

Disciples 591

Chapter 591: The Resurrection Method

The sky above the Imperial city was obscured by the huge blue lotus.

The cultivators outside the Divine Capital looked at the Imperial city's Ten Terminal Formation in confusion.

"What happened?"

"A blue lotus?"

"Who cultivates a blue lotus?"

The cultivators looked at the sky above the Imperial city in shock. It seemed like anything was possible in the great and vast world. It was only natural that they would be shocked by things they had not seen before, however, they accepted it very quickly as well. After all, since ancient times, there were countless predecessors who created many new cultivation methods.

The ancestors of the Confucian, Buddhist, and Daoist sects created the Daoist seals, the Buddhist seals, and various script and talisman seals based on various theories. The Fiend zen created the black seals as well.

Since the Evil Sky Pavilion's Master was the first Nine-leaf cultivator in the world and the person who kicked the door to the Nine-leaf stage open, it was not strange if he had developed some new cultivation method.

The cultivators could only accept this fearfully and respectfully.

...

When the blue lotus bloomed, the glass-like Eight Gates Formation seal that appeared above the Imperial city instantly shattered. It gradually faded away like golden stars in the sky.

Just like that, Lu Zhou easily destroyed the Eight Gates Formation seal. There was no doubting this fact.

Lu Zhou descended slowly, casual and composed.

At this moment, realization dawned on the Nether Sect members, Hua Chongyang and the branch members. This was undoubtedly the reason their sect master would scurry away whenever he encountered his master! How could he not run away when his master was so powerful? Indeed, their sect master was very smart to know when to run.

The sun was setting at this moment...

Lu Zhou could sense that he did not have much extraordinary power left.

Whizz!

The curtain-like barrier in the sky changed colors.

A strong gust of wind began to blow in the air, and the clouds dispersed.

“The Ten Terminal Formation is disappearing again!”

“Everyone, get ready!”

The Evil Sky Pavilion disciples stepped forward.

Primal Qi surged wildly into the city again at this moment, and the air was no longer so stifling that it was difficult to breathe.

Everyone’s cultivation bases were slowly being restored. They inhaled deeply and wasted no time in circulating their Primal Qis.

Similarly, Lu Zhou could feel his cultivation base returning to him as well. Although he had almost exhausted his extraordinary power, he was now a Five-leaf Nascent Divinity Tribulation realm elite. In terms of combat experience, skill, and insights, he was a cut above the rest. ‘I’m still peerless...’

Bam! Bam! Bam!

At this moment, several white-robed cultivators were sent flying out of the Dazheng Palace.

At the same time, black-robed cultivators appeared in the direction of the Eternal Palace. They grabbed two white-robed cultivators as they flew in the air before tossing them to the ground.

The white-robed cultivators dropped to the ground with a loud boom.

It did not take long before the ten elders from the Big Dipper Academy were captured and tossed in front of Lu Zhou. Their faces were ashen.

Then, the black-robed cultivators descended to the ground one after another. There were more than ten of them.

At this moment, Li Yunzhao emerged from Dazheng Palace and greeted Lu Zhou respectfully. “Greetings, Senior Ji.”

Lu Zhou looked at Li Yunzhao and pointed at the individuals who captured the ten elders before he asked, “Are they your people?”

Li Yunzhao said, “I feel embarrassed. One must have some sort of way to protect oneself deep in the palace, after all...”

“Is this the Empress Dowager’s directive?”

“The Empress Dowager has long discovered that this person was an impostor. Unfortunately, the impostor has full control over the Divine Capital. The Empress Dowager prioritized the bigger picture and did not expose him.”

The others nodded upon hearing this.

No wonder the Empress Dowager was so bold as to visit the Evil Sky Pavilion previously. She even went as far as to give the longevity pill she had kept for many years to the Evil Sky Pavilion. Naturally, she did not know Lu Zhou had no need for the longevity pill. It was clear now that she had wanted to seize the opportunity to establish a friendly relation with the Evil Sky Pavilion.

Apart from that, they understood now why the Empress Dowager had defended Zhao Yue so strongly back in the Obedient Villa. At that time, she had vehemently opposed switching the Second Prince, Liu Huan, with the Fourth Prince, Liu Bing.

They understood now why Liu Gu had remained indifferent toward the prince's death and the Empress Dowager's illness, completely focused on opposing the Evil Sky Pavilion and unifying the Ten Thousand tribes.

At this moment, Li Yunzhao said in a clear voice. "The Empress Dowager has ordered the Imperial guards to stand down! No one is to resist the Evil Sky Pavilion!" Since his cultivation base had been restored, his voice was loud and energetic, resounding through the Imperial city.

The remaining soldiers and officials sprawled on the ground.

At this moment, the Evil Sky Pavilion's cloud-splitting chariot slowly lowered its altitude in the sky above the Imperial city.

One of the female cultivators stood near the helm and said, "M-mister First..."

Si Wuya frowned and said, "I'll go and have a look." He pushed away from the ground lightly and flew up into the sky.

After Si Wuya boarded the flying chariot and entered the cockpit, he saw Yu Zhenghai lying inside. There were bloodstains on Yu Zhenghai's neck. Although he had prepared himself for this, he still trembled.

"Eldest Senior Brother?" Si Wuya tried to wake Yu Zhenghai up. Alas, Yu Zhenghai remained unresponsive; his eyes remained close. Yu Zhenghai's life aura was weak as well.

Then, Si Wuya carried Yu Zhenghai and leaped out of the flying chariot.

The Evil Sky Pavilion disciples cried out when they saw Yu Zhenghai. "Eldest Senior Brother!"

Meanwhile, the 10,000 Nether Sect members fell to their knees in unison.

"Sect master!"

Their invincible sect master had been grievously injured. How could they not be worried?

Hua Chongyang and the 12 branch masters walked up to Yu Zhenghai.

Si Wuya's expression was grim as he approached Lu Zhou. "Master, Eldest Senior Brother is..."

Lu Zhou raised a hand to stop Si Wuya from speaking any further. It was difficult to tell if Yu Zhenghai could survive this. Nothing was absolute. He looked at the unconscious Yu Zhenghai. He extended his hand toward Yu Zhenghai and did not hesitate to channel all of his extraordinary power out. This was all he could do; he would leave the rest to fate.

"Master..." The grim expression on Lu Zhou's face did not escape Si Wuya's notice.

Lu Zhou said, "You've saved him once... I'm sure you know about the Wuqi tribe's characteristics of the Wuqi tribe..."

"Yes."

“Yu Zhenghai would lose 300 years of his life every time he dies. Even if he survives this injury, he still can’t escape his great limit...”

“...”

Conch looked at Yu Zhenghai contemplatively. Perhaps, she remembered his words to her during their first meeting. She walked up to him and softly said, “Hang in there.”

The others lowered their heads.

Lu Zhou looked at Conch and remembered the Nine-leaf stage and runes. Then, he said, “Si Wuya.”

“Yes, master.”

“Where did you find your Second Senior Brother’s runes?”

Si Wuya was overjoyed! He knew what his master’s question meant. He replied at once, “I found it in an ancient grave. The runes can absorb life. That’s right... Master, I’ll take Eldest Senior Brother to Liang Province immediately!”

Lu Zhou glanced at Yu Zhenghai before he said with a sigh, “The runes can prolong his life, but if they’re going to split it between them, they can’t go about killing people.”

Si Wuya said, “So long as we can guarantee Eldest Senior Brother’s life for 49 days, there’s hope. In truth, there are records in the ancient books about the death of the Wuqians. In fact, there’s no proof that three deaths are the limit. They only came up with three deaths based on humans’ great limits. Nevertheless, even if there’s no way to overcome the great limit, even if Eldest Senior Brother can only live for another ten years, I have to save him!”

Lu Zhou felt something stir in him and asked, “Are you confident?”

“I... I wish to bring Eldest Senior Brother to Lou Lan. Eldest Senior Brother has said that the location of his first death was an ideal spot, which aligns with favorable time, geographical, and chronological conditions. I can’t make any guarantees, but I’m willing to try.”

At this moment, Hua Chongyang bowed. “I’m willing to go with you, Mister Seventh.”

The 12 branch masters said in unison, “We’re willing to follow the sect master to our deaths!”

Then, the Evil Sky Pavilion disciples raised their hands one after another.

“I think I should be the one to escort Eldest Senior Brother!”

“I want to go as well...”

Lu Zhou looked at everyone...

Chapter 592: The Imperial Family’s Secret

Although the Nether Sect had conquered the Divine Capital, there were still many dangers lurking within the palace walls. They knew that the road to Lou Lan would not be smooth-sailing.

After pondering on it for a moment, Lu Zhou said, "Old Seventh, take the flying chariot to Liang Province and look for your Second Senior Brother."

It would be much safer if they had Yu Shangrong's help.

Ye Tianxin said, "Master... Why don't I go accompany Seventh Junior Brother to Liang Province? I've traveled the entire Great Yan previously. I've been to the western regions and passed by Lou Lan. If we travel by flying chariot, we'd be too big of a target. We'll certainly attract the attention of the Other Tribes. That's very dangerous."

Ye Tianxin had a point. With her accompanying Si Wuya, the journey would be much smoother.

However, Si Wuya said, "Sixth Senior Sister, although you're an Eight-leaf cultivator, you're not completely healed yet... You should stay here and help master oversee things in the Divine Capital... Moreover, I have my sources in Lou Lan."

"..."

Sources...

Si Wuya glanced at Yu Zhenghai before he said, "Master, time waits for no man. I'll take my leave now."

"Go." Lu Zhou waved his arm.

Si Wuya pushed away from the ground and flew toward the flying chariot. The cloud-splitting chariot dragged a long tail behind it as it moved toward Liang Province. In just a moment, it disappeared among the clouds.

The cultivators outside the Divine Capital were shocked and baffled when they saw this. Perhaps, their courage was boosted by the disappearance of the Ten Terminal Formation, they moved closer to the Divine Capital to have a look.

There were no Imperial guards, no curtain-like barrier in the sky, and no ballistae...

The Divine Capital was in ruin. Dilapidated houses, corpses were strewn everywhere on the ground, and fly-infested pools of blood summarized the post-war Divine Capital.

Upon seeing this, the cultivators sighed deeply.

Rebirth would follow a war.

Then, the cultivators in the air looked in the direction of the Imperial city.

"In the end, who's the final victor?"

Nobody knew the answer, and nobody dared to enter the Imperial city of their own accord. They merely flew around inside the Divine Capital.

...

Inside Dazheng Palace in the Imperial city.

Li Yunzhao supported the Empress Dowager to slowly sit down.

