why does this paiza look so new?"

"Of course, it's new. After all, I've only just carved it earlier..."

"Hm?"

Swoosh!

A cold light glinted in the air as the Separation Hook drew an arc across his neck.

Mingshi Yin covered his mouth. With the chamber pot in one hand and the corpse in the other, he scurried into an alley and vanished.

...

A moment later.

In a forest more than ten miles from the Big Dipper Academy.

Mingshi Yin took a pill and sniffed it. "This f*cking stinks... Oh, wait, it's the smell of the chamber pot. Is this the leaf-sprouting pill? I wonder if I can eat it while I still have my Golden Lotus? The Big Dipper Academy is vast, but they sure are stingy. I've practically turned this place inside out, and this is the only one I found." He did not consume the leaf-sprouting pill. Instead, he packed it away and left the forest.

...

Meanwhile, the ten pill refinement rooms in the Big Dipper Academy were in chaos.

Hundreds of academy disciples searched the academy as they hovered in the air.

A few hours later, the academy disciples gathered outside the main pill room.

“President, we couldn’t find it!”

“We’ve searched everywhere: the north, south, east, and west. We found nothing!”

“The final pill must’ve been substituted and stolen by someone!”

Zhou Youcai frowned. His eyelids twitched out of anger. He said in a deep voice, “Shameless scoundrel! This is too outrageous!”

“Calm down, president!” the others cried out.

Zhou Youcai suppressed the flames of rage in his heart and said, “Put a lid on this. We’ll act as if this didn’t happen.”

“Huh?”

“You’ll obey my orders!”

“Understood!” The academy disciples bowed.

...

Inside the Evil Sky Pavilion’s eastern pavilion.

Lu Zhou glanced at the descending radiant circles.

He could feel that his avatar was getting stronger.

Finally...

Whizz!

Under his coaxing, a corner of the avatar’s Golden Lotus sprouted a new leaf. The new leaf shone with a dazzling brightness.

“It’s done.”

The radiance faded away. Two leaves were now slowly spinning around the Golden Lotus.

Technically, this was Lu Zhou’s first experience of sprouting a leaf through his own effort. It felt more exciting compared to purchasing avatars.

It took him half a day to accomplish this.

Lu Zhou’s cultivation base was now officially in the Two-leaf Nascent Divinity realm.

Lu Zhou called up the system dashboard. He looked at the prices of the item cards.

As he expected, the prices of the item cards had increased by 1,000 merit points.

The current prices of the item cards meant that it was no longer practical to hoard them.

Lu Zhou had the Heavenly Writing's extraordinary power. So long as he continued to meditate upon the Heavenly Writing scrolls, it could be used to replace the Deadly Strike Card. If he had no other choice, he could still buy the Deadly Strike Card at a high price to save his own life.

He glanced at the Golden Lotus Leaf again.

"50,000..."

Chapter 492: Open Earth Scroll

'Should I buy it?' Raising his own cultivation base was much more important than anything else. The problem was if he spent his merit points, the process of sprouting leaves for him in the future would be slower. Since he could sprout leaves by cultivating now, he should not give up on the wonderful opportunity. 'Hold it together.' In the end, he did not purchase the Golden Lotus Leaf.

Lu Zhou stood up and walked away from the screen. He looked at the parchment drawing on the table. "Hm?"

He noticed a few new islands in the oceanic region in the northeast. A slight hint of excitement stirred in him. This meant the map was giving him new clues.

"Penglai Island? Could this be where the Luo woman is?"

Lu Zhou remembered what the Penglai Sect Master, Huang Shijie, told him about the Luo woman. Did he withhold some information like the source of his knowledge? Was it a coincidence that Huang Shijie also became an Eight-leaf expert 300 years ago? Did he also receive help from the Luo woman? The more he thought about it, the more likely it seemed.

Lu Zhou opened the system dashboard to have a look. A new mission was listed under the Heavenly Writing mission column: Search for the Open Earth Scroll.

"Open Earth Scroll?"

Up until now, Lu Zhou had mastered four Heavenly Writing powers. They were the sound technique that was the power of speech, the areal attack that was the power of muting, the mimicry technique that was the power of past lives, and the healing technique that was the power of immaterial existence. He had expected there to be a fifth power, but he did not expect it to be the Open Earth Scroll.

He was still lost in his thoughts when a voice rang from outside. "Greetings, master."

Lu Zhou regained his senses and emerged from the eastern pavilion with his hands on his back. When he saw Mingshi Yin with one knee on the ground, he said, "You're back?" Inwardly, he thought to himself, 'He's like a feral child.'

Mingshi Yin looked around for a moment. When he was certain his master was not going to reprimand him, he said, "I went to the Big Dipper Academy."

"The Big Dipper Academy?" Lu Zhou was puzzled.

Mingshi Yin presented the leaf-sprouting pill with both hands. "I found this. A leaf-sprouting pill! A treasure! I took it just for you, master."

Lu Zhou took the leaf-sprouting pill and sniffed it. The medicinal smell was strong. Then, he tossed the pill to Mingshi Yin and said, "You keep it."

"Master, I searched the entire Big Dipper Academy. I even went through their chamber pots..."

"Hm?"

"No, no, no... I've misspoken." Mingshi Yin hurriedly put the leaf-sprouting pill away.

"This is to be used after one's Golden Lotus is severed.

"Understood."

Lu Zhou noticed that Mingshi Yin's loyalty was steadily above 80%. Perhaps, it was due to him not reprimanding Mingshi Yin for going to the Big Dipper Academy on his own accord. In any case, there was no need for Mingshi Yin to do that.

At this moment, Yu Shangrong walked into the eastern pavilion and said, "Greetings, master."

"What is it?"

"Jing Province is in turmoil. I'd like to have a look," Yu Shangrong said.

Lu Zhou frowned slightly. He knew that Yu Shangrong and Yu Zhenghai had never seen eye to eye. They had always been at odds with each other.

Yu Zhenghai wanted to attack Jing Province, and Lu Zhou gave him six months to do it. What would Yu Shangrong do there with his Three-leaf cultivation base?

"Old Second," Lu Zhou said apathetically.

"Yes, master."

"I forbid you from fighting with Yu Zhenghai within these six months. Can you do that?" Lu Zhou asked.

Mingshi Yin was shocked when he heard this. Since when did his master become so forgiving? It seemed like his master was being merciful toward his Eldest Senior Brother?

Yu Shangrong was taken aback. He met his master's gaze and said, "You misunderstood me, master. Indeed, there are times where the saber and sword will exchange blows, but sometimes... they can be in sync as well."

Mingshi Yin. "???"

Lu Zhou studied Yu Shangrong's face, gauging his reaction. He noticed that Yu Shangrong was still holding onto the diary. He roughly understood what was happening. Then, he said, "What about your Three-leaf cultivation base?"

Yu Shangrong straightened his back and said in a nonchalantly confident tone, "With my sword in hand, I have nothing to fear."

Lu Zhou felt speechless. It seemed impossible for him to change Yu Shangrong's temperament... In the end, he calmly said, "In that case, you should go."

"Thank you, master."

"If there's a threat to you, you should prioritize your life," Lu Zhou said.

"I've met countless dangers throughout my life. My enemies are the only ones who would choose to preserve their lives," Yu Shangrong said.

"..." Lu Zhou frowned slightly.

Yu Shangrong sensed something was amiss with the atmosphere. Hence, he bowed slightly and said in an acquiescing tone, "I'll remember your words."

"Ding! Disciplined Yu Shangrong. Reward: 200 merit points."

'He won't listen to me if I talk to him normally. I'll have to put on a stern expression every single time.'

"Go, then."

Yu Shangrong nodded. He turned around and left the eastern pavilion.

"Second Senior Brother! Second Senior Brother!" Mingshi Yin called out as he ran after Yu Shangrong.

"What's the matter?" Yu Shangrong stopped in his tracks and looked at Mingshi Yin in confusion.

"A leaf-sprouting pill." Mingshi Yin presented the pill with both hands. He wanted to subtly get into his Second Senior Brother's good books.

Yu Shangrong looked at the pill indifferently before he said with a smile, "You should keep such a precious item for yourself." After he finished speaking, he flew up and descended the mountain with movements as light as willow and vanished in a blink of an eye.

Mingshi Yin was still holding the leaf-sprouting pill in his hands as he muttered under his breath, "Is this thing... worthless? Did I go through all that trouble for nothing?"

"Uh, M-mister Fourth?" Zhou Jifeng walked over to have a look.

"Just spit it out!"

"Nobody wants the pill?" Zhou Jifeng was practically drooling.

"You want it?"

"Thank you, Mister Fourth!" Zhou Jifeng hastily bowed.

"You're out of your mind. When did I say I'll give it to you?"

Mingshi Yin put the leaf-sprouting pill away.

Zhou Jifeng. "..."

Mingshi Yin did not return to the eastern pavilion. He decided to return to the southern pavilion to rest. It was at this moment he saw Little Yuan'er and Conch walking toward him.

The two girls were merrily chatting away.

“Hm? A newcomer?” Mingshi Yin walked up to them. He greeted Little Yuan’er, “Little Junior Sister!”

Little Yuan’er saw what he was holding and said, “Fourth Senior Brother? Did you bring some delicious snacks for me?”

Conch merely smiled at him.

“This is?”

“Conch...” Little Yuan’er replied.

“Conch?” Mingshi Yin felt shocked. He circled Conch with a smile and sized her up. Nobody knew what was going through his mind.

“Fourth Senior Brother... what’s this?”

“A leaf-sprouting pill,” Mingshi Yin nonchalantly replied.

“Let me see it.”

Mingshi Yin passed the leaf-sprouting pill to Little Yuan’er. He stood at the side and observed Conch.

Little Yuan’er opened the bag and took it out to have a look. The sparkling and translucent leaf-sprouting pill was aromatic.

This was Little Yuan’er and Conch’s first time seeing a leaf-sprouting pill. They were, naturally, curious.

Conch was clearly attracted by the pearl-like leaf-sprouting pill.

“Here.” Little Yuan’er placed the leaf-sprouting pill in Conch’s hand.

Conch received it carefully and held it against the sunlight.

