

Disciples 611

Chapter 611: A Unique Diary

Lu Zhou stroked his beard and looked at the calm Zhu Tianyuan. "Zhu Honggong."

Zhu Honggong shuddered. The way the old man had called out to him seemed very familiar. His eyes suddenly widened. That mannerism, his actions, his words, his tone, his speech, and his... clothes. He was thoroughly shocked to his core. However, when he looked at the younger and alien face, relief flooded through his body. The old man was not who he thought he was. In the end, he said, "Senior Lu, you should stay out of this... I'll give my master an explanation."

"My son's right." Zhu Tianyuan nodded. "This is the Divine Capital. It has already become the Nether Sect's territory... We'll both lose if we fight in earnest. At most, I won't be able to see my son, but you'll lose your life. Knowing Old Villain Ji, if he makes a move, you won't even have a chance to fight back..."

Lu Zhou remained silent. He was about to nullify the effect of the Appearance Alteration Card when Jiang Pu suddenly flew out of the pile of rubble. He tossed the debris aside and charged at Lu Zhou like a cannonball.

"Jiang Pu, no!" Zhu Tianyuan's face paled from shock.

Everything happened in a blink of an eye.

Jiang Pu appeared before Lu Zhou in just a short moment.

Lu Zhou raised his hand...

Whizz!

A blue light shone from between his fingers again. His palm was aimed at Jiang Pu.

In the end, Jiang Pu was kept at bay by this unique power. He froze in midair and could not advance! 'He's powerful!'

Jiang Pu regarded the old man before him in shock. Although he had mentally prepared himself for this, he did not expect to be stopped so easily. This... this meant that the difference in their strength was very wide.

Lu Zhou did not even deign to look at Jiang Pu. He did not think it was worth it to use his extraordinary power on these people. So, he clenched his hands into fists, and Primal Qi began to gather around his fists.

Bang!

Jiang Pu fell to the ground face-first.

Zhu Tianyuan exclaimed in shock, "What precise control!" The old man's cultivation base had to be very profound to be able to do this. With amazing control, the old man gathered Primal Qi and spread them one foot before himself, controlling his opponent's movements. That was why Jiang Pu had fallen.

"Really?" Lu Zhou felt this move was simple.

“Your move reminds me of Old Villain Ji... Back then, this was his favorite move to use when he bullied others,” Zhu Tianyuan.

Zhu Honggong gulped as he looked at the old man before him. He instinctively retreated. ‘This old man seems dangerous! I must look for a chance to escape.’

At this moment, Lu Zhou unleashed a grand technique. There was a blur of movements before he faded out of sight.

Zhu Tianyuan frowned slightly. He thought the old man was going to attack his son. He immediately moved to intercept the attack with a palm strike.

Lu Zhou struck with his palm.

The two old men’s palms collided!

Boom!

Lu Zhou did not budge. He stood before Zhu Honggong.

Zhu Tianyuan retracted his palm and stumbled five steps back before he managed to stabilize himself. His arm was numb! He was shocked. As expected, this man was not a friend.

Lu Zhou coldly said, On your knees!”

Zhu Honggong looked at the old man before himself. He felt as though he was hallucinating. He saw the old man’s facial features distort and rearrange themselves.

Meanwhile, Zhu Tianyuan said, “My son, you should only kneel at the heavens, the earth, and your parents... There is gold under a man’s knees; you cannot kneel on a whim. Forget it... I still have to rely on Old Villain Ji. Consider this my bad luck!”

Thud!

As soon as Zhu Tianyuan finished speaking, Zhu Honggong fell to his knees. His movements were neat and thorough. He placed both hands on the ground and touched his forehead on the back of his hands. He did not move.

“This...” Zhu Tianyuan was stunned. He was thoroughly annoyed. “I knew it! Old Villain Ji couldn’t properly teach you! I can’t believe this! How can you be so spineless! This is your territory, for crying out loud! I must confront Old... Old... Vill... about... When did you... Old Villain Ji?!”

Lu Zhou turned to face Zhu Tianyuan when Zhu Tianyuan was still ranting.

Without a second thought, Zhu Tianyuan pushed away from the ground and shot away from the courtyard at lightning speed.

Jiang Pu and the Ancient Saint Cult disciples were stunned.

Lu Zhou shook his head and looked at Zhu Honggong. “That’s your useless father!”

“Ma... Master... I... I had a tough time!” Zhu Honggong felt like crying as soon as Lu Zhou nullified the effect of the Appearance Alteration Card.

“Zhu Tianyuan... If you leave, you won’t be able to see Zhu Honggong ever again,” Lu Zhou calmly said.

A sigh rang from outside the courtyard. Then, Zhu Tianyuan returned as though nothing had happened. He opened the doors and walked in.

The Ancient Saint Cult disciples were further baffled.

What was happening?

Zhu Tianyuan looked at Lu Zhou with a stern expression as he said, “Old Villain Ji... You’re as shameless as you have been in the past!”

The Ancient Saint cult disciples staggered backward!

‘He’s Old Villain Ji?’

Jiang Pu widened his eyes in shock and horror as he looked at Lu Zhou. He finally realized Lu Zhou’s appearance had changed. He began to cough violently. After that, he quickly bit back the pain and fell to one knee. “Greetings, Senior Ji!”

The others followed suit; their hearts thumping wildly in their chests. “Greetings, Senior Ji!”

“Was it fun? Did you find it amusing?” Zhu Tianyuan spread his hands out.

Lu Zhou said, “How can I meet you if I didn’t do this? Besides... What if it was someone who wanted to harm my disciples? Do you expect me to sit back and do nothing?”

Zhu Tianyuan gave it some thought and nodded. “You have a point.”

Zhu Honggong pulled a face and said, “Master...”

Lu Zhou said sternly, “Shut up. You bad-mouthed me behind my back and offended me. You’ve got guts.”

“...”

Zhu Tianyuan immediately explained, “Don’t be so petty. He only forgot his place because of you. It’s the teacher’s fault for not producing a good student.”

“You’re complaining about me?” Lu Zhou stared at Zhu Tianyuan.

“I wouldn’t dare.”

“If it weren’t for this rascal, I wouldn’t have forgiven you for that rude statement!”

“...”

Zhu Tianyuan’s old face stiffened. He smiled awkwardly. “There’s no need for that. I did praise you as well...”

Lu Zhou was speechless. As the saying went, ‘If the upper beam is not straight, the lower beam will be crooked’. Like father like son, they had no respect for the old and were shameless to boot. “Zhu Tianyuan, your face is as thick as the city walls, just like before!”

“Forget it... I wanted to bring Zhu Honggong back to the Ancient Saint Cult and apologize to you afterward. You know, act first and report later. Alas, man proposes, the heavens dispose,” Zhu Tianyuan said with a sigh.

“The Ancient Saint Cult has always kept a low profile. Why did you suddenly show your faces?” Lu Zhou asked.

This was the only time where he talked like a parent.

Zhu Honggong remained prostrated on the ground. He dared not move.

Zhu Tianyuan did not answer his question directly. He waved his hand and said, “Bring up the goods.”

“Understood.” A disciple entered the room and returned with a package.

Zhu Tianyuan opened the package. It contained... a brown-covered book.

“What is this?” Lu Zhou asked.

“You’ll know when you open it.”

Lu Zhou received the book and flipped it open. The first few dozen pages were torn away. When he finally reached an undamaged page, it read: The people here are weak. They don’t seem to know how to reach the Nine-leaf stage... I can feel the familiar heaven-and-earth shackle here, but I don’t know where I should start investigating this. I want to help the people here grow stronger so that they’ll have the power to fight against a Nine-leaf or even a Ten-leaf cultivator, as soon as possible. I met many cultivators, but their thoughts are conservative.

Upon reading this, Lu Zhou’s expression remained calm. However, inwardly, he was shocked.

Chapter 612: A Record of the Golden Lotus

Curiosity made Lu Zhou continue flipping through the pages.

“Many won’t believe me...”

“Without passion and determination, there can never be true progress.”

“I tried to tell some of them the truth behind cultivation...”

Lu Zhou felt the paper and the cover. They were clearly old. The book was not engraved with any protective mechanisms. Even its cover was simple and crude. Its corners were falling off due to the corrosion of time. Much of the text was blurred, and many pages in the middle seemed to have been torn away, for some unknown reason.

He wanted to continue reading, but he heard Zhu Tianyuan say, “This is one of the reasons why I’m in the Divine Capital... As of now, you’re the only one who has reached the Nine-leaf stage. I intended to have someone present this diary to you, but I didn’t expect to run into you here. If you’re interested in this item, I can trade it for my son. What do you say?”

Lu Zhou stopped flipping through it. He did not answer Zhu Tianyuan’s question right away. He closed the book and asked, “Why didn’t you show me this before?”

Zhu Tianyuan shook his head and said with a sigh, "I never knew there was such a diary before this... It was found by a curious disciple who flipped through it while he was cleaning the archives. This book is badly damaged. I think someone vandalized it. If you didn't reveal yourself as a Nine-leaf cultivator, I think it would've been thrown away like trash."

Lu Zhou flipped to the final section of the book. He saw a line that read: Many think that the Eight-leaf stage is the limit of human cultivation, but I know otherwise. I noticed something different about the heaven-and-earth shackle... I discovered that the Golden Lotus might be what's limiting human cultivation. How should I overcome this?

Many of the pages after that were torn.

The next intact page Lu Zhou found read: Finally, someone believes me. He's an old man with the surname Yun. I pitied him and helped him complete his cultivation method. It's yet uncertain if this is a problem caused by the Golden Lotus... But, who would be willing to listen to me and try?

After reading this, Lu Zhou wondered inwardly, 'An old man with the surname Yun? Yun Tianluo?'

Lu Zhou looked at Zhu Tianyuan and asked, "Do you know the owner of this diary?" He was rather shocked; it seemed like he had stumbled on a clue regarding the Luo woman. He had been searching for a while now; he did not expect to find a clue here.

Zhu Tianyuan shook his head and said, "She left a signature on the final page. The owner of this diary is a female, a legendary one, at that."