The person seated opposite the Empress Dowager was the Evil Sky Pavilion's Master, the greatest Nine-leaf expert in the world.

The palace was filled with people kneeling on the ground.

The court officials and the elders of the two academies were bound and forced to their knees.

When the Empress Dowager looked up, she saw Zhao Yue standing behind Lu Zhou. "Zhao Yue... you came."

Zhao Yue lowered her head.

"I don't blame you." The Empress Dowager could not blame Zhao Yue nor did she have any reason to blame Zhao Yue.

Zhao Yue did not grow up in the palace. She had also fulfilled her responsibility when she took care of the Empress Dowager while she was ill. In fact, it was a wonder that she did not hold a grudge against the palace.

The Empress Dowager knew that she was in the wrong. How could she blame Zhao Yue? Then, she shifted her gaze to Lu Zhou. After studying him for a moment, she said emotionally, "It's been a while."

Lu Zhou did not bother with small talks and directly dove into the heart of the conversation. "There are tens of thousands of Nether Sect members outside Dazheng Palace. They're the subordinates of my disciple, Yu Zhenghai..."

"I know."

"I won't comment on Liu Ge. Ever since Liu Gu ascended the throne, he did not govern the country. He killed the fairfolks, dumped their corpses into the river, and fished their bones from the river for a decade. The prince colluded with grand shamans from the Other Tribes and brought harm to the nine provinces. The Imperial family has ended up in this situation today..."

"... because we brought it upon ourselves," the Empress Dowager said with a sigh. A resigned expression could be seen on her face. She turned to look at the court officials and said, "It's meaningless to talk about these things now... The change in governance is a part of the natural cycle. If the people of the nine provinces can live peacefully, I won't have any complaints even if the ruler's surname is Ji."

Upon hearing this, the court officials prostrated themselves and cried out, "Empress Dowager!"

Their cries were brimming with despair. If there were a change in rulers, they would all become slaves from a subjugated nation.

Lu Zhou shook his head. He was different from Yu Zhenghai; he was not interested in world domination. If his first disciple, Yu Zhenghai, truly wanted to sit on the throne, he would have to go through many obstacles as well. After all, Yu Zhenghai did not have the surname Liu.

Among the five princes, only the Third Prince, Jiang Aijian, and the Fifth Prince were left. It did not matter to Lu Zhou to whom the court officials wanted to push onto the throne.

Nevertheless, Yu Zhenghai had gone through many troubles to conquer the empire. If Lu Zhou made a decision on his first disciple's behalf, would his disciple not feel disappointed? Therefore, he was not in a hurry to make a decision.

Instead, Lu Zhou looked at the elders from the Big Dipper Academy and the Sky Conduct Academy and the court officials. "How should we deal with these people?"

"The Evil Sky Pavilion can do whatever they want with them." The Empress Dowager no longer regarded this as an important matter.

"Since I'm asking you, it means I respect your decision..."

When Lu Zhou spoke, the elders from the two academies who were on death row kowtowed immediately.

The Empress Dowager was taken aback. The Divine Capital had fallen. What more was there to be said? She looked at the elders who were kowtowing at her; the soft thuds of the foreheads hitting the floor irritated her slightly. "Drag them out... Behead them."

Since ancient times, monarchs had always been heartless.

Upon hearing the Empress Dowager's order, the elders' faces turned ashen.

"Have mercy, Empress Dowager! Mercy!"

The Imperial guards charged in.

These elders' cultivation bases had been sealed before they were bound. They were powerless to resist the Imperial guards and were dragged out of the palace.

Lu Zhou looked at the elders. 'What a waste... Should I be merciless and kill them myself?'

Although the remaining elders had weak cultivation bases, they were still worth something.

'I'm letting my mind wander again.' Lu Zhou shook off the extraneous thoughts before he asked, "When did you find out that he's not Liu Gu?"

The Empress Dowager looked up and said, "How could I not know my son? The day that impostor ascended the throne, I knew."

"Liu Ge was still around at that time. With his abilities, he should've been able to take that man down," Lu Zhou said.

"Indeed, Liu Ge had thought about it. Alas... the fake Liu Gu was already an Eight-leaf cultivator at that time. He also had a super heaven-grade weapon, the Magistrate Brush," the Empress Dowager said.

Lu Zhou flipped his hand, and a red-tipped brush appeared in his hand. "This is a super heaven-grade weapon as well?"

The Empress Dowager was not surprised the brush was with Lu Zhou now. She nodded. "That's right."

This... Perhaps, this was the reason the Imperial family had firm control over the empire.

Liu Ge had High Void, and Liu Gu had the Magistrate Brush. Moreover, they gathered the elites under the heavens inside the Divine Capital.

The armor, the red veins, the red-tip brush...

Lu Zhou asked, "Where did the Imperial family get all these items?"

The Empress Dowager turned to Li Yunzhai and said, "Send the others out..."

Li Yunzhao understood the Empress Dowager's intention. He turned to the court officials and said, "The Empress Dowager is tired. You're all dismissed for the day."

"Understood!"

The court officials looked perplexed. The Divine Capital had been conquered. What were they supposed to do next? Should they flee? Should they stay? They did not know what to do. Nevertheless, since the Empress Dowager had given her command, they had no choice but to obey and respectfully took their leave.

When the court officials were gone, the Empress Dowager rose to her feet and said, "Follow me."

"Where are we going?"

Li Yunzhao said in a hushed voice, "The inner warehouse."

Little Yuan'er was shocked. She asked, "Is this the inner warehouse that the shameless fellow mentioned?"

Zhu Honggong chimed in, "Are there treasures inside? We've won. By convention, I should be able to loot the place."

The others looked at Zhu Honggong...

'He must be really used to being the leader of the bandit. He's out of his mind!'

Upon seeing the peculiarity of everyone's gaze, Zhu Honggong scratched his head and asked, "Is it something I said?"

The others ignored him and followed Lu Zhou and the Empress Dowager.

Zhu Honggong, who was still confused, asked, "Tenth Junior Sister, did I say something wrong?"

Conch replied, "No."

"Then, why are they looking at me strangely? Are they jealous of my intelligence?" Zhu Honggong was about to scratch his head again when he realized he had been wearing his boxing gloves all along. He immediately lowered his hand. "Indeed, I'm much smarter than before... Eh, where's everyone? Third Senior Brother? Fifth Senior Sister? Sixth Senior Sister? Where did everyone go?"

The vast Dazheng Palace was now deserted.

...

After the battle at the Divine Capital.

Many palace girls and eunuchs fled the palace. The path seemed lonesome and desolate.

A moment later, the group arrived near the warehouse of the Imperial family. They made several turns before they saw an old brown door that was 30 feet tall and 10 feet wide.

The Empress Dowager stopped in her tracks and looked up. She said, "This is the Imperial family's warehouse. It's located deep in the palace; that's why it's called the inner warehouse."

Lu Zhou found the brown door familiar. He said, "I think I've been here before."

Li Yunzhao smiled and said, "You were on good terms with the former Emperor, Senior Ji. It's no surprise that you've been here... However, the inner warehouse isn't completely safe. Half a year ago, we lost the sword Dragonsong. It hasn't been recovered since."

Lu Zhou acted as though he did not hear Li Yunzhao's words. 'This has nothing to do with me...'

At this moment, the Empress Dowager took a key out and opened the door to the inner warehouse.

Lu Zhou did not press her about the key. He followed behind her in a casual manner.

"Everything Emperor Yong Shou obtained in the past was placed in the inner warehouse..."

Chapter 593: The Letter from the Nine-leaf Cultivator (Part One)

The group entered the dimly-lit inner warehouse. Despite the dim lighting, their visions were not affected.

There were various treasures, weapons, and tomes inside. They made for a rather dazzling sight

Conch skipped as she walked, brimming with curiosity.

Conch was not the only one; everyone's interest was piqued by the treasures as well.

Even Duanmu Sheng, who usually conducted himself rather strictly, could not help but look around. Occasionally, he would poke the sabers and swords on the racks with his Overlord Spear.

Meanwhile, the Evil Sky Pavilion's four elders were abnormally quiet. They looked around and touched the things that attracted their interests, looking like a supervisor visiting a site.

"This saber is amazing." Pan Zhong stared at a saber. After all, he did not have a weapon of his own yet.

"This sword... Is this the famed treasure of the now-extinct Wind Riding Faction, the Wind Rider?" Zhou Jifeng picked up a sword, clearly reluctant to put it back down. He was almost drooling.

Pan Zhong moved closer to have a look. He nodded and said, "Good eye, little brother!"

Bam!

The Overlord Spear stabbed at Wind Rider's blade. After poking it, Duanmu Sheng no longer looked at the sword. He shook his head slightly. "How can an earth-grade weapon be worthy of entering the Evil Sky Pavilion?"

Pan Zhong and Zhou Jifeng did not dare to retort.

'Of course, you wouldn't consider this when you have the heaven-grade Overlord Spear!'

'What choice do I have since I have no weapons!'

'So what if I like earth-grade weapons? Mister Third, don't go overboard!'

Crack!

Wind Rider snapped.

Zhou Jifeng was taken aback. He said, "You have a point, Mister Third. How can this third-rate rubbish enter the Evil Sky Pavilion?!"

The group continued to walk deeper into the warehouse.

Lu Zhou did not expect the inner warehouse to be this huge. They had been walking for quite some time, and yet, they were still not at the end.

The Empress Dowager did not pay much attention to the items around her. It was as though she frequently came to this place.

Li Yunzhao said, "The former Emperor left the management of the inner warehouse to the Empress Dowager... All these years, the Empress Dowager has been cautious and conscientious in her duty. Even after the former Emperor's passing, the Empress Dowager remained steadfast."

At this moment, the Empress Dowager came to halt and turned to look at the others. Then, she slowly said, "You may take whatever you want from the inner warehouse."

When Lu Zhou's disciples heard this, they were delighted. They behaved like a band of monkeys who had never seen the world as they hopped and jumped around.

Li Yunzhao was baffled. Why would the Evil Sky Pavilion disciples be interested in the items in the inner warehouse when they possessed heaven-grade weapons? In the end, he reprimanded them. "Behave yourselves!"

The disciples started and no longer dared to move.

The Empress Dowager said, "I almost forgot... Indeed, with your statuses, you might not be interested in the items here at all."

Zhou Jifeng wanted to cry. 'No! I'm interested! I'd love to take all of them back with me!'

The Empress Dowager pointed to a box in the corner and said, "When Liu Ge was still on the throne, he told me over and over again to look after this box. Li Yunzhao..."

"Understood." Li Yunzhao waved his hand; the box flew over.

