

Disciples 761

Chapter 761: Utterly Defeated Before I Can Even Get Serious

The red bird pulled on the chariot and swiftly flew into the clouds as it sped toward the Flying Star House.

Chen Tiandu coughed again. He said, "That old fiend's sword path..."

"That's a new sword path. I've never heard of it." Ye Zhen's expression was calm as he looked at the clouds ahead of him. "The Confucian school cultivates positive vital energy and obtains Expansive Heavenly Energy. The Buddhist sects cultivate seals and Brahmic chants. The Daoist sects cultivate nature and life. The sword path Sikong Beichen unleashed at the end was indeed peculiar."

"In that case, this Senior Lu whom that old fiend Sikong mentioned truly exists?" Chen Tiandao asked.

Ye Zhen merely nodded and said nothing else.

The red bird picked up speed.

...

In the Thousand Willow Monastery on Thousand Willow Mountain.

Xia Changqiu stood under a huge tree. He looked up at Yu Shangrong who was leaning against the tree trunk and said, "The people of the Flying Star House are here."

Yu Shangrong lightly leaped off the tree and looked at the horizon. "I see."

Yu Shangrong's voice had barely faded when Yu Zhenghai appeared next to Yu Shangrong. "Shall we have a contest?"

"You took the words right out of my mouth." Yu Shangrong spread his arms and flew down the mountain.

Yu Zhenghai flew down the mountain as well.

Xia Changqiu shook his head. 'Are they going to have a contest at a time like this?'

Tian Buji, who had led the elders, Wuwu, and Ji Fengxing from the Fair Hall over, called out, "Monastery Master!"

"Mhm. Let's head down to fend them off."

Little Yuan'er and Conch flew down the mountain as well.

Shortly after, the others gathered around the gazebo. They had a great view here; they could see most of the area around Thousand Willow Mountain from here.

Wuwu asked, "Senior brother, who do you think is stronger?"

Ji Fengxing smiled and said, "Of course it's Big Brother Yu. Look at the way he stands and moves. His every movement is brimming with confidence as though victory is already in his hands. He's a true elite swordsman." After saying this, he saw Little Yuan'er and Conch flying over. Then, he quickly added,

“Eldest Big Brother Yu is powerful as well. Look at his saber at his waist. If it were anyone else, they would look tacky for carrying a saber in that manner. However, it looks imposing and domineering when Eldest Big Brother Yu.”

Wuwu rolled her eyes at Ji Fengxing. Then, she looked at Little Yuan’er and asked, “Sister Yuan’er, who’s more powerful among them?”

Little Yuan’er was caught off guard by the question. She scratched her head and pointed at the duo alternately as she muttered, “Eldest Senior Brother... Second Senior Brother... Eldest Senior Brother... Second Senior Brother...”

Ji Fengxing. “...”

While Little Yuan’er was hesitating between the two choices, many cultivators from the Thousand Willow Mountain appeared.

Yu Shangrong flashed a faint smile and said, “Let’s not use our avatars or energies unless there’s a real danger. What do you say?”

“Good idea.”

“That way I won’t have the advantage of my avatar against you.” Yu Shangrong dove.

“Well, I won’t have the advantage of my desolate-grade weapon against you as well.” Yu Zhenghai dove as well.

...

Meng Changdong and Xie Xuan led the 1,000 cultivators in the air as they maintained a low altitude.

There were disciples from different sects so they did not ride on a flying chariot. To conserve strength, they did not fly at top speed as well.

When Thousand Willow Mountain was within sight, Meng Changdong shouted, “Stop!”

Xie Xuan was clearly displeased. He said disapprovingly, “It’s just the Thousand Willow Monastery. Why are we acting so cowardly?”

“Caution is the parent of safety. Liang Zidao was an Eight-and-a-half-leaf cultivator, but he was still killed by the Thousand Willow Monastery. We shouldn’t underestimate them.”

Indeed, their 1,000-strong cultivators were impressive. However, most of them were only in the Brahman Sea realm or the Divine Court realm.

Xie Xuan shook his head and said, “You’re a Nine-leaf cultivator, but you’re afraid?”

“This isn’t fear; it’s caution.” Even before the mission began, he knew his principles would be at odds with Xie Xuan’s. He knew Ye Zhen had intentionally sent this man to bother him.

During the journey here, they did not speak much at all.

Xie Xuan looked up and said, “If you’re afraid, you can leave now. I’ll inform Elder Ye about what happened.” He had intentionally spoken loudly.

Upon hearing these words, the 1,000 cultivators behind them laughed.

Soon after, someone pointed at the Thousand Willow Monastery and cried out, "What's that?"

"I think they're cultivators. They're coming at us."

Xie Xuan said coldly, "Kill them."

Dozens of cultivators flew forward to meet them.

However, Xie Xuan did not expect the two cultivators, one wielding a sword and the other wielding a saber, would go on a killing spree as soon as they made contact.

"One."

"Two!"

"Three! Junior Brother, you're too slow." Yu Zhenghai swung his Jasper Saber around as he flitted through the cultivators' ranks. With every flash of his blade, corpses fell to the ground.

Yu Shangrong aimed his sword at his targets and sent five of them flying at lightning speed. He did not even look at his targets as he turned around and said, "Eldest Senior Brother, you're the one who's slow."

Meng Changdong frowned.

Xie Xuan frowned slightly as well before he shouted, "Who goes there? Announce yourselves!"

Yu Shangrong paid no attention to Xie Xuan's words and continued on his killing spree.

Yu Zhenghai was the same.

Both of them fought alongside each other and seemed to be... competing on who had the highest number of kills.

"Don't just stand there! Do something!"

The hundreds of disciples standing Meng Changdong and Xie Xuan sent energy seals toward the two attackers.

Yu Zhenghai and Yu Shangrong swung their weapons.

Parrying energy seals with their weapons was part of their daily basic training. They could hold back violent storms easily, let alone these weak cultivators. They did not even have to utilize their energies.

Bam! Bam! Bam!

Bam! Bam! Bam!

The energy seals bore down on the duo, completely blotting out the sky. However, the attacks were parried by their extremely quick saber and sword techniques.

"They're not using their energies?" Xie Xuan was puzzled.

Meng Changdong said, "Brother Xie, give the order to retreat... These two aren't pushovers."

“You’re boosting other people’s morale while reducing your own. No wonder Ye Zhen doesn’t think too highly of you,” Xie Xuan chided.

Faced with such formidable enemies, Meng Changdong did not bicker with Xie Xuan. Instead, he looked at Yu Shangrong and Yu Zhenghai. He noticed the duo’s movements were simple, precise, and thorough. The movements and techniques were just right; there was no wasted energy at all. Without experiencing many life-or-death situations, numerous encounters with the blade, or a life tainted with blood, it was impossible to hone such a killing technique. He persisted and said again, “Brother Xie... Retreat.”

Xie Xuan turned a deaf ear to Meng Changdong’s words. Moreover, he leaped up dozens of meters in the sky with his hand tightly gripping his saber hilt. He cried out, “My turn!”

Whizz!

Xie Xuan’s avatar appeared. Nine leaves could be seen spinning around the red lotus.

“Destroy the mountains and rivers!”

A huge energy saber appeared and swung down on Yu Shangrong and Yu Zhenghai like a guillotine.

Yu Zhenghai and Yu Shangrong exchanged a look. Clearly, they had a tacit understanding of what was in each other’s minds.

The Jasper Saber’s energy saber appeared.

The Longevity Sword’s energy sword appeared as well.

The Jasper Saber’s energy saber shot out.

The Great Dark Heaven Memorial’s Dark Heaven Starlight!

Meanwhile, Yu Shangrong split into three. His energy sword pierced the red lotus avatar at lightning speed.

“Golden energy!”

“Foreign tribesmen!”

The remaining cultivators seemed frightened by this sight.

The red lotus avatar was instantly shattered by the energy saber and energy sword. There was no doubt about the outcome.

Yu Zhenghai unleashed his grand technique and appeared before Xie Xuan. While he kicked Xie Xuan, he did not forget to say, “Second Junior Brother I’m faster!”

Yu Shangrong appeared above Xie Xuan and kicked Xie Xuan’s chest. “Eldest Senior Brother, look closely. This is my second kick!”

Bam!

Xie Xuan spat out blood in the air. His heart sank as he said in a faltering voice, “They’re... so powerful?”

At this moment, a person came speeding from the forest of towering trees. He shouted, "Elder Ye's orders! Everyone has to retreat immediately! No questions asked!"

The remaining cultivators were scared out of their wits, to begin with. With this order, they immediately flee in all directions, running wildly for their lives.

Yu Zhenghai shook his head as though he thought it was a shame. "See that, Second Junior Brother? They're already so frightened before I could even get serious."

Chapter 762: Coming to Us

Yu Shangrong did not look at Yu Zhenghai. He said in confusion, "Retreat?"

The two of them had been holding back their strength all this time. They had only unleashed their energies when they encountered Xie Xuan. With their rich battle experiences, they kicked Xie Xuan between them like a ball shortly after they engaged in combat.

Most of the remaining cultivators scattered immediately. Their morale was shattered. This was unexpected.

The duo wondered if they displayed too much of their strength or if the red lotus cultivators were just timid.

Xie Xuan was heavily injured. His internal organs felt as though they were crushed. After spitting a mouthful of blood in the sky, he plummeted to the ground.

Boom!

Xie Xuan landed on the ground.

"Eldest Senior Brother, keep an eye on him. I'll go after the others." Yu Shangrong flew forward.

"Second Junior Brother, you should keep an eye on him. I'll go after them."

Yu Zhenghai summoned his avatar.

His 150-foot avatar stood on a golden lotus. Every single leaf was bright, full, and brimming with vitality.

After consuming Chi Yao's Heart, Yu Zhenghai gained 1,200 years of life. Ao Yu's Heart provided him with 500 years of life while the red fish heart gave him 100 years of life. While breaking through to the Nine-leaf stage, the golden lotus consumed 1,300 years of life. After reaching the Nine-leaf stage, he gained 600 years of life. In total, he gained 1,100 years of life.

For Yu Shangrong, a short-lived citizen of the Melilot Nation, this was slightly cruel.

"Eldest Senior Brother, keep an eye on him." Yu Shangrong no longer looked at Yu Zhenghai's golden lotus avatar. He faded out of focus and gave chase.

Yu Zhenghai glanced at his avatar. He felt that he had been too insensitive by manifesting it in front of his Second Junior Brother's face as well. Therefore, he said with a sigh, "Fine, I'll let you do what you want just this once."

After he finished speaking, Yu Zhenghai turned around and looked at Xie Xuan who was lying in a pit. Since his avatar was destroyed, he was inevitably dealt a heavy blow. He glared at Yu Zhenghai and the shining golden Nine-leaf avatar. The nine leaves spun above him, looking as though they would drop at any time and slick his head off his body.

