

Disciples 711

Chapter 711: The Flying Star House Comes Reckoning

A hint of shock flashed in Ye Tianxin's eyes. In her opinion, she was the person who understood this weapon the most in the world. She could sense the slightest change in it, let alone the flowing radiance along the hoop's blade. She was stunned.

The female cultivator held her hands higher and said tentatively, "Miss Sixth?"

When Ye Tianxin heard the female cultivator calling out to her in a new form of address, she snapped back to the present. She smiled in satisfaction as she took the Amorous Hoop. "Thank you."

"It's been a long time since I've seen you smile..."

Ye Tianxin was suddenly stunned upon hearing these words. She recalled the events of the past. It seemed like, indeed, it had been a long time since she last smiled.

Life was like a dream. Everything in the past weighed down so heavily on her that she could barely breathe. She did not know when it started, but she nearly forgot that she was someone who knew how to smile. Just interacting with someone else made her feel as though she was being caressed by a spring breeze.

"Did my master tell you to bring this to me?"

"Mhm... the pavilion master told me to send the weapon over early in the morning."

Ye Tianxin circulated some Primal Qi on her palm. When her Primal Qi touched the Amorous Hoop, the radiance flowed along its blade with a smoothness much greater than before. Thick energy blades swirled around the hoops.

"It's beyond the heaven-grade." Ye Tianxin was shocked.

Ye Tianxin did not waste any time familiarizing herself with her upgraded weapon and practiced in the southern pavilion.

At this moment, Duanmu Sheng, Mingshi Yin, Si Wuya, and the others walked out. When they saw changes in the Amorous Hoop, all of them wore a shocked expression on their faces.

"It's a desolate-grade Amorous Hoop," Si Wuya said.

"Master's biased..." Zhu Honggong looked at his boxing gloves that seemed like two blocks of metals, in hindsight.

Si Wuya said, "Your boxing gloves are a heaven-grade weapon as well. Aren't you satisfied with them?"

"I haven't activated its grade yet since I've no affinity with it yet," Zhu Honggong said in an aggrieved tone.

"Be patient. Raise your cultivation base steadily. Master won't hold back once you're at the Eight-leaf stage," Si Wuya said.

Duanmu Sheng was originally filled with envy as well. However, when he looked at Zhu Honggong with his hideous boxing gloves, he felt much better. Although his weapon was not a desolate-grade weapon, at least, it was not hideous looking. No matter how he looked at it, the Overlord Spear seemed cooler and nicer. With this thought in mind, he held his sleeve and blew on the dragon ornament on the spear before giving it a good wipe. After he was done, he said as he carried the Overlord Spear over his shoulder, "Carry on, guys. I'm going to cultivate."

...

Over the next two days, cultivators from the nine provinces left the Evil Sky Pavilion.

Lu Zhou, on the other hand, was fully focused on his meditation of the Heavenly Writing scrolls.

Nobody disturbed him.

...

The demonstration from the Evil Sky Pavilion's Patriarch to the world became a hot topic over these two days as well.

In a certain relay station in the Divine Capital.

"I saw it with my own eyes. The Evil Sky Pavilion's Patriarch demonstrated the method to sprout the ninth leaf. His golden lotus was burning!"

"A burning golden lotus? This is my third time hearing that. Is it real?"

"I swear to the heavens. If I lie to you, my newborn son won't have a d*ck!"

"Alright, alright, I believe you."

A middle-aged man sat in the corner, sipping tea, as he watched the cultivators coming and going. He was careful not to get into trouble with anyone.

"There was an interruption during his demonstration... A red lotus cultivator appeared out of nowhere to attack the patriarch. At that time, the patriarch was at a crucial stage of the demonstration when he was forced to engage the attacker in battle. They fought for a long time, and it left destruction all over the mountains and the rivers. The red lotus cultivator's lotus was flaming, and he had a profound cultivation base. However, he was still beaten into a pulp by the patriarch's palm strike."

"The red lotus cultivators are pieces of sh*t. They're nothing but trash. How dare they trespass upon Great Yan!"

With that, their onslaught of insults against the monk, Fa Kong, began.

After a while, someone sighed. "The problem is that the patriarch is the only one who's a Nine-leaf cultivator. That's far from enough. The manmans at Mo City, Qiong Qi at Yu Province, and the Nine-leaf red lotus invader. They were all defeated by the patriarch alone. When will we have a second Nine-leaf cultivator? More and more beasts have been appearing lately."

"The Three Sects are the ones with the highest chances, I think... Actually, the two academies, the Sky Orthodox Sect, the Blossom Faction, the Clear Water Temple, and the Blue Dragon Sect are improving

quickly as well. The era of the ten great sects is already over. I'm sure a second Nine-leaf cultivator will appear within three years."

"Three years are too long."

The others sighed.

The middle-aged man drank several cups of tea before turning around to leave. When he reached a deserted spot, he leaped into the air and made his way to the southern part of Great Yan.

Based on what he learned over these few days, the force with the highest possibility of producing a Nine-leaf cultivator was the Three Sects.

Since he could not stop the first Nine-leaf cultivator, he would try to stop the second Nine-leaf cultivator from appearing.

...

The Sky Martial Court in the red lotus domain.

"Elder Qiu, The Blood Sun Temple has replied. Their Monastic Discipline Hall's First Seat, Master Fa Kong, is dead," a disciple reported respectfully.

Inside the great hall, Elder Qiu sat on a lotus dais dozens of meters wide. His eyes were slightly closed. When he heard the news, he opened his eyes slightly.

Fa Kong was a Nine-leaf elite from the red lotus domain who had mastered the karmic fire, and yet, he was still killed. This had exceeded his expectations.

"How many of those who arrived at the other side are still alive?" Elder Qiu asked.

"There's one left, but his cultivation base isn't profound. I don't think he can do much," the disciple, Mo Buyan, said.

"Don't worry... When a cultivator's cultivation base is too profound, he's more prone to act recklessly. Fa Kong is a great example of this. Fa Kong had mastered the karmic fire; Ye Zhen might not even be a match for him. If an elite like Fa Kong lost his life before he could do anything impactful, then we've all underestimated the people of the golden lotus domain too much," Elder Qiu said, "Having one of ours sending us information is better than losing all of them. This Nine-leaf cultivator from the golden lotus domain is extraordinary. I'm afraid that the single-capacity Sky Shuttle will only be sending more of our men to their deaths... How's the progress with the Sky Shuttle?"

"We need at least half a month, elder," Mo Buyan replied.

"Before the sky chariot arrives, don't send anyone else to the golden lotus domain."

"Understood."

...

The Thousand Willow Monastery in the red lotus domain.

Yu Zhenghai placed his hands on his back while Yu Shangrong crossed his arms. Both of them were looking at Ji Fengxing who was outside the gazebo.

“Fighting with a saber is the best... Move your feet, put some strength into that wrist of yours. You swing like a lady. Didn’t you eat?” Yu Zhenghai said.

At this moment, Ji Fengxing wielded a saber in his left hand and a sword in his right hand. There was no harmony at all.

Yu Shangrong said, “Fighting with the sword is the best. It’s all about speed, precision, and brutality. Look alive! You move like a sloth. What’s wrong? Haven’t you been sleeping well?”

Wuwu covered her mouth and laughed.

Yu Zhenghai said, “Come here. I’ll show you how it’s done. Your movements should be big when using a saber. Your imposing manner is important, and then, comes your might. This is what a man should cultivate.”

“Any skill that can kill is a good sword technique. How can you call that a man’s saber technique when it can’t even kill?” Yu Shangrong said disdainfully.

“...”

Ji Fengxing could not take it anymore. He tossed the weapons aside and said, “Seniors, am I suited to the saber or the sword?”

“Saber!”

“Sword!”

Ji Fengxing. “...”

Just when the two disciples’ quarrel was about to escalate further to arguing about the advantages and disadvantages of the saber and sword, a huge flying chariot flew in their direction from the distance.

The flying chariot was 100-meter long and dozens of meters wide. It was all brown. Hundreds of cultivators could be seen flanking the flying chariot on both sides. A flag was flown above the flying chariot. Three words on the flag caught their eyes: Flying Star House.

Wuwu saw the words on the flag and said, “Big brothers, the people from the Flying Star House are here!”

Yu Shangrong and Yu Zhenghai looked up at the flying chariot and smiled.

“Rock-paper-scissors. Winner gets to make the first move. What do you say?”

“You took the words right out of my mouth,” Yu Shangrong replied calmly.

Chapter 712: If My Master Is Here, You Wouldn’t Even Be Able To Last One Round

Wuwu and Ji Fengxing looked at the duo in stunned silence. They were surprised that the duo was still in the mood for rock-paper-scissors at such a crucial moment. If they were not worried, they would have been impressed.

If the Flying Star House wanted to look for trouble, how was the Thousand Willow Monastery going to overcome it?

Meanwhile, Yu Shangrong and Yu Zhenghai played their game.

Three rounds later, Yu Shangrong won. He smiled faintly as he said, "Thank you."

Yu Zhenghai placed his hands on his back and said, "Since I'm your senior brother, it's only natural for me to give this chance to you."

Yu Shangrong was pleased enough with his victory that he did not bother to bicker with Yu Zhenghai. He was happier than that time when they had their ultimate Eight-leaf battle in Cloud Radiant Forest.

Wuwu and Ji Fengxing were speechless as they watched the duo.

Ever since Yu Zhenghai began to stay here, the two disciples often debated in the gazebo, but they had never spared. One was an elite swordsman while the other was an elite saber user. No matter how long they argued, they could decide on a winner. Therefore, they decided to make Ji Fengxing learn both the sword and the saber before they made their judgment.

Sometimes, the others wondered if the duo was nemeses or fellow disciples.

...

The cultivators on the flying chariot slowly made their way to the Thousand Willow Monastery.

Meanwhile, in front of the Thousand Willow Monastery's Fair Hall, the elder, Tian Buji, led dozens of disciples as he flew over.

They hovered at the side of the gazebo and bowed at the flying chariot.

"I wonder which senior from the Flying Star House has decided to grace us with his presence? Forgive us for our lack of hospitality."

At the helm of the flying chariot, a sexagenarian with a stoop back walked out. His hair was gray, and he was not tall.

Tian Buji bowed. "So, it's Elder Liang."

When the flying chariot stabilized, the old man with the stoop back, Liang Zidao, disembarked from the flying chariot and hovered in front of it.

Dozens of Flying Star House disciples flew out as well and spread out behind Liang Zidao.

Liang Zidao rested his hands on his back as he looked at the gazebo before shifting his narrowed eyes to Tian Buji. Then, he said, "I want to speak to Xia Changqiu."

The two elders spoke with some sound technique, causing the low-rank cultivators to hear ringing noises in their minds. It was rather uncomfortable.

Tian Buji smiled before he replied, "Elder Liang, you've come a long way. May I know what business you have here? The monastery master is currently cultivating in seclusion and isn't able to receive guests. You can speak to me instead."

“It’s not the same.”

“How so?”

“You’re too weak,” Ling Zidao said bluntly; his voice dripping with scorn.

Tian Buji said, “Elder Liang, we’re both cultivators. Is there a need to insult another fellow cultivator?”

Liang Zidao shook his head. “The Flying Star House has lost too many disciples to the Thousand Willow Monastery. Yet, you expect me to behave in a civil manner? Don’t you think you’re asking for too much?”

“Their deaths have nothing to do with the Thousand Willow Monastery,” Tian Buji said.

“Don’t try to talk your way out of this!” Liang Zidao raised his right hand.

Two disciples stepped forward on each of Liang Zidao’s sides and summoned their avatars immediately.

Whizz!

Whizz!

There were two sounds of resonance as a Seven-leaf red lotus avatar and an Eight-leaf red lotus avatar appeared before fading away.

Tian Buji and the others frowned slightly.

“I’m not Lu Song or Xuan Ming... We’re all intelligent people. There’s no need to beat around the bush,” Ling Zidao said, making his intentions clear.

“So the Flying Star House has decided to look for trouble with the Thousand Willow Monastery?”

“So what if it’s true?”

Tian Buji, naturally, knew what kind of situation they were in. The rise of the great forces would often come with them taking over minor forces. Even without Wuwu, Lu Song, or Xuan Ming... this was bound to happen. He would have to deal with this sooner or later.

The only thing Tian Buji did not expect was for the Flying Star House to send Liang Zidao.

Liang Zidao was known for being merciless and making big movements whenever he made a move. He was always direct with his intentions as well.