The light illuminated the box. It was a black box covered with a layer of dust.

Li Yunzhao waved his arm again, clearing the dust from the box.

Lu Zhou looked at the box. 'Hm? These familiar veins again!'

The veins on the box highly resembled those on Lin Xin's armor. However, why were these veins black?

As though she could read Lu Zhou's mind, the Empress Dowager said, "So as to not attract unwanted attention, I painted this box black with ink."

"..."

The older, the wiser.

"The original color?"

"Red?"

As expected.

Lu Zhou's expression remained unchanged. He looked at the box and asked, "From whom did this box come from?"

"The Emperor had said this was from the Imperial tutor. Before the Imperial tutor left, he left a few items behind: a sword, a brush, and a box. The sword has been missing for some time now." Based on her words, it was clear she was unaware that Liu Ge had been very much alive up until recently. Perhaps, Liu Ge did not want her to know and deliberately kept the secret from her.

After all, it was surely painful to depend on life-sucking runes to survive. It was like being a living dead. Nobody in the world could overcome their great limits. Although there were various methods, the most one could do was to delay one's death.

In any case, since the Empress Dowager did not know, there was no need to tell her.

The Empress Dowager continued to say, "A Nine-leaf cultivator's power is needed to open the box... Nothing else is able to open it." She had thought someone from the Imperial family would attain the Nine-leaf stage first.

Liu Gu himself thought so as well. He was of the opinion that if he could reach the Nine-leaf stage and obtain whatever was in the box, he would be able to unify the Ten Thousand Tribes and establish a long-lasting dynasty. Alas, he was one step behind.

Outwardly, Lu Zhou appeared calm, but he was, in fact, inwardly fretting. 'I'm only at the Five-leaf stage. Moreover, I've exhausted most of my extraordinary power. How am I going to open it?'

Pan Zhong said, "Pavilion Master, this treasure box was made for you!"

Pan Litian said, "Whatever is in the box must be extraordinary. Please open the box, Pavilion Master. Let me gain some knowledge and experience."

The others nodded in agreement.

Even the Empress Dowager chimed in, "I've been looking after this box for centuries, and yet, I don't know what it holds. If the Evil Sky Pavilion opens the box, I'll be able to rest in peace."

Lu Zhou had saved the Empress Dowager's life once. She would not say no even if Li Zhou wanted to take the box away.

Lu Zhou gauged his own extraordinary power. He felt awkward. He remembered the chant of the Heavenly Writing scrolls and recited it inwardly. 'Let's give it a try. Even if I fail, they won't dare to say anything.'

Lu Zhou placed his palm on the box.

Smack!

When his broad palm landed on the box, Lu Zhou expected blue light to shine from between his fingers. Alas, nothing happened.

'This... Ah! My face...' Lu Zhou was still inwardly struggling in embarrassment when a faint blue light briefly flashed between his fingers. It lasted for just a moment. Unexpectedly, a crisp clicking sound rang from the box!

The Empress Dowager's eyes widened when she saw this. She sounded slightly emotional as she said, "I've tried many methods to open the box, but they were all futile. I didn't expect this..."

It was normal for the Empress Dowager to be moved. After employing different ways to open the box, she knew it was almost impossible to open the box.

Li Yunzhao chimed in, "I can attest to the fact that even His Majesty failed to open the box. His Majesty tried hacking at it for an entire night with his Eight-leaf grand technique. Alas, it was in vain."

"..."

"As expected. You're amazing, Pavilion Master!" The four elders were genuinely impressed.

Lu Zhou was immune to their flattery. He pressed his palm down.

The box cracked open; its sides falling apart.

The Heavenly Writing's extraordinary power seemed like the key to the box.

In just a moment, the box collapsed into a pile of debris, revealing two items that caught Lu Zhou's eyes.

There was an envelope that was clearly made from unique materials and a rectangular brocade box.

Lu Zhou picked the envelope up first. Apart from him, no one dared to touch the box. As soon as he touched the envelope, he felt a chilly sensation on his skin. It seemed like the envelope was no ordinary envelope; it must have been made to prevent decay.

Lu Zhou opened the envelope. As expected, it contained a letter!

"Stand back!" Duanmu Sheng suddenly said as he raised his Overlord Spear.

The others backed away.

Duanmu Sheng's intention was obvious; his master was the only one who could read the letter.

The letter read: If someone managed to open this box, it means that the person reading this letter has attained the Nine-leaf stage. Nice to meet you, the first, second, or maybe the third Nine-leaf cultivator?

Heh... Anyway, it doesn't matter anymore. I have to tell you that you're leading the world to a huge disaster."

Chapter 594: The Letter from the Nine-leaf Cultivator (Part Two)

"If you're the first Nine-leaf cultivator, I advise you to weaken your cultivation base to Eight-and-a-half leaves. If you're the second, please kill the first. I've left a brush, a sword, and armor. You can kill a Nine-leaf cultivator with them. If you can't, then I'm sorry to say both of you will cause a huge disaster."

After Lu Zhou finished reading that paragraph, he discovered a paragraph at the side with fine writings. It read: An imposing tree grew in a forest. It grew upward with all its might in search of more sunlight and raindrops. Its thick trunk took up as much ground space as it could so that it could breathe the freshest air. Its roots dug deep to absorb the essences from the soil. Beside the huge tree, there were several weak trees struggling to survive. Their trunks were thin and fragile; their leaves were yellowing and wilting. The small trees glared at the big tree and said, "You're so powerful, why must you limit our growth?" The big tree looked at them indifferently and replied, "To me, your growth will forever be a threat."

Lu Zhou was slightly puzzled. Was this paragraph about the law of the jungle? He suddenly remembered the super heaven-grade weapon, High Void and the red Magistrate Brush in Liu Gu's possession, the red coffin, and the diary from the Roulian.

Lu Zhou continued reading the letter: Many madmen searched for the truth behind the heaven and earth's shackles and their lifespans' taboo. There are also many madmen who ended up becoming food to beasts... I hope you're not a madman. I like Great Yan... It's peaceful and quiet here. There aren't many killings, and there aren't many madmen. The lifespan of a cultivator is against the will of the heavens, to begin with. It's enough for Eight-leaf cultivators to live for 1,000 years. That's why you should tell the people that there is no Nine-leaf stage in this world and that men could only live up to 1,000 years... Snuff out their curiosity, and avert the danger! Don't try to investigate this. The things I left behind will be able to prove my words. You must be curious and confused. What is the disaster I speak of, and where did I come from? I'm sorry, I can't reveal the answers to you. My friend, if it's possible, please look for someone on my behalf. She has the surname Luo and was here 300 years ago. Find her and give her the brocade box. If you can't find her, you can have the box.

Lu Zhou was shocked. This mysterious elite was also searching for the Luo woman?!

He looked down at the letter again. "I hope that everything is well."

That was the ending.

'Is that all?'

The writer refused to reveal his origins or what the danger was. Did he really just leave an ominous warning behind without any context? That was all?

Lu Zhou re-read the letter several times. He checked, but there was nothing at the back of the letter. Based on the paragraph about the law of the jungle, he was sure it was written as an afterthought. The ink was lighter than the others.

Although the writer did not reveal his origin or detail the disaster, it was clear the danger existed. Lu Zhou recalled the final sentences of the secret tome in the red coffin. The handwriting and the tone were similar. They must have been written by the same person.

Lu Zhou would be lying if he said that he was not curious. Based on the content of the letter, the Nine-leaf stage would bring disaster. Perhaps, the disaster had something to do with the law of the jungle.

Humans would not care about the ants crawling in the grass, but what if the ants grew into fist-sized spiders?

Lu Zhou shook his head. 'I'm not an actual Nine-leaf cultivator...'

The four Evil Sky Pavilion elders were curious. They wanted to know what the letter said. However, they could not see anything.

Lu Zhou put the letter away. At the same time, he remembered Si Wuya. Si Wuya liked pondering over such things. Perhaps, Si Wuya would have a better idea about this. Then, he looked at the Empress Dowager and asked, "What's this Imperial tutor's name?"

The Empress Dowager shook her head. "He never told us his name."

"Did he leave anything else behind?"

"Inside Great Yan's Imperial city, that was all he left... If there's nothing else, it must be somewhere else."

Li Yunzhao chimed in at this moment, "The Ten Terminal Formation was drawn by the Imperial tutor himself."

"..."

The others were inwardly shocked.

Lu Zhou understood the writer's words about what he left behind being able to prove everything. If the writer was capable of drawing the Ten Terminal Formation, he must have been an incredible and cunning persona. The writer's words on the letter were airtight; he did not leave any clues about his origins at all. Perhaps, the writer was afraid of humans' inherent curiosity and decided to directly cut the bud off?

"Where did he go?" Lu Zhou asked again.

The Empress Dowager sighed. "The Imperial tutor left without warning. He didn't even tell the Emperor. It was as though he had vanished into thin air. The Emperor has commissioned men to look for him everywhere... They went as far as the Blackwood Forest in the extreme west. They tried to pass through the forest but failed."

Pan Litian frowned and said, "I've been to Blackwood Forest as well. I found my gourd bottle there... There are many treasures inside Blackwood Forest. There was a time where there was a treasure-hunting trend among human cultivators. There were countless casualties, and many Other Tribesmen cultivators joined in as well. So, that's all the doing of the Imperial family."

The Empress Dowager seemed regretful.

Li Yunzhao said, "The Evil Sky Pavilion's Mister Seventh, Si Wuya, set fire to a 10,000-mile area on the eastern side of Blackwood Forest. That stopped the treasure hunting."

"..."

The others looked at Lu Zhou.

Lu Zhou's expression remained calm. He acted as though he did not hear anything. 'What does it have to do with me?'

He looked at the brocade box on the floor. He flipped his palm and drew the box to him with a surge of energy.

His action attracted everyone's attention. They no longer paid attention to the topic before this or the letter's content. Now, they were all curious about the brocade box's content.

"Master, what's in it?"

The brocade box was exquisite. It was rectangular with several red lines and patterns. A red lotus was carved onto one side of the brocade box. They were merely lines without any color. The cover of the box was designed to be slid off. There was no need for a key nor were there sealing Formation veins.

Lu Zhou opened the box.

Click!

An unadorned but elegant and delicate red-stringed zither lay silently in the brocade box.

"Ding! Obtained weapon: Nine Strings Zither. State: Merits undetermined; grade not activated."

When he heard the system's notification, Lu Zhou counted the strings on the zither. Indeed, there were nine strings. He took the Nine Strings Zither out of the box and placed it on his palm.

The Nine Strings Zither was as long as the Lantian Jade Flute, and yet, it was only as wide as his palm.