Yu Zhenghai shook his head. "Is this all?"

Yu Zhenghai's words seemed to aggravate Xie Xuan. He grunted and spat out another mouthful of blood. His body trembled; he had a hard time accepting this. "Nine-leaf golden lotus... Ye Zhen has really done me in."

Xie Xuan pushed his palms on the ground and shot up toward Yu Zhenghai. He burned his sea of Qi and was bathed in red flames.

Yu Zhenghai shook his head again. "Futile." The Jasper Saber flew from his waist into his hand.

Xie Xuan joined his palms together. The energy seals in the sky spun around him. His eyes were bloodshot. Up against two enemies, he had no hope of winning. However, he did not believe he did not stand a chance if it was a one-on-one battle. He launched energy seals after energy seals at his opponent until they formed a dragon.

This reminded Yu Zhenghai of the rune seal golden dragon. He did not expect someone in the red lotus domain had mastered this technique as well. The two moves were similar in some ways, but the red energy seals' power seemed to be more formidable after they had merged.

Yu Zhenghai tossed his Jasper Saber out. Ever since he reached the Nine-leaf stage, he had no chance to use his Jasper Saber without any reservations. Now, he would be able to fight to his heart's content with a Nine-leaf cultivator.

Sovereign Descent.

Yu Zhenghai's Jasper Saber spun up before it hovered in front of his 150-foot avatar.

The energy sabers were like a waterfall from the nine heavens as they fell and instantly overwhelmed Xie Xuan and his red energy seals.

"Desolate-grade weapon!"

...

"Ding! Killed a target. Reward: 0 merit points. Domain extra: 100 merit points."

"Ding! Killed a target. Reward: 0 merit points. Domain extra: 100 merit points."

"Ding! Killed a target. Reward: 4,000 merit points. Domain extra: 1,000 merit points."

The influx of rewards surprised Lu Zhou. He muttered, "The Flying Star House."

Naturally, he was happy to see the numbers rising on the system dashboard.

Merit points: 50,940.

'I have 50,000 merit points now. Alas, I can't purchase Golden Lotus Leaves anymore. Otherwise, I could instantly reach the Ten-leaf stage.'

"The priority is to replenish the item cards."

Lu Zhou opened up the item column. When he saw the price, he frowned. "20,000."

'This is daylight robbery! I'm your only customer. I won't buy this. I'll wait until you close down for business.'

He closed the system dashboard and continued to cultivate.

He remembered how he first used the Deadly Strike Cards to kill the third person on the black roll, Zuo Xinchuan. After that incident, he had been using the cards frequently. At Measure Heaven River, he used five cards at one go. After reaching the Nine-leaf stage, the prices of the item cards were clearly increasing at a much quicker pace than before.

When he thought about this, he knew that he should not have bought Deadly Strike Cards back then. If he focused on improving his cultivation base and only purchased the Deadly Strike Cards now, he would have been truly undefeatable.

Lu Zhou opened his eyes.

"Purchase."

"Ding! Spent 20,000 merit points. Obtained Deadly Strike Card x1."

Lu Zhou stared at the card. As he expected, the price tag under the card changed to 21,000 merit points.

"..."

'Fortunately, the increase isn't as crazy as before. Come to think of it, I might be too dependent on the item cards.'

Lu Zhou closed his eyes again. He kept hearing the notifications of reward points from the domain extra.

He had a sudden thought. His ears shone with blue radiance.

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

The sounds in every corner of the Thousand Willow Monastery rang clearly in his ears.

"I didn't expect Senior Lu's disciples to be Nine-leaf cultivators. There aren't even that many Nine-leaf cultivators in the Flying Star House."

"Do you see the two young girls? The fierce and cute one is almost at the Eight-leaf stage. The innocent-looking one with the flute in her right hand is at the Three-leaf stage. I heard her say that she's the youngest of the ten disciples. Apart from these four people, Senior Lu has another six disciples who haven't shown up yet. That's too scary."

"I suddenly pity Ji Fengxing. To think he rejected the Evil Sky Pavilion."

Lu Zhou could hear everything. Moreover, he could selectively mute any sound he wanted as well. He muted this conversation before he increased the input of extraordinary power. The Heavenly Writing power immediately expanded his range to cover the entire Thousand Willow Mountain.

The sound of the wind, the birds, and the waterfall rang in his ears, and he quickly muted them.

The range of this power seemed to have expanded greatly. He found that it was much easier to use it now as well. The consumption of his extraordinary power was like a small stream; it was not as outrageous as before.

Not only did his extraordinary power cover the entire Thousand Willow Mountain, but its range covered 100 miles behind the mountain as well.

The rustling of the grass and tree leaves seemed to have merged with the land that moved in tandem with the sky.

Badump! Badump! Badump.

The sounds of heartbeats.

Lu Zhou recited the incantation for the Heavenly Writing power again.

...

In the forest behind Thousand Willow Mountain.

A person was panting heavily at this moment. After he caught his breath, he said in a hushed tone, "The most dangerous place is often the safest."

"I didn't expect Xia Changqiu to have such powerful helpers."

"However, the young are too inexperienced, after all. Not even Ye Zhen can do anything to me."

...

Upon hearing these words, Lu Zhou slowly opened his eyes. Then, he pushed away from the ground. Like a phantom, he left the courtyard. With his grand technique, he entered the forest behind the mountain.

It was quiet at the back of Thousand Willow Mountain.

Lu Zhou made no further movement. He surveyed his surroundings as his ears glowed blue again.

Powerful cultivators could conceal their auras and keep quiet to effectively stay hidden. Those who were smarter would even fake their own deaths to fool the eyes and senses of the others.

Meng Changdong was leaning against a tree trunk as he concealed his aura. There was a reason he could survive to this day as an elder of the Flying Star House.

To Ye Zhen, Meng Changdong's timidity was a sign of weakness. However, the Flying Star House was short of talents. Moreover, he was a Nine-leaf cultivator. That was the reason Ye Zhen had to put up with him.

Before they could even make a move during this annihilation mission, their army was completely destroyed.

Meng Changdong did not go head-to-head with Yu Shangrong. As he fled, he had been thinking of ways to escape the pursuit of the terrifying swordsman. When he seemed to have depleted all his power from fleeing, he decided to boldly try his luck and turned back to Thousand Willow Mountain.

He recalled the cultivator who had flown here to relay the message. He was puzzled. Based on his understanding of Ye Zhen and the house master, they would not give up halfway. Moreover, it had been verified that the Thousand Willow Monastery was colluding with foreign tribesmen. Was this not the pretext the Flying Star House wanted?

He finally calmed down at this moment. He shook his head. "Perhaps, it's time to retire."

After he finished sighing, a voice rang from behind him. "Where are you retiring to?"

Chapter 763: Answer Me Truthfully

Meng Changdong's hair stood on end immediately. He shuddered and shot up to his feet before he turned to look behind. He saw an old man dressed in a white long robe stroking his beard as he looked at him.

Meng Changdong was not a fool. His capability of being an elder under Ye Zhen was a testament to his talents. Hence, he would not make low-level mistakes such as looking down on someone he had just met. He could sense the old man's strength was unfathomable even though the old man did not use Primal Qi. Based on the old man's posture, manner, and the look in his eyes, he could tell this imposing presence was not something that was achieved overnight. He quickly suppressed the shock in his heart and asked, "Who are you?"

Lu Zhou shook his head lightly. He said coldly, "I'll be asking the questions, not you."

'Do you really think that I have no temper? What makes you think that you can ask for my name?'

"You'll be asking the questions?" Meng Changdong said warily.

"Who are you?" Lu Zhou asked.

"I'm only a woodcutter who's resting here while passing by. I'll be on my way soon enough," Meng Changdong replied.

"A woodcutter?"

The eyes were the windows to the soul. When Lu Zhou leveled his deep gaze on Meng Changdong, Meng Changdong felt as though the old man's eyes could see through his heart.

Would a woodcutter wear Confucian robes and have clean feet? Moreover, what was a woodcutter doing behind Thousand Willow Mountain? The mountain was steep with a cliff on one side. Lu Zhou continued staring at Meng Changdong with a penetrating gaze. 'Does he take me for a fool?'

Meng Changdong was aware that his excuse was incredibly flimsy. He instinctively took a step back. "Old Mister, I'll leave right away." He turned around and left after he finished speaking.

“Do you think you can leave?” Lu Zhou struck with his palm.

The shining golden palm seal shot toward Meng Changdong who had faded out of focus.

Bam! Bam! Bam!

The palm seal shot through a couple of trees before it struck Meng Changdong’s chest.

Meng Changdong looked at Lu Zhou in shock. “A Golden lotus foreign tribesman?”

Someone who could withstand the palm seal of a Nine-leaf cultivator was no doubt a grand cultivator.

Lu Zhou stroked his beard as he walked forward. “You might not know what you’re up against... However, I advise you to surrender to save yourself from suffering.”

Meng Changdong did not expect there to be a cultivator who was not any weaker than himself on Thousand Willow Mountain.

The two young Nine-leaf cultivators were already enough to make him flee.

Meng Changdong thought to himself wryly, ‘The most dangerous place is the safest? Great, I just walked right into the tiger’s mouth!’

Meng Changdong joined his palms together. He chanted under his breath as energy swirled around him. There was a flurry of movements, and when the smoke dissipated, he was nowhere to be seen.

Lu Zhou walked forward with his hands on his back. He surveyed his surroundings. A cultivator could not make himself disappear, not even with grand techniques. “Escape technique?”

Lu Zhou searched the towering trees around himself. He stroked his beard as his ears glowed blue. The sound of thumping heartbeats rang in his ear again.

Lu Zhou calmly moved his hand.

A palm seal sailed toward a huge tree 50 meters ahead of him.

Bam!

The palm seal split the huge tree.

Meng Changdong was sent flying as he spat out a mouthful of blood.

“Impossible!” Meng Changdong’s brows were tightly knitted together. He fought back the intense pain as he made hand signs.

Whizz!

There was a flash of red light before Meng Changdong disappeared again.

Lu Zhou walked forward.

He could hear the thumping heartbeats clearly. He pushed his palm down.

The palm seal landed on the ground.

Bam!

A grunt rang from below the ground.

Lu Zhou wondered what the woodcutter thought about the hit. He stroked his beard and said tonelessly, "Nobody under the heavens can escape from me."

This statement struck fear into Meng Changdong's heart. He struck with his palms out and leaped out of the ground.

The cloud of dust obscured their vision.

Meng Changdong crashed through dozens of trees as he made a wild dash to escape.

Lu Zhou's protective energy kept the soil at bay. He struck with his palms again. After he unleashed his grand technique, he caught up to Meng Changdong. He noticed that Meng Changdong's agility and escape technique were superior to most and caught up. Meng Changdong was capable of hiding in the ground and trees. Moreover, after suffering from two palm strikes, Meng Changdong could still maintain his agility. He was rather surprised by this.