For the Flying Star House to send Liang Zidao, it was clear they no longer intended to conceal the hostility.

At this moment, Yu Shangrong pushed away from the ground and stepped over the railing. He flew over as though he was as light as a feather. When he came to a halt, he said humbly and politely, “My apologies, but if you’ll allow me to interject...”

Wuwu and Ji Fengxing were perplexed. At this juncture, how could Yu Shangrong speak in such a manner?

Nevertheless, Liang Zidao did not even deign to spare Yu Shangrong a glance. He only waved his hand.

With that signal, a Seven-leaf red lotus elite dove from the sky.

“I’ve already told you. Apart from Xia Changqiu, none of you are qualified to speak to me.”

Liang Zidao’s voice had barely faded when the Seven-leaf red lotus elite, who had dived from the sky, summoned his avatar and made his way toward Yu Shangrong. He found it strange that Yu Shangrong still wore a faint smile on his face and remained still as he hovered in the air. In that instant, he ran dozens of simulations in his mind regarding possible surprises that might occur during battle. In the end, he came up with a few possibilities: his opponent would prepare to defend himself with a weapon, summon his avatar, or turn around and run. Whatever it was, he was prepared to kill or severely injure his opponent with a red lotus sacred technique. This was a good opportunity for him to take the initiative and crush his opponent. With all these thoughts in mind, a faint smile appeared on the Seven-leaf red lotus elite’s lips. ‘Here I come! Die!’

Yu Shangrong did not move at all.

The red lotus elite frowned slightly. All he saw was the sword behind Yu Shangrong shaking. In just a moment, he was upon Yu Shangrong.

Zing!

There was a flash of red light as the sword left its scabbard!

Yu Shangrong wielded his sword with his right hand and brought it from his left shoulder to the right. His right arm was now extended to the side.

Bam!

The battle ended; it did not even last for half a breath before it ended.

There were no flashy moves or bursts of energies. There were no unnecessary techniques as well.

The red lotus avatar was smoothly cleaved into two.

The Seven-leaf elite’s eyes widened as he looked at his avatar with trembling lips. He had run through various scenarios in his mind, but he did not expect this outcome at all.

His avatar shattered, and he fell, severely injured. Even if it was not a fatal blow, it still dealt heavy damage to him.

...

The others were shocked as they looked at Yu Shangrong.

Yu Shangrong moved his right arm back to its original position before he calmly sheathed his sword. He was as gentle as ever as he said, “I had to save my life with this sword strike. I hope you understand.”

Liang Zidao stared at Yu Shangrong intently. Someone who could strike down a Seven-leaf cultivator with a single sword strike in just a blink of an eye could not be a weakling. “Who are you?”

Yu Shangrong did not reply to Liang Zidao's question, which was quite unlike him. Instead, he said, "If the Flying Star House came looking for trouble, how could I, as a guest of the Thousand Willow Monastery, sit back and do nothing?"

"So, that geezer, Xia Changqiu, hired a helper. Are you from the Ninth Temple?" Liang Zidao asked.

Yu Shangrong shook his head. "That's not important. I have a suggestion for you, and I hope that you'll heed it."

"And what's that?" Liang Zidao turned around with a curious expression.

"Return to where you came from and stop giving the Thousand Willow Monastery trouble..." He paused for a moment. After giving it some thought, he added, "On behalf of the Thousand Willow Monastery, I thank all of you."

"..."

Wuwu and Jifengxing. "..."

Yu Zhenghai did not find Yu Shangrong's behavior strange. He merely shook his head, bored.

Liang Zidao stared at Yu Shangrong. "You and what army?" There were not many who dared to challenge the Flying Star House in Great Tang, after all.

"I, alone, am enough," Yu Shangrong calmly replied.

"..."

The disciples of the Flying Star House were furious when they heard Yu Shangrong's words.

"Very well." Liang Zidao completely disregarded Tian Buji, at this moment. All his attention was focused on Yu Shangrong. Due to Yu Shangrong's polite and calm manner, he was even more infuriated, to the point where killing intent surged in his body.

"Even if the Ninth Temple's Master is here, he won't dare to act against the Flying Star House recklessly. The seeds of a grudge have been planted now." Liang Zidao waved his hand.

"You should heed my advice." Yu Shangrong shook his head helplessly. "If my master were here, you wouldn't even be able to last a round."

After the verbal exchange, the killing intent in Liang Zidao's swelled even more.

Inside the gazebo.

Wuwu looked at Yu Zhenghai and said, "Elder big brother... Is your master really that powerful?"

Yu Zhenghai nodded and said, "My junior brother has many wonderful qualities, but sometimes, he's humble to a fault."

"Hum... humble..." Ji Fengxing felt as though he was struck by lightning. He wondered if Yu Zhenghai was bragging.

“If my master were here, there won’t be any ‘round’ to speak of... These people won’t even have a chance to make a move,” Yu Zhenghai said.

“...”

Chapter 713: Sword Drawn with Killing Intent

Tian Buji was drenched in sweat from his lack of confidence. He felt Yu Shangrong’s bragging was too exaggerated and getting out of hand. He had witnessed the sparring session between Yu Zhenghai, Yu Shangrong, and the monastery master, Xia Changqiu. Based on their sparring sessions, the duo was evenly matched with the monastery master. They were both at the Eight-leaf stage.

Indeed, with their cultivation bases, the duo had all the reasons to feel proud of themselves. After all, Eight-stage cultivators were also considered as main players in the cultivation world. However, compared to elites like Ye Zhen, Eight-leaf cultivators were... inferior.

Faced with Liang Zidao, even Xia Changqiu, the monastery master, would not confidently claim victory.

Liang Zidao was known as a madman with a bloodlust. He had always been the Flying Star House’s most valiant warrior in the past. Apart from the Flying Star House’s Nine-leaf elites, he had never lost to any Eight-leaf cultivators before.

At this moment, a person to Liang Zidao’s left lowered his altitude for several meters. Then, he looked at Yu Shangrong and said, “The Flying Star House doesn’t kill one without a name. What’s your name?”

As usual, Yu Shangrong did not behave conventionally. Instead, he said, “Since you’re not going to listen to my advice, I’m afraid that I have no choice but to offend you.” With that, he faded out of sight suddenly.

The Eight-leaf red lotus cultivator from the Flying Star House was taken aback. However, he did not summon his avatar. After witnessing his comrade’s avatar being cleaved into two, he knew Yu Shangrong wielded a heaven-grade weapon.

Liang Zidao shook his head. “Yun Huan, make it quick.”

“Understood.” Even an Eight-leaf cultivator, Yun Huan, had to obey Liang Zidao’s orders. Based on this, it was clear how strong Liang Zidao was.

At this moment, Yu Shangrong reappeared and brought his sword down.

Swoosh!

Yun Huan was shocked. With a burst of movement, he hurriedly sped back to put some distance between him and Yu Shangrong.

Yu Shangrong smiled faintly. “Not bad.”

In the gazebo, Yu Zhenghai shook his head as he said, “Second Junior Brother, you’ve already lost during the first move.”

“It’s too early to say that I’ve lost.”

“Don’t underestimate your opponent. If this geezer is deliberately concealing his cultivation base and suddenly reveals himself to be a Nine-leaf cultivator, you’d be caught off guard,” Yu Zhenghai said with a hint of amusement.

Yu Shangrong knew Yu Zhenghai was joking, but he knew Yu Zhenghai had a point as well. ‘Well, if it turns out there’s a Nine-leaf cultivator here, I’ll... I’ll just do what Old Fourth does.’

Yu Shangrong vanished again. In the next second, he appeared in front of Yun Huan and stabbed with his sword. He did not use any energy swords!

The others were puzzled.

Meanwhile, Yun Huan felt humiliated by his opponent. He launched several palm seals in the air.

Yu Shangrong pirouetted and gracefully sidestepped the attacks.

Ji Fengxing exclaimed, brimming with praises, “What swift movements!”

Tian Buji was puzzled. “Why isn’t he using his energy? Is he deliberately doing this?”

Yu Shangrong was at top speed. Red palm seals filled the skies, and yet, he avoided them nimbly with ease. Then, he drew closer to his opponent and swung his sword.

The Traceless Sword.

Yu Shangrong’s Longevity Sword glowed with a red light as it fell toward Yun Huan’s avatar.

“I was waiting for this... Activate!” The red lotus let out a wave of Primal Qi, not energy, that rocked forth.

Yun Huan thought Yu Shangrong would stop attacking and retreat. Alas, his expectations were shattered. He really did not under Yu Shangrong at all.

How could Yun Huan know that the Sword Devil, Yu Shangrong, would never back away? Once the sword was drawn, it would continue without care.

Sideways slice!

The sword left Yu Shangrong’s hand, spinning!

Yu Shangrong defended himself with his arms and flipped backward. He retreated steadily and gracefully.

Bam!

His Longevity Sword drew a cut across the red lotus avatar. Then, it flew in a circle around them before returning to Yu Shangrong’s palm.

Yun Huan glared at Yu Shangrong angrily before he looked at his own avatar with a slight embarrassment. His opponent managed to damage his avatar without even using energy. Although the cut was not deep or fatal, it was still a cut. For an elite, this was an unacceptable shame.

Just when Yun Huan was about to charge again, a voice rang in the air. “Yun Huan.”

“Elder Liang?!” Yun Huan looked up, confused.

“Stand down.”

“I’m not done.”

“You’re not a match for him. If he used his avatar earlier, you would’ve been grievously injured.” Liang Zidao had been watching their exchanges before he came to this conclusion.

Liang Zidao descended slowly.

Yun Huan had no choice but to retreat respectfully.

Liang Zidao looked at Yu Shangrong and said, “You’re powerful.”

“It’s not worth mentioning.” Yu Shangrong smiled faintly.

“But... you’re not powerful enough.” As soon as Liang Zidao finished speaking, he launched energy fists into the air.

The red punches shot toward Yu Shangrong like meteorites.

Yu Shangrong had many combat experiences. He had anticipated Liang Zidao’s sudden attack so he raised his Longevity Sword.

Bam!

The energy fists landed on the sword.

The two of them backed away from each other.

This was merely a probing attack.

“What did Xia Changqiu give you? Why is an elite like yourself willing to help him?”

Yu Shangrong lowered his sword and said calmly, “I’m a guest here. I can’t just sit down and do nothing.”

“Is that it?”

“That’s it.”

Liang Zidao felt like his intelligence was being mocked. He unleashed red energy from his body and charged toward his opponent like a cannonball.

Yu Shangrong swung his sword. He started slow before he slowly picked up pace until the sword became a blur. This resembled the scene where he had cut the witchcraft tendrils above the abyss.

Yu Shangrong could keep himself dry by swinging his sword when he was under a waterfall; he could also prevent snowflakes from touching him when it snowed. When he moved at his top speed, his movements could not be seen with the naked eye. At this moment, all that could be seen was a round area filled with blurry shadows.

Liang Zidao was keeping Yu Shangrong busy as well. He kept hurling energy punches in an attempt to break through the sword shadows before Yu Shangrong.

“This sword technique...” Ji Fengxing’s eyes widened as an expression of shock appeared on his face.

“He’s not giving it his all. This is nothing.” Yu Zhenghai shook his head.

“This isn’t his best?”

“Continue watching.”

At this moment, Liang Zidao finally summoned his avatar. When the red lotus avatar appeared, his speed doubled, and the energy punches in the air immediately converged.

Bam!

Yu Shangrong’s sword shadows converged as well as he parried the energy punch. Then, he flipped backward.

“Do you think that I’m Yun Huan?”

Swoosh!

Liang Zidao flew into his avatar and charged at Yu Shangrong with his red lotus.

Ji Fengxing was inwardly delighted. “It’s a chance to slash his avatar!”

Yu Shangrong flipped his right palm and held his Longevity Sword in a reversed grip. Instead of retreating, he advanced. He faded out of focus and split into three.

“Young man... I’ll teach you a lesson today.”

The red lotus flipped, blossomed, and spun.

Yu Shangrong’s three silhouettes merged into one as he struck with his sword.

At the same time, Liang Zidao lunged forward with his avatar!

“What technique is this?”

“Isn’t he afraid of a heaven-grade weapon?”

Bam!

Yu Shangrong’s Longevity Sword drew across the red lotus.

There was a collision of energies.

However, the sword did not damage the avatar,

When Yu Shangrong looked at the red leaves on the red lotus, he saw there were eight and a half leaves. Half of the ninth leaf had already sprouted.