"A zither?!"

The others were stunned.

"It's a zither!"

"It doesn't look ordinary." Zhou Jifeng stared at it keenly.

"I feel like you're stating the obvious..."

When the Nine String Zither touched his skin, Lu Zhou felt a faint cold sensation. It felt solid to the touch, and its aesthetics were stunning.

Lu Zhou's disciples were baffled. How was anyone supposed to play such a small zither? It was only as wide as a person's palm. Was the player supposed to use a toothpick to pluck the zither's strings? Anyway, that was not important. The point was, why did Great Yan's Imperial tutor leave a zither behind?

Chapter 595: The Nine Strings Zither

Lu Zhou turned to look at the Empress Dowager and asked, "Is the Imperial tutor interested in music as well?"

The Empress Dowager sighed emotionally before she said, "The Imperial tutor knows the four arts, and he would play the zither from time to time. However, I've never seen him using this zither. This is an exquisite work of art. Perhaps, it's some sort of ornament?"

Lu Zhou shook his head. "I wouldn't be so sure about that."

The others might think it was a decoration. However, to the experienced and knowledgeable Lu Zhou, he knew the zither could be controlled with Primal Qi.

The system's notification was proof of that.

The other continued to look at Lu Zhou.

Lu Zhou released the Nine Strings Zither, and it hovered in front of him. He extended both hands...

Whizz!

The Nine String Zither shone with golden radiance and enlarged. Then, an energy seal appeared and merged with the enlarged Nine Strings Zither. The lines between his fingers were formed from energy.

Everyone stared at it with wide eyes.

Pan Litian said, "Someone once said that sound techniques are skills that require vast knowledge. Most cultivators would only stop at the brutish and unrefined stage of howling or hurling... A true master of melody knows how to bewitch the heart and mind with musical notes and could affect another person's will. A masculine melody is speedy and fierce like a thunderclap while a feminine melody was gentle and enriching like flowing water..."

"Unfortunately, most cultivators would just go with the flow and cultivate the Eighteen Arms. After all, if they had the time to listen to music, they would have preferred to spend it cutting down someone else. They find that much more fulfilling."

"Heh, Old Leng, you can't resist bickering with me, can you?"

"I'm just discussing the matter."

Under normal circumstances, many families would not have the resources to allow a member to learn elegant arts. If one were to place a zither or a knife before a child from an ordinary family, there was no doubt the child would choose the knife without any hesitation. Naturally, there were always exceptions.

Pan Litian asked, "How do you explain Conch, then?"

Leng Luo glanced at Conch who was standing at the side. He shook his head. "Although she's special, it won't change my views."

"..."

'You argumentative geezer!'

Lu Zhou ignored the duo's bickering and moved his finger.

A cacophonous noise rang in the air.

Lu Zhou did not know how to play the zither at all. How could a modern young man who transmigrated here have time to learn to play the zither?

"Amazing! That's some fine playing, Pavilion Master!" Pan Zhong applauded.

Everyone turned to look at Pan Zhong immediately.

Pan Zhong ceased his applause immediately as he mumbled, "It... It was... great..."

Zhou Jifeng looked at Pan Zhong scornfully. 'You butter mouth. You're a far cry from Mister Eighth... Wait, where is Mister Eighth? It's not like him to miss such an occasion.'

Despite the cacophonous noise, everyone bore with it and listened.

After a while, Lu Zhou shook his head. "Although I know how to control Qi through melody, I've never practiced it. This Nine Strings Zither will surely be extraordinary in the right hands."

Upon hearing this, Little Yuan'er said, "Master, why don't you let Junior Sister Conch give it a try?"

Conch looked expectant. Since the Nine Strings Zither was revealed, she had not been able to tear her eyes away from it. It was obvious she liked the zither.

Lu Zhou almost forgot that among his ten disciples, he had one who knew how to control Qi with melody.

Lu Zhou retracted his Primal Qi; the Nine Strings Zither reverted to its original appearance. Then, with a wave of his sleeve, he sent the Nine Strings Zither to Conch.

Conch was clearly much more excited than usual. She picked the Nine String Zither up and would not put it back down. It seemed like she had forgotten that she had another instrument, the Lantian Jade Flute.

The Empress Dowager and Li Yunzhao simultaneously turned to look at Conch.

"Who's this"

"My latest disciple, Conch," Lu Zhou replied.

Li Yunzhao praised, "Those you accept as a disciple are always extraordinary, Senior Ji." He could sense Conch's cultivation base and the flow of aura in her, but he did not underestimate her.

"Focus your mind," Lu Zhou said tonelessly.

"Oh." Conch did as she was told. She loosened her hands. The Nine String Zither hovered before her.

Lu Zhou did not have to teach her what to do next. She knew what she was supposed to do.

Conch immediately condensed Qi into energy.

The Primal Qi that wrapped around the Nine String Zither instantly turned into a red energy seal.

A Nine Strings Zither compatible with her size appeared in front of her.

“Red... red energy?!” Li Yunzhao was shocked!

Lu Zhou knew this would certainly catch their eyes, but he did not mind...

Meanwhile, the Evil Sky Pavilion’s four elders, the disciples, and the others looked at Conch, puzzled.

Red energy? How was this possible?

Upon seeing their reactions, Lu Zhou gruffly said, “There’s no need to be so surprised.”

The four elders instantly understood what Lu Zhou meant. Lu Zhou could unleash golden and blue energy seals, after all. Was it really a surprise that his illegitimate daughter could unleash red energy?

Everyone’s eyes were trained on Conch as her fingers danced on the strings.

The zither sang. Her fingers produced a mellifluous tune.

Although Lu Zhou did not know how to play the zither, he knew that most zithers had seven strings. It was shocking that a nine-stringed zither could produce such a melody. The gears in his mind began to turn as he regarded Conch in shock. He connected the puzzles in his mind. Perhaps, Conch was from that place!

Shortly after, the notes formed by her energy drifted away and scattered into the surroundings like wind blades.

“This is bad!” Li Yunzhao immediately planted himself before the Empress Dowager.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

The notes from the melody turned into sound blades that shot out into the surroundings.

The melody was like a storm now.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Lu Zhou activated his protective energy.

Similarly, his disciples activated theirs as well and blocked the sound blades.

After the short performance, the inner warehouse was in a mess.

Conch hastily released her hands. She clenched them into fists.

The song ended.

The red energy lines faded away, and the delicate and exquisite Nine Strings Zither dropped back into her hands.

Conch said apologetically, “Master... I-I-I... It wasn’t my intention to do that...”

Lu Zhou stroked his beard and said, “You’ve just entered the Divine Court realm. Although you’re gifted in tune, you still have a lot to learn about controlling Qi with sound.”

“Understood. I’ll work harder.”

Lu Zhou raised his hand. His energy wrapped around the Nine Strings Zither, and it flew back into his hand.

Conch was crestfallen.

Lu Zhou said, "The Nine Strings Zither is something he left behind... I'll hold onto it for now."

Conch nodded.

When Little Yuan'er saw Conch was depressed, she quickly whispered into Conch's ear, "Don't worry. No one in the Evil Sky Pavilion knows how to play music. You're the only one. It'll be yours sooner or later..."

Conch thought Little Yuan'er's words made sense. She was in a better mood now that she heard Little Yuan'er's words. "Thank you, Ninth Senior Sister."

"..."

'I wonder what's going on in that little girl's mind.'

The Empress Dowager looked at the box on the floor with a sigh before she said, "My mission is done... From this day on, this mission shall be passed on to the Evil Sky Pavilion."

"Mission? To protect the peace of the world?" Lu Zhou found the Empress Dowager's words amusing. However, his expression was as calm as ever.

"I'm merely making a suggestion. It's up to you what you want to do."

The Nine-leaf stage would bring disaster. If Lu Zhou were to do as the Empress Dowager suggested, did it not mean he had to deliberately weaken his cultivation base? Most importantly, he was only at the Five-leaf stage! In the end, he only said, "What if the tides of the time can't be held back?"

Chapter 596: The Sky Won't Fall

After reading the letter, Lu Zhou felt that the Imperial tutor was too narrow-minded. Throughout history, no dynasty had ever managed to align the thoughts and actions of every single person under the heavens. Free will, experiments, and curiosity were imperative in human improvement.

Even if Lu Zhou did not transmigrate to this place, Ji Tiandao, Yun Tianluo, Liu Gu, and Gong Yuandu, all these people, would still try to attempt the Nine-leaf stage. Even his previously short-lived disciple, Yu Shangrong, had similar thoughts in the past.

When the lotus-severing era dawned, many cultivators jumped on the bandwagon and cultivated.

Half a year had passed since then. Even Liu Gu had recultivated to the Eight-and-a-half leaf stage. The others would certainly catch up sooner or later. It was only a matter of time. Who could stop everyone from attempting the Nine-leaf stage?

Even if Lu Zhou did not spread the theory of lotus severing, Yun Tianluo's chessboard, Liu Gu's research, and Yu Shangrong's successful attempt at severing his lotus would one day reveal the answer to everyone.

The Empress Dowager sighed and said, "I'll leave it to the heavens."

“I, for one, think it’s in our hands.”

The Empress nodded and did not continue the conversation.

Lu Zhou remembered the Luo woman mentioned in the letter. He asked, “Have you heard of a woman with the surname Luo, Empress Dowager?”

The Empress Dowager fell deep into her thoughts. Perhaps, it was due to her advanced age, she needed some time to recall events of the past. After a while, she shook her head. “The Imperial tutor never mentioned her to me. Perhaps, he might have told someone about her. I heard the Emperor say that the Imperial tutor would frequently spend time on his own while thinking about his hometown. The Imperial tutor had spoken about searching for someone. Perhaps, he was referring to the Luo Woman”

“So she had never appeared in the Divine Capital before?” Lu Zhou was puzzled.

Li Yunzhao said, “I’ve been serving the Empress Dowager for the longest time. I know about everything the Empress Dowager sees and hears. I can guarantee that we have no knowledge of a Luo woman being on good terms with the Imperial tutor. However, the Divine Capital is huge, and there are many people with that surname. We can rule out the possibility that the person the Imperial tutor was looking for is among them.”

Lu Zhou stroked his beard and nodded. “I see.”

At this moment, an Imperial bodyguard showed up outside the inner warehouse. He bowed and said, “Empress Dowager, the Big Dipper Academy’s Zhou Youcai and the Sky Conduct Academy’s Meng Nanfei request an audience!”

The Empress Dowager sighed and said, “Tell them to wait in Dazheng Palace.”

“Understood.”

...

Dazheng Palace.