At this moment, the palm seal struck Meng Changdong's back. He spat out blood again and fell on his face.

With a flash of movement, Lu Zhou appeared before Meng Changdong.

Meng Changdong turned over and stared at Lu Zhou. He said hoarsely. "Y-you... How did you do it?" He retreated as he searched for a way of this predicament.

"What's your name?" Lu Zhou looked down at Meng Changdong. "If you try to run again, I'll kill you."

The golden lotus bloomed under Lu Zhou's feet. Golden flames rose in the air, but they only lasted for a second.

"Golden... k-karmic power!" Meng Changdong's eyes widened. His mental state seemed to be crumbling at this moment. He sat limply on the ground with a ghastly pale face. He thought of the saying, 'Forfeiting the path to heaven but barging into hell'.

Meng Changdong coughed. He merely wanted to run away. He had no intention of confronting or fighting this old man, in the first place. Upon seeing the golden karmic fire, he lost all will to resist. In the end, he replied, "Flying Star House's Meng Changdong."

"Did you lead the cultivators here to annihilate the Thousand Willow Monastery?"

"Yes."

"The Ninth Temple's Sikong Beichen sent me a message and said that the Flying Star House's Master, Chen Tiandu, and Ye Zhen is visiting the Ninth Temple. Is this true?" Lu Zhou asked.

"Yes."

"How powerful are Chen Tiandu and Ye Zhen?" Lu Zhou asked.

"The house master is naturally a Ten-leaf cultivator..." Meng Changdong coughed violently for a moment before he continued to say with his head lowered, "Ye Zhen... is a Nine-leaf cultivator."

Lu Zhou's eyes flashed as he raised his voice and said pointedly, "I've never liked liars."

Meng Changdong felt the terrifying killing intent the voice emitted. He hastily added, "I'm telling you the truth... It's... I-it's j-just that Ye Zhen's strength is unfathomable..."

"Unfathomable?"

"Ye Zhen is the Flying Star House's Grand Elder. He's a cautious and calculative man. He's good at concealing himself. Publicly, he says he's a Nine-leaf cultivator, but nobody knows his actual strength," Meng Changdong said.

"Ye Zhen had led hundreds and barely managed to take down the luan. I've heard about that," Lu Zhou said.

Meng Changdong said, "Indeed, that's true, but... Ye Zhen might've been concealing his strength. He's already mastered the karmic fire long ago. He could've killed the luan on his own. Why would he lead such a huge group to the Black Water Mystic Cave?"

Upon hearing this, Lu Zhou looked at Meng Changdong and said, "You don't seem to like him very much."

"I've never agreed with Ye Zhen's way of doing things... He wanted to get rid of me in the past, but he didn't expect I'd stay in Lofty Steep Mountain," Meng Changdong said.

"So, you're trying to do the very opposite and run toward Thousand Willow Mountain instead of returning to the Flying Star House? However... you'll need to return sooner or later," Lu Zhou said.

"I'll retire after this incident," Meng Changdong's tone was one of pleading as he said, "I've answered you honestly. Please spare me, old mister. I won't tell a soul about what I saw today."

Lu Zhou continued stroking his beard as he looked at Meng Changdong. After a moment's silence, he said, "If you wish to live, you'll answer my questions truthfully."

Meng Changdong had a complicated expression on his face. He steeled himself before he said, "Alright."

"Do you know Jiang Wenxu?"

"Jiang Wenxu is an elder of the Flying Star House. 300 years ago, he joined the Sky Martial Court's research expedition and went missing in the Black Water Mystic Cave." Meng Changdong saw Lu Zhou frowning when he finished speaking so he quickly added, "A few months ago, Jiang Wenxu's life stone shattered."

"That's all?" Lu Zhou.

"Yes, I'm telling the truth."

Lu Zhou's voice was low and menacing as he said, "What about the crystal?"

"Ah..." Meng Changdong's body turned limp, and his mind turned blank.

Chapter 764: You've Underestimated Me

There were only three individuals in the world who understood the memory crystal the most: the crystal's owner, Jiang Wenxu who obtained the crystal, and Meng Changdong who had been studying the crystal for a long time.

Jiang Wenxu's life stone had shattered. In that case, who could this golden lotus cultivator be?

"Are you from the golden lotus domain, old mister?" Meng Changdong was unwilling to speak about the crystal. After all, it was the only leverage he had now to stay alive.

Lu Zhou continued to stroke his beard calmly as he said, "Before Jiang Wenxu died, he sent my crystal to the red lotus domain. I crossed the Endless Ocean just to look for it. Is there anything wrong with me trying to retrieve what's mine?"

Meng Changdong's heart skipped a beat. He cried out, "You're the owner of the crystal?!"

Lu Zhou looked at Meng Changdong and asked, "Where's my crystal?"

Meng Changdong gulped. A hint of incredulity could be seen in his eyes as he said, "Ye Zhen knows the importance of the crystal. Every time I studied the crystal, he would send disciples to assist me. Officially, the disciples are sent to assist me. However, they were actually there to monitor and control me. How could I have the chance to bring the crystal out with me? It's in my room on Lofty Steep Mountain."

Lu Zhou nodded. 'In that case, I'll have to go to the Flying Star House.'

Meng Changdong leaned forward and said, "I've answered your questions honestly, old mister. Can I go now?"

As Meng Changdong turned around, Lu Zhou shook his head and said, "I'll release you once I retrieve my crystal. After all, who's to say you're not lying to me?"

"..."

After that, Lu Zhou raised his hand that seemed to be imbued with divine power.

Goosebumps rose on Meng Changdong's skin when he looked at Lu Zhou's hand that seemed capable of holding onto one's soul.

The Fiend Monk Hand Seal closed as Lu Zhou sent several energy seals that landed on Meng Changdong's dantian and sea of Qi. With this, Meng Changdong's cultivation base was firmly sealed. Then, he waved his sleeve and rose into the air with Meng Changdong in tow like an eagle clutching a chick.

...

After dealing with Xie Xuan, Yu Zhenghai returned to the Thousand Willow Monastery.

Soon after, Yu Shangrong returned as well.

The others rushed up and greeted them upon their return.

"How was it?"

Yu Shangrong shook his head and said, "Only 200 of them are left... The leader reminds me of Fourth Junior Brother. He's a slippery one."

Yu Zhenghai did not make fun of Yu Shangrong over this. Although the duo liked to compete among themselves and Yu Zhenghai's techniques were grand, he could not compare to Yu Shangrong when it came to pursuit. He knew Yu Shangrong well. With Yu Shangrong's ability, if Yu Shangrong could not catch that person, then, the others had no hope of catching that person as well.

Little Yuan'er said, disgruntled, "If master were there, that person wouldn't be able to get away."

"You're right. Senior Lu would be able to catch him," Xia Changqiu said.

Yu Zhenghai said, "Junior Sister, you shouldn't say that. Master is getting old. It won't do for us to trouble him with every single thing."

"Oh."

Xia Changqiu walked over and cupped his fists at the four disciples before he said, "You might be unaware of this, but the leader is Meng Changdong. He's the Second Elder of the Flying Star House. Although his combat strength is only mediocre, he's highly skilled in escape techniques and Formations. He's well-versed with escape techniques from the Confucian, Daoist, and Buddhist sects. It's only natural that we can't catch him unless Senior Lu makes a move..."

Yu Shangrong turned to look at Xia Changqiu. "The Flying Star House's Second Elder?"

"That's right."

"That's great. I'll head to the Flying Star House and capture him," Yu Shangrong said calmly and confidently.

"..."

Xia Changqiu hastily said, "Brother Yu, you mustn't. The Flying Star House isn't a minor sect. The Lofty Steep Mountain is 100,000 feet tall and has near-impenetrable defenses. There are 10,000 disciples at the foot of the mountain, apart from elites like Ye Zhen. If you go, it's just like..." He paused for a moment. He swallowed the words 'walking into a trap' before he said, "It'd be fine if Senior Lu goes there..."

At this moment, Little Yuan'er cried out, "Master?" She pointed at Lu Zhou who was flying toward them from the back of the mountain.

Xia Changqiu was shocked when he saw Lu Zhou and the person with him. He quickly calmed down and feigned an expectant expression on his face as he said, "Flying Star House Elder Meng Changdong? It seems like you tried to be cunning at the wrong place..."

The Thousand Willow Monastery elders bowed in unison.

Yu Zhenghai and the others looked at Lu Zhou as well. They looked at Meng Changdong intently in confusion. This was the elder who was skilled in escape techniques?

Lu Zhou descended in front of the Fair Hall before he pushed Meng Changdong away.

Meng Changdong fell on the ground.

Little Yuan'er scoffed and said haughtily, "So what if he's skilled in escape techniques? Isn't he still caught by my master?"

Meng Changdong was humiliated by that statement.

Xia Changqiu bowed and said, "I've expected this. Since Senior Lu made a move, he wouldn't be able to escape even if he could sprout wings."

Meng Changdong was taken aback when he saw Xia Changqiu, the Monastery Master of the Thousand Willow Monastery, treated Lu Zhou with fearful respect and seemingly cheerful submission.

Yu Shangrong and Yu Zhenghai bowed. "Master."

'Master?' Meng Changdong remembered how powerful these two were. 'He's the master of these two Nine-leaf cultivators?'

"How did you catch him, Master?" Conch asked timidly.

Lu Zhou replied as though it was not a big deal, "He's only a Nine-leaf cultivator. Capturing him is as easy as flipping my palm."

"..."

Meng Changdong's face flushed red when he heard the comment.

"I've already sealed his cultivation base. Lock him up, and don't let outsiders know about his whereabouts. I'll be going to the Flying Star House to retrieve something," Lu Zhou said.

Upon hearing this, Meng Changdong sat limply on the ground. He shook his head and said with a sigh, "Old mister, I'm telling you, it's best for you to stay away from Lofty Steep Mountain."

"Oh?" Lu Zhou stroked his beard as he looked at Meng Changdong.

"No one can return from Lofty Steep Mountain. There's no need for me to say any more than this." Meng Changdong looked away.

Lu Zhou stroked his beard and said, "You underestimate me..."

Xia Changqiu recalled what happened in the Ninth Temple. He wondered inwardly, 'Is the old senior going to use his old tactics?'

"I'll head to the Flying Star House with you, Senior Lu," Xia Changqiu said.

"Me, too," Tian Buji chimed in.

Yu Zhenghai and Yu Shangrong said in unison, "I'm willing to go and flatten the Flying Star House as well."

Meng Changdong looked at Xia Changqiu in confusion. He was shocked by how submissive Xia Changqiu was. After he recovered from the shock, he said, "It's futile."