The two girls continued whispering to each other.

“Can this be eaten?”

“It’s something to be eaten... like sweets.” Little Yuan’er was admiring the leaf-sprouting pill.

“Oh.” Conch looked at the candy-like translucent leaf-sprouting pill as an urge to eat it rose in her heart. There was no child that could resist the allure of sweets, after all. She raised her hand and placed the leaf-sprouting pill into her mouth. It melted instantly.

Mingshi Yin walked over at this moment. When he saw her clean and empty palm, he said in confusion, “Where’s my leaf-sprouting pill?”

“I ate it,” Conch replied innocently.

“Huh?”

“It’s sweet and salty... and... hot...” After saying this, Conch shut her eyes and fell to the side.

Mingshi Yin. “???”

Chapter 493: Impressive Avatars

After a cultivator had severed their Golden Lotus and consumed a leaf-sprouting pill, the pill would stimulate their dantian's sea of Qi to produce large amounts of Primal Qi to raise their cultivation base and stimulate the growth of a new leaf.

The leaf-sprouting pills were difficult to refine, and the materials needed to refine them were rare. The only lab rats used during the early stages of the pills' development were cultivators who had entered the Nascent Divinity realm.

Although this was Mingshi Yin's first time seeing a leaf-sprouting pill, his common sense told him that ordinary people should not eat this pill. Otherwise, the effects would be adverse. As soon as he saw Conch falling, he quickly extended his hand and sent a surge of energy to protect her. Then, with his other hand, he quickly sealed her meridian points with rapid taps.

"Fourth Senior Brother, what's happening to Conch?" Little Yuan'er seemed slightly anxious now that she discovered something was amiss.

Initially, Mingshi Yin wanted to reprimand Little Yuan'er. However, he did not have the heart to do it when he saw her expression. "Bring her into the room."

Mingshi Yin and Little Yuan'er quickly brought Conch into Little Yuan'er's room in the southern pavilion.

Little Yuan'er was beside herself with worry. She asked, "Is she going to be alright?"

Mingshi Yin could not guarantee that so he only said, "Calm down." He pushed his Primal Qi forward. An energy seal supported Conch. He channeled his Qi through his palm and sent it into her Extraordinary Eight Meridians and into her internal organs. He could sense the intense surging of the medicinal effect in her body. He was shocked to discover it was growing more and more intense. It was no wonder she had fainted since she was unable to withstand it.

"She's a mortal!" Mingshi Yin exclaimed in shock. If she had the slightest bit of cultivation base, he could have helped her by routing the Primal Qi from the pill into her dantian's sea of Qi and help her break through to avert the danger. However, since she was a mortal, the pill's effect had nowhere to go and was ricocheting around her internal organs. He knew this could not go on.

Medicine was three parts poison. Moreover, even cultivators would be in agony after consuming this pill. One had to know cultivators had to endure harsh Body Tempering processes. Their Extraordinary Eight Meridians had been tempered as well. A grand cultivator in the Nascent Divinity Tribulation realm was much more powerful in terms of physical strength even without help from their Primal Qi.

Without hesitation, Mingshi Yin kept channeling his Primal Qi.

"Hm?" Mingshi Yin sensed that the pill's effects were moving toward her dantian's sea of Qi. Her life would be in danger if this went on. He had to stop this.

Mingshi Yin dared not let his guard down. He used his Primal Qi to stop the pill's effects inside her Extraordinary Eight Meridians. He blocked the entrance to her dantian's sea of Qi.

At this moment, Conch grunted. Blood trickled out from the edge of her lips.

Little Yuan'er started in shock. She said hastily, "Fourth Senior Brother, I'll go get master! I'll go get master..."

Mingshi Yin did not stop her. He focused on protecting Conch.

Little Yuan'er ran out of the room.

Mingshi Yin did everything in his ability. Saving someone was much more difficult than killing someone, especially when it was something as unexpected as what he was dealing with now. Soon enough, his forehead was drenched in sweat.

Soon enough, Lu Zhou arrived outside the southern pavilion. The female cultivators around bowed at him.

Bam!

Lu Zhou waved his arm. A blast of energy opened the door, and he entered the room.

"Master!" Mingshi Yin looked sheepish. "I didn't intentionally do this! She was too quick! Don't worry, she'll be fine soon!"

Lu Zhou looked at Conch; her condition did not seem promising. A pained expression could be seen on her face, and there were bloodstains on the edge of her lips as well. Most importantly, white fumes were rising from her body. These signs showed that Conch's outlook was not good.

"Move aside."

"Understood." Mingshi Yin moved to the side at once. He wiped his sweat away and remained bowing. He dared not move. His heart raced as he looked at Conch furtively. 'You better survive, young lady. Otherwise, master will beat me to death for sure!'

Lu Zhou walked to the bed. He placed two fingers on her wrist and channeled some Primal Qi into her body. Conch's Extraordinary Eight Meridians were in a mess. The pill's effects were restless and impacted her dantian's sea of Qi. Without experiencing Body Tempering beforehand, mortals had no place to store the Primal Qi from the pill. They would only end up imploding and dying.

He raised a palm. A faint blue light shone from between his fingers.

To visit many places without having to move, reaping many benefits.

This was the fourth Heavenly Writing power: the power of immaterial existence.

When the power entered Conch's body, the pill's effects were immediately nullified by Lu Zhou's power that was stronger.

Lu Zhou did not use too much of his extraordinary power. He merely used a small portion of it. Healing could not be done overnight. However, as he healed her... he discovered more and more about her unique and intriguing characteristics. 'That can't be right!'

Mingshi Yin was beside himself with anxiety. He was worried something bad and unexpected might happen. He hastily pulled Little Yuan'er to the side and asked softly, "Where did this young girl come from?"

Little Yuan'er honestly told him what she knew.

Upon hearing Little Yuan'er's words, Mingshi Yin was certain Conch was a mortal. He felt more at ease now. 'It's fine. Even if something were to happen, it won't be a big deal.'

At this moment, the blue light suddenly flashed blindingly bright in the room. A powerful blue lotus instantly enveloped the entire southern pavilion.

Mingshi Yin was shocked. He looked at the light from the blue lotus on the floor. Then, he looked outside the room.

Lu Zhou was standing in the center of the blue lotus. He was pressing down with both palms. The petals of the blue lotus seemed alive between his fingers. Under the sunlight, the blue lotus's radiance seemed exceptionally brilliant.

A powerful surge of life energy rippled out from the southern pavilion into the surroundings like a tide.

The first ones to notice this strange phenomenon were the four elders of the Old Age Pavilion.

Leng Luo, Pan Litian, Hua Wudao, and Zuo Yushu walked out of the room. The four of them looked at the dazzling blue lotus.

"What's happening?"

"I've never seen the pavilion master unleashing such a grand healing technique!"

"I'm afraid he must have encountered a trouble!"

The four of them frowned slightly.

Without saying another word, Leng Luo raised his palm. "Hundred Tribulations Insight."

Leng Luo's avatar did not have a Golden Lotus. Even so, a Hundred Tribulations Insight avatar was still a Hundred Tribulations Insight avatar. It was not something that a Ten Worlds avatar or below could compare to. He sent his avatar into the air.

"Elder Leng, what are you doing?" Pan Litian was puzzled.

"I understand now..." Hua Wudao unleashed his avatar as well. Similarly, it did not have a Golden Lotus. His Hundred Tribulations Insight avatar flew into the air.

Pan Litian shook his head. "Just as well. I should be the first one to help." He joined his palms, and his avatar materialized. He pushed upward, and his Hundred Tribulations Insight avatar flew up as well.

The three Hundred Tribulations Insight avatars did not have Golden Lotuses.

Zuo Yushu was shocked. "You've all severed your Golden Lotuses?"

"What's wrong with that?" The three of them looked at Zuo Yushu.

They could sympathize with Zuo Yushu. After all, she had just joined the Old Age Pavilion. It was expected that she would not immediately sever Golden Lotus.

An unnatural smile could be seen on Zuo Yushu's face as she said in an exhausted tone, "I didn't think any of you would really sever your Golden Lotuses..." Then, she slammed her staff on the ground.

Whizz!

The script seals on her staff floated out. The script seals looked like bricks that stacked on top of each other into a Hundred Tribulations Insight avatar.

The three elders looked at it at the same time. They were inwardly amazed by it. There were many ways to form an avatar in the Confucian Societies, just like the Daoist Societies. However, this was an impressive method. There were advantages to using unconventional methods. One could usually catch one's opponents off-guard. The downsides were the might and speed were not as great as the conventional method. They noticed that Zuo Yushu's avatar did not have a Golden Lotus as well.

The four avatars did not have Golden Lotuses.

The four elders exchanged glances and smiled.

At the same time, they positioned their avatars so that they covered the southern pavilion before they flew toward Little Yuan'er's room.

Their avatars grew. Although they severed their Golden Lotuses, and they were now smaller. Hundred Tribulations Insight avatars were still an impressive sight and would strike fear into the hearts of the people who saw it.

The four shining and golden giants, three males and one female, surrounded the blue lotus' leaves. Power seemed to pour down from the sides like four waterfalls. The golden radiance and the blue lotus merged as one as they descended.

Chapter 494: Naturally Entering The Mystic Enlightening Realm

In the northern pavilion and the western pavilion in the Evil Sky Pavilion.

The female cultivators who were sweeping the stairs halfway up the mountain looked up at the blue lotus and the four avatars. All of them stopped what they were doing to look at this impressive sight.

The four humanoid avatars were the size of a mountain as they supported the leaves of the blue lotus. Power was leaking from four directions.

Pan Zhong and Zhou Jifeng looked up at the four avatars as well.

A tidal wave of power fell from the skies.

"What's that?"

"Such intense vitality and Primal Qi!"

The duo had been stuck in the Divine Court realm for a long time. This avalanche of Primal Qi and life energy made their dantian's sea of Qis stir. They exchanged a glance before sitting down on the ground, no longer caring about what was happening at the other end. After all, they could not be of any help. They were better off seizing this opportunity to achieve a breakthrough.

"Not going to form a Golden Lotus?"

"Nope."