Energy flowed backward as Liang Zidao launched an energy punch.

Yu Shangrong's amazing battle reflexes were displayed at this moment. His Eight-leaf golden avatar towered in the air and turned around, meeting the energy punch.

Bam!

The energy punch landed on Yu Shangrong's avatar. A golden energy sword appeared on the Longevity Sword.

Swoosh!

Yu Shangrong retracted his avatar; he had deflected the attack. He continued attacking with his sword as usual.

Whoosh!

The Longevity Sword landed true; its tip pierced Liang Zidao's shoulder.

The air seemed to have frozen over.

Everyone looked terrified.

Liang Zidao's eyes widened. He looked at his shoulder before looking at Yu Shangrong. "An invader from the golden lotus domain?!"

Tian Buji and the others frowned. The appearance of the golden avatar had shocked them.

"Xia Changqiu is colluding with those from the golden lotus domain... No wonder... I'll draw blood today! Everyone, attack! Don't let any of them go!"

The Flying Star House had been studying the Black Water Mystic Cave for a long time. It was the earliest sect to send its members to the golden lotus domain.

Initially, Liang Zidao intended to intimidate the Thousand Willow Monastery. However, with the appearance of the golden lotus, he discovered it was a great outlet for his bloodlust.

At this moment, dozens of disciples emerged from Flying Star House's flying chariot. Along with the other disciples who were already on the scene, they circulated their Primal Qi.

Yun Huan glanced at Tian Buji and said, "The Thousand Willow Monastery is colluding with the foreign tribes. Kill them all!"

Ji Fengxing and Wuwu were stunned.

"How? G-golden? What's the meaning of this?" Wuwu looked at Yu Zhenghai.

Yu Zhenghai merely shook his head and said, "Second Junior Brother, are you still going to hold back against such a powerful opponent?"

Yu Shangrong raised his Longevity Sword and said, "Eight-leaf and a half... Interesting." Then, he joined his palms together. His Longevity Sword split into two, four, eight...

Primal Restoration.

Thousands upon thousands of energy swords appeared above Yu Shangrong.

“Eight-and-a-half leaf?” Yu Zhenghai looked at Liang Zidao upon hearing Yu Shangrong’s words.

The cultivators swarmed over.

Yu Shangrong summoned his avatar again as energy swords spun in the air!

Several cultivators were struck down from the air.

The Sword Devil Destiny!

With a grand technique, thousands of energy swords rained down on the Flying Star House disciples and struck them down easily. The energy swords continued to attack them relentlessly.

Tian Buji and Ji Fengxing gulped.

“This is a second-grade sword technique?”

The disciples of the Flying Star House parried the countless energy swords. Those who were slightly distracted even for a second lost their lives.

“Young man... It’s over!” With a burst of movement, Liang Zidao entered the range of the Sword Devil Destiny. Currently, his Eight-and-a-half-leaf avatar was... upside-down! Its lotus was above while the avatar was below! The red lotus blocked the countless energy swords while he launched energy fists at his opponent.

“Big brother!”

“Senior!”

Yu Zhenghai frowned slightly. He placed his hand on his Jasper Saver. His fingers were shaking slightly. ‘Second Junior Brother...’

Before Yu Zhenghai could act, a smile bloomed on Yu Shangrong’s face. “My apologies, I was aiming for the red lotus!”

Whizz!

The golden avatar appeared again. Its arms and palms that shone with golden radiance held a huge energy sword and swung it down.

“What’s this? The avatar can move?”

“There’s no golden lotus?!”

Liang Zidao finally noticed that Yu Shangrong was no longer holding his Longevity Sword. There was only an energy sword!

The massive energy sword slashed down.

“D*mn it!” Liang Zidao felt a pang of pain. He grunted as a quarter of his red lotus was severed by the huge energy sword!

Yu Shangrong lowered his altitude and raised his hand gracefully. His avatar vanished, and the Longevity Sword flew in a circle in the sky before returning to him.

Liang Zidao's face was flushed red. He was sent flying back for more than 100 meters, throwing up blood.

Tian Buji stared at this scene with his mouth agape. Due to the exciting battle, he was filled with the urge to clap but restrained himself in the end.

Was there ever an Eight-leaf cultivator who could defeat an Eight-and-a-half-leaf cultivator?

Even Yu Shangrong's Eldest Senior Brother, Yu Zhenghai, who always bickered with him could not help but raise his hands and clap.

"What do you think?" Yu Shangrong smiled faintly.

Chapter 714: Just How Powerful is Yu Shangrong?

Yu Zhenghai initially thought that his Second Junior Brother had done a splendid job and wanted to applaud him. However, upon hearing Yu Shangrong's question, he was immediately annoyed. Therefore, his reply was only lukewarm. "It's not bad... Since you decided to expose your avatar, you could've killed that Eight-leaf cultivator with a single sword strike if you wanted to."

"That's the advantage of hindsight," Yu Shangrong said.

"Let's see how you're going to handle this now."

The Eight-leaf cultivator, Yun Huan, who was hovering near the flying chariot, was filled with incredulity and pain at the same time. He could hardly believe that Liang Zidao, who was unrivaled among his peers, was injured by an Eight-leaf cultivator. What bothered him even more was that the opponent was chatting as though this was nothing and did not think much about them at all.

After a part of his avatar's lotus was severed, Liang Zidao flew back for more than 100 meters before he could stabilize his footing. Flames of fury burned in his eyes as he glared at Yu Shangrong with a dark expression. The killing intent and hatred in his eyes were uncontrollably intense. However, anger and hatred did not make him lose his mind or act recklessly.

Liang Zidao ordered, "Yun Huan, report this to Elder Ye Zhen."

"Understood." Yun Huang turned around, preparing to leave.

Yu Shangrong smiled faintly. "My apologies, but you can't leave." He vanished from sight again and reappeared in front of Yun Huan. His Longevity Sword shone with a faint red light as it thrummed in his grip. He knew the moment he exposed his avatar, he could not let a single one of them leave. After all, his golden avatar gave away his identity as a foreigner. He was confident, not stupid.

Liang Zidao stabilized his injuries and inhaled deeply before he flew forward.

Meanwhile, the Flying Star House's disciples retreated.

Liang Zidao raised his voice. "Yun Huan, just go. Leave this to me." He brought a brocade pouch out from his pocket, and from it, he brought out a red pill. Then, he proceeded to put the pill in his mouth and swallowed it. Subsequently, Primal Qi around him surged and changed. Compared to before, it seemed more violent. Clearly, he was absorbing the Primal Qi from his surroundings.

“Tian Buji, you’re colluding with people from the golden lotus domain. They’re foreign tribesmen. If word of this spreads, the Thousand Willow Monastery is surely done for!” Liang Zidao said.

Before seeing the golden avatar, Tian Buji supported Yu Shangrong unconditionally. However, the golden avatar had truly stunned him. He could not help but hesitate. Yu Shangrong was a foreign tribesman, after all!

Wuwu flew in front of Tian Buji and said, “Big brother is a good person!”

Tian Buji. “...”

‘This isn’t a matter of him being a good or a bad person!’

Liang Zidao was not bothered by Tian Buji’s attitude. He said loudly, “Yun Huan, what are you standing around for?!”

“Yes!” Yun Huan flew in another direction.

When Liang Zidao saw that Yu Shangrong was going to give chase, red energy denser than before emerged from his body. Then, the red energy covered his arms.

“Do you think you can stop all of us?” Liang Zidao shot toward Yu Shangrong like a fired arrow.

Yu Shangrong unleashed several energy swords and engaged with Liang Zidao again.

The others were shocked to see Liang Zidao was still capable of unleashing such a bold and powerful move after his part of his red lotus had been severed. Moreover, he seemed to be fighting more valiantly than before.

Liang Zidao stared at Yu Shangrong. “You’re powerful, but, unfortunately, you’ve picked the wrong opponent.”

While Yu Shangrong focused on his sword’s swing, he caught a glimpse of Yun Huan who had traveled quite a distance away...

Liang Zidao followed Yu Shangrong’s gaze and saw Yun Huan.

Suddenly, an emerald beam of light shot toward Yun Huan at lightning speed.

‘What’s that?’

Only Yu Shangrong and Liang Zidao saw this.

When the emerald light was upon Yun Huan, it instantly shot out countless energy sabers.

Yun Huan felt chills on his back. When he turned around, a look of terror appeared on his face.

‘Desolate-grade weapon?’

The energy sabers shot forward and killed Yun Huan.

The sudden change made Liang Zidao frown. He unleashed fiercer streams of energies from his fists and pushed Yu Shangrong away.

At this moment, both opponents faced each other from a distance.

“Yun Huan!” Liang Zidao looked in Yun Huan’s direction.

The other disciples from the Flying Star House were also looking at the descending energy sabers in stunned silence.

The sabers dropped down like a waterfall.

Yun Huan was nowhere to be seen.

Tian Buji had noticed the energy sabers that had suddenly appeared as well. “Golden energy sabers!”

This meant that there was more than one golden lotus invader!

This was also the reason Liang Zidao pushed Yu Shangrong away and retreated.

At this time, the energy sabers faded away. An emerald weapon flew back toward the gazebo and landed in Yu Zhenghai’s hand. He placed it back at its spot on his waist. Then, with his hands resting on his back, he looked up and said, “This is supposed to be a fair fight, how can I allow you to call for reinforcements?”

At this moment, everyone’s attention was focused on Yu Zhenghai.

Liang Zidao asked, “Who are you?”

Yu Zhenghai walked out from the gazebo and slowly walked up into the sky as though he was walking on the ground. When he reached the sky above the gazebo, he drew level with Liang Zidao, Tian Buji, and the others.

“You talk too much.” Yu Zhenghai flew forward.

Yu Shangrong raised his Longevity Sword and said, “Eldest Senior Brother, I’m not finished yet.” He could tell Yu Zhenghai had grown impatient, judging by how he had used the Great Dark Heaven Memorial to kill Yun Huan.

Since Yu Zhenghai had lost at rock-paper-scissors, he had no choice but to restrain himself. In an effort to compromise, he said, “I’ll just kill those who try to leave... Surely this is acceptable, Second Junior Brother?”

Yu Shangrong brought his Longevity Sword down and smiled faintly. “Yes.”

“...”

The others were stunned speechless again, confused by the nature of the relationship between the duo.

...

Meanwhile, the notification of a reward of 5,000 merit points interrupted Lu Zhou’s meditation on the Heavenly Writing scrolls.

He looked at the scenery outside the window as he shook his head and sighed.

He did not know how Yu Zhenghai and Yu Shangrong were faring in the red lotus domain. Based on what he knew, there had to be elites much stronger than the monk, Fa Kong, in the red lotus domain. In Great

Yan, his two disciples peerless. However, in the red lotus domain, things were not simple. If they were exposed, they would be labeled as foreign tribesmen and would undoubtedly be attacked. However, this was not what he was most worried about. He was more worried about his two disciples' pride and obstinacy. In his opinion, instead of knowing when to retreat, they would recklessly charge forward and fight the powerful opponent they encounter.

He had two choices: to go to the red lotus domain to look for them or to wait for them to return.

How should he choose?

...

Liang Zidao looked at the two of them coldly. From the Great Dark Heaven Memorial released by the Jasper Saber, he knew that the newcomer was not a weakling. These two fellow disciples were clearly not ordinary. His expression turned solemn as he said, "In that case, this will be a fight to the death."

The red energy on Liang Zidao's body glowed brighter. Clearly, the medicinal pill he consumed had great effects. Without external help, nobody could have unleashed such explosive strength after having part of their lotus severed.

Liang Zidao walked toward Yu Shangrong.

Meanwhile, Yu Zhenghai appeared above the flying chariot. He looked at the cultivator who manned the helm before he walked over to a chair at the side and calmly took a seat. He said, "Nobody moves. Or else, you'll die."

Yu Zhenghai found this familiar. He had once liked to sit in this position to look at the lands and the mountains.

The disciples of the Flying Star House were shocked. Many of those who were hovering outside charged toward him when they saw him.

Yu Zhenghai had been watching Yu Shangrong fight for a long time and was itching for a fight as well. He did not even look at the Flying Star House cultivators as he unleashed his energy.

Boom!

The Flying Star House disciples were sent flying back, spitting out blood in the process.

Yu Zhenghai's expression was cold as he looked ahead.

Liang Zidao's brows were tightly knitted together. The elite saber user was even more powerful than he had imagined. The saber user was on par with the swordsman in front of him. It seemed like he had run into trouble today.

