

## Disciples 721

### Chapter 721: The Ninth Temple's Treasure

Only during his journey back earlier did Mingshi Yin carefully consider it. After all, the lotus-severing era had dawned quite a while ago; the tides were changing. He was truly in a dilemma. In the end, he said, "Master... Sixth Junior Sister can use this. She has been at the Eight-leaf stage longer than I have. Her foundation must be more stable."

"Ye Tianxin has never recovered from her past injuries. Her cultivation base has never reached the peak as well. She needs more time," Lu Zhou said with his hands on his back, "The four elders of the Evil Sky Pavilion are old. After recultivating to the Eight-leaf stage, they won't be able to compare to the younger generation."

Lu Zhou continued to say, "Your Eldest and Second Senior Brother are possibly in trouble in the red lotus domain. From what we know now, the red lotus domain is much more powerful than the golden lotus domain. They haven't returned even after all this time. I'm certain that they've run into some problems. I'm going to bring both of them back. However, before that, I can't leave until there's a second Nine-leaf cultivator in Great Yan. Do you understand?"

Mingshi Yin understood his master's concern, and he was impressed by it.

"Among your fellow disciples, you're the one I worry about the least..."

Mingshi Yin widened his eyes when he heard these words. He looked up and met his master's gaze. Perhaps, he was imagining things or thinking too much, but his master seemed to have aged further. Time waited for no man. Even his ever-powerful master would grow old one day. The younger generation would have to take center stage sooner or later. In the end, he bowed and said, "With your faith in me, I'll do my best, master!"

"Good. Go back and prepare for it. When the time is right, I'll keep watch for you," Lu Zhou said.

Mingshi Yin was moved. "Understood." Then, he retreated from the room respectfully.

Many people in the world wished to be protected by the Evil Sky Pavilion, but it was similar to asking for the moon. This opportunity he was given could only be hoped for, but not obtained.

...

The Sky Martial Court in the red lotus domain.

Mo Buyan entered the hall. He bowed at Elder Qiu and said, "Elder Qiu, the final person in the golden lotus domain, Zhang Wu... His life stone has shattered."

Elder Qiu was much calmer than before when he received this news. Perhaps, there was the precedent of Fa Kong's death so he was not surprised that someone with Zhang Wu's cultivation base would die as well. He opened his eyes and said, "He's alone in the golden lotus domain. It's impossible for him to conceal his avatar for so long unless he lived in the wilderness. I expected as much..."

Mo Buyan nodded. Then, he said with a sigh, "Looks like the golden lotus domain is much more powerful than we thought. Also, the research on the Sky Chariot is almost done. What do you think that we should do now?"

"Leave it for now... We'll come up with a new plan to understand the golden lotus's true strength. One Sky Chariot won't be enough. If a single Nine-leaf cultivator is all they have... We'll need ten Sky Chariots. I think the elites of Great Tang won't mind having a slice of the cake."

Mo Buyan was shocked. This plan was slightly bold. When they remained motionless, they did nothing, but when they made a move, they would launch a large-scale invasion on the golden lotus domain. After a moment, he said, "Also, we've received word from the Flying Star House. Their elder, Liang Zidao, and his subordinates, Yun Huan and Yun Lun, brought 80 disciples to the Thousand Willow Monastery. All of them are dead."

Elder Qiu widened his eyes, and his brows were slightly furrowed. Before this, it was only a trivial matter, and they did not have to worry about the Flying Star House. However, it seemed like matters were not as simple as they imagined.

The Flying Star House and the Sky Martial Court were the closest allies. Who would act against the Flying Star House?

"Has the Thousand Willow Monastery grown so bold now?"

"It's complicated... Moreover, I don't think the Ninth Temple has a hand in this," Mo Buyan said.

"Why do you say that?"

"The Ninth Temple's Eight-leaf cultivator, Kong Lu, was attacked by a saber user and was heavily injured. This saber user... is in Thousand Willow Monastery. The Ninth Temple has sent experts to the Thousand Willow Monastery," Mo Buyan said.

"Interesting, interesting..." Elder Qiu sighed with relief. "As long as it isn't the Ninth Temple."

...

Meanwhile, in the Thousand Willow Monastery.

In front of Fair Hall.

The monastery master, Xia Changqiu, had no other choice but to maintain a cordial relationship with Yu Zhenghai and Yu Shangrong. Based on what Elder Tian told him, the duo had unfathomable cultivation bases. He sighed. He was only worried about the fact that the duo was from the golden lotus domain.

Xia Changqiu looked down at the gazebo from the sky.

Ji Fengxing was practicing with a saber and a sword outside the gazebo.

Xia Changqiu shook his head and sighed. "I wonder if this is the right or wrong choice. I'm ashamed to face my predecessors due to my own powerlessness."

Tian Buji flew to his side and looked down as he said, "Monastery master, I think that... this might be an opportunity."

"I hope so." Xia Changqiu sighed. "Since I've made the choice, I can't regret it. There's no other way but forward."

Tian Buji clenched his hands. "That's right... We can only move forward!"

...

In the gazebo.

Yu Zhenghai stood with his hands on his back as he observed Ji Fengxing's saber practice. "You've improved quite a lot. You seem much more familiar with it now."

Yu Shangrong nodded and said, "Your swordplay is rather good as well. You'll surely achieve something if you keep at it for a decade."

'A decade?' Ji Fengxing wanted to cry.

Yu Zhenghai no longer looked at Ji Fengxing. He said, "Second Junior Brother, we've killed the members of the Flying Star House without giving it much thought. How are we going to deal with them if they send a Nine-leaf cultivator our way?"

"What do you think we should do, Eldest Senior Brother?"

"We're both stuck at the Eight-leaf stage for many years... especially you. You've recultivated to the Eight-and-a-half-leaf stage. There are many dangers in the red lotus domain. The Black Water Mystic Cave itself has a high mortality rate. If we want to return safely, we must reach the Nine-leaf stage," Yu Zhenghai said.

"Do you have a way to reach the Nine-leaf stage, Eldest Senior Brother?" Yu Shangrong asked.

Yu Zhenghai patted his pocket and said, "Master has given me Chi Yao's Heart. It grants a person 1,200 years of life. With it, I can reach the Nine-leaf stage."

Yu Shangrong glanced at him wordlessly.

Yu Zhenghai said, "Master has also given me the desolate-grade Jasper Saber. If I become a Nine-leaf cultivator, I can surely bring you safely back to Great Yan." It was clear he was trying to show off. However, when he saw Yu Shangrong remaining silent, he thought, perhaps, he had gone overboard. After all, his Second Junior Brother was short-lived to begin with and had severed his lotus. Surely, his Second Junior Brother had suffered greater hardship than him. Moreover, now that his junior brother heard about how their master favored him, his junior brother must not feel good. In the end, he said, "If you need it, I can give you Chi Yao's Heart."

"There's no need for that," Yu Shangrong calmly replied, "How are you going to reach the Nine-leaf stage without that thing? I can reach that stage without relying on an external object." In other words, he was implying that their master had given his senior brother Chi Yao's Heart because their master thought his senior brother was too weak.

Yu Zhenghai. "..."

While they were engrossed in their conversation, Wuwu leaped off the gazebo and said, “Big brother, look there...”

A person was riding a white crane on the horizon, flying in their direction.

The two disciples from the Evil Sky Pavilion exchanged a look.

Ji Fengxing noticed it as well. He exclaimed in shock, “Big brother, quickly run! It’s the Ninth Temple’s Zhu Xuan!”

Yu Zhenghai stepped out of the gazebo into the air and asked, “Who is Ninth Temple’s Zhu Xuan?”

Ji Fengxing appeared anxious. He quickly approached the duo and tugged on their sleeves. “There’s no time to explain... Run!”

However, the white crane moved like a bolt of lightning. In just a moment, it had arrived in the Thousand Willow Monastery.

An old man who seemed to be in his seventies sat on the white crane. His eyes were lively. He was holding a black brocade box. He asked loudly, “Where’s Xia Changqiu?”

Above Thousand Willow Monastery.

Xia Changqiu had seen the white crane earlier. With Tian Buji, he led 1,000 disciples over.

“Brother Zhu, I didn’t know that you’re coming. What brings you here?” Xia Changqiu did not expect that a Ninth Temple elite would arrive before the members of the Flying Star House.

Zhu Xuan said, “Kong Lu has been unexpectedly attacked. I heard there’s a saber user here in the Thousand Willow Monastery... He’s the one who injured Kong Lu.”

Upon hearing this, Xia Changqiu frowned slightly.

Tian Buji said in a hushed tone, “We have a mole.”

Xia Changqiu’s eyelid twitched. The Thousand Willow Monastery was already past its prime. Was there a need to use such a despicable method?

Yu Zhenghai flew up into the sky and asked, “Are you looking for me?”

“Are you that saber user?” Zhu Xuan’s eyes quickly found Yu Zhenghai. At the same time, he saw the Jasper Saber at Yu Zhenghai’s waist.

Ji Fengxing said nothing else. He flew up and rammed into Yu Zhenghai’s waist as he flew eastward. “Run!”

“Too late.” Zhu Xuan pushed his palm out. The brocade box in his hand flew out as well.

The brocade box shone with a dazzling red light. It was as dazzling as the blue lotus.

“The Ninth Temple’s peak desolate-grade treasure, the Square Box.” Xia Changqiu was shocked.

## **Chapter 722: The Square Box**

The Square Box obtained its name from its shape. It was impregnable like a fortress, and when it was activated, it would transform into a cage so huge that it seemed capable of caging the entire world. Its range was so wide that it would be difficult for one to escape. Among binding weapons, it was rather formidable.

Even Zhu Xuan did not have complete mastery over the Square Box. The box was the Ninth Temple's prized possession and was also the temple's only desolate-grade weapon.

When Zhu Xuan threw the Square Box out, it shot toward and bore down on Yu Zhenghai like a huge mountain.

Yu Zhenghai easily pushed Ji Fengxing aside. After all, Ji Fengxing was only in the Brahman Eight Meridians realm, and it would not be good if he was caught in the middle of a battle between those in the Nascent Divinity realm.

As Ji Fengxing was sent flying back, he cried out, "Trust me, you should leave!"

How could Yu Zhenghai heed Ji Fengxing's suggestion of fleeing? He had always been someone who looked down on elites. Therefore, he acted as though he did not hear Ji Fengxing's words as focused his attention on the Square Box.

"Stand back!" Yu Zhenghai leaped. He extended his right arm, and the Jasper Saber flew up swiftly into his hand.

The Jasper Saber was wrapped in energy as it flew up to meet its target. Dozens of energy sabers arranged themselves into the shape of a long dragon and struck the Square Box.

Zhu Xuan's eyes widened. He frowned as he said, "I knew it! Golden energy!"

Upon seeing this, Yu Shangrong looked up slightly. His Longevity Sword vibrated on his back, as though nudging him to take action.

Meanwhile, since Ji Fengxing could not dissuade Yu Zhenghai, he landed next to Yu Shangrong and tried to dissuade Yu Shangrong instead. He pleaded in a low voice, "Please leave! We can't afford to cross the Ninth Temple."

"Why not?"

"Ninth Temple rarely meddles in the affairs of the world, but it's still a major sect on par with the Sky Martial Court and the Flying Star House. A century ago, the Ninth Temple suddenly took an interest in foreign worlds and sent its men into the Black Water Mystic Cave to reach the other side. However, the Sky Martial Court unexpectedly shut the cave and prohibited anyone from going in or out. Over the years, they started to have more and more conflicts. Ever since then, they have had a rocky relationship," Ji Fengxing said in a slightly worried tone.

Meanwhile, with a flurry of movements, Yu Zhenghai appeared above the Square Box and brought his saber down with both hands.

With this, the desolate-grade Jasper Saber was pitted against the desolate-grade Square Box.

Bam! Bam! Bam!

The golden energy and the red energy collided, and the aftershock rippled into the surroundings.

The disciples from the Thousand Willow Monastery were sent flying by the backlash.

All the spectators had to activate their energies to block the aftershock.

Yu Shangrong glanced at Zhu Xuan.