"Legendary?" From what Lu Zhou understood about the Luo woman, and based on his 1,000-year experience, the Luo woman was, at most, mysterious, not legendary.

"Brother Ji..."

"Don't call me that," Lu Zhou interjected.

"Why do you have to hold onto past grudges? I've already presented you with my greatest treasure. You're the bigger man here. Please don't hold it against me," Zhu Tianyuan said.

Lu Zhou glanced at Zhu Honggong, who was still prostrated on the ground. 'Is this some hereditary trait?'

When the two of them met many years ago, Zhu Tianyuan's character had been like that. Now that they met again, it seemed like he did not change much.

"Have you read this diary?" After asking the question, Lu Zhou felt he was asking the obvious.

"I read it when we discovered it..."

Lu Zhou flipped to the last page. Indeed, there was a signature there: Luo (the middle word was blurred) Yin.

'Luo something Yin?' As he expected, this was the Luo woman from 300 years ago whom he had been searching for.

Based on the letter left behind by Great Yan's Imperial tutor, it was clear Great Yan's Imperial tutor was also searching for this Luo woman. However, it was also clear the two of them had starkly different views about cultivation.

Great Yan's Imperial tutor was strongly of the opinion that no one should attempt attaining the Nine-leaf stage since it would bring about a disaster.

Luo 'something' Yin, on the other hand, seemed to encourage cultivators to grow stronger so they could stand against a Nine-leaf cultivator.

The two of them had come from the same place. Why were their opinions so different?

"Do you know where this Luo woman went?" Lu Zhou asked.

Zhu Tianyuan shook his head. "The previous Holy Master has seen her, but I don't know her. Nobody knows where she is right now. She might be... dead."

"Dead?"

"The diary says that she's extremely adept at cultivation but not so skilled in controlling it," Zhu Tianyuan replied, "Since her control wasn't good, I'm afraid it must have been difficult for her to survive."

Lu Zhou frowned slightly. How confusing.

Lu Zhou had yet to read the diary, hence, he was in no hurry to ask for proof. Moreover, Zhu Tianyuan had no need to lie regarding this matter. However, if she was not skilled at control, how did she instruct Yun Tianluo? Truly, she was shrouded in mystery.

Just like Great Yan's Imperial tutor, she was extremely mysterious. In any case, Lu Zhou was rather certain the Great Yan's Imperial tutor's cultivation base was beyond the Eight-leaf stage.

Zhu Tianyuan nodded, clearly pleased, when he saw Lu Zhou deep in thought. He said with a smile, "It seems like this diary is very important to you, Brother Ji. In that case... can I take my son with me?"

Before Lu Zhou could reply, Zhu Honggong immediately kowtowed and said, "Master, the sun and moon are witnesses of my sincerity! I'll never leave you! Please have mercy!"

Zhu Tianyuan. "???" He looked at Zhu Honggong, slightly stunned.

Lu Zhou said, "Get up and talk."

"Yes, master." Zhu Honggong got to his feet with difficulty.

"You're, indeed, Zhu Tianyuan's son. You don't remember anything because you're young when I recruited you. You came into this world of your parents. How can you not acknowledge them?" Lu Zhou said as he thought back to events of the past.

"Uh..." When Zhu Tianyuan heard this, his emotions were stirred. He turned and gave Lu Zhou a complicated gaze. 'Is this still the Old Villain Ji I know?'

Jiang Pu placed a hand on his injured chest and walked over. He bowed and said, "Young master, after you left the Ancient Saint Cult, the holy master hasn't had a good night's rest or appetite. The holy mistress fell ill, distraught, and passed away in her prime..."

"Stop," Zhu Tianyuan said.

Jiang Pu immediately shut his mouth and said no more.

Zhu Tianyuan smiled and said, "That's all in the past. Don't listen to him... I'm happier than anyone else to learn that you've entered the Nascent Divinity realm."

Lu Zhou said, "You lost the bet..."

"I willingly admit that," Zhu Tianyuan said.

Lu Zhou searched his memories. It was true; Zhu Honggong's talents were terrible. How did he suddenly improve after joining the Evil Sky Pavilion? If his host, Ji Tiandao, truly had some unique method to modify one's constitutions and talents, then, it would explain why his nine disciples were so outstanding.

"Kneel," Lu Zhou said.

Zhu Honggong was taken aback. However, when he saw that his master was serious, he hastily knelt.

Lu Zhou placed his hands on his back and said, "Since time immemorial, there's no greater grace than the act of birth and the act of raising someone. You should decide for yourself."

Zhu Tianyuan was slightly taken aback. He could not believe these words spoken by the Old Villain Ji he knew. For a time, he was shocked speechless.

Chapter 613: Exploration Never Ends

Based on Zhu Tianyuan's understanding of Ji Tiandao, it was impossible for Old Villain Ji to let his son go. In fact, he would not even be given a chance to see his son. He was aware of the Evil Sky Pavilion's rule: those who had joined the Evil Sky Pavilion had to sever their past ties. This was the reason he had decided to act first and report later. He truly did not expect Old Villain Ji would leave the decision up to his son.

Lu Zhou placed his hands on his back and turned to the side to gaze into the distance. Behind his back and turned to the side as he gazed into the distance. Half of the Divine Capital's sky was dyed red by the setting sun. It was an exceptionally beautiful sight. He thought to himself that teaching a disciple was a long and difficult journey. However, he was inherently different from Ji Tiandao when it came to educating the disciples.

Zhu Honggong mulled over the matter for a while before he finally turned to Zhu Tianyuan and kowtowed.

Thud!

Although Zhu Tianyun was shameless, the skin on his face as thick as the city walls, he could not suppress his surging emotions at this moment.

Zhu Honggong kowtowed thrice before he said, "Please forgive me for not being able to go with you... Master raised me and taught me how to cultivate. How can I abandon him?"

Zhu Tianyuan sighed when he heard Zhu Honggong's words.

Jiang Pu and the others shook their heads, feeling that it was a great pity.

Jiang Pu sighed and tried to persuade Zhu Honggong. "Young master, if you don't return, the Ancient Saint Cult will fall into the hands of others!"

Zhu Tianyuan raised a hand to interrupt Jiang Pu and said, "I respect your choice." There was no greater grace than the act of raising someone. Although he was slightly surprised by Zhu Honggong's decision, he could understand it.

Zhu Honggong said, "I'm not interested in the Ancient Saint Cult and have no intention of becoming a holy child..."

Zhu Tianyuan sighed again and said, "Oh, well... In any case, I'm happy enough that I got to meet you today."

"Ding! Disciplined Zhu Honggong. Reward: 500 merit points."

Lu Zhou did not expect to be rewarded for this. He was merely acting on his own accord. Based on this, the rascal's character could be seen. Despite the rascal's loose mouth, the rascal was sincere. 'All those lessons didn't go to waste.'

Lu Zhou looked up at the sky and called out, "Old Eighth."

Zhu Honggong immediately rose to his feet and followed Lu Zhou.

It had only been an instant, but Zhu Tianyuan seemed to have recovered from his dejection. He shamelessly asked, "My son, can you call me father before you leave?"

"..."

'Call him father?' To be honest, when Zhu Honggong was kowtowing earlier, he had the urge to call Zhu Tianyuan father. However, upon seeing Zhu Tianyuan's behavior now, the urge was completely swept away. How awkward. He remained silent and followed Lu Zhou out of the courtyard.

"Safe journeys, Senior Ji!"

"Young master!"

After the duo left, Zhu Tianyuan sighed in disappointment. "I'm a failure of a man..."

Jiang Pu kneeled and said, "It was I who was useless!"

"That's enough... This is Old Villain Ji we're talking about. Do you really think you can win him?" Zhu Tianyuan rolled his eyes.

"Uh..." Jiang Pu's face flushed red.

“He’s the great Nine-leaf cultivator, after all. If he had the intention, you would’ve died. Do you think you’d still be able to stand here? However, I really didn’t expect his temperament to change this much,” Zhu Tianyuan said.

“If young master isn’t going to inherit the cult, are we going to sit back and do nothing while the cult falls into the hands of others?” Jiang Pu asked.

“Then Ancient Saint Cult is already declining... If it’s gone, it’s gone. I’m relieved to see my son living a good life.”

“What should we do now?”

“We’ll stay, of course... I won’t leave until he calls me father... That ungrateful brat!” Zhu Tianyuan said resentfully.

“...”

...

Back in Dazheng Palace.

Zhu Honggong obediently trailed after Lu Zhou without saying a word.

Lu Zhou’s thoughts were not on Zhu Honggong at all, he was thinking about the diary the entire time. He walked to the rush cushion, lost in his thought, and sat down cross-legged.

Zhu Honggong did not dare to disturb his master when he saw his master deep in thoughts. When he turned around, he saw his Third Senior Brother, Duanmu Sheng, passing by Dazheng Palace. He immediately bowed and said, “I’ll receive my punishment from Third Senior Brother at once, master.”

Lu Zhou flipped through the diary as though he did not hear Zhu Honggong.

Zhu Honggong left Dazheng Palace. “Third Senior Brother...”

“What?”

“Please hit me!” Zhu Honggong requested with a bow.

Duanmu Sheng frowned. “I don’t have such strange fetishes.”

“... That’s not what I meant. I’ve made a mistake and should be punished with the rod. Master is currently occupied, and your seniority is the highest now. It’s most appropriate for you to punish me. Here, hit me. Don’t hold back the most.” Zhu Honggong pointed to his back.

Duanmu Sheng regarded Zhu Honggong with a complicated gaze and said, “Weirdo...” After saying that, he turned around and made his way to a deserted plaza.

Duanmu Sheng did not walk very far away when he heard Zhu Honggong exclaiming emotionally, “Although Third Senior Brother is slightly dumb, he... he’s really kind to me...”

Duanmu Sheng turned around. “Old Eighth, come here.”

“Huh?” Zhu Honggong was confused.

When Duanmu Sheng saw Zhu Honggong did not move, he went over and hoisted Zhu Honggong up before he fiercely kicked Zhu Honggong's buttocks.

