

Disciples 821

Chapter 821: My True Intentions

“...”

A heavy pressure that seemed impossible to defend against bore down on everyone on the cloud platform.

At this moment, Gao Shiyuan's death seemed like a trivial matter. Everyone's attention was focused on Wang Shizhong, the head of the secretariat and a person who held a high position.

The soldiers looked up and placed their hands on the hilts of their sabers.

Wang Shu looked at the white-haired old man in shock.

On the other hand, Wang Shizhong struggled to maintain a neutral expression. However, his expression looked unnatural and stiff. “Senior Lu, you're joking, right?”

“Do I look like someone who likes to joke?” Lu Zhou asked.

Wang Shizhong's expression froze. “Just because of Ji Liang?”

“Just because of Ji Liang.”

Neigh!

Ever since Ji Liang's return from the rock forest, its condition was not at its best. On the dashboard, its status still remained as resting. Apart from its short rest in the rock forest, it did not seem to rest. It looked exhausted. If it had merely used its ability to replenish Yu Shangrong's life, it would not be exhausted to this extent. Take Whitzard for example. Whitzard was never in this state after it used its ability.

“...” Wang Shizhong felt that this was an overreaction. Nevertheless, he said, “My daughter is wrong, but this isn't something that deserves capital punishment! Please reconsider, Senior Lu... If there's an offense, I'll repay you in kind, but please spare her!”

After that, Wang Shizhong slowly rose to his feet. Then, he beckoned Wang Shu over and said, “Shu'er, on your knees.”

“No!” Wang Shu turned away.

“Bastard!” Wang Shizhong raised his hand. A red energy hand seal grabbed his daughter over.

Wang Shu yelped. She was not a match for her father and could only let her father pull her over to the center of the platform.

Wang Shizhong pushed Wang Shu down with the red palm seal.

Thud!

Wang Shu fell to her knees immediately.

The others looked at Wang Shizhong with complicated looks in their eyes.

Whether it was Nie Qingyun or Xia Changqiu, even the young emperor, Li Yunzheng, did not expect the old man to be able to pressure Wang Shizhong to such an extent. He was the head of the secretariat, after all!

The officials of the royal court treated Wang Shizhong with respect. Even the Sky Martial Court's Yu Chenshu was wary of him. How could they not be surprised to see him so submissive in front of this old man? It was like a joke!

How could Li Yunzheng, who was used to seeing Wang Shizhong conducting himself in a high and mighty manner, not be shocked?

"Is that all?" Lu Zhou looked at Wang Shu. In other words, kneeling would not get her out of trouble. These people were too optimistic.

Wang Shizhong said, "I can promise you, Senior Lu, that I'll heavily punish those who hurt Ji Liang. Moreover, my family will present you with high-grade cultivation materials, extreme-grade talismans, cultivation medicinal pills, medicinal herbs, extreme-grade Spirit Stones, or anything you want as reparations, Senior Lu!"

Wang Shu looked at her father in shock. She had never seen her father so submissive before. He even offered to pay such a huge price!

Lu Zhou could easily kill Wang Shizhong with a palm strike, let alone someone like Wang Shu. If he wanted to kill Wang Shu, he would not do it himself. Although it was easy to kill them, it would be tantamount to declaring war on the royal court if he did that.

The imperial family of the golden lotus domain was already powerful, let alone the red lotus domain's royal court.

The capital probably wielded some secret weapon that even Yu Chenshu was worried about. Otherwise, would someone like Yu Chenshu align himself with the royal court?

Lu Zhou slowly rose to his feet. He shook his head and said, "Let's change the conditions."

"Let's hear it."

"First, those who hurt Ji Liang must die. Second, I want more than 10,000 extreme-grade talismans, medicinal pills, and Spirit Stones. Third, her talents are mediocre. The way I see it, she has no need for her dantian's sea of Qi."

"..." Wang Shizhong frowned and said, "Senior Lu, I can promise you the first two conditions, but the third one..."

"This is my bottom line. You should know that nobody has ever dared to bargain with me," Lu Zhou said in a low voice.

"..."

"Fourth..."

'There's a fourth condition?' Wang Shizhong's heart sank. He felt that his heart was bleeding.