At this moment, Zhu Xuan was observing Yu Zhenghai calmly as he controlled the Square Box. Indeed, his strength and cultivation base was something to contend with. He was not any weaker than the Flying Star House's Liang Zidao.

"Does this mean that the Thousand Willow Monastery has offended everyone?" Yu Shangrong asked as he calmly watched the battle in the air.

Ji Fengxing said with a bitter expression, "I know that you have a profound cultivation base, but the Ninth Temple is different from the Flying Star House! The Ninth Temple never openly makes their move. The forces that stood against it have never ended well... The Ninth Temple is extremely skilled in assassination. 50 years ago, an elite from the Flying Star House who had just entered the Nine-leaf Stage was heavily injured by the Ninth Temple. Even the Blood Sun Temple's monk, Fa Kong, who's a rare elite who has mastered the red lotus karmic fire would have to restrain himself in front of the Ninth Temple." As he said this, he prepared to push Yu Shangrong away. He was clearly incredibly anxious.

Yu Shangrong merely patted Ji Fengxing's shoulder and said, "There's no need to be nervous. Nobody's cultivation path is smooth and without obstacles. Only by overcoming hardships can we rise higher."

"..."

The Thousand Willow Monastery's Master, Xia Changqiu, continued watching the battle between Yu Zhenghai and Zhu Xuan. The area affected by the aftershocks grew wider as well. "Stand back!"

With this order, the disciples retreated further.

Zhu Xuan frowned deeply as he looked at Yu Zhenghai moving swiftly in front of him.

Yu Zhenghai would launch energy sabers from the Jasper Saber every now and then, parrying the incoming blasts of red energy from the Square Box.

"It's no wonder Kong Lu was defeated. He's no ordinary Eight-leaf cultivator." Based on their brief exchange, Zhu Xuan had a vague idea of Yu Zhenghai's true strength. He no longer wasted any time and made several hand gestures.

At this moment, Xia Changqiu called out loudly, "Wait, Brother Zhu!"

Bam!

Zhu Xuan slowed down.

The Square Box was pushed back before it came to stop, still spinning.

Yu Zhenghai flew back and looked at Zhu Xuan.

Meanwhile, Zhu Xuan said to Xia Changqiu, "Xia Changqiu, you colluded with these foreign tribesmen, and I have yet to hold you accountable for that yet. And yet, you're trying to stop me now?"

Xia Changqiu shook his head and said, "This must be a misunderstanding. If he has offended you, I'm willing to apologize to you on his behalf, Brother Zhu."

"No need." Then, Zhu Xuan looked at Yu Zhenghai and said, "I want to take him away. Who dares to stop me?"

Yu Zhenghai who was holding the Jasper Saber replied, "You'll have to see if you're capable of that first." With a flurry of movements, his energy sabers shot out again, fiercer than before.

"Avatar!" Zhu Xuan summoned his avatar. The Eight-and-a-half-leaf red lotus under the avatar bloomed, emitting Primal Qi. The 140-foot avatar was a testament to his cultivation base.

The Thousand Willow Monastery disciples exclaimed in shock upon seeing this. This was the closest they had gotten to the Nine-leaf stage.

Yu Zhenghai did not expect Zhu Xuan's cultivation base to be more profound than Liang Zidao. The key was that Zhu Xuan had the Square Box, a weapon that was almost at the peak of the desolate grade.

Yu Zhenghai focused on attacking. He wielded his saber with both hands, from which his energy burst forth. The huge energy saber slashed at the Square Box again.

At this moment, the Square Box was already several meters in size.

Bam!

The energy saber struck the Square Box. The box was sent spinning back.

Zhu Xuan snorted and lunged forward with his red lotus avatar.

At this moment, Yu Zhenghai summoned his avatar as well.

The two avatars faced each other.

The 100-foot avatar stood before the 140-foot avatar as the red energy and golden energy collided.

Boom!

A halo of energy rippled out vertically.

"Take cover!"

Ji Fengxing and Wuwu moved away from the gazebo before the vertical energy halo struck the gazebo. With a crack, the gazebo was sliced in half by the energy.

Yu Shangrong was the only one who did not move. An energizer barrier protected him from the aftershock of the collision.

Yu Zhenghai wielded his saber with his avatar in tow and advanced.

Zhu Xuan would never allow a desolate-grade weapon to touch his avatar so he withdrew his 140-foot avatar. At this moment, the Square Box emerged from behind him; its size larger than before.

Bam! Bam! Bam!

At this moment, the Square Box blocked several energy sabers. It created some distance between the two opponents as it continued to spin in position as it increased in size.

Zhu Xuan and Yu Zhenghai both launched their attacks again. One used palm seals while the other used energy sabers.

Their attacks collided above the Square Box. The impact of the collision pushed both of them back.

Xia Changqiu led the others and went after the two opponents.

Yu Shangrong took flight as well.

Meanwhile, Ji Fengxing and Wuwu tried their best to keep up with the others.

After flying past a mountain, they found the opponents battling in a valley.

"I didn't expect our friend to be able to hold out for so long against Zhu Xuan." Xia Changqiu was greatly shocked.

Tian Buji nodded. "However, Zhu Xuan has yet to strike with all his might. Moreover, the Square Box isn't an easy weapon to deal with."

Similarly, Zhu Xuan did not expect an Eight-leaf cultivator was capable of holding up against the Square Box as well. He raised a palm.

The Square Box hovered in the air and moved swiftly. Like a red square lantern, it shot toward the space above Yu Zhenghai.

Zhu Xuan made several hand signs again.

"Impurities scattered in the natural world; unfathomable mysteries in the deep cave. Mighty gods of the eight directions, grant me the power to become one with nature. Qianluo, Dana, Donggang, Taixuan."

The Square Box instantly increased its size to that of a large mountain and bore down on Yu Zhenghai.

Yu Zhenghai glanced at the box as he summoned his avatar and unleashed his grand technique.

However, the Square Box flew out, unimpeded, toward the space above Yu Zhenghai.

Zhu Xuan pushed both palms out. With his 140-foot avatar, he controlled the Square Box.

Yu Zhenghai tossed his Jasper Saber up. He chose an unexpected method: he chose to advance instead of retreat. He attacked the bottom of the Square Box.

Yu Zhenghai pushed a palm out,

The Great Dark Heaven Palm.

Bam!

The Square Box was struck by the huge palm strike and was pushed up.

Yu Zhenghai launched another palm strike.



Bam!

Meanwhile, the Jasper kept spinning around the palm seal as energy sabers materialized around the golden avatar.

Zhu Xuan frowned. "This child's strength exceeds my expectations! Kong Lu, you did not lose in vain. However, if I can't take him down, I would tarnish the Ninth Temple's reputation."

The red lotus flew up.

With a burst of movement, Zhu Xuan appeared above the Square Box with his red lotus avatar.

Boom!

With his avatar, Zhu Xuan stood on top of the Square Box before it dropped down.

Meanwhile, Yu Shangrong looked up. A cold breeze caused his robes to flutter in the air.

Zing!

The Longevity Sword flew out of its scabbard.

Yu Shangrong raised his right hand, and his Longevity Sword flew into his hand. He remained silent as he continued to look at the red lotus avatar above the Square Box. In the next second, he disappeared into thin air.

### **Chapter 723: The Ninth Temple's Stance**

The members of Thousand Willow Monastery hovered in the air and continued to watch.

"As expected of Zhu Xuan, a Ninth Temple elite who has one foot in the Nine-leaf stage. He's forcing both of them to fight him at once."

By now, they had some basic understanding of Yu Zhenghai and Yu Shangrong. They knew the duo were fellow disciples and knew they liked to compete with each other, albeit in secret. Apart from that, they rarely attacked the enemy together. Even when they were teaching their students the saber or sword techniques, they competed with each other. In front of the Fair Hall, they would also guide the other Thousand Willow Monastery disciples as another way of competing with each other.

Zhu Xuan's strength was evident in the way he had forced the two fellow disciples to work together.

Yu Shangrong's silhouette appeared next to the red lotus avatar. He leaned forward as he walked on air. The first technique he unleashed was the Guiyuan Sword Technique's Enter Three Souls.

Three blurry figures appeared.

Zhu Xuan who was hovering before the red lotus avatar frowned when he saw the elite's three silhouettes. True elites could sense how powerful their opponent was through their exchanges.

At the bottom, Yu Zhenghai was being targeted by the Square Box that kept bearing down on him.

Zhu Xuan had no choice but to split his attention and deal with Yu Shangrong. With a light tap of his feet, he shot into the air along with his avatar.

The 140-foot shining red avatar could hardly be missed.

The red lotus cultivators who were flying past looked up at this shocking sight.

“A 140-foot red lotus. Which elite is this?”

“Shall we go and take a look?”

“We’d better stay out of a fight between elites so that we won’t get caught in the crossfire. The battle is close to the Thousand Willow Monastery’s territory.”

“What’s that?”

They looked toward the distance again.

Under the 140-foot red lotus avatar, a red cube was being lifted by a figure the size of a green bean. Every time it was pushed up, a thunderous sound would follow.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

The sounds made the others shiver despite the temperature.

“That’s the weapon of the Ninth Temple’s Zhu Xuan, the Square Box.”

“An elite that needs the Ninth Temple’s elite, Zhu Xuan, to deal with... The Thousand Willow Monastery is truly something.”

“The Thousand Willow Monastery is no longer what it once was. I don’t know what’s gotten into them lately. They’re offending people at every turn.”

The spectators discussed among themselves. All of them knew the weak could only resign themselves to being beaten up.

The others exchanged their opinions.

...

Meanwhile, Yu Shangrong’s Guiyuan Sword Technique was already locked onto the red lotus. Three silhouettes shot toward their target as an energy sword flew out.

Zhu Xuan joined his palms together. “Dhyana Mudra.”

A red Dhyana Mudra wrapped around the golden lotus.

Bam!

The Longevity Sword drew across the Dhyana Mudra.

Yu Shangrong shot Zhu Xuan and hovered in the air with his sword in hand.

The Dhyana Mudra was damaged, but the avatar was untouched.

It was a draw.

Zhu Xuan withdrew his avatar and looked at Yu Shangrong. “Who are you?”

"The person who will kill you." Yu Shangrong's tone was light when he spoke.

"The Square Box has already been activated. This has nothing to do with you. I'm warning you to stay out of this." Zhu Xuan did not want to fight two opponents at once if it was possible.

"I'm afraid that things won't go your way." Yu Shangrong moved at lightning speed.

Traceless Sword.

Zhu Xuan unleashed his Dhyana Mudra again. At the same time, countless palm seals shot into the air.

"Zhu Xuan is skilled in both Buddhist and Daoist skills!" Xia Changqiu was awestruck.

Yu Zhenghai pushed the Square Box up again. His Eight-leaf golden avatar unleashed a surge of energy.

When the cultivators in the distance saw this, they exclaimed in shock.

"A golden avatar! The foreign tribes have invaded!"

The cultivators flew into the distance immediately. However, when they were halfway there, they came to a stop.

"We shouldn't go there. Since the Ninth Temple is here, anyone who gets close will be deemed as their enemies."

"So, what the Sky Martial Court said is true!"

The cultivators looked at the Square Box as they hovered in the air.

...

The grand three-way battle continued until the sun was setting. The three opponents fought for six hours.

At this moment, the forest in the valley had been flattened.

Zhu Xuan who was forced to fight against two opponents was slowly being pushed back.

Ji Fengxing gulped before he said, "I have the impression that if the two big brothers work together, they might be a match for a Nine-leaf cultivator."

At this moment, Wuwu cried out, "Look!" She pointed at the 140-foot red lotus avatar, around which countless energy swords that resembled schools of fish swimming in the ocean circled.

Whizz!

The 140-foot seemed like it was growing.

"He's going to break through to the Nine-leaf stage!" Xia Changqiu exclaimed in shock.

If Zhu Xuan somehow reached the Nine-leaf stage during the battle, Yu Zhenghai and Yu Shangrong could not possibly defeat him. They had personally witnessed their master's Nine-leaf might. They knew how great of a difference it would make in strength.

While the energy swords spun, the energy sabers pushed against the Square Box from below.