Although Zhu Honggong weighed several hundred catties, he could not withstand Duanmu Sheng's kick. He drew an arc in the air as he was sent flying.

A miserable wail resounded in Dazheng Palace.

"I'm merely fulfilling your wish. Just as well. This is a good chance to polish my spear techniques!"

"Ahh!"

...

Inside Dazheng Palace.

Lu Zhou was flipping through the pages of the diary. Although the text was a blur, it was readable, for the most part.

"It's still uncertain if the problem is caused by the Golden Lotus... Would anyone be willing to listen to me and try?"

The next page read: It's hard to fathom a person's mind. I must have control over my power. I must obtain sufficient power to protect myself. I can feel that some cultivators are getting greedy and want to steal the cultivation methods. Some cultivation methods are too profound, but I've memorized them. Who created these methods?

Lu Zhou was puzzled when he read that. Did the Luo woman's cultivation method not come from her hometown? If that was the case, where did she obtain her cultivation method? The diary did not mention the source of the cultivation methods. He could only make his own guesses.

The next few dozen pages were all records of her feelings. They did not provide him with anything of substance.

When he was halfway through the book, he saw something interesting again. It read: After researching for a long time, I've proven that the Golden Lotus absorbs life while the red lotus will not. A 600-years-old Eight-leaf cultivator, Feng Ke of Mobei, failed to reach the Nine-leaf stage. He died. 400 years weren't enough. Xie Han of Yang Province, a 400-year-old Eight-leaf cultivator, failed to reach the Nine-leaf stage. He died. 600 years weren't enough. Han Song of Liang Province, a 300-year-old Eight-leaf cultivator, failed to reach the Nine-leaf stage. He died. 700 years weren't enough.

All in all, there three pages that recorded failed attempts on attaining the Nine-leaf stage.

Upon reading all these things, Lu Zhou understood now why Zhu Tianyuan referred to her as legendary. These Eight-leaf experts were all great individuals renowned throughout history. And yet, they were only subjects of her experiments and researches.

The youngest one was a 100-year-old cultivator.

The pages read: Mo Jiangnan, a genius from Great Yan's Qing Province. 100 years old. Failed to reach the Nine-leaf stage. He survived but lost nearly 900 years of his life. Is it possible that the people here are incapable of reaching the Nine-leaf stage? Perhaps, I should take a look at the Other Tribes.

The following pages after that documented her negative feelings.

"One day, I'll find the answer. Exploration never ends! Don't give up!"

Chapter 614: You're a Lucky One, Yu Zhenghai!

After reading that, Lu Zhou found the Luo woman's emotions were easily swayed. She seemed young, but she seemed to know how to manage her emotions. She would often motivate herself in her diary. It was clear she held herself to a certain standard.

Lu Zhou wondered if she was the mad person the Great Yan's Imperial tutor had mentioned? Why did their opinions differ so much?

Lu Zhou continued reading: I bought a crude map from a stall. The strange thing is, apart from the difference in details, its outline is similar to my hometown. Sometimes, I wonder if I'm dreaming. However, I have sufficient methods to differentiate the real thing from the fake one.

The next few pages were filled with symbols Lu Zhou could not understand. 'These must be the symbols she frequently uses.'

He continued to read: I'm lacking information on younger Eight-leaf cultivators to determine how many years of life the Golden Lotus takes... This is a difficult question to tackle. The Eight-leaf cultivators here only live up to 1,000 years. The Golden Lotus absorbs more than 900 years of life.

The next entry read: I thought about a new method today. The red runes can be used to prolong a person's life. The remaining runes will easily expose my identity. I hid them in the ancient tomb.

What followed was a series of dates without context.

After that, Lu Zhou discovered there was a considerable number of pages that had been torn away.

The second last page read: The method to replenish one's life can be applied while attempting the breakthrough. However, the requirements are very strict. My experiments show that the red runes can't be used while the method in the day is more suitable. Based on my estimation, the Golden Lotus should take about 1,100 to 1,200 years of life. Although the problem of the Golden Lotus is solved, this method is demanding... Is there some other method that's more suitable for the masses? If only everyone has the same exploratory spirit as I have. Alas, most people here aren't interested in the Nine-leaf stage. It's unfortunate that I still don't have an answer for the heaven-and-earth shackle problem. Luckily, the people here aren't troubled by it.

The final page read: I'm not the only one who has come here...

The handwriting on the final page was messy and looked like it was written in haste.

Based on the diary, Lu Zhou concluded that the Luo woman had vast knowledge and powers she could not stably control. He was inclined to agree with Yun Tianluo that the woman was most likely a Nine-leaf or Ten-leaf expert.

If the contents of the diary were true, that there were more than or two people with profound cultivation bases and red lotuses here, why was there no disaster like the Great Yan's Imperial tutor had predicted?

The surviving pages contained detailed records of her works. They did not seem like the meaningless scribbles of a lunatic. This was especially true about the amount of life taken by the Golden Lotus. She came to the conclusion that it took between 1,100 to 1,200 years of life. Could a lunatic come up with an answer like that?

Lu Zhou wondered if the Luo woman was still alive, and if so, where was she? Could she still be alive after all these years? What would she think about the problems being solved by severing one's Golden Lotus?

He closed the old notebook. Part of the book's corner fell off due to its old age.

He continued thinking to himself in silence. He was slightly disappointed there was no mention of her hometown in the diary. He was curious if everyone from her hometown cultivated a red lotus.

Red lotus...

Lu Zhou was reminded of Conch. Perhaps, he could learn something about the red lotus cultivation from Conch.

After that, he closed his eyes and meditated on the When he thought about this, Lu Zhou closed his eyes and meditated on the Heavenly Writing scrolls.

...

The next morning, Lu Zhou summoned Conch to Dazheng Palace and sent the others away.

Conch did not know what her master wanted. She bowed, curious. "Master."

Lu Zhou appraised Conch. "Show me your avatar."

"Oh." Conch opened her fair little hand. With just a thought, she summoned an avatar that resembled a little red statue that hovered above her palm.

Indeed, the avatar was red, but there was no red lotus.

Was he mistaken? Did he see the reflection from the golden mirror wrongly?

Lu Zhou flipped his palm. The Golden Taixu Mirror appeared in his hand. With a surge of Primal Qi, the golden mirror shone brightly and illuminated Conch. Shortly after, the reflection showed a red lotus under the red avatar.

"A red lotus..." Lu Zhou put the golden mirror away and asked, "Are you nearing a breakthrough?"

Conch did not understand her master. She asked excitedly, "Master, am I going to have another breakthrough again?"

Again...

What would the others feel if they heard this?

Lu Zhou gauged her cultivation base. Indeed, she was in the late stage of the Divine Court realm. However, she was still some ways away from Hundred Tribulations Insight. As a unique treasure, the golden mirror could verify an object's authenticity. It was unlikely for it to be mistaken. This meant that Conch's actual potential was most probably already at the Hundred Tribulations Insight stage. This was not cultivation. It was a kind of... awakening.

"Conch, have you seen a red lotus before?" Lu Zhou asked.

Conch nodded. "Mhm."

"Where?"

"I don't remember."

"Do you remember how you came here?"

"I don't."

Lu Zhou wondered if Conch had lost her memories, just like he did?

"That's all for now. Go and cultivate."

"Yes, master." Conch turned around and skipped out of Dazheng Palace.

As Lu Zhou looked at her retreating back, he wondered if red lotus cultivators were like giants next to ants.

The diary stated that red lotus would not absorb life. This meant that red lotus cultivators were not subject to the life limit between the Eight-leaf and Nine-leaf stage.

The tides of the times were turning. Nobody knew what the future held.

...

Ten days later.

Under the moonlight...

At the end of the Land of Buried Bones, Yu Shangrong was lying on a tree branch of a towering tree near the quagmire with the Longevity Sword in his hand. His eyes were tightly shut.

Neigh!

Ji Liang circled back toward him from afar. Then, it flew in a circle above the quagmire before flying off into the distance. Was it searching for food or for a female horse?

At this moment, Yu Shangrong opened his eyes. His ears twitched. He moved and leaped off the branch. Like seeds of willow, he adjusted his body's angle and flew toward the quagmire. He looked down. He heard a gurgling sound.

Yu Shangrong smiled faintly. "You're a lucky one."

These were signs that Yu Zhenghai managed to cling to his life.

Wuqians lived in caves and ate dirt. When they died, their hearts remained uneroded. When they were buried, they could be reborn.

Yu Shangrong could feel the Primal Qi in the surroundings being drawn to the quagmire. He could also feel the density of the sun and moon essence inside the pool of water. He had been keeping an eye on the minute changes of the quagmire over the past ten days. In the beginning, it was deathly still; the quagmire was devoid of movements. For a time, he was worried and disappointed. Even then, he did not give up. This was Yu Zhenghai's final chance; the only chance he had to live. He wanted to do everything he could so he waited patiently.

Yu Shangrong circulated some Primal Qi and sent it toward the quagmire. He attempted to sense what was happening under the surface. Perhaps, it was due to the natural terrain and the wonderful surroundings, his Primal Qi scattered and returned to the natural world when it drew close to the pool of water and mud.

The heavens taught humans cultivation, enabling them to control Primal Qi from the natural environment. It was a power to protect themselves, and a power to destroy the world. Sometimes, even a powerful Eight-leaf expert seemed as insignificant as a grain of sand in the vast and mysterious world of nature.

"Oh, well, I've never been short of patience... I just hope you don't disappoint me." Yu Shangrong shrugged as he hovered in the air.

The night grew darker. The stars sparkled brilliantly in the sky.

Yu Shangrong rose higher than the tree as he attempted to find Ji Liang. He did not see Ji Liang's shadow, but he saw a procession of cultivators flying slowly toward him under the moonlight.

Yu Shangrong frowned slightly and entered the forest.

Chapter 615: My Apologies, But None of You are Allowed to Leave

Yu Shangrong landed on a tree branch. He hid his aura as he held his Longevity Sword. Then, he lay down and closed his eyes. He had the intention of ignoring everything that did not affect him. His objective was to guard the quagmire and spend the next 49 days in peace. He lied down and closed his eyes.