Both of them came to an agreement on their cultivation method.

...

Meanwhile.

Lu Zhou poured all of his Heavenly Writing's extraordinary power out. This was the most extraordinary power he had used to unleash the power of immaterial existence. Unlike the previous occurrences, he was now using it to save someone. Previously, it had only been used to kill.

Visit many places without having to move, reaping many benefits.

Heavenly Writing's chant swelled and rose in volume as it entered the blue lotus.

Mingshi Yin was dumbstruck. Was his master out of his mind? Why would his master go so far as to save a young girl he barely knew? At this moment, he saw the four avatars around the blue lotus.

"The four elders' Hundred Tribulations Insight avatars!" Little Yuan'er ran out and looked at the golden flashes of energies in the skies.

Primal Qi and the Heavenly Writing's extraordinary power complemented each other. The golden and blue shone down the mountain with increasing intensity like an expanding ocean.

The trees grew abundantly at the halfway point of the mountain, and the withered plants around the gazebo were revitalized.

Birds and beasts chirped and roared in joy and leaped in excitement among the trees.

At the foot of the mountain, even the plants were rejuvenated.

The withered trees at the places where the battle with the grand shaman, Ba Ma, had taken place were given a new lease on life.

Everything was growing again.

...

Inside the southern pavilion.

Princess Yong Ning walked out of her room as she endured the uncomfortable sensation in her body. She was stunned when she saw the impressive sight, standing riveted to the spot. She widened her eyes and muttered, "Pretty..."

She heard Si Wuya mention that the Evil Sky Pavilion could not be violated. He had also mentioned the evil and unclean aspects of Golden Court Mountain. However, how could she believe someone else's words without witnessing it for herself? Now that she had witnessed this, she disregarded the rumors she had heard. If she could, she wanted to throw away her status as a princess and stay here forever.

...

Cultivators around Golden Court Mountain stopped to look at the impressive scene.

The citizens of Tangzi Town laid down their hoes and stopped their labor as they looked at the flashes of light in the distance. Although they could not get a clear look, the golden and blue radiances usually meant something positive. This time, it made them feel fearful but respectful at the same time.

...

Under the support of the four avatars, the huge blue lotus nearly covered the entire Evil Sky Pavilion.

The four pavilions were filled with the blue lotus' energy.

"I can't hold it anymore." Hua Wudao was the first to speak.

"Just a little longer!" Leng Luo said encouragingly.

"Who's the pavilion master trying to save anyway? Does he have to cause such a huge scene?"

"Regardless... our objective is to help the pavilion master!"

The four of them exchanged a glance and nodded. All of their faces, without an exception, were glistening with sweat. Maintaining a Hundred Tribulations Insight avatar for a long time was no small feat, after all. It was incredible that they could even hold out for so long.

A moment later, the four Elders began to sway on their feet.

"On my count, we'll retreat together," Leng Luo said in his deep voice. It would be too much for them if they kept this up. They would be hurt.

"Alright."

Leng Luo's avatar shifted slightly.

Lu Zhou sensed movement in the skies, and he gauged his extraordinary power again. In a few short breaths, he would run out of extraordinary power. Everything hinged on this final moment...

He could meditate again to replenish his extraordinary power. However, if this young girl were to die, her secrets would die with her.

Whizz!

The Heavenly Writing's power was at its maximum output at this moment.

The four avatars retreated at the same time. As they retreated, a leaf appeared on them.

"They sprouted leaves!"

"No way! They sprouted leaves at the same time!"

The four avatars sprouted leaves simultaneously!

They were now in the One-leaf Nascent Divinity Tribulation realm.

What a majestic sight it was to behold!

Sprouting a leaf signified that they had grown stronger again.

The four avatars grew larger as they sprouted their leaves. From their 10-foot height, they grew to 20 feet at the same time.

The four elders were, naturally, overjoyed!

“Again?” Hua Wudao asked hesitantly.

Since they had a breakthrough, it meant they could now keep going.

However, Zuo Yushu said, “There’s no need for that.” She recalled her avatar from the skies and said again, “The pavilion master is stopping.”

The others felt it as well. If the pavilion master stopped, it was meaningless for them to continue.

At the same their avatars vanished, the blue lotus faded out of sight as well.

The four elders staggered backward. Although they had a breakthrough, it did not mean it was any less taxing on their bodies.

“Let’s adjust our breaths here.”

...

Similarly, Pan Zhong and Zhou Jifeng had a breakthrough as well. However, their breakthroughs were not as impressive. They were rookies among Nascent Divinity Tribulation realm cultivators. Although they formed Hundred Tribulations Insight avatars at the same time, and their cultivation bases were similar to the elders of the Old Age Pavilion, the actual difference between their strengths was as different as heaven and hell.

The commotion of their breakthroughs was completely overshadowed by the blue lotus.

In any case, they had gotten the help they needed and were now officially in the Nascent Divinity Tribulation realm.

...

Inside the room of the southern pavilion.

Everything was silent.

Lu Zhou had done everything he could. He stroked his beard as he looked at Conch before he placed two fingers on her wrist. After a brief examination, he frowned deeply.

Perhaps, he was terrified by this huge disturbance, Mingshi Yin fell to his knees with a thud and said, “I’ve made a mistake. I didn’t mean to harm her!”

When Little Yuan’er saw this, she raised her hands, pouted, and wiped away her tears.

Lu Zhou looked at the two of them and reprimanded them, “Be quiet!”

“Oh.” The two of them shut their mouths at once.

Lu Zhou did not have the time to listen to them. He sensed the Extraordinary Eight Meridians in Conch’s body had been completely connected. Her dantian’s sea of Qi had been activated!

“How’s this possible?” Lu Zhou thought he was hallucinating. He examined her again. After his examination, he confirmed that Conch was now a Mystic Enlightening realm cultivator with five connected meridians.

He really could not figure it out. A normal cultivator would have to undergo Body Tempering first. Body Tempering cultivated the muscles, bones, and tendons. The body had to be tempered from the inside out, including the Extraordinary Eight Meridians. When the conditions were right, the cultivator would enter the Mystic Enlightening realm. After connecting five meridians in the Mystic Enlightening realm, one’s senses would be greatly sharpened.

A human’s body was a container. When the container’s quality was raised, it would be more tolerant to the havoc wreaked by Primal Qi. Primal Qi could be condensed into energy that protected the cultivator as they breathed and moved. This was how it was for a cultivator. Nobody could skip this step, and yet, Conch had easily entered the Mystic Enlightening realm!

Chapter 495: Grade Skipper

Lu Zhou used every Heavenly Writing’s power to preserve Conch’s Extraordinary Eight Meridians. However, they were merely preserved. He could not help her undergo Body Tempering or cultivate. Having used his power over and over again, he knew this very well. However, Conch had easily and naturally entered the Mystic Enlightening realm.

Lu Zhou stroked his beard as he thought about this. He really could not make sense of it. What happened?

Mingshi Yin remained kneeling on the ground, too afraid to speak.

Little Yuan’er, on the other hand, stopped crying. She was now looking at Conch.

Lu Zhou could not seem to find the answer to his question despite his thousand years of experience and knowledge. He stood up and mumbled, “Incredible.”

Mingshi Yin looked up at his master in confusion as he asked, “Master, how’s she doing?” He furtively looked at Conch who was lying on the bed. He could sense that Conch was still breathing and smoothly at that. She did not seem to be in any danger.

When Mingshi Yin saw his master frowning and lost in thought, he stood up of his own accord, walked up to the bed, and placed two fingers on Conch’s wrist. His eyes widened. He could not believe it and examined her pulse again. “Good heavens!” The results were the same. He stuttered, “M-mystic Enlightening?”

He leaped backward and said in an alarmed tone, “Master, is she a spy sent by the other sects? Did she intentionally hide her cultivation base and strength?”

Without waiting for a response from Lu Zhou, Mingshi Yin shook his head and refuted his own guess. “No, it makes no sense to send a Mystic Enlightening cultivator.”

Little Yuan’er was shocked and puzzled. “Fourth Senior Brother, is Conch dead?”

“She’s not dead, she’s doing fine... She’s now in the Mystic Enlightening realm,” Mingshi Yin replied.

“Mystic Enlightening realm?”

“Entering the Mystic Enlightening realm directly without undergoing Body Tempering...”

“...”

There was no doubt Conch had entered the Mystic Enlightening realm, but Lu Zhou could not figure out how for now. This was truly strange. If she were from the modern world, it could be considered as her skipping a grade. In fact, she was even more terrifying than those grade skippers in the modern world. A grade skipper merely learned faster compared to other students. Essentially, they still have a foundation. However, Conch had no foundation whatsoever, but she directly skipped the Body Tempering process and directly entered the Mystic Enlightening realm. Even the outstandingly talented Little Yuan’er was not capable of this.

Lu Zhou was still lost in his thoughts when the four elders appeared in the courtyard. “Greetings, Pavilion Master.”

Lu Zhou stopped thinking. He calmly said, “Come in, all of you.”

The four elders entered the room. They glanced around and could roughly guess what happened. At the same time, they looked at Conch who was lying on the bed.

“What happened?” Zuo Yushu asked, puzzled.

“Allow me, allow me...” Mingshi Yin raised a hand. He seemed enthusiastic about recounting something so sensational. He stood before the four elders, cleared his throat, and said, “Genius... A super genius! A peerless genius... She directly entered the Mystic Enlightening realm... Don’t look at me as if I’m some lunatic.”

“...”

What was he talking about? They could not understand Mingshi Yin’s words. Only when Mingshi calmed down and properly recounted what happened did they understand. All of them clicked their tongues in wonder and amazement. There had never been a cultivator who entered the Mystic Enlightening realm without undergoing Body Tempering.

The four elders took turns walking to the bed to examine Conch’s Extraordinary Eight Meridians.

Even the knowledgeable four elders were baffled by this strange occurrence. They could not understand it.

The four of them frowned, lost in their own thoughts.

Lu Zhou stroked his beard and looked at the four elders. “Elder Pan, any ideas?”

“Uh...” Pan Litian’s wizened face twitched. He said with a smile, “I’m sure Elder Leng knows. I won’t embarrass myself.”