All of a sudden, the Square Box dropped 100 meters down.

Yu Zhenghai broke free of the Square Box and flew out like a fired arrow. He spread his arms, and energy sabers gathered around him. For the first time in his life, he did not feel embarrassed about having to join forces with another person. Moreover, that person was his Second Junior Brother. He cried out, "Junior brother!"

With just that, Yu Shangrong understood Yu Zhenghai's intention. With his Guiyuan Sword Technique, he controlled his energy swords that flew along with the energy sabers.

The two fellow disciples hovered close to each other, at this moment. They were at both sides of the avatar that was close to 150 feet in height.

Zhu Xuan's face flushed red from the effort he was expending. He barely had time to catch his breath with the duo pressuring him.

At this moment, Xia Changqiu made his move. "I'm sorry, Brother Zhu."

Xia Changqiu summoned his avatar and swept his Horsetail Whisk at the Square Box.

The Square Box spun out of control.

Xia Changqiu unleashed his grand technique again and appeared above the others. He looked down at the red lotus avatar that was almost 150-foot tall. Then, he raised two fingers, and his horsetail whisk flew out.

At the same time, the energy sabers and energy swords shot toward the heart of the avatar like a water dragon.

Boom!

The horsetail whisk struck the avatar's head.

Boom!

Zhu Xuan grunted. Blood trickled out from the corners of his mouth. However, his eyes flashed with a strange light. At this moment, the red lotus avatar surged intensely with energy as it spun. It instantly formed a vortex that devoured the energy sabers and energy swords.

Bam! Bam! Bam!

Yu Shangrong raised his Longevity Sword and flew back.

Yu Zhenghai raised his Jasper Saber and flew back as well.

Xian Changqiu was worse off. He had been standing right before Zhu Xuan. He was hit by the red energy and was sent flying back. He grunted as his blood essence surged.

The battle ended.

"150 feet."

Everything was silent as the energies dissipated.

Yu Shangrong and Yu Zhenghai looked at each other.

"I'm fine."

"Me too."

In the middle of the red lotus avatar that was hovering in the air, Zhu Xuan slowly opened his eyes before his eyes swept past Yu Zhenghai and Yu Shangrong.

"This is bad. Zhu Xuan has reached the Nine-leaf stage!"

The cultivators who watched from afar felt their bodies tremble.

"Hey! This is something worth celebrating! Great Tang has gained another Nine-leaf cultivator!"

"However, we're talking about the Ninth Temple, after all. As expected of Zhu Xuan who's regarded as the grand cultivator closest to the Nine-leaf stage for the past 50 years."

...

Zhu Xuan looked at the fellow disciples and asked, "Do you still wish to continue?"

Yu Zhenghai said, "If you wish to continue, we'll continue."

"What about you?" Zhu Xuan looked at Yu Shangrong.

"If you want to fight, we'll continue fighting." Yu Shangrong straightened his right arm as his Longevity Sword buzzed.

Zhu Xuan did not ask Xia Changqiu. Instead, he shook his head and asked, "What do you say to leaving it at this?"

The two fellow disciples were briefly puzzled by these words.

Realization dawned on the duo when Zhu Xuan looked at Yu Zhenghai and said, "However, you must come with me."

Yu Zhenghai tightened his grip on his Jasper Saber. "What if I refuse?"

Zhu Xuan waved his right hand. His avatar vanished. The Square Box shrank and returned to its pouch. The white crane flew up and carried him. Then, he looked at his arms. His veins were popping on his arms, and his thumb was numb and still shaking. This battle had greatly exceeded his expectations. He wiped the blood off the corners of his lips before he said, "There are no eternal enemies in the world. I'm already at the Nine-leaf stage. If I die in this battle, we'll both suffer great losses."

As the saying went, 'The friend of an enemy is a friend'. After witnessing the duo's might, Zhu Xuan had changed his mind. The Ninth Temple had always been on bad terms with the Sky Martial Court and the Flying Star House. However, if these two elites were to join the Ninth Temple, it would surely improve the temple's strength.

Yu Zhenghai smiled and repeated, "There are no eternal enemies?"

“The Ninth Temple has always been on bad terms with the Sky Martial Court and the Flying Star House. Since the two of you have such profound cultivation bases, why don’t you join the Ninth Temple?”

Yu Zhenghai sheathed his Jasper Saber. He stood with his hands on his back and said, “Apart from the Evil Sky Pavilion, I have no interest in joining any other sect. I decline your invitation to join the Ninth Temple. However, I can consider a collaboration.” The aura he exuded when he led the Nether Sect was apparent, at this moment.

Although Zhu Xuan had a profound cultivation base, he was not someone with a high position. Therefore, he was not as articulate with his words. He wondered what kind of force the Evil Sky Pavilion was.

At this moment, Yu Zhenghai looked at Yu Shangrong and asked, “A wise man submits to circumstances. I won’t force you to do anything against your will. What do you say?”

Yu Shangrong glanced at Yu Zhenghai before he calmly said, “You have a point, senior brother.”

“Alright.”

Zhu Xuan descended slowly until he drew level with the duo. “As the Ninth Temple’s Grand Elder, I invite both of you to the Ninth Temple if you’ll follow me...”

#### **Chapter 724: The Master of the Elites**

Yu Zhenghai placed his hands on his back. He looked at the remaining bloodstains at the edge of Zhu Xuan’s lips before he turned to look at Yu Shangrong. He seemed to be waiting for Yu Shangrong to express his opinion.

Meanwhile, Xia Changqiu, the Monastery Master of the Thousand Willow Monastery Master, was shocked by the Ninth Temple’s sudden change in attitude. Everyone knew how the Ninth Temple usually operated. Zhu Xuan’s strength was apparent, and he had come to avenge Kong Lu. How could he not feel shocked by the Ninth Temple suddenly changing its stance?

Ji Fengxing immediately cried out, “Don’t go!” He was afraid of the Ninth Temple’s might and was honestly afraid of speaking out against an elite like Zhu Xuan. However, this matter was related to Yu Shangrong and Yu Zhenghai’s safety. He could not sit back and do nothing.

Zhu Xuan looked at Ji Fengxing. He, naturally, understood Ji Fengxing’s thoughts. He said, “My guests, if I wanted to harm you, I could leave right now and return for revenge some other day after my Nine-leaf stage has stabilized. Why would I invite both of you to return with me now?”

Zhu Xuan had a point.

Yu Zhenghai said, “I’ll go with him, Second Junior Brother, you stay.”

Yu Shangrong frowned. Then, he looked at Zhu Xuan and said, “I’ll go with you.” Then, he said to Yu Zhenghai and parroted his senior brother. “Eldest Senior Brother, you stay.”

Both of them had initially planned on staying at the Thousand Willow Monastery to deal with enemies. If a Nine-leaf cultivator showed up, they would just run. However, their encounter with the Ninth Temple made them change their minds. If they did not go to the Ninth Temple, they would surely create more

trouble. Based on Xia Changqiu and Ji Fengxing's attitude, they knew that the Ninth Temple was different from the Flying Star House.

Xia Changqiu pressed on his chest before he lowered his head and sighed.

Zhu Xuan could tell the duo was undecided. Hence, he addressed Xia Changqiu, "I heard the Thousand Willow Monastery is recently at odds with the Flying Star House... The Flying Star House has always been on good terms with the Sky Marital Court. They are trying to monopolize the Black Water Mystic Cave and the Endless Ocean. The Flying Star House will certainly seek revenge. Am I right, Xia Changqiu?" He addressed Xia Changqiu by name; his attitude was a stark contrast from his attitude toward Yu Shangrong and Yu Zhenghai.

Xia Changqiu nodded and said, "Indeed."

Then, Zhu Xuan said to the two fellow disciples, "My friends, since you're both esteemed guests of the Thousand Willow Monastery and the Ninth Temple... Will the Flying Star House still dare to recklessly come and seek revenge?"

Xia Changqiu's eyes lit up. Zhu Xuan's had a point. However, this would depend on Yu Shangrong and Yu Zhenghai completely.

Yu Zhenghai said loudly, "It's settled, then..." When he saw Yu Shangrong was about to say something, he hardened his expression and straightened his back. With his hands on his back, he said, "There's no need to say anything else. Throughout the years, I've never used my status as your Eldest Senior Brother against you, but today, I'm ordering you to stay here as the Evil Sky Pavilion's first disciple."

Yu Shangrong's brows were knitted together tightly.

300 years have passed, and these two disciples had competed in silence. Sometimes, they even fought openly. They had fought intensely in the Cloud Radiant Woodlands as well. Up until now, the outcome of their battles had never been apparent. However, seniority was important. Moreover, it was true that Yu Zhenghai had never used his seniority against Yu Shangrong before. This was the first time. In the end, he remained silent.

Zhu Xuan nodded lightly. He motioned with his hand. "Shall we?"

Yu Zhenghai flew forward.

Before they parted, Zhu Xuan glanced at Yu Shangrong. He cupped his fists and said, "We'll meet again." After saying this, he left on the white crane.

Yu Zhenghai and Zhu Xuan vanished into the clouds in no time at all.

Ji Fengxing flew over and said worriedly, "Big brother, I'm worried the collaboration the Ninth Temple spoke of is just a means to capture you."

Wuwu walked over. When she saw Yu Shangrong's cold expression, she could tell he was in a bad mood. She hastily said, "Big brother, are you hurt? Shall I heal you?"

She did not wait for his reply as a red sphere of energy appeared in her hand before she tossed it out. The red sphere fell on Yu Shangrong's body and dissolved into spots of starlight.

At this moment, Yu Shangrong finally replied, "I'm fine..."

Xia Changqiu said with a sigh, "Both of you got into trouble on the Thousand Willow Monastery's grounds, but the monastery couldn't do anything..."

Wuwu blinked her huge eyes and asked, "What should be done now?"

Yu Shangrong looked in the direction where Yu Zhenghai left. Then, he said frostily, "If the Ninth Temple dares to touch a single strand of his hair, I'll make sure to drench the Ninth Temple in blood."

Upon hearing this, Xia Changqiu, Tian Buji, Ji Fengxing, and Wuwu felt speechless.

On the other hand, the Thousand Willow Monastery disciples shivered despite the temperature.

After Yu Shangrong finished speaking, he descended...

...

Meanwhile, Zhu Xuan had gotten off the white crane and was walking on air like Yu Zhenghai. Although their speed could not compare to the white crane, they were not slow.

Zhu Xuan glanced at the Jasper Saber hanging from Yu Zhenghai's waist before he asked, "May I know your name?"

"Yu Zhenghai," Yu Zhenghai replied.

"I've seen countless weapons throughout my life. Heaven, earth, mystic, yellow, universe, cosmos, desolate, and flood-grade... A heaven-grade weapon is rare enough as it is, and there are even fewer desolate-grade weapons. Is that saber of yours a desolate-grade weapon?" Zhu Xuan asked.

"It's only a weapon gifted to me by my master. Your Square Box isn't bad as well," Yu Zhenghai said.

"Compared to blades, the Square Box's offensive power is lacking... Based on today's battle, it's clear I was at a disadvantage." Indeed, Zhu Xuan seemed unable to gain the upper hand when the Square Box was pitted against the Jasper Saber.

"I was just lucky." Yu Zhenghai would not forget himself just because he was praised.

"I have two questions to ask... I wonder if that's alright?"

Yu Zhenghai looked at the setting sun and said, "I'll answer them if I can."

"Are the two of you truly from the golden lotus domain?" Zhu Xuan asked.

"Of course." There was no longer any need to conceal this. Yu Zhenghai had already manifested his golden lotus avatar during battle earlier. It was not his style to blatantly lie.

Zhu Xuan said, filled with praise, "I didn't expect that the prediction of that Sky Martial Court's lunatic to come true."

"Lunatic?"

Zhu Xuan slowly explained, "A lunatic who liked studying foreign worlds. She was convinced there was another world on the other side of the Endless Ocean."



Yu Zhenghai silently sped up as he said, "The Ninth Temple has a strong foundation, but why can't the temple defeat the Sky Martial Court or the Flying Star House?"