It did not take long before the procession of cultivators drew close to the quagmire. They came to a halt.

Yu Shangrong was puzzled. He opened his eyes slightly. He saw the cultivators through the dense canopy of leaves.

The cultivators stood out under the moonlight. They were all wearing purple cloaks, and their heads were covered. Their faces could not clearly be seen. They seemed like a gloomy bunch. It was eerie how they hovered in the air in a long row.

"The Land of Buried Bones lies ahead... According to the plan, we'll have to control the skeletons of all the dead."

"Over the centuries, many have been buried in the Land of Buried Bones... The dead of the cities in the area were dumped here as well. They're all given a grand burial ceremony."

One of the cultivators flew forward over the quagmire. He looked at the Land of Buried Bones and announced loudly, "Our grand predecessors deserve our respect... Their souls and wills will be passed down after their deaths."

Several cultivators flew after him. They saw the skeletons on the Land of Buried Bones.

These skeletons were one of the trump cards of the people of Lou Lan.

When Yu Shangrong saw this, he felt slightly relieved. They were clearly here for the skeletons...

The Land of Buried Bones was a trump card of the people of Lou Lan. The higher-ups gathered them in the name of respecting the dead. In truth, they were hoping that they could still defend Lou Lan in their deaths. Witchcraft was the key to controlling these skeletons.

Yu Shangrong retracted his gaze. He ignored them and closed his eyes as he prepared to sleep.

At this moment, the purple-robed cultivators flew above the quagmire and formed a circle.

"Let's do it."

"Praise!"

The purple-robed cultivator in the lead pressed a hand to his chest. Then, he joined his palms and raised them toward the skies. A faint purple light appeared from between his palms.

Soon after, a purple beam of light shot toward the Land of Buried Bones. A light circle shone on a skeleton. The skeleton seemed to have been imbued with life as it began to move.

"Lay the Formation."

The other purple-robed cultivators stood in their respective positions and raised their palms at the same time. They looked up at the skies; their hoods sliding off their heads. Purple lotuses were branded on their foreheads. The moment they cast their spells, the lotuses shone.

Whizz! Whizz! Whizz!

Primal Qi surged.

"Kan... shu... bo... tou... piao... mu... you... liang... xin..."

They chanted a series of unintelligible incantations as purple gas began to rise from their bodies. They controlled the Primal Qi in their surroundings. Soon after, purple witchcraft circles appeared under their feet.

The sound of gurgling rang in the air as the clear pool of water at the center of the quagmire began to bubble.

The purple-robed cultivators were puzzled.

"Be careful! There's a living person."

As witchcraft cultivators, their senses toward the dead were greater than the ordinary person. Naturally, their senses toward the living were the same.

They looked at the clear pool of water in the center of the quagmire and exchanged a look. They stopped what they were doing and looked at the pool of water intently.

At this moment, a gentle voice from the nearby forest rang in their ears. "My apologies."

The purple-robed cultivators were stunned. They instinctively turned to look at the source of the voice.

Under the moonlight, they saw a cultivator dressed in green robes slowly flying out of the forest before stopping in the air above them. Although he was alone, they sensed an unfathomable aura from him. They could tell his composure was born out of spending time with elites and the confidence of surviving on a blade.

Yu Shangrong asked lightly, "If it's possible, can you cast your spell elsewhere?"

"Why?" the witchcraft cultivator standing at the lead asked, puzzled.

Yu Shangrong looked up at the moon and said, "Don't you find this quiet and peaceful place perfect for resting?"

"I'm sorry, my friend... We're here on orders, and we have to cast our spell here," another cultivator replied.

"The Land of Buried Bones is vast. It won't have much of an effect if you change locations..." Yu Shangrong smiled warmly. "I sincerely wish you'll heed my suggestion."

A witchcraft cultivator standing at the back said contemptuously, "Why must we switch locations? Why don't you move to another location instead? There are plenty of other places for you to rest! This is the best place for us to cast our spell!"

"Me, too," Yu Shangrong said curtly.

"My friend, please leave."

Yu Shangrong shook his head lightly. His expression was calm as he said with a sigh, "As you wish. You may stay."

As Yu Shangrong spoke, his Longevity Sword spun out of his hand with a whoosh. It split into two, four, eight... Countless energy swords appeared in a formation.

The Sword Devil's Destiny!

"No! Defend yourselves!"

Many cultivators raised their hands at once. A huge purple barrier rose from the witchcraft circle.

The Sword Devil's Destiny rained down like hail.

Bam! Bam! Bam! Bam! Bam!

The energy swords easily shattered the witchcraft barrier. The remaining energy swords instantly pierced the chests of several cultivators. More than ten members out of the more than 50 witchcraft cultivators died instantly.

The remaining cultivators wore a frightened expression on their faces as they cast spells after spells.

Yu Shangrong raised his right hand. His Longevity Sword returned to his grasp. He gripped tightly and stepped forward.

“Stop him!”

“Kill him!”

Several purple radiant circles appeared and shot toward Yu Shangrong.

Yu Shangrong moved at lightning speed as he shot forward and slashed his sword.

Countless energy swords parried the incoming purple light circles.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Several cultivators were sent flying.

At the same time, before anyone else noticed, energy swords had materialized in the air again and rained down on them, piercing their chests, as they were sent flying back.

Thud! Thud! Thud!

Corpses fell down from the sky into the quagmire.

In just a blink of an eye, only more than ten witchcraft cultivators were left out of the more than 50 cultivators.

The cultivator in the lead frowned deeply as he waved his sleeves and called out, “Retreat!”

The cultivators turned around and fled.

Yu Shangrong said calmly, “My apologies, but none of you are allowed to leave...”

It would be bad if these people escaped and spread the word about this incident.

Yu Shangrong moved at top speed. The faint red light on his sword flashed brighter than before!

Grand technique!

There was a flurry of movements as he pierced the chest of one cultivator who was lagging behind. He did stop and continued moving at lightning speed.

Five well-trained witchcraft cultivators turned around and launched purple rings from their palms.

Having had the experience of fighting a grand shaman, Yu Shangrong did not allow the purple energy to come close to himself. He immediately swung his Longevity Sword with great force.

Traceless Sword!

Countless energy swords appeared in the surroundings, sweeping away the purple rings!

When they looked up, Yu Shangrong had already arrived in front of them. He spread his arms; the energy swords hovering around them.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

The energy swords flew out and pierced the cultivators' bodies.

"A Great Yan swordsman?" Currently, there was only one surviving witchcraft cultivator.

The cultivator ran for some distance. When he saw his comrades were all dead, he stopped. He turned around and faced Yu Shangrong. He knew it was futile to run!

Yu Shangrong raised his sword. He shook his head and said, "This wasn't what I intended to do... but I have no choice."

"..." The leader of the witchcraft cultivator said, "Are the cultivators of Great Yan so shameless and despicable?"

"You can say whatever you like..." Yu Shangrong was not interested in squabbling.

The lead witchcraft cultivator began to laugh maniacally before he said, "I admit that Great Yan is strong in individual fights, but this time... you've merely killed low-rank witchcraft cultivators. If you kill me... the royal city will surely get to the bottom of this... Even if you run to the ends of the world, they will hunt you down."

"Is that a threat?" Yu Shangrong was amused.

Chapter 616: The Sword Devil's Protection

The witchcraft cultivator calmed his nerves. He had the impression that the Great Yan swordsman was rational and reasonable. He might have a chance to survive if he could explain the benefits and consequences of his actions. There was no need to grovel and beg.

"You can think of it as a threat." He looked at Yu Shangrong and raised his hand. He showed Yu Shangrong the pattern on his palm. "I'm Xien of the Bonar Family in Lou Lan's royal city. If you lay your hands on me, my family will surely get to the bottom of this. Why would you invite such trouble upon yourself, sir?"

Yu Shangrong nodded slightly and said, "Indeed, I don't like troubles."

"Besides, Lou Lan has always been on good terms with Great Yan. While it's true that there have been some unhappy incidents ever since the dawn of the Lotus-severing era, this doesn't affect the relationship between our countries... It's said that the Nether Sect is wreaking havoc in Great Yan and that the Divine Capital has fallen. I do feel sorry for that," the shaman, Xien, said.

"Alas... they're already dead." Yu Shangrong glanced at the corpses strewn on the ground below.

Xien shook his head and said, "I'll talk to the higher-ups... Naturally, everything depends on how you act."

Yu Shangrong nodded again. He stepped forward. The moonlight fell on the side of his face, highlighting his cold expression. "My stance has never changed since the very beginning..."

"Very good. I like people like you who adapt to the times... We'll meet again." Xien turned around. As soon as he turned around, a dark and vicious expression appeared on his face.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

All of a sudden, Xien heard the sound of energy swords whistling in the air ringing behind him.

‘Hm?’ His eyes widened in shock and anger as he cursed, “You... A sneak attack?!”

Countless energy swords merged into one in the air. They formed a long dragon that shot toward Xien.

Xien cried out and Xien struck with both palms, erecting a purple barrier around himself. Purple circles appeared around him like hula hoops.

Yu Shangrong did not even deign to look at Xien. He turned around indifferently as his energy sword moved at lightning speed.

Bang!

The energy sword pierced Xien’s chest.

The Longevity Sword circled in the air once before flying back into the scabbard on Yu Shangrong’s back.

Xien who was holding onto his sword plunged down into the forest below.

Yu Shangrong’s movements were as smooth as flowing water. He did not fumble, always calm and composed.

Xien, on the other hand, was wide-eyed. He looked at the silent forest, at the starry skies, at the moon, at the quagmire... and at the scattered corpses of his comrades. He could keenly feel his life leaking out from his body. He did not even register the pain as he plummeted to the ground.

Yu Shangrong returned to the branch and lay down, considering his next move.

Those witchcraft cultivators had shown up at the Land of Buried Bones, of all places. Clearly, they had a mission. Now that they had all been killed by him, nobody would be reporting back. This would certainly draw attention. Lou Lan would certainly organize a search party. It was not difficult to locate this place. In that case, what should he do next?