Leng Luo said in a hushed tone to Hua Wudao, “Elder Hua... you answer this.”

“Me? I think it’s better to leave this to Senior Zuo...” Hua Wudao hastily stepped backward.

Zuo Yushu frowned. 'These three old men are bullying a woman. How could they do this? This shameless lot!'

However, Zuo Yushu did know something about this. Hence, she said, "I don't think that she has never undergone Body Tempering."

When the others heard this, they looked at Zuo Yushu.

"What makes you say that?" Lu Zhou asked as he stroked his beard.

Zuo Yushu looked to the side before speaking with the air of a female tutor, "You've preserved her meridian vessels with some unconventional method, Pavilion Master. With the addition of the powers from the four of us, it's not impossible for her to complete Body Tempering in a short amount of time under those conditions."

"But her bodily functions aren't strong. She's no different from a mortal," Mingshi Yin said, still perplexed.

"The pavilion master's power and our powers complemented each other. When we activated her dantian's sea of Qi, our powers canceled each other out, which led to this outcome," Zuo Yushu cupped her fists at Lu Zhou and said, "Of course, these are only my speculation."

"It's no small feat to enter the Mystic Enlightening realm under such conditions."

Pan Litian said, "In that case, this young girl might be a rare cultivation genius who only shows up once every thousand years."

"Indeed..." Zuo Yushu said.

Mingshi Yin rolled his eyes at them, speechless. After going on for so long, they had reached the same conclusions he did.

At this moment, Hua Wudao stepped forward and said with a bow, "Pavilion Master... I'm willing to take her on as a disciple. I'll do everything I can to teach her everything I know. Please agree to my request, Pavilion Master!"

Leng Luo said, "You're going to teach a young lady to fight with your tortoiseshell technique? I think this young lady is suitable for the Dao Invisibility technique. I guarantee that she'll become the next Eight-leaf Dao Invisibility elite."

Pan Litian said in a disapproving tone, "I don't think that there's much difference between the Dao Invisibility technique and the tortoiseshell technique... With her talent, she should be learning about energy seals with me. Becoming an Eight-leaf cultivator is nothing. I hope that she'll become a Nine-leaf cultivator!"

Zuo Yushu joined the Evil Sky Pavilion late. However, when she saw a young talent such as Conch, she felt an urge to teach her as well. She was a female as well, and she resented the Confucian Societies' patrilineal inheritance. She felt that it was a waste for her to bring all that she learned to the grave. "I... I..."

Before Zuo Yushu could finish her sentence, Lu Zhou raised a hand and calmly, "That's enough."

The room fell silent.

Nothing was for certain yet, and they were already fighting over a potential disciple. When Lu Zhou looked at the elders, none of them dared to speak. "I have my arrangements for her... Let's call it a day."

The four of them bowed and left the southern pavilion.

Outside the southern pavilion, the four of them sighed and shook their heads.

"What a shame that a genius such as her can't become my disciple..." Pan Litian sighed.

"Let's not think about it anymore. With the pavilion master around, we won't get the chance..."

The others were taken aback. That made sense. How could they have forgotten this?

...

Inside the room.

Lu Zhou looked at the unharmed Conch. Indeed, he thought about accepting her as his disciple, but accepting another disciple would not benefit him further. In fact, it would only distract him.

According to Ji Tiandao's sequence of recruiting his disciples, the nine disciples were somehow related to the poem. In that case... if the tenth disciple's name was Conch, did that not mean that everything would deviate from the original plan?

"Look after her," Lu Zhou ordered.

"Yes, master."

Lu Zhou decided to focus on unraveling the mysteries behind Conch for now. Why couldn't the Eye of Truth see through her? How did she directly enter the Mystic Enlightening realm? Where did she come from? Where would she go?

...

Two days later.

The battle of Jing Province began.

With the support of the Penglai Sect, the Nether Sect launched an all-out attack against the city under Yu Zhenghai's leadership.

Huang Shijie and Yu Zhenghai, two Eight-leaf elites, attacked Jing Province City with Hua Chongyang and the other Nether Sect elites.

Jing Province was in turmoil.

In less than three days, Jing Province's garrison was pushed back.

The Nether Sect rode on the momentum and occupied the General's Mansion.

...

Inside the General's Mansion.

Yu Zhenghai was in a more positive mood than he was before. He said to Huang Shijie who was next to him, "Thanks to you, Brother Shijie, that we're able to defeat Wen Shu."

Huang Shijie waved his hand and said, "It's nothing. Your Great Dark Heaven Memorial, Sect Master Yu, has truly widened my horizons. The way you shook the lands with a swing of your saber is amazing."

Everyone said that Yu Zhenghai's cultivation base was profound. However, few had witnessed him in action.

After the battle at Jing Province, Huang Shijie had to admit that even though he was also an Eight-leaf cultivator, it would be difficult for him to defeat Yu Zhenghai.

"If you have any requests, Brother Shijie, please feel free to speak. I will do my best to fulfill them," Yu Zhenghai said.

Huang Shijie initially had many requests, but when he thought about Ji Tiandao's Nine-leaf Golden Lotus, he said, "There's no need to thank me. We're just friends helping each other out..." As soon as he finished speaking, he suddenly coughed and spat out a mouthful of blood.

"Brother Shijie!" Yu Zhenghai cried out.

"I'm fine... That old brigand Wen Shu couldn't beat me directly and resort to a sneak attack... How despicable!"

At this moment, Hua Chongyang hurried into the mansion. He cupped his fists at the two of them and said, "Report, sect master. We've searched every corner of the Formation. The old brigand Wen Shu has gotten away!"

When he heard this, Yu Zhenghai said in a deep voice, "Find him even if it means turning the city inside out!"

"Yes, sect master!" Hua Chongyang bowed.

...

Meanwhile, in a channel north of Jing Province, five battered armored men were running.

"General Wen, this way... If we follow this channel that runs between the huge trees, we'll reach Measure Heaven River that's 50 miles away. I've prepared a boat there."

An old man was sandwiched between them. His armor was damaged, and his face was wounded. This was one of the eight great commanders who guarded Jing Province City and the Confucian Society elite, General Wen Shu.

Wen Shu glanced at Jing Province City. Then, he shook his head and said, "I won't rest until I get my revenge."

The moment he said this, a calm and gentle voice rang from above a tree. "My apologies."

Chapter 496: I'm a Peerless Eight-leaf Elite. Always Have Been and Always Will Be!

Wen Shu and his entourage were like birds startled by the mere twang of a bow, to begin with. They felt fortunate enough to have survived the battle of Jing Province. They were all injured to varying degrees. Therefore, the sudden voice startled and frightened them.

“Who’s there?”

“General Wen Shu, look out!”

A green-robed swordsman with a longsword in his hands perched on a branch of a huge tree. He looked down on everyone with a lofty bearing. He said with a smile on his face, “My apologies, but you must remain here.”

“You are...” One of them found this swordsman’s appearance extremely similar to a certain legendary individual.

“He’s... Yu Shangrong! The Sword Devil, Yu Shangrong!” someone cried out.

Wen Shu’s heart sank and thumped wildly in his chest. Even in peak condition, he was merely slightly stronger than Huang Shijie. There was no way he would be a match for Yu Shangrong or Yu Zhenghai. He had heard about the grand battle between the two Eight-leaf elites in Radiant Cloud Forest as well. The epic battle was well-known in the cultivation world. It was clear that Sword Devil Yu Shangrong whose name struck fear into the hearts of those who heard it was as strong as Yu Zhenghai. He continued staring at Yu Shangrong who was perched on the tree warily and in trepidation. ‘I can’t panic. I must pull myself together.’ In the end, he cupped his fists together and inhaled, gathering his Primal Qi. He said, “Your reputation precedes you, Sword Devil. Forgive our lack of hospitality.”

Yu Shangrong calmly said, “My sword never kills someone without a name. Apart from Wen Shu, the lot of you should leave. I’ll give you three breaths to do so.”

The remaining four soldiers exchanged a glance.

Wen Shu frowned. He hastily said, “Fleeing before the enemy is a death offense!”

The four soldiers were not fools. How could they deal with Yu Shangrong?

‘Fleeing before the enemy? Aren’t you doing exactly that, you old geezer?’

“We’re sorry, General Wen.”

What could they do in three breaths? The answer was simple; they could run for their lives, of course! Four of them did not hesitate; they turned tail and ran immediately. In just a blink of an eye, they vanished among the trees. They could not be blamed. After all, they were unaware that Yu Shangrong had severed his Golden Lotus. Who would not cower in fear before the Eight-leaf elite, Yu Shangrong?

Wen Shu furrowed his brows; his expression was dark. He suppressed the unpleasant feeling in his heart as he cupped his fists together again and said, “I heard that you’re at odds with Yu Zhenghai, the Sect Master of the Nether Sect. To be honest, I’ve fought with him for a hundred rounds earlier. If you find him now, I’m sure you’ll be able to easily defeat him now.”

Still perched on the branch, Yu Shangrong smiled faintly and said, “It looks like you don’t understand me at all.”

“Huh?”

“So what if I defeat him now? It won’t be a glorious victory,” Yu Shangrong said tonelessly.

Wen Shu relaxed and said, “I’m also injured. Dear sir...”

Yu Shangrong lowered his arms to cut Wen Shu’s words off. With the scabbard in his right hand, he tossed it up lightly and caught his Longevity Sword. With a push of his left hand, a blast of energy sent the scabbard flying.

Bam!

The scabbard was embedded into the tree.

The scarlet Longevity Sword was raised before Yu Shangrong. “Alas, you’ll have to die.”

After saying this, Yu Shangrong patted the sword. With movements as light as a swallow, he flew toward Wen Shu on his sword.

Wen Shu’s expression turned grim. He retreated at once while shooting multiple talismans from his palms.

Bam! Bam! Bam!

Both of them started fighting.

Yu Shangrong appeared calm. He held his Longevity Sword behind him as he walked toward his target.