Lu Zhou stroked his beard and said, "This fourth condition isn't for me but for Great Tang. From this day onward, you'll return power to Li Yunzheng. Fifth, you and your daughter have to spend some time on Cloud Mountain."

The cloud platform was as silent as a graveyard when Lu Zhou finished speaking.

Wang Shizhong glanced at Wang Shu. Realization dawned on him. Ji Liang was merely a pawn used to exert pressure on him. These conditions were the old man's objectives all along.

Nie Qingyun rejoiced inwardly at this development. He lauded Lu Zhou for this move. There was no need to doubt the royal court's strength. Surely, they had some means that even the Sky Martial Court had to be wary of. However, if they managed to clear the traitors by Li Yunzheng's side and support him, the problems would be easily solved. The conflicts between the Ninth Temple, the Cloud Mountain, and the palace would be solved as well. It was true that the older one was, the wiser one would be.

'Wonderful! This is a wonderful move!'

Li Yunzheng looked at Lu Zhou incredulously. 'Old Mister Lu is for the authority to be returned to me?!'

Li Yunzheng had fantasized countless times about the grand picture he would paint in Great Tang once he gained authority. The commoners would live out their days happily as an era of peace and prosperity was ushered in. However, his fantasies remained fantasies. There was no way they would become a reality.

Wang Shizhong said, "Although I'm the head of the secretariat, the authority doesn't lie on my shoulders alone. Moreover, I've tried my best to compensate for what happened to Ji Liang. Are you sure you're going to insist on being unreasonable, Senior Lu?"

Neigh! Neigh! Neigh!

Ji Liang trotted in a circle and neighed. At this moment, it emitted green gas from its body.

Conch said, "Ji Liang had been poisoned. Now that it had expelled the poison, it wants to go back to sleep."

"..."

At this moment, Wang Shu suddenly rose to her feet and ran. "Take me away!"

The two soldiers standing behind her took each of her arms and flew into the sky.

Yu Shangrong's expression was neutral as he said, "Too late."

Primal Qi surged as soon as Yu Shangrong joined his palms together.

60,000 energy swords weaved themselves into a heavenly net and barred their way.

Wang Shu was completely shocked by this. She hurriedly cried out, "Break through the net! Hurry! What are you waiting for? Help me!"

The soldiers on the ground were confused by Wang Shu's sudden rebellious move. However, seeing their young lady in trouble, they could not endure it and rose into the sky to break the 60,000 energy swords.

Yu Shangrong crossed his hands. He circulated Primal Qi from his dantian and pushed down!

The 60,000 energy swords fell like torrential rain.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

The palace soldiers brandished their sabers wildly. Soon after, they were forced to lower their attitudes.

With swift movements, Yu Shangrong reached for Wang Shu...

At this moment, red energy surged out of Wang Shizhong before he moved toward Yu Shangrong at lightning speed.

Bam! Bam! Bam!

Wang Shizhong struck with his palm.

Yu Shangrong easily dodged the attack with movements as light as a swallow.

Wang Shizhong pushed his palm out.

A huge palm seal sailed toward Yu Shangrong.

Yu Shangrong launched his own palm seal and retreated on the momentum...

"Senior Lu, forgive me for not being able to agree to the third condition! My daughter expended a lot of effort to cultivate... There's no difference between killing her and destroying her sea of Qi..." Wang Shizhong said.

Yu Shangrong, who was used to having the Longevity Sword, felt a like toothless tiger without his sword at this moment. However, the Sword Devil was the Sword Devil. Even without teeth, his attitude did not change...

"Kill her then."

With a flurry of movements, Yu Shangrong appeared above Wang Shizhong.

Meanwhile, the Cloud Mountain elders and disciples, and the members of the Thousand Willow Monastery watched the fight unfold.

There was no other place more suitable for a sparring session than the cloud platform. It was perfect in terms of the size, the space for in-air maneuvers, and the view.

When Yu Shangrong appeared above his opponent, he split into three.

Return and Enter Three Souls.

The three figures appeared blurry as they moved at lightning speed.

Wang Shizhong was incredibly cautious. He quickly manifested his avatar.

Whizz!

An avatar close to 180 feet tall appeared above the cloud platform. The red lotus blossomed and spun underneath it.

“Nine-and-a-half leaves... Wang Shizhong is a Nine-and-a-half-leaf cultivator!”