Xia Changqiu frowned. He looked at Meng Changdong and said, "Shut your mouth. Even Chen Beizheng and Sikong Beichen didn't dare to act impudently in front of Senior Lu..."

Meng Changdong was shocked. He remembered Chen Beizheng's death and how Ye Zhen issued an urgent order for everyone to retreat. There was no need for him to be told about the connection between the two. Goosebumps rose on his skin immediately as his back was drenched by cold sweat.

"Lock him up. The elders will keep an eye on him."

"Understood." Two Thousand Willow Monastery elders brought Meng Changdong away.

Lu Zhou nodded and said, "I'll go by myself. All of you stay here."

"Master, you're going alone!" Yu Zhenghai and Yu Shangrong were shocked.

"There's no need to worry. I know what I'm doing." Lu Zhou pushed away from the ground with his feet. He flew away from the mountain like a breeze.

The others bowed. "Safe journey, Senior Lu."

Lu Zhou vanished from their sight in an instant.

Ji Fengxing said, slightly worried, "Will Senior Lu be in danger going there alone?"

Without waiting for an answer from Yu Zhenghai, Yu Shangrong, Little Yuan'er, and the others, Xia Changqiu said, "There's no need to worry. There won't be much of a problem if Senior Lu personally makes a move."

"But, I heard that Ye Zhen is extremely cunning," Ji Fengxing said.

"As the saying goes, 'Ginger becomes spicier as it ages'. You're still young, but you'll understand this one day." After saying these words, Xia Changqiu cupped his fists at Yu Zhenghai and Yu Shangrong before he turned around and left.

The others were left there, stunned.

...

After Lu Zhou left the Thousand Willow Mountain. He landed and lamented his lack of mounts. Every day felt like a year to him.

With the little time he had, he checked the system dashboard. His mounts were still on their way.

Then, he produced an Appearance Alteration Card and shattered it. He visualized Meng Changdong's appearance. His face seemed to distort before he morphed into Meng Changdong.

After that, he did not waste time and continued flying to Lofty Steep Mountain.

...

Lofty Steep Mountain.

The mountains were five fingers pointing toward the heavens.

The middle finger was the highest peak of Lofty Steep Mountain. It was also where Ye Zhen and the housemaster resided.

The other places were occupied by elders and core disciples.

There was a ring of old and simple buildings around Lofty Steep Mountain. Cultivators could be seen occasionally flying around Lofty Steep Mountain.

At this moment, Lu Zhou appeared in the vicinity of the mountain. He looked ahead and continued making his way there,

As he drew closer and closer to his destination, a person approached him. "Elder Meng?! You're fine! Elder Ye has sent a search party to look for you!"

Chapter 765: The Power of One

Lu Zhou looked at the small figure with a neutral expression. 'I don't recognize him... If I'm exposed, they'll definitely gang up on me... That's dangerous...'

Lu Zhou looked at the buildings around the Flying Star House. Their different heights had a wave-like pattern similar to the five peaks. The peaks could not be seen at all; they seemed taller and loftier than the Ninth Temple. There was a kind of beauty in the lack of symmetry.

Lu Zhou said, "I'm... fine."

"Fine?" The disciple scratched his head, but he did not think much about it. He said, "Elder Meng, this way please."

"What's so urgent?"

"I don't know. You'll have to ask him yourself." He was only an ordinary disciple. How would he know about the matters of Ye Zhen and the others?

Lu Zhou remembered Sikong Beichen's flying letter. Since these two managed to return to the Flying Star House, it was clear Sikong Beichen did not gain much of an upper hand

"Lead the way."

"Huh? Lead... lead the way?" The disciple scratched his head again.

"Forget it."

At this moment, the Flying Star House disciples at the foot of the mountain looked up.

"It's Elder Meng! As expected, Elder Meng survived the annihilation mission at the Thousand Willow Monastery."

"Elder Meng's skilled in escape techniques after all. Elder Ye has said that even he might not be able to catch Elder Meng. How amazing!"

"Hey, don't you think Elder Meng looks even more imposing when he flies now?"

While Lu Zhou flew up Lofty Steep Mountain, he considered how cautious he should be with using the Deadly Strike Cards. He had to gain a better understanding of the Flying Star House's collective strength. If the Flying Star House's strength was as the rumor said where their strength mainly lay with the housemaster and Ye Zhen, he was confident he would be able to do as he pleased. Although group battles and long battles were not advantageous to him, he was confident he would not have a problem with killing Ye Zhen.

Indeed, Lofty Steep Mountain was high. When Lu Zhou was halfway up the mountain, he could feel the clear difference between the lower and higher altitude. He could see faint Formation veins in the air. He could sense the power of these veins was much stronger than ordinary Formations from their auras.

As he was looking at the second peak, a voice reached his ears. "Elder Meng, this way!"

A Confucian scholar flew toward him and hovered above him before he bowed in greeting.

Lu Zhou flew up.

The Confucian scholar pointed at the space in front of the second peak and said, "Elder Meng, I knew you'd be fine! Anyway, that's where the Daoist veins are, you should be careful."

Lu Zhou did not reply to him. Instead, he asked, "What is it?"

"Elder Ye told me to wait for you here, and bring you to him as soon as you return," the Confucian scholar said. Although his words were respectful, his tone and expression were proud.

Lu Zhou recalled Meng Changdong's words. Indeed, the two's relationship did not seem to be good. He could not help but sigh inwardly. Meng Changdong was an elder of the Flying Star House, but he seemed lower than a disciple.

The Confucian scholar was arrogant and bossy like a dog who threatened someone based on its master's strength.

Lu Zhou stroked his beard calmly and said, "I rushed all the way back; I'm going to change my clothes."

The Confucian scholar was slightly taken aback when he heard the way Lu Zhou spoke. Then, he quickly said, "I'll wait here."

"Alright." Lu Zhou flew toward the second peak and entered a lavish courtyard at the peak.

Several disciples bowed upon seeing him, but he remained silent as he walked past them.

After Lu Zhou entered the room, one of the disciples said in a hushed voice, "Leave Elder Meng alone. Since the annihilation mission is a failure, he must be feeling down."

The other disciples nodded.

Inside the room, Lu Zhou walked up to the bookshelf and scanned it. He saw a damaged box in the upper left corner.

Just as Meng Changdong had said, the most dangerous place was the safest. This did not seem like a place where important items would be kept. However, it was exactly where the memory crystal was

kept. The damaged box was kept within reach and did not even have a covering. Nevertheless, its height was just right. One would not be able to see into the box.

Lu Zhou opened the box and picked the crystal up. It was cold to the touch. A familiar feeling stirred in his mind. With this, he confirmed the crystal was the other half of his crystal. Then, he placed it in his sleeve.

Now that he had obtained his crystal, he did not think the next part would be difficult.

"Elder Meng." A voice rang from outside the room.

'Is someone's keeping an eye on me?'

Meng Changdong had said that disciples were sent to accompany him when he studied the crystal. There were ears and eyes on the wall.

Lu Zhou looked around himself as his ears glowed blue, unleashing the Heavenly Writing's power.

"That old geezer, Meng Changdong, sure is lucky for being able to stay alive after that setback."

"He's one of the most useless Nine-leaf cultivators I've ever met. Elder Ye alone could fight against ten Nine-leaf cultivators."

He increased the range of his hearing until the middle peak.

"Elder Ye, Meng Changdong is back. He's in his room now, and he'll be here to see you soon."

"I see."

Lu Zhou retracted his power. He looked at the door. The other person was still knocking on his door.

"Elder Meng?"

Lu Zhou opened the door and saw the Confucian scholar.

The Confucian scholar smiled and said, "I thought that you've forgotten about the matter at hand, Elder Meng... This way please."

Lu Zhou's expression remained the same as he raised his hand and struck.

Smack!

The Confucian scholar did not expect Lu Zhou to suddenly strike him. The slap landed on his cheek square. A handprint appeared on his face immediately, accompanied by a stinging pain. He was thoroughly shocked

"Elder Meng!" The Confucian scholar widened his eyes as he held his cheek with his hand.

The disciples in the courtyard at the second peak gathered, attracted by the commotion. They were in disbelief. They had never seen Meng Changdong striking anyone before. Even if was going to strike someone, that person was not someone he should have hit. After all, this Confucian scholar was Ye Zhen's direct disciple, Jiang Xiaosheng!

Lu Zhou looked at Jiang Xiaosheng indifferently and said, "You're just a disciple. How dare you order an elder around?" He emphasized the word 'elder'. His tone and mannerism were starkly different from Meng Changdong.

The disciples present on the scene looked at 'Meng Changdong' in shock. Was this still the Elder Meng they knew? Is he finally standing his ground? How was he going to explain himself to Elder Ye? All of them remained silent. No one reprimanded the Confucian scholar as well.

However, the Confucian scholar seemed to have inherited Ye Zhen's natural disposition. He calmed down quickly. He bowed and cupped his fists together. "I've made a mistake. Elder Ye has invited you over for a talk." His tone was now respectful and polite; the arrogance had vanished.

"Lead the way," Lu Zhou said.

When Jiang Xiaosheng turned around to fly outside, a dark expression briefly flitted across his face.

It did not take long before two of them arrived outside a dojo near a five-story courtyard on the middle peak.

Lu Zhou looked at the cherry blossom trees outside the dojo and could not help but wonder inwardly, 'It's cold all year round on Lofty Steep Mountain. Why are there cherry blossoms here?'

The architectural style of the dojo reminded Lu Zhou of a certain country on earth.

The wooden door opened. "Elder Meng, this way."

Lu Zhou entered the dojo. The open-styled dojo reminded him of a certain country in his memories. There was a sunroof on top and a yellow wooden floor. The center of the dojo was built with high-grade wood, and many scenic paintings hung on the walls.

The sunroof on top did not brighten up the dojo. Instead, it cast a stark contrast between light and shadow, giving the place a mysterious look.

The word 'ru' hung in the main hall, looking out of place.

Seated before the 'ru' character was Ye Zhen, the Flying Star House's Grand Elder who had almost equal authority as the housemaster. It was difficult to imagine someone so young with an erudite air to the Grand Elder of the Flying Star House.

"Master, Elder Meng is here." The Confucian scholar made sure to look as though he was in pain when he greeted his master.

Ye Zhen opened his eyes and glanced at his disciple. He asked calmly, "What happened to your face?"

Jiang Xiaosheng prostrated himself. "I deserved it. I accidentally offended Elder Meng."

Upon hearing this, Ye Zhen shifted his gaze to 'Meng Changdong'. His eyes seemed to be speaking a language of their own.

The moment their eyes met, Lu Zhou saw a lot of emotions. There was calmness, killing intent, shock, and disbelief.

"Please take a seat." Ye Zhen raised his arm.