Wen Shu kept sending out talismans and script seals as though he was facing a great enemy. This was the Sword Devil, after all! This was the Evil Sky Pavilion’s Mister Second, Yu Shangrong, whose every move was to kill. He was given the moniker Sword Devil for a reason! Therefore, despite being seriously wounded, how could he hold back when facing such an opponent? He had to forcibly muster all the strength he had left in him to fight for his survival.

Wen Shu’s eyes widened. He had been sending more and more talismans and script seals out, and yet, the Sword Devil evaded all of them and danced around his attacks, unharmed. At this moment, the Sword Devil was fast approaching him!

Yu Shangrong swung the Longevity Sword!

Bam! Bam! Bam!

Several talismans were parried by the Longevity Sword. The sword shadows were densely packed that they looked like a blur.

When Wen Shu saw that the Sword Devil was finally upon him, he shouted, “Open!”

A round energy seal blast rippled out into his surroundings.

His Eight-leaf avatar appeared and grew in size.

Boom!

The trees in the vicinity of a few dozens meters fell.

However, after a few breaths, Wen Shu's avatar vanished. He felt the pressure had alleviated slightly. 'Where's the Sword Devil?'

Wen Shu looked up cautiously. He saw Yu Shangrong gracefully flip in the air above the cloud of dust that was stirred up. It seemed to him like he managed to push Yu Shangrong back? He found this hard to believe. Although he had used all his strength to attack, it should have been easy for the Sword Devil to destroy his avatar and kill him. It baffled him to see Yu Shangrong retreating at this moment.

Meanwhile, Yu Shangrong avoided the shockwave from the Eight-leaf avatar's appearance. When he landed, he advanced again at a much faster speed.

"Are you toying me?" Wen Shu asked, incensed and offended. He kept pushing his palm out as different talismans appeared between his fingers. A faint golden light could be seen swirling around his palms. He pushed forward.

Yu Shangrong tapped the ground with his feet and shot into the air. His sword hovered beside him. Densely packed energy swords appeared in the air.

"Sword Devil's Destiny."

Countless energy swords shot toward Wen Shu.

Wen Shu scoffed. "Is this all the Sword Devil's got? You'll pay for underestimating your opponent." He joined his palms together. His left index finger connected with his right index finger. Then, he stomped his feet on the ground before the golden light between his fingers flashed brighter than before.

This was the best opportunity to unleash Abandon Wisdom. All elements were in place. The Sword Devil was above while Wen Shu was below. The angle was perfect, and the timing was impeccable. Wen Shu would never give up on such a wonderful opportunity! A string of words hung above his hands: Abandon Wisdom. This was the most powerful technique of the Confucian Societies. The energy seals formed streamlined bullets above his fingers. Then, he shot toward Yu Shangrong like a cannonball.

The energy swords from the Sword Devil's Destiny collided with the energy seals of Abandon Wisdom.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

The Sword Devil's Destiny could not block Abandon Wisdom.

Yu Shangrong's expression remained the same. He did a 180-degree flip and retreated as he unleashed his avatar.

Whizz!

When his avatar appeared, it made for a shocking scene.

Yu Shangrong merged with his avatar. His palms joined with its palms.

The four palms advanced against Abandon Wisdom.

Time seemed to slow down at this moment.

It was a move that could decide the outcome of the battle in an instant, but it seemed to be taking too long.

The trees fell as the two opponents advanced to each other. They flew upward; one pressing forward while the other retreating.

Wen Shu caught a glimpse of Yu Shangrong's avatar's Golden Lotus before he burst into a peal of laughter. "It seems like the heavens are on my side today. Who knew I'd meet the Sword Devil who has severed his Golden Lotus? You're seeking death!" He felt invigorated and hopeful now that he had seen Yu Shangrong's lack of a Golden Lotus. The flames of his fury finally found an outlet. The radiance of Abandon Wisdom shone between his fingers as he charged toward the four palms.

Their energies collided!

Boom!

A horizontal streak of energy swept through the surroundings...

Bam! Bam! Bam!

The huge trees around them were felled by the collision of energies.

Their lines of sight were suddenly unobstructed now.

Wen Shu maintained the Abandon Wisdom.

Yu Shangrong's four palms were crossed as he parried the blow!

Wen Shu thought that Yu Shangrong would be heavily wounded from this, but that did not seem to be the case. Yu Shangrong was not only unharmed, but he still managed to maintain his avatar. A shocked expression bloomed on his face as he looked at Yu Shangrong incredulously. "Three-leaf... Y-you're just a Three-leaf cultivator! How did you block that? Why is your avatar still here?" His voice was trembling when he spoke.

At this moment, the duo began to descend to the ground.

"You know too little about avatars," Yu Shangrong said nonchalantly. He looked at Wen Shu as though Wen Shu was a dead man walking.

Wen Shu felt his temper rising. He said contemptuously, "So what? Even if I'm heavily wounded, I won't lose to a mere Three-leaf cultivator like..."

Swoosh!

Three leaves shot out at lightning speed toward Wen Shu and slashed his neck, creating a neat wound before Wen Shu even finished speaking.

Both of them finally touched the ground.

Wen Shu's eyes were widened as he looked at the three leaves incredulously. Fresh blood was constantly gushing out of his wound.

At this moment, the three shining golden leaves returned to the Longevity Sword's side.

Rip!

Two of the leaves suddenly split into two. They shone with a brilliant golden light. Five leaves circled in the air and eventually flew toward the avatar before it finally disappeared under the glaring sunlight.

Yu Shangrong stood with his back against the sun. His slender figure seemed lofty and untouchable.

Wen Shu could not see his expression against the glare of the sun. He could only hear Yu Shangrong say, "I'm a peerless Eight-leaf elite... Always have been and always will be."

Chapter 497: Five-leaf Yu Shangrong. Coming To A Head!

The blood gushing from Wen Shu's neck wound stained his chest. When he felt he could no longer breathe, he felt as though his soul was being grabbed by an invisible hand from his dantian's sea of Qi. It seemed like it was pulled up from his heart before it was briefly lodged in his throat, and finally, escaped his body. He fell backward.

The sun shone on Yu Shangrong's face, illuminating his calm and stoic expression. Perhaps, he was used to seeing such a scene, he only felt apathy.

Yu Shangrong raised his palm. From the faraway tree trunk, the scabbard flew back to him, and he sheathed his sword. He suddenly wondered if his claim had been too audacious earlier? After all, there was still his invincible master!

...

At this moment, Lu Zhou was meditating on the Heavenly Writing scrolls since he had used up all of his extraordinary power.

The addition of 1,500 merit points left him puzzled.

Among his nine disciples, it was most likely that Yu Shangrong was the one who killed a grand cultivator. Yu Zhenghai had not yet returned, and Ye Tianxin was still banished. Wait, it could have been Mingshi Yin as well. During the battle at the Obedient Villa, Mingshi Yin had killed a Five-leaf cultivator when he was just a Three-leaf cultivator. However, Mingshi Yin did not leave the Evil Sky Pavilion... Who else could it be if not Yu Shangrong?

A Three-leaf Yu Shangrong with the experience and technique of an Eight-leaf cultivator would find it easy to kill a Five-leaf cultivator.

Lu Zhou did not dwell on it too much and closed his eyes to continue meditating on the Heavenly Writing scrolls.

...

After the battle, Jing Province City was no longer the flourishing city it was once.

The streets were occupied by the Nether Sect Members.

Only some houses were damaged. In general, the battle did not cause much damage to the city.

With an Eight-leaf cultivation base, it was normal for cultivators to fight for days on end. If there had been no Formation, it would not have been surprising for two Eight-leaf cultivators to demolish Jing Province City. It was clear that they had restrained themselves when they fought. Moreover, Jing Province City had activated its Formation as well, shielding it from damage.

At this moment, the Nether Sect disciples were everywhere; from the city walls to the city gates. Flies buzzed about busily above the corpses strewn on the ground.

The Formation area was also occupied by the Nether Sect's cultivators.

The smell of blood wafted through the streets to the top of the city walls.

...

Inside the General's Mansion.

Yu Zhenghai, Si Wuya, and Huang Shijie were discussing their next move.

"Wise brother, Liang Province, Yi Province, and Jing Province are now under the Nether Sect's control. Should we advance north?" Yu Zhenghai asked.

Si Wuya was about to reply when Hua Chongyang walked into the room. He quickly said, "Sect master, we've found Wen Shu's head at the northern city gate..."

Yu Zhenghai, Si Wuya, and Huang Shijie instinctively rose to their feet from the shock.

Huang Shijie, an Eight-leaf expert, frowned slightly and asked, "Who did it?"

Hua Chongyang shook his head and replied, "We're not sure."

With his hands on his back, Yu Zhenghai said, "Surely, it's the work of an elite since he's capable of killing Wen Shu... Is there anything else?"

"There's only Wen Shu's head... However, based on the cut, it seemed to have been made from a sword," Hua Chongyang replied.

"A Sword Path elite?" A smile bloomed on Yu Zhenghai's face as he said, "Well, it's no surprise. After all, as the saying goes, 'A just cause attracts much support, an unjust one finds little'. If I can meet this elite, I'll have to personally thank him." At the end of his sentence, his expression turned regretful as though he felt it was a pity he could not meet this mysterious elite who killed Wen Shu. In his opinion, there was no doubt the other party meant to help the Nether Sect by displaying Wen Shu's head near the city gate.

Huang Shijie cupped his fists and said, "You have the support of the people, Sect Master Yu. The world will one day belong to the Nether Sect."

Hua Chongyang added, "I've sent some men out north to investigate. Based on their observation, there had been a battle, and Wen Shu seems to have unleashed quite a bit of power. However, his opponent's sword skills were amazing. No energy swords were wasted. He relied mostly on his sword and didn't leave many marks behind."

Si Wuya said, puzzled, "Apart from Second Senior Brother, who else is capable of this?"

Yu Zhenghai shook his head and said, "Wise brother, Wen Shu has been heavily wounded by me. If it was Second Junior Brother, Wen Shu wouldn't have had the chance to react all. It can't be him. Moreover, knowing him, he would wish for Wen Shu to survive."

When the others heard this, they nodded in agreement.