Meanwhile, Tian Buji gulped before he mumbled, "They're clearly Eight-leaf cultivators, but why is their strength far stronger than Eight-leaf cultivators?" He was confused.

Tian Buji was not the only one who was confused. Everyone was confused as well.

Liang Zidao cried out as the red energy around his body shone brighter than before, "You killed my disciples! The Flying Star House will never forgive you!"

Liang Zidao flew over again, almost parallel to the ground. His fists shone red as flames of fury burned in his eyes.

Yu Shangrong felt the pressure this time so he no longer held back. He let go of his Longevity Sword and joined his palms together.

Primal Restoration.

The plants around Yu Shangrong swayed, and the tiles on the gazebo flew out.

The swords in the hands of the Flying Star House's disciples were pulled away.

Ji Fengxing's saber and sword rose into the air as well.

At this moment, countless energy swords were merging.

Li Zidao attacked with his fists with a flurry of movements. He parried the energy swords with his punches.

The energy swords were relentless. They continued their assaults as they spun and thrust forward.

The sky was covered by Yu Shangrong's energy swords and Liang Zidao's red punches.

Tian Buji was greatly shaken when he saw this and hastily ordered, "Stand back."

Ji Fengxing wondered out loud in awe, "Just how powerful are big brother's sword techniques?" In his eyes, Yu Shangrong became even braver and more powerful as he fought. His understanding of Yu Shangrong was constantly being refreshed.

Chapter 715: If My Master Were Here, Ye Zhen Would Surely Die

Ji Fengxing recalled the first time he met Yu Shangrong. In hindsight, he had been foolishly arrogant. To think he had once tried to challenge an elite like Yu Shangrong. If Yu Shangrong had used any one of the techniques he used today, he would have died. When he thought about this, chills ran up his spine.

After casting Primal Restoration, an energy sword returned to Yu Shangrong's palm. He swung the sword as he stood in the air.

The red and golden opponents streaked across the sky as they clashed.

Wuwu looked up and said, "When I met him, I knew his sword techniques are more powerful than yours, but I didn't expect him to be so powerful. Senior brother, can you promise me you won't get mad if I speak my mind?"

"Uh... Can you not speak your mind, then?" Ji Fengxing had a strong hunch that Wuwu's words were going to be hurtful.

As though she did not hear Ji Fengxing's words, Wuwu said, "I feel... that you're unworthy of being big brother's student."

"..." Ji Fengxing held onto the railing to stabilize himself after receiving the verbal blow from Wuwu. He said, "I... I'm not angry."

“There’s also big brother’s Eldest Senior Brother. He’s powerful as well. I think...”

“Stop thinking! I’ll admit it, alright?” Ji Fengxing could no longer take it and interjected, “I really can’t keep up with learning the sword and the saber at the same time.” He sighed after he finished speaking.

Since Ji Fengxing and Wuwu knew the duo had profound cultivation bases, it was obvious their mastery of the sword and the saber must be extraordinary as well. Many cultivators would probably clamor to learn from them, and yet, out of everyone, he was given this opportunity. Alas, he did not have the capability. What could be more hurtful than these words?

...

After dozens of rounds.

The golden and red energies retreated at the same time.

Yu Shangrong remained unscathed. He hovered gracefully in the air as his Longevity Sword returned to his hand. He looked down at the red runes on the Longevity Sword; everything was normal.

On the other hand, Liang Zidao’s arms were numb. Beads of sweat could be seen on his forehead, and his eyes were bloodshot. Yu Shangrong’s exceptional combat strength and tenacity had exceeded his expectations. He could hardly believe Yu Shangrong was just an Eight-leaf cultivator. In the end, he stared at Yu Shangrong and asked, “The outcome hasn’t been decided even after such a long fight. Do you intend to continue?”

“Of course.” Since the outcome had not been decided, it was only natural for them to continue.

Liang Zidao said, “What do you say if we end it here? I will consider your suggestion of leaving the Thousand Willow Monastery.”

Tian Buji, Ji Fengxing, and Wuwu were rendered speechless by these words.

There was no such thing as reason in the cultivation world. Reasons were born from the fists.

Yu Zhenghai shook his head, feeling bored.

Yu Shangrong smiled faintly and replied, “My apologies. Opportunities usually don’t come knocking twice.” After he finished speaking, he stepped forward. He held the sword in his right hand and pointed the tip down. With every step he took, a faint golden ripple appeared under his feet.

Yu Zhenghai frowned deeply when he saw this. ‘Junior brother is...’ In his opinion, he had the desolate-grade Jasper Saber and his peak Eight-leaf cultivation base. If he fought seriously, he could defeat an Eight-and-a-half-leaf cultivator. However, he did not expect his Second Junior Brother, with a heaven-grade weapon, to be capable of defeating an Eight-and-a-half-leaf cultivator. To be honest, he was having trouble wrapping his head around this.

Liang Zidao moved forward as well. “Do you really think that I can’t kill you?” As soon as he finished speaking, he launched several beams of red energy. Then, he hastily brought out another pill from his brocade pouch and sent it into his mouth. With no pause in his movement, he fished out a handful of talismans before he finally joined his palms together.

When Liang Zidao separated his palms, the talismans were burning in red flames.

Upon seeing this, Tian Buji cried out loudly, "Watch out! It's karmic fire generated from talismans!"

The Flying Star House disciples instinctively turned to look at Tian Buji. As expected, the Thousand Willow Monastery was truly colluding with foreign cultivators!

The dozens of cultivators from the Flying Star House closest to Tian Buji and the others made a move toward them.

"Who allowed you to move?" Yu Zhenghai flicked his thumb. He did not move, but his Jasper Saber rose. It buzzed, attracting the others' attention. Then, he suddenly stomped his feet.

Boom!

The flying chariot creaked noisily before it cracked.

At lightning speed, Yu Zhenghai shot into the midst of the Flying Star House disciples. He caught his Jasper Saber and began to swing it around. With every swing of his blade, a disciple from the Flying Star House would fall from the sky. As he moved, he left afterimages in his wake.

Tian Buji exclaimed in surprise, "A desolate-grade weapon! It's truly terrifying!"

These small fries were easily dealt with by Yu Zhenghai in no time at all.

The Flying Star House disciples did not even have time to react when their stomachs were split open and their necks were sliced by the cold Jasper Saber.

After he was done dealing with the small fries, Yu Zhenghai did not even deign to look at the low-rank cultivators. He returned the Jasper Saber to its sheath and turned around with his hands on his back. He continued watching Yu Shangrong and Liang Zidao.

At this moment, Liang Zidao's hands were once again filled with talismans. The flames met Yu Shangrong's Longevity Sword before he caught it in his hand

Bam!

"Even if this is a heaven-grade weapon, I'll break it!" Liang Zidao twisted his hand in an attempt to break the Longevity Sword.

Yu Shangrong released his grip and struck with his palm.

Whizz!

Yu Shangrong's avatar appeared.

Whizz!

The red avatar appeared as well.

Boom!

A loud noise rang in the air as the red and golden avatars collided.

At this moment, Yu Shangrong's Longevity Sword was still caught between Liang Zidao's hands. Liang Zidao said, "I won't make the same mistake twice."

"But you already did..." Yu Shanrong controlled his avatar and launched an energy fist. His avatar moved and punched out at the stationary red avatar. It made no difference if the avatar had a red lotus.

Boom!

The punch landed on the red lotus avatar's shoulder, causing it to sway.

Liang Zidao felt his mind go blank. When he regained his senses, he hastily flew into his avatar to merge with it. At the same time, he was still holding on to the Longevity Sword.

"Burn, karmic fire!" The flames between Liang Zidao's palms surged and covered his entire body. Even his avatar burned with red flames. It highly resembled the red lotus karmic fire.

Since Yu Shangrong and Yu Zhenghai had never seen the karmic fire before, they found it peculiar.

Yu Zhenghai said worriedly, "Junior brother, I think I should step in."

"No need." Yu Shangrong flew into his avatar as well and controlled it from within.

At this moment, Liang Zidao charged toward him with his flaming red lotus avatar. He had consumed two pills and burned many talismans. He had exhausted all his strength and external tools. All that was left was to burn his sea of Qi. He said hoarsely, "I don't believe I can't kill an Eight-leaf cultivator like you!"

As soon as he finished speaking, the avatar's red flaming palm struck Yu Shangrong's golden avatar.

Yu Shangrong extended his hands. The energy swords in the surroundings flew into the avatar's huge palm. The energy sword was dazzlingly brilliant just like the lotus leaves. After merging together, the avatar instantly launched three energy swords.

Bam! Bam! Bam!

The energy swords were clearly different from the others. They seemed... corporeal. How could an energy sword contain such might?

Liang Zidao was repelled. He exclaimed in shock, "What's this?"

Bam! Bam! Bam!

Yu Shangrong launched three more energy swords that landed on Liang Zidao's avatar.

Liang Zidao was pushed back again. 'How can these golden energy swords push an avatar back?' He took a closer look; the golden avatar was not wielding energy swords, it was wielding the lotus leaves!

The lotus was the strongest defense of an avatar, and the lotus leaves were the sharpest parts. All elites knew how to make use of their lotuses and leaves.

However, the red lotus domain did not know that the lotus leaves... could leave the lotus. They were unaware that Yu Shangrong no longer possessed a golden lotus.

When Liang Zidao turned to look behind him, he saw six shining golden lotus leaves shooting toward him.

The golden avatar threw out another sword; the seventh leaf shot out.

Liang Zidao was pushed back again. He could not understand the missing golden lotus when there were lotus leaves.

Similarly, Yu Shangrong did not understand the red flames.

At this moment, Yu Shangrong attacked with the final leaf like a fired arrow.

Liang Zidao had no other choice. He parried with his palms. "Die!"

Boom!

The seven leaves fell like snow and drew across Liang Zidao's avatar. The final leaf mercilessly stabbed into the red avatar.

Liang Zidao spat out blood immediately. He held the Longevity Sword between his flaming red hands, and at the same time, caught the final leaf. Alas, he still could not stop the final leaf from piercing his avatar at the heart.

With this, the battle ended.

The energy swords and red energy gradually faded away.

At this moment, the red avatar was cracking, and the golden avatar wielded its lotus leaf and further thrust the leaf into the red lotus avatar's heart.

Liang Zidao was grievously injured. His chest felt heavy. He looked up at the final shining lotus leaf incredulously. "How can there be such a powerful Eight-leaf..."

Yu Shangrong remained expressionless as he said flatly, "My apologies, I never said that I'm an Eight-leaf cultivator..."

"..." Realization dawned on Liang Zidao immediately.

The red avatar shattered.

Liang Zidao's palms separated, and the Longevity Sword returned to Yu Shangrong's hand.

At this moment, Primal Qi leaked into the surroundings.

Liang Zidao watched the eighth golden lotus leaf flying away from him. Just right behind the eighth leaf, he finally saw half a leaf. His breathing was labored as he slowly descended. His eyes were brimming with hatred and contempt, "I see... How despicable! Elder Ye will avenge me!"

Yu Shangrong looked at the falling Liang Zidao.

"Ye Zhen?"

"Are you scared now?" The light in Liang Zidao's eyes was slowly dimming.

Yu Shangrong shook his head. "It's too unfortunate you don't have the fortune to meet my master."

"What... what do you mean?"

"If my master were here, Ye Zhen would surely die," Yu Shangrong replied calmly and confidently.

Liang Zidao's blood essence surged, and he spat out another mouthful of blood. His Primal Qi finally dispersed completely as he plummeted to the ground.

Chapter 716: The Second Nine-leaf Cultivator of Great Yan

Liang Zidao fell.

At this moment, Yu Zhenghai's Jasper Saber flew out again. The technique, Sovereign Descent, was like the tempestuous sea, and as majestic as the vast ocean. The might and range of this technique far exceeded the Dark Heaven Starlight.

The energy sabers blotted out the sight of the land as they descended. They shrouded the flying chariot and the disciples from the Flying Star House.

The desolate-grade weapon complemented Yu Zhenghai's peak Eight-leaf cultivation base. The might of the energy sabers was on par with an Eight-and-a-half-leaf cultivator. They easily devoured Liang Zidao.

Meanwhile, the Thousand Willow Monastery's Tian Buji, Wuwu, and Ji Fengxing looked at the energy sabers that rained down from the sky and gulped. They felt their mouths were extremely dry at this moment. Perhaps, their mouths were agape for too long. When they breathed, they felt as though the air grated their windpipes. Their throats were uncomfortably sore.