The Big Dipper Academy’s President Zhou Youcai and the Sky Conduct Academy’s President Meng Nanfei were shaking as they kneeled on the ground.

The Empress Dowager sat on the right while Lu Zhou sat on the left.

Zhou Youcai prostrated himself and said, “Senior Ji, please believe me. I didn’t approve of the ten elders’ actions... I tried to dissuade them from interfering with the conflict between the Divine Capital and the Evil Sky Pavilion, but they wouldn’t listen!”

Meng Nanfei said with a sigh, “Ever since Yan Province, I’ve repeatedly told my disciples to not leave the academy. I didn’t think that...”

On the twin rocks peak, Lu Zhou had met Zhou Youcai, and they had a conversation there.

Among the two presidents, the others were, naturally, more suspicious of Meng Nanfei.

“Give me a reason to believe in you,” Lu Zhou said.

Zhou Youcai shuffled forward on his knees. He produced a handful of talismans and said, "These are the talismans I've given my core disciples. If they stray too far away from the academy, the energy seal on the talismans will fade away. Senior Ji, you have a profound cultivation base; you can examine the time these talismans were created."

Lu Zhou waved his arm. One of the talismans flew into his palm. Indeed, there was a faint trace of a talisman seal's power on it. This was the simplest tracking seal applied on paper.

"What about you?" Lu Zhou shifted his gaze to Meng Nanfei.

Meng Nanfei shuddered. His eyes were wide open as he said, "Senior Ji, I'm telling the truth... I thought of using the same method but..."

This was not convincing enough.

On the twin rocks peak, Meng Nanfei was dismissive of Lu Zhou's invitation. He only sent a disciple there. At that time, Lu Zhou had only intimidated him with a Disguise Card.

At this moment, Hua Chongyang bowed and said, "Senior Ji, I have something to say!"

"Let's hear it."

"When the Nether Sect attacked the city, I saw many Sky Conduct Academy disciples!" Hua Chongyang said.

Hua Chongyang's words were akin to the final nail being hammered into the coffin for Meng Nanfei. He fell backward immediately. "You... You must be mistaken."

Hua Chongyang snorted before he said, "I can differentiate between the Imperial guards and the Sky Conduct Academy disciples."

One group donned armor while the other wore long white robes. Hua Chongyang was not a blind man.

Lu Zhou made up his mind. He looked at Hua Chongyang and said, "How many Nether Sect disciples died?"

"We haven't had the time to tally the number yet. Before the battle of the Divine Capital, we had close to 70,000 comrades. Now, we barely have 40,000..." A frown appeared on Hua Chongyang's face when he said this.

Swoosh!

At this moment, many Nether Sect disciples swarmed toward the entrance of Dazheng Palace and glared at Meng Nanfei with bloodshot eyes.

The 12 branch masters from the Nether Sect fell to their knees at once. "With the sect master's absence, please make a decision on our behalf, patriarch!"

The members of the Nether Sect echoed the branch masters' words.

"Please make a decision on our behalf, patriarch!"

"Please make a decision on our behalf, patriarch!"

Their voices resounded loudly in Dazheng Palace.

'For every grievance, someone is responsible. For every debt, there is a debtor'.

Liu Gu was dead. There was nothing more to be said about this.

Lu Zhou looked at Meng Nanfei. "Even if I forgive you, the blood of tens of thousands of Nether Sect disciples determine that you won't be forgiven."

Meng Nanfei's heart sank. He hastily said, stumbling over his words, "S-senior... S-senior Ji... I h-had no choice as well... We were only serving our master!"

Lu Zhou ignored him. He called out, "Hua Chongyang."

"Yes, senior."

"In Yu Zhenghai's absence, you'll be in charge of the Nether Sect... I'll leave Meng Nanfei's fate to you," Lu Zhou said with a wave of his sleeve.

When Hua Chongyang heard this, he fell to one knee. "Thank you, Senior Ji."

Upon hearing Lu Zhou's words, the branch masters grew visibly excited.

Hua Chongyang looked at Meng Nanfei and said, "Come with us."

"..."

When Meng Nanfei did not move, Hua Chongyang went over and dragged him out. Hua Chongyang was injured to begin with. He did not have the confidence to take down Meng Nanfei.

Meng Nanfei flinched instinctively. He cowered in fear.

At this moment, Lu Zhou raised a hand and launched a palm seal! The Five-leaf Lu Zhou was already considered an elite among elites.

Boom!

Meng Nanfei did not dare to dodge. He took several steps backward and grunted; blood spilled from the edge of his lips.

Lu Zhou continued to ignore Meng Nanfei. He rose to his feet and said, "Hua Chongyang, I'll be staying in the Imperial city for a few days. You'll be in charge of cleaning up the Divine Capital. So long as I'm here... the sky won't fall."

Hua Chongyang had been worried that the Nether Sect would have a hard time picking up the pieces if Lu Zhou left. After all, the Nether Sect and the Imperial city had both suffered heavy losses in this war. With the Evil Sky Pavilion around, he was beyond thankful.

Hua Chongyang and the Nether Sect members were overjoyed. They kneeled again. "Thank you, patriarch!"

...

On the city walls of Liang Province City.

Huang Shijie looked at the green-robed swordsman on the turret. He cupped his fists together and said, "Mister Second, are you thinking about a method to kill General Karol?"

With his arms crossed and body facing west, Yu Shangrong answered without turning back, "No."

"Then, what are you thinking about, Mister Second?"

"I'm wondering why Karol isn't attacking until now," Yu Shangrong replied.

"He must be afraid."

"Instead of passively defending, why don't we take the initiative and attack?"

"Mister Second, what do you mean?" Huang Shijie was startled.

At this moment, a figure flew down. He bowed and said, "Island Master, a letter from Mister Seventh in the Divine Capital."

"What is it about?"

"Sect Master Yu is in trouble."

"..."

Chapter 597: The Sword Devil Has Lost It

Huang Shijie's eyes widened as he said, "This is no time for a prank!"

"Mister Seventh penned the letter himself! I dare not lie! Mister Seventh has asked us to wait for him." The person bowed as he presented the letter with both hands.

"..."

"Mister Seventh is on his way to Liang Province. He will arrive tomorrow morning!"

... Yu Shangrong looked up slightly in the direction of the Other Tribes. He did not move or turn around, keeping quiet. Earlier, a faint smile could be seen on his face, but now, his face was devoid of expression.

Huang Shijie could sense the change in the atmosphere so he cupped his fists together and took his leave.

...

Liang Province. The next morning.

Huang Shijie, Jiang Aijian, Li Jingyi, and the masters of the Ten Thousand Poison Faction, the Blossom Faction, and the Fiend Temple gathered at the General's Mansion.

"Where's Mister Second?"

One of the disciples bowed and replied, "Mister Second is on one of the turrets."

"So early?" Jiang Aijian was shocked.

“Mister Second has been standing the entire night.”

“The entire night?” Huang Shijie frowned slightly. “I’ll go and have a look.”

Jiang Aijian said, “Master... You’re getting worried for nothing. Aren’t you afraid of being flayed alive if you head there now? How can Mister Second be fine when something like that has happened to Mister First?”

Huang Shijie was stunned. He said, “I thought they didn’t get along.”

“Indeed, but they’re fellow disciples, after all,” Jiang Aijian replied.

“You have a point.” Huang Shijie nodded. “Little Jian...”

Jiang Aijian said with a straight face, “Master, please address me as Aijian! Ai for the love of all peoples, and Jian for Sword Freak. If you can’t call me that, at least refer to me as your good disciple your... If you call me Little Jian again, I’m leaving!”

“Scram!” Huang Shijie said. “If you’re even one ten-thousandth like Yu Shangrong, I wouldn’t have fallen to such dire straits. Look at him and his world-renowned profound cultivation base then look at you...”

“Master, that’s not fair. I’m renowned all over the world as well! I’m one of the three great Sword Freaks in the cultivation world! When have I ever tarnished your good name? It isn’t fair for you to compare me to him!” Jiang Aijian said arrogantly.

...

At this moment, the cloud-splitting chariot was speeding toward Liang Province City from the east, dragging a long tail behind it. Perhaps, due to it traveling at maximum speed, it buzzed and thrummed.

A few people looked up in unison.

“They’re here!”

“Mister Seventh is here!”

Then, the others rose to their feet and looked at the sky as well.

In just a blink of an eye, a green-clad figure appeared before everyone. He crossed his arms as he looked at the incoming cloud-splitting chariot with a cold gaze.

“Greetings, Mister Second.” The people from the Ten Thousand Poison Faction, the Blossom Faction, and the Fiend Temple bowed in unison.

Yu Shangrong ignored them. He continued staring at the cloud-splitting chariot.

Soon enough, the cloud-splitting chariot was above Liang Province City.

Upon seeing this, Yu Shangrong stepped into the air.

Si Wuya who was manning the helm saw Yu Shangrong. He bowed and said, “Greetings, Second Senior Brother!”

With just a glance, Yu Shangrong saw Yu Zhenghai lying in the flying chariot. He investigated Yu Zhenghai with his energy and failed to detect any aura. Yu Zhenghai was as good as dead. A slight frown appeared on his face when he discovered this. He asked, "Does master know?"

"Yes. It was too late when master arrived. Eldest Senior Brother fought Liu Gu valiantly above Cloud Rage River. The two of them were evenly matched, and both of them died," Si Wuya calmly replied.

Yu Shangrong shook his head. He said indifferently, "I've told him that Liu Gu isn't a pushover. This wouldn't have happened if he had listened to me."

Since Mister Second from the Evil Sky Pavilion was sleeping, the others could only listen.

Si Wuya said with a sigh, "It's meaningless to discuss this now. Although master spared no effort in healing Eldest Senior Brother, he only managed to keep Eldest Senior Brother's life hanging by a thread."

Yu Shangrong entered the cloud-splitting chariot. He stood next to Yu Zhenghai and looked down at him.

The cloud-splitting chariot was silent.

Zing!

All of a sudden, Yu Shangrong's Longevity Sword left its scabbard. A red light shot out from the sword into Yu Zhenghai's body before it returned to its scabbard.

Yu Shangrong asked, "What else did master say?"

After Si Wuya recounted Lu Zhou's words to Yu Shangrong, he continued to say, "I'll take Eldest Senior Brother deep into Lou Lan and find the spot where he was first buried."

The others were shocked upon hearing this.

Jiang Aijian shook his head. He stepped forward, looked at Si Wuya, and said, "I know you're resourceful, but the people of Lou Lan rule their nation with witchcraft. Mo Li and Ba Ma both died in Great Yan. Now that the Divine Capital is in chaos, they're just waiting for an opportunity to conquer our lands. Aren't you just seeking death if you go to Lou Lan now?"