"You've underestimated them... The Sky Martial Court belongs to the Great Tang Dynasty. Their elites are as numerous as the clouds." After saying this, Zhu Xuan recalled something and asked, "Is the Evil Sky Pavilion powerful?"

Based on the two men's attitude, Zhu Xuan could vaguely guess the Evil Sky Pavilion was not a force to be trifled with.

Yu Zhenghai smiled before he bluntly replied. "If Evil Sky Pavilion were here, there would be no need to fear the Sky Martial Court or the Flying Star House." In fact, he was being cautious not to reveal too much information about the Evil Sky Pavilion. This one sentence was sufficient.

Zhu Xuan's expression remained neutral, but he was inwardly shocked. To think that the Evil Sky Pavilion was, at least, comparable to the Sky Martial Court.

After a beat, Zhu Xuan asked, "It must be difficult for both of you to travel this far. You weren't the only ones who had visited the red lotus domain. What's your business here?" This was the burning question in his mind, and he was most interested in its answer.

Yu Zhenghai asked, "Would you believe me if I told you that I came here by mistake?" Indeed, from Yu Shangrong's perspective, Yu Shangrong had indeed come to this place by mistake despite how unbelievable it sounded.

And yet, Zhu Xuan said, "I believe you."

Yu Zhenghai nodded.

Zhu Xuan asked carefully, "Is your master in the red lotus domain as well?"

Yu Zhenghai shook his head and said, "He's focused on cultivation and rarely meddles in worldly affairs. However, I can't guarantee what would happen if things get out of hand."

Upon hearing this, Zhu Xuan wondered inwardly, 'For someone to be the two men's master, that person has to be at the Nine-leaf stage... Fortunately, I didn't kill them earlier. If their Life Stones shatter, there will definitely be trouble. At that time, the Ninth Temple would have unwittingly gained a great enemy.'

...

In the golden lotus domain.

In the dense forest halfway up Golden Court Mountain.

The bright moon was hanging high in the sky.

In the dense and impermeable forest, a faint starlight could be seen. Pure Primal Qi in the surroundings rose from the plants and merged with the Primal Qi in the air. It gathered around a cluster of weeds.

After a moment, an exclamation could be heard from the cluster of weeds as though the person who had spoken had just been hit with a sudden realization. "Wait! The Nine-leaf stage requires 1,200 years, but Shu Si's Heart will only give me 800 years of life. So, I'll have to burn 400 years of my life?! I'm young

now, but doesn't this mean I'll turn into an old man when I reach the Nine-leaf cultivator? How can that be? I'm so handsome and suave..."

## **Chapter 725: Mingshi Yin's Secret**

"No! How hideous would I become if I looked as old as master?" Mingshi Yin shuddered at the thought of this. He stopped cultivating and emerged from the tall blades of grass.

He surveyed his surroundings. He had been cultivating here over the years. His master had said the Bluewood Heart Technique was most suited to him. However, he had to rely on his own effort to learn about the Bluewood Heart Technique. Finding this place was a product of his luck. He had discovered long ago that his rate of improvement when he cultivated in the forest when he cultivated elsewhere.

His fellow disciples only knew that his cultivation method had the best effect if he were in the forest. However, they were unaware that he yielded the best result when he cultivated in the forest as well.

He had also cultivated the ground escape technique here. If he tunneled underground, he would be completely safe, after all.

He mulled over his thoughts as he stroked his chin and muttered to himself, "1,200 years... How did master overcome that?"

After a moment, his eyes widened as he exclaimed, "Does master have many Chi Yao's Hearts?"

He paced around before he came to a halt. He continued muttering to himself, "Why didn't I think about this before? Master is too intelligent. He won't do anything that he has no confidence in! I should cultivate harder so I can reach my peak state in the shortest time possible!"

Cultivation in itself was going against the will of the heavens. Even at the peak, cultivators had to choose the best time to achieve a breakthrough.

With this thought in mind, he returned to the center of the cluster of weeds. He flipped his palms up as his Primal Qi surged. More weed grew around him, and they grew taller as well. They were now almost the same height as him.

Four walls made of grass were formed around him.

Mingshi Yin sat with his legs crossed and eyes closed and he regulated his breathing.

At this moment, vitality surged from him. However, the Primal Qi inside the forest was quickly gathered by him before it was absorbed by his dantian's sea of Qi.

...

Several days passed in just a blink of an eye.

In the Evil Sky Pavilion's eastern pavilion.

In the morning.

Lu Zhou had fully replenished his extraordinary power, and he had stabilized his Nine-leaf cultivation base as well.

Remaining life: 218,980 days.

A question appeared in Lu Zhou's mind. 'I wonder if there's a Ten-leaf stage after the Nine-leaf stage? Is there another great limit to be overcome between the Nine-leaf stage and the Ten-leaf stage?'

The human cultivators in Great Yan had been stuck at the Eight-leaf stage for many years now. They were very familiar with the cultivation process under the Eight-leaf stage. However, everything about the Nine-leaf stage and above was unknown.

Lu Zhou was like the lighthouse, lighting up everyone's path while he progressed in the dark.

In the end, he decided there was no point dwelling on this matter. He would obtain his answer by slowly raising his cultivation base.

He could purchase the Thousand Realms Whirling with 500,000 merit points. This seemed to hint that he could enter a new realm.

Merit points: 23,640.

His current points were too far from 500,000 merit points.

After thinking about it for a moment, Lu Zhou bought another Deadly Strike Card.

15,000 merit points were deducted from him.

Up until now, he had two Deadly Strike Cards. Before he made his way to the red lotus domain, he had to make as many preparations as he could. The Deadly Strike Card was one of his trump cards. He had to have them ready.

Since he was only left with 5,000 merit points after his latest purchase, he could no longer buy any other item card for now.

"Master, Zhu Tianyuan requests an audience." Si Wuya's voice rang from the other side of the door.

Lu Zhou was slightly curious. Zhu Tianyuan's attention should all be focused on Zhu Honggong. Why did Zhu Tianyuan come? "What's the matter?"

"He has checked the Ancient Saint Cult's warehouse and discovered one thing. He personally brought it here so you can have a look at it."

Lu Zhou emerged from his room and walked out of the eastern pavilion. He looked at Si Wuya and said in a slightly puzzled tone, "Your cultivation base has improved a lot."

Si Wuya replied, "I daren't slack off under your supervision, master. I've been diligently cultivating every day."

"When will you reach the Eight-leaf stage?"

"Uh..." Si Wuya shook his head. He had no idea as well. Nobody could be sure about cultivation, after all.

Lu Zhou no longer pressed Si Wuya for an answer. With his hands on his back, he walked to the southern pavilion.

Si Wuya followed closely behind him.

Shortly after, the two of them arrived at the southern pavilion.

There were many gathered on the plaza before the southern pavilion.

The Evil Sky Pavilion's four elders and many female disciples were gathered around some black object as they studied it curiously.

Meanwhile, Zhu Tianyuan and Zhu Honggong stood at the side.

"Greetings, master."

The others turned around and bowed.

"Rise." Lu Zhou arrived before the others with hands on his back. He looked at the object at the center of the plaza and asked in confusion, "Zhu Tianyuan, what's this?"

It looked like a small battered boat. It was black and covered in a thick layer of grime.

Zhu Tianyuan said, "You might not know this, Brother Ji... Do you remember the blueprints on Jie Kai's body?"

Lu Zhou had seen the blueprints on Jie Kai before. However, the Sky Shuttle, the Water Shuttle, and the Sky Chariot did not resemble this thing. His voice deepened as he said, "What does it have to do with this thing? Don't beat around the bush."

Zhu Tianyuan's expression turned solemn. He bowed and uttered a statement that shocked everyone, "This is left behind by that Luo woman."

Lu Zhou was shocked.

Si Wuya was the first one to rush forward. He hastily wiped the grime off the object with his sleeve. After wiping it a few times, Formation veins could be seen on it. It was not strange if the others did not recognize these, but he would not miss these. He had been studying the Sky Shuttle, the blueprints, and Luo Shiyin's notes for a long time so he instantly recognized the Formation veins. He exclaimed, "It's the Formation veins on the Sky Shuttle!"

The Sky Shuttle?!

The others were shocked.

Si Wuya immediately ordered, "Clean this."

"Understood." Several female disciples fetched buckets of water over to clean the object. They did not dally now that they realized the importance of this object. In time, as they cleaned, the object that resembled a small boat was slowly restored to its original appearance. The veins on its body could clearly be seen as well.

Si Wuya who had been studying it all this time sighed and stroked it. A hint of admiration could be seen in his eyes.

“Master, the Formation veins on this thing are slightly weaker than the Sky Shuttle. Moreover, its shape is clearly different from the Sky Shuttle as well. The Sky Shuttle has strong defenses and is quick, but its altitude is limited. This must be a mini Sky Chariot.”

Zhu Tianyuan laughed. “Hah! I knew this wasn’t an ordinary object... You should be proud of your father for having such a good memory!” He patted Zhu Honggong’s shoulder heavily after he finished speaking.

Lu Zhou said, “A mini Sky Chariot... If this can’t even compare to the Sky Shuttle, how could it cross the ocean?”

Si Wuya said, “Great Yan cultivators have countless experiences exploring the Endless Ocean... The beasts in the ocean are exceptionally strong. However, they won’t simply leave the ocean and won’t leap too high up. Hence, by flying higher, we can avoid the beasts. The Formation veins on the surface are used to resist high-altitude flight. The disadvantage is that Primal Qi will suddenly drop at a certain height. It might even vanish... It’s difficult for cultivators to control.”

Zhu Tianyuan asked in confusion, “So, it’s useless?”

“Not entirely... Although it’s not as good compared to the Sky Shuttle, in the sense that it’s slow and has weak defenses, it has a higher capacity compared to the Sky Shuttle. With this size, it can carry three to five passengers,” Si Wuya said. At this moment, he pushed the little boat.

Whizz!

Si Wuya exclaimed in shock, “It had been used!”

Lu Zhou looked at Zhu Tianyuan and said, “Luo Shiyin has been to the Ancient Saint Cult before. Do you know where she is now?”

Luo Shiyin might still be alive. It was also possible that she rode this mini Sky Chariot as she traveled back and forth between the red lotus domain and the golden lotus domain. This discovery was indeed surprising.

Zhu Tianyuan shook his head and said with a sigh, “I don’t know about that. The former cult master knew her. She vanished at some point. After inheriting the position of cult master, I inherited the notes and this broken boat.”

The others seemed disappointed to hear this.

Si Wuya finished inspecting it and said, “Master, this mini Sky Chariot can be used, but its defenses are weak.”

Lu Zhou nodded and said, “Call Old Fourth over. Tell him to wait at the eastern pavilion. I have a task for him.”

“Yes, master.” Si Wuya turned around and left.

After that, Lu Zhou said, “Protect the Sky Chariot. Nobody is to get close to it. Anyone who disobeys this order will be exiled from the Evil Sky Pavilion!”

**Chapter 726: The Unexpected Second Nine-leaf Cultivator**

Lu Zhou studied the Sky Chariot for some time. The Formation veins inscribed on it were indeed exquisite Formations used to control flight. After confirming that there were no mistakes, he left the southern pavilion.

Zhu Honggong nudged Zhu Tianyuan with his elbow and said, "I thought you couldn't bear to part with me. I see now that you're only here to send a package."

"It's true foolishness to meet your master empty-handed," Zhu Tianyuan said.

Zhu Honggong scratched his head as he said, "You have a point."

"Son, how's your cultivation progressing recently? Everyone under the heavens is competing to become a Nine-leaf cultivator now. Your old man is a coward who loves his life too much. I'm not brave enough to sever my lotus. I'm proud that you're so courageous. When you're attempting the Nine-leaf stage, I'll personally keep watch for you," Zhu Tianyuan said.

Zhu Honggong cleared his throat before he solemnly said, "That's... Well, severing the lotus is just a trivial matter. It's not worth mentioning at all."

At this moment, Duanmu Sheng hoisted his Overlord Spear over his shoulder and stepped forward. He said, "Eighth Junior Brother, who's planning to sever their lotus?"

"N-no... No one's severing their lotus..." Zhu Honggong shuddered as he quickly waved his hand. At the same time, he moved to stand behind his father.

