

Disciples 731

Chapter 731: The Colossal Creature in the Mist

On the Evil Sky Pavilion's plaza.

The members of the Evil Sky Pavilion had gathered near the Sky Chariot. They did not dare to miss the pavilion master's departure to the red lotus domain.

Si Wuya, naturally, understood his master's intention when his master told him to summon Little Yuan'er and Conch. Clearly, his master intended to bring the two young girls with him.

Little Yuan'er had a profound cultivation base and had always been favored by their master. It was not surprising for him to bring her along. The others would not have any opinion about it.

Meanwhile, Conch was a red lotus cultivator. It was only natural that their master decided to bring along her as well.

After a brief wait, Lu Zhou appeared before them.

"Welcome, Pavilion Master."

"Welcome, Master."

Lu Zhou looked at them before finally shifting his gaze to the miniature Sky Chariot.

After inspection and cleaning, the Sky Chariot was now spotless. The Formation veins on its surface were painted over with black ink.

"There's no need for formalities."

Si Wuya said, "Master, I've inspected the Sky Chariot many times over and carved the red runes left by Jiang Wenxu on the helm. Most of the runes are damaged, but these can basically bring you to the red lotus domain."

"Very well." Lu Zhou nodded in satisfaction. He did not hurry onto the chariot. Instead, he looked at Si Wuya and asked, "What's the situation like in Great Yan's nine provinces?"

Si Wuya replied, "There are more beasts now... Many flying beasts are disturbing the human settlements, but the new Formations are in effect now. On top of that, we have ballistae. We have no problem dealing with flying beasts and land beasts. For now, huge beasts are rare, but with Fourth Senior Brother here, we shouldn't have a problem."

Lu Zhou nodded and turned to look at Mingshi Yin.

Mingshi Yin's appearance had almost completely reverted to its original state. This meant that the outflow of vitality energy and the years from the golden lotus were taking effect.

"Show me your avatar."

"Yes, master!" Mingshi Yin chuckled inwardly. 'Finally, the moment to look cool has arrived!'

Mingshi Yin stepped forward and summoned his avatar.

Whizz!

His 150-foot avatar appeared in front of everyone's eyes.

The others looked up.

Lu Zhou initially intended for Mingshi Yin to show him the miniature version of his avatar. However, there was no helping it since Mingshi Yin had already manifested his full-size avatar.

He noticed that Mingshi Yin's golden lotus leaves were not flaming. 'There's no karmic power?'

"Alright. Withdraw," Lu Zhou said.

Mingshi Yin looked around himself surreptitiously. He saw the others were craning their necks to take a look. Some of them seemed envious as well. Hence, he said, "It's alright, master. I can maintain this for a while."

"Hm?" Lu Zhou drew out the syllable to sound stern and disapproving.

"Oh." Mingshi Yin retracted his avatar.

The others regained their senses.

Lu Zhou said, "You should keep a low profile after reaching the Nine-leaf stage. You mustn't brag about this everywhere you go."

"I'll remember your teachings, master," Mingshi Yin said.

Despite his words, Lu Zhou knew Mingshi Yin would only show off here. Mingshi Yin had always been dependable when completing missions so there was no need to worry too much about him.

"Old Seventh."

"Yes, master."

"Although Zhao Yue is supported by the Empress Dowager, her cultivation base is on the weak side. You should assist her from the side after my departure," Lu Zhou said.

"Yes, master."

The nine provinces were all under the Nether Sect's control.

Si Wuya's reputation among the Nether Sect disciples was comparable to Zhao Yue. He was the best man for the job.

Lu Zhou turned to look at the others and said loudly, "I'll leave the Evil Sky Pavilion in your care."

The others bowed.

"We'll await your return, Pavilion Master."

Lu Zhou leaped onto the miniature Sky Chariot. "Yuan'er, Conch."

Little Yuan'er and Conch were already prepared for this. They boarded the Sky Chariot as well.

Little Yuan'er stood beside the helm and waved at the others. With a bright smile, she said, "Goodbye."

The Sky Chariot rose into the air and left the barrier.

...

The miniature Sky Chariot was much smaller compared to the cloud-splitting chariot. It could only carry a handful of passengers. However, since there were only three of them, it was rather spacious.

Lu Zhou stood beside the helm and looked at the scenery below.

The Sky Chariot was flying at an acceptable speed. It was comparable to the cloud-splitting chariot. It soon left Golden Court Mountain's area and flew toward the northern border.

...

Five days later.

The Sky Chariot crossed Rongbei and the desert, drawing close to the Endless Ocean at the northern border.

"Master, we're at the Endless Ocean." Little Yuan'er who was manning the helm looked at the boundless sea before them.

To be honest, the vast ocean that seemed to go on forever was worrying.

Little Yuan'er, who had always been bold, felt slightly fearful as well.

Lu Zhou nodded. "Higher."

"Mhm."

The Sky Chariot was now at the altitude where Primal Qi was the thinnest. Then, it maintained the altitude and flew forward.

Shortly after, the coastline of the golden lotus domain vanished behind them. They were now surrounded by water as far as the eye could see.

"Master, the red runes are shining!" Little Yuan'er turned the helm. When she circulated her Primal Qi, the runes glowed with a faint red light.

"Adjust the direction and increase the speed," Lu Zhou said.

"Mhm." Although Little Yuan'er had little experience of flying a chariot, she had no problem maintaining the flight and altitude.

"Ninth Senior Sister, you can do it! I can feel it! This is the right direction!" Conch clapped her hands.

...

Another five days passed in just a blink of an eye.

The Sky Chariot continued flying above the Endless Ocean.

They could not see anything. There were the occasional cloud drifting by and sea beasts circling under the Sky Chariot, but there was nothing else.

In the beginning, Little Yuan'er had been excited about this new experience, but as time passed, she began to feel bored.

At this moment, a low noise sounded from up ahead.

Shocked, Little Yuan'er said, "Master, I hear something."

Lu Zhou heard the low and unique sound as well.

The deep sound was rather unique. It seemed to come from the Endless Ocean. Also, it sounded like it was made by a musical instrument.

"There's a cloud of mist. I can't see a thing." Little Yuan'er was slightly worried.

Lu Zhou walked up to her and held the helm. He said faintly, "I'm right here. There's no need to worry."

Little Yuan'er and Conch were young, after all. It was understandable that they were frightened under such circumstances.

The Sky Chariot entered the cloud of mist.

They could hardly see their hands even if they held them in front of their eyes.

Lu Zhou could only determine their direction from the red runes on the helm.

The low and deep rang again from below.

Splash!

The mist seemed to roil as the sound of waves accompanied it.

Little Yuan'er and Conch held each other as they looked around anxiously.

At this moment, Little Yuan'er's air as a little ancestor was completely gone.

Lu Zhou frowned slightly. He raised his left hand. His fingers shone with blue radiance. The scripts of Abandon Wisdom hung between his fingers.

Abandon Wisdom!

He pushed down. A palm seal several times larger than the Sky Chariot parted the mist below.

As the palm seal dropped, the mist behind the palm seal gathered and obscured it from sight.

Splash!

Lu Zhou felt puzzled. 'What's in the cloud of mist on the Endless Ocean?'

He wanted to go down and take a look, but when he thought about the huge Chi Yao in the dark space, he gave up on that thought. He had killed Chi Yao because he was driven by his instinct to survive. If the Deadly Strike Card did not work, and a Nine-leaf cultivator could not deal with this unknown creature in the sea, would he not be rushing to his death?

At this moment, a louder cry from before reached their ears.

“Master, this monster seems to be chasing us!”

“Don’t fluster.” Lu Zhou was calm and composed as he dealt with this. His attitude greatly boosted the two young girls’ confidence. They calmed down as well.

The Sky Chariot continued to part the mist and flew faster.

Creak!

The Sky Chariot made a strange sound.

Lu Zhou frowned. He recalled Si Wuya had said the Sky Chariot could climb high enough, but defense was its weakness.

‘Is it breaking?’ Lu Zhou slowed down. The strange sound stopped.

However, a louder cry filled the air around the Sky Chariot. It was as though the colossal creature was right beside them.

To gain the power to hear everything so that we can hear voices in all realms at will.

This was the Clear Heavenly Ears.

Lu Zhou’s ears glowed with a faint blue light that lit the surroundings.

He heard the sound of the seawater, huge waves, and the snapping of the beasts.

Lu Zhou stopped using his power.

The Eight Trigrams spread out from under his feet. Ten scripts emerged from his waist: heaven, earth, life, death, water, fire, being, non-being, separation, and combination. The ten shining golden scripts flew into the surroundings.

This was the Six Compatible Seal, an original technique developed by Hua Wudao.

The Six Compatible Seal formed a circle that continued to expand. The aim was not to inflict damage but to disperse the mist around them. Its range was good enough.

With Lu Zhou’s Nine-leaf strength, the Six Compatible Seal’s range was hundreds, or perhaps, 1,000, meters.

Lu Zhou looked down. He saw an unimaginably huge dorsal fin slide past his eyes.

“A whale?” Lu Zhou wondered.

Little Yuan’er and Conch were completely stunned. They had been flying for a long time. The beast was not chasing after them! It was just that it was so huge that all this time they had merely been flying from its tail to its head. Up until now, they had not overtaken the huge beast.

Chapter 732: Arriving at the Red Lotus Domain

Although Lu Zhou was knowledgeable with his 1,000 years' worth of memories and insight, he was still deeply awed by the colossal creature.

It called out again in low groans.

Little Yuan'er and Conch were still clinging onto each other tightly. Their eyes were brimming with awe as well.

One would always regret not being prepared after the fact. At this moment, Lu Zhou wondered if he should have brought Si Wuya along. If Si Wuya were here, Si Wuya could have helped him identify this oceanic beast. Why did he bring two inexperienced young girls?

The Six Compatible Seal faded away. The mist around them gathered around them and obscured their visions.

Little Yuan'er released her energy to cover the miniature Sky Chariot. At the very least, the view in their direct vicinity was clear.

The sounds of the waves, the groans, and snapping jaws continued to ring in their ears.

"Survival of the fittest. That's the unchanging truth of nature."

Big fish preyed on smaller fish while smaller fish preyed on krill.

Lu Zhou piloted the Sky Chariot and sped forward.

Splash!

Lu Zhou unleashed his Six Compatible Seal again.

The circle spread outward.

Lu Zhou looked down.

Around the colossal creature, there were various oceanic beasts engaging in a battle royale.

'It's not a whale? It looks nowhere close to a whale at all.'

In comparison, those other beasts would not even be enough to fill the gaps between this colossal creature's teeth. Humans were too insignificant to mention before the beasts as well.

Hundreds and thousands of beasts leaped into the air, stirring up huge waves.

"They can even manage short flights," Lu Zhou said in amazement.

Some of the oceanic beasts could leap so high it was almost as if they could fly. It was when they leaped up that they noticed the Sky Chariot cutting its way across the mist. Many of them tried to ram against the Sky Chariot.

At this moment, the colossal beast leaped up and a rainbow arc streaked across the air.

Lu Zhou flipped his palm. A Deadly Strike Card appeared in his hand. Up until now, this card had never failed him. 'Can this card kill this colossal beast?'

While he was hesitating, Lu Zhou heard a string of notifications from the system.

“Not suggested to kill this target. Killing this target will deplete the system’s energy and it won’t be able to recover. Killing it will lead to various unpredictable outcomes.”

‘Unpredictable outcomes? Does this mean that I can’t kill this beast?’

The colossal beast and the other oceanic beasts around it were the obstacles that stood between the red lotus domain and the golden lotus domain.