Si Wuya said, "That's the only way to save Eldest Senior Brother. If I can save him, I'm willing to take the risk."

The others nodded when they heard this.

At this moment, Yu Shangrong said, "Leave it to me."

"Second Senior Brother?"

"I'll go to Lou Lan." Yu Shangrong raised a hand. A five-fingered energy seal propped Yu Zhenghai up.

"But..."

"I have my Longevity Sword, and I can prolong his life. Can you?" Yu Zhenghai looked at Si Wuya.

"Besides, your cultivation base is too weak."

"..."

“Say no more. I can promise that I’ll survive as long as I have my sword.” Yu Shangrong flew out of the flying chariot with Yu Zhenghai in tow.

The others looked at the Sword Devil, Yu Shangrong, in confusion. Was he not being too hasty? Was he not going to plan his route or come up with a strategy first? Did he go crazy?

“By the way, what’s the situation like in the Divine Capital, Seventh Junior Brother?”

“Liu Gu is dead. It’s a great victory for the Nether Sect. Master is personally keeping an eye on the Divine Capital. It’s absolutely safe there,” Si Wuya replied.

“Alright.” Yu Shangrong looked in the direction of the Other Tribes. “Look after Liang Province City for me.”

Si Wuya was in a great dilemma. ‘Uh... Isn’t he taking this too lightly? He’s switching players and departing at the drop of a hat...’

Neigh!

The cry of a horse sounded from below.

The others were shocked and looked at the source of the commotion. They thought that the Roulians had invaded. However, they saw Mingshi Yin approaching them on horseback.

The horse had a ruby mane and snow-white coat. Its eyes were golden. It truly looked outstanding.

“Neigh! Neigh! Neigh! Come on, I’ve not even complained about you, but you’re complaining non-stop!”

The others were shocked.

“It’s the Evil Sky Pavilion’s Mister Fourth.”

“Mister Fourth has a mount like this?”

Si Wuya regarded Mingshi Yin on the horse with a complicated gaze. He did not know why he was here.

Mingshi Yin stopped and leaped off the steed. “Greetings, Second Senior Brother.”

Yu Shangrong smiled faintly and said, “Why were you loitering about in the area these few days?”

“Was I? You must’ve mistaken me for somebody else, Second Senior Brother.” Mingshi Yin scratched his head and acted as though he had no idea of what Yu Shangrong was talking about.

“You have always been at odds with Seventh Junior Brother. Now that there’s a possibility of the Other Tribes invading, both of you must look past your differences and support each other,” Yu Shangrong said.

“Got it.” Mingshi Yin’s reply was clearly insincere. He thought to himself, ‘You’re even more at odds with Eldest Senior Brother!’

“I’m sure that defending Liang Province will prove much more difficult in my absence. If there are any troubles, ask master for help. Don’t be arrogant and underestimate your enemies,” Yu Shangrong said.

“Got it.” Contrary to his reply, Mingshi Yin thought to himself, ‘Why do I feel this advice is much more suited for yourself?’ Naturally, he did not dare to verbalize his thoughts.

Yu Shangrong smiled faintly and said, “I’ll leave it to all of you. Farewell.”

Yu Shangrong was about to turn around and fly away when...

Neigh!

Ji Liang hurriedly flew in front of Yu Shangrong, blocking his path.

“Hm?”

Neigh!

Ji Liang kept lowering and lifting its head as though it was nodding.

“Hey, hey, hey... Ji Liang, what’s the meaning of this? Don’t stand in Second Senior Brother’s way.” Mingshi Yin was taken aback.

Neigh! Neigh! Neigh!

Ji Liang kept moving.

Yu Shangrong made a guess. “You want to bring me to Lou Lan?”

Ji Liang nodded.

The others were shocked as they looked at Ji Liang.

“What an incredible horse!”

“A horse with intelligence. It’s a legendary mount!”

“You’re fated to be with this horse, Mister Second. If it brings you to Lou Lan, victory will come on horseback!”

Mingshi Yin. “???”

Every second counted on a rescue mission. Yu Shangrong had no objections to going with Ji Liang. He said, “Very well.”

Then, he leaped onto Ji Liang’s back with Yu Zhenghai in tow.

Ji Liang was extremely tame and obedient...

Mingshi Yin. “!!!”

Yu Shangrong said, “I’m sorry, Fourth Junior Brother.”

“No, no, no, there’s no need to apologize... This horse belongs to master, after all. Just take it and use it!” Inwardly, Mingshi Yin had already cursed Ji Liang 1,000 times over.

Yu Shangrong nodded and said no more. He rode the horse and dove toward the forest in the west. In just a blink of an eye, he vanished.

...

Meanwhile.

Behind a bunker north of the forest, a masked Roulian saw Ji Liang. He immediately returned to the campgrounds.

...

At the campgrounds.

When General Karol learned the news, he smiled. "Do you know who left Liang Province?"

"My lord... although it was far away, I'm certain it's the Evil Sky Pavilion's second disciple, Yu Shangrong, who left on horseback. Apart from that, he seemed to have brought a patient with him."

"Good job," Karol said, "Notify Lou Lan to keep an eye on that man. If the situation permits, kill him."

"Understood!"

Chapter 598: Crossing Heaven's Moat

At the Roulian campground, the Roulian cultivators gathered around a bonfire as they drank wine and feasted on meat. They showed no indication of invading Liang Province.

Karol stepped outside and looked at the skies. His eyes gleamed coldly as he murmured, "Karran... I'll be able to avenge you soon."

...

At night.

The forest was quiet.

After a day of traveling at full speed, Yu Shangrong planned to stop for a rest.

Ji Liang's performance had exceeded his expectations. Barring unforeseen circumstances, Ji Liang should be able to take him across Heaven's Moat.

Heaven's Moat was somewhere beyond the forest. It was the name of the mountain range that towered up into clouds between Great Yan and the western regions. To cross it, one's cultivation base had to be profound. Otherwise, one would need to travel by flying chariot. There were soldiers patrolling the borders all-year-round near Heaven's Moat to guard against the invasion from the Other Tribes. Under normal circumstances, it was difficult to cross Heaven's Moat.

After the great disturbance in the Divine Capital, Wei Zhuoyan had recalled his troops. The area seemed slightly desolate now.

Yu Shangrong glanced at Heaven's Moat outside the forest. Aside from the stars, he could not see anything. Then, he looked at the unconscious Yu Zhenghai whom he had propped against a tree trunk and said, "Since you hate Lou Lan so much, why didn't you take them down when the Nether Sect was at its strongest? You could even conquer the Divine Capital."

Yu Zhenghai did not answer nor could he answer.

“Back then, the two of us fought with master and lost... After master left, if I didn’t hit you with that final palm strike, perhaps, Liu Gu wouldn’t have been able to sneak up on you. So... that death was on my hands, but I never regretted striking you. The enmity between the Noblemen and Wuqians shouldn’t be placed on our shoulders alone, don’t you think?”

In the quiet forest, Yu Shangrong spoke to the unconscious man.

“Since Lou Lan took your life... I’ll take theirs and give them to you... We’ll call it even. What do you say? Just tell me what you think... I’ll take your silence as a yes, then.”

Yu Shangrong said no more.

Neigh!

Ji Liang replied instead.

Yu Shangrong noticed that Yu Zhenghai’s life aura was weakening. He drew his Longevity Sword. When another scarlet light shot into Yu Zhenghai’s body, he returned it to its scabbard.

“If we keep this up, we’ll both die.” A gentle smile appeared on Yu Shangrong’s face as he said, “However, I don’t think the heavens will let us die so easily.”

Yu Shangrong suddenly lifted his Longevity Sword out of its scabbard with his thumb.

Zing!

His Longevity Sword suddenly shot past a tree in the distance.

Swoosh!

His Longevity Sword accurately impaled the cultivator hidden behind the tree. The sword absorbed a faint red energy before it flew back into its scabbard.

As though nothing had happened, Yu Shangrong said with a smile, “This is the first one.”

Then, he stood up and carried Yu Zhenghai onto Ji Liang. The two men and one horse flew out of the forest.

Yu Shangrong had just left when another person sat down limply behind another tree, breathing heavily. “Is that Great Yan’s Sword Devil? General Karol wants us to intercept him? I have to tell the general quickly!”

He barely finished his sentence speaking when a voice rang from above. “My friend.”

“Hm?”

“My apologies. You won’t be able to send that letter.”

When the man looked up, he barely had the time to focus when the Longevity Sword that was wrapped in energy shot toward him.

“This is the second one.”

The sword returned to its scabbard.

Yu Shangrong flew back onto Ji Liang's back.

Ji Liang continued flying to Heaven's Moat.

Heaven's Moat was an unbroken and towering mountain range that extended 10,000 miles; separating the western regions and Great Yan. Its unique height deterred many from conquering it.

Many cultivators would rather take a detour from the northwest to reach the lands of the Other Tribes. However, that would mean a longer journey and was a waste of time.

When Yu Shangrong returned to Brackish Mountain, he spent close to five days traveling with his Eight-leaf cultivation base before he reached the Melilot Graveyard. Taking a detour was not a recommended option. Moreover, he was trying to save Yu Zhenghai who was in imminent danger. How fortunate that he had Ji Liang.

Ji Liang seemed to be compatible with Yu Shangrong. No matter what he did, Ji Liang would instantly understand what he wanted.

Ji Liang flew upward with no fear of heights, unlike cultivators who had a limit to how high they could fly.

The forest was huge. Many who mastered flying would wildly test the limits of the heights.

The strange thing was when cultivators reached a certain altitude, they would run out of Primal Qi. Since that discovery, cultivators no longer tried to fly at too high an altitude.

Heaven's Moat was not as tall as the limit.

When Ji Liang was halfway up the mountain, the temperature dropped suddenly. The cold was biting.

It seemed like a snowstorm was upon them.

Yu Shangrong activated his protective energy that enveloped Ji Liang and Yu Zhenghai.

"I heard Old Fourth calling you Ji Liang... You suit me very well. If it's possible, what do you say to staying with me after this?" Yu Shangrong asked as they climbed higher.

Neigh!

Ji Liang replied as he continued to fly higher.

"That's great."

Neigh! Neigh!

"There's no need to worry about master. He has many mounts. He won't be missing you," Yu Shangrong said.

Neigh! Neigh! Neigh!

"Here it comes."

At this moment, the snowstorm above Heaven's Moat intensified.

Yu Shangrong smiled faintly and said, "Follow me..." He pushed away from Ji Liang's back lightly and shot into the air as he summoned his avatar.