"..." Duanmu Sheng looked at the father and son in confusion before he finally said, "In that case, come and train with me. I've made some improvements in my spear techniques recently."

A bitter expression appeared on Zhu Honggong's face as he instinctively took a step back.

Zhu Tianyuan asked in confusion, "Practicing with the spear is a good thing, right? Son, you don't look so good. Forget it, I'll spar with your senior brother. Let's go." Since he was in the Evil Sky Pavilion, he had nothing to do anyway.

"Alright. Thank you, uncle." Duanmu Sheng cupped his fists together.

"Don't mention it..." Zhu Tianyuan was an Eight-leaf elite. If he could not even suppress an Evil Sky Pavilion disciple who had barely recultivated to the Five-leaf stage, he would be better off resigning from his position as the Ancient Cult Master and go into farming.

"Father, you mustn't go..."

"I don't mind. Your father isn't kicking the bucket just yet." Zhu Tianyuan stepped forward and grabbed Duanmu Sheng's wrist. "Let's go! I'll train with you. Even if it's for the entire day, I won't mind."

Zhu Honggong. "..."

Duanmu Sheng was greatly moved. He said, "In that case, I'll have to thicken my face and accept your kind offer, uncle... It'd be best if I could train in this manner every day." After he finished speaking, he pulled Zhu Tianyuan along with him as he walked away.

An ominous feeling rose in Zhu Tianyuan's heart immediately. He stammered, "E-everyday?"

Duanmu Sheng nodded and said, "Elder Hua was my training partner before this. When we first started, it was once every three days. However, he began avoiding me after that. Perhaps, I'd made a mistake and unknowingly irritated Elder Hua. Uncle... Uncle? You... don't look so good. Are you alright?"

"I'm fine, I'm fine..."

"That's great. Time waits for no man. Let's go!" He continued pulling Zhu Tianyun to his training spot halfway up the mountain. He was worried this high-level training partner would escape.

'Oh, no! I think I've fallen into a trap.'

...

When Lu Zhou returned to the eastern pavilion, Mingshi Yin was waiting respectfully inside the eastern pavilion. When he saw his master had returned, he followed his master into the hall after he greeted his master.

After they entered the room, Mingshi Yin bowed and immediately said, "Master, I'm ready."

Lu Zhou nodded, pleased. He said, "Good."

"Master, do we really need 1,200 years of life to reach the Nine-leaf stage?" Mingshi Yin asked.

Lu Zhou answered, "Yes, you'll need 1,200 years of life."

"In that case... Please give me Chi Yao's Heart, master... I can't wait!" Mingshi Yin said with a smile.

"Hm?" Lu Zhou's pitch rose at the end, making him sound stern and imposing.

An uneasy feeling rose in Mingshi Yin's heart. He quickly lowered his head and said, "I'm just kidding."

"Don't joke about this matter. You should treat this important matter seriously," Lu Zhou said.

"I understand."

"Since you're ready, let's try it tomorrow," Lu Zhou said.

"Huh? Are we in a rush?" It was completely out of Mingshi Yin's expectations that his master would ask him to attempt the Nine-leaf stage so quickly. He was slightly shocked.

Lu Zhou replied, "Your Eldest and Second Senior Brothers are in trouble in the red lotus domain where dangers abound... We can't put this off any longer."

"Master... Who's going to look after things in Great Yan when you leave?" After all, until now, there was only one Nine-leaf cultivator in Great Yan.

"I'll deal with everything here before leaving for the red lotus domain. Moreover, I'll only be gone for a short while," Lu Zhou said.

"I understand."

At this moment, Lu Zhou extended his hand and said, "Separation Hook."

“Uh...” Mingshi Yin flinched instinctively. He seemed reluctant. However, when he saw his master’s stern expression, he had no choice but to bring his weapon out before respectfully placing it in his master’s hand.

“That will be all.”

“Understood.”

After Mingshi Yin left, Lu Zhou returned to the rush cushion and sat down. He took out the Shining Stone and tossed it out to refine the Separation Hook.

After the Shining Stone’s flames and the Separation Hook merged, Lu Zhou no longer bothered with it. It would succeed overnight.

Then, Lu Zhou looked at his merit points.

Merit points: 8,640 merit points.

It was not too practical to purchase item cards now. Instead, he decided to try and obtain them through lucky draws.

“Lucky draw.”

“Ding! Spent 50 merit points and 18 luck points. Obtained: Reversal Card x10.”

“Lucky draw.”

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

...

Early the next morning.

Lu Zhou opened his eyes, emerging from his meditative state.

When he heard the Separation Hook fell on the floor, he turned to look. The upgrading of the weapon had been completed.

He raised his hand and brought the Separation Hook into his hand. He circulated his Primal Qi slightly. There was vaguely visible light gleaming off the hook’s blade. Indeed, it was now a desolate-grade weapon.

At this moment, Si Wuya’s voice rang from the other side of the door. “Master, everything’s ready. Fourth Senior Brother is already waiting in the southern pavilion.”

“I see.” Lu Zhou put the Separation Hook away and left the eastern pavilion.

...

When Lu Zhou arrived at the southern pavilion, he saw a tall square platform had been built outside the southern pavilion.

At this moment, Mingshi Yin was sitting on the platform. His spirits were calm, and he seemed composed.



“...”

When the others saw Lu Zhou, they bowed. “Pavilion Master.”

“Master.” His disciples bowed.

Lu Zhou looked up at Mingshi Yin. “What a mess! What kind of a joke is this? Get down.”

‘Flashy but without substance. He’s spending too much time on useless matters.’

Mingshi Yin shuddered and leaped off the high platform immediately. He sighed inwardly. ‘I can’t even act cool like master.’

Lu Zhou pointed at a spot in a corner of the southern pavilion.

Mingshi Yin bowed and said, “Understood.” Then, he walked over obediently.

The female disciples covered their mouths and stifled their giggles.

Little Yuan’er waved her hands and said, “Go for it, Fourth Senior Brother!”

“Go for it, Fourth Senior Brother!”

Duanmu Sheng sighed. He did not expect his Fourth Junior Brother who had always been weaker than him, was about to attempt the Nine-leaf stage. He could only blame himself for not working hard enough. Then, he turned to look at Zhu Tianyun with determination flashing in his eyes as he said, “I’ll have to trouble you to train with me again next time.”

Zhu Tianyuan’s fingers trembled slightly. With a slightly unnatural expression, he said, “Sure, sure...”

Meanwhile, the four Evil Sky Pavilion elders were feeling emotional as well. Although they knew Mingshi Yin’s cultivation base was profound and he liked concealing his strength, they did not expect Mingshi Yin to be the first to reach the Nine-leaf stage. They planned to observe the leaf-sprouting process to gain some experience. There was no harm for them to observe him.

Lu Zhou stroked his beard and said, “Begin.”

“Understood.” Mingshi Yin stepped into the center of the spot under the watchful eyes of the Evil Sky Pavilion’s members. He sat down with his legs crossed.

“I feel slightly embarrassed with so many people watching me... Should we do this in the room?”

Mingshi Yin had always cultivated in secret. This was his first time having so many people look at him. He felt awkward as though someone was peeping at him while he was showering.

Lu Zhou frowned slightly. He said in a low voice, “If you’re not going to do this, I’ll give this chance to another person.”

‘You’re not the only one who wants to reach the Nine-leaf stage.’

“Don’t... Master, I’ll do it right away!” Mingshi Yin flipped his palm up. A miniature Eight-leaf golden lotus avatar appeared above his palm immediately.

Lu Zhou said, “Focus. Elders, guard the four directions.”

The four elders bowed in unison. "Understood." They flew up and landed on top of the southern pavilion's great hall.

"Hua Yuexing."

"Here."

"Guard the highest point."

"Understood." Hua Yuexing wielded the Falling Moon Bow and flew to the top of the Evil Sky Pavilion.

"Everyone else, stand back."

The others bowed and retreated.

Mingshi Yin focused his mind. Golden radiant energy rings slid down from his avatar's waist.

Lu Zhou stroked his beard and nodded, watching Mingshi Yin. He was the only one standing in front of Mingshi Yin at this moment.

...

Meanwhile, in the red lotus domain.

In a dense forest in a valley several miles away from the Thousand Willow Monastery.

Yu Shangrong was sitting next to a huge tree. His Eight-leaf avatar hovered above his palm while his other held the Longevity Sword. His expression was calm as usual.

Without any hesitation, he raised his left hand slightly. The Longevity Sword buzzed before it flew out of its scabbard. It pierced through the heart of a flying beast above the forest.

Bam!

The flying beast was pinned to the tree.

Meanwhile, radiant energy rings were sliding down from the avatar's waist.

## **Chapter 727: The First Person To Sever His Lotus**

There were originally no roads in the world. Paths were formed when people walked over the same route over time. The question was: who was the first person to tread on the path? The answer was: Yu Shangrong.

Even in the red lotus domain, based on what Yu Shangrong knew, there was none who had severed their lotuses to reach the Nine-leaf stage yet. There were no such records in the history books.

Yu Shangrong, the second disciple of the Evil Sky Pavilion, the famous Sword Devil in Great Yan, was the first person to tread on this path.

He could only rely on himself without any external help. He did not believe Xia Changqiu, and hence, he had chosen this isolated and silent place.

The Primal Qi in the red lotus domain was denser. Unfortunately, there were more beasts, and he was more likely to be disturbed... However, these matters did not affect his determination to sprout a leaf. Having come this far, he had his fair of hardships, after all.

Radiant energy rings continued sliding down his avatar as eight leaves spun around it. The avatar shone with a golden light.

At this moment, flying beasts were beginning to gather. It seemed as though they had picked up the scent of some exquisite delicacy as they landed on the branches and looked down at the human.

A gust of wind blew through the forest, lifting Yu Shangrong's long hair.

A few birds flew down, trying to get closer.

With a whistle, the Longevity Sword shot out and accurately pierced through the birds' chests.

The birds' carcasses dropped to the ground immediately.

Yu Shangrong was unaffected, focused on sprouting his leaf.

As the energy rings dropped with increasing speed, the birds of the forest increased in numbers, and their sizes increased as well.

Yu Shangrong placed two fingers on his leg. His Longevity Sword buzzed, as though it was warning the beasts away.

He was an Eight-and-a-half-leaf cultivator, after all. Therefore, the first half of the leaf-sprouting process went smoothly. He almost did not feel any pressure at all.

As the energy rings picked up speed, the Primal Qi and vitality energy in the surroundings began to gather as well.

The beasts grew by devouring vitality energy. Powerful humans were one of their most favorite foods. However, powerful humans were one of the foes they were most wary of as well.

Energy continued to gather.

Yu Shangrong kept an eye on the beasts around him through the corners of his eyes.

His avatar spun. Due to the lack of a golden lotus, there was, naturally, no spinning golden lotus. As it spun, the vitality energy in the surroundings seemed to be pulled in by a vortex as they swiftly gathered toward the avatar.

This was Yu Shangrong's method of sprouting leaves.

Swoosh!

A gust of wind blew, and the forest seemed to sway with it.

...

In front of the Thousand Willow Monastery.

Wuwu and Ji Fengxing looked ahead with blank expressions on their faces.

“Did big brother leave?” Wuwu sounded reluctant to part.

“He won’t... He’s going to wait here for his Eldest Senior Brother to return. Moreover, there’s nowhere else for him to go,” Ji Fengxing said.

“What’s that?” Wuwu pointed at a huge beast in the distant horizons. It was flapping its wings as it flew toward the Thousand Willow Monastery.

“A flying beast! Notify the elders and the monastery master! Quick!”

“Oh.” Wuwu swiftly flew toward the mountain and informed Xia Changqiu and Tian Buji about this.

Xia Changqiu was not completely healed yet. Even with Wuwu healing him, he would need more time before he completely recovered. Upon hearing this news, he was shocked. “It’s not unheard of for beasts to attack human settlements, but beasts rarely appear in these parts. Why would they suddenly appear in the Thousand Willow Monastery?”

Tian Buji frowned and said, “Is somebody trying to harm us?”