If he killed this creature, the red lotus would be able to invade the golden lotus domain much more easily. However, Lu Zhou did not know if this was the unpredictable outcome the system was referring to.

Moreover, if more beasts were attracted to the area after he killed this colossal beast, it would spell great trouble for him. He only had two Deadly Strike Cards. It was not wise to poke a hornet’s nest.

As he pondered on this matter, the mist gathered around them seemed to grow denser. Their vision was once again obscured.

Lu Zhou’s thoughts snapped back to the present, and he withdrew his item card.

Lu Zhou brought the Sky Chariot higher to avoid those oceanic beasts that could almost fly.

The Sky Chariot kept climbing until it was at the highest point possible. The Primal Qi was extremely thin here.

He sent a palm strike down. The palm seal parted the mist and dropped down.

At this moment, the deep groans of the beast rang from behind them.

With this, the Sky Chariot was finally out of the colossal beast’s range...

Although a Nine-leaf cultivator was powerful, he was too insignificant to mention in the face of this colossal beast.

There were truly all kinds of wonders in the big wide world. The expanse of the sky and lands were extolled, and the brightness of the sun and the moon were praised.

If it were not for this Sky Chariot and his Nine-leaf cultivation base, he would not have the chance to see this colossal creature at all.

“The mist is gone.”

The Sky Chariot finally emerged from the mist. However, they were presented with a new challenge.

Bolts of lightning flashed in the sky accompanied by deafening claps of thunder. Strangely, there were no clouds in sight.

Soon after, the sun set, and darkness fell.

Lu Zhou had a firm grip on the helm as his energy wrapped around the Sky Chariot.

The Sky Chariot could not be damaged. If it was, Lu Zhou would have to carry his two disciples as he flew. Humans could hardly maintain flight at this height. Flying at a low altitude would also be dangerous since they risked running into oceanic beasts.

...

The Sky Chariot flew in the turbulent wing as the lightning bolts flashed for three days.

If Lu Zhou did not have a profound cultivation base and could not shield the chariot with his energy during the past three days, the Sky Chariot would have fallen apart a long time ago.

After difficult weather passed, the Sky Chariot was now flying in clear sky with nary a cloud in sight with the sea below it.

The sun that hung proudly in the sky shone on the Sky Chariot, seemingly able to clear away the heaving feelings in its passengers' hearts.

At this moment, Little Yuan'er volunteered to man the helm. "Master, allow me."

Lu Zhou allowed her to do it. With his cultivation base, he would have no problem with maintaining the Sky Chariot's flight for a long time. However, the mental strain made him feel slightly numb.

Lu Zhou stepped aside, sat down, and closed his eyes.

"Master... How far away is the red lotus domain?" Little Yuan'er asked as she steered the Sky Chariot.

"I don't know," Lu Zhou replied.

"Will the red lotus domain be as beautiful as Great Yan?"

"I don't know," Lu Zhou replied.

Little Yuan'er looked ahead and asked, "Junior Sister Conch, do you know?"

"It's as beautiful as Great Yan," said Conch.

"I nearly forgot... You're cultivating the red lotus, and you're from the red lotus domain. In that case, do you still remember what the red lotus domain looks like?" Little Yuan'er asked.

Although they could not see the shoreline yet, it was much more comfortable flying in such conditions compared to flying in the mist or in the dark.

"I... I don't remember," Conch replied timidly as she looked at the vast ocean and endless clear sky.

"Don't worry... I'm here. If anyone were to bully you, I'll stand up for you. Moreover, master is here as well. He'll stand up for you!" Little Yuan'er said.

"Thank you, Ninth Senior Sister."

The two young girls continued chatting merrily.

...

The Sky Chariot continued flying for another three days.

When the sun was once again halfway out of the horizon, Little Yuan'er had completely lost all sense of direction. In her opinion, the spot from which the sun was rising was east. The shoreline would surely be somewhere where the sun was.

Little Yuan'er squinted. She placed her hand on her forehead and looked ahead.

At this moment, Conch woke up. When she saw Little Yuan'er seemed slightly tired, she said, "Ninth Senior Sister, I can take over."

"Mhm." Little Yuan'er stepped aside.

When Conch took over, the Sky Chariot suddenly dropped!

Swoosh!

The intense swaying and rocking woke Lu Zhou up from his meditative state. He placed his hand on the deck as rich energy appeared around the Sky Chariot like a huge bubble before it finally stabilized in midair.

Little Yuan'er started. She patted her chest.

Conch said apologetically, "I'm sorry. I didn't do it on purpose..."

"Channel your Primal Qi into the helm," Lu Zhou said.

"Oh." Conch's Primal Qi surged.

Lu Zhou retracted his own Primal Qi; the energy around the Sky Chariot disappeared.

Conch displayed her stunning and quick ability to learn. In the beginning, the flight of the chariot was unstable. However, she quickly mastered the technique to pilot the chariot. After a while, it was as though she had flown the chariot countless times before.

"What's that?" Little Yuan'er pointed at a black spot on the horizon.

Lu Zhou had been resting for a few days. He was refreshed. He stood beside the helm and looked down.

"A beast."

There was a huge horde of oceanic beasts. They were like ants on land. Then, these oceanic beasts leaped into the air toward the Sky Chariot.

"Master..." Little Yuan'er's expression changed.

"There's no need to worry," Lu Zhou glanced at the beasts and said, "Fly higher."

The Sky Chariot rose.

The beasts were getting closer. Some of them were as big as elephants.

Conch took the conch from her waist and blew on it as she piloted the Sky Chariot. With the help of her Primal Qi, the sound from the conch spread downward.

Countless oceanic beasts dropped back down into the sea, creating splashes. Then... all of them leaped out of the sea in unison, drawing a breathtaking arc in the air before they dove down again.

"You can control them?" Lu Zhou asked.

"Master, I merely greeted them. They bear no ill will."

Lu Zhou nodded and looked ahead.

The sun was high in the sky.

"Master, the red runes on the helm are shining brighter now," Conch said after she saw the changes in the red runes.

Lu Zhou turned to look at the runes before moving his gaze up ahead again. The coastline... had finally appeared. It looked like a thin black line that gradually grew thicker as they moved forward.

Chapter 733: Killing the Sky Martial Court's Red Lotus Cultivator

They were here. After flying for a fortnight and crossing the Endless Ocean, they were finally at the other side.

However, Lu Zhou could not gauge the distance they had covered.

Little Yuan'er and Conch applauded in excitement, leaping and cheering.

Lu Zhou heaved a long sigh. Although there had been close calls during the journey, they managed to overcome it.

The Sky Chariot that Luo Shiyin left behind was quite useful. The flight did not take too long.

The greatest obstacles between the golden lotus domain and the red lotus domain were the mist and the colossal beast. It was no wonder the Sky Martial Court invented the Sky Shuttle to carry red lotus karmic fire elites to cross the ocean. It was no wonder... that the Sky Shuttle's defenses were terrifyingly strong.

...

At this moment, the coastline was right before them. Even so, they still had to fly for some time before arriving.

The cliffs, the walls, the reefs... The forests on the shore appeared before them.

"Master, look!" Little Yuan'er pointed to the right.

He looked in the direction she pointed. There were several wooden platforms along the shore.

"Fly lower."

"Mhm."

The Sky Chariot slowly descended and flew toward the coast.

Swoosh!

A huge projectile shot out from one of the shot platforms. It whistled as it sailed through the air.

“Master, allow me.” Little Yuan’er circulated her Primal Qi and condensed it into energy that shielded the Sky Chariot.

Bam!

Her energy blocked the projectile.

Little Yuan’er was a Seven-leaf Nascent Divinity realm cultivator, after all. It was not surprising that she was capable of deflecting this attack.

The ballista was not weak as well. A deafening boom rang in the air as it landed.

On the platforms in the forest, dozens of cultivators leaped into the air to meet them. Two of them were clearly faster than the others. They flew in front while everyone arranged themselves in rows behind them.

“They’re from the golden lotus domain! Take them down!”

“The elder was right. The golden lotus domain is much faster than we are. They’re sending their men over to invade!”

Lu Zhou stood beside the helm and looked at the duo. As he expected, the Eye of Truth did not work on them. He could see no information about them. He did not know the reason for this, but it was not important. With his Nine-leaf cultivation base, he could easily gauge his opponents’ strength. Moreover, even if there were elites, all he needed was a single card.

“I’m Song Gang of the Sky Martial Court... Invaders, I demand that you surrender yourselves,” the man on the left said.

“Get out of the way,” Little Yuan’er said with a smile.

Song Gang looked at Little Yuan’er on the Sky Chariot. He did not expect the invader to be so young. ‘Is there no one else in the golden lotus domain? The elders are right. The golden lotus domain is unbelievably weak.’ He, like many others, was unaware of Fa Kong and Gu Ming’s deaths since the higher-ups kept them a secret.

This was to keep the masses calm and to retain the peace. Moreover, they would not openly admit that they had made a mistake.

“Little girl, do you know the Sky Martial Court?”

“I don’t care if you’re the Sky Martial Court or the Ground Martial Court, I’m telling you to move! Don’t you understand what I’m saying? Master, I don’t think they understand me,” Little Yuan’er said as she pointed at Song Gang.

Song Gang. “...”

The man on the right was more polite. He cupped his fists together and said, “I’m Song Chu of the Sky Martial Court. I’m in charge of guarding the Endless Ocean’s shore. Are all of you from the golden lotus domain?”

Lu Zhou raised his hand as a signal for Little Yuan'er to step back. He looked at Song Chu and asked, "You're from the Sky Martial Court?"

"That's right. We're, indeed, from the Sky Martial Court. old mister, it's only natural for you to not know about Sky Martial Court since you've just arrived in the red lotus domain... The Sky Martial Court is a direct subordinate of the Great Tang Dynasty. It's the strongest sect there is, be it in Great Tang or in the foreign lands. We know about the existence of the golden lotus domain and are informed of some basic information. There's only one Nine-leaf cultivator in the golden lotus domain... To tell you the truth, in the Sky Martial Court alone, there are two Nine-leaf cultivators." After he finished speaking, he looked at Lu Zhou intently, hoping to see an expression of fearful respect on Lu Zhou's wizened face. Alas, he was destined to be disappointed.

Lu Zhou said expressionlessly, "Are you one of them?"

Song Chu shook his head. "I'm only an attendant in the Sky Martial Court. I don't dare to compare myself to a Nine-leaf cultivator."

Lu Zhou shook his head, as though he found this was a shame. However, it was only natural that Nine-leaf cultivators would not be a coast guard. It was a low-ranking post.

"Are you going to stop us from landing?" Lu Zhou asked.

Song Gang was not as patient as Song Chu. He said gruffly, "Enough talking. The Sky Martial Court has ordered for everyone from the golden lotus domain to be imprisoned and wait for the elders' judgment."

The Sky Martial Court disciples behind Song Gang flew forward and formed a line next to him.

Song Chu said, "Old mister... To save yourselves pain, why don't you come with us?"

Dozens of cultivators gathered around them, manifesting their Ten Worlds avatars.

Lu Zhou was puzzled. Why would the cultivation methods, avatars, and cultivation philosophies in the red and golden lotus domains be similar? Back on earth, even the languages and cultures on both ends of the Pacific Ocean were starkly different, let alone for places this far away from each other. Could it be... that the golden lotus domain and the red lotus domain were once a single domain?

The concept of continental drift appeared in Lu Zhou's mind again. At the bottom of the 100,000-foot-deep abyss, they could reach the red lotus domain by traveling through the black water. Judging from the map Si Wuya drew and the old parchment, the black water was where the two domains overlapped. There was a hollow and dark space there.