Lu Zhou wondered what would happen if he used the Deadly Strike Card to kill Ye Zhen now. However, he was not in a hurry so he calmly walked over and sat across Ye Zhen with his legs crossed.

Ye Zhen looked apologetic as he said, "I apologize to you on Jiang Xiaosheng's behalf. A disciple should know his place. How could he be disrespectful to an elder?"

Lu Zhou nodded in satisfaction. He said, shocking Ye Zhen and his disciple, "It's the father's fault for not raising the child properly, and the teacher's fault for not teaching a pupil correctly. Leading by example is something that every teacher and master should know."

However, the shock seemed to only last a second. Ye Zhen said with a dignified air, "You have a point, Elder Meng. Jiang Xiaosheng, what mistake did you make?"

Initially, Jiang Xiaosheng had assumed his master would stand up for him. The current situation threw him off. Still prostrated, he said, "I went into Elder Meng's courtyard without permission and... and offended Elder Meng!"

"You're Elder Ye's direct disciple so your mistake is even worse. What do you say, Elder Ye?" Lu Zhou's tone was calm.

"It's just as you said, Elder Meng. Drag him out and give him 30 strokes of the cane. You'll be grounded for one month." Ye Zhen waved his arm.

A gust of wind rolled toward Jiang Xiaosheng. With a boom, he flew out of the dojo. "Forgive me, master! Forgive me, master!"

Ye Zhen smiled and asked, "Are you satisfied with this, Elder Meng?"

Chapter 766: On the Contrary

"I won't hold it against him. It's just that I thought we should be stricter in regard to respecting seniority and hierarchies. Since time immemorial, rules have been indispensable in kingdoms and families. Without rules, society would collapse. Jiang Xiaosheng has repeatedly stepped on the Flying Star House's bottom line with his behavior. Therefore, he should be punished. I'm impressed that you're willing to stand on the side of justice, Elder Ye." Lu Zhou had never had thoughts about pretending to be Meng Changdong. It did not suit his ways of doing things even though he had changed his appearance.

Ye Zhen maintained the faint smile on his face as he said, "You're right, Elder Meng. Under one roof, there's a need to establish rules that enforce respect according to one's seniority. It's like that for commoners, and it's how it should be for the Flying Star House that has tens of thousands of members."

It was just as Lu Zhou had been told, Ye Zhen was an exceptionally cunning man. He kept his cool even after the change in the way Lu Zhou spoke and the way Lu Zhou addressed him. He did not give away his thoughts and seamlessly went with the flow. His emotions or displeasure were all buried in the depth of his heart. This was not the conduct someone as young as him usually had.

Nevertheless, Lu Zhou remained unperturbed. He calmly asked, "Is there a reason you asked to see me, Elder Ye?"

Ye Zhen said, "Elder Meng, you led 1,000 cultivators to annihilate the Thousand Willow Monastery today. The Twelve Sects of Cloud Mountain's elite, Xie Xuan, was killed by a golden lotus cultivator. Where were you when that happened, Elder Meng?" He spoke calmly. He was interrogating Lu Zhou, but there was no hint of blame in his tone.

Lu Zhou replied, "The Thousand Willow Monastery is being guarded by elites. Even Xie Xuan lost his life. Naturally, I chose to retreat." He did not think there was anything shameful about this.

For someone like Meng Changdong, it was not surprising that he fled. If Yu Shangrong had caught him, he would have died. Alas, who knew he would run into Lu Zhou?

Based on Ye Zhen's words, it was clear to Lu Zhou that Ye Zhen had informants among the cultivators who had gone to the Thousand Willow Monastery. He was not at the monastery, but he spoke as though he was there and knew the situation like the back of his hand.

"Now that Xie Xuan is dead, the Twelve Sects of Cloud Mountain will surely launch an inquiry. How do you plan to explain yourself, Elder Meng?"

"Elder Ye, surely you've got a plan..." Lu Zhou was fearless. He kept his tone even as he said, "You knew about the relationship between the Thousand Willow Monastery and the Ninth Temple, and yet, you stubbornly insisted on the annihilation mission. Why's that?"

Ye Zhen did not seem angered by these words; his expression remained unchanged. He said, "You're wrong. The housemaster and I went to the Ninth Temple because we were confident we'd be able to take down Sikong Beichen. We decided to seize the opportunity to kill two birds with one stone and annihilate the Thousand Willow Monastery as well." The way he addressed 'Meng Changdong' had changed now.

"Seize the opportunity?" Lu Zhou smiled. "Lu Song, Liang Zidao, and Daoist Master Xuan Ming were capable members of the Flying Star House. They died in vain, and you call this seizing the opportunity?"

Ye Zhen, naturally, heard the rebuke in Lu Zhou's words. However, he said with a smile, "The three of them were reckless and made a move without my permission. They only have themselves to blame for their deaths. Of the 1,000 cultivators who were sent on the mission to annihilate the Thousand Willow Monastery, 300 were from the Sky Martial Court, 500 from the Twelve Sects of Cloud Mountain, 150 rogue cultivators, and only 50 from our side. When the retreat order was given, all 50 of our members returned alive. There's no casualty on our side."

"..." Lu Zhou had to admit Ye Zhen had a certain ability to control and manipulate things. On the surface, the leader and person in charge of the campaign against the Thousand Willow Monastery was Meng Changdong. However, in truth, Ye Zhen was the one pulling all the strings from behind. He was truly cunning.

Ye Zhen continued to say, "However, I'm curious. How did you escape with your life, Elder Meng?"

"I'm skilled in escape techniques. It's easy for me to escape," Lu Zhou answered.

Ye Zhen nodded. "Elder Meng, aren't you going to ask about what happened to the housemaster and me at the Ninth Temple?"

Something stirred in Lu Zhou. He had a feeling that Ye Zhen was privy to something. Ye Zhen rarely acted according to convention so it made him difficult to predict.

Nevertheless, Lu Zhou's expression remained neutral. There was only one thing he had to remember: Faced with absolute power, schemes and plots were nothing.

"If you want to talk about it, Elder Ye, I'm all ears," Lu Zhou said.

Ye Zhen raised his arm.

The wooden doors on both sides of the dojo creaked as they closed.

"Are you worried about the ears on the wall?"

The dojo was located in the five-story courtyard at the middle peak; it belonged to Ye Zhen. Who would be so bold to eavesdrop at this place?

Ye Zhen said, "The times are different." He stood up slowly, and his Confucian robes hung loosely on his frame. His straight body cast a slender shadow on the floor. He continued to say, "The housemaster and I went to Ninth Temple to see if Sikong Beichen was telling the truth and to get to the bottom of Chen Beizheng's death..."

"Oh?" Lu Zhou seemed puzzled.

"Although Sikong Beichen mastered a new sword path, he did not have the ability nor the boldness to kill Chen Beizheng. After all, he would incur the wrath of the palace. The Ninth Temple is waning. None of its five First Seats has mastered the karmic fire. Therefore, there's no doubt an unknown elite had killed Chen Beizheng," Ye Zhen said as he paced with his hands on his back.

"You have a point," Lu Zhou replied.

"Sikong Beichen says the elite has the surname Lu, has the power to kill Chen Beizheng, and is most likely at the Thousand Willow Monastery." Ye Zhen continued pacing. "The disciples who went to annihilate the Thousand Willow Monastery reported that they saw two Nine-leaf golden lotus cultivators. Did you see them, Elder Meng?"

"I did," Lu Zhou said.

"Alright." Ye Zhen nodded. He returned to his spot and sat down with his legs crossed. "In that case, I'd like you to do two things, Elder Meng."

Lu Zhou kept quiet. He wanted to see what tricks Ye Zhen would play.

Ye Zhen said, "First, the Flying Star House would rather not lose capable members. If there's no official business, you should remain here. Second, the memory crystal is of utmost importance. I've informed the Sky Martial Court that we'll leave the crystal with them. With this, you no longer have to trouble yourself with it, Elder Meng. What do you think?" After he finished speaking, he waited silently for Lu Zhou's reply.

Lu Zhou was in no hurry to answer him. After thinking to himself for a moment, "You're only trying to make me surrender the crystal..." He was puzzled about Ye Zhen's apparent dislike of Meng Changdong.

He had a strong feeling that there was something fishy about this matter. 'Why did he keep Meng Changdong around for so long then? He's even trying to protect Meng Changdongs...'

Ye Zhen smiled. He extended his hand slowly in front of Lu Zhou. "I'll have to trouble you, Elder Meng."

"You want the crystal so badly?"

Ye Zhen replied with a smile, "Truth be told, this crystal means nothing to me. If the Sky Martial Court wants it, I'll oblige. However, it's not impossible if you want to keep it... What do you say... friend?" He had spoken slowly when he said the word 'friend'. It was obvious he knew the person sitting in front of him was not the real Meng Changdong. He kept his eyes trained on Lu Zhou when he spoke, expecting to see shock on Lu Zhou's face or signs of being flustered.

Contrary to Ye Zhen's expectations, Lu Zhou remained calm. The crystal was already in his hand so he did not care much about how the situation developed. Moreover, as soon as he met Ye Zhen, he knew Ye Zhen would be difficult to deal with. He said, "You have good eyes."

Ye Zhen smiled and said, "From the moment you first stepped into my dojo, I knew you're not the real Meng Changdong."

Lu Zhou was slightly surprised by this. It was normal if Ye Zhen had discovered he was an impostor based on their conversation, especially when he did not make much of an effort to hide his identity. However, he was rather impressed Ye Zhen was capable of seeing through his disguise so quickly.

"Elder Meng is only an early Nine-leaf cultivator. His aura wouldn't remain so stable if he entered the dojo. Your cultivation base is greater than Elder Meng, sir," Ye Zhen said.

No wonder Ye Zhen was not angered earlier.

Ye Zhen continued to say, "Under the heavens, there are many who mastered appearance alteration techniques. You merely altered your appearance, but you didn't change your manner of speech and movements. I can tell you're not worried about exposing your identity; you're only here to take the crystal."

Lu Zhou nodded. "Intelligent people have the same weakness. You're all too full of yourselves. You're no exception to this as well."

Ye Zhen did not deny this. He merely nodded. He waved his hand again. Veins appeared on the four scenic drawings in the dojo. They seemed like flowing water.

"The Ninth Temple is no longer what it once was. Why must you act contrarily, sir? The Flying Star House is like the sun during high noon. We'll surely become the greatest sect in Great Tang one day. Why don't you work with me, sir?"

"Work with you?" Lu Zhou studied Ye Zhen.

"You may keep the crystal as a token of my sincerity," Ye Zhen said bluntly as he placed his palms on his lap, "When you return, please inform Senior Lu of this. Those who know how to select their friends will gain respect. I hope you'll consider this matter thoroughly before you act."