Many things have happened lately. The Thousand Willow Monastery had offended Flying Star House and the Sky Martial Court. It was not impossible for them to resort to underhanded tricks.

Xia Changqiu shook his head and said, “It’s unlikely... If they wanted to harm the Thousand Willow Monastery, they could just send their men over. They don’t have to beat around the bush. Moreover, I’ve ordered for the news of our good relationship with the Ninth Temple to be spread. Although the Flying Star House is vexed, they won’t go head-to-head with Ninth Temple.”

Tian Buji nodded and found that Xia Changqiu’s words made sense. Hence, he said, “In that case, there’s only one other possibility... Someone is attempting the Nine-leaf stage in the Thousand Willow Monastery. The Nine-leaf cultivator has attracted the beasts.”

“Zhu Xuan?” Zhu Xuan was the only one who had sprouted the ninth leaf in the Thousand Willow Monastery recently.

“I don’t think so. Zhu Xuan left the Thousand Willow Monastery after sprouting his leaf and returned to the Ninth Temple. I think it’s someone else.”

Upon hearing their words, Wuwu who was standing next to them exclaimed “It’s big brother! Big brother is sprouting a leaf!”

Xia Changqiu and Tian Buji exchanged a look. Naturally, they knew who Wuwu was referring to.

“Pass down my order. Search the area within a 30-mile radius... We must find Yu Shangrong as quickly as possible.”

“Monastery Master, should we invite Elder Xu to emerge from his secluded cultivation?” Tian Buji asked.

“There’s no need for that. Elder Xu is a traditional man. It’s unlikely that he’ll be accepting of a foreign tribesman... I’ll explain the circumstances to him personally when he emerges from his cultivation.”

“Alright.” Tian Buji led hundreds of disciples and flew away from the Thousand Willow Monastery.

When they saw the huge beast in the skies, they gathered together.

Tian Buji looked at the dense forest in the distant valley and said, "Follow me."

"Understood."

Tian Buji led the way and flew toward the huge beasts.

...

Yu Shangrong's leaf-sprouting process was at the crucial stage at this moment. His avatar was spinning at its highest speed.

The vitality energy had gathered around him, causing the flying beasts above the forest to squawk in excitement and agitation.

The flying beasts flapped their wings, causing leaves to fall.

Yu Shangrong moved two fingers.

The Longevity Sword split into two, four, and eventually split into 1,000 energy swords that shot toward the flying beasts.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

The flock of flying beasts fell from the air while the other beasts dove.

The deafening squawks made Yu Shangrong frown slightly. However, his years of leaf-sprouting experience and methods of surviving dangerous situations made him exceptionally composed and determined.

Swoosh!

Yu Shangrong rose to his feet. His avatar was spinning on top of his palm while he held his sword with his other hand.

The golden swords in the skies seemed to form a cluster of energy that slashed at the diving birds.

"Quick."

Yu Shangrong focused on sprouting his leaf.

The energy radiant rings grew thicker. He could feel his eight golden leaves were already at their peak.

The smaller birds could not do anything about Yu Shangrong's energy swords.

Swoosh!

Yu Shangrong looked up.

A pair of wings that spanned dozens of meters covered the sky overhead.

Ordinary people would have been scared out of their wits if they had seen this. Only Yu Shangrong could still smile. "You think so highly of me. Interesting."

He pushed two fingers down.

His Longevity Sword moved, and the trees fell.

Traceless Sword.

He pushed away from the ground with a straight back. He flew backward gracefully at top speed.

His avatar continued to sprout its leaf.

The huge beast flapped its wings, stirring up a strong wind. Pebbles flew in the air as well.

Bam! Bam! Bam! Bam! Bam!

The pebbles stirred up the wind swept through the forest.

Yu Shangrong tapped his feet again as he activated his protective energy. The energy swords formed a wall in front of him.

The huge beast sensed the surging vitality energy. Its eyes glinted as it dove with its shining red talons.

At this moment, energy seals shot past Yu Shangrong from behind.

Soon after, energy sabers, energy arrows, palm seals, and script seals danced in the air. They were all red!

"Hm?" Yu Shangrong frowned slightly. "Should I start my second plan?"

The people from the Thousand Willow Monastery were here. If they decided to seize the opportunity and worked with the beasts to kill him now, it would be difficult for him to survive.

He had considered this possibility before so he had come up with a countermeasure as well. He looked in the direction of the Thousand Willow Monastery.

Even if he were to fail in sprouting this leaf, he would not allow his pride as the Sword Devil to be trampled on.

He was about to leave when a voice rang in the air. "I'll help you!"

Tian Buji launched a wave of energy that struck the huge beast.

Hundreds of disciples formed a wall.

Yu Shangrong flew lower and looked around him. Although Tian Buji had helped him, he was still wary. He stood with his back against a huge boulder as he absorbed the vitality energy from his surroundings at a higher speed.

Boom!

At this moment, the huge beast dove.

Hundreds of disciples were sent flying.

The eagle-like beast was unafraid of these inconsequential techniques. Tian Buji's ultimate technique was the only one that made it pause slightly. Occasionally, several of its feathers would fall off.

“Form the Formation!” Tian Buji ordered.

The disciples quickly gathered in the air and formed a Formation.

The Daoist Formation seal covered 100 meters in the air.

The beast screeched sharply. Its talons glinted in the light as it rammed into the huge Formation.

Boom!

A deafening boom resounded as the Formation was destroyed.

The Thousand Willow Monastery disciples were sent flying back, throwing up blood.

Tian Buji grunted. His blood essence boiled in his body.

Such a powerful beast!

“Retreat!” Tian Buji had no choice but to order a retreat.

The disciples pressed on their chests as they bit back the pain and swiftly retreated all the way until they were in front of the huge boulder that Yu Shangrong was leaning against.

“What should we do?” Wuwu flew out from behind. She raised her hand and threw a huge red radiant circle out. She seemed like a fairy of the forest at this moment. As soon as the radiant circle touched the ground, it covered the hundreds of disciples. Everyone’s injuries were visibly healing.

This wide-range healing technique caused her to stagger and pant heavily.

“Elder Tian, return to the Thousand Willow Monastery!”

“No, the huge beast will follow us. Our barrier can’t stop this huge beast!”

“However, we can’t keep this up forever.”

Without a Nine-leaf cultivator leading the assault, the others would only end up as fodder.

“Stop it!” Tian Buji made up his mind. He glanced in the direction of the boulder.

At this moment, a person moved toward them with a burst of movements. “I have a plan. Should we give it a try?”

“Elder Xu Su?”

“Isn’t Elder Xu Su cultivating in seclusion behind the mountain? This is great. He came just in time.”

The middle-aged man was the Thousand Willow Monastery’s third elder, Xu Su.

Elder Xu Su carried his sword as he ran forward. He did not fly. He was charging toward the boulder as his sword buzzed in his hand. “The problem will be gone if we kill this person!”

Xu Su’s target was Yu Shangrong who was leaning against the boulder, not the huge beast in the air!

Tian Buji was shocked. “Stop it! Elder Xu, don’t do something that’s going to harm the monastery!”

“Stop him!”

Upon seeing this, the disciples were shocked as well. It was impossible to stop Xu Su at this moment.

The sword in Xu Su’s hand shone brightly with red light as it shot toward Yu Shangrong’s face.

Primal Qi caressed Yu Shangrong’s face like a cold breeze. No matter how complicated or dangerous his environment was, Yu Shangrong could always maintain his composure. It was the same at this moment.

Yu Shangrong did not dodge. Instead, a faint smile appeared on his face. He saw the radiant energy rings at the avatar’s waist travel in the other direction. He said. “I see.”

The radiant ring reversed and returned to the waist.

With that, his ninth leaf had sprouted.

### **Chapter 728: The Sword Devil’s Lotus-less Avatar**

Yu Shangrong moved swiftly and decisively. As soon as he saw the ninth leaf that was shining with golden radiance like the other eight leaves, he clenched his hands. His avatar disappeared immediately.

He only needed a glance to see it was a Nine-leaf avatar without a lotus. He could sense there was something special about the avatar, but now was not the time to be studying his avatar so he retracted it. Moreover, he did not want to expose his avatar yet.

The dense vitality energy dispersed immediately.

At this moment, Elder Xu Su was upon him. “Surrender yourself!”

An energy sword shot forth.

Yu Shangrong moved his right hand slightly. His Longevity Sword vibrated as he swung it forcefully.

An energy sword swept out horizontally.

Bam!

Xu Su’s energy sword was destroyed. There was a slight change in his expression. He was shocked. He pushed away from the ground and attempted to fly higher so that he could work with the beast to take down this cultivator who was attempting the Nine-leaf stage. He was barely a few meters from the ground when Yu Shangrong’s silhouette shot past him.

There was a flash of light...

Swoosh!

Yu Shangrong did not even deign to look at Xu Su as he shot past. He gripped his Longevity Sword tightly as he shot toward the huge beast with a burst of movements.

The Thousand Willow Monastery disciples merely felt a breeze blowing past them when they saw shadows brandishing swords shooting in the air above them.

Every sword strike hit the beasts’ vital points.



The Thousand Willow Monastery disciples were stunned by this.

Meanwhile, in the forest, Xu Su slowly looked up and saw the magnificent display of dancing shadows in the air. Then, he looked at the wound the sword left on his stomach. The sword strike had slit it open, and blood was gushing out, dyeing his robes red.

“This... Is he an Eight-leaf cultivator?” Xu Su’s eyes widened as he fell backward.

Tian Buji saw this and shuddered. ‘Elder Xu Su is... dead?!’

Among the people present at this moment, Yu Shangrong was the only one who could kill Xu Su effortlessly while he attacked the huge beast at the same time.

Tian Buji was shocked. He gulped. The battle was too intense, leaving him no time to think about too many things.

The other disciples did not have time to worry about Xu Su’s death as well. They attacked the huge beast.

Yu Shangrong unleashed his Guiyuan Sword Technique without restraint.

The beast was a beast, after all. The colossal creature was nowhere as nimble as humans.

It flapped its wings but could not seem to hit its target.

Yu Shangrong went all out with his fighting style... He shot in all directions as he swung his sword around.

Feathers fell to the ground.

Tian Buji saw the opportunity and ordered, “Everyone, attack!” He joined his palms together and an energy barrier shrouded the Thousand Willow Monastery disciples, blocking the wind and rocks that were stirred up the beast’s wings.

Hundreds of them attacked at the same time. None of them seemed aware that Yu Shangrong was now a Nine-leaf cultivator. His swift sword strokes that moved like the wind impressed the others.

Finally, after Yu Shangrong’s series of attacks, the final dozens of energy swords landed on the huge beast’s belly.

A deafening cry resounded through the forest.

The huge beast flapped its wings. It adjusted its direction and shot into the distance.

Yu Shangrong leaped back and hovered in midair.

The Thousand Willow Monastery disciples were delighted to see the effect of Yu Shangrong’s attacks.

Tian Buji ordered, “After it!”

Yu Shangrong shook his head and said, “There’s no need to chase after it.”

“Why?” Tian Buji wondered. “This northern goshawk beast might drop a heart of life. One heart might be worth 200 to 800 years. It’s a great treasure.”

“Heart of life?” Yu Shangrong was puzzled.

Tian Buji explained, “Beyond human settlements, there are many unknown and powerful beasts. Humans are more insignificant than ants before them. They like to hunt humans, especially powerful ones, since feeding on such humans would improve their abilities. Some beasts would form a heart of life, and humans can replenish their lives if they consume the hearts.”

Something stirred in Yu Shangrong. He was indifferent to most things, but as a member of the Melilot Nation, how could he remain indifferent to such an important piece of information.

The citizens of the Melilot Nation had tried to fight against their destinies of being short-lived for generations. Although Yu Shangrong was at the Eight-leaf stage previously, he only had 500 years to live, at most. Currently, he had lived for more than 300 years. Even with his master’s longevity pill, he would not be able to overcome the great limit. He was now left with more than 100 years to live. Who would not want such a treasure?

However, Yu Shangrong had just attained the Nine-leaf stage. Perhaps, it was due to the lack of lotus, his Nine-leaf stage was extremely unstable. The Primal Qi in his sea of Qi was chaotic. At the same time, pulses of vitality energy leaked out. He would suffer a great loss if he gave chase now.