"This way..."

The voice pulled Lu Zhou back to the present.

Lu Zhou looked at the unbelievably weak Ten Worlds avatars before him. He was not interested in wasting his time on them. Hence, he asked, "Who has the highest authority in the Sky Martial Court?"

Song Gang said loudly, "Are you someone who can speak to the court master?"

Song Chu said again, "Old mister, you're already surrounded. Even if the sole Nine-leaf cultivator from the golden lotus domain were here, he couldn't save you."

Lu Zhou frowned slightly.

Just as Little Yuan'er had said, these men did not understand what was said to them.

Lu Zhou waved his sleeve. "Yuan'er."

"Yes, master."

"Clean this up."

Little Yuan'er was immediately invigorated. In Great Yan, she had always been restricted. This was the first time her master had given her such a command. She pushed away lightly from the chariot and flew out.

Song Chu and Song Gang shook their heads at the same time. "You don't know your place."

Two red lotus avatars appeared in the air. It was a Three and Five-leaf avatar.

When the avatars appeared, Little Yuan'er giggled. She faded out of focus as her Nirvana Sash shot toward the two cultivators like a rain dragon. Then, she gave the duo a firm kick.

Bam! Bam!

The two of them plummeted from the sky. Exclamations of shock could be heard among the members of the Sky Martial Court.

'How can this young girl be so powerful?'

"Kill her!"

Dozens of cultivators advanced to attack.

Little Yuan'er summoned her avatar.

Her Seven-leaf golden lotus avatar grew before releasing a blast of energy. The dozens of Ten Worlds avatars before herself were sent flying, and the cultivators spat out blood. None of them was a match for Little Yuan'er.

Little Yuan'er did not trouble herself with the cultivators in the Divine Court realm and below. Instead, she shot toward the two Nascent Divinity realm cultivators. She moved with her Cloud Treading Boots on her feet and the Nirvana Sash around her waist.

Boom!

In the next second, Little Yuan'er was above the head of the Three-leaf avatar. She stepped on the red lotus avatar.

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

"Retreat!"

“Fall back! Notify the elders. The golden lotus domain has invaded!”

At this moment, Song Chu finally realized the precarious situation they were in. “Stop her!” After saying that, he turned around and sped away.

Alas, Little Yuan’er was a Seven-leaf cultivator. On top of that, she had the Cloud Treading Boots and her Seven Stars Cloud Treading Steps. How could a puny Five-leaf cultivator escape from her?

With her Nirvana Sash, Little Yuan’er moved at lightning speed as her golden lotus blossomed...

The Ten Worlds avatars fell into the sea.

The oceanic beasts appeared and devoured the fallen cultivators mercilessly.

Little Yuan’er was everywhere. Dozens of cultivators were immediately struck out of the sky. Then, she pursued Song Chu. With several bursts of movement, she appeared before Song Chu, blocking his path.

Song Chu was shocked. ‘If this young girl is a Seven-leaf cultivator, then, the old man is... is an Eight-leaf cultivator?!’

Little Yuan’er smiled and stomped her feet.

Bam!

Lu Zhou raised his hand and said, “I want him alive.”

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

“...”

This little girl was too unrestrained. She had no intention of letting any of them survive.

“Master... I... I didn’t do that on purpose... I didn’t know he was so weak,” Little Yuan’er said sheepishly.

Chapter 734: Who’s the Invader?

Lu Zhou intended to interrogate a local cultivator to obtain more information about the red lotus domain such as its basic structure, number of sects, or who the ruler was, among others. If he knew who the leader was, he could just directly go to the leader. It was stated in the art of war that one should always aim for the king. If one could capture or kill the enemy’s commander, the remaining army would crumble of its own accord. This way, the red lotus domain’s plans of invading the golden lotus domain would be foiled. He thought this was a rather feasible plan. However, since they did not manage to capture anyone alive, he would have to look for someone else. The information he wanted was not a great secret after all, He could always just ask around when he arrived at a human settlement.

“Forget it. Just listen to my orders when we enter the human city. Don’t make any rash movements.” Lu Zhou felt these words were not enough. Although the young girl had improved by leaps and bounds, she was not too familiar with the workings of the world or the conflict between the golden lotus domain and the red lotus domain. Therefore, he added, “You mustn’t reveal your energy or your avatar as well.”

“Oh, got it.” Little Yuan’er seemed to know she had made a mistake since she joined her palms together in a pleading gesture.

Lu Zhou turned to look at the Sky Chariot. There was a new problem. Where should he park the Sky Chariot? When he discovered the human settlement was still some distance away, he decided to take a look before deciding on anything.

“Let’s go.”

...

The Sky Martial Court.

Mo Buyan hurried into the main hall. He bowed and said, “Elder Qiu, the Song brothers guarding the Endless Ocean are dead.”

Elder Qiu’s eyes snapped open in shock. He asked, “What about the others?”

“Song Gang and Song Chu were in the fifth team. Team one to team four guard the northeastern direction. Team five to team eight guard the southeastern direction. When the others hurried to the scene, Song Gang and Song Chu were already dead.” Mo Buyan seemed to have trouble accepting this as well.

“Isn’t General Zhuo there?” Elder Qiu wondered out loud, puzzled.

“Zhuo Xing is from the palace, after all. He’d wished for nothing more than for the sects to fight amongst themselves. The palace has always seized opportunities like this. If we haven’t been supporting them in secret...”

Elder Qiu narrowed his eyes and raised a hand to cut him short. He said, “Don’t spout nonsense.”

“I’ve spoken wrongly.”

“To be able to deal with team five in such a short time and openly challenge the palace and the Sky Martial Court... I can’t think of anyone else apart from invaders from the golden lotus domain. Send someone to investigate this in secret. Also, notify the palace about this. Every cultivator entering and leaving the cities should be examined,” Elder Qiu said.

“I’ll get to it immediately.” Mo Buyan left the great hall.

Elder Qiu sighed. He looked at the door and muttered to himself, “Perhaps, the golden lotus domain is much more powerful than we expected. The invaders... are here.”

Who was the invader?

...

Lu Zhou remembered the outline of the map that Si Wuya had sketched. Moreover, Luo Shiyin’s notes mentioned that the red lotus domain and the golden lotus domain were similar. If that was the case, it would take some time before they encounter a human settlement.

The Sky Chariot flew in the sky.

At this moment, the Sky Chariot was slightly too slow for his liking. It was not spacious as well. It did not offer the best experience while crossing the Endless Ocean as well. However, this was their only Sky

Chariot that would serve as their only means to return to the golden lotus domain. They could not destroy it nor could they carry it everywhere with them. Considering the fact that Luo Shiyin left this object behind 300 years ago, there would likely be more advanced Sky Chariots in the red lotus domain. The difficulty of building a Sky Shuttle would be much greater than that of building this miniature Sky Chariot.

The three of them crossed several thousand miles of mountains, rivers, and forests before they saw the human cities, villages, and residential zones.

After a while, Lu Zhou found a cave. He placed the Sky Shuttle inside the cave and sealed the entrance.

Feeling assured, three of them entered the city and found an inn.

Then, Lu Zhou sent Little Yuan'er to obtain information about this city and its location.

...

Little Yuan'er returned around dusk.

"Master, I've asked around... Wait, let me have a drink of water..." Little Yuan'er poured herself a glass of water right after she entered the room. After quenching her thirst, she said, "This is a small city in Longyou Circuit."

"Longyou?" Lu Zhou stroked his beard and pondered.

"I hate the name. Aside from the foreign tribes, everything is under Great Tang's control. Great Tang is divided into ten circuits. There's the Guannei Circuit, Jiangdong Circuit, Jiangbei Circuit, Jiannan Circuit... The capital is in Guannei Circuit. This is Longyou..." Little Yuan'er drank some water again.

Lu Zhou nodded slightly. He had a rough idea now. He asked, "Are there any major sects around here?"

"From what I heard at the relay station, the Flying Star House sounds powerful. They killed the luan... There are many who wish to join the Flying Star House," Little Yuan'er replied.

'The Flying Star House? What a small world.' Lu Zhou remembered that Gu Ming, whom he had killed, mentioned that Great Yan's Imperial tutor, Jiang Wenxu, was from the Flying Star House. If they could kill the luan, they were, indeed, powerful. However, he took these rumors with a pinch of salt.

In Great Yan, the ten great sects were said to be powerful as well, but they still paled in comparison to the Three Sects. The rise of the Fiend Sects could not compare to Yu Zhenghai's Nether Sect at all.

Then, Little Yuan'er told him everything that she had learned.

Lu Zhou nodded and committed the information to memory.

Conch supported her chin and blinked as she listened to Little Yuan'er's report. In the beginning, she managed to stay awake. However, as she listened, she slowly rested her head on the table and fell asleep.

After listening to what Little Yuan'er had to say, Lu Zhou now had a basic understanding of the red lotus domain. Aside from learning about the Sky Martial Court and the Flying Star House, there were still organizations such as the Blood Sun Temple, the Thousand Blades Temple, the Ninth Temple, and the

Twelve Sects of Cloud Mountain. The restrictive power of the palace was not as great as compared to Great Yan. However, it was not to be underestimated since it managed to remain in power up to this day. Apart from that, there were also more foreign tribes around Great Tang, but none of them dared to invade Great Tang. Things were comparatively peaceful here.

The problem was... How was he supposed to find Yu Zhenghai and Yu Shangrong?

“Did you find out anything about your Eldest and Second Senior Brother?” Lu Zhou asked.

Little Yuan’er shook her head.

Lu Zhou wondered inwardly, ‘Yu Zhenghai and Yu Shangrong have killed many red lotus grand cultivators, but they weren’t exposed. The issue of the golden lotus domain isn’t a common topic of conversation among the people yet.’

Among the sects, the Blood Sun Temple was the nearest. Moreover, they had lost one karmic fire elite, and they did not have many monks. They would be a relatively easy target.

With his Deadly Strike Card, Lu Zhou was not worried about opponents with possibly more profound cultivation bases than his. With this, he recalled the colossal creature in the Endless Ocean. He could not help but wonder if humans could reach the stage of that colossal creature through cultivating?

...

The next morning.

Lu Zhou and his two disciples left the inn. After they found out the Blood Sun Temple’s location, they left the city. Upon their exit, they noticed that the process was stricter than when they had entered. However, it posed no problem to them.

...

Outside the city.

Lu Zhou tried to summon his mount. “Whitzard.”

After waiting for a while, there was still no sign of Whitzard.

Lu Zhou told Little Yuan’er and Conch to stay close as he called up the system dashboard and checked the information of his mount.

Whitzard (rushing to the red lotus domain)

“Qiong Qi”

Qiong Qi (insufficient ability, could not head to the red lotus domain.)

“Ji Liang.”

Ji Liang (rushing to the red lotus domain...)

Lu Zhou thought of summoning Bi An here as well. However, when he considered that they would have to return to the golden lotus domain again, he decided to not summon Bi An to save it the trouble of going back and forth.

He made his decision after considering Yu Zhenghai and Yu Shangrong. Two would be enough. Whizard could carry three riders, and Ji Liang could carry two. It was just right.

Lu Zhou sighed. 'I don't think parents would have this much trouble. Being a master is much harder than being a parent.'

With no mounts available, they had no choice but to fly themselves.

Lu Zhou looked up and saw some beasts circling in the sky. He was puzzled. 'What's the red lotus domain using to prevent the beasts from coming nearer? There were more beasts during the night, but they couldn't break the city's barrier.'