Whizz!

A lotus-less 90-foot avatar kept the snowstorm at bay after it raised its hands.

Yu Shangrong shook his head and said with a sigh, "A Golden Lotus would've come in handy at a time like this..." Regardless, his expression remained calm as he flew into the avatar. Then, the shining golden avatar shot toward the highest point of Heaven's Moat.

At this moment, the garrison soldiers near Heaven's Moat and the civilians staying around the mountains stopped what they were doing and looked up at Heaven's Moat. It was as though a sky lantern was slowly rising into the dark skies above Heaven's Moat.

On the western region's side, the soldiers guarding the borders were spurred into the action by this sight. They mobilized their troops toward Heaven's Moat!

Yu Shangrong was focused on the skies. The snowstorm obscured his vision and blocked the golden radiance. Countless snowflakes fell on his avatar, covering its glow. However, his determination did not waver.

"Open." Seven shining golden leaves appeared and spun around the avatar as it flew upward.

The accumulated snow on the avatar was instantly swept away by the lotus leaves, and it shone brightly again!

Boom!

The avatar pushed the snowstorm away and left a huge ring of light in the sky!

Ji Liang synchronized its movements with him as it followed closely behind.

They were finally past the most difficult part of Heaven's Moat and landed on a peak.

The cold wind raged on and on!

When Yu Shangrong retracted his avatar, his hair, eyebrows, and robes turned white from the snow! He formed a barrier with his energy to keep out the raging cold wind.

Ji Liang neighed. With Yu Zhenghai on its back, it landed beside Yu Shangrong.

The man and the horse stood on the peak of Heaven's Moat, nested between Great Yan and the western regions, and looked down at the hazy lands.

The roar of the wind filled their ears. The mountains were hidden by snow. The boundless western region was lost in the darkness.

"... When I just reached the Eight-leaf stage back then, I've been here on my own. Now that I'm back, it seems boring."

Neigh!

Yu Shangrong turned to look at Yu Zhenghai on the horse's back and said, "Eldest Senior Brother, you've never been here... You can't enjoy the exquisite scenery from this vantage point."

He looked down the mountain again. He knew this was not the time to be enjoying the scenery. Moreover, it was extremely dangerous for him to continuously waste his Primal Qi on this raging storm.

He leaped onto Ji Liang and pointed at Lou Lan. "Ji Liang, shake off those cultivators at the border."

Neigh!

Ji Liang leaped into the air again. When it reached a suitable altitude, it adjusted its direction and maintained its altitude. It kept flying at lightning speed.

...

Inside Dazheng Palace, in the Imperial city of Great Yan's Divine Capital.

The palace was quiet at night.

After two days of meditation, Lu Zhou had recovered some of his extraordinary power. Just when he was about to stop meditating, he could hear faint footsteps approaching...

"Shh, this is the Imperial city. Our mission this time is to investigate and not assassinate!"

"Evergreen Palace, Dazheng Palace, the inner warehouse... Search every inch of this area. We must find the box. The Divine Capital is in disarray right now. We won't have another chance after this."

"Understand!"

"We'll meet here in an hour! Move out!"

Chapter 599: Unfortunately, You're Not Old Villain Ji

Lu Zhou's ears twitched.

The silent palace made it even easier for him to use the listening power from the Heavenly Writing.

He opened his eyes and looked at the skies outside the palace.

A black figure appeared. The figure moved swiftly and nimbly as it snuck into the palace, traversed the corridors, and sniffed about like a dog. He seemed to have a unique talent for picking up scents. Whenever he stopped, a faint energy could be seen swirling around the tip of his nose before quickly disappearing.

At this time, several Imperial guards on patrol passed by outside the palace.

The black figure scurried into a room and hid behind a screen. Again, a faint energy swirled around the tip of his nose before disappearing. His nose twitched. "Who's there?"

He spun around; his eyes widened in shock. He saw an elderly man sitting on a rush cushion inside the room. The old man appraised him, seemingly unafraid.

“What are you looking for, young man?”

The black figure’s heart was racing. He kept his eyes fixed on the old man. He gulped as his nose twitched again. He cried out, “F-five... Five... Five-leaf?”

Lu Zhou was taken aback. “You can tell that I’m at the Five-leaf stage?”

The black figure did not answer the question. Instead, he said, “That’s none of your business... From now on, you’re not to make any sound. Otherwise, I’ll kill you!”

Lu Zhou nodded. He stroked his beard and asked, “A Deep-eye Tribesman?”

The black figure was slightly taken aback. “Huh? You know about us?”

“I went to Rongbei when I was young. The Deep-eye Tribe isn’t outstanding among the Other Tribes. What gives you the courage to infiltrate Great Yan?” Lu Zhou said casually as though they were discussing the weather.

The black figure chuckled and said, “Why not?”

Great Yan’s nine provinces were in turmoil; the Divine Capital had been reduced to rubble. The Imperial guards had suffered great losses, and the two academies were destroyed by the Nether Sect’s attacks. Indeed, this was the best time to infiltrate Great Yan.

Lu Zhou expected the Other Tribes to band together to invade the empire. He did not expect them to infiltrate Great Yan. It was no wonder that Liang Province was peaceful and without large-scale battles.

Lu Zhou asked nonchalantly, “What are you looking for?”

“Don’t ask about something that you shouldn’t ask about.” The black figure stood at a distance from Lu Zhou in a stance that showed he would attack at any given moment.

“A box?” Lu Zhou continued to bait him.

“How did you know?” The black figure was shocked.

“A box left by a Nine-leaf elite, right?”

The black figure’s eyes widened as he looked at Lu Zhou. He hurriedly said, “If you tell me where it is, I’ll spare you.” He was, naturally, clueless to the fact that the old man seated before him was a tiger more terrifying than himself.

With Lu Zhou’s strength, he had no trouble taking down these Other Tribesmen. However, since they were capable of sneaking into the palace, they had surely resolved to sacrifice their lives for this cause.

“If you tell me your objectives, I’ll tell you.” Lu Zhou’s attitude was calm and firm.

The black figure turned and looked out the window.

The night was getting late.

The Imperial city was too huge. It was a tall order to find one box. He considered Lu Zhou's words before he finally said in a hushed voice, "There's something we want inside that box... As for what it is, we don't know as well. We're only here on orders."

"Whose orders?"

Alarm bells rang in the black figure's mind when he heard this question. He looked at Lu Zhou and asked, "Are you trying to dig information out of me?"

"If you want the box, you'll answer me..." Lu Zhou replied.

The black figure replied, "Fine. It's General Karol."

"Karol is only a general of the allied army of Lou Lan and Rouli. You're a Deep-eye Tribesman... Why do you obey his orders?"

Upon hearing Lu Zhou's words, the black figure was suddenly certain of the knowledge that the old man seated before him was not a simple person. He said, somewhat warily, "Is it strange for Rongxi and Rongbei to be allied?"

When Lu Zhou heard this, he stroked his beard and nodded. He said, "The palace has already been conquered by the Evil Sky Pavilion. You've got guts coming here."

"Aside from Old Villain Ji, the others are a ragtag team of senior citizens and invalids. There's nothing to fear about them," the black figure replied.

"You've investigated the Evil Sky Pavilion?" Lu Zhou was curious now. How did this man know that the Evil Sky Pavilion was nothing but a group of old people and invalids? Although it was grating to his ears, he was forced to agree with the black figure's description when he thought about it.

"That's easy... To tell you the truth, we have eyes inside and outside the Divine Capital," the black figure said.

Lu Zhou was slightly speechless. Although it was common to plant spies in an enemy nation, it was rare to see a nation sending this many spies out.

"Very well." Lu Zhou stood up slowly.

His movements startled the black figure. He said with a gruff voice, "Don't move!"

"Hm?"

"Old geezer, where's the box?" The black figure's voice was low and hoarse.

"I have it..."

When the black figure heard this, a delighted expression appeared on his face. "Nice. Give me the box, and I'll spare you."

"You? You'll spare me?"

"You're refusing a toast only to drink a forfeit." In truth, the black figure had never intended to keep his words. After answering so many questions, he had long made up his mind to kill Lu Zhou. He stomped

his feet and drew his dagger at lightning speed! He had to deal with his enemy in the shortest time possible to prevent a commotion.

Lu Zhou raised his palm and pushed it forward, launching a Great Seal of Fearlessness that shone with a brilliant golden light. A hint of blue light could be seen around it as well. It looked extremely eye-catching in the dark.

The black figure was caught off-guard by this.

Bam!

The Great Seal of Fearlessness struck his face, and he reeled back.

Bam!

The hand seal's impact pushed the black figure out the door, causing him to roll down the stairs outside. His internal organs were heavily injured. He grunted before he turned to the side and spat out a mouthful of blood.

"He's really strong!" The black figure pressed a hand to his chest as he struggled to rise to his feet. Then, he quickly sped off.

"I'd like to see how far you can run!"

Lu Zhou flew out. He summoned his Five-leaf avatar!

Whizz!

His shining golden avatar immediately illuminated Dazheng Palace and the plaza before Dazheng palace.

Drawn by the commotion, the Imperial guards and the cultivators inside the palace who were nearby rushed over.

Lu Zhou flew at lightning speed. He looked down and saw the Deep-eye Tribesman flying at a low altitude. Then, he sent another palm seal out.

A frightened expression appeared on the Deep-eye Tribesman's face as he summoned his avatar.

It was a Six-leaf leopard king!

"I see."

Bam!

The palm seal hit the Six-leaf leopard king.

At this moment, several figures shot up in the skies.

Lu Zhou's disciples were drawn and alerted by this commotion and had rushed over.

The Deep-eye Tribesman continued keeping low as he fled. He looked behind him and said, "Unfortunately, you're not Old Villain Ji! You have no hope of capturing me!"

The Deep-eye Tribesman's voice had barely faded when Lu Zhou raised his hand and launched a Binding Cage Card. The card only had a 30% hit rate.

When the Binding Cage Card sailed out in the air, Lu Zhou threw a second card into the air.

Two square cages doggedly pursued the Deep-eye Tribesman.

The Deep-eye Tribesman looked back and exclaimed in shock, "What are these things?"

As soon as the Deep-eye Tribesman finished speaking, one of the two cages dropped down on him. Then, a shining golden net appeared on the ground.

Bam!

The first card shattered.

Soon after, the second cage dropped and missed its mark as well.

The Deep-eye Tribesman was stunned. When he regained his senses, he said with a smile, "You're all bark but no bite. It's just a flashy technique. Old geezer, we'll meet again! Farewell!"