“If that’s the case, won’t everyone have long lives?” Yu Shangrong asked.

Tian Buji shook his head and said, “Impossible... Based on current research, cultivators can only live for 3,000 years at most. Even hearts of life can’t extend a person’s life past that.”

Yu Shangrong looked at the leaving beast silently.

If Yu Shangrong did not give chase, how could Tian Buji dare to give chase?

Tian Buji raised his hand. “Retreat.”

His disciples bowed in the air. “Understood.”

Wuwu wiped the sweat off her face and moved to Yu Shangrong’s side. She blinked her huge eyes and said, “Big brother, you’re amazing!”

Yu Shangrong merely smiled faintly at her and did not reply.

At this moment, a disciple cried out, seemingly flustered, “Elder Xu is dead! Elder Xu is dead!”

The disciples of the Thousand Willow Monastery landed and surrounded Xu Su’s corpse.

As soon as Tian Buji heard these words, he instantly reprimanded the disciple, “Why are you making a ruckus?! Carry his body back! I’ll personally explain this to the monastery master.” He glanced at Yu Shangrong before he cupped his fists and flew back to the Thousand Willow Monastery.

...

“Ding! Killed a target. Reward: 1,500 merit points. Domain extra: 1,000 merit points.”

When he heard this notification, Lu Zhou merely frowned slightly before he organized his thoughts again. He shifted his attention back to Mingshi Yin who was focused on sprouting a new leaf.

At this moment, Mingshi Yin's leaf-sprouting process was at a crucial point.

Naturally, he did not know that his disciple, Yu Shangrong, was already a Nine-leaf cultivator now. Moreover, his second disciple had broken through and sprouted the ninth leaf under difficult circumstances.

Mingshi Yin's golden lotus was spinning swiftly.

The leaf-sprouting process resembled Lu Zhou's determination.

The radiant energy rings continued sliding down.

Clearly, the power Mingshi Yin generated was not sufficient to make vitality energy and power surged out from the golden lotus, after which the energy rings would slide backward before sprouting the ninth leaf.

The members of the Evil Sky Pavilion looked at the golden lotus anxiously. They were more nervous than Mingshi Yin himself.

At this moment...

Mingshi Yin's hair whitened, and his skin wrinkled. The golden lotus had already devoured most of Mingshi Yin's longevity.

"Shu Si's Heart!" Lu Zhou reminded him.

Although Mingshi Yin was the disciple whom he worried about the least, his experience in attempting the Nine-leaf stage was still lacking.

Perhaps, due to his rapid aging, Mingshi Yin's attention was slightly divided. He grunted in response to his master's reminder. Then, he brought Shu Si's Heart out before he divided it into large chunks and consumed them quickly

The others were bewildered as they watched Mingshi Yin aged.

Those who had severed their lotuses sighed in relief while those who had not were beginning to worry about their futures.

This was especially true for Little Yuan'er. When she imagined herself being old and wrinkled, she felt a lump in her chest.

On the other hand, Si Wuya and Ye Tianxin accepted this more readily.

Ye Tianxin had experienced too many deaths and did not have much to ask from life. She would not be dejected even if she could not make it to the Nine-leaf stage.

Conch had never seen this before so she was curious about everything that she was seeing.

After consuming Shu Si's Heart, Mingshi Yin felt vast vitality energy expanding in his sea of Qi. However, that was swiftly devoured by the golden lotus. They negated each other.

Mingshi Yin felt his heart race. It was getting more and more intense by the moment.

The golden lotus became agitated after being supplied with longevity. It was nearing saturation.

At this moment, the four elders who guarded the four corners looked up.

“The beasts are here!”

“Everyone, get ready to defend!”

At the top of the Evil Sky Pavilion, the strong and healthy Hua Yuexing’s expression was solemn as she pulled on her Falling Moon Bow. Her bow and arrow were wrapped in energy. It complemented her slender figure.

The magnificent energy arrow shot toward a flying beast in the air.

Lu Zhou’s attention was caught by this as well.

Hua Wudao nodded and said, “As expected, the energy arrow of a Five-leaf grand cultivator is powerful.”

Hua Yuexing gave a rare smile. She nocked another energy arrow and attacked the flying beasts in the air.

Zuo Yushu said, “A huge beast might show up. The four of us will have to work together when it comes.”

“Alright.”

Hua Yuexing could deal with the small flying beasts on her own.

Then, the four elders shifted their gazes onto Mingshi Yin...

Mingshi Yin felt his golden lotus was at its peak. The speed of his improvement slowed drastically.

“Clear your head of distracting thoughts and calm your heart,” Lu Zhou said. His fourth disciple was young, after all.

Mingshi Yin drew a deep breath and stabilized his emotions.

Lu Zhou nodded. “Vitality energy is flowing out. Sprout the leaf.”

“Understood.”

### **Chapter 729: Improving the Evil Sky Pavilion’s Strength**

Indeed, Mingshi Yin felt the vitality energy flowing out. Hence, he tried to exert force on the energy rings. As expected, the golden radiant rings slid up from the golden lotus and moved toward the avatar’s waist. When they moved up, the avatar grew taller. The golden lotus enlarged as well.

An empty space between the eight golden leaves. When the energy ring shot back toward the outermost region of the golden lotus, there was a crisp sound.

Mingshi Yin could clearly see the ninth lift sprouting from the inner side of the golden lotus.

The ninth leaf had taken form!

In the air, there were flocks of flying beasts. Many beasts on the ground appeared around Golden Court Mountain as well.

The others were delighted.

“The huge beast is here...” The four elders looked up at the same time.

Mingshi Yin had already completed the sprouting of the ninth leaf so Lu Zhou stopped looking at him. He pushed away from the ground and shot into the sky. From up high, he saw the huge beast leading a flock of smaller beasts. Due to the distance, he could not tell what kind of huge beast it was.

They flew over the forest and the mountain peaks.

Golden Court Mountain was isolated to begin with. Where did these beasts come from? The Four Great Forests?

Moonlight Woodland was deep in the Misty Forest. Deep within Moonlight Woodland was a bottomless abyss. Ye Tianxin had seen countless beasts in the abyss and had obtained the fairfolk’s inheritance there.

‘Are these beasts... from the Moonlight Woodland?’

His host, Ji Tiandao, had been to the Four Great Forests before but not the deeper parts of Moonlight Woodland... It was too easy to lose one’s direction there. It was a sure way to seek death.

Lu Zhou stroked his beard and waited as looked at the incoming flock of flying beasts.

At this moment, Si Wuya exclaimed, “It’s a Fei Yi bird!”

“Fei Yi?” Lu Zhou repeated.

Si Wuya explained, “It’s recorded in one of the books in the western pavilion... This bird fights physically and is very fierce.”

Ever since the appearance of the beasts, Si Wuya had pored over the books about beasts in the western pavilion and even those in the Divine Capital’s Imperial city. Therefore, he was rather knowledgeable.

“Does it have a heart?” Lu Zhou asked.

“Every animal has a heart. However, this beast is mostly brawn. I don’t think it’s capable of forming a heart of life. I’m still searching for a concrete way to categorize them.”

Lu Zhou nodded. He was glad that he had a disciple like Si Wuya who saved him a lot of trouble.

As a transmigrator, he had been tormented by books in the past. He would hardly take a look at books.

Without a heart of life, there was no benefit in fighting the beast. It would even be a loss if he had to use a Deadly Strike Card. He muttered to himself for a moment before he rose even higher in the air.

Whizz!

The Nine-leaf Golden Lotus avatar looked down proudly from the sky.

With the Evil Sky Pavilion in the center, his 150-foot avatar expanded. The golden flaming golden lotus released energy halos into the surroundings. Then, it shrank and dissipated.

Lu Zhou looked in the direction from which Fei Yi was coming. His display of avatar made the other winged beasts retreat. As he expected, Fei Yi turned around and flew away. It disappeared in an instant.

It was as silent as a graveyard at the bottom of the Evil Sky Pavilion.

The others looked at Lu Zhou with fearful respect.

Meanwhile, the four elders and Hua Yuexing were filled with envy. They would never grow sick of looking at the golden flaming avatar.

Mingshi Yin stood up. "Hey, hey, hey, I'm a Nine-leaf cultivator! I became a Nine-leaf cultivator!"

Nobody entertained him. They were still in awe of the golden flaming avatar.

"Little Junior Sister, would you like to look at my Nine-leaf avatar?" Naturally, Mingshi Yin was reveling in his delight from successfully breaking through to the Nine-leaf stage.

Conch ignored him. She did not seem impressed. She pointed at their master in the sky and said, "Golden flames."

With these two words, Mingshi Yin seemed to wilt.

Lu Zhou landed.

The others bowed.

Mingshi Yin cleared his disappointment away. Then, he bowed and said, "Master, I'm fortunate enough that I didn't let you down. I'm now successfully become a Nine-leaf cultivator."

Lu Zhou nodded in satisfaction. "Very good. You're now a Nine-leaf cultivator, but why don't you look happy?"

"No, no, no... That's not it. I'm just feeling sad about you leaving, master." Mingshi Yin raised his sleeve and wiped away a drop of tear.

The other members of the Evil Sky Pavilion were speechless.

'How fake!'

Not to be outdone, Zhu Honggong stepped forward and exclaimed in shock, "Master, you're leaving?"

Lu Zhou looked at the others as he said. "There's now another Nine-leaf cultivator in Great Yan. I believe that more Nine-leaf cultivators will emerge soon enough. We can fend off beasts, but the hearts of men are what we should fear. With a Nine-leaf cultivator here, we can prevent the red lotus domain from invading."

The others nodded.

Lu Zhou looked at Mingshi Yin and said, "It's only a matter of time before the red lotus domain invades the golden lotus domain. I'm going to the red lotus domain mainly to retrieve your Eldest and Second

Senior Brother. My other objective is to get to the bottom of Conch's origins. Also, I want to prevent the red lotus domain from continuing their invasion." Apart from that, he had another objective as well. He wanted to search for the other half of his memory crystal and learn about the void seeds, among others.

"You're now a Nine-leaf cultivator... Look after Great Yan."

"I won't let you down, master." Mingshi Yin fell to one knee.

At this moment, the others looked at Mingshi Yin. Before they knew it, Mingshi Yin had become the strongest person in the Evil Sky Pavilion.

Lu Zhou continued, "You've just reached the Nine-leaf stage. Your vitality energy will flow out soon to restore your life... Give me your hand."

Mingshi Yin nodded and extended his hand.

Lu Zhou placed two fingers on Mingshi Yin's wrist. After examining Mingshi Yin, he was puzzled. Shu Si's Heart provided 800 years of life. If the golden lotus needed more than 1,200 years of life, Mingshi Yin would need to make up for more than 500 years with his own life span. However, it seemed like Mingshi Yin had only used up 400 years. With this, he speculated the years of life the golden lotus absorbed were not fixed. They ranged around 1,200 years.

"Reaching the Nine-leaf stage will grant you 200 years of life. From the One-leaf stage to the Eight-leaf stage, you'll gain 50 years at every stage. In total, you're given 600 years of life," Lu Zhou said.

Mingshi Yin was overjoyed. "Thank you for your teaching, master."

"Thank the heavens. If I have to put up with this old appearance, I'd have a mental breakdown!"

"I never knew that reaching the Nine-leaf stage with the golden lotus has this benefit," Duanmu Sheng said enviously.

Si Wuya shook his head. "Not exactly. After reaching the Nine-leaf stage, the great limit is no longer applicable. Since the beasts will drop hearts of life, those who severed their lotuses could hunt beasts to replenish their lives. There's not much of a difference between the two."

It was more difficult to reach the Nine-leaf stage with a golden lotus, and it was only natural for there to be some benefits.

After severing the lotus, it was much easier to reach the Nine-leaf stage, and it was only natural for cultivators to have to pay a higher price.

Lu Zhou flipped his palm. The Separation Hook appeared in his palm, and he sent it toward Mingshi Yin.

"I'm giving you the desolate-grade Separation Hook. I hope that you'll put it to good use."