Yu Zhenghai was pleased with his demonstration. He turned around to look at the others, wanting to see what their expressions were like. Just as he wished, the people from the Thousand Willow Monastery looked at him with their mouths hanging wide open. Finally, he asked Yu Shangrong, "Second Junior Brother, you told me if these corpses aren't cut to shreds, our location would be exposed. Since you've defeated Liang Zidao, I took the liberty of dealing with the others. You won't be angry, right?"

Before Yu Shangrong could reply, a bitter expression appeared on Ji Fengxing's face as he said, "It makes no difference whether they're reduced to shreds or not. With the huge flying chariot here, there's no way the Flying Star House will fail to notice it."

"It doesn't matter," Yu Zhenghai said, "If you're all afraid, you can run away."

"..."

Yu Shangrong did not entertain Yu Zhenghai's bragging. Instead, he looked at his Longevity Sword's blade. In the end, Liang Zidao had caught his Longevity Sword with the talismans' karmic fire. As a result, the red runes on his blade had been burned off. The red runes had many uses. One of its most important functions was absorbing vitality. As a national of the land of the melilots, he mainly relied on this to live until now. Moreover, if it were not for the longevity pill, perhaps, he would have already reached his great limit and died.

With the red runes gone, Yu Shangrong's mood was slightly affected. These red runes were only found after his Seventh Junior Brother scoured the entire nine provinces. Their rarity was on par with a heaven-grade weapon.

When Yu Zhenghai turned back to look at Yu Shangrong, his smile vanished.

Yu Shangrong returned the Longevity Sword to its scabbard; his expression remained neutral.

The duo flew toward the gazebo together.

"There's more to the talismans' karmic fire than meets the eye," Yu Shangrong said.

Yu Zhenghai did not disagree. He nodded and said, "Without the red runes, your longevity..." He knew Yu Shangrong had consumed a longevity pill before. Even so, that would only provide Yu Shangrong with 200 years of life.

Yu Shangrong said nonchalantly, "I'll just have to reach the Nine-leaf stage..." He did not know how many years of life would be given to him when he reached the Nine-leaf. However, his instinct told him the number of years had to be a lot since it was so difficult to reach the Nine-leaf stage.

Yu Zhenghai asked, "I didn't know you're already at the Eight-and-a-half-leaf stage. Did you try to reach the Nine-leaf stage before?"

"Yes." Ever since Yu Shangrong arrived in the red lotus domain, he had spent every day cultivating and teaching Ji Fengxing the basics of swordplay. When the time was ripe, he had attempted the Nine-leaf stage. He was quite satisfied with the results; he became an Eight-and-a-half-leaf cultivator.

"Why didn't you reach the Nine-leaf stage instead?" Yu Zhenghai was puzzled. Based on the normal process of cultivation, a peak Eight-leaf cultivator could attempt the Nine-leaf stage. Usually, from the One-leaf to the Eight-leaf stage, cultivators would succeed in proceeding to the next stage within three tries. Those who were talented usually succeeded with their first try. Although his Second Junior Brother was unbearably arrogant, there was no doubt he had an amazing talent for cultivation. Why did his Second Junior Brother did not succeed during the first attempt?

Yu Shangrong said, "Breaking through to the Nine-leaf stage will create too huge of a commotion. The 150-foot avatar will definitely draw attention. Moreover, after reaching the Nine-leaf stage, I'd be temporarily vulnerable and weakened. I'll have to look for a secluded place to reach the Nine-leaf stage next time."

"..."

Yu Zhenghai nodded.

The two fellow disciples' conversation did not escape Ji Fengxing and Wuwu's ears.

Ji Fengxing felt as though he was listening to a conversation between gods. He was stunned speechless. All cultivators wished to reach the Nine-leaf stage as soon as possible, and yet, this man forcibly suppressed the process of reaching the Nine-leaf stage?

Yu Shangrong asked in return, "Have you ever attempted the Nine-leaf stage, Eldest Senior Brother?"

“I’m still waiting for the right time... I have the desolate-grade Jasper Saber, and it’s enough for me to protect myself. You, on the other hand, Second Junior Brother...”

“The red runes are external, after all. I’ll just have Seventh Junior Brother inscribe a new set when I return to the Evil Sky Pavilion.”

As the duo continued to converse, it seemed likely that it would escalate into a fight.

Naturally, Wuwu, Ji Fengxing, and the others did not dare to interrupt.

The duo just annihilated the entire entourage from the Flying Star House, and yet, they were acting as though nothing out of the ordinary had happened.

At this moment, Tian Buji finally regained his senses. He flew over, bowed, and said, “Dear guests... Shall we talk in the hall?”

Yu Shangrong and Yu Zhenghai looked at each other.

“Might as well.”

The golden avatar had already been exposed. They were not sure what stance the Thousand Willow Monastery was going to take.

...

Ever since Lu Zhou’s demonstration at the Evil Sky Pavilion, the cultivators under the heavens continued searching for opportunities to reach the Nine-leaf stage.

Currently, the Tian Sect’s Nan Gongwei and the Yun Sect’s Feng Yizhi were considered the most likely candidates to reach the Nine-leaf stage first.

Lu Zhou had been thinking. He was now at the Nine-leaf stage, and Jiang Wenxu’s words seemed to be true. Did this mean his presence would attract the beasts?

At this moment...

“Ding! Killed a target. Reward: 2,000 merit points. Domain extra: 1,000 merit points.”

The notification of the reward surprised him slightly.

“2,000 points... That’s at least an Eight-an-a-half-leaf cultivator. Have they reached the Nine-leaf stage?” Lu Zhou wondered out loud, “I certainly hope so.”

If Yu Zhenghai and Yu Shangrong had reached the Nine-leaf stage, it would be much easier for them to protect themselves.

At this moment, a voice rang from the other side of the door.

“Greetings, master,” Si Wuya said.

“Enter.”

Si Wuya entered the room. “Master, the two academies have come up with improved Formations. They’ll be made known in a few days.”

Lu Zhou was slightly moved. He did not expect them to be done so soon.

Si Wuya explained, "In the past, the Emperor withheld the blueprints. Now that the two academies and the Taixu Academy are working together to research it, it's, indeed, progressing much more quickly."

"Good."

"Also, I've had the Sky Shuttle disassembled. The Formation and runes outside can only be activated by a Nine-leaf cultivator. It's extremely difficult to fix it," Si Wuya continued to say.

"The Sky Shuttle can only carry one passenger, and the rider won't be able to see outside. Yet, the monk, Fa Kong, managed to accurately arrive at the Evil Sky Pavilion. Someone must've been cooperating with him. Search the nearby mountains," Lu Zhou said.

"Understood."

"Also, who do you think Great Yan's second Nine-leaf cultivator would be?" Lu Zhou asked.

Si Wuya had thought about this before. He immediately smiled and said, "If there are no accidents, I think that it'll be Eldest Senior Brother or Second Senior Brother... Eldest Senior Brother's life was extended by 600 years with the Red Fish Heart and half of Chi Yao's Heart. If the remaining half is put to good use, it won't be a problem for them to reach the Nine-leaf stage. Second Senior Brother is the first person to sever his golden lotus. He won't be limited by his longevity. However, we still don't know what happened to him after he fell into the abyss."

"What about the others?" Lu Zhou asked again.

Si Wuya gave it some thought before replying, "Apart from the reclusive elites, among the known cultivators, the most probable candidate is Ji Qingqing, one of the eight great generals... Then, there's the Three Sects' Nan Gongwei and Feng Yizhi... Also, Senior Sister Tianxin if she's able to prolong her life."

"Ji Qingqing?" Lu Zhou did not recognize this name.

"Xiang Lie was one of the eight great generals. During the battle at Liang Province, he was killed by your Abandon Wisdom. Then, the Imperial family appointed Ji Qingqing as his replacement to defend Yu Province. This person became one of the eight great generals at a young age. She has amazing talents. If she has recultivated, I reckon that she's already an Eight-leaf cultivator now. Second Senior Brother made a hit list in Yu Province, and for some reason, Ji Qingqing was so frightened that she fled the city in the dark of night. Nobody knows where she is right now."

This meant it would be difficult to locate Ji Qingqing.

Since Nine-leaf cultivators would attract the beasts, how did Jiang Wenxu avoid them?

"Continue your investigation and find the hidden red lotus cultivators. Also, keep an eye on the beasts' movements."

"Understood."

“One more thing. I might go to the red lotus domain to bring your Eldest Senior Brother and Second Senior Brother back.”

Si Wuya was shocked. “If you’re gone, how is Great Yan going to repel the beasts, master?”

The manmians and Qiong Qi were not beasts that Eight-leaf cultivators could deal with.

“That’s why I’m waiting for the appearance of the second Nine-leaf cultivator in Great Yan.”

“I understand.”

After Si Wuya left the eastern pavilion, Lu Zhou continued thinking to himself and felt he would feel more at ease if the second Nine-leaf cultivator in Great Yan was from the Evil Sky Pavilion.

He sighed. The four elders were old to begin with. They were close to their great limits. Among his disciples, Ye Tianxin was the only one who was at the Eight-leaf stage.

‘Old Fourth?’ Lu Zhou thought about Mingshi Yin. ‘Could he be concealing his strength? Although Conch is special, she’s still quite behind. She might not reach the Eight-leaf stage before Little Yuan’er.’

After a while, Lu Zhou shook his head to dismiss his thoughts and decided to do a lucky draw.

“Lucky draw.”

“Ding! Spent 50 merit points. Obtained Binding Cage Card x5.”

‘Binding Cage Cards?’

The item cards were expensive, anyway. If he got item cards, it was a big win for him.

“Lucky draw.”

“Ding! Spent 50 merit points. Obtained Reversal Card x10.”

...

Three days later.

South of Great Yan.

Amid a forest with towering trees.

A middle-aged man had one knee on the ground as he looked at the dozens of Restrictions beyond the woodlands.

“The most likely candidate to be the second Nine-leaf cultivator in Great Yan is Nan Gongwei?”

He had remained hidden for a long time. Yet, he did not feel the surge of Primal Qi that was unique to a cultivator breaking through to the Nine-leaf stage.

...

In the afternoon.

A huge group of flying beasts appeared on the horizon. The beasts' number grew, and they kept attacking the dozens of barriers of the Three Sects' ten holy lands.

Upon seeing this, the middle-aged man widened his eyes as he mumbled to himself, "They're here! Alas, there are no huge beasts. These people are pretty lucky."

Chapter 717: Who Would Be Shu Si's Food?

An excited expression appeared on the middle-aged man's face immediately. However, he muttered to himself in a slightly regretful tone, "Alas, I'm out of talismans. Otherwise... I could've lured the huge beasts here to attack them. I can only think of some way to interrupt the leaf-sprouting process and wait for the Sky Chariot to arrive."

He kept staring at the barriers of the Three Sects' ten holy lands. There were more elites in the Three Sects. He knew that he could drag the battle out.

He would retreat after interrupting the leaf-sprouting and sprint in the other direction as fast as he could.

...

Meanwhile, in the Tian Sect's holy land.

Nan Gongwei sat cross-legged in the middle of the holy land.

The disciples of the Three Sects hovered around him and kept watch.

"Stay alert. There are more and more beasts appearing."

The Eight-leaf Feng Yizhi, Chu Nan, the other elders, and the elites were keeping watch. Among the current sects, the Three Sects were the only ones who possessed this kind of strength and power.

"What beast is that?" Chu Nan was puzzled.

"It's not a manman, and it's not a northern goshawk... I've never seen it before."

Whizz!

Nan Gongwei summoned his Eight-leaf avatar. His golden lotus-less avatar shone with a golden energy ring. As usual, the radiant rings slid down.

...

In the Evil Sky Pavilion's eastern pavilion.

After Lu Zhou did a round of Taiji, Mingshi Yin hurried over. He bowed and said, "Master, the Three Sects have sent a letter. It says that Nan Gongwei of the Tian Sect is attempting the Nine-leaf stage at the moment."

"Nan Gongwei?" Lu Zhou stroked his beard. "Any word on Ji Qingqing?"

"Ji Qingqing has gone missing after the battle in Yu Province started. There's nothing about her. She might be talented, but she might not be as fast as Nan Gongwei..." Mingshi Yin replied.

“Why would you say that?” Lu Zhou’s interest was piqued by Mingshi Yin and Si Wuya’s different opinions.

“That’s because she was absent when you were demonstrating, master!”