Lu Zhou thought that Ye Zhen's unfathomable cultivation base and cunningness were the only things that made him difficult to deal with. After conversing with Ye Zhen, he discovered Ye Zhen was highly ambitious and harbored ulterior motives. 'Those who can't restrain themselves in the little things will ruin great plans. As expected of a Confucian scholar.'

"Meng Changdong is now a prisoner. All that's left of the Flying Star House are you and the housemaster. On the surface, you're not even comparable to the Ninth Temple. How can this be called a collaboration?" Lu Zhou asked.

"I, alone, am enough," Ye Zhen said. After he said this, the scenic paintings around them flowed like water.

Faint Primal Qi hung in the air.

Lu Zhou saw the Daoist veins flowing in the air.

The Daoist veins swirled, and their surroundings brightened up.

Ye Zhen folded his palms.

Behind Lu Zhou, a miniature avatar appeared. His Nine-leaf golden lotus blossomed slowly. He looked at the scenic paintings again. This dojo had used these four paintings to form a Formation.

Chapter 767: Ye Zhen's Secret (Part One)

"After entering the dojo, every illusion will be dispelled." Ye Zhen parted his palms, and the Daoist veins dissipated. "In my dojo, I'm the overlord."

Lu Zhou returned his gaze to Ye Zhen. Ye Zhen was clearly trying to show his strength; this was Ye Zhen's so-called sincerity to work together. He looked at Ye Zhen, perplexed. "Overlord?"

Ye Zhen said tonelessly, "The path lies in the heart, and the path is the heavens. Knowing the heart is the same as knowing the path and heavens... Your avatar has appeared, sir."

Lu Zhou had a treasure called the Golden Taixu Mirror that would reveal all creations' true forms. He did not expect Ye Zhen would be capable of pulling this off with the Daoist veins in the dojo. However, only his golden lotus was exposed, not the karmic fire. No wonder Ye Zhen was so confident and wanted him to pass a message to 'Senior Lu'.

The dojo was silent for a moment. Lu Zhou said, "I don't need your approval if I want the crystal. If I wish to take it away, no one can stop me. As for working together, what if I refuse?"

Ye Zhen shook his head. "A wise man submits to circumstances. Those who cannot understand current trends are dumb mules. You've traveled a long distance over the Endless Ocean, why must you make enemies for yourself? You have no reason to reject my proposal, sir..."

Lu Zhou had to agree Ye Zhen had a point. Under normal circumstances, it was indeed a good idea to work with Ye Zhen. He replied indifferently, "You're wrong."

"Hm?" Ye Zhen was puzzled.

"You've planned and accounted for many things, but you miscalculated one thing..." Lu Zhou said. He paused for a moment before he added, "You're irritating."

Ye Zhen's smile faded. "Is this the reason?"

"It's a good reason," Lu Zhou said.

Ye Zhen joined his palms together again. The Daoist veins in the surroundings flowed like water and surged again.

A buzzing noise rang in the air. It was as though the Daoist veins were resonating with something. Their strength seemed more powerful compared to before as well.

"To tell you the truth, I've studied the crystal before. Unfortunately, I was too forceful, and damaged it a little," Ye Zhen said.

Lu Zhou frowned slightly. If Ye Zhen's earlier actions merely irritated Lu Zhou, his actions of damaging the crystal had stepped on his bottom line. He thought to himself decisively, 'This man will surely become the source of a great problem in the future. I can't let him live.'

"Although your reply disappoints me, I'd still like to hear Senior Lu's reply. Leave the crystal here, sir, and then, you can leave." Ye Zhen's tone was calm, and he did not sound the least bit disappointed. From the beginning, he had no intention of letting the person in front of him leave with the crystal. Everything was just a test; the real contest was just about to begin.

Lu Zhou stared at Ye Zhen as he said, "That's enough." He rose his feet slowly. He did not plan to entertain Ye Zhen. As soon as he got to his feet, the scenic paintings shot out red lines that merged together. Moreover, they were merging at blinding speed. It was as though they were leaving the Formation veins inside the dojo. It was a unique Formation vein.

"You can only leave once you leave the crystal behind," Ye Zhen said.

Lu Zhou flipped his palm casually.

A golden palm seal sailed toward Ye Zhen.

Ye Zhen's figure faded out of focus. The palm seal hit thin air and did not touch the moving lines.

"In this dojo... I am the overlord."

The buzzing sound grew even louder at this point.

Lu Zhou noticed Ye Zhen's figure was becoming more ephemeral as well.

In the next second, Ye Zhen appeared behind Lu Zhou. He stood with a straight back and a calm expression on his face. He extended his hand and said, "Crystal."

"Formation?" Lu Zhou looked at the Daoist veins around him.

"This is my dojo. It contains the Absolute Heaven Formation. In this Formation, the greater your cultivation base is, the more powerful I'll become."

“Becoming stronger when faced with a stronger opponent... Interesting.” Lu Zhou nodded. “Alas, I can’t leave the crystal here.”

Ye Zhen shook his head again. “You know nothing about me.”

Hundreds of runes immediately appeared in their surroundings from the scenic paintings. The red script seals seemed as though they were crafted out of human blood.

Lu Zhou spread his legs.

Seeing One’s Nature, the Buddhist Dhyana Mudra.

Golden circles appeared, keeping the red script seals at bay.

Ye Zhen flitted toward the character ‘ru’. He seemed to be everywhere all at once.

‘An illusion? From the very beginning, the one I’ve been talking to wasn’t Ye Zhen, but an illusion? I might have miscalculated.’ Despite his thoughts, Lu Zhou was not flustered. He was more than strong enough to leave this place.

“Avatar.” When Lu Zhou’s Nine-leaf avatar appeared, its height and size were suppressed. It was only as big as an average adult. It did not even have the karmic fire.

This was one of the Absolute Heaven Formation’s effects. It provided the user with more power when the opponent was powerful. It was superior to the Ten Terminal Formation. The Ten Terminal Formation cut off all Primal Qi and barred all entries and exits. However, the user of the Formation would also be restricted. Absolute Heaven Formation had no such restrictions. Additionally, it strengthened the user while it weakened the opponent.

Ye Zhen appeared half a meter before Lu Zhou. His Confucian robes hung loosely on his body.

Lu Zhou was not flustered. He waved his arm.

A palm seal sailed forth and hit Ye Zhen.

Ye Zhen’s body rippled with red radiance as he absorbed the golden palm seal. At the same time, his aura grew stronger as well. His expression was neutral as he stood with his hands on his back. “I’ve told you. You know nothing about me.”

Realization dawned on Lu Zhou. He retracted his avatar, deactivated Seeing One’s Nature, and the Dhyana Mudra. His Primal Qi faded away as well. Then, he sealed his dantian’s sea of Qi and blocked his Extraordinary Eight Meridians.

With these actions, the red lines, the red light, and the script seals in the dojo gradually faded away.

“Hm?” Ye Zhen clapped his hands. “You’re the first person to understand how to deal with the Absolute Heaven Formation. Alas, with this, you don’t even have the energy to strangle a chicken.”

Lu Zhou remained silent as he stepped forward. He extended his hand and pushed out. He was no different from a mortal now.

Ye Zhen continued to stand with his hands on his back; he did not move. He was certain Lu Zhou would not even be able to touch his clothes without Primal Qi.

Alas...

Originating from nothing, from it comes everything. Living in samsara and learning from it!

The moment Lu Zhou's palm touched Ye Zhen, his extraordinary power surged out.

Ye Zhen felt as though his chest had been hammered. His eyes widened as a shocked expression appeared on his face. It was too late.

Bam!

Ye Zhen reeled back like a cannonball.

Bam!

Ye Zhen crashed through the 'ru' character of the dojo and through the wooden door, flying out into the courtyard before he landed at the base of a lonely cherry blossom tree. Fear washed over him at this moment as he looked at the human-shaped hole he left behind.

Lu Zhou walked over nonchalantly. Then, with a burst of movement, he was upon Ye Zhen again. He launched another palm strike.

Ye Zhen did not understand what was happening. 'Did the Absolute Heaven Formation lose its effects?' He saw Lu Zhou sealing his sea of Qi and Extraordinary Eight Meridians; he did not understand how Lu Zhou was still capable of unleashing a technique.

The palm strike caught Ye Zhen off-guard again. He flew back and crashed through the five-story courtyard and flew off the middle peak. He quickly struck with his palm and summoned his avatar. His 150-foot red lotus avatar illuminated the northern side of Lofty Steep Mountain.

Thousands of disciples looked up.

The karmic fire burned and dyed the sky red. It shone as brightly as the sun and the moon.

Ye Zhen was no longer looking ahead. He joined his palms together, and Confucian scripts appeared around him. The Taiji produced two forms, the two forms gave rise to four phenomena, the four phenomena gave rise to the Eight Trigrams, and the Eight Trigrams would dictate fate. Thousands upon thousands of script seals surged out.

At this moment, a voice rang from above Ye Zhen. "Young man, the one who's ignorant is you."

Lu Zhou shattered the Deadly Strike Card in his hand and pushed his palm down. His fingers shone with a golden light.

The Daoist Nine Cuts Hand Seals, the Sole Diamond Seal, the Great Blitz Treasure Seal, the Outer Circle Mystic Seal, the Inner Eight Words Seal, Fetterless Seal, the Pantheon Seal, the Eight Trigrams Seal, the Magic Gourd Seal, and the Sun Moon Seal dropped down.

'Will you dare to act so savagely now that I'm suppressing a Confucian cultivator with Daoist moves?'

Bam!

The first palm seal pushed through the red lotus avatar like a hot knife through butter.

Ye Zhen frowned deeply. He grunted and spat out a mouthful of blood. He hastily retracted his avatar and attempted to escape.

The second palm seal approached Ye Zhen silently as though it was locked onto him.

Bam!

It landed on Ye Zhen's chest.

The next two palm seals followed suit and landed on Ye Zhen's chest consecutively, causing him to plummet from the height of 100,000 feet.

Boom!

The five final palm seals struck the ground.

"Ding! Killed a target. Reward: 4,500 merit points."

"There's no domain extra?" Lu Zhou was puzzled. 'He's not from the red lotus domain?'

However, this was not the time to dwell on this matter. Lu Zhou unsealed his Extraordinary Eight Meridians and sea of Qi, restoring his cultivation base.

At this moment, the Flying Star House disciples were flying toward him from below.

Chapter 768: Ye Zhen's Secret (Part Two)

Based on the current situation, the use of the Deadly Strike Card was a loss to Lu Zhou. However, considering the fact that Ye Zhen would surely grow into a huge threat in the future, nipping him in the bud was the best course of action.

Lu Zhou hovered in the sky on the northern side of the middle peak.

The Daoist Nine Cuts Hand Seals had attracted the disciples in the area.

It also caught the attention of Chen Tiandu, the Master of the Flying Star House, who was on the middle peak as well. His voice thundered in Lofty Steep Mountain as he shouted, "Activate the Formation!"