Si Wuya wondered if he should mention the matter about Yu Shangrong severing his Golden Lotus, but in the end, he swallowed his words. At this juncture, it was very possible that his Eldest Senior Brother did not want to hear about anything to do with severing one's Golden Lotus. The greater picture was more important. His Eldest Senior Brother had nothing on his mind now apart from conquering the world.

...

In the Eastern pavilion of the Evil Sky Pavilion.

After meditating on the Heavenly Writing scrolls for five days, Lu Zhou felt that his extraordinary power was nearly completely replenished. However, it was far from enough to merely meditate on the Heavenly Writing scrolls.

Now that the barrier had been restored, and the world was intimidated by the presence of a Nine-leaf elite in the Evil Sky Pavilion, this was the best chance for him to focus on cultivating. If he could progress from the One-leaf stage to the Two-leaf stage, there was a chance for him to progress from the Two-leaf stage to the Three-leaf stage.

Lu Zhou opened the system dashboard and took a look.

Remaining life: 16,744 days.

He had 48 Reversal Cards.

That amounted to about 45 years of life. His bodily functions were not at their best yet.

After thinking about it, Lu Zhou used 10 Reversal Cards. His lifespan increased by 4,000 days.

Lu Zhou did not use the remaining Reversal Cards. His instincts told him the value of these cards might appreciate after the Earth Scroll was activated.

"Master." Little Yuan'er's voice reached him from the outside, at this moment.

"Come in."

Little Yuan'er pushed the doors open and brought Conch into the room.

Conch appeared slightly shy. Perhaps, she was still shocked from consuming the leaf-sprouting pull.

"Let me see your hand," Lu Zhou said.

"Oh." Conch extended her hand in front of Lu Zhou.

Lu Zhou placed two fingers on Conch's wrist.

'Hm?' Lu Zhou sensed that aside from her dantian's sea of Qi directly activated, there were now some Primal Qi flowing through her meridian vessels. Things seemed to have gotten stranger. If she had not cultivated in the past, how could she have entered the cultivating state? She had never gone through the conventional Body Tempering process. The flow of Primal Qi was no laughing matter. If it condensed into energy, she would certainly be hurt.

Lu Zhou lifted his fingers and stared at Conch intently as he asked, "Conch, answer me honestly... Do you really know nothing about cultivation?"

"Cultivation?" Conch blinked her huge eyes.

Lu Zhou flipped his palm. A miniature avatar appeared above it.

Two leaves spun under the avatar.

Little Yuan'er did not find this strange at all. It was no longer news to them that their master was skilled in controlling avatars of different realms.

"This," Lu Zhou said, "is what cultivation means."

"I've seen this before," Conch said curiously.

"Is that so?"

"Eight leaves, nine leaves, and ten leaves..." Conch extended her fingers as she happily counted the leaves she had seen as she looked at the leaves under Lu Zhou's avatar.

When he heard this, Lu Zhou felt slightly shocked. "Where did you see it?"

Conch shook her head and muttered, "I can't remember... Maybe I was dreaming."

"..."

Lu Zhou felt speechless. Did she just claim that she had seen something in her dream?

When he saw that Conch was back to normal and there were no other issues aside from the tempering of her Extraordinary Eight Meridians, he said, "Yuan'er."

"Yes, master."

"Tell everyone to focus on their cultivation for the next six months. They're free to choose to sever their Golden Lotus or not. Everyone should help each other out, but we must be quick about this. Also, nobody is to teach Conch about cultivation in any way."

Little Yuan'er understood the first part of the instructions. The second part left her confused.

Just as Little Yuan'er was about to open her mouth to ask, Lu Zhou interjected, "If there's nothing else, you may leave."

"Yes, master." Little Yuan'er led Conch away from the eastern pavilion.

The eastern pavilion was quiet once more.

Lu Zhou was lost in his thoughts at this moment. If there were other Nine-leaf cultivators, or even a Ten-leaf cultivator, in this world, where would they be at this moment?

The Ten-leaf stage only existed in the old books, and there was the Thousand Realms Whirling avatar as well...

Lu Zhou checked the system dashboard. The price of a Thousand Realms Whirling avatar was 500,000 merit points.

Chapter 498: Help One Another to Sever Lotuses

If he wanted to purchase Thousand Realms Whirling avatar, he would have to wait until he had reached the Nine-leaf stage first. There was a long road ahead of him before he reached that stage.

‘I should save my merit points. I can’t spend them now.’

Lu Zhou closed his eyes and continued to cultivate with his legs crossed.

...

Early next morning, outside the eastern pavilion.

Zhu Honggong, Old Eighth, loitered around like he was an unemployed person.

“Morning, Fifth Senior Sister. Fifth Senior Sister... you look more beautiful than yesterday,” Zhu Honggong said with an ingratiating smile on his face.

Zhao Yue frowned. “What is it, Old Eighth?”

Zhu Honggong looked around before he said in a hushed tone, “Fifth Senior Sister, have you severed your Golden Lotus?”

“I haven’t, why?” Zhao Yue asked.

“Just asking.”

‘Nutjob.’ Zhao Yue gave him a complicated look as she walked away.

Zhu Honggong continued to loiter around. When he saw Little Yuan’er and Conch strolling about, he called out to them, “Little Junior Sister...”

“Eighth Senior Brother?”

“Little Junior Sister, you look more beautiful than yesterday,” Zhu Honggong said.

Little Yuan’er giggled. “Really?”

Zhu Honggong walked up to her and asked in a hushed voice, “Little Junior Sister, have you severed your lotus?”

“I haven’t, why?”

“Just asking,” said Zhu Honggong casually.

Little Yuan'er rolled her eyes at him and said, "You have too much time on your hands." Then, she led Conch to the back of the mountain in a run.

'I knew it. Nobody has severed their Golden Lotuses yet. They think that they can fool me into severing mine first? Fat chance of that happening! I won't sever mine until everyone has severed theirs. Wait... If I sever it first, I can cultivate earlier than everyone. I can't put it off forever....' Zhu Honggong looked at Little Yuan'er's retreating back as he stroked his chin. Finally, he made up his mind. 'I should look for Third Senior Brother and speak to him!'

Just when he was about to go to the training grounds at the halfway point of the mountain, a voice rang from behind him. "Eighth Junior Brother, come here."

"Fourth Senior Brother?"

Zhu Honggong saw Mingshi Yin waving at him nearby. His eyes brightened up as he walked over. He stood before Mingshi Yin, bowed, and asked, "Fourth Senior Brother... have you severed your lotus?"

"Why?" Mingshi Yin was not like the others. When he was asked this question, he immediately went on alert.

"Just asking..."

"Forget that. I'll help you today. You've just formed your Hundred Tribulations Insight avatar and have no leaves yet. The earlier you sever it, the better it is!"

"Huh?"

"Stop hesitating! Let's go! It's definitely more difficult for you to sever your lotus. It'll be easier with mutual help. I'll help you, and you'll help me. That's how the four Elders did it... Hey, I'm talking to you. Do you think that it makes sense?" Mingshi Yin asked.

"Yes, yes, yes..." Zhu Honggong nodded. Indeed, he could not bring himself to sever his lotus.

Then, Mingshi Yin grabbed Zhu Honggong's collar and dragged him toward the southern pavilion. When they were in the room, he said, "Show me your avatar."

"..."

"Don't worry. My Separation Hook is quick and precise. It'll be over before you know it." Mingshi Yin flipped his palm. His Separation Hook hovered above it. "A person without a heaven-grade weapon will have a hard time severing their lotuses. Lesser weapons like earth-grade and mystic-grade weapons, you'll have to hack at it a few times. Some of them had it worse. They couldn't sever it even after hacking away at it for half a day... Eh? Why are you sweating so much? Show me your avatar, quick! Don't dawdle."

Swoosh!

Zhu Honggong turned around and ran. He crashed through the door and ran out of the pavilion.

"Running away?" Mingshi Yin moved swiftly and activated his avatar.

Whizz!

Mingshi Yin and his avatar appeared in front of Zhu Honggong. He grabbed him. "I'm trying to help you. How dare you run away? What are you afraid of? Are you a man? You shouldn't be this cowardly. Look at Second Senior Brother, he's a true hero. He's so valiant! You should know that when Second Senior Brother severed his Golden Lotus, there was no such thing as a survival pill. Second Senior Brother is the true pioneer... Old Eight, have more faith in yourself. Show me your courage."

Zhu Honggong chuckled bitterly. He said through tears streaming down his face, "I... I was just warming up." Then, with utmost reluctance, he summoned his avatar. As soon as his avatar appeared, he hastily said, "Senior Brother... wait, wait up..."

Mingshi Yin's Separation Hook burst forth with golden radiance as he swung it at Zhu Honggong's Golden Lotus.

"Ahh!" A wail not dissimilar to a pig's squeal resounded through the entire southern pavilion.

The instant the Golden Lotus fell to the ground, the upper part of the avatar melted back into Zhu Honggong's body.

At this moment, Mingshi Yin scratched his head and asked, "Old Eighth, did you eat the lotus-severing survival pill?"

Zhu Honggong. "???" His eyes rolled back into their sockets, and he fainted.

Mingshi Yin was speechless. He quickly took out a survival pill and put it into Zhu Honggong's mouth. Then, he took out a leaf-sprouting pill and did the same. After all that, he carried Zhu Honggong back to the room and tossed him onto the bed.

Mingshi Yin muttered to himself, "You should thank me... The results of the Big Dipper Academy's latest research are now in you! Although this leaf-sprouting pill isn't as potent as the one Conch ate, it's of good quality as well. If you eat it with the survival pill, you'll be able to easily sprout one leaf."

Mingshi Yin waited for a while longer inside the room. When he saw that Zhu Honggong's condition was stabilizing, he turned around and left. He had barely left the room when he saw Pan Zhong and Zhou Jifeng passing, clearly trying to reduce their sense of presence.

"Hey, want to sever your lotuses? I'll help you for free," Mingshi Yin hollered at them.

"Ah... No, no, no, it's okay. We don't need that. Good day, Mister Fourth." Pan Zhong and Zhou Jifeng turned around and ran.

'Poor Mister Eighth. So, that's how painful it is to sever one's lotus. It seems even more painful than dying.' Both of them were relieved they had chosen the other alternative to cultivate.