The instant Mingshi Yin caught the Separation Hook, he sensed the changes in his weapon. He prostrated himself and worshipped his master as he said, "Thank you for the desolate-grade weapon, master!"

The others were so envious that their eyes nearly popped out from their sockets.

Lu Zhou had three more Shining Stones. Upgrading a weapon would reward him with 1,000 merit points. Therefore, he would gladly upgrade weapons. Before he had to leave, he was thinking about who to use it on to obtain the greatest value. He decided to use it to increase his disciples' strengths.

"You should go and stabilize your golden lotus now," Lu Zhou said.

"Understood."

The others cupped their fists at Mingshi Yin.

"Congratulations, Fourth Junior Brother."

"Congratulations, Fourth Senior Brother."

"Congratulations, Mister Fourth."

Mingshi Yin cleared his throat and puffed his chest as he said, "There's no need to be so formal... I'm still an easygoing person. If any of you wish to see a Nine-leaf avatar, all you have to do is tell me. By the way, did you manage to take a good look earlier? Should I manifest it again?"

Lu Zhou frowned. "Impudence." Usually, he did not have to worry about his fourth disciple. However, it seemed like his fourth disciples had already forgotten his place after his breakthrough.

"Uh... I'll return at once!" Mingshi Yin scurried back into his room.

Si Wuya bowed and asked, "Master, when are you planning to leave?"

Lu Zhou answered as he stroked his beard, "After three days."

"In that case, I'll check on the Sky Chariot."

Lu Zhou looked at the others again. 'Is Evil Sky Pavilion strong enough?' He felt their strength was far from sufficient.

If a karmic fire elite such as Fa Kong were to appear, it would be difficult for them to deal with such a person.

Fortunately, Si Wuya and Mingshi Yin were here to look after things. They would not be so dumb as to go head-on with such an elite.

As for the others...

"Pan Zhong," Lu Zhou said.

"Yes, Pavilion Master." Pan Zhong stepped forward.

"I'll give you Life Cutter. I hope that you'll put it to good use!"

Lu Zhou waved his sleeve. Life Cutter appeared in his hand and shot toward Pan Zhong.

Pan Zhong trembled. His eyes widened as he fell to his knees. He said excitedly, "Pan Zhong thanks the pavilion master for the gift of a heaven-grade weapon." After receiving Life Cutter, he let it drink his blood to claim ownership over it. He was greatly moved by this bona fide heaven-grade weapon.



“Ding! Life Cutter has acknowledged its owner. Reward: 1,000 merit points.”

“Zhou Jifeng.”

“I’m giving you High Void. I hope that you’ll put it to good use.” Lu Zhou waved his sleeve again.

‘High Void? That’s a super heaven-grade weapon!’ The instant Zhou Jifeng was called, he felt as though he was electrocuted. He stepped forward and fell to his knees. He raised both hands and said, “Thank you for the heaven-grade weapon, Pavilion Master.”

“High Void is actually a heaven-grade weapon. I’ve already destroyed the red runes, and it’s no longer a super heaven-grade weapon. You shouldn’t compare amongst yourselves,” Lu Zhou said.

### **Chapter 730: Preparations and the Endless Ocean**

There were many who would go all out just to get their hands on a heaven-grade weapon. Countless cultivators would have loved to possess a heaven-grade weapon, but they could not.

Although Zhou Jifeng and Pan Zhong envied the ten disciples of the Evil Sky Pavilion, that was all they could do. They did not dare to hope to possess weapons like the disciples. The closest they had come into contact with such weapons was when they entered the Imperial family’s inner warehouse when the Divine Capital was conquered. However, with so many weapons in the Evil Sky Pavilion, was there a need to take the weapons in the inner warehouse. Owning a heaven-grade weapon was something worthy of celebration itself; they would not dare compare among themselves.

Zhou Jifeng received High Void respectfully. He was so filled with emotions that it took a lot of effort for him to string a coherent sentence together. “Thank you, Pavilion Master. I will surely dedicate my life to the Evil Sky Pavilion and sacrifice my life if I have to.”

Their loyalties went up by 10% each.

With this, the loyalties of the younger members were basically above 80%.

Lu Zhou looked at the four members of the Old Age Pavilion.

The others followed his gaze.

‘What’s gotten into the pavilion master today? Why is he giving away weapons?’

“Leng Luo,” Lu Zhou said.

Leng Luo was not as expressive as the younger ones. Throughout his life, he had owned weapons of his own. This was also attributed to him cultivating Dao Invisibility. Often, when he felt that he could not defeat his opponent, he would choose to flee. His rich experience and wide knowledge resulted in his personality that was seldom affected by anything.

Lu Zhou looked at his remaining weapons. Unnamed, Jade Horsetail Whisk, Spotless Blade, Magistrate Brush, and Nine String Zither. Naturally, he could not give Unnamed away. It was one of his trump cards. This was also the only weapon that grew stronger as his cultivation base improved. Moreover, it was enhanced by the black runes. The impregnable Sky Shuttle was as brittle as a thin piece of paper before it.

The Jade Horsetail Whisk was used by both the Buddhist and Daoist sects. Knowing Leng Luo, he would not accept this. What about Spotless Blade? The Magistrate Brush was best used by someone from the Confucian school. It could work wonders as it wrote scripts and formed script seals. Nine String Zither? From the letter Jiang Wenxu left behind, this weapon most likely belonged to the Luo woman, or Luo Shiyin. However, this weapon was more suited for his tenth disciple, Conch. Lu Zhou once suspected that Conch was Luo Shiyin since she shared similarities with her. It also explained her awakening state. However, her longevity was completely untouched. The Imperial tutor, Jiang Wenxu, refuted that as well. Moreover, Leng Luo was not someone who would play the zither. By the process of elimination, the Spotless Blade was all that was left.

"I'll give you the Spotless Blade. I hope that you'll put it to good use." He waved his sleeve again.

The Spotless Blade flew into Leng Luo's hand.

"Super-heaven grade, Spotless Blade." Pan Litian looked at it enviously.

"Thank you for the gift of the super heaven-grade Spotless Blade, Pavilion Master." When Leng Luo lifted the Spotless Blade, he could not help but feel excited despite his years of experience and knowledge.

The others from the Evil Sky Pavilion had no opinions about this. It was only natural for the elders of the Evil Sky Pavilion to possess super heaven-grade weapons.

Zhou Jifeng and Leng Luo let their weapons drink their blood.

Lu Zhou was rewarded with 2,000 merit points. Then, he stroked his beard and said, "If there's nothing else, we'll call it a day." After he finished speaking, he left with his hands on his back.

The others bowed.

Hua Wudao raised his arm weakly, swallowing the words on the tip of his tongue. 'What about me? Are there no more weapons?' He sighed. He had no choice but to accept this reality.

Pan Litian walked to Leng Luo and said with a hint of jealousy, "You're lucky. You got a super heaven-grade weapon out of now. I feel pressured now."

Leng Luo retorted, "Haven't you always felt pressured?"

"I have my Wine Gourd Bottle, why would I feel pressured? The pavilion master sure is looking out for you," Pan Litian said.

"The other elders possess weapons of their own. It's understandable that the pavilion master chose to give me the Spotless Blade."

Nearby, Zuo Yushu held her Coiling Dragon Staff. Similar to Pan Litian, even if she were given another weapon, she might not accept it.

Hua Wudao was the only one who was sighing outside the southern pavilion.

...

After returning to his room, Lu Zhou called up the system dashboard and checked his remaining merit points and longevity.

Merit points: 12,040.

Remaining life: 218,985 days

Item: Deadly Strike Card x2, Critical Block Card x138 (passive), Binding Cage Card x5, Whizard, Bi An, Ji Liang, Qiong Qi, Disguise Card x2, Golden Taixu Mirror, Appearance Alteration Card x3, Shining Stone x3, Reversal Card x28.

Weapon: Unnamed, Jade Horsetail Whisk, Magistrate Brush, Nine String Zither.

With his Nine-leaf cultivation base, these items certainly seemed unpresentable compared to before.

A problem occurred to Lu Zhou.

The mount he obtained from the lucky draw had been brought to him by the system's power. When it came to Ji Liang, it had to travel to him on its own. After that, in regard to Qiong Qi, he had to personally tame it. When traveling to the red lotus domain, how was he going to bring his mounts with him?

Indeed, this was a problem.

Unfortunately, there was nothing from the system. It was not very intelligent as well. It could not answer his questions.

"I'll just try and summon them from the other side when the time comes."

It was useless for him to think about such matters at the moment. He was better off thinking about accumulating more things he could use to his advantage while dealing with the red lotus domain.

Lu Zhou noticed that he had Disguise Cards among his items... Now that he was a Nine-leaf cultivator, why would he need to disguise himself?

He extended his right hand.

A Disguise Card appeared in his hand.

This time, a message popped up on the interface. "May disguise the color of the avatar."

"Color?"

Realization dawned on Lu Zhou. 'You're worried that I'd be ganged up on when they find out that I'm a foreigner? Useless card. It can't even compare with the Appearance Alteration Card.'

There were not many usable item cards left.

The Thunderblast Card had always been useful since he could often use it to intimidate others.

It was priced at 5,000 merit points.

"Purchase one."

He purchased another Thunderblast Card just in case.

He was left with 7,040 merit points.

Lu Zhou thought about trying the lucky draws. However, when he looked at his 100 luck points, he shook his head. 'I should save them. Even the European Emperor won't be able to handle this.'

"I have three Shining Stones left. Who should I use them on?"

Ye Tianxin now had the desolate-grade Amorous Hoop, and Mingshi Yin had his desolate-grade Separation Hook.

Among his remaining disciples, Si Wuya was the most stable cultivator.

Although Duanmu Sheng was not as talented as the others, his redeeming virtue was his diligence. Lu Zhou decided to only give him a desolate-grade weapon when he was close to the Seven or Eight-leaf stage.

Zhao Yue's cultivation base had always been lagging behind. She might be busy governing the country. Moreover, she was far away in the Divine Capital.

Little Yuan'er?

Lu Zhou made a decision. He called Si Wuya and Little Yuan'er over.

The two of them seemed puzzled when they arrived at the eastern pavilion. They entered the room and saw their master sitting on the rush cushion. His eyes were closed as he rested his mind. His hands were placed on his lap.

"Greetings, master." The two of them kneeled.

Lu Zhou opened his eyes and said, "Leave your weapons here."

Si Wuya and Little Yuan'er exchanged a look.

"Master, what are you going to do?" Little Yuan'er asked. She was bolder than the others, after all.

"You'll find out tomorrow."

"Understood."

Both of them left their weapons before leaving the eastern pavilion.

Lu Zhou did not hesitate to use two Shining Stones.

The Peacock Plume burned in the fire and shone brilliantly.

The Nirvana Sash was clearly made of cloth, but it was not damaged from the burning flames.

Everything went smoothly.

Then, Lu Zhou entered his meditative state.

...

Early the next morning.

Lu Zhou heard two notifications.

“Ding! Obtained desolate-grade Peacock Plume. Reward: 1,000 merit points.”

“Ding! Obtained desolate-grade Nirvana Sash. Reward: 1,000 merit points.”

Lu Zhou returned the weapons to Si Wuya and Little Yuan’er.

Then, he returned to his meditative state.

...

Three days passed in just a blink of an eye.

After receiving the Peacock Plume, Si Wuya was filled with awe. He stroked his weapon as he muttered to himself, “How does master raise the grade of our weapons?”

He knew his Peacock Plume as well as Yu Shangrong knew his Longevity Sword. Just by touching it, he knew the Peacock Plume had received a huge upgrade.

“Golden flames?” Si Wuya recalled his master’s Nine-leaf avatar.

In the cultivation world, apart from forging flames that had to meet high requirements, materials were also important. The greater the skill and cultivation base of the blacksmith, the better the weapon’s quality would be.

There was no other explanation. Si Wuya could only attribute this to the golden flames.

...

When Si Wuya arrived at the eastern pavilion, he called out, “Master, the Sky Chariot is ready.”

A voice rang from the room, “I see. Tell Little Yuan’er and Conch to wait near the Sky Chariot.”

“Understood.”