Chapter 822: Failing to Appreciate a Favor

There was no need to reiterate just how terrifying the forces of the royal court could be. The head of the secretariat alone possessed such a formidable cultivation base. What about the captains or elites inside the palace? There were also the Daoist Formations that had never been activated before in the palace. There was also Yu Chenshu, a karmic fire user, and the various cultivation elites in Great Tang’s ten Circuits.

Bam! Bam! Bam!

Yu Shangrong used his hand as a sword to slash at the avatar.

Wang Shizhong said gruffly, “Retreat!” Then, he quickly unleashed a blast from the red lotus that pushed Yu Shangrong back.

Yu Shangrong was about to manifest his avatar when Wang Shizhong turned around and pushed Wang Shu away. “Leave! I’ll deal with him.”

At this juncture, there was no longer any hope of having a peaceful discussion. Wang Shizhong, naturally, prioritized his daughter over any peaceful discussion.

Lu Zhou remained motionless as he looked at Nie Qingyun meaningfully and asked, “Am I supposed to do this myself as well?”

Nie Qingyun shuddered.

Smack!

Nie Qingyun slammed his hands down on the black table, breaking it immediately. Like a fired arrow, he shot into the air and shouted, “This is Cloud Mountain, not a place where you can act as you please! Get down!”

Then, Nie Qingyun threw his heaven-grade Sky Soul Saber that was wrapped in a dense layer of energy sword toward the huge chariot.

Everyone watched this shocking scene with eyes almost falling out of their sockets.

Wang Shizhong unleashed his grand technique and tried to block the Sky Soul Saber!

Nie Qingyun said gruffly, “Avatar!”

Whizz!

A 200-foot red lotus avatar appeared, announcing the strength Nie Qingyun prided himself on to the thousands of Cloud Mountain disciples present on the scene.

Boom!

The avatars collided.

Wang Shizhong was sent flying. He grunted in pain. His blood essence boiled as he said, "I don't understand this. You're a Ten-leaf cultivator, why are you doing another person's bidding?"

"There are many things you don't understand," Nie Qingyun said, "Alas, that old fiend, Sikong, isn't here... However, I'm enough to deal with all of you. You're not worthy of fighting Senior Lu!"

"..." Li Yunzheng, the monarch of an empire, turned to look at Lu Zhou again. 'How powerful is he? Even two Ten-leaf cultivators have to follow his orders?'

"That's amazing, Sect Master!" the Cloud Mountain disciples exclaimed in unison with an expression of admiration on their faces. Regardless of how powerful outsiders were, they were still outsiders. They were, naturally, moved when they saw their sect master's strength.

"Sect Master Nie, we're here to seek peace." Wang Shizhong fought back his surging blood essence as he reeled back.

Nie Qingyun ignored Wang Shizhong and continued controlling his Sky Soul Saber.

"This is bad! Run!"

The Sky Martial Court disciples and the cultivators from the palace leaped off the huge chariot and scattered in different directions.

At this moment, a massive energy saber from the Sky Soul Saber dropped down.

Boom!

The huge chariot could not withstand the powerful strike from the Sky Soul Saber that was being wielded by a Ten-leaf cultivator. It was easily cleaved into two.

The Formation veins were damaged, and the chariot shattered.

At the same time, boxes from the flying chariot fell from the sky.

"There are so many boxes?" Xia Changqiu stared at the boxes in awe.

"I'm going to catch the boxes... Finders keepers!" Little Yuan'er moved at lightning speed. She moved with her Seven Stars Cloud Treading Steps and Supreme Purity Jade Slip. Her scarlet Nirvana Sash flew over the heads of the others like a dancing dragon, stirring up a gust of wind as it headed toward the boxes.

The Nirvana Sash moved quickly. It shot to the left and right before it caught the boxes. In just a blink of an eye, it caught more than ten boxes.

Currently, Little Yuan'er's control of the Nirvana Sash was almost perfect.

After catching the ten boxes, Little Yuan'er flew toward her master.

Suddenly, dozens of cultivators lunged toward Little Yuan'er at the same time. Half of them wore armor while the other half wore robes. These were the men from Sky Martial Court and the palace.