“...”

Lu Zhou frowned. With a slightly annoyed tone, he said, “Be serious.”

Mingshi Yin’s smile faltered. He bowed and said, “I’ve made a mistake.”

“Where’s Si Wuya?”

“He has been studying the Sky Shuttle over the past few days... He’s almost obsessed with it,” Mingshi Yin said, “Master, the Tian Sect is trying to make you their supporter. Just ignore them. They have enough elites in their sect.”

Although the Three Sects were powerful, it was only normal for Lu Zhou to feel slightly worried since he had witnessed Fa Kong, with his red lotus karmic fire, attacking him.

After giving it some thought, Lu Zhou said, “Old Fourth.”

“Yes, master?”

“Go and take a look at the Three Sects,” Lu Zhou said.

“Huh? Master... I’m only a Seven-leaf cultivator. You’re sending me to aid someone who’s sprouting the ninth leaf?” Mingshi Yin was puzzled.

Lu Zhou regarded Mingshi Yin with a deep gaze. He remained silent as he continued to look at Mingshi Yin knowingly.

Mingshi Yin wiped off the look of confusion from his face before he bowed and said, “Understood. I’ll head out right away...” He was about to turn and leave when he looked back with a flattering smile and said, “Master, may I ride Ji Liang there?”

Lu Zhou was about to nod and summon Ji Liang when little Qiong Qi, with its small wings, ran over to the eastern pavilion and grabbed Mingshi Yin’s foot.

Woof! Woof! Woof!

“Shoo!” Mingshi Yin raised his leg, intending to shake Qiong Qi off.

However, Qiong Qi held on even tighter.

Lu Zhou glanced at little Qiong Qi. It had only been a few days, but its fur had almost completely covered its body. The feathers on its wings were almost fully grown as well. This beast seemed to be adapting to its environments quicker than the humans. It had intelligence on par with humans, but it was much weaker than other beasts at birth.

“It’s too clingy! Master, should I cut this Qiong Qi up?” Mingshi Yin asked.

Woof! Woof! Woof!

Qiong Qi barked thrice before it pulled back and lunged forward.

Mingshi Yin was swept off balance and fell accurately on Qiong Qi's back.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

Little Qiong Qi flapped its wings and took flight.

Mingshi Yin was shocked and curious.

Lu Zhou looked at little Qiong Qi, seeming to understand its intention. He asked, "You want to go?"

Woof!

"Go, then."

Woof! Woof!

Mingshi Yin had completely no say in this.

Little Qiong Qi carried Mingshi Yin away up in the air.

"Hey, hey, hey!" Mingshi Yin felt his body sway on the bumpy ride. He felt his brain spinning, and he had to circulate his Primal Qi to help little Qiong Qi stabilize itself.

When they were out of Golden Court Mountain's range, little Qiong Qi seemed even more jubilant. This was its first flight. Since it was young, it was fearless. It dove without any hesitation.

"Are you kidding me? Are you riding me, or am I riding you?" Mingshi Yin increased his input of Primal Qi to form an energy barrier.

Woof!

Qiong Qi sped forward and barked as it flew. It seemed to be bragging about its speed.

Mingshi Yin rolled its eyes. "Go away. I'm better off flying on my own." After saying this, he placed one foot down in the air.

Woof! Woof! Woof! Woof! Woof!

Qiong Qi flapped its wings more quickly now. Although it was not as fast as Ji Liang, its speed was acceptable. However, the instability of the ride was not acceptable to Mingshi Yin.

Mingshi Yin smacked his forehead and muttered to himself, "What did I do to deserve this?"

The pair of man and 'dog' seemed to bicker back and forth in their respective languages as they flew toward the Three Sects.

...

Meanwhile, in the center of the Tian Sect's holy land.

Nan Gongwei's avatar rose into the air. He was now at the crucial stage.

"All disciples should be on high alert. Increase the patrols."

Nan Gongwei's eight leaves spun with increasing speed as energy rings kept sliding down his avatar.

Nan Gongwei was delighted when he heard a crisp sound. "Senior Ji's method of sprouting the leaf is useful!"

The way everyone sprouted their leaves was more or less the same, but it was different as well. The elites could always pinpoint the details.

A shining energy shot up from the avatar's feet.

At this moment...

Beyond the dozens of barriers, an Eight-an-a-half-leaf red lotus avatar appeared.

"Incoming!"

The Three Sects' disciples felt their hairs stand on end. They did not expect there would be an actual invasion by a red lotus cultivator just like what happened at the Evil Sky Pavilion.

The red lotus avatar unleashed two bursts of grand technique and appeared above the Tian Sect.

"Oh, no... He's skilled in Formations. He managed to skirt around the Restrictions."

The Eight-and-a-half-leaf red lotus avatar suddenly disappeared. The middle-aged man turned around and prepared himself to break the final barrier.

"Stop him!"

The Nascent Divinity realm elites took flight.

Feng Yizhi and Chu Nan arrived on the scene first.

The red lotus elite launched dozens of palm seals.

Bam! Bam! Bam!

Aside from Feng Yizhi and Chu Nan, the others reeled back.

The middle-aged man had a grim expression on his face as he looked at the beasts in the sky. He had to hurry! He was worried about the Evil Sky Pavilion's Nine-leaf cultivator coming to the rescue.

After the Three Sects' disciples reeled back, the flying beasts suddenly gathered in throngs and flew toward Tian Sect.

The middle-aged man frowned. "What's happening?"

Meanwhile, Nan Gongwei was at the crucial stage of a breakthrough. He was sweating from the effort he expended.

At this moment, a sharp cry resounded in the sky.

At the southernmost part of the Three Sects, an extremely huge flying beast lunged at the middle-aged man.

He glanced at the flying beast and exclaimed in shock, "Shu Si? Who drew this beast here?"

Shu Si resembled an owl, but its size... was thousands of times larger.

The little Shu Sis seemed to be agitated when they heard the cry of the gigantic Shu Si.

The Three Sects' disciples took flight again in an attempt to stop the beasts.

The middle-aged man gave it some thought before he decided to make this a short battle. He quickly launched palm seals into the surroundings.

Bam! Bam! Bam!

He was an Eight-and-a-half-leaf cultivator after all. The Six-leaf and Seven-leaf cultivators were no match for him.

Feng Yizhi and Chu Nan were the only ones who could give him trouble. However, their palm seals were blocked by his armor.

He suddenly charged downward!

Bam!

The barrier shattered.

He launched a palm seal downward.

At this moment, Shu Si bared its talons and lunged at the middle-aged man.

Bam!

Shu Si pushed the red lotus cultivator away from the holy land. Its huge wings stirred up a huge gale in the area. Its talons glinted as it struck the middle-aged man.

The man grunted and summoned his avatar!

Whizz!

Huge amounts of Primal Qi power leaked out of the red lotus.

Boom!

Shu Si flew upward. It was clearly in pain as its feathers dropped to the ground. It was clearly angered by this. Its eyes were as sharp as a falcon, and they glinted fiercely in the light. It charged at the middle-aged man again.

The man looked in Nan Gongwei's direction. He noticed that Nan Gongwei was still trying to sprout his leaf. He wondered inwardly, 'This man has drawn the beast here. If he carries on with the process, how am I supposed to deal with this beast?!'

He immediately left with a burst of movement!

The huge owl-like Shu Si flapped its wings that were as huge as the sky curtains and pursued him.

“Hm?” The middle-aged man flew to the highest point with a frown on his face. ‘It’s not here for that man, but me?’ He looked down. The red veins on his armor were emitting power. ‘Crap, the armor has activated its Nine-leaf power.’

This armor had been modified to give him combat strength comparable to an early-stage Nine-leaf cultivator. It was only now that he realized Shu Si’s target was not Nan Gongwei, but himself!

His hair stood on end immediately. Without any hesitation, he turned around and fled with a flurry of movements. With this, the red veins on his armor shone again!

The Three Sects’ disciples stared at this scene with their mouths agape. His speed was comparable to that of a Nine-leaf cultivator! Initially, they were thinking of ways to deal with the beast. Who knew, in the end, the beasts would end up helping them?

Nan Gongwei looked up at the countless Shu Sis in the sky and said, “Listen up, everyone. The disturbance of Primal Qi is slightly intense. I’m going to stop my leaf-sprouting process! Stand back!”

“Stop? Are you out of your mind?”

“Let him stop.” Feng Yizhi levitated in the air. “Chu Nan, stay here. I’ll go after him.”

“Don’t! There might be an ambush,” Nan Gongwei said as he looked at the avatar.

Feng Yizhi sighed and had no choice but to order, “Everyone, stand guard within the Restrictions!”

What would they do if the leaf was sprouted, and it attracted the beast? Nobody knew why the beast went after the red lotus cultivator, but the appearance of Shu Si had stricken fear in their hearts. Even an Eight-and-a-half-leaf cultivator had to run away from it, let alone them.

...

A moment later.

Mingshi Yin half-carried Qiong Qi as they flew. They rose and fell in the air.

Mingshi Yin was speechless. “I have the worst luck! If master didn’t forbid me, I would’ve slain you a long time ago.”

Screech!

A sharp cry rang from ahead.

Little Qiong Qi spread its wings as its fur stood on end.

Chapter 718: Qiong Qi’s Destiny

Mingshi Yin exclaimed in shock, “Hey! Don’t forget you’re flying!”

Since Qiong Qi stopped flapping its wing, it was only natural for them to drop.

How could Mingshi Yi stay idle as Qiong Qi plummeted to the ground? Speechless, he circulated Primal Qi and carried himself and the beast.

Woof! Woof! Woof.

Qiong Qi seemed persistent on landing; it did not flap its wings. Its barks were clearly different from before as well; it sounded anxious and slightly fearful.

Mingshi Yin, who had sensed Qiong Qi's abnormalities, asked, "What's wrong?"

Little Qiong Qi barked a few more times as it looked up ahead.

"There's danger there?" Mingshi Yin dove swiftly.

Although little Qiong Qi was young, Mingshi Yin chose to trust its instincts. After landing, he looked up at the treetops and saw a red lotus cultivator flying overhead.

Hot on the red lotus cultivator's heels, Shu Si, which spanned dozens of meters, flapped its wings in wild pursuit. Its sharp talons glowed sinisterly.

"What do you know... Little pup, you actually did something useful!" Mingshi Yin patted the back of little Qiong Qi's head and looked up at the sky. "Hide!"

Although little Qiong Qi was young, it was already the size of a tiger. If it did not hide, it would easily be seen.

Woof.

Little Qiong Qi and Mingshi Yin hid behind a huge boulder.

Boom!

The Shu Si was unbelievably swift as its talons struck the middle-aged man's armor.

Bam! Bam! Bam!

"Livestock!" the middle-aged man cursed loudly as he landed. He had underestimated Su Shi's speed. He had to turn around to deal with it.

For a time, wild blasts of energy and explosions rang from the forest in front of Mingshi Yin.

Mingshi Yin lowered himself further and placed a palm on the boulder, blocking the aftershock with some energy. Then, he looked at little Qiong Qi and sternly said, "I'm warning you; don't move, don't bark, and don't look!"

Woof!

Mingshi Yin was speechless. "I must've been a great sinner in my past life to let you torture me. That's a red lotus cultivator, you know?"

Little Qiong Qi stopped barking and lay down.

...

The middle-aged man and Shu Si fought fiercely for four hours.

The trees within 1,000 meters of the fight were completely destroyed.

Mingshi Yin continued to stay hidden behind the boulder. He did not even try to take a peek. He judged the distance between the battle and them by sound. When he noticed that the noise had gone down slightly, he looked over furtively.

The middle-aged man's arms, face, and legs were completely riddled with wounds. His torso was relatively untouched since it was protected by the red glowing armor.

Then, Mingshi Yin shifted his eyes to the huge Shu Si. Many of its feathers had fallen. Its eyes glowed red, and there were bloodstains on its sharp talons.

Mingshi Yin wondered how much of the blood was from the beast and how much of it was from the red lotus cultivator

The middle-aged man panted heavily, and his face glistened with sweat. He retreated carefully with his eyes trained on Shu Si.

"Livestock, I'm not a Nine-leaf cultivator! See for yourself. It's from the armor. Get lost!" The middle-aged man began to explain himself to the beast in an attempt to make it leave.

However, Shu Si stared at him and lowered its head as though it was preparing to pounce.