When he saw that the duo running away, Mingshi Yin shrugged helplessly.

"Old Fourth."

"Third Senior Brother?" Mingshi Yin turned around and saw Duanmu Sheng walking toward him with the Overlord Spear in his hand. A determined expression could be seen on his face.

"Old Fourth, I've thought about it for a whole night, and I finally have an epiphany," Duanmu Sheng said.

“What epiphany, Third Senior Brother?” Mingshi Yin asked with an ingratiating smile.

“Fellow disciples should help each other out... You help me sever my lotus, and I’ll help you sever yours. What do you say?” Duanmu Sheng was not someone who was afraid of pain. However, it was naturally better if someone helped him to sever his lotus. “Now that most sects in the cultivation world are actively severing their lotuses and recultivating, we can’t fall behind. Otherwise, the Evil Sky Pavilion would be left in the dust.”

“Uh... Third Senior Brother, I-I can help you sever your lotus... However, how do you plan to sever my lotus?” Mingshi Yin asked, feeling apprehensive.

“With my Overlord Spear, of course.” Duanmu Sheng continued to say, “I’ve reached great heights in my spear techniques a long time ago. I can unleash 100 energy spears in a very short amount of time. That’ll be enough to sever your Golden Lotus.”

Mingshi Yin. “...”

“Eh? Fourth Senior Brother, why are you sweating so much? Don’t worry, I won’t hold back. I’ve been simulating various spear techniques in my mind lately. The best way...”

Before Duanmu Sheng could finish, he felt a breeze against his face. “Old Fourth... Old Fourth, I command you as your Senior Brother to get back here!”

Mingshi Yin ran down the mountain at lightning speed. Who could f*cking endure that? He decided not to sever his lotus... Being an Eight-leaf expert for life did not seem too bad. Why must he attempt to reach the Nine-leaf stage? That did not make sense, right? ‘Why are there so many cultivators with impaired minds in the cultivation world? Many of them can’t even reach the Eight-leaf stage until the day they die. Why would they even sever their lotuses? Isn’t it enough to strive to become an Eight-leaf cultivator?’

Mingshi Yin flew toward the foot of the mountain at lightning speed. He landed on a branch and made himself comfortable before he fell soundly asleep. He was enjoying the soft caress of the wind when a deafening sound resonated in the air.

The sound was so unique, and it traveled far and wide.

Sitting on the branch, Mingshi Yin looked around. He saw a winged beast in the air speeding toward the mountain with a flying chariot in tow.

“What the... What a huge beast!”

The bird had wings that spanned 50 feet each. Its feathers were dark crimson, and its eyes were as large as fists that shone with an eerie light.

Mingshi Yin did not recognize this beast, but he was sure that it did not exist around human settlements. He was, naturally, shocked. Did it come from the Four Forests?

Mingshi Yin leaped into the air and went to meet the flying beast with the flying chariot. As he expected, the winged beast was headed toward Golden Court Mountain.

Perhaps, it was out of courtesy, the chariot did not fly high but maintained a low altitude. It reached the foot of the mountain in no time at all and slowed to a stop.

Mingshi Yin looked at the five people on the flying chariot.

They wore scarlet clothes of foreign lands with embroidered hats and parted mustaches. The leader had a stocky build and eyes as sharp as a falcon.

The leader looked up at Mingshi Yin who was hovering in midair. He placed his right hand on his left shoulder and said with a slight bow, "My friend, I'm an envoy from Rouli. My name is Lanni, and I wish to meet the Master of the Evil Sky Pavilion."

Chapter 499: Books on the Nine-leaf Stage in the Coffin?

Chirp!

The huge flying beast raised its head, opened its thick and sharp beak, and cried out deafeningly. It resembled a giant falcon. It did not look very likable at all.

It was common to see a flying chariot being pulled by a flying beast. However, it was only suitable to be used in sparsely populated cities.

Flying beasts such as this one were difficult to tame. They could easily go berserk. Once they lose control, they would cause harm to humans. Moreover, this did not seem like an ordinary beast.

Mingshi Yin looked at the five individuals on the flying chariot before looking at the man who greeted him. "Envoy from Rouli?"

"It's an honor to meet you, sir." The mustache of Lanni, the Rouli envoy, twitched when he spoke. He seemed like he was smiling, but at the same time, not. "My friend, since you're near Golden Court Mountain, you must be a friend of the Evil Sky Pavilion. If you can introduce us, I will be forever grateful to you."

Mingshi Yin said nonchalantly, "You speak our language well."

"There's an academy to learn the language of Great Yan in Rouli... That's where I learned it," Lanni replied.

Mingshi Yin was perplexed. Rouli was engaged in a battle with the Liang Province. Their two nations were practically at war. Why did Rouli send its men to the Evil Sky Pavilion instead of to his Eldest Senior Brother or the Imperial family?

As the saying went, 'Beware of suspicious folk bearing gifts, they are sure to harbor ill intentions'.

Mingshi Yin scratched his head. He looked away and said, "Uh... What? What did you say? I don't understand you..." After that, he flew in another direction.

"This is important. Please thoroughly think this through," Lanni said immediately.

Mingshi Yin hovered in the air after flying several meters away. He looked back and said, "How important is this? Are the skies falling?"

“...” Lanni was speechless. However, he said, “Not exactly.”

“Then, there’s nothing to worry about.” Then, Mingshi Yin turned around, unleashed a grand technique, and vanished from their sight.

Lanni was left staring at the Golden Court Mountain’s barrier with a stunned expression. He did not seem angered. Contrarily, a smile could be seen on his face as he said, “I’ve spoken with many Great Yan people, but I’ve never met someone as unconventional as him. What an interesting fellow.”

“Chief, shall we force our way through?” one of Lanni’s subordinates asked.

“Are you out of your mind? This is the Evil Sky Pavilion. We’re not here for a fight. Moreover, this barrier isn’t ordinary. We won’t be able to easily breach it.”

“What should we do then?”

“Wait.”

...

In the afternoon, Mingshi Yin returned again. He hovered in the air and saw Lanni and the others still waiting at the foot of the mountain.

When Lanni saw Mingshi Yin, he stood up at once. “We meet again, my friend.”

“You guys sure are determined.”

“We won’t leave until we meet the Master of the Evil Sky Pavilion.” Lanni was worried that Mingshi Yin might disappear again so he hastily added, “This has something to do with the secret of the Nine-leaf stage. Please help us obtain a passage, my friend.”

Chirp!

The winged beast cried out deafeningly again.

The Nine-leaf stage? Mingshi Yin went on alert immediately. He did not agree to help them immediately. Instead, he said, “Wait here.” He turned around and passed through the barrier.

When Lanni saw the blue barrier, he smiled confidently.

At his side, his subordinate said, “Chief, he won’t meet us as well...”

“He will... Any expert in this world would be curious about the Nine-leaf stage... The Evil Sky Pavilion’s Master is no exception to this,” Lanni said confidently.

“I heard that he’s already at the Nine-leaf stage. Why would he be interested?” the subordinate asked.

Lanni placed his hands on his back and said, “Firstly, if he’s truly at the Nine-leaf stage, that makes him the first Nine-leaf expert in the cultivation world. A person like that will be most interested in maintaining his status. What do you think he’d do if Nine-leaf cultivators pop up one after another?”

When the subordinate heard this, his eyes gleamed and immediately slid a thumb over his throat.

“Secondly, if he’s not a Nine-leaf cultivator, it means the rumors are fabricated by Great Yan and the Evil Sky Pavilion. That will be the opportunity for us to take Liang Province with Lou Lan.”

The subordinate looked fearfully respectful. He bowed and said, “That’s brilliant, Lord Lanni.”

However, another person said, “What if he’s really at the Nine-leaf stage?”

Lanni scoffed and said, “The avatars of humans are based on their own figures. If severing the Golden Lotus allows them to reach the Nine-leaf stage, then Rouli, with our belief in the wolf king, will certainly have an advantage. When that moment comes...” He paused dramatically. “It will be the beginning of the end of Great Yan.”

At this moment, a figure floated down from above. Mingshi Yin hovered in the air and said, “My master invites you up the mountain.”

Lanni turned back to glance at the box on his flying chariot and said, “Bring it up.”

“Understood.” The four of them admired and respected Lanni even more now.

Rouli and Lou Lan were currently allies. They fought against the armies of Great Yan multiple times at the borders. Then, they joined in the battle at Liang Province. After the Nether Sect conquered Liang Province, Rouli had been looking for an opportunity to snatch Liang Province away while the situation had not been stabilized. With the appearance of a Nine-leaf cultivator and the popularity of the lotus-severing theory, Rouli had to put its plans on hold.

“Tiangou, stay here.” Lanni snapped his fingers. A ray of light shot out between his fingers into the winged beast’s forehead.

Tiangou lied down obediently.

Mingshi Yin shook his head. It was clearly a bird, why did they have to name it Tiangou, a heavenly dog?

The five of them walked toward the Evil Sky Pavilion, guided by Mingshi Yin.

...

A moment later, inside the Evil Sky Pavilion’s great hall.

Lu Zhou sat on his seat in a stately manner.

The Rouli envoy, Lanni, walked into the hall with his fellow comrades. “Greetings, Pavilion Master. I am Lanni, a Roulian envoy.”

The remaining four bowed.

Lu Zhou glanced at Lanni.

Name: Lanni Bonar

Race: Roulian

Realm: Nascent Divinity Tribulation realm

Lu Zhuo bluntly said, “Let’s hear it. What brings you here?”

Lanni bowed again and said with a smile. "Esteemed Lord Pavilion Master, I heard that you're the first Nine-leaf Golden Lotus elite in the cultivation world. That's why we made the effort to visit you. If it's possible, Rouli wishes to be at peace with the Evil Sky Pavilion."

Mingshi Yin said in confusion, "What's he talking about?"

Duanmu Sheng frowned and said, "Don't interrupt, let him speak."

Mingshi Yin. "..."

Lanni looked at Lu Zhou and said, "We have two objectives for visiting the Evil Sky Pavilion: to establish a positive relationship with the Evil Sky Pavilion and to discuss the Nine-leaf stage with you."