Lu Zhou felt slightly speechless when he saw this. 'That fellow is incredibly lucky.'

Lu Zhou flipped his hand, and Unnamed appeared in his hand. He rose into the air above Dazheng Palace. He looked at the Deep-eye leopard king running toward the distance under the moonlight.

At this moment, his disciples were already here.

The Imperial guards and the elites of the inner palace had also arrived.

They arrived just in time to witness this scene.

After Unnamed turned into a bow, Lu Zhou calmly pulled on the bowstring until the bow resembled the full moon. Soon after, an energy arrow appeared between his index and middle finger.

Swoosh!

The energy arrow flew out at the Deep-eye Tribesman's back.

There was no doubt about the outcome. The black figure was struck by the energy arrow and fell down from the skies.

Chapter 600: Troublesome Spies

After the arrow struck the Deep-eye Tribesman, the palace's elites looked at Lu Zhou who was hovering above Dazheng Palace in shock and fearful respect. Then, they turned to look at the spot where thief fell and wondered inwardly, 'Who's stupid enough to place himself directly in front of the muzzle of a gun?'

When Duanmu Sheng saw this, he cried out before diving down, "I'll go get him!"

Lu Zhou put Unnamed away and looked at the palace's elites around him. Then, he said tonelessly, "What are you waiting for? Are you waiting for me to catch all the thieves in the palace for you?"

"Yes, yes, yes... We'll go... We'll go immediately!" The palace's elites hastily scattered.

“Lock down the Imperial city. Don’t let anyone in or out. Catch the thieves!”

Based on the voices he heard, he speculated there were five Other Tribesmen who had infiltrated the palace this time. It should not be difficult to capture all of them after locking down the Imperial city and combing the area.

Shortly after, Duanmu Sheng brought the Deep-eye Tribesman, who was shot by the arrow, back. He landed in front of Dazheng Palace and tossed the person onto the ground.

Thud!

The Deep-eye Tribesman cried out from the pain. His eyes were brimming with fear at this moment.

The others were puzzled. How was he still alive after being hit by an arrow of a Nine-leaf cultivator? They studied him for a moment before they figured out the answer. The arrow had only struck his abdomen. This meant that his dantian’s sea of Qi was damaged. He had merely lost his cultivation base, and he would not die just yet.

Lu Zhou slowly landed.

The others descended as well.

Lu Zhou looked at the Deep-eye Tribesman.

Name: Lu Li

Identity: Deep-eye Tribesman

Realm: Nascent Divinity Realm

“What’s your name?”

Lu Li cowered in fear. He did not answer the question. Instead, he said, “Y-you’re not a Five-leaf cultivator?”

Duanmu Sheng frowned. He went up and kicked Lu Li. After that, he fiercely said, “My master is already a Nine-leaf cultivator. Are you insulting him?”

“Nine-nine-Leaf?” Lu Li trembled.

Lu Zhou was not bothered by this. Instead, he said, “Answer me.”

“You... you’re Old Villain Ji?!”

As soon as Lu Li finished speaking, Zhu Honggong shot forward from among the crowd and punched Lu Li. His punch landed squarely on Lu Li’s chest.

Bam!

Lu Li cried out in pain again.

Zhu Honggong raised his fists and cursed, “I’ll give you a chance to reconstruct your sentence.”

Lu Li bit back the pain and hastily said, "I'm Lu Li from the Deep-eye Tribe in Rongbei... I'm here to look for a box. It's said that the box contains the secrets of the Nine-leaf stage. I brought four comrades with me. Each of them has different skills such as breaking Formations, fleeing, climbing, and seeing in the dark. I'm the leader of the group. I have a keen sense of smell. Please don't kill me. I'll tell you everything..."

Zhu Honggong nodded. "Master, he has told us everything. He's useless now. I'll clobber him to death!"

"Stand down," Lu Zhou said.

"Yes, master." Zhu Honggong obediently retreated to the side.

Lu Zhou looked at Lu Li and asked, "The Deep-eye Tribe knows about the Nine-leaf stage as well?"

Lu Li said, "About 50 years ago, an expert came to our tribe. He said... he stayed in Great Yan's palace for some time."

When Lu Zhou heard this, he said, "Great Yan's Imperial tutor?"

"Yes, yes, yes, he's Great Yan's Imperial tutor! He said that he was looking for someone. That's why he was traveling around to the lands of the Ten Thousand Tribes. He stayed with us for ten years," Lu Li replied.

As expected, the Nine-leaf elite was still alive.

Lu Zhou pressed on. "Do you know where he is now?"

Lu Li shook his head and said, "Although this man is on good terms with the king, he has a profound cultivation base. Nobody can stop him if he wishes to leave."

"He told you to look for the box?"

"Well..."

Bam!

Zhu Honggong banged his boxing gloves together.

Lu Li started then he hastily said, "Wait, wait, wait. The king sent me here. Everyone knows about the Nine-leaf stage now. The 12 nations of Rongxi and Rongbei are trying to reach the Nine-leaf stage. Whoever attains it first will have the advantage over the others."

This reminded Lu Zhou of the practices of modern companies who sent spies to their competitors' companies to steal precious techniques. They would resort to anything to achieve their goals. It was not strange for the Other Tribes of Rongbei to do this as well.

"There are only five of you here?" Lu Zhou asked.

"Yes, only the five of us..." Lu Li replied.

At this moment, the remaining four Deep-eye Tribesmen were brought toward them by the Imperial guards. The Imperial guards pushed them. "On your knees!"

Lu Li looked at the others with a stunned expression. Why were they so easily captured?

The four of them kneeled next to Lu Li. Their faces were swollen and bruised.

At this moment, Zhao Yue said, "Master, I heard that the Divine Capital isn't too peaceful these days. There are many spies from the Other Tribes causing trouble everywhere."

Lu Li hastily waved his hands and said, "They're not from the Deep-eye Tribe! They must be from Lou Lan or Rouli!"

Lu Zhou looked at Zhao Yue and asked, "Are the disturbances serious?"

"It's not only in the Divine Capital. The Other Tribesmen are causing trouble in the nine provinces as well... but the Divine Capital has it worse."

Lu Zhou looked at Duanmu Sheng and said, "I want to see Hua Chongyang tomorrow morning."

"Understood!"

After saying this, Lu Zhou turned around and left.

...

The next morning.

Inside Dazheng Palace.

Lu Zhou's extraordinary power had increased after a night of meditation.

Hua Chongyang, who had received Duanmu Sheng's message, did not waste time and rushed toward the palace. "Greetings, Senior Ji."

Lu Zhou looked at Hua Chongyang and asked, "Do you know why you're here?"

Hua Chongyang bowed and said, "I'm sure you've heard that the Other Tribesmen have infiltrated the Divine Capital and are causing trouble. They are robbing the civilians and committing atrocities of every kind."

"You have tens of thousands of members in the Nether Sect, and yet, you can't even manage the Divine Capital?" Lu Zhou asked, perplexed.

"They would go into hiding after they commit crimes. They would lay low before they strike again. They're too cunning! The Other Tribesmen are doing this on purpose. I caught three of them over the past two days!" A troubled expression could be seen on Hua Chongyang's face when he spoke.

At this moment, Duanmu Sheng walked in. He bowed and said, "Master... A letter came to the Imperial city. Kindly have a look."

Lu Zhou took the letter and opened it. "Old villain Ji, release Lu Li and the others or we'll kill the people in the Divine Capital. We'll kill five people every day until they are freed."

After reading this, Lu Zhou clenched his fist!

Poof!

The letter was instantly reduced into ashes that scattered in the wind.

'Threatening me?'

Duanmu Sheng lowered his voice and tentatively said, "Master, five civilian corpses were sent along with this letter."

Upon hearing this, Hua Chongyang fell to his knees immediately. "I'm useless! The Nether Sect has just conquered the Divine Capital so our foundations aren't stable yet. The despicable Other Tribesmen are using this opportunity to stir up trouble. Please give me some time, Senior Ji. I will certainly catch them and cut them to 10,000 pieces."

Hua Chongyang knew if his sect master wanted to rule the empire, they would need to govern the empire well and ensure the civilian's safety. The civilians were the foundations of the city, after all. With the foundation in chaos, how could the empire prosper?

"None of the court officials are doing anything?" Lu Zhou asked, puzzled.

"They're indifferent to the situation... The Nether Sect alone is maintaining basic order in the Divine Capital. However, the nine provinces are chaotic as well. I've sent the 12 branch masters back to take care of their respective cities. The military force is concentrated in the Divine Capital, and it's proving difficult to suppress these Other Tribesmen spies," Hua Chongyang replied.

Duanmu Sheng bowed and said, "Master, he's not to blame for this. I went out for a stroll this morning. The Divine Capital is still in the midst of recuperating. Many buildings are being reconstructed. At the end of the day, the court officials would not align themselves with the Fiend Path. Those Other Tribesmen spies dressed up like Great Yan civilians. It's difficult to tell them apart."

After hearing their statements, Lu Zhou felt that this was indeed a problem.

At this moment, Zhao Yue appeared in front of Dazheng Palace. When she entered, she said, "Master, many civilians are kneeling in front of the Imperial city."

Upon hearing this, Lu Zhou said, "I'll go and take a look."

The others left Dazheng Palace as well.

Soon after, Lu Zhou appeared above the Imperial city and looked at the kneeling civilians. There were hundreds of them. Pieces of papers were littered around them. They were kowtowing and shouting at the same time.

"Please help us, Evil Sky Pavilion!"

"Please help us, Evil Sky Pavilion!"

Lu Zhou pointed at the paper on the ground and asked, "What do the papers say?"

"They're left by the Other Tribesmen. Their contents are the same as the letter you read... That's why all the civilians are panicking," Hua Chongyang said with a frown.

The civilians continued to kowtow.

Lu Zhou looked at the civilians again.

‘Those spies are cunning.’

Even if the spies were singled out, they could not do anything if the spies refused to confuse. If they recklessly kill people, it would only worsen the situation in the Divine Capital. As the saying went, ‘It’s easy to conquer a country, but it’s difficult to govern it’.

Lu Zhou stroked his beard as he thought of a countermeasure. After muttering to himself for a while, he said, “I’ll do something about this.”

After saying this, he heard a ding from the system’s notification. He checked the system’s mission list. As expected, there was a new mission: Solve the Divine Capital’s hidden problem.

“With Senior Ji making a move, victory is in the bag!” Hua Chongyang bowed. Inwardly, he wondered how Lu Zhou would solve this difficult matter. Force alone would not be able to solve anything.

“Notify Big Dipper Academy’s Zhou Youcai that I want to meet him.”