Yu Shangrong hated troubles the most... He opened his eyes and looked at the pool of water. He said with a sigh, “If this were the past, I would never be bogged down by this problem.” After saying that, he closed his eyes again and went back to sleep.

...

When he received the series of notifications, Lu Zhou thought that a battle had broken out in Liang Province. However, after further considerations, he thought there would be more notifications if the Roulians had attacked. Although the points were not high, they could not be considered as little.

Lu Zhou asked someone to send a letter to Liang Province.

Soon enough, Si Wuya sent a reply saying everything was peaceful and quiet in Liang Province. He reassured that there would not be a problem with him holding the fort.

“Looks like they’re killed by Yu Shangrong...” After mulling over it, Lu Zhou told Old Eighth to contact Si Wuya and have his sources in Lou Lan assist Yu Shangrong from the sides.

He would have to pay a visit to Lou Lan sooner or later. According to Liu Ge, Ji Tiandao's memory crystal was most probably related to Lou Lan's royals.

...

In the afternoon, Duanmu Sheng hurried into Dazheng Palace. "Your orders, master?"

Lu Zhou glanced at Duanmu Sheng. Confused, he asked, "Where's Old Eighth?"

Duanmu Sheng replied, "Old Eighth has been working hard these few days. He's cooped up in his room practicing his breathing. I can handle his tasks for him!"

Lu Zhou nodded and said, "Very well... Send word to Si Wuya. Tell him to think of some way to assist Yu Shangrong."

"Yes, master." Duanmu Sheng turned around and left.

...

Meanwhile, inside a certain room in Jinghe Palace.

"Ouch! Softer, will you?" Zhu Honggong cried out as he lay on the bed.

"My son, did Old Villain Ji beat you again? See? You should've left with me. Why are you staying here? You're only suffering!" Ever since Zhu Tianyuan entered the palace, he had been following Zhu Honggong around like a bum beetle.

"Don't insult my master... This was Third Senior Brother's doing."

"In that case, he should take responsibility for his actions! I won't say anything if it was your master who hit you... but how can your Senior Brother be this domineering, beating people up as he pleases?"

At this moment, the door creaked as Duanmu Sheng entered the room. He held his Overlord Spear in his left hand and a vial of liniment in his right. He said, "Old Eighth, here's something for you."

Zhu Tianyuan turned to look at Duanmu Sheng's muscular body. Each of Duanmu Sheng's movements radiated terrifying power. He asked in confusion, "You are?"

"Duanmu Sheng... Zhu Honggong's Third Senior Brother," Duanmu Sheng replied.

Zhu Tianyuan was taken aback. He hastily said, "Oh, it's you, Evil Sky Pavilion's Mister Third. My son can be stubborn sometimes. I hope that you can look after him as his Senior Brother in the future. If he does anything wrong in the future, you can just hit him! Don't hold back because of me!"

Zhu Honggong. "???"

Duanmu Sheng had already heard about Zhu Honggong's matters. Hence, he cupped his fists and said, "Uncle, this is nothing. I won't hold anything against my junior brother."

"To have a reasonable and magnanimous senior brother like you must be Zhu Honggong's reward after eight lifetimes' of hard work!"

“Don’t mention it... Apply this liniment three times a day. He’ll be healed in three days. I have something else to attend to. Goodbye.”

“Goodbye, Mister Third.”

Zhu Honggong. “???”

...

Seven days later.

In the morning.

Across the quagmire, Yu Shangrong flew out of the forest as he usually would. He observed the changes in the bubbles and sensed the situation under the surface. Compared to seven days ago, he could clearly sense the aura of life now. This meant Yu Zhenghai was another step closer to being resurrected.

After observing this, Yu Shangrong drew his Longevity Sword and practiced his swordplay.

He saw Ji Liang looking for food in the nearby mountains and smiled.

Soon after, he saw three purple-clad cultivators flying toward Ji Liang.

Ji Liang was alert. When it sensed people approaching, it immediately returned and hid among the trees in the forest behind Yu Shangrong.

The three purple-clad cultivators flew over as well. When they saw Yu Shangrong hovering in the air, they bowed and greeted him.

“There’s someone here! My friend, have you seen our comrades? They wear the same clothes we do,” the purple-clad cultivator standing in front asked.

Yu Shangrong was honest. He pointed at the corpses near the quagmire, among the weeds and the trees of the forest, as he said, “You mean, them?”

The three purple-clad cultivators looked down... They were greeted by the sight of corpses. They were shocked and quickly descended. They flew around and began to gather corpses using witchcraft. An incredulous expression appeared on their faces after they counted the number of corpses.

The leader of the three purple-clad cultivators asked, “My friend, did you see the murderer?”

Yu Shangrong smiled. “I see that they’re your comrades. I’m sorry for their deaths... as for the murderer, he must’ve gone to the royal city.”

“Thank you, my friend!” The purple-robed cultivator raised his hand. A purple witchcraft net wrapped around the bodies and lifted them up. He said, “Let’s report back. Quickly!”

“Understood!”

The three cultivators left the Land of Buried Bones with the corpses.

Yu Shangrong looked in the direction of the quagmire. He shook his head and said, "If it weren't for you... I would never stoop so low and lie." Then, he smiled and added, "However, one must do a few dumb things throughout his life."

After saying this, he flew into the forest.

...

Night fell.

The bubbles on the surface of the pool of clear water grew larger and larger. The gurgling sounds turned louder and louder as well.

When midnight arrived, it had become rather noisy.

Yu Shangrong flew out of the forest and inspected the quagmire. He said, "You might be dead, but your temper is still something to reckon with."

He returned to the forest.

...

Fortunately, nobody else came close to the quagmire over the next five days. Everything proceeded smoothly.

"22 more days to go." Yu Shangrong would scratch a mark on the tree trunk with his Longevity Sword to mark the passing days.

At this time, the gurgling sounds were much louder than before.

Yu Shangrong looked at the skies through the canopy. He glanced at the quagmire. The pool of clear water was still bubbling. With so much activity, it would be troublesome if someone were to come.

...

Yu Shangrong spent ten peaceful days before the pool of water finally stopped bubbling.

Chapter 617: Final Resurrection

Yu Shangrong faded out of focus. In the next instant, he appeared above the pool of water. His feet were firmly on the quagmire, and yet, he was not wet. He stooped down and listened quietly. His surroundings were extremely quiet as well. The quieter a place was, the more likely one would hear ringing in one's ears. He was experiencing this at the moment. Amidst the sound of ringing, he could faintly hear... the sound of wind? No...

Yu Shangrong flew up. He saw many cultivators flying toward him from Lou Lan city. There were purple-robed and armored cultivators.

"12 more days..." Yu Shangrong felt his head ache at this moment. With his abilities, he could get rid of these cultivators, but he was still human, after all. If Lou Lan sent its troop at him relentlessly, he would eventually collapse from exhaustion. He pondered it for a moment before he looked at Ji Liang and called out, "Ji Liang."

Neigh!

Ji Liang flew toward him excitedly.

Yu Shangrong patted Ji Liang and said, "Draw them away... Fly to the south of Heaven's Moat. I don't think they can reach the highest point at the south of Heaven's Moat. Shake them off there."

Neigh!

"You shouldn't fly too fast or else they won't be able to keep up..." Yu Shangrong removed his cloak. He flew into the forest and broke some branches. He placed them on the horse's back and covered it with his cloak.

Ji Liang spun around.

"Go..."

Neigh!

Ji Liang's current neighing surpassed the volume of those before. It flew away from the forest toward Great Yan.

With the commotion Ji Liang deliberately caused, the purple-robed cultivators and soldiers from Lou Lan City saw it immediately. They changed their direction and pursued it. The soldiers traveled on foot while the cultivators flew behind them in a densely packed formation.

Looking up from the forest, it was as though a naughty child had disturbed a hive of angry hornets.

Yu Shangrong briefly glanced at the sky. Then, he leaned against a tree trunk and said, "Don't fly too quickly."

Ji Liang understood what Yu Shangrong intended to do. It made frequent stops as it flew.

The purple-robed cultivators thought Ji Liang was an ordinary mount that would be exhausted after a short flight. They chased after it wildly.

When they finally vanished behind the clouds, Yu Shangrong closed his eyes, adjusted his breathing, and rested. He knew the real challenge would come next.

Ji Liang would need more than ten days to reach Heaven's Moat... It would have to travel to the mountains and back, which meant that it would be more than 20 days before it returned to fetch him. However, it would only take 12 days to see if Eldest Senior Brother would come back to life. This meant that he would have to bring his Eldest Senior Brother back to Great Yan on his own.

"Fly on my own?" When Yu Shangrong thought about this, he opened his eyes, feeling slightly helpless. To think the great Sword Devil would experience moments of helpless as well.

...

Yu Shangrong's strategy of using Ji Liang as a diversion was successful. However, on the third day, more cultivators arrived at the quagmire.

Yu Shangrong did not show himself. He merely observed from the forest.

The purple-robed cultivators surveyed the quagmire's surroundings and flew for some distance above the Land of Buried Bones. Then, they changed directions and left. They must have been here to investigate the deaths of their people.

The next three days were uneventful.

...

Meanwhile, Karol was also keeping a close tab on this matter in the Roulian campground.

"General, we have a reply from Lou Lan. Although the Sword Devil hasn't been located yet, they've laid many traps along the route back to Great Yan. He won't be able to return!" a subordinate said with a bow.

Karol opened his eyes. He nodded and said, "Very good... What's the situation on Bazir's side?"

"Lord Bazir isn't in a good mood. He has difficulty accepting your opinions."

"Imbecile... How did someone like him cultivate to the rank of a grand shaman?" Karol smiled. "There's only one Nine-leaf cultivator in Great Yan... The 12 allied nations must work together in a coordinated manner. Does he think he's the king of Lou Lan?"

"I... don't know."

"That's all for now. If he comes, tell him that I'm busy and won't be able to meet him."