He turned to look at the city wall, and he looked at the towering walls. It was 100-meter tall so he could not see the ends on either side. When he looked up, he could see a web-like pattern halfway up the wall.

'Formation veins?' It was too far away for him to see.

Formation veins were largely used on weapons, flying chariots, and Formations on the ground. It was rare to see them being used on city walls. Indeed, the red lotus domain was much more advanced than the golden lotus domain. He would have to reach a consensus with the red lotus domain's cultivators as quickly as possible.

If a war were to break out, the golden lotus domain would be hard-pressed to fend off the red lotus domain with its combined strength.

"Let's go." Lu Zhou took flight made his way to Blood Sun Mountain.

Little Yuan'er and Conch responded and followed him.

...

Two days later.

The three of them landed at the foot of Blood Sun Mountain.

Without mounts, they took longer than usual. They gained a better understanding of the red lotus domain's surroundings along the way. The plants, mountains, and rivers were lusher in the red lotus domain. The beasts in the wild were more ferocious. They could often see larger beasts that tried to get close to human settlements, but they were swiftly killed by human cultivators.

"Master, is this Blood Sun Mountain?" Little Yuan'er looked at the red leaves that covered the mountain.

Under the sun, the red maple leaves painted the scene bright vermillion.

Blood Sun Mountain was true to its name.

Lu Zhou nodded. He stroked his beard and said, "Go up the mountain."

The three of them flew instead of walking. When they were halfway up the mountain, a young novice monk came up to meet them. His palm was straightened before his chest, and his head was bald. He bowed politely as he said, "Dear benefactors, kindly halt... This is Blood Sun Temple, and we're not accepting visitors at the moment. I kindly ask you to leave."

Chapter 735: The Status of a Karmic Fire Elite

Lu Zhou looked at the little novice monk and said, "Notify your abbot that I have something to discuss with him about Fa Kong."

The novice monk knew the Buddhist Master Fa Kong's name. Fa Kong was a Nine-leaf karmic fire elite from the Blood Sun Temple, after all. His expression immediately changed as he said, "Kindly wait here, dear benefactors."

The novice monk sped back to the Blood Sun Temple. After passing through several courtyards, he finally arrived at the courtyard where the abbot was staying. He stood outside the door and said, "Abbot, there's an old benefactor at the foot of the mountain. He says he has something to say to you regarding Master Fa Kong."

There was a long pause before a reply came from the room. "Fa Kong has already passed on, why must we look for trouble? Tell this benefactor that I won't meet him."

"Understood." The novice monk returned to the foot of the mountain and relayed the abbot's message to Lu Zhou.

When Little Yuan'er heard this, she was about to leap into a rage when Lu Zhou raised a hand to stop her. Then, he said coldly, "If that's the case, I have no choice but to go up the mountain uninvited."

Lu Zhou ignored the novice monk's protests and flew up.

"Little monk... You're not discerning at all. Nobody under the heavens dares reject my master," Little Yuan'er said with a smile.

"Benefactors! Please wait here!" However, with his weak cultivation base, how could the little novice monk possibly stop them.

Lu Zhou led the way. He placed one hand on his back and flew toward Blood Sun Temple's entrance.

In front of the entrance, there were 100 monks armed with rods. They were shouting and training, but none of them were flying. When they saw the strangers, the monks armed with rods gathered around them swiftly.

"Amitabha. Old benefactor, did you lose your way?" an older monk asked as he straightened his palm in front of him while his other hand held the rod.

Lu Zhou ignored him and flew forward.

With this, the monks with the rods determined the newcomers were hostile. They no longer hesitated and attacked with their rods.

Lu Zhou seemed to vanish into thin air as he made his way through the group of monks.

The monks who had charged out crashed to the ground. Upon seeing this, they were terrified. They had no idea this person had such a profound cultivation base.

“Where’s the Blood Sun Temple’s abbot?” Lu Zhou’s voice was loud. With the Heavenly Writing’s extraordinary power, it was extremely clear but not deafening. His voice spread from the Heavenly King Hall in front of him to the Great Strength Hall, the Thousand Buddhas Hall, the Receiving Hall, the scripture depository, the dojo, and the Cloud Tower.

Within 1,000 meters of Blood Sun Mountain, winged beasts took flight and the beasts on land scampered away.

The abbot, Fa Hua, who was knocking on the wooden fish, opened his eyes. The doors to his room were opened by a blast of energy, and he flew out with his legs crossed. Would a person capable of unleashing such a sound technique be a weakling?

The monks flew out of the Great Strength Hall. The Three First Seats and twelve vajras flew over from the dojo on the other side of the chasm on the second peak. They reached the decorated archway swiftly enough before they finally arrived at the main entrance.

These monks who came were Blood Sun Mountain’s core disciples and cultivating monks. There were 1,000 of them hovering in the air.

“Abbot.” The monks bowed.

From the direction of the Heavenly King Hall, the abbot, Fa Hua, flew over and landed.

When Fa Hua landed, the others followed suit as well. They dared not remain in the air when the abbot was on the ground.

Fa Hua was dressed in simple monk robes, but there was a certain quality that the others did not have between his eyes. He looked at Lu Zhou and the two little girls. They were foreign faces to him. He straightened his palm and asked, “Amitabha. What brings you to the Blood Sun Temple, old benefactor?”

Lu Zhou nodded. ‘The leader of the Blood Sun Temple is here. Things are easier now. There’s no need to waste my time on these small fries.’

“Are you the abbot of the Blood Sun Temple?”

“I am the abbot, Fa Hua,” Fa Hua replied.

“I have questions for you.”

Fa Hua shook his head and said, “Old benefactor... I don’t know you. If you’re here to worship Buddha, I would welcome you with open arms. However, if you’re here for revenge, please forgive me for not being able to entertain you.”

The twelve vajras stepped forward automatically. They wore red kasayas and carried prayer beads. As soon as they stepped forward, their prayer beads shone with red radiance.

Lu Zhou gave them a cursory glance. In his deep eyes, there seemed to be vortexes churning.

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

This was the power of speech recognition.

"I'm in a good mood today, and I don't feel like killing anyone. If you'd like to meet Buddha prematurely, I don't mind changing my mind." After Lu Zhou said this, the 12 vajras felt their heads spin. They staggered backward and felt their blood essence surge.

The other monks retreated.

The abbot, Fa Hua, was the only one who stood in his position, unleashing flames. The karmic fire negated the sound technique.

Lu Zhou did not look at the others. He merely looked at Fa Hua. He did not expect the Blood Sun Temple's strength to be so formidable. They had two karmic fire elites!

The power of speech recognition was unleashed gently like a stream. There was no explosive might, but it caused fear to permeate and linger in a person.

Abbot Fa Hua frowned. This was an elite who was comparable to himself! 'Now that Fa Kong's dead, are they trying to destroy the Blood Sun Temple? Is the major sect sending their hidden elites to do the job?'

The Three Seats stepped forward.

"Stand down," Fa Hua gruffly said.

"Abbot!"

"Stand down!" Fa Hua raised his voice.

"Understood." The Three Seats retreated obediently.

Fa Hua looked at Lu Zhou. He straightened his palm and bowed. "Amitabha. Those who come are guests. Follow me."

The monks made way for the 'guests'.

Fa Hua turned around and invited Lu Zhou to the Great Strength Hall.

The other monks felt indignant, but there was nothing they could do.

Lu Zhou waved his sleeves and placed his hands on his back. They crossed the decorated archway and entered the Blood Sun Temple. When they were on the steps, he stopped and said, "I have a word of advice."

"What is it, old benefactor?"

"You'd better not use someone else for your own ends. Even if Fa Kong is alive, I'd still think nothing of him. Don't say you've not been warned," Lu Zhou said.

“...”

The others were stunned.

‘He thinks nothing of Fa Kong? Who’s this man?’ Fa Kong glanced at Lu Zhou again. He really had no recollection of this person. There were less than ten Nine-leaf cultivators who had karmic fires in Great Tang. Every one of them was well known. So, who was this man?

The Blood Sun Temple had already lost a karmic fire cultivator. They could not afford to make a powerful enemy now.

“This way.” Fa Kong maintained his composure despite his thoughts.

They entered the Great Strength Hall.

The other monks waited outside while the Three Seats and the 12 vajras entered the hall at the same time.

Little Yuan’er and Conch stood by their master’s side.

The moment Lu Zhou sat down, Fa Hua asked, “May I know your name, old benefactor?”

Lu Zhou stroked his beard and said, “Who I am isn’t important... I’m only here to clarify several questions...”

Fa Hua nodded. “Ask away, old benefactor.”

“Who ordered Fa Kong to attack me?” Lu Zhou’s voice was calm and tranquil.

“...”

The Three Seats exchanged a look. The Blood Sun Temple had Four Seats in the beginning. Their statuses were only second to the abbot. Fa Kong was one of the four. However, Fa Kong was of the same standing as the abbot. Sometimes, the abbot would even have to show consideration to Fa Kong for the greater good. Fa Kong had always been an independent person so the others seldom knew what he was up to.

A deep frown appeared on Fa Hua’s face as surprise briefly flitted past his eyes. He was the head of the temple, after all. Even when there was a problem, he could still maintain his composure. Moreover, he seemed to have a keen mind. He did not expose Lu Zhou’s origins as he said, “Fa Kong has always been unbridled... Although he’s the Monastic Discipline Hall’s First Seat, he rarely abided by the monastic rules...” After saying this, he asked, “Fa Kong attacked you, old benefactor?”

Fa Hua was clearly trying to change the topic in an attempt to fish out information.

How could Lu Zhou not know what Fa Hua was trying to do? He bluntly said, “Fa Kong snuck up on me so I came here for revenge. What do you think?”

The other monks inhaled sharply when they heard Lu Zhou’s words.

Fa Hua chuckled. He seemed at ease and not worried at all. He also seemed unperturbed by Fa Kong’s death. He said, “I’m the head of this temple, and one of the few karmic fire controllers in Great Tang. If

you're here for revenge, old benefactor, you would've made a move long ago. Why would you wait until now? When two karmic fire users fight, it'll only end in mutual destruction."

Chapter 736: You Overestimated Yourself

Lu Zhou's expression remained the same. He stroked his beard, feigning confusion. "Mutual destruction? Aren't you overestimating yourself?"

'Isn't this monk trying to walk in Fa Kong's footsteps?'

If anyone else had spoken such words, the other monks would have leaped into a fit of rage and raised their rods to beat that person senseless before throwing the person out of the temple. However, this visitor was not a pushover. He repelled the 12 vajras with just a sound technique. There were not many monks in the Blood Sun Temple, but with their two karmic fire elites, they became renowned in the world. Every sect in Great Tang was wary of them. However, they could only suppress and hide their anger as the old man criticized the abbot.

"Have you mastered the karmic fire, old benefactor?" Fa Hua asked.

Lu Zhou was as calm as an old well. He looked at Fa Hua indifferently.

Fa Hua knew this question was slightly offensive so he explained, "Since you've mastered the karmic fire, you know how powerful it is, old benefactor. If the karmic fire gets into your Extraordinary Eight Meridians and burns your sea of Qi, you'll surely be greatly injured. A Nine-leaf cultivator without the karmic fire is weaker than one with the karmic fire. Moreover, those without karmic fires would have to avoid those with karmic fires. I've been cultivating painstakingly for more than 800 years and obtained the red lotus karmic fire..."

Swoosh!

Fa Hua opened his palm, and a red lotus hovered on top of it. Scarlet flames rose in the air as though they were made of blood. They were a dazzling sight to behold.