Lu Zhou's expression remained calm. He was not in a hurry. Everything was within his control.

Yu Zhenghai grinned before he said loudly, "Trying to attack my Ninth Junior Sister? You'd have to go through my saber!" Then, he leaped up and threw his desolate-grade Jasper Saber out.

The Great Dark Heaven Memorial!

Like a great cartwheel, it killed the cultivators in the air mercilessly.

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

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

Upon seeing this, Li Yunzheng was shocked. "A desolate-grade weapon?"

"You've got a sharp eye," Lu Zhou said.

"Old Mister, this... Is he your disciple as well?"

"What? Why can't I be his master?" Lu Zhou asked.

"No, it's not that..." Li Yunzheng hastily waved his hands. "I was just curious. Old mister, you said you're going to find me a teacher. I don't think you have to look for one. You're perfect! I'm... I'm not much older than the two little girls. If I'm your grand disciple, won't I have to call them senior aunts? That's... that's awkward, right?"

"I'm no longer accepting disciples... It's an honor being my grand disciple... Are you turning down my offer?" Lu Zhou asked.

Li Yunzheng was taken aback. Then, he said tentatively, "In that case, I should address you... as grandmaster, right?"

"Indeed." Lu Zhou nodded.

"I..." Li Yunzheng straightened his back and cleared his throat before he solemnly asked, "May I ask a genuine question?"

"Let's hear it."

"You're from the golden lotus domain. If one day, I obtain the power to rule the empire, will you become like them?" Li Yunzheng asked.

Lu Zhou did not reply to the question. Instead, he beckoned Li Yunzheng over.

Li Yunzheng moved closer.

Lu Zhou produced Unnamed silently before he opened his other hand.

Li Yunzheng was shocked. He cried out hoarsely, "Black runes! The legend of the black lotus domain... is real?!"

'The old man is from the black lotus domain? Just how far has he traveled?!'

Lu Zhou put Unnamed away and continued to watch the battle in the air.

After what seemed like hours, Li Yunzheng recovered from the shock. He asked curiously, "Then... Is my teacher as powerful as my senior uncles?"

"I can tell you honestly that in terms of talent, intelligence, conduct, strategy, or cultivation base, nurturing the body, the governance of a nation, or bringing peace to the lands... He's leagues ahead of you," Lu Zhou replied.

Li Yunzheng was overjoyed when he heard this. He immediately cupped his fists together. "Thank you, old mister."

"Hm?"

"Grand... Grandmaster."

At this moment, Yu Zhenghai had killed all of the cultivators who were harassing Little Yuan'er with a crushing force.

Nie Qingyun's display of strength was impressive as well. After shattering the flying chariot, he killed three deputies before swinging his saber at Wang Shizhong.

Bam! Bam! Bam!

Three sabers descended from the skies and struck Wang Shizhong's shield.

Wang Shizhong grunted as blood trickled out from the edge of his lips to the ground.

Yu Zhenghai said with a grin, "Sect Master Nie, you're a quick learner!"

Nie Qingyun replied with a smile, "Comrade Yu, this technique of yours is handy. Thanks!" Then, he dove as he released his energy sabers and palm strikes at the same time.

"Father!" Wang Shu's eyes brimmed with tears. She was incredibly frightened at this moment.

Yu Shangrong moved swiftly. He raised his hand and formed an energy sword as dozens of cultivators tried to stop him.

"I'm truly impressed... He formed an energy sword with his bare hands."

One needed precise and almost perfect control to form energy with bare hands. It was clear Yu Shangrong did not rely on anything but his fingers to form the energy sword. To a certain extent, it could be seen that he was already on the right track to master the swordless path.

From below, Wuwu cheered loudly. "Big brother, do your best!"

Yu Shangrong swung the energy sword. Every time he swung the energy sword, he would cut down an enemy.

The remaining dozens of cultivators continued to swarm toward Yu Shangrong.

Yu Shangrong launched a huge energy sword with one hand.

The energy sword multiplied into 100 blades that shone dazzlingly with golden light.

Bam! Bam! Bam!

The low-rank cultivators could not block the strikes and were struck.

Those who were higher in the air could only retreat as they tried to defend themselves.

At this moment, Yu Shangrong grabbed Wang Shu.