Mingshi Yin frowned. 'This place isn't far from the Three Sects. Why is this man from the red lotus domain here? Is he trying to sneak up on Nan Gongwei?' He continued his observation. To prevent any accidents, he turned around and glared at Qiong Qi before placing his index on his finger to shush it.

Qiong Qi did not disappoint him. It remained on the ground and did not move.

'That's more like it.' Mingshi Yin looked to the side and pushed his palm forward. He utilized his Bluewood Heart Technique, plants started growing behind the boulder...

The middle-aged man's battle with Shu Si was fierce. They were unaware that they had an audience close by.

Shu Si ignored the middle-aged man's explanations. It screeched and flapped its wings, stirring up a strong gale. Without the trees blocking it, a hail of pebbles and a storm of sand obscured the view.

The red lotus elite engaged in an intense battle with Shu Si again.

They fought for another two hours until the sun was setting, and they slowly moved to a slope 1,000 meters away.

Mingshi Yin sighed in relief. 'It's a good thing we're far from them now.'

Meanwhile, blood stained the middle-aged man's face. He was clearly an arrow at the end of its flight.

However, Shu Si's body was covered in wounds as well.

"If you want to die... I'll fulfill your wish!" The middle-aged man gritted his teeth and raised a hand to circulate his Primal Qi. He tapped several unique points on his armor.

The red runes on the armor burst forth with red radiance. The web-like red lines spread out from the man. Meanwhile, the red ribbons he prepared beforehand unfurled and activated the red lines' power like flames.

Screech!

Shu Si flapped its wings wildly as it tried to block the red lines with its sharp talons.

Bam! Bam! Bam!

The trees were already fell by the blasts of energies, and the explosion of the red lines completely shattered the trees!

Swoosh!

Several red lines left gruesome wounds on Shu Si's body. Its right wing was severed by the red lines with a squelching sound. It screeched at an even higher pitch!

The birds within several miles scattered.

Little Qiong Qi's fur stood on end again.

Due to the distance, Mingshi Yin could not see what was happening. He said, "You're quite the coward."

Woof!

Qiong Qi's expression seemed to say: Aren't you one as well?

At this moment, the sounds of the battle died down. Their surroundings became quiet again.

"Little pup, do you think I should take a look, or should I run away?" Mingshi Yin asked.

Woof! Woof! Woof.

"I think running away is more important. What do you think?"

Woof! Woof! Woof!

"Alright... We've agreed on a decision. Let's run then." Mingshi Yin pushed away from the ground and shot into the air. He waited for Qiong Qi to come to him. He turned to look and realized Qiong Qi did not follow after him. Instead, it was running toward the location of the battle between Shu Si and the man.

Mingshi Yin said, "You're in the rebellious phase now, aren't you?" He shook his head; he had no choice but to go after it. He kept a low altitude as he flew.

It seemed like Qiong Qi's sharp senses and stubborn genes to battle had been triggered at this moment. It came to a halt when it was near its destination.

Mingshi Yin landed as well.

Amidst the rubble and debris, Mingshi Yin saw Shu Si had lost a wing. Meanwhile, the red lotus elite leaned against a bloodied boulder and did not move.

"Neither side won?" Mingshi Yin felt slightly incredulous.

“Who...” The red lotus cultivator looked up. His wretched expression disappeared immediately and was replaced by a fierce one. He looked at Mingshi Yin who was slowly walking toward him.

Mingshi Yin raised his hands. “This is a misunderstanding. I’m just passing by... Comrade, I think you’re in quite a bad state!”

The red lotus cultivator glanced at Shu Si opposite him. Something stirred in him as he said, “This beast is Shu Si... It’s... comparable to an early Nine-leaf cultivator. It’s hurt... Kill... kill it, and... Shu Si’s heart... is yours...”

“Shu Shi’s Heart?” Mingshi Yin was puzzled.

The middle-aged man said in between coughing fits, “Most beasts... survive on the vitality energy in the world. That’s... t-that’s how they grow to become so fierce. When... when humans reach the Nine-leaf stage... the... vitality will surge strongly. The huge... beasts... like... food like this... the most... Its heart can supply you with longevity... If you obtain it, you’ll be able to prolong your life...” At the end of his words, his breathing seemed to weaken.

Prolong lives?

Mingshi Yin was shocked when he heard this. “That means, you’re a Nine-leaf cultivator, senior?”

The man looked at Mingshi Yin meaningfully and did not deny it. Instead, he urged Mingshi Yin, “Quick, kill Shu Si! Its heart will be yours for the taking!”

At this moment, although Shu Si was heavily injured, it was drawing closer and closer.

Bam!

Shu Si shattered a rock.

“Oh, no! I better run!” Mingshi Yin turned around and ran.

This time, Qiong Qi understood Mingshi Yin’s intention and ran with him.

“Oh, no, you don’t...”

Bam!

The middle-aged man slammed his palm on the ground. He used all his power to launch himself toward Mingshi Yin. His only hope of surviving was to make Shu Si change its target.

As the middle-aged man shot toward Mingshi Yin at lightning speed...

Whizz!

An avatar appeared.

The Seven-leaf golden lotus instantly blocked the middle-aged man.

Bam!

The man’s face bloodied as he turned back to look at Shu Si. He removed the armor from himself and said, “Only seven leaves?”

“What... Are you offended by a Seven-leaf cultivator?”

The golden lotus swirled as the power surged.

The instant the man was sent flying, he summoned his avatar as well!

Eight-and-a-half-leaf red lotus avatar.

Mingshi Yin suddenly came to a halt. He turned around and faced the man. A faint smile flashed past his lips. He wielded the Separation Hook in a reverse grip, and his avatar suddenly grew taller.

100-foot avatar!

Seven leaves became eight leaves. The seven, slightly withered golden leaves, instantly became luscious and succulent. The eight leaves shone brightly and spun around the golden lotus.

Mingshi Yin no longer retreated. Like a fired arrow, he charged forward with his avatar at a lightning speed.

Boom!

Mingshi Yin landed. His back facing the man.

The Eight-and-a-half-leaf red lotus avatar had been greatly weakened, to begin with. The Separation Hook easily sliced through it, shattering it.

Mingshi Yin retracted his avatar. He wiped his Separation Hook as though nothing had happened.

The man’s eyes widened. It looked as though his eyeballs were going to pop out of their sockets. He turned around slowly and pointed at Mingshi Yin’s back. “You...”

Mingshi Yin narrowed his eyes slightly as he said, “That scared the hell out of me. To think that you’re a crippled Eight-and-a-half-leaf cultivator...”

Thud!

The man fell down.

Mingshi Yin did not have the time to revel in his victory when he saw Shu Si moving toward him.

Chapter 719: Shu Si’s Heart and Mingshi Yin’s Choice

At this time, Lu Zhou was meditating on the Heavenly Writing scrolls in the eastern pavilion. When he heard the notification and received 2,000 merit points with an extra 1,000 domain merit points, he frowned slightly. This number was the equivalent to an Eight-and-a-half-leaf cultivation base.

‘Did Yu Shangrong and Yu Zhenghai get into trouble again?’

...

Mingshi Yin stepped back.

Little Qiong Qi turned to face Shu Si and took a few steps backs as well.

Both man and ‘dog’ retreated.

The sun was setting, pulling the shadows of the man and the 'dog' longer.

"Hey, pup! Bite it..."

Woof! Woof! Woof!

Qiong Qi barked. The little pup was now a big pup, but it seemed extremely meek in front of the gigantic Shu Si.

Both of them kept retreating.

Shu Si advanced toward the red lotus cultivator and came to a halt. It raised its sharp talons and plunged them into the corpse. It tore the corpse apart and devoured it.

Mingshi Yin retched. "I can't f*cking stomach this! I'm out!" He quickly launched himself into the air. 'If this isn't the moment to run, then I don't know when would be a good time.'

This was a beast that an Eight-and-a-half-leaf cultivator was helpless against after giving it his all. Running was undoubtedly the right choice.

After Mingshi Yin flew up, he turned back to look.

Qiong Qi bared its fangs as it glared at Shu Si. It kept barking.

"Dog, let's go!" Mingshi Yin urged.

Qiong Qi's fur stood on end. Unlike before, the fur was like energy needles and looked exceptionally sharp. This was a stark contrast with its image of a big pup.

Shu Si ignored Qiong Qi. Instead, it continued to feast on the red lotus cultivator's corpse. With its size, eating a human was something that could be done with a couple of mouthfuls. It finished its meal in no time at all. However, it was clear that it was satiated. Moreover, its injuries had put it in a bad mood as well. At this moment, its sharp eyes landed on Qiong Qi...

"No way."

Screech!

Shu Si's sharp cry was much louder than Qiong Qi's barks. It immediately drowned out the barks and spread into the surroundings. It stirred up clouds of dust and caused the ground to quake.

Mingshi Yin's eardrums hurt from the sharp sound so he instinctively plugged his ears. He kept his eyes trained on Shu Si. It was clearly seriously injured, but it was still capable of letting out such a powerful cry.

Were beasts really the natural enemies of humans?

Mingshi Yin recalled the middle-aged man's words before he died. Apparently, after reaching the Nine-leaf stage, humans would become incredibly appetizing food to the beasts. What about Qiong Qi?

While Mingshi Yin was lost in his thoughts, Shu Si lunged at Qiong Qi.

When humans walked on a grassy plain, it was difficult to notice the ants. However, if the ants crawled out and tried to bite the humans, the humans might just stomp on the ants to kill them.

That was the law of the jungle that determined the food chain.

In Shu Si's eyes, Qiong Qi was the ant it could kill with just a stomp of its feet.

"Little ancestor, you're really good at seeking trouble!" Despite his complaints, he was going to dive toward Qiong Qi.

However, just as Mingshi Yin was about to dive, little Qiong Qi charged forward fearlessly. It bared its little fangs and pounced on Shu Si's wing at lightning speed before sinking its fangs into Su Si's wing.

Shu Si did not expect this little creature to be so fast. It screeched in pain as it flailed its wing wildly, flinging Qiong Qi away in the process.

"Oh, my... I've truly underestimated you." Mingshi Yin was shocked.

After little Qiong Qi landed, it rolled twice before getting back up and kept its head low.

Woof! Woof! Woof.

Mingshi Yin shook his head and said, "You have to be tamed since you're so disobedient."

He no longer hesitated and dove from the air. "Little pup, step aside! You're not a match for it."

Whizz!

There was a buzz as energy resonated, and his avatar appeared.

Plants emerged from the ground, and Primal Qi energy spread out.

Mingshi Yin shot past Shu Si at blinding speed as the Separation Hook in his hand flashed coldly.

Bam! Bam! Bam!

One round ended.

Mingshi Yin was back in the sky, looking down at Shu Si.

The wounded Shu Si, that had lost a wing, looked at Mingshi Yin in the air helplessly. It could only roll on the ground as blood oozed out from its body.

"What a stubborn one." Mingshi Yin stared at Shu Si. Since he intended to kill it, he decided to make it quick. He would not give it a chance to recover.

Mingshi Yin dove again. The energy blades in the air wrapped around the Separation Hook before it rained down violently on Shu Si.

This went on for half an hour.

Shu Si seemed to have been sliced beyond recognition by the Separation Hook. It lost too much blood and eventually collapsed. Soon after, it lay motionlessly on the ground; its breath weakening.

Mingshi Yin descended and took a few deep breaths. With his Eight-leaf cultivation base and a one-sided assault, he could only defeat it after half an hour. It was clear just how high the price the red lotus cultivator had paid.

“That was close.” Mingshi Yin looked at the almost dead Shu Si and sighed as he said, “Qiong Qi... Bite it. I’ll keep an eye out for you.”

Grr! Grr! Grr!

Qiong Qi growled at Shu Si before it charged forward.

Mingshi Yin was speechless. ‘You f*cking dog. You’ll only listen to me when it’s unimportant. You’re hopeless.’

All Qiong Qi was born with a thirst for battle. It was one of the beasts at the top of the hierarchy. It seemed to have a knack for finding other beasts’ weaknesses.

At this moment, Qiong Qi pounced and bit Shu Si’s heart. At this moment, it was no longer a cute little pup who was trying to be fierce; it was now a wild wolf with explosive power.

Soon after, Qiong Qi lifted its head. It carried a piece of glowing stone that resembled a red gem in its mouth. It did not swallow it.

After the red crystal was removed, Shu Si stopped breathing.

Qiong Qi held the red crystal in its mouth and ran up to Mingshi Yin. It looked up and wagged its tail...