The sounds of energy resonance rang in the air. At the same time, many red lotus avatars flew off the five peaks that resemble fingers.

Several 100-foot avatars were charging swiftly to the scene.

Above the middle peak, a peculiar energy seemed to be brewing.

A Ten-leaf expert!

'I have one Deadly Strike Card left... if I fight him to the bitter end, I might still stand a chance... However, the Formation of these five peaks is strange...' Lu Zhou did not think that it would be in his

interest to stay on Lofty Steep Mountain. However, he was rather tempted to stay when he saw the moving merit points that were charging toward him.

Buzz! Buzz! Buzz!

The Daoist veins Formation was forming, but Lu Zhou's extraordinary power would not be restricted.

'Forget it. I should get out of here, just to be safe.' Lu Zhou unleashed the power of past lives again. With his extraordinary power, he unleashed his grand technique and moved swiftly toward the north.

At this moment, 1,000 disciples arrived where Ye Zhen had fallen.

Several Eight-leaf avatars saw a flash of blue in the sky to the north. Perhaps, it was due to the setting sun and the evening mist, most of them did not have a good look at it.

"Someone's invaded! After them!"

Roughly five Eight-leaf avatars gave chase in the direction of the flash of blue light.

Meanwhile, many low-rank cultivators followed them from behind.

As for the other disciples, they landed next to the ditch that Ye Zhen was lying in.

"What happened?"

Although the commotion was huge, when they hurried over, all they saw was a flash of a figure, numerous palm seals, and Ye Zhen's falling red avatar.

"If my eyes didn't deceive me, I think a Nine-leaf cultivator was hit out of the sky. I... I think it's Elder... Elder Ye..."

"Impossible! Elder Ye will be the one doing the beating!"

At this moment, the Formation of Lofty Steep Mountain was completed; It enveloped the area.

Daoist veins flowed in the skies.

At this moment, a disciple at the edge of the pit said, "There's no one in here!"

Apart from a human-shaped dent stained with blood in the center of the ditch, nobody could be seen at all.

"How's this possible? I swear I saw a red lotus cultivator plummeting from the sky. I'm sure it was a Nine-leaf cultivator as well!" a disciple cried out in confusion.

The other disciples were puzzled as well.

Some of them leaped into the ditch, but they did not find anything.

"That's strange... Why isn't there anyone in here?"

"Maybe the person who flew off the middle peak is Elder Ye?!"

The others looked terrified.

Several low-rank Nascent Divinity cultivators flew toward the middle peak and landed in front of the five-story courtyard.

They saw the human-shaped hole, the damaged wooden walls, and the cherry blossom tree.

The disciples hurried to the dojo's entrance. They bowed. "Greetings, Elder Ye!"

However, they were only greeted with silence.

They were puzzled. With Elder Ye's cultivation base, it was impossible for him to have missed such a huge commotion. They mustered up their courage and drew closer to the dojo.

The middle peak had its own rules. Apart from direct disciples, nobody was allowed to approach the dojo with Ye Zhen's permission. Therefore, the disciples were extra cautious as they approached the dojo.

At this moment, the side door suddenly opened. It was Ye Zhen's direct disciple, Jiang Xiaosheng! "Get lost."

The disciples were stunned. They, naturally, did not dare to question Jiang Xiaosheng. They hurriedly bowed before they turned and left.

"I'm warning all of you; anyone who dares to trespass on my master's dojo will be severely punished!" Jiang Xiaosheng fiercely said as he glowered at the disciples.

The others shuddered and hastily left.

After the disciples of the Flying Star House left, Jiang Xiaosheng entered the dojo and shut the wooden door tight. His face glistened with sweat as he patted his chest. He muttered under his breath with a grim expression on his face, "Meng Changdong is capable of killing my master?"

...

Meanwhile, in the forest north of Lofty Steep Mountain.

The rays of the setting sun were filtered by the trees. It was getting darker and darker.

Under a huge tree, Ye Zhen supported himself with one hand against the ground as he spat out a mouthful of blood himself. He panted heavily as he sat and leaned against the tree. When he looked up earlier, he had seen Eight-leaf cultivators of the Flying Star House giving chase. However, they were nowhere to be seen now.

"Who are you?" Ye Zhen gradually calmed down. He waved his hand and patted himself down to remove the dust on his Confucian robe. It was much cleaner now. Then, he straightened his upper garment. Even so, there were still bloodstains on his collar. For some reason, the bloodstains annoyed him greatly. He removed it and tossed it away.

Swoosh!

His Karmic fire appeared and reduced the robe to ashes. He was left in his white garment.

He continued tidying his clothes before he finally calmed down. After that, he sat his legs crossed and regulated his breathing.

...

Meanwhile, after leaving the Formation of Lofty Steep Mountain, Lu Zhou headed north and entered another forest. He did not continue flying. Instead, he remained standing in the forest.

Soon after, five Eight-leaf cultivators from the Flying Star House caught up to him and surrounded him.

“Who are you? How dare you trespass into the Flying Star House?”

Lu Zhou turned around slowly and looked at them.

The five of them were shocked.

“Elder Meng?”

“You’re chasing me?”

Lu Zhou’s mannerism, speech, gaze, and posture were starkly different from Meng Changdong.

“Meng Changdong, what’s the meaning of this? How are you going to explain yourself to Elder Ye after causing such a great disturbance?”

“Elder Meng, that Nine-leaf avatar north of the middle peak was yours, right? Why did you do that?”

The five of them questioned Lu Zhou in turn.

Lu Zhou’s expression remained indifferent. His temper that had been ignited by Ye Zhen had not subsided. ‘He got away easy since he was killed with just a palm strike.’

He raised his hand and launched shining golden palm seals in the air. “How dare you challenge me, you Eight-leaf cultivators?”

The five cultivators were shocked.

Lu Zhou stepped forward. With every step he took, a leaf emerged from the golden lotus under his feet. Soon after, nine leaves sprouted among the golden flames.

“Golden lotus karmic power! This is bad! Flee!”

Lu Zhou, naturally, would not decline if people willingly offered up their lives to him.

The five people who thought they were chasing someone Ye Zhen had injured fled in different directions.

Bam!

One of the shining golden seals landed on one of the cultivators, causing him to fall. He quickly flipped in the air. When he looked up, he saw a sight that he would never forget.

Lu Zhou rose into the air as a 150-foot avatar rose from the ground. The golden karmic fire burned brightly. A loud buzzing noise rang in the air as an exquisite arrow and bow appeared in his hand. He

held the bow and arrows with his five fingers as the other hand pulled the string back. The arrows shone with a blue radiance as tongues of flames shrouded them.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

Four energy arrows shot out in four different directions.

Lu Zhou did not hold back at all. He used half of his extraordinary power and divided it among the four arrows. At the same time, he had shrouded them with his karmic fire as well. Coupled with his Nine-leaf cultivation base, no Eight-leaf cultivators would be able to defend against the arrows.

Lu Zhou no longer looked at the cultivators. His avatar and Unnamed that had shifted into a bow disappeared. At the same time, the golden flames and blue radiance faded away as well. Finally, he reverted to his original appearance.

100 meters away, the only Eight-leaf expert who was only hit by the golden palm seal looked at the advancing old man as fear tightened its grip on his heart.

Chapter 769: With a Smile

Lu Zhou advanced slowly. As he drew closer four clear notifications rang in his ears.

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

So far, he had obtained 10,000 merit points. There was no reason for him to not welcome these people who offered these points to him. He smiled.

The four cultivators were dead so he no longer paid any attention to them. He made his way to the sole survivor. He stroked his beard as he shook his head. “Did you have fun chasing after me?”

“...” The man immediately discarded his pride as an Eight-leaf cultivator. He knocked his forehead on the ground and pleaded, “Spare me, Elder Meng... I mean, old senior! Spare me, old senior!”

“Who’s Ye Zhen?” he asked when he recalled the notification he received of Ye Zhen’s death. The notification sounded strange to him.

Ye Zhen had clearly manifested a red lotus avatar, but Lu Zhou was not given domain after killing Ye Zhen. The four people he had just killed all gave him domain points. Why did he not receive any for killing Ye Zhen?

“Elder Ye... is the Grand Elder of the Flying Star House,” the man said with a trembling voice.

“I hate liars the most.” Lu Zhou lifted his hand that shone with golden radiance.

The man hastily waved his hands and said, “I-I truly don’t know... All I know is his cultivation base is unfathomable. Even the house master has to show consideration to him. Throughout these years, it’s all thanks to Elder Ye alone that the Flying Star Height manages to reach its current height!”

Lu Zhou did not strike yet. He continued to ask, “Since Meng Changdong is a thorn in Ye Zheng’s side, why didn’t Ye Zhen get rid of him?”

“Uh... how would I know what Elder Ye is thinking about? Elder Ye has always been difficult to read,” the man replied nervously.

“What good are you alive if you don’t know anything?” Lu Zhou pushed his hand out before he pressed down.

At close range, a palm seal shot out.

The man’s eyes widened. His body stiffened as he instinctively tried to resist. He unleashed all his Primal Qi.

Boom!

The blue palm seal bore down on the man’s body, pressing him into the ground.

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

The man had self-exploded at the final moment.

The trees in the surroundings fell as clouds of dirt were stirred up. When the dust finally settled, a plain formed within a 100-meter radius.

Lu Zhou, still glowing with a faint blue light, turned around slowly. After a while, the blue light faded away. His expression remained the same, as though nothing out of the ordinary had happened.

He pushed away from the ground and flew away.

...

The forest was extremely silent.

At this moment, Ye Zhen’s forehead was wet with sweat. After he regulated his breathing, his internal injuries were slightly relieved. At this moment, he had regained his composure; he was once again the smiling, graceful, and calm Confucian scholar like before.

Similar to Lu Zhou, Ye Zhen wondered about Lu Zhou’s identity as well. Although he was calm, it did not mean he was not furious that Lu Zhou managed to kill him once.

He raised his palm slowly before a strange red lotus appeared above it. Soon after glowing red dragon heads appeared, several heads emerged. The avatar was finally completed after the fifth head appeared.

At the end of the left side of the avatar, only a headless neck remained. Meanwhile, three other heads were lowered; they seemed wilted. They did not glow red nor did they look alive.

There were nine nascent souls and nine lives contained in Ye Zhen’s avatar. Currently, the nine-headed avatar was only left with eight heads. His eyes flashed with killing intent as he said through gritted teeth, “No matter who you are, I’ll remember this grudge of you taking one of my lives.”

The mostly humanoid avatar looked dim. At this moment, one of the nine leaves fell.

Ye Zhen clenched his fist, and his avatar disappeared. His figure faded out of sight as he flew back to the middle peak. He deliberately skirted around the place where he had 'died' and returned to the five-story courtyard on the middle peak.