Wang Shu turned around and screamed, "Don't touch me!" At the same time, she tried to punch Yu Shangrong.

"My apologies," Yu Shangrong said expressionlessly. He looked down at Wang Shu indifferently as he pushed his hand forward. Before her punch could connect, his palm landed on her stomach.

Bam!

Wang Shu fell from the sky.

"Shu'er!" Wang Shizhong's eyes turned red.

Nie Qingyun dove.

The energy sabers kept pushing Wang Shizhong back.

Nie Qingyun crossed his hands.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Wang Shizhong spat out a mouthful of blood as he slid along the ground, crashing through two tables. He continued sliding before he came to a stop half a foot before Lu Zhou. When he looked up, he saw Lu Zhou stroking his beard and looking down on him calmly.

Lu Zhou shook his head and said indifferently, "If this happened in the past, you would've been dead by now." After a brief pause, he added, "You really don't know how to appreciate a favor."

Chapter 823: A Futile Attempt to Escape

His attitude had changed. Previously, he could still negotiate the conditions peacefully. However, now that a fight broke out, who would still be forgiving and calm?

Indeed, Wang Shizhong did not know how to appreciate a favor. He refused a toast only to be forced to drink a forfeit.

Lu Zhou sat in a dignified manner half a foot behind Wang Shizhong. The emperor, Li Yun Zheng, was a foot to his left.

Wang Shizhong was a Nine-and-a-half-leaf cultivator. Although he was struck out of the sky by Nie Qingyun, he still had some fight left in him. His current spot was perfect to launch an attack against the old man. This was the closest he could get to the old man. However, would he really dare to attack?

In the sky, the cultivators who put up resistance were being struck down by Yu Shangrong and Yu Zhenghai.

Wang Shizong's daughter, Wang Shu, failed to escape. After the palm strike landed on her, she crashed on the ground. She had never felt such pain in her life before that it was almost as if she had forgotten what pain felt like until this moment. She knew her sea of Qi had been destroyed; she was now a mere mortal.

Wang Shizhong coughed violently before he turned to look at Nie Qing Yun in the sky.

Nie Qing Yun's 200-foot avatar towered like a mountain over everything. Its height seemed impossible to scale.

Nie Qingyun did not continue to attack. Instead, he looked down at Wang Shizhong and asked, "Lord Wang, are you still going to resist?"

Wang Shizhong stood up. He waved his hands and addressed Lu Zhou, "Senior Lu, I accept the five conditions."

"Very good," Lu Zhou replied curtly.

Then, Wang Shizhong hobbled toward Wang Shu. He carried her and channeled Primal Qi into her body through his palm. At the very least, he could lessen her pain and suffering.

Nobody stopped Wang Shizhong. They only watched him.

Li Yunzheng felt torn. He turned around and asked, "Isn't this going too far?"

Lu Zhou said earnestly, "You're still young. There are many things you have yet to experience for yourself. Wang Shizhong is the head of the secretariat. As a high-ranking official, he has much more blood on his hands than you can imagine. If I was the one who fell and he was the one sitting here, do you think I'd still be alive?"

"Uh..." Li Yunzheng was at a loss for words. As someone with a high, the highest, position, he understood Lu Zhou's words. Indeed, he had witnessed Wang Shizhong sentencing people to death before. Five years ago, the trusted subordinates whom he painstakingly cultivated were killed overnight. The result of the palace's investigation was that it was not the work of assassins, but he knew better. Their corpses were burnt to crisps, and the truth had been buried ever since.

"The tender-hearted aren't suited to command an army, martyrs shouldn't manage finances, and those who are emotional shouldn't make decisions... Do you understand?" Lu Zhou asked.

These were the necessary requirements of a ruler of a kingdom.

One should intervene in affairs that were not in their jurisdictions. In many cases, most people could not act as they pleased.

"Understood," Li Yunzheng replied as he looked at Wang Shizhong.

After Wang Shizhong stabilized his injuries, he sighed as he murmured, "You brought this disaster upon yourself."

Nie Qingyun withdrew his avatar and ordered, "Lock them up."

"Understood."

Upon seeing this, several cultivators took a step forward and cried out in unison, “Lord Wang!”

The Sky Martial Court had lost many of its members. Those who were left were elites from the Wang Family. How could they stay idle when their lord was being taken away?