“What’s this...” Mingshi Yin took the red crystal. “Is this Shu Si’s Heart?” He did not expect the heart of the huge beast to be only the size of a fist. It looked like a large ruby.

Mingshi Yin did not understand much about beasts. He did not know how or why the heart was this way. However, when he remembered that oysters could form pearls, he no longer dwelled on the matter.

...

“Ding! Killed Shu Si. Reward: 3,000 merit points.”

Lu Zhou opened his eyes again.

‘A beast worth 3,000 merit points is equivalent to the manmans. It should be difficult for an Eight-leaf cultivator to defeat it. Did Yu Shangrong and Yu Zhenghai have a breakthrough?’

The series of handsome rewards made him suspicious.

Lu Zhou left the eastern pavilion and went to the southern pavilion. He saw Si Wuya deep in his research so he cleared his throat.

Si Wuya started. He had thought it was someone else and was about to reprimand whoever dared to interrupt him. When he saw it was his master, he immediately bowed. “Master, is there something you need?”

“How’s the progress with the Sky Shuttle?” Lu Zhou asked.

“For now, we can only think of some ways to fix the Sky Shuttle. It’s not too practical for us to build one ourselves. Moreover, my current cultivation base...” Si Wuya seemed embarrassed when he spoke about his cultivation base. Indeed, being a Seven-leaf cultivator in the Evil Sky Pavilion was rather embarrassing. Moreover, he had not cultivated.

“No matter.” Lu Zhou knew this was not something that could give him results just because he pushed for it.

“Master, I have two things to report.”

“What is it?”

“The members of the Penglai Sect have returned to Penglai Island. Jiang Aijian was in Liang Province, and he passed by the Evil Sky Pavilion yesterday. He said that he wants to return the Demon Sword to its owner.” Si Wuya fetched the Demon Sword, which was the height of a man, from the corner, before he placed it down. “This Demon Sword is restless. Jiang Aijian couldn’t control it and had no choice but to part with it.”

Lu Zhou looked at the Demon Sword and said, “This was from the Mausoleum of Swords. It’s the Demon Sword that the genius swordsman Gong Yuandu was guarding. Jiang Aijian loves swords as much as his own life. How could he bring himself to part with it?”

Getting Jiang Aijian to give up a sword of his own volition was much more difficult than getting a tree to hatch eggs. Was there something wrong with this sword?

“Perhaps, there’s something amiss with the Demon Sword,” Si Wuya said.

“What’s the second thing?” Lu Zhou asked.

“Zhu Tianyuan has returned to the Ancient Saint Cult. He sent a letter yesterday and said that he’ll be visiting in two days,” Si Wuya said.

Lu Zhou stroked his beard and nodded. “There’s no longer any internal strife or danger in the Ancient Saint Cult. He can’t bear to be away from his son. Let him be.”

Si Wuya smiled but did not say anything.

Lu Zhou glanced at the Demon Sword and said, “Send it to my room.”

“Yes, master.”

Chapter 720: Black Runes and Competing with a Nine-leaf Cultivator

Back at the eastern pavilion.

Si Wuya had already ordered someone to send the Demon Sword over.

As Lu Zhou looked at the Demon Sword, he recalled the scene of Gong Yuandu’s death. In pursuit of the Nine-leaf stage, Gong Yuandu failed to overcome the great limit of his life. In the end, Gong Yuandu was forced into a corner and was reduced to dust.

Although Jiang Aijian did not state his reason for giving up the sword, for someone like who loved swords as much his life to give up this sword, the sword had to either be trash or would bring him great trouble.

‘What’s wrong with this sword?’ Lu Zhou raised his hand before he sent Primal Qi that had been condensed into energy into the Demon Sword.

The Demon Sword thrummed and vibrated. The blade was thick. Unlike conventional swords, there was no sharp edge. It was more like a huge ruler. There were uneven veins on it, making its surface rough like tree bark.

At this moment, Lu Zhou saw a mark on the sword; it was clearly visible under the energy.

“Jiang Aijian has struck this sword before?”

A person who loved swords tried to strike a sword?

Swoosh!

The Demon sword suddenly flew out. It was out of control.

Since Lu Zhou was already a Nine-leaf cultivator, there was no need for him to fear the Demon Sword. When he activated his protective energy, the Demon Sword shot toward him aggressively.

Bam! Bam! Bam!

The Demon Sword struck his protective energy. Sparks flew and a ripple spread out. However, it could not do anything to Lu Zhou.

Lu Zhou looked at the Demon Sword, baffled. Weapons could not possibly have a will of their own. ‘What’s happening? Is someone controlling the sword? Is the reason Jiang Aijian gave the sword up?’

Lu Zhou retracted his protective energy and drew close to the Demon Sword before he grabbed it.

“Ding! Obtained weapon, Dark Night. Rune energy is insufficient and can’t be fixed.”

At this moment, Lu Zhou remembered a scene in the Mausoleum of Swords. He was puzzled. “Black rune?”

Lu Zhou flipped his hand; Unnamed materialized in his hand.

When Unnamed appeared, the Demon Sword became restless. It seemed to be preparing to attack.

‘Since it can’t be fixed, I’ll just destroy it.’

As he circulated his Primal Qi, he brought Unnamed down on the Demon Sword before it could take flight again.

Bam!

Unnamed drew across the Demon Sword.

The Demon Sword quietened down.

Lu Zhou stroked his beard as he stared at the Demon Sword. He was puzzled. 'Is that all?'

At this moment, the Demon Sword cracked at the spot where Unnamed had struck it. Then, black runes emerged from the inside of the Demon Sword. They resembled exquisite and small words.

An idea appeared in Lu Zhou's mind. He tossed Unnamed out.

Unnamed hovered among the black runes.

Subsequently, the black runes floated toward Unnamed. Soon after, the black runes in the Demon Sword were completely absorbed by Unnamed until there were no more runes left.

Lu Zhou raised his hand; Unnamed flew back to him.

"Disappear." The black runes on the sword faded away. Now, it looked no different from an ordinary sword.

He circulated some Primal Qi.

The sword seemed to have been dyed black by ink. Dense black smoke rose up.

"What's the grade of this sword?" Lu Zhou was curious. It had never been shown on the system dashboard. It merely told him that Unnamed would be upgraded accordingly along with his cultivation base. Now that he was already at the Nine-leaf stage, he wondered if the sword was beyond the desolate-grade.

Lu Zhou did not dwell on Unnamed's grade for long. He put it away and looked at the Demon Sword. It was now completely useless.

Lu Zhou went behind the screen and looked at the old parchment drawing. The outline of the red lotus domain was now clearer than before, but it was still rather blurry.

After Great Yan's nine provinces were taken over by the Nether Sect, his extraordinary power's upper limit had risen again.

Up until now, there were no clues about the Open Scroll yet. Was the appearance of the red lotus domain on the map a hint for him to go over there?

The memory crystal, Conch's secret, and his first and second disciples seemed like hints and reasons for him to go to the red lotus domain.

Lu Zhou paced around with his hands on his back, mulling over this matter.

There were two important matters currently: the invasion of the beasts and the invasion of the red lotus domain. The huge beasts could be kept at bay through Formations and Nine-leaf elites. However, if the people from the red lotus domain were to invade, it would be a huge problem, especially if there was a Nine-leaf red lotus cultivator who had mastered the karmic fire.

...

Meanwhile.

After killing Shu Si, Mingshi Yin went to the Three Sects with little Qiong Qi in tow. He had only understood afterward that the red lotus cultivator tried to sabotage Nan Gongwei. Unfortunately, Nan Gongwei had failed to reach the Nine-leaf stage this time and had to wait for another time.

Before Mingshi Yin left, Nan Gongwei, Feng Yizhi, and the others had invited him to stay a little longer. However, he declined and left on Qiong Qi's back.

During the journey back.

"Little pup, you're flying better now. Not bad," Mingshi Yin praised.

Woof! Woof! Woof.

Little Qiong Qi seemed to enjoy being helpful. It was clearly delighted.

Indeed, Qiong Qi's ability to learn and adapt was rather high. During the journey back, Mingshi Yin did not have to release Primal Qi to stabilize it.

Mingshi Yin stood in the wind and fished out Shu Si's Heart. He could feel the powerful vitality leaking out of it.

"Little pup, can this really extend my life?" Mingshi Yin was skeptical.

Woof!

"Eldest Senior Brother extended his life by eating Chi Yao's Heart so I think Shu Si's Heart should work, right? The problem is my limit is only 1,000..."

"Sever my lotus?" Mingshi Yin shuddered when he thought about this. He did not possess his Second and Third Senior Brother's courage.

"I think that being an Eight-leaf cultivator is enough... Should I give this to another person? Or perhaps, I can mimic master and use to on my golden lotus when I attempt the Nine-leaf stage?"

He kept thinking about the matter but could not make up his mind.

He muttered to himself, "That's not right... There will be many Nine-leaf cultivators in Great Yan sooner or later. When that time comes, isn't it going to be more dangerous for me?"

Woof! Woof! Woof!

Little Qiong Qi suddenly dove before it rose again. Its speed seemed to be picking up as well.

The mountains and the lands sped past them in a blur.

He saw the beasts hovering above the forest before him. There were loud explosions ringing from the forest. It seemed like huge beasts were fighting fiercely in the forest. Although these beasts were not as huge as Shu Si, how were ordinary humans supposed to fight them off without a high enough cultivation base?

Qiong Qi charged toward the sun fearlessly, flying over mountains, rivers, and forests.

Mingshi Yin sighed. The tides of time could not be stopped. Was he destined to go with the flow?

...

In the Evil Sky Pavilion.

As soon as Mingshi Yin returned, he made his way to the eastern pavilion immediately. He bowed outside the door. "Greetings, master."

"Enter."

Mingshi Yin opened the door and entered. He stood in front of his master and bowed again before he said, "Master, Nan Gongwei failed to reach the Nine-leaf stage."

Lu Zhou opened his eyes when he heard this. With a slightly regretful tone, he said, "He failed?"

The second Nine-leaf cultivator did appear, after all. This meant his journey to the red lotus domain would have to wait.

"A red lotus elite interrupted him. Also, there's this beast, Shu Si..." Mingshi Yin said.

"Shu Si?" Lu Zhou rose to his feet with hands on his back and stared at Mingshi Yin. He recalled the notifications of merit points before this. He looked at Mingshi Yin intently as he asked, "Did you kill Shu Si?" If someone else had killed Shu Si, he would not have obtained the merit points.

Mingshi Yin scratched his head and said, "It was just a stroke of luck. How could I have killed Shu Si with my strength? After all, even the Eight-and-a-half-leaf red lotus cultivator could not kill it." As he spoke, he brought out Shu Si's Heart.

Lu Zhou's gaze fell on the glinting crystal that was leaking vitality energy. He took the crystal and appraised it.

"Ding! Obtained the heart of Shu Si. Provides 800 years of life."

"Shu Si's Heart provides 800 years of life," Lu Zhou said before tossing the crystal back to Mingshi Yin.

Mingshi Yin caught it and said in slight confusion, "Master, this is for you."

"I'm already at the Nine-leaf stage. I don't need this," Lu Zhou said.

"Oh." Mingshi Yin bowed before he said, "In that case, I won't disturb your cultivation, master. I'll take my leave."

"Stop." Lu Zhou's voice turned stern.

Mingshi Yin turned around and bowed again before he asked, "Your orders, Master?"

"Your cultivation base is already at the Eight-leaf stage, right?"

The room was as silent as a graveyard at this moment, and the atmosphere was heavy as well.

Mingshi Yin answered honestly, "Yes, master."

"Show me your avatar."

“Master... I’m shy... Alright, here I go.” Mingshi Yin extended his right hand and pushed his palm forward. A miniature Eight-leaf avatar appeared before him. The eight leaves were dazzling as they shone around the full golden lotus.

Eight leaves.

Lu Zhou was slightly surprised at Mingshi Yin’s speed.

After a moment’s silence, Lu Zhou asked, “Have you attempted the Nine-leaf stage?”

Mingshi Yin hastily shook his head and said, “No, never...”

“Everyone in Great Yan’s cultivation world is trying to reach the Nine-leaf stage. I’ve been waiting for the second Nine-leaf cultivator to appear. You’re already a peak Eight-leaf cultivator, and you have Shu Si’s Heart. Haven’t you thought about breaking through to the Nine-leaf stage?” Lu Zhou looked at Mingshi Yin.

“Uh...” Before this day, Mingshi Yin honestly never thought of attempting to reach the Nine-leaf stage.