The monks regarded the flames with fear and admiration. These flames were likely the reason the Blood Sun Temple remained standing until this day, and they were also the source of the temple's confidence.

What happened to the art of conversation? No matter how many reasonings one could come up with, people would still resort to the fist. From time immemorial, whether it was on earth or some other world, if one wanted to intimidate their enemies and make them play by one's own rules, one would have to display sufficient strength.

Fa Hua clenched his hand, and the red lotus karmic fire disappeared. A friendly smile could be seen on his face as he straightened his palm in front of his chest and said, "Amitabha..."

With a slight hint of displeasure, Lu Zhou asked, "Compared to Fa Kong, who's weaker?"

Fa Hua replied with a straight face, "If we were to fight head-on, I'd be evenly matched with Junior Brother Fa Kong. If we were to drag it out and have a contest of Zen and techniques, I'm more powerful than Fa Kong."

Lu Zhou stroked his beard and nodded. He looked at Fa Hua and gruffly said, "Since I can kill Fa Kong, I can kill you. Do you have one life more than him?"

"..."

The Great Strength Hall was as silent as a graveyard at this moment.

The monks' eyes widened as an incredulous expression appeared on their faces.

Fa Hua could hardly believe his eyes. He stopped fiddling with his prayer beads in his left hand, shocked. "You killed Fa Kong, old benefactor?!"

The monks rose to their feet and stared at Lu Zhou as though he was a great enemy.

Lu Zhou's expression remained the same; no changes could be seen on his face at all. Inwardly, he was puzzled. These monks did not seem to know much about what Fa Kong did in the golden lotus domain. He asked tonelessly, "Don't you know what happened to Fa Kong?"

"Although I'm the abbot, I couldn't restrain Junior Brother Fa Kong... All I know is he had a good relationship with the Sky Martial Court. He had said he was going to do something shocking. However, I didn't expect that he wouldn't return." After he finished speaking, he suddenly rose to his feet. His wizened face that seemed exhausted seemed energetic at this moment. He asked, "Are you truly from the golden lotus domain, old benefactor?"

Upon hearing this, the monks rose up as well, ready to fight at a moment's notice.

Lu Zhou continued to stroke his beard, ignoring the monks' reactions. He said, "I've already stated my objective when I arrived. All you have to do is to answer my questions."

Next to the second pillar of Great Strength Hall, a stocky monk in kasaya attacked with his palm. He released red energy and moved his hands as though they were blades. He leaned forward before he charged toward Lu Zhou. "Even Buddha can't save you today..."

The monks were frightened and taken aback. They did not expect the First Seat of Palm Zen Hall would suddenly attack. The temple could not function without rules. The affairs and etiquettes of the temple were upheld by the Palm Zen Hall's Hui Neng.

Lu Zhou remained seated; he did not move at all. Just as the palm strike was about to land on him, he suddenly waved his sleeve in a graceful and casual movement. It was as though he was shooing a fly away.

The Buddhist Great Vajra Wheel Hand Sign!

Bam!

At such close range, the golden palm seal and the red palm seal collided.

There was no doubt about the outcome.

The Palm Zen Hall's First Seat, Buddhist Master Hui Neng, recoiled as his red palm seal was destroyed.

The monks exclaimed in shock as they watched the palm seal push Hui Neng out as it continued sailing in the air.

With a loud boom, Hui Neng crashed into the second pillar of Great Strength Hall. He was sent back to where he came from.

The pillar of the Great Strength Hall cracked loudly. However, even if it was broken, it would not crumble easily.

The monks had not recovered from their shock.

The Great Strength Hall was deathly silent.

This kind of difference could only be born from an extremely wide gap between strengths.

The red palm's force seemed pitifully weak.

Hui Neng grunted and spat out blood before he slid to the ground in a heap.

Lu Zhou continued behaving as though nothing out of the ordinary happened. He stroked his beard with a calm expression on his face

The monks were speechless. Even Hui Neng's Eight-leaf cultivation base could not withstand a single blow from the old man.

Meanwhile, a grim expression appeared on Fa Hua's face. "Golden palm seal. Great Vajra Wheel Hand Sign?"

"Sit." Lu Zhou raised his hand. It was as though Fa Hua was the guest, and he was the host.

Fa Hua forced himself to calm down as he sat down.

Lu Zhou said, "The light of the Buddha shines on all. I spared his life when I struck. Are you satisfied?"

"If I may be so bold, I'd like to have a go as well," Fa Hua said. Without waiting for a reply, he smacked the table, and it shattered. Then, he shot toward Lu Zhou, extending a palm shrouded with flames toward Lu Zhou.

Lu Zhou remained seated and only lifted one hand in response.

The two palms collided.

Bam!

Fa Hua's palm had red flames while Lu Zhou's palm was bare.

The monks were delighted upon seeing this.

Nobody would dare to defend against karmic fire without energy. This seemingly simple palm strike was actually a powerful Nine-leaf attack. Even the 12 vajras and the Three Seats would not take this lightly.

Fa Hua felt a chilling sensation on his palm. When he looked down, he saw a faint flash of blue before a golden palm seal suddenly surged out.

Bam!

“Abbot!”

Fa Hua was sent flying back. He did a backflip in midair before he struck with his palm again.

“Karmic Fire Vajra Palm!”

Lu Zhou raised his palm again.

Their palms collided once more.

This time, it was a contest of Primal Qi.

The flames on Fa Hua’s palm grew brighter.

Creak! Creak! Creak!

The Great Strength Hall threatened to crumble at this moment.

Suddenly, a red lotus bloomed under Fa Hua’s feet. It was covered in flames. The nine leaves were a terrifying sight. At the same time, an avatar slowly rose.

Lu Zhou scowled. ‘Is this bald donkey really going to force me to use a Deadly Strike Card?’ The cards were too expensive. It was not worth it to use it on this bald donkey.

Lu Zhou chose to use his Heavenly Writing power.

Originating from nothing, from it comes everything. Living in samsara and learning from it. This is the power of past lives.

Buddhist Great Seal of Fearlessness.

His palm shone blue and golden at the edge. He unleashed one-third of his extraordinary power.

Whizz!

There was a strange resonance in the air.

Fa Hua immediately felt his arm go numb and sensed a danger of it breaking. He trembled and swiftly retracted his hand.

Bam!

The Great Seal of Fearlessness’ power traveled along Fa Hua’s arm to his chest. He reeled back as he spat out a mouthful of blood.

Bam!

Fa Hua crashed through a huge pillar.

Rumble!

Fa Hua crashed through the wall of Great Strength Hall with his karmic fire, flying out of the hall.

Silence descended on the Great Strength Hall again.

Lu Zhou withdrew his hand. He seemed unaffected and uninjured. Based on this palm strike, he could vaguely tell he would need at least half of his extraordinary power to kill a red lotus Nine-leaf cultivator with a karmic fire. When he fought Fa Kong back then, Fa Kong was protected by the Sky Shuttle. A quarter of his extraordinary power could not break the Sky Shuttle. Based on that experience, it was clear just how powerful a red lotus Nine-leaf cultivator with karmic fire was.

“Abbot!” The monks charged out of the hall. Shortly after, they carried Fa Hua back into the hall.

Fa Hua’s face was covered in dirt, and blood stained the corners of his mouth. His robes were torn as well.

Lu Zhou looked at the monks, “Anyone else has a problem?”

His question resounded throughout the Great Strength Hall.

Lu Zhou had always been a keen believer in striking the enemy’s king first. If he could subdue Fa Hua, the others would not dare to resist him. He continued speaking in a voice that resounded in the hall, “Those who have a problem can step forward now.”

Nobody stepped forward.

Fa Hua coughed violently. Lu Zhou’s performance had exceeded his expectations. In fact, Lu Zhou’s strength seemed absurd to him. They were both karmic fire elites. The difference between them should not be this wide. Throughout his long history of being a Nine-leaf cultivator, he had never lost so thoroughly like he did today. After his coughing fits subsided, he said, “Stand down, everyone.”

How could they not?

Lu Zhou continued to stroke his beard. He looked at the moderately injured Fa Hua. One-third of his extraordinary power could only injure Fa Hua. If used against an Eight-leaf cultivator, one-third of his extraordinary power could have reduced them to ashes. Indeed, the karmic fire was powerful.

“Old benefactor, whatever it is you want to know, I’ll tell you.” Fa Hua relented.

Lu Zhou nodded in satisfaction. “Why didn’t you say so earlier?”

Fa Hua no longer had any intentions of resisting after the brief exchange.

The other monks dared not say anything as well.

Little Yuan’er covered her mouth as she giggled. She pointed at Fa Hua and said, “You’re a tough one... It’s not every day I see someone survive my master’s palm strike.”

“...”

“What are you looking at? I’m just telling you the truth.” Little Yuan’er was not afraid at all. She returned the glare the other monks were shooting her way.

The monks dared not speak up, still greatly shaken.

Lu Zhou looked at Fa Hua and asked, “Have you seen any other golden lotus cultivators apart from me?”

Chapter 737: I'll Kill On Your Behalf

Fa Hua waved his hand as a signal for the others to leave.

"Abbot!" The twelve vajras and the Three Seats would not leave.

Hui Neng had suffered a hit and was heavily wounded. He was ghastly pale.

"Get out!" Fa Hua said sternly.

The monks had no choice but to turn around and leave.

Lu Zhou was not even worried about exposing his identity as a golden lotus cultivator, but Fa Hua was ordering his disciples to leave.

After the monks left the Great Strength Hall, Fa Hua sighed heavily. "To tell you the truth... I disagreed with Junior Brother Fa Kong's actions. I'm also against the research about the other worlds that's being conducted by the Sky Martial Court. The Buddha is merciful, and all lives are equal. Why must the strong trample on the weak? Not many know about the existence of the golden lotus domain. When I learned about it, I did all I could to oppose it. Alas, Fa Kong was stubborn... I'm both surprised and unsurprised by his death."

Lu Zhou regarded Fa Hua with surprise. He did not expect Fa Hua to have such thoughts. The brigands of the world would not utter words like all lives were equal. Moreover, everyone had their own definitions of the word equal. In the end, he nodded and asked, "How much do you know about the golden lotus domain?"

"All I know is that the golden lotus domain is weak. When Fa Kong was still around, he told me that. Fa Kong and I rarely saw eye to eye. Hence, we don't often speak to each other. The Sky Martial Court is researching the other worlds and discovered the golden lotus domain some time ago. They sent some of their men to investigate as well. Fa Kong worked with the Sky Martial Court. He was tasked with killing the strongest person in the golden lotus domain." After Fa Hua finished speaking, he pressed his chest and coughed.

"Since you're against it, why didn't you stop Fa Kong?" Lu Zhou asked.

Fa Hua sighed heavily again. "You might not know this, old benefactor, but I suspect the Sky Martial Court's Master is a Ten-leaf cultivator." When he mentioned the Ten-leaf cultivator, a hint of fearful respect could be seen in his eyes. Moreover, there was a hint of helplessness as well.

Something stirred in Lu Zhou. This was by far the most important piece of information he had received since arriving in the red lotus domain. With this information, it meant that he could not do as he pleased just because he was a Nine-leaf cultivator. He could not stand against a Ten-leaf cultivator at this moment. At the same time, he felt puzzled. Since there was a Ten-leaf cultivator around, why did they not send the most powerful cultivators they had in the Sky Shuttle? Would that not have been a better plan?

When Fa Hua saw that Lu Zhou was deep in his thoughts, he asked, "Did Fa Kong truly attack you, old benefactor?"

"I don't have a habit of lying," Lu Zhou said.