“Wang Tuo, Wang Xiang, Wang Yun, heed my order!” Wang Shizhong said loudly.

The three elites from the Wang Family stepped forward and bowed as they said, “Lord Wang!”

“I’ll stay on Cloud Mountain for some time. Don’t tell anyone about this when you return, and don’t contact the Sky Martial Court! Go.”

“Understood!” The three elites retreated to the edge of the cloud platform, maintaining their distance out of fear of being cut down by the sabers.

Wang Shizhong cupped his fists at Lu Zhou. “Senior Lu, I agree to the five conditions, and I’ll stay here with my daughter. However, these Wang Family disciples have nothing to do with this. It’s pointless for them to stay here. Can you let them go?”

Lu Zhou stroked his beard as he looked at the remaining cultivators. Indeed, there was no meaning to keeping them here. He needed someone to convey his message after all. Moreover, if none of them returned, the Sky Martial Court would surely be alerted.

Lu Zhou was about to speak when Conch suddenly pointed at one of the Wang Family disciples and said, “Master, he’s the one who captured Ji Liang... Ji Liang looked at him many times earlier!”

“...” Wang Tuo was shocked, and he felt his heart sink.

Ji Liang had returned to the mountain to rest; it had been poisoned previously. Earlier, it had neighed and made a scene, but needless to say, no one understood it.

Upon hearing Conch’s words, everyone turned to look at Wang Tuo.

At this moment, Wang Shizhong recalled when they had heard Ji Liang neighing when they just arrived, his daughter had mentioned Wang Tuo. He did not pay attention to the matter at that time.

Wang Shizhong called out in a gruff voice, “Wang Tuo!”

The first of the five conditions had everything to do with Wang Tuo, after all.

Wang Tuo, naturally, understood the predicament he was in. He did not hesitate and turned tail to flee. He leaped off the cloud platform and ran for his life.

The others were stunned by this.

‘He ran?’

Wang Tuo would have been better off if he had just stayed on the cloud platform. Now that he fled, it only confirmed his guilt and that he was the culprit behind Ji Liang’s capture. There was no longer any need to discuss this matter.

Nie Qingyun said coldly, “I’ll go after him. I’d like to see if he can get away.”

“Allow me.” Yu Shangrong looked at Wang Tuo moving further and further away.

At this moment, Lu Zhou slowly rose to his feet. “No need.”

Everyone was puzzled. Was the old man going to spare Wang Tuo?

The Cloud Mountain disciples who were watching from the sidelines were also baffled.

Yu Shangrong and Nie Qingyun who stopped moving as soon as Lu Zhou spoke were stunned as well.

Nie Qingyun said, “If I’m not mistaken, the injury on Ji Liang’s was caused by a saber. Fortunately, Ji Liang isn’t an ordinary mount, and its bones are tough. Apart from that, the poison it was fed is incredibly potent. When consumed, it could turn one into a cripple even if one didn’t die. The one who hurt Ji Liang is unimaginably vicious. I don’t understand. Why are you letting him go, Senior Lu?”

Upon hearing the horrors inflicted on Ji Liang, a scowl appeared on Yu Shangrong’s face immediately. He bowed and said, “Master, I request permission to go after that person.”

Wang Shizhong’s expression soured when he heard these words.

Meanwhile, Wang Shu who was nestled in her father’s arms looked aghast as well.

At this juncture, the situation was no longer under Wang Shizhong’s control. It was only natural that Wang Tuo decided to flee since he wanted to keep his life. How could he order Wang Tuo to stay?

Lu Zhou stroked his beard and walked toward Wang Shizhong. He looked at Wang Tuo who was gradually disappearing in the distance. He said, “He’s just a minor cultivator. Why is there a need to pursue him?”

Then, Lu Zhou flipped his palm, and Unnamed appeared. It buzzed as he gripped it.

Soon enough, an energy bow that was as tall as an adult and arrow appeared.

Lu Zhou pulled on the bowstring with two fingers on his right hand.

Twang!

A blue energy arrow as thick as a person’s arm sailed through the sky.

Following that, Lu Zhou put Unnamed away unhurriedly. As though nothing had happened, he turned to face Wang Shizhong and said, “I’ve always been merciful. I’ll let