The dojo was deserted.

Ye Zhen patted the dust off his robes expressionlessly again. Perhaps, he felt his image was not quite right so he smoothed his hair and straightened his sleeves.

At this moment, the dojo's wooden door opened.

Jiang Xiaosheng ran out and quickly protracted himself in front of Ye Zhen. "Master, you're finally back! I'd driven away the disciples who came over earlier. I've been waiting for your return!"

Ye Zhen looked at Jiang Xiaosheng emotionlessly and said, "Fetch me a robe."

"Understood."

Ye Zhen entered the dojo. A slight frown appeared on his face as he looked at the broken wall. When Jiang Xiaosheng approached him with a new set of robes, he did not look at Jiang Xiaosheng at all. Instead, he lifted his arms up and coldly said, "Dress me."

"Understood." Nobody in the world understood his master's temper better than Jiang Xiaosheng. He carefully put on the robes for Ye Zhen. Not even a single wrinkle could be seen on the garment. However, due to being nervous, he accidentally used too much force when he was smoothening the sleeve and pulled the sleeve over his master's left hand.

Ye Zhen raised his right hand swiftly.

Smack!

Jiang Xiaosheng was slapped on the face. He did not stop adjusting Ye Zhen's robes as he apologized profusely, "Forgive me, master!"

Similar to the robes before, these Confucian robes hung loosely on Ye Zhen's body as well. Finally, he looked like the Ye Zhen of old again.

If someone had witnessed the battle earlier, they would find it difficult to believe Ye Zhen had been engaged in a battle at all. He did not look like he had left the dojo at all.

"Xiaosheng, clean the dojo. Restore it to its original appearance," Ye Zhen calmly said.

"Understood! I'll get to it right away." Jiang Xiaosheng, who had suffered two slaps today, was incredibly nervous.

"Xiaosheng."

"Yes, master?" Jiang Xiaosheng shivered.

"I hit you in hopes that you'll remember this: I'm the only one under the heavens who's allowed to hit you. Since Meng Changdong hit you, I'll stand up for you and take his life," Ye Zhen said.

Jiang Xiaosheng was delighted upon hearing these words. He prostrated himself again and said, "Thank you, master!" After a moment, he mustered up his courage and asked tentatively, "Meng Changdong really doesn't know his place... He even dares to attack you, master! Why... Why didn't you get rid of him?"

Ye Zhen replied, "Naturally, I have my reason for that. However, I didn't expect him to betray the Flying Star House."

"Betray the Flying Star House?"

"Notify all the disciples that Meng Changdong has betrayed Flying Star House... Notify the Sky Martial Court, the palace, and all the sects in the cultivation world. Anyone who manages to take Meng Changdong down, dead or alive, will be handsomely rewarded."

"I'll get to it right away."

...

Night fell. The moon was bright tonight, and the stars were scarce.

Lu Zhou returned to Thousand Willow Mountain. During the journey back, he grumbled inwardly, 'Why are the two mounts taking so long? They're so slow! Did the drown in the Endless Ocean?'

Fortunately, he had a profound cultivation base. The speed of his flight was still acceptable. However, after fighting Ye Zhen, he was left with less than one-third of his extraordinary power.

After landing in his courtyard, he unleashed the power of hearing. His surroundings were quiet; there was nobody in the vicinity.

As he entered the room, he grumbled to himself again, 'What amazing disciples I have! None of them are even worried that I might get into trouble! Ungrateful brats!'

Lu Zhou did not rest immediately. He lit up a candle and brought the memory crystal out. He had done all he could to protect the crystal after he obtained it.

He placed the crystal under the light from the candle. When the light shone on the crystal, he discovered there were chips on the edge of the crystal, just as Ye Zhen had said.

"I hope that important memories won't be affected by these damages..."

Chapter 770: Great Void

Lu Zhou was in no hurry to decipher the memories. Since it was night, he opened the wooden windows and allowed the night breeze to enter.

He felt much better now. What happened today had bothered him. 'Who's this Ye Zhen character?'

The cherry blossom tree on Lofty Steep Mountain bloomed all year round. That must be due to the power of the Daoist veins. The dojo's setting and the position of the 'ru' canvas were strange. There was definitely more than met the eyes with Ye Zhen. He did not regret using his Deadly Strike Card. Under those circumstances, Ye Zhen clearly had many other plans he could fall back on; it was most reasonable

to kill Ye Zhen to spare himself troubles in the future. Regardless, despite having already killed Ye Zhen, he could not help but feel that something was amiss.

There were many strange things in the world. There was Emperor Liu Ge who had an immortal body, and then, there was the fake emperor Liu Gu who was a Wuqian... There was also his first disciple, Yu Zhenghai... Someone as cunning as Ye Zhen would surely have methods of preserving his own life. With this thought in mind, he began to feel it was a loss to use that card,

He decided to confirm his suspicions tomorrow before making any decisions. It was too early to think about these matters now.

The night breeze pulled him back to the present at this moment. He closed the window and returned to the table. He extended his wizened hand and placed it gently on the crystal.

Whizz!

The familiar buzz of resonance rang in the air.

All of a sudden, Lu Zhou felt as though a fog had settled in his mind. It felt like he was plunged into a white world. This situation was similar to the other half of the memory crystal as well. He moved forward and arrived in front of a wall. 26 alphabets divided themselves into half before they arranged themselves in no particular rhyme and order.

Lu Zhou sighed emotionally. It was likely he was the only one who could decipher the secrets of the crystal. 'What memories did Ji Tiandao seal? Why did he seal them? Hopefully, I'll obtain my answers soon.'

Lu Zhou tried to touch the symbols. Although he recognized them, some of them were too small. He attempted several times before he succeeded in making contact. Fortunately, he had prior experience so he moved with familiar ease.

'The bright moon shines over the sea; from far away, we share this moment together'.

The wall that barred his way faded away.

The first part.

Ji Tiandao's fragmented memories spanned different timelines.

"The system's coordinates can't be wrong, but everything is too dangerous here. I have to find a way to leave this place as soon as I can..."

"My cultivation base is too weak. If it's possible, I'd rather not come here. This is such a troll."

When Lu Zhou lifted his head, the scenes began to distort.

"I finally obtained ten pills! I must leave this place! Are my eyes playing tricks on me? I swear I saw a black lotus descending from that place... Is he a Fiend Zen cultivator?"

The scenes and voices distorted again.

"I think my eyes must be overworked."

Lu Zhou saw Ji Tiandao swiftly leaving the danger zone. A loud energy resonance energy rang in his ears, accompanied by crashing sounds. Terrifying beasts were hidden in his surroundings.

"I've fought through countless perilous situations and mammoth beasts along the way with all my might. It's great to be alive."

"I should continue fleeing. I wonder when I can return to Great Yan."

A long flight, fatigue, hardships, experience of finding shelter outside; all these scenes appeared in Lu Zhou's mind.

The second part.

"I met an extremely intelligent and polite girl. Her name's Luo Xuan. She knows a lot about the lands. She also knows the tongue of beasts and is gifted in music."

Scenes of two people walking appeared.

"I've asked Luo Xuan many things along the way. To be safe, I didn't reveal much about myself. She told me the place where I left might be called Great Void. I didn't think much of it. She told me she's lost and that she couldn't find her way back. She asked me to bring her back to Great Yan with me. I didn't agree. After all, I need to be cautious. In any case, it didn't stop her from following me."

The journey back to Great Yan was extremely difficult. His weak cultivation base was completely exposed while Luo Xuan put her gift in the tongue of beasts to good use. Her cultivation base seemed profound sometimes, and other times, it did not seem impressive at all. Nevertheless, they managed to evade many beasts and dangerous situations.

"Luo Xuan asked me what I got from Great Void. I didn't tell her."

"Luo Xuan's curiosity and exploratory spirits are unusual. To satisfy her, I gave her many riddles and problems that are unsolvable in this world. She's completely engrossed in solving them. However, she has yet to solve even one of them."

The third part.

"I've organized the items I obtained from the unknown land. There are several books about ordinary cultivation methods and 10 pills. Luo Xuan saw them and expressed her interest in them. She didn't seem to recognize the pills. Instead, she was curious about the cultivation methods. To thank her for her help, I gave her the books that contain ordinary cultivation methods. She was happy."

To return to Great Yan, they had to traverse a seemingly endless forest. Ji Tiandao's weak cultivation base meant that he had to be cautious at all times. This slowed his progress.

"Luo Xuan is impressed with the wonders of the cultivation methods... This is my first time seeing a red lotus avatar. I was in awe. It reminded me of what I saw in the unknown land."

"Luo Xuan has been studying the unsolvable riddles and problems every day. She's truly a genius. She managed to grasp many concepts after listening to my explanation one time. However, it doesn't seem like she's making any progress with the problems. I told her they're only the tip of the iceberg."

“Luo Xuan told me she wants to become my disciple, but I refused her. I told her that every person had their own ideals and pursuits in life. She loved exploring, but there’s nothing I can teach her about that. However, Luo Xuan would still call me her teacher from time to time.”

The fourth part.

Ji Tiandao woke up one morning and discovered Luo Xuan was gone.

Luo Xuan left a note behind that read: I’m sorry. I’ve taken one Great Void Seed so I can study it. I’ll continue to search for the secrets of the worlds. You taught me many things along the journey. It’s just as you said; there’s no end to learning. When I finally understand these things, I’ll look for you again. I promise that I won’t leak any information about you. I hope that you’ll accept me as your disciple when we meet again.

Ji Tiandao organized his possessions again. He had lost one pill. Otherwise, all the other items were still there. He was puzzled by the term ‘Great Void Seed’.

“I’ve taught her so many things, and she stole my pill... These are pills that can greatly improve the quality of cultivation. I’ll have to be cautious from now on. Nobody can know about their existence.”

...

The fifth part.

Ji Tiandao finally returned to Great Yan.

Emperor Liu Ge had subdued the Other Tribes and brought peace to the lands.

100 years had passed.

Ji Tiandao finally reached the peak of his cultivation base. He was in the Eight-leaf Nascent Divinity realm.

“Should I start recruiting disciples?”

Ji Tiandao decided to recruit disciples and teach them in the Evil Sky Pavilion.

After that, Ji Tiandao recruited some disciples.

“I must conceal their backgrounds.”

The memories distorted again.

The sixth part.

“The Nine-leaf plan failed at the last minute. I should continue to seal the crystal. Luo Xuan knows that I’ve been to the unknown lands. In that case, I’ll seal those memories as well.

The scene of sealing the memories in the crystal appeared in Lu Zhou’s mind. Lu Zhou saw the Evil Sky Pavilion, the gazebos, and the barrier.

Swoosh!

Lu Zhou opened his eyes. He returned to the present.

The room was quiet, and the bright moon hung in the night sky.