"Understood!" The subordinate left. He flew away from the camp and arrived at another campground soon after.

After making it past the guards, he arrived outside the main tent. "My lord, I've conveyed your message to the general."

A voice rang from within the tent. "I don't think the general will hold this against me, not with his magnanimity... Is he pleased with my suggestion?"

The subordinate replied, "The general said that he can hardly accept such a ludicrous suggestion and that Lou Lan should earnestly reflect on why it's so weak."

"What?"

"Stay your anger, my lord! Those were the general's exact words! The general has also said that he's busy and won't be able to meet you!"

There was a long pause from the tent. Grand Shaman Bazir seethed in anger as he finally said, "Get lost."

The subordinate did not dare to linger for a moment longer. He immediately dashed out of the campgrounds toward a remote spot in the forest. He sent a letter there before returning to the Roulian campground.

...

Inside the Lou Lan campground.

Bazir cursed out loud, "Karol, you Roulians are but a bunch of uncivilized barbarians. How dare you compare yourself to the likes of Lou Lan?"

A shaman on the side said respectfully, "My lord... Do you think we should still intercept Yu Shangrong?"

"What do you think?"

"I recommend that we don't... We can turn this into a gesture of goodwill toward Great Yan. Great Yan's Nether Sect is currently like the sun during high noon. I'm afraid the 12 allied nations won't be able to bear much fruit."

Bazir glanced at his subordinate and said, "No."

"My lord?"

"Not only am I going to intercept Yu Shangrong, but I will force him toward Lou Lan's territory. Then, I'll kill him there, no matter the price. When that happens, the Evil Sky Pavilion will surely put the blame on Rouli. I'd like to see how Karol will hold up against a Nine-leaf cultivator!"

"That's brilliant, my lord."

"I'll leave it to you. Remember, a Roulian must be seen doing that."

"Understood."

It was merely a matter of having some of their own impersonate the Roulians.

...

12 days passed in just a blink of an eye.

In addition to the 27 days, the 40 golden days for Wuqians to be resurrected were over. 49 days were neither long nor short. However, it was enough time for big changes to take place in the cultivation world. Nobody knew what the situation was like in the current cultivation world.

The sun rose as usual, and the moon would still retire. Everything seemed normal.

In the morning, a drop of dew slid off the tree branch. The sunlight shone on it, making it look dazzling.

Whizz!

The drop of water was slowed by invisible Primal Qi before it could reach Yu Shangrong's hair.

Yu Shangrong opened his eyes at this moment. He scattered his Primal Qi; the droplet of water hovering above his head instantly evaporated.

Bloob! Bloob! Bloob!

The water bubbled and gurgled from the center of the quagmire again.

Yu Shangrong descended and flew out of the forest. He hovered nearby as he looked down at the area.

The pool bubbled with more intensity now. Steam was beginning to rise from it as the water boiled over. As the water evaporated, the quagmire dried up into soil. Eventually, the bubbling sound stopped. The land was now flat and parched.

Yu Shangrong crossed his arms. He stared at the ground. He said under his breath, "Your time is up..."

He looked at the sun in the skies. The sun rose in the east; its rays shone from the mountain onto the ancient Lou Lan City in the distance.

Everything was quiet.

Birds flew overhead, chirping noisily. One of the birds, a mutated bird, with a keen sense of smell landed at the center of the quagmire and pecked at the dry layer of soil. It seemed to have picked up a scent and was pecking away enthusiastically. Soon enough, it pecked until there was an opening on the ground.

Swoosh

An arm covered in dirt broke out of the ground and grabbed the bird; its fingers gripping the bird's wing. After a while, it released its grip.

Frightened, the bird flew away, fleeing for its life.

The arm remained raised, pointing at the sky.

Chapter 618: Kill Anyone Who Stands in Your Way

It was a slightly creepy sight. If Yu Shangrong were not prepared for this and if he had not known this was coming, he thought he would have been slightly creeped out by this sight as well.

Yu Shangrong studied the arm. The fingers were straight, and the skin seemed young. It did not look like the arm of someone who was trained in saber.

Yu Shangrong shook his head. "Your luck isn't the best."

When Wuqians were reborn from the earth, those who were fortunate would reemerge as they were before. If they were unlucky, they would have to start over as a baby. If they did not have much life left, they would die before they could even drink a few mouthfuls of milk. It would end as a tragedy. However, judging from the appearance of the arm, the outcome was still acceptable even if it was not the best.

Swoosh!

The soil was pushed away. A clay man stood in the quagmire. His size was not very big.

Although Yu Shangrong looked calm, inwardly, he was still shocked when he witnessed a Wuqian emerging from the earth.

After drying, the soil, naturally, clung to the person's body. Bit by bit, the blackened soil dropped off from his body. Since he was reborn, nothing else mattered.

Yu Shangrong studied Yu Zhenghai's appearance. He discovered Yu Zhenghai's stature was much smaller compared to before. Yu Zhenghai seemed more like a very young man. Since Yu Zhenghai's face, body, and hair were hidden by mud, he could not clearly see Yu Zhenghai's appearance. Nevertheless, he saw Yu Zhenghai's eyes shining with life; it was brimming with curiosity and a sense of... loss.

The seemingly young man did not move for a long time. He observed the mountains, the river, the Land of Buried Bones, and the forest before his eyes eventually landed on Yu Shangrong who was hovering in the air nearby.

Yu Shangrong smiled faintly. "Well, at least you're not dead."

"Not dead?" the young man wondered out loud.

"Eldest Senior Brother... You have to help yourself from now on," Yu Shangrong said indifferently. 'I've done many things for you throughout this journey. As my Eldest Senior Brother, it's time for you to do your part, right?'

Yu Zhenghai, now a young man, asked in confusion, "Who are you? Who's Eldest Senior Brother? How can you fly?"

"..." Yu Shangrong was stunned. He studied Yu Zhenghai's dirt-covered body. He flipped his palm. A surge of energy lifted some clean water from a pool far away and flew toward Yu Zhenghai.

When Yu Zhenghai saw this, he jumped in shock. He turned around and ran. However, the water seemed to have locked onto him. It moved rapidly and splashed onto him. He was instantly cleaned, revealing a young man. His eyes were brimming with shock as he stared at Yu Shangrong who was hovering in the air.

Yu Shangrong was shocked as well. He looked at Yu Zhenghai. "You don't remember?"

"Remember what?"

"Your name."

The young man shook his head.

Yu Shangrong sighed softly. 'This isn't like what Old Seventh described. Why does he seem like a different person after he's reborn?' He waved his hand. The clothes he had prepared beforehand flew out of the forest to Yu Zhenghai. He said, "Wear these..."

Yu Zhenghai clothed himself. Naturally, the size was too big. He seemed comical in his oversized clothes.

However, Yu Shangrong did not make fun of him. He said, "Follow me."

"Why?"

"What do you mean why?"

"I'm not going."

"?" Yu Shangrong dove and landed before Yu Zhenghai. He saw wariness in Yu Zhenghai's eyes. He also sensed a familiar obstinance.

“Who are you?” Yu Zhenghai asked.

Yu Shangrong studied him again. Perhaps, 49 days of boredom had given him some inspiration, he said with a straight face, “I’m your senior brother.”

“Senior Brother?” The young man scratched his head, clearly still confused.

Yu Shangrong turned around and calmly said, “If you can’t remember, don’t force yourself. Time is running short. I’ll take you back.”

“Where to?”

“Great Yan.”

With Ji Liang, the journey from the quagmire to Heaven’s Moat would take about ten days. Without Ji Liang, it would at least take a month, and this was without considering the time they would need to rest in between.

Yu Shangrong was not sure if the young Yu Zhenghai could endure long periods of flight. He did not understand much about Wuqi, and he wondered if Yu Zhenghai’s cultivation base was still intact after being reborn as a young man. If he had to protect them from the wind with his energy all the way back, it would be very demanding on his Primal Qi, and the loss would outweigh the benefits. Then, he turned around to look at Yu Zhenghai.

At this moment, Yu Zhenghai gathered his robes up. Indeed, the robes were too big for him. He slowly made to follow after Yu Shangrong.

Swoosh!

Yu Shangrong swung his sword. An energy sword accurately drew across young Yu Zhenghai’s robes. The few inches of the hem that were cut off by the energy sword fell off immediately.

Young Yu Zhenghai was shocked. He looked at the sword in Yu Shangrong’s hand and said, “Your sword technique...”

“Is amazing?”

“Mhm.”

Yu Shangrong smiled in satisfaction. ‘You never admitted this before...’

“Can I be your disciple?” Yu Zhenghai followed Yu Shangrong.

“...”

‘I should be content with taking advantage of him. It’ll be too complicated if I become his master. Messing with the hierarchy might cost me a few years of life.’ Yu Shangrong shook his head, “You have a better master.”

“Where?” Yu Shangrong saw a passion for cultivation in Yu Zhenghai’s eyes... Those eyes were the same as his when he walked from Brackish Mountain for several months to meet his master. He suddenly understood. This resurrection seemed to have brought Yu Zhenghai back to the cycle of his first death.

There were many strange occurrences in the big wide world; there were many things that could not be explained.

Yu Shangrong suppressed the shock he felt. He pointed in Great Yan's direction and said, "Let's go."

A surge of energy lifted the two of them up. They flew toward the Land of Buried Bones.

Young Yu Zhenghai had a feverish look in his eyes... toward flying, cultivation, and the future. He asked curiously, "Senior Brother, how profound is your cultivation base?"

"What do you think?"

"The Brahman Sea realm?" Yu Zhenghai replied as admiration shone in his eyes, "I heard that Brahman Sea realm cultivators can fly."

Yu Shangrong smiled faintly. "Higher than that."

"Divine Court realm?" Young Yu Zhenghai's eyes widened as though he just realized how amazing the person next to him was.

Divine Court realm cultivators were usually affiliated with a sect and had great supporters.

"Higher than that." Yu Shangrong shook his head slightly.