Fa Hua shook his head and said, "Karma and sins. Since you're here for revenge, old benefactor, I have nothing more to say."

"You haven't answered all my questions yet." Lu Zhou glanced at Fa Hua before he rose to his feet and paced around with his hands on his back.

"Do you mean the other golden lotus cultivators?" After asking the question, Fa Hua said with a hint of uncertainty, "A few months ago, there were rumors going around that there was a great battle between a golden lotus avatar and a red lotus avatar at the Thousand Willow Monastery."

"The Thousand Willow Monastery?" Lu Zhou turned to look at Fa Hua.

"It's only a rumor. It's said that the Ninth Temple's Grand Elder fought against two golden lotus cultivators with his treasure, the Square Box. However, the Sky Martial Court and the Flying Star House stepped forward to dispel the rumor. I have no clue about how true the rumor is..." Fa Hua said, "However, based on what I understand about how the Sky Martial Court operates, the rumor is probably true."

Lu Zhou stroked his beard and nodded. He committed the names the Thousand Willow Monastery and the Ninth Temple to memory. He recalled the many notifications he had received about his two disciples killing elites in the red lotus realm. It was not surprising that they would have to expose their avatars when fighting against elites. However, why did the Sky Martial Court and the Flying Star House want to keep the matter a secret?

"The Ninth Temple's Grand Elder fought those two on his own?" Lu Zhou asked.

"You shouldn't underestimate the Ninth Temple, old benefactor. They're as powerful as the Sky Martial Court! The grand elder, Zhu Xuan, is said to be the person who's closest to breaking through to the Nine-leaf stage in the last 50 years... Apparently, he had broken through to the Nine-leaf stage while he was fighting the two golden lotus cultivators and suppressed both of them," Fa Hua said.

Little Yuan'er could no longer hold back. She waved her fist and angrily said, "Master, let's go to the Ninth Temple now. I'll show them for daring to beat my senior brothers!"

'Senior brothers?' Fa Hua was frightened when he heard Little Yuan'er's words. He looked at the old man in front of him and studied him again. The old man seemed like an erudite man. His actions seemed experienced as well. Suddenly, realization dawned on him. He asked in shock, "Are you here to look for your disciples, old benefactor?"

Lu Zhou did not answer Fa Hua. Instead, he asked in return, "If you knew, why didn't you answer me earlier?" Inwardly, he thought to himself, 'Must you only submit after tasting pain.'

Since entering the Blood Sun Temple, Lu Zhou could tell the old monk was not a rash person. The old monk was probably used to biding his time and knew when was the right time to advance and retreat. The old monk did not choose to battle just because he had the karmic fire or because he had the advantage of being on his home turf. Clearly, the old monk was intelligent.

Fa Hua wiped away the blood from the edge of his lips with his sleeve before he said, "Old benefactor, I only used half of my strength in that last palm strike."

“You deliberately held back your strength?” Lu Zhou was puzzled.

“You’ve seen the Three Seats... The Palm Zen Hall’s First Seat, Hui Neng, is the injured one. The other two are the West Hall’s First Seal, Hui Jue, and the Back Hall’s Hui Sheng.” At this point, he lowered his voice and used Primal Qi to project his voice to Lu Zhou, “Those three are from the palace.”

Lu Zhou’s eyes widened imperceptibly. “Are you saying those three are sent here to keep an eye on you?”

“There are many sects under the heavens. A Nine-leaf cultivator can tip the scales in the other direction greatly, and those with karmic fires are one in a million... How can the four seas remain peaceful if the ruler doesn’t have a trick or two? The palace has its own methods. Although the Blood Sun Temple has two karmic fire users, it can’t possibly stand up against the entire world,” Fa Hua said.

“With your cultivation base, why didn’t you become a high official that governs the lands? Or, you could’ve freely roamed the lands. Who would stand in your way?” Lu Zhou asked.

“I have no interest in an official career... Although the palace is powerful, its movements are still restricted by the nobles. The nobles originated from the major sects. They keep each other in check. That’s how the monarchy functions. Moreover, the Blood Sun Temple is close to my heart. I can’t possibly abandon this temple and roam the lands,” Fa Hua said emotionally.

Lu Zhou felt he knew too little about the red lotus domain. The power struggles in the red lotus domain were not simple at all. In fact, it might be even more complicated than those in Great Yan previously. Perhaps, he needed to have a longer chat with Fa Hua.

At this moment, voices rang from outside the Great Strength Hall.

“Abbot!”

Lu Zhou and Fa Hua turned to look.

They were none other than the First Seats of Blood Sun Temple’s West Hall and Back Hall, Hui Jue and Hui Sheng.

Fa Hua’s expression returned to normal. He asked, “What’s the matter?”

“Senior Brother Hui Neng is in a serious condition.”

“Alright.” Fa Hua rose to his feet with great difficulty.

Upon seeing this, Hui Jue and Hui Sheng hurried over and supported Fa Hua.

Now that Lu Zhou was paying attention, it did seem like these people were keeping an eye on Fa Hua. ‘How interesting... and unexpected...’

Hui Jue straightened a palm in front of his chest and said to Lu Zhou, “Regardless of your origin, old benefactor, I’m sure you’ve vented some of your frustrations after hurting the abbot. I hope your misgivings have lessened as well. Would you like to stay the night so that you can have another conversation with the abbot after he recovers?”

Lu Zhou understood the meaning of Hui Jue's words. He shook his head and said, "No, thanks. I have something else to do." Then, he looked at Fa Hua and said, "I didn't kill you because of your cultivation base. I'll look for you again once I've dealt with my matters."

Fa Hua. "..."

Lu Zhou motioned to Little Yuan'er and Conch.

The two young girls responded and obediently followed him out of the Great Strength Hall.

However, the trio from the Evil Sky Pavilion had barely taken two steps away from the hall when the 12 vajras and 1,000 monks surrounded the Great Strength Hall.

Meanwhile, Hui Neng and Hui Sheng carried Fa Hua out.

Fa Hua said sternly, "Stand down. They're not to be obstructed."

The monks retreated.

However, Hui Neng suddenly said, "Abbot, they're foreign golden lotus cultivators... Don't you think that..."

Lu Zhou who was just beginning to walk away suddenly came to a halt. He turned around with his hands on his back and looked at the two monks before he looked at Fa Hua. He said, "Your Buddha is merciful, and surely, he's able to differentiate between good and evil. Fa Hua, have you ever killed someone?"

"Amitabha. The Blood Sun Temple's monastic rule is that we're not to kill. Indeed, the act of killing is the gravest sin of all. Of all merits, sparing lives ranks first."

After Fa Hua finished speaking, Lu Zhou said indifferently, "In that case, I'll kill on your behalf."

There was a flurry of movements.

Grand technique.

Then a golden lotus bloomed under Lu Zhou's feet as nine golden leaves spun around it.

The other monks were frightened when they saw the golden flames shrouding the golden lotus.

Lu Zhou struck with both palms.

The power of past lives.

Two golden Great Seal of Fearlessness shot out.

At this moment, Hui Neng and Hui Sheng finally realized the two palm seals were meant for them.

Whizz! Whizz!

The two monks immediately summoned their red lotus avatars. At the same time, they raised their arms to defend themselves.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

An explosion of energy rang in the air as the two palm seals seemingly struck Hui Jue and Hui Sheng's arms at the same time. Both of them reeled back and spat out blood. How could two Eight-leaf cultivators withstand the attacks of a Nine-leaf golden lotus cultivator with karmic fire and extraordinary power?

Bang! Bang!

Hui Jue crashed onto a huge pillar to the left while Hui Sheng crashed against the pillar on the right in front of the Great Strength Hall. They broke the rhyming couplet engraved on the rock pillars.

The first verse read: The lotus from pure soil carries the weight of the world and Buddha.

The second verse read: Buddha, bright as the pearl, is the way to samadhi and enlightenment.

Crack!

The words shattered and fell.

Hui Jue and Hui Sheng died immediately!

Chapter 738: Nine-leaf Yu Shangrong

The rhyming couplets were painted with gold ink and fixed on veined pattern boards. The weather did not and could not damage these golden words, but faced with the might of a Nine-leaf cultivator, they were as fragile as paper.

The red lotus domain wrote with golden ink and their Buddha had Golden Bodies. Did that mean they were red Golden Bodies? How ironic.

The 12 vajras' eyes burned with anger.

Meanwhile, the 1,000 monks hovering in the air were stunned, at a loss over what to do.

The abbot, Fa Hua, a karmic fire user, was shocked. It was apparent from his slightly widened eyes.

The monks wielding rods in front of the Heavenly King Hall filed in at this moment and formed three rows in front of the Great Strength Hall. Not even a fly could get past them.

However, nobody dared to lift a finger. Who would dare? Although they were brimming with fury, they were frightened and shocked by the flaming Nine-leaf golden lotus under Lu Zhou's feet.

"The lotus from pure soil carries the weight of the world and Buddha... That's a nice poem," Lu Zhou said with his hands on his back as the golden lotus disappeared.

"Abbot!" the monks exclaimed in unison.

As long as the abbot gave the order, the monks of the Blood Sun Temple would fight to their deaths. The temple's pride had to be defended at all costs. Moreover, the abbot was also one of the few red lotus karmic fire elites in this world. If the abbot fought with all his might against this Nine-leaf foreign tribesman, the monks could cooperate with him. With that, they might have a chance of winning!

The armed monks prepared to chant their Brahmic verses. All they needed was for the abbot to give the order.

The 1,000 disciples looked at Fa Hua.

Fa Hua glanced at Hui Sheng and Hui Jue who broke the stone pillars. He shook his head and said, "Old benefactor... Why must you put me in such a difficult position?"

With the notification of the reward of 5,000 merit points ringing in his head, Lu Zhou's expression remained as calm as a still lake; there was no fluctuation at all.

"I solved your problem for you. You should be thanking me instead," Lu Zhou said tonelessly.

"They were only early-stage Eight-leaf cultivators, and they were young. I could still control them. Now that they're dead, I still have a problem. You might as well kill me, old benefactor," Fa Hua said with a pained expression.

'If a Nine-leaf karmic fire elite is this worried, the palace must be a force to be reckoned with... If the Sky Martial Court has a Ten-leaf cultivator, it stands to reason the palace would have one as well... Uh... It seems like I was too reckless...'

Despite his thoughts, Lu Zhou said to Fa Hua, "That's your problem. Your junior brother, Fa Kong, attacked me, and I have yet to settle that debt with you. Seeing that you answered all my questions truthfully, I'll spare your life. If I find out that there's an ounce of untruth in your words, I'll surely kill you."

Fa Hua was rendered speechless by Lu Zhou's words. He was suffering enough as it was, and Lu Zhou's words were like pouring oil over fire.

The other monks were stunned. The Grand Abbot of the Blood Sun Temple was a rare Nine-leaf karmic fire cultivator, and yet, he was being spoken to like a junior by this old man. How awkward. Moreover, Hui Jue and Hui Sheng's corpses were still lying on the ground. What was the abbot doing?

"Abbot!" the monks cried out again. At the same time, they straightened their palms in front of their chests.

Lu Zhou turned around and looked at the monks. "Do you have a death wish?"

Without using Primal Qi, the mysterious old man's voice pressed down on the monks, making them struggle just to breathe. They had urged their abbot, filled with anticipation earlier. The Blood Sun Temple's monks were unafraid of death! However... faced with this imposing old man, their pride was crushed.

"Stand down! Anyone who causes a scene will be exiled!" Fa Hua said thunderously.

The monks sighed and landed.