Lu Zhou stroked his beard and said, "Is there someone in Rouli who's at the Nine-leaf stage now?"

"Not yet."

"How are you going to discuss anything if you don't have Nine-leaf cultivators?"

"Uh..." This question rendered Lanni speechless. Indeed, what ideas could they exchange or what discussion could they have if none of them had any idea about the Nine-leaf stage?

'I'm sure these Other Tribesmen came here under these pretexts to verify the truth...'

Lanni bowed and said, "Please hear me out, Pavilion Master."

"Let's hear it."

"I'm from the Bonar Family in Rouli. About 1,900 years ago, my family received a certain object." Lanni waved his arm.

The four individuals behind him brought a long box forward.

Lanni pointed at the box and said, "This is a coffin."

Mingshi Yin and Duanmu Sheng frowned.

Duanmu Sheng suddenly shot out at lightning speed.

Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh!

Spear shadows rained down ferociously.

Lanni did not expect the people of the Evil Sky Pavilion to attack without warning. He hastily retreated and dodged the attack.

Bam! Bam! Bam!

The spear shadows rained down on Lanni like a storm.

The other four looked frightened.

Duanmu Sheng's spear techniques were clearly much more powerful than before.

“Please hear me out, Pavilion Master!” Lanni hastily cried out as he retreated. When he saw the spear shadows were about to hit him, he hastily added, “The coffin contains books about the Nine-leaf stage!”

Bam!

In the end, Lanni was struck by the spear shadows. He flipped and reeled back. After stumbling a few steps back, his back slammed into a pillar. His chest was screaming in pain. His eyes widened as he sized Duanmu Sheng up. ‘So powerful!’

Duanmu Sheng was also shocked by this man’s defensive skills. Even Hua Wudao’s tortoiseshell energy seal could not easily block it, and yet, this man only stumbled a few steps backward.

“Stand down.” Lu Zhou waved his hand.

Duanmu Sheng cupped his fists at Lu Zhou and went to the side.

Lu Zhou looked at Lanni and calmly said, “Bring them to me.”

Chapter 500: Tiangou

Lanni endured the pain in his chest as he waved his hand. He could only blame himself for acting rashly and bringing the coffin in without any explanation. After all, in Great Yan, this gesture was extremely disrespectful.

One of Lanni’s subordinates opened the lid and carried one of the thicker books before respectfully presented it to Lu Zhou.

Lu Zhou looked at the book skeptically. “The Nine-leaf cultivation method?”

There were similar books sold on the streets of Great Yan. They were basically scams.

Lanni hastily said, “1,900 years ago, my ancestors found this coffin on the shores of the northern border... The personal diary of my ancestors said that there was once a powerful Nine-leaf cultivator inside this coffin.”

Mingshi Yin said sarcastically, “Sure, we believe you.”

Lanni said in a clear voice, “I swear on the name of the Bonar Family. If there is an ounce of untruth in my words, my family will be cursed to live as slaves for generations to come!”

“Wow, that’s harsh. Carry on...” Mingshi Yin gave him a thumbs-up.

Lanni lowered his voice and slowly said, “That cultivator remained in Rouli for a month. He brought some books with him and left Rouli. I heard that he came to Great Yan. Then, he was never heard of ever again.”

There were too many loopholes in Lanni’s story. If there had really been a Nine-leaf cultivator, why had nobody hailed him as a brilliant genius 1,900 years ago? Why was he not mentioned in the annals of history? There had never been rumors about him in the cultivation world as well.

However, Lu Zhou was in no hurry to refute Lanni’s claims. Instead, he opened the book. The cultivation method in the front pages was similar to Great Yan. In terms of cultivation theories, it was

fundamentally similar to the Confucian, Buddhist, and Daoist Societies. He skipped to the part of the book where the Nine-leaf stage was concerned. Alas, he discovered the pages were smudged with ink, and the writings were almost illegible. There was only one line he managed to make out: The people here are weak, but it's safe here. I hope that it remains like this forever." The words were written in Great Yan's language.

Lu Zhou frowned. He flipped through the other pages and realized they were illegible. Again, he saw the same line: I hope it stays this way forever.

"I hope it stays like this forever."

"I hope that there is no Nine-leaf stage in the world. I hope that there is no Ten-leaf stage in the world."

"I like gold... not red."

There were no cultivation methods. There were only scribbled lines of incohesive thoughts. It was like a prayer and a diary.

Lu Zhou looked at Lanni standing in the great hall...

Lanni bowed. "The covers of the books are protected from decay by special Formation veins. The veins are carved into the seams. They can attest to the age of the books."

Lu Zhou closed the book. He saw dense veins running along the cover. Alas, they were faded and only a handful of them was still glowing red. In that instant, he remembered the line on the last page: I like gold, not red.

This was Lu Zhou's first time seeing red Formation veins. He raised his palm and smacked the cover!

Boom!

The Formation vein unleashed a mystical power.

A red stamp shot toward the skies. Then, it scattered into the surroundings like butterflies. Due to their age, the stamps were feeble. The power they had stored was nearly depleted.

Lu Zhou smacked the book with his hand again. He channeled his Primal Qi into the cover's veins. It immediately shone with golden radiance. The veins were renewed. The red veins faded away and were replaced by golden ones.

Lanni nodded. "There are 100 veins in total. Every vein can protect the book for 20 years. Every 20 years, one of the veins would fade."

Lu Zhou raised his palm. His expression remained the same, but he was inwardly shocked. Indeed, this book was nearly 2,000 years!

"Do you know where the person inside the coffin is now?" Lu Zhou asked.

Lanni shook his head and said, "My family has protected this item for generations. We're searching for that senior as well. We've received no information about the senior up until now."

Lu Zhou stroked his beard and pondered. There had never been a shortage of people interested in digging out secrets in this world, especially when it was about the Nine-leaf stage and the Ten-leaf stage.

At this moment, Lanni said, "This is the sincerity of the Bonar Family... I'm willing to give these to the Evil Sky Pavilion."

It was expected for them to present the books as a gift, but the coffin was really inappropriate. If it were not an antique, Duanmu Sheng would have long thrown them out of the window.

At this moment, Lu Zhou said, "I'll accept them..." His eyes darkened as he looked at Lanni and asked, "What do you want?"

There was no free lunch in this world. One would not be given gifts without having to give something in return.

Lanni placed his right hand on his shoulder and said in a gentlemanly fashion, "I dare not ask for anything in return, but I do have one wish."

"Let's hear it."

"We would like to have a glimpse of the grand Nine-leaf stage!"

"Is that it?" Lanni nodded with an eager expression on his face.

Lu Zhou walked down the steps with his hands on his back as he said, "Rouli has always had the ambition of wild wolves. You've trespassed on our borders numerous times. I'm afraid that a peace proposal is merely a pretext for you to verify something."

Lanni's face fell. He quickly said, "Uh, this... you've misunderstood me."

'A Disguise Card costs 10,000 merit points. How can I waste it on some Other Tribesman?'

What a joke!

Lu Zhou stepped forward.

Lanni took a step back.

At this moment, a deafening cry rang from outside.

Chirp –

Mingshi Yin said, "It's that livestock!" He ran out of the great hall.

In the skies, the huge winged beast flapped its 50-foot-long wings and squawked outside the barrier.

"My livestock is going berserk. I'll go tame it at once," Lanni hurriedly said.

His four subordinates followed him out of the great hall.

Lu Zhou waved his hand. "Duanmu Sheng."

"Yes, master."

"Take them down."

“Yes, master!”

Although Lu Zhou did not know where these Other Tribesmen got their confidence from, since they were bold enough to play tricks on the Evil Sky Pavilion, they could not be allowed to leave.

Having received the order, Duanmu Sheng picked up his Overlord Spear and pursued them.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

“Surrender!” Duanmu Sheng would not listen to excuses so he did not give a chance to speak. 100 spear shadows formed a ferocious spear seal as he attacked.

Bam! Bam! Bam!

Lanni struck with both palms. His energy blocked the spear shadows, and he flipped backward before dropping to the ground.

“We came with sincerity. Why must the pavilion master be hostile?” Lanni’s eyes burned with fury.

Lu Zhou walked past the coffin slowly. He was still curious about where Lanni Bonar had gotten his confidence from? He looked at the coffin beside him and saw it was densely covered in dark crimson veins.

Defensive Formation veins? They were more complicated and powerful than the ones on the book.

Lu Zhou emerged from the great hall and looked up.

The huge bird was starting to attack the barrier.

Bam!

Ripples spread across the barrier.

Mingshi Yin said speechlessly, “Stop pretending. Even your bird can’t take it anymore.”

Lanni frowned deeply. He glanced at Tiangou and wondered, ‘How could this be?’

Bam!

Tiangou charged toward Golden Court Mountain’s barrier again.

Duanmu Sheng could not stand this any longer. He advanced with his Overlord Spear.

A battle royale instantly broke out before the great hall.

Duanmu Sheng fought against five opponents on his own.

Mingshi Yin did not jump in hastily. Instead, he observed Tiangou in the skies.

It was flapping its wings, sending blasts of energy winds at the barrier.

At this moment, several energy arrows were launched from above the southern pavilion and struck Tiangou’s huge body.

Bam! Bam! Bam!

These attacks were, naturally, from Hua Yuexing. Alas, she only managed to dislodge on its feathers. The other arrows were blocked with a movement of its wings.

Chirp!

The huge seemed extremely agitated,

“What is this?” Mingshi Yin’s eyes widened.

Hua Yuexing was a Three-leaf Godly Archer, and yet, she could not even handle the beast?

Lanni turned to look at Lu Zhou as he fought and pleaded at the same time, “Pavilion Master, this truly is a misunderstanding!”

Lu Zhou stroked his beard as he observed the huge bird in the skies. Just when he was about to use Unnamed and turned it into a bow to take the beast down, the mellifluous sound of flute rang in the air.

It was slow and soothing. Like the gentle churning of a stream between the trees of a forest.

When the tune reached the area above the Evil Sky Pavilion, the huge bird seemed to have calmed down and seemed to have regained its senses.

Lanni’s eyes widened. “Impossible!”

The tune continued playing...