"Senior brother... You're... you're in the Nascent Divinity realm?" Yu Zhenghai could barely string his words together. His voice was laced with excitement and reverence. He had forgotten about how he emerged from the quagmire, resurrected as a person, about his identity as the Evil Sky Pavilion's first disciple, the Nether Sect Master whose name struck fear in those who heard it, and his status as an Eight-leaf cultivator. The conclusion of karma was a cycle of obsessions. Perhaps, his obsession began when he died for the first time in Lou Lan.

Yu Shangrong initially had the urge to show off. However, after thinking about it, he thought it was boring. In the end, he said, "You'll become as powerful as I am."

Young Yu Zhenghai was still feeling excited over Yu Shangrong's words when purple mist rose from the forest ahead of them. It spread sideways and barred their way.

Yu Shangrong shook his head. "I knew it wouldn't go so smoothly." He brought Yu Zhenghai with him and flew northward!

The fatal weakness of Lou Lan's witchcraft was this... Although witchcraft was powerful, time was needed to lay out the Formation and activate the spell. Their enemies would only need to avoid them to render their spells useless. Yu Shangrong knew this well so he flew northward.

Young Yu Zhenghai was not afraid of flying. In fact, he was enjoying it... After all, he liked the sensation of looking down from up high. It seemed like some traits were inherent, after all.

The two of them had flown for an entire day. The purple barrier that barred their way had disappeared.

Yu Shangrong shifted his direction and headed east.

"Territory of the Roulians."

Yu Shangrong dove.

They landed.

“We’ll rest for a bit.”

Young Yu Zhenghai nodded. He looked around curiously.

Alas, shortly after they stopped to rest, Roulian cultivators swarmed around them from the surroundings. They wielded spears, bows, and blades as they tightened their circle around them.

Yu Shangrong appeared calm. He gripped his sword hilt with both hands. His eyes were slightly closed as he stood with a straight back.

A gust of breeze blew by. Leaves fell.

Young Yu Zhenghai saw the Other Tribesmen, but he was not afraid. Instead, he looked at them with eyes brimming with hostility as he retreated to Yu Shangrong’s side. Then, he picked up a stray branch and stood in a defensive stance.

Yu Shangrong said calmly, “Don’t stray too far away from me.”

“Mhm.”

At this moment, a person emerged from behind the trees with a staff in his hand. He said in a clear voice, “The Evil Sky Pavilion’s Mister Second? I’m afraid you won’t be able to leave.”

Yu Shangrong opened his eyes. His Longevity Sword shot out of its scabbard.

There was a flash of red light before countless energy swords materialized around him! They cut sideways. Every single energy sword skirted around Yu Zhenghai with perfect precision.

The trees around them fell!

Dozens of Roulians who were surrounding them were instantly killed!

Yu Zhenghai was in awe.

Yu Shangrong said tonelessly, “Since you want to die, I’ll fulfill your wish.”

“Move! Don’t give him a chance!”

The people around them swarmed forward.

Yu Shangrong raised his right hand. His arm was parallel to the ground. His Longevity Sword shot into his hand. Then, he faded out of focus!

Whizz!

Yu Shangrong’s avatar appeared!

The leader with the staff looked up and frowned. His voice trembled as he said, “This is bad! 100 feet?! Didn’t they say he’s only a Six-leaf cultivator? Retreat! The information is wrong. Retreat!”

“Impossible!”

Chapter 619: The Rogue Western Wind Blows Across the River, When Is It Going To Return?

Many Seven-leaf elites in the world knew the basic fact that an Eight-leaf cultivator was as big as Mount Tai. Even the people of Rouli and Lou Lan knew this. When they saw the 100-foot avatar, their intention to kill Yu Shangrong vanished without a trace.

Impossible!

Even if an Eight-leaf cultivator was here, he could only run as soon as he heard Yu Shangrong's name. Here they were, without an Eight-leaf cultivator among their numbers. The outcome was predictable. It was a crushing defeat for them.

Wherever the energy swords went, they did not seem like they were cutting down people. They seemed like they were cutting down... hay.

Young Yu Zhenghai was stunned by this sight... Nobody knew how much he thirsted for power or how strongly he wanted to become an expert like the person before. He did as Yu Shangrong ordered him to. He stood obediently in place as the energy swords danced and the Roulians fell all around him.

A moment later, Yu Shangrong returned to his original spot. He looked at young Yu Zhenghai as though nothing had happened. He raised his left hand, and his Longevity Sword returned to its scabbard and back in his embrace.

The battle had ended just like that. The trees and plants within 100 meters were felled by Yu Shangrong.

The chilly breeze brought with it a metallic stench that seemed to linger in the air. It prickled Yu Zhenghai's newly-formed sense of smell.

"Are you afraid?" Yu Shangrong asked. He was used to this so it did not affect him at all.

Young Yu Zhenghai shook his head to show that he was not afraid.

That was beyond Yu Shangrong's expectations. Perhaps, Yu Zhenghai had endured many hardships so he knew when he should feel afraid and when he should not...

"Your sword techniques are amazing," young Yu Zhenghai said.

"I think so, too."

"Since you're my senior brother... Can you teach me how to use the sword?"

"..." Yu Shangrong shook his head lightly and replied with a straight face. "You're not suitable for the sword."

"What suits me then?"

"A saber," Yu Shangrong said.

When he heard this, young Yu Zhenghai beamed. He asked, "How did you know that I like sabers? Sabers are cool. A man's strength can only be manifested by using a saber!"

"..." Yu Shangrong successfully bit back a retort. He closed his eyes indifferently and entered his resting state.

Young Yu Zhenghai stood at the side. He toyed around with the branch. He gripped it with both hands and made slashing motions.

Bam! Bam! Bam!

Young Yu Zhenghai struck a tree stump with the branch. His strength was not something a youth his age should possess. He said, "I'll surely become as powerful as you."

"I hope so."

It was unknown if Wuqians could recultivate after they were resurrected. Any possible side effects of the resurrection were also unknown. It was slightly too early to be talking about cultivation right now.

After they had rested, Yu Shangrong brought young Yu Zhenghai with him and continued eastward.

...

Five days later, in a bamboo forest east of Rouli.

The long journey had worn young Yu Zhenghai out. He could barely walk. He was already at his limits after having held out for so long.

The two of them traversed vast deserts, winding mountain paths, and seas of clouds.

When they landed among the bamboos, Yu Zhenghai lay down at once. "I can't go any further."

"You have no choice but to walk."

They only rested briefly.

Yu Shangrong heard something flying toward them above the bamboo forest. He stood up and moved his hand. A few vines flew over, picking Yu Zhenghai up, and brought him to his side. His movements were neat and precise. He placed one hand on his back as the vines wound around his waist several times. His back was straight and his expression was calm as he walked out of the bamboo forest. Then, he drew the Longevity Sword and lifted it before an energy sword shot out.

It cut through some bamboo and hit the cultivator above the bamboo forest.

Every time Yu Shangrong swung his sword, a cultivator fell. He did not even have to look; he kept his eyes trained ahead.

At this moment, a figure dove toward him at blinding speed. At the same time, a Six-leaf wolf king avatar merged with that figure as he crashed through the bamboo forest.

The wolf pounced while baring its fangs. The figure wielded sharp blades in both hands as he aimed for Yu Shangrong's face. His movements were as quick as lightning!

Yu Shangrong joined his palms together. His Longevity Sword was held between his hands. An energy sword suddenly expanded and wrapped around his Longevity Sword. It dropped down like a guillotine at lightning speed as well.

In just a split second, the wolf king avatar was cleaved into two, falling to the left and the right.

The cultivator in the middle of the avatar shared the same fate.

The battle ended.

Once again, panicked cries rang in the air.

“He’s not a Six-leaf cultivator! Retreat!”

“Change of plans! Run!”

The remaining cultivators fled to the west.

Yu Shangrong carried Yu Zhenghai with an indifferent expression on his face as he continued on his journey. He stepped out of the forest and rose into the air. He looked to the side; young Yu Zhenghai was fast asleep.

...

The rogue western wind blew across the river, when was it going to return?

...

On Liang Province City’s walls.

Si Wuya faced Rouli. He seemed to be lost in his thoughts.

At this moment, Jiang Aijian leaped up and sat on the city wall. “Are you sure your men are fine?”

“They’ve crossed Heaven’s Moat and formed a garrison at the north of Great Yan... If Lou Lan’s forces place a grand Formation there, it’ll be difficult to breach. I trust those I employ and won’t employ those I don’t trust. I believe in them,” Si Wuya replied.

“Breach?” Jiang Aijian shook his head. “You can attack all you want, but I’m going to make things clear. I’m only helping you with defending.”

“Offense is the best defense.”

“...” Jiang Aijian spread his hands. He shook his head and said, “Can I object to this plan?”

“You can... but it’s futile.”

“I can’t stand you guys.” Jiang Aijian was speechless. He said with a sigh, “At the end of the day, I’m still Great Yan’s Third Prince. How can I sit back and do nothing while the Other Tribes invade my lands? Just tell me... when? I’ll do everything in my power to help.”

“Tonight.”

“Er... Can I take back what I just said?”

“No.”

...

Inside Dazheng Palace in the Divine Capital.

After so many days, Lu Zhou's Heavenly Writing power had already been replenished several times over. In the meantime, he kept attempting to expand the limits of the power of hearing. He had practically memorized the incantation for the power and mastered its use.

He opened the system dashboard again.

Merit points: 66,203

The added merit points were from Yu Shangrong.

Lu Zhou looked at his merit points and shook his head. He wondered how Yu Zhenghai was faring now...

'That rascal. Will it kill him to write back?'

After pondering for a moment, Lu Zhou opened the list of items and said, "Purchase Golden Lotus Leaf."

"Ding! Spent 50,000 merit points. Obtained: Golden Lotus Leaf x1."

Initially, he wanted to use it immediately. When he remembered the item cards would increase in price whenever his cultivation base improved, he spent another 10,000 merit points and purchased a Deadly Strike Card. He would save it as his final trump card. After purchasing it, he finally said, "Use Golden Lotus Leaf."