At the same time, the armed monks near the Heavenly King Hall parted to form a path.

Lu Zhou looked up at the veins on the decorated archway. He was curious about them. They seemed similar to the ones on the city walls. However, these were even more detailed and delicate.

In the sky above the Blood Sun Temple, he could see a net-like barrier keeping the beasts at bay.

Lu Zhou remembered it now; the veins were similar to the veins on the armor Lin Xin obtained from the Crown Prince. The red lotus cultivators sent by the Sky Martial Court to the golden lotus domain wore armor with these veins as well. Was this some advanced power that protected human settlements?

Lu Zhou turned around with his hands on his back. He looked at Fa Hua and said, "You merely used half of your strength when you fought me, but I only used one-third of mine."

Fear washed over Fa Hua when he heard these words. When he regained his senses, Lu Zhou had already risen to the air.

Lu Zhou formed an energy shield around himself. Behind him, Little Yuan'er and Conch took flight as well.

The 1,000 monks from the Blood Sun Temple did not dare to stop them.

Lu Zhou's palm shone with golden radiance.

There was an imposing pressure that could not be resisted, like something heavy bearing down on the monks.

The monks hastily deactivated the Formation veins, and the pressure lifted as Lu Zhou left the Blood Sun Temple and Blood Sun Mountain.

The monks did not understand what happened.

Meanwhile, the 12 vajras stepped forward. "Abbot, we should notify the Sky Martial Court immediately... The foreign tribesmen have invaded and killed our monks. The foreign tribesman has drawn blood, and we must avenge the fallen!"

Fa Hua looked at the monks with a stern expression as he straightened his palm in front of his chest. He said, "Nobody is to act without my orders."

"Huh?" The monks were confused.

Fa Hua joined his palms together. The red lotus karmic fire on his body burned brightly, and he seemed to be shrouded in flames.

Under the light from the karmic fire, the monks backed away.

"Amitabha..." The karmic fire and the red energy between Fa Hua's palms fell on Hui Jue's and Hui Sheng's corpses.

The corpses were lit with flames and burned to a crisp in no time at all.

Fa Hua thought about Hui Neng, 'Of the Three Seats, only the Palm Zen Hall's First Seat is left. Hui Neng knows everything... Do I really have to break my non-killing steak?'

...

Meanwhile, on a precarious peak 100 miles away from the Thousand Willow Monastery.

Yu Shangrong carried his Longevity Sword as he looked at the mountains and the setting sun. He had been on this mountain peak for three days now, stabilizing his Nine-leaf stage.

He summoned his avatar and looked at the nine lotus leaves spinning around it. "My life has only increased by 100 years?"

Compared to the Eight-leaf stage, aside from the additional leaf and the avatar's height, there were no other obvious changes.

From Ji Fengxing, he learned that cultivators in the red lotus domain were not restricted by the 1,000-year life limit. From the One-leaf to the Eight-leaf stage, the red lotus cultivators would receive 100 years of life. Between the Eight-leaf and Nine-leaf stage, the red lotus cultivators gained 200 years of life.

Yu Shangrong was puzzled. Ever since he began to cultivate, the years he had received had always been fewer compared to others. Indeed, he overcame the great limit of life with the Nine-leaf stage. However, he merely gained 100 years of life. He was rather surprised by this. Nevertheless, due to his experience, the surprise did not show on his face, and he quickly regained his calmness.

"It's better than nothing." 100 years were better than none.

He retracted his avatar and looked at the setting sun, the birds of the forests, and the mountains. He smiled faintly. "You'll be my targets today."

A good swordsman had to polish his sword skills after his cultivation base had improved to achieve perfect control and affinity.

Yu Shangrong faded out of focus and left afterimages in the air, making the birds of the mountains and forests his victims.

...

At the foot of Thousand Willow Mountain.

In the refurbished gazebo.

Wuwu and Ji Fengxing leaned against the railing and looked ahead in a daze.

"Senior brother, do you think big brother has gone to the Ninth Temple to rescue his senior brother?"
Wuwu wondered out loud, worried.

Ji Fengxing shook his head with a sigh and said, "I told them to run away, but they wouldn't listen. Not only that, but they even fought with him! I don't think things are looking good for eldest big brother. He must be suffering now. I think he'll be subjected to the whip and the rod. They might even break his fingers..."

"Hey, don't scare me like that!" Wuwu said.

Ji Fengxing sighed again and said, "We can't trust Zhu Xuan. He's only an elder, what decision can he make? Eldest big brother is a golden lotus cultivator, a foreign tribesman. Maybe... Alright, alright, I'll stop. I'm just worried that big brother, with his pride in his sword techniques, will really head to the Ninth Temple. That will be really bad."

Wuwu nodded in agreement and asked, "Should I go to the Ninth Temple and plead for them?"

“No... You’re all taking the Ninth Temple too lightly. That’s a place where they’ll eat you whole. Big brother has always spoken highly of his master, but even if that old man’s here, the Ninth Temple would not back down.”

At this moment, Wuwu who had keen eyes pointed at the sky ahead and said, “Someone’s here!”

An old man with completely white hair and two young girls were flying toward them from the mountains in the distance.

Ji Fengxing frowned as he said, “Wait here. I’ll notify the monastery master.”

Chapter 739: The Patriarch Arrives

Ji Fengxing flew up the mountain in a haste.

Ever since Yu Shangrong and Yu Zhenghai sparred with the monastery master, Xia Changqiu, Ji Fengxing had been promoted to an inner disciple. He now had sufficient authority to enter the Fair Hall.

“Is it someone from the Flying Star House?” Xia Changqiu’s expression was grim.

The last time the Flying Star House’s Liang Zidao led his men here, they were all killed by Yu Shangrong and Yu Zhenghai. The Ninth Temple’s Zhu Xuan had said that the Flying Star House would not dare to trouble the Thousand Willow Monastery... In truth, would the Ninth Temple even step in to help if the Flying Star House came looking for trouble?

“I don’t know. It’s an old man, but he looks hostile,” Ji Fengxing said worriedly.

Tian Buji bowed. “Monastery Master, this concerns the monastery’s survival. Should I go to the Ninth Temple?”

“No.” Xia Changqiu walked down the steps and said worriedly, “We can’t trust the Ninth Temple. Yu Zhenghai is in their hands now. Even if we’re in a collaborative relationship, they won’t care about us.” He turned to look at Ji Fengxing, who was kneeling on one knee, and said, “Have you found Yu Shangrong?”

“Ever since his attempt to reach the Nine-leaf stage was interrupted, we haven’t seen him.”

The two of them sighed. All they knew was that Yu Shangrong’s attempt to reach the Nine-leaf stage was interrupted when they were dealing with the huge beast. They did not see the ninth leaf or a Nine-leaf avatar.

Xia Chengqiu knew Elder Xu Su was killed because he tried to sneak up on Yu Shangrong to kill Yu Shangrong. It was understandable if Yu Shangrong left the Thousand Willow Monastery because of that matter.

“Come with me. We’ll meet the visitor. If it’s a blessing, it’s not a disaster. If it’s a disaster, we won’t be able to avoid it anyway.” Xia Changqiu waved his sleeve and flew outside.

The disciples in front of the Fair Hall flew out as well.

...

At the foot of the mountain.

Wuwu walked out of the gazebo. She called out to the slowly approaching old man and asked, "Who are you? What are you doing here at the Thousand Willow Monastery?"

Lu Zhou did not answer her immediately. After landing, he surveyed his surroundings before he looked up at Thousand Willow Mountain. They had to ask for directions along the way to get here. Fortunately, it was not difficult to locate the Thousand Willow Monastery. All things considered, their journey was rather smooth. He nodded, pleased. "It's remote and strategically located. Indeed, this is a sound spot."

Wuwu raised her voice and said, "Hey, hey, hey... I'm talking to you!"

Little Yuan'er looked over. When she saw that Wuwu was about her age, she frowned and asked, "Do you think you can talk to my master that way? Little girl, let me ask you... Have you seen a slender, out-of-this-world handsome swordsman who carries a long sword on his back? His sword skills are incredibly amazing."

When Wuwu heard this, her assumptions were confirmed. She immediately put on an act and said, "I'm not a little girl... The swordsman you're looking for isn't here. I haven't seen him."

"You haven't seen him?" Little Yuan'er was skeptical.

Conch gestured as she said, "In that case, have you seen a saber user who carried his saber around his waist? He's tall and stocky, and very skilled with the saber. He's on par with that swordsman."

Wuwu's heart skipped another beat. She was now convinced these people were here to look for her big brother and eldest big brother. She averted her gaze and said, "Never seen him."

Conch seemed disappointed. She turned around and said, "Master... they're not in trouble, right?"

Lu Zhou shook his head and said, "There's no need to worry."

Little Yuan'er was no longer the naïve young girl she once was. When she saw that Wuwu seemed to be dealing with them half-heartedly, she grew annoyed. She asked, "Master, should we force our way into the Thousand Willow Monastery?"

'Force their way in?' Upon hearing these words, Wuwu straightened her back instinctively. 'This sister is fierce!'

After Little Yuan'er finished speaking, many cultivators could be seen flying down from Thousand Willow Mountain.

The leader was Xia Changqiu, the Monastery Master of the Thousand Willow Monastery. Tian Buji, the elder, was next to him.

When Xia Changqiu saw Lu Zhou, he was puzzled. He had never seen this old man before. He bowed and asked, "Old Mister, may I ask what business you have here?"

Lu Zhou stroked his beard and looked at Xia Changqiu. He said, "I'm looking for someone."

"Are you looking on behalf of the Flying Star House or the Sky Martial Court?" This was what Xia Changqiu was most concerned about.

Lu Zhou thought about it for a moment. Currently, he did not know much about the Thousand Willow Monastery. Yu Shangrong and Yu Zhenghai fought the Ninth Temple's Elder around Thousand Willow Mountain, and it was impossible that these people had missed that. The Thousand Willow Monastery members were from the red lotus domain, after all. It was highly possible that they were involved in capturing Yu Shangrong and Yu Zhenghai. 'Let's dig out information from them before revealing my identity.'

In the end, Lu Zhou said, "The two people I'm looking for are from the golden lotus domain. I'll be taking them with me."

Upon hearing this, Xia Changqiu thought to himself, 'As expected, they're not here with good intentions. This old man must be an elite from the Sky Martial Court or the palace.'

"I'm sorry... I've never heard of the golden lotus domain before. Old Mister, I'll have to ask you to leave." Xia Changqiu made an inviting gesture.

"You've never seen them? They're foreign tribesmen." Lu Zhou did not believe Xia Changqiu.

Before Xia Changqiu could reply, Tian Buji bowed and said, "The monastery master is usually cultivating in seclusion. He doesn't know much about the affairs of the world. I, on the other hand, have heard some rumors."

"Let's hear it."

"It's said that the Ninth Temple has captured a foreign tribesman from the golden lotus domain. You might want to head over to the Ninth Temple, old mister," Tian Buji said. He was akin to hitting two birds with one stone. He could redirect the calamity to the Ninth Temple, and at the same time, the Thousand Willow Monastery would escape this calamity.

"The Ninth Temple?" Lu Zhou had heard the name mentioned several times now. "Why didn't you mention it earlier?"

Tian Buji was taken aback. 'This old man's manner...'

Lu Zhou pushed away from the ground and hovered in the air as though he was as light as a swallow. He looked at Xia Changqiu as he said, "I'm going to ask you questions, and you'll answer them truthfully. If there's even an ounce of untruth in your words, I'll annihilate everyone in your monastery." His voice traveled far and loud.

Xia Changqiu was shocked. 'He's not just an Eight-leaf cultivator! I-is he a Nine-leaf cultivator?'

"Calm down, old senior. The Thousand Willow Monastery don't dare to conceal the truth from you. We've honestly never seen those two Eight-leaf golden lotus elites," Xia Changqiu explained hastily.

"I didn't say they are Eight-leaf cultivators... How do you know that?" Lu Zhou's voice deepened considerably.

"..." Xia Changqiu's heart sank. 'This is bad.'

Lu Zhou faded out of focus for a moment before he shot forward.

Xia Changqiu's expression changed slightly. He folded his palms and pushed them forward.

Lu Zhou appeared in front of Xia Changqiu. His wrinkled hand was like a five-fingered heavenly hook. He did not seem to be using any energy as he pushed his palm forward. When he broke through Xia Changqiu's energy, his palm shone with a blue radiance!

Bam!

Xia Changqiu was sent flying back. His arms went numb immediately, and his blood essence surged.

The others were shocked. The grand Monastery Master of the Thousand Willow Monastery was pushed back with what seemed to be just a casual strike!

Xia Changqiu was in great pain. His confidence and pride had taken a blow consecutively from Yu Shangrong, Yu Zhenghai, Liang Zidao, Zhu Xuan, and now, this old man... He could hardly accept this. All of them could easily bully him! How could he remain unaffected? Was there no longer any place for the pride of an Eight-and-a-half-leaf cultivator?

Lu Zhou looked at Xia Changqiu and said with a hint of praise, "You're still standing after taking a hit from me. Your cultivation base isn't too bad."

Xia Changqiu's expression was gloomy. However, with so many people watching, he had to straighten his back. "Thank you for the kind words, old mister... We've never seen the two golden lotus cultivators. About them being Eight-leaf cultivators... I've heard that from the rumors as well."

Lu Zhou stood in the air with his hands on his back as he said, "I don't like liars..."

Tian Buji planted himself before Xia Changqiu and said, "Old senior, you're techniques are shocking and profound. Why must you bully us?"

Ji Fengxing flew up and bowed at Xia Changqiu. Then, he turned to face Lu Zhou and said, "This has nothing to do with the Thousand Willow Monastery, I was the one who started all this. I know the people you're looking for, old mister."

After Ji Fengxing finished speaking, a figure shot toward them from the distant forest. Upon seeing this, his eyes widened immediately as he shouted, "Big brother... Run!" With a burst of movement, he flew toward Yu Shangrong.

Chapter 740: As Powerful As They Say

Ji Fengxing was determined not to let Yu Shangrong make the same mistake twice. His instincts told him this old man was not easy to deal with. No matter who the old man was or where he was from, the old man was not someone the Thousand Willow Monastery could deal with. The best thing to do was... run! His cultivation base and speed were no match for Yu Shangrong. He could only bar Yu Shangrong's way and said, "It's an elite! Run!"

Lu Zhou looked over. Ji Fengxing was blocking the person speeding toward them. He raised a hand and pushed his palm out.

A shining golden palm seal sailed through the air.

“A Buddhist? Why is it golden?!” Tian Buji was greatly shaken.

Xia Changqiu was also shocked by the golden palm seal. ‘He’s not from the Sky Martial Court, the Flying Star House, or the palace?’

Wuwu looked at the old man. The old man was stroking his beard as he looked ahead with an indifferent expression on his face.

The palm seal sailed forth swiftly.

When a Nine-leaf cultivator made a move, even the Eight-leaf Ji Fengxing could hardly block it.

When the palm seal was about to land, Yu Shangrong unleashed his grand technique and vanished out of sight. He appeared in front of Ji Fengxing and raised his Longevity Sword with both hands in front of himself.

Bam!

Yu Shangrong blocked the palm seal as he flew against Ji Fengxing. The two of them were sent flying at the same time.

The palm seal had hit the Longevity Sword.

They slowed down after they flew several meters back in the air.

Lu Zhou did not strike again. He had seen the newcomer, and he understood Ji Fengxing’s intention.

The others were stunned.

Ji Fengxing turned around, about to say something, when Yu Shangrong raised his hand, gesturing to him to keep quiet. Then, he looked at the old man in front of him before he placed the Longevity Sword on his back and respectfully knelt on one knee. “Greetings, master.”

Yu Shangrong’s expression was the same as usual. It was calm, gentle, and unshakably confident. It seemed like no matter the time or situation, he would always be the same.

Xia Changqiu, Tian Buji, Wuwu. “...”

Ji Fengxing. “???”

Since Lu Zhou had made his move, it meant he was no longer bothered with concealing his identity.

Yu Shangrong’s greeting had confirmed the old man’s identity.

Ji Fengxing was so shocked and speechless. When he was learning sword and saber techniques from Yu Shangrong and Yu Zhenghai back then, he had always heard the two bragging about their master. Both of them had different views on cultivation and could hardly beat each other. However, there was only one thing they agreed on: their master was the strongest. The many grand pictures they painted all had one message: their master was peerless.

Ji Fengxing gulped. He looked at the seemingly harmless old man. When he regained his senses, a question appeared in his mind. ‘Is this old man really unparalleled?’

Lu Zhou stroked his beard and nodded in satisfaction. After crossing the Endless Ocean and a long flight, they were here on the other side and finally found Yu Shangrong. He said calmly, "Rise to your feet and speak."

Yu Shangrong slowly rose to his feet.

At this moment, Little Yuan'er and Conch flew into the air as well and stood next to their master. They greeted in unison, "Second Senior Brother!"

Yu Shangrong smiled when he saw the young girls. "Junior sisters, we meet again..."

Lu Zhou said, "You blocked my strike easily. Did you raise your cultivation base?"

Yu Shangrong nodded.

Lu Zhou looked at the shocked Ji Fengxing next to Yu Shangrong.

Yu Shangrong understood his master so he explained, "I've been lodging in the Thousand Willow Monastery since I came to the red lotus domain. Although Ji Fengxing's cultivation base is weak, he's a righteous man."

Lu Zhou understood the matter now.

Ji Fengxing stepped forward timidly and bowed at Lu Zhou as he said, "G-g-greetings, o-o-old s-senior..." He was so nervous that he could hardly speak.

By now, Xia Changqiu, the Monastery Master of the Thousand Willow Monastery, naturally knew the nature of the relationship between Lu Zhou and Yu Shangrong. He was filled with fearful respect as he hastily greeted Lu Zhou, "I see, you're a friend from afar. The Thousand Willow Monastery welcomes you, senior."

Xia Changqiu had no choice. He was destined to be like this since he had chosen to stand with Yu Shangrong and Yu Zhenghai.

The disciples followed suit and bowed.

Lu Zhou ignored them. Instead, he looked at Yu Shangrong and asked, "Where's your Eldest Senior Brother?"

Yu Shangrong lowered his head slightly and said apologetically, "I couldn't protect him. I'm willing to accept any punishment, master."

Xia Changqiu found that it was inappropriate for all of them to remain outside at the foot of the mountain. Hence, he said loudly, "Everyone, why don't we head into the hall? We should have a relaxed conversation, especially since it's a reunion."

Lu Zhou looked at Xia Changqiu and asked, "Are you the monastery master?"

"I am."

"You certainly have an eye for talent. This young man, Ji Fengxing, is he a disciple of yours?" Lu Zhou asked.

“Indeed, he’s a disciple of the Thousand Willow Monastery. That was a shameful display.” Xia Changqiu felt slightly embarrassed about the incident. When he compared the old man’s disciples with his own, the difference was as great as the sky and the earth.

Yet, Lu Zhou turned to look at Ji Fengxing, stroked his beard, and said, “Young man, you have a good character. The Evil Sky Pavilion values that the most. If you’re willing, I can make an exception and accept you into the Evil Sky Pavilion. You’ll have the same rank as Pan Zhong and Zhou Jifeng.”

Ji Fengxing. “...”

Ji Fengxing was at a loss for words.

“Do you mind this?” Lu Zhou glanced at Xia Changqiu.

Xia Changqiu’s expression was stiff. He chuckled awkwardly as he waved his hand and said, “No, not at all...” If it were anyone else trying to snatch his disciples away, he would have flayed that person alive.

Ji Fengxing bowed and said, “It’s thanks to the Thousand Willow Monastery that I was able to walk on the path of cultivation. Since I’ve joined the monastery, I can’t possibly betray it. You’ve said it yourself, old senior, that you’ve taken a liking to my character. If I go with you, it’ll only show you’re wrong about me.” After that, he raised his voice and said, “Thank you for the kind gesture, old senior.”

‘Interesting.’ This was the second time Lu Zhou was turned down. However, Ji Fengxing had a point. Since Ji Fengxing was unwilling, it would not be good to force him. If the melon had to be broken off from the vine by force, it would not taste good. Moreover, the Evil Sky Pavilion was not lacking in manpower.

As for Wuwu, although her character was good, she was not mentioned. It seemed like she had been overlooked.

Xia Changqiu nodded in approval. Then, he turned around and said, “Everyone, please follow me...”

They entered the Fair Hall.

To show their respect, the elders of the Thousand Willow Monastery had come over as well.

Little Yuan’er sat down before she said, “Second Senior Brother, master has gone through a lot to look for you...” Then, she recounted how they had crossed the Endless Ocean and flew for a long time.

The others felt frightful when they heard the story.

Initially, Yu Shangrong did not think much about it. After all, with his master’s cultivation base, it was not strange that his master was able to come to the red lotus domain. However, after he heard his Ninth Junior Sister recount what happened, he found out his master did not travel here through the black water but had crossed the Endless Ocean instead. He was shocked by this. After all, he knew the Endless Ocean was said to be impossible to cross. Nobody knew the danger that lay in the water. To think his master was willing to go through so much trouble for him!

Lu Zhou stroked his beard and asked, “So, where’s your Eldest Senior Brother?”

Yu Shangrong nodded and told his master about how he and Yu Zhenghai fought Zhu Xuan. He also told his master about how the Flying Star House had made several visits.

After listening to this, Lu Zhou stroked his beard and nodded as he said, "Zhu Xuan reached the Nine-leaf stage mid-battle. It wasn't easy for the two of you to draw even with him. On the surface, it seems like he wants to work with the two of you, but he's really trying to use you. Your Eldest Senior Brother must've understood that as well. He must've deliberately followed him so the rest of you are safe."

Upon hearing this, Xia Changqiu said, "I'm ashamed... It's all because the Thousand Willow Monastery is too weak. Otherwise, this wouldn't happen."

Little Yuan'er, who had always been impatient, said irritably, "Master, since they're bold enough to capture Eldest Senior Brother, we should kick down their doors right now. I don't care if they're the Eight or Ninth Temple!"

Xia Changqiu, Tian Buji, Ji Fengxing, Wuwu, and the elders were rendered speechless. What they did not expect was that Yu Shangrong rose to his feet as well and chimed in with a straight face, "If you're going to kick their doors down, master, I'm willing to go with you."

"..."

'What a bunch of madmen!'

Xia Changqiu cleared his throat before he hastily said, "Old senior, you're from the golden lotus domain. Therefore, I feel it's my duty to inform you that the Ninth Temple isn't as weak as you imagine."

Little Yuan'er waved her fist and said, "You're only saying that because you don't know my master. I've never seen anyone who's capable of standing after master strike them."

Ji Fengxing felt a sense of déjà vu. That was right. The little girl's words were reminiscent of Yu Shangrong and Yu Zhenghai's words. Their words were not the same, but the essence was the same. 'Are all the other disciples like this as well? Perhaps, this old man is really as powerful as they say...'