Shortly after, the item card dissolved into spots of starlight that swirled around him. They eventually gathered around his dantian's sea of Qi. The tidal wave of power rose and churned like waters of the sea. The surging Primal Qi burst forth and grew in his dantian's sea of Qi like an incoming tide. At the same time, his heart and mind were at peace. The minute sounds of the breeze around Dazheng Palace were clearly brought to his ears.

...

Above Dazheng Palace, the clouds parted. Primal Qi wreaked havoc and swiftly gathered around Lu Zhou.

At this moment, Zhu Tianyuan was supporting Zhu Honggong's weight. They were in Dazheng Palace's vicinity. When they saw the surging Primal Qi, they were shocked.

"My son, Dazheng Palace is in trouble!" Zhu Tianyuan was shocked.

"Stay calm!" Zhu Honggong pulled Zhu Tianyuan. He bit back his pain and earnestly said, "You're new here so you don't know about this... Whenever you encounter something like this, you must keep quiet and lay low."

"My son, you're too green. Someone's sprouting a leaf... Perhaps, it's your senior! You should go and learn from them!" Zhu Tianyuan said.

"You're green! Trust me... Don't go looking for trouble!"

"Is this how you should talk to your father? I've been around far longer than you..." Zhu Tianyuan put on the air of a senior and said. "It's only someone sprouting a leaf. There's nothing to it. Your old man and Old Villain Ji go way back. I can even watch him sprout a leaf, let alone his disciples..."

Boom!

A clap of thunder rang from Dazheng Palace.

“Scram.”

Chapter 620: The Six-leaf Patriarch

To gain the power of speech recognition, even about unspeakable truths, and understand the words spoken by the tongues of beings in different worlds.

A clap of thunder rang in the air before the power of speech was released. It was focused and powerful.

The blue Heavenly Writing extraordinary power struck Zhu Tianyuan and Zhu Honggong. They were sent reeling, drawing an arc in the air, before they crashed on the ground.

“Ouch!” Zhu Honggong’s previous wounds had not healed yet, and yet, he was further injured. He wailed in pain as his face was drenched in cold sweat.

Despite being shocked, Zhu Tianyuan was in a better state. He hastily helped Zhu Honggong to his feet and limped toward Jinghe Palace.

When they entered Jinghe Palace, the duo heaved a sigh of relief. They patted their chests.

“I’m begging you, don’t drag me down with you... If you weren’t here, I’d be like a fish in water! I was doing great. Now that you’re here, it’s as though I’m cursed with bad luck. I’m violating rules at every turn,” Zhu Honggong pleaded.

Zhu Tianyuan wiped the sweat off his face. After calming down, he said, “That was an accident... I didn’t expect the relationship we had to mean nothing to him. The men of today are degenerates... My son, why don’t you think about coming back with me to the Ancient Saint Cult and take over the position of Holy Master? You’ll never be in want. You might even be able to give me a cute and plump grandson. In any case, it would be better than being beaten up here every day!”

“Forget it. Don’t try to trick me. Something that good will never happen to me.” Zhu Honggong did not believe Zhu Tianyuan. When he was taken away, Jiang Pu had said that someone was coveting the Ancient Saint Cult. ‘Trying to deceive me? Fat chance. Do you really think that I can’t use my brain?’

“No way... I’m your father. A father won’t lie to his son.”

Thud! Thud! Thud!

Someone knocked on the door.

A solemn expression appeared on Zhu Tianyuan’s face as he opened the door. He saw two little girls curiously peeking into the room. He asked, puzzled, “You are?”

“Eighth Senior Brother!” Little Yuan’er and Conch greeted Zhu Honggong in unison.

Zhu Honggong replied, “Hello, junior sisters.”

Zhu Tianyuan said, “Oh, you’re my son’s junior sisters...”

"We're here to see Eighth Senior Brother... If there's anything you need, just tell us," Little Yuan'er said.

"In that case, fetch a basin of water to wash Zhu Honggong's feet," Zhu Tianyun said. He could not order Zhu Honggong's seniors around, but it should not be a problem to order Zhu Honggong's juniors around since juniors should respect their seniors. There was nothing wrong with asking his son's juniors to fetch over a basin of water for his son to wash his feet, right? Moreover, this was how the juniors showed respect to their seniors in the Ancient Cult Sect. Naturally, the older members would also look after the younger members. Yes, they got along well.

Zhu Honggong. "???"

Little Yuan'er frowned slightly. She pointed at herself, "Me?"

"Yes... go." Zhu Tianyun waved his sleeve. "Don't forget to bring some desserts as well. I've never tasted the desserts in the palace before. I'd like to have some."

"No, no, no... Don't listen to him, Little Junior Sister..."

Thud!

Zhu Honggong hastily got off the bed and crawled to the door. "Little Junior Sister, I don't need water for my feet!"

Zhu Tianyun. "???"

"My son... What are you doing? You're the senior brother. Go back and rest."

Zhu Honggong felt like crying as he said, "I'm begging you, please leave... Stop making things worse for me! I'm serious!"

Little Yuan'er said, "Eighth Senior Brother, are you sure you don't want it?"

"Yes!" Zhu Honggong said seriously.

"Mhm, rest well, then. If you need anything, just tell me. I'll have Third Senior Brother fetch some water for you."

"..."

Then, Little Yuan'er pulled Conch out and skipped away from Jinghe Palace.

Zhu Tianyun was feeling slightly dizzy. 'Why is the hierarchy so messed up here?' He turned to look at his son, Zhu Honggong, and saw his son glaring at him as though he was an enemy.

"Get lost..."

...

Inside Dazheng Palace.

Lu Zhou gauged the changes of the Primal Qi in his body. Ever since he lost his cultivation base after transmigrating here, his lifespan had been limiting the progress of his cultivation base. Before this, the

progress he had from cultivating on his own was pitifully slow. He had to purchase avatars directly from the system.

After reversing his life for 100 years, he regained more of his physical abilities. He decided that he should increase his pace and return to the peak as soon as he could.

Lu Zhou had a feeling that the tide of the lotus-severing era was about to change. He had to reach the real Nine-leaf stage as quickly as he could.

He raised his palm and summoned his avatar.

Five lotus leaves swirled around his avatar. Shortly after, radiant rings slid down from its waist. Its energy grew stronger as well.

Poof!

A leaf appeared on the side of the Golden Lotus. The sixth leaf had finally sprouted. This meant that his cultivation base had successfully entered the Six-leaf Nascent Divinity realm.

Lu Zhou nodded in satisfaction. He clenched his hand, and his avatar disappeared.

The golden radiance disappeared as well, restoring the interior of the palace to its original colors.

Lu Zhou stood up and gauged the changes in his body. His instincts told him that he would certainly have good luck if he tried a lucky draw right now...

"Lucky draw!"

"Ding! Spent 50 merit points. Thank you for participating. Luck +1."

'I'm not angry. Again!'

"Lucky draw!"

"Ding! Spent 50 merit points. Thank you for participating. Luck +2."

Lu Zhou stopped. He was not angry. Truly...

A great philosopher once said that one should not be flustered whenever one encountered difficulties. One should remain calm. If one smiled as one stared into the abyss, the abyss would also...

'Forget it!'

Lu Zhou decided to take a stroll outside before attempting the lucky draw again.

...

At the same time.

In a valley 10,000 miles away from Heaven's Moat in the north.

Yu Shangrong placed young Yu Zhenghai on the ground. Although his cultivation base was profound, he was feeling the strain of rushing throughout their journey. Not only did he have to maintain a high speed while flying, but he also had to shield another person with his energy.

After they landed, Yu Shangrong sat down with his legs crossed, adjusted his breathing, and rested.

Young Yu Zhenghai opened his eyes at this moment. "Where are we?"

"A valley in eastern Rouli," Yu Shangrong replied with his eyes closed.

"How long before we reach Great Yan?"

"Half a month."

"So long?"

Yu Shangrong opened his eyes. With a faint smile on his face, he said, "If you had your cultivation base, it'd only take us half the time. Alas..."

Young Yu Zhenghai looked down at his palms and mumbled, "Cultivation base..."

Yu Shangrong smiled knowingly. Then, he closed his eyes and quickly recovered his Primal Qi and stamina.

Young Yu Zhenghai called out tentatively, "Senior brother?"

"Speak." Yu Shangrong's eyes were still closed. He reveled in being addressed as senior brother by Yu Zhenghai.

"Why don't you return on your own?" Although Yu Zhenghai had been reverted to the time of his youth and lost his cultivation base, he was warier of strangers compared to the ordinary person.

"If I leave, you'll surely die," Yu Shangrong said.

"No, I won't."

"Don't try to act tough. This isn't a human settlement. This isn't a place where you can act tough. Look..."

A flying beast flew above the treetops. Its tail was slender, its beak sharp, and its eyes gleamed with electricity. It resembled a gigantic mutated owl.

When he saw this monster, young Yu Zhenghai frowned. His palms turned sweaty. Nevertheless, his reaction was calmer compared to his peers. This was a rare quality.

When the flying beast drew close to them, it did not slow down and disappeared into the horizon.

Yu Shangrong stood up and said, "Let's be on our way."

Young Yu Zhenghai got to his feet. With Yu Shangrong's help, the two of them rose into the air and flew away from the valet.

...

Three days passed by in the blink of an eye. The end of the valley lay before them.

Young Yu Zhenghai looked at the receding forest as he asked, "How long will it take for me to have a cultivation base like yours?"

"A long time," Yu Shangrong replied. That was stating the obvious.

However, young Yu Zhenghai dared not say it out loud. Instead, he continued with another question, "Can I attain it?"

"You can." Yu Shangrong could not be blamed for his curt replies. This was because young Yu Zhenghai had been relentless with his questions throughout their journey.

"I think so too," young Yu Zhenghai said confidently.

Yu Shangrong looked at the exit before them and said, "There's a 10,000-foot-deep abyss five miles ahead. Hold on tight."

"Mhm." Yu Zhenghai felt nervous.

Five miles was not far for a cultivator.

However, just as the duo was about to leave the valley, the sky darkened. Then, purple radiant circles began to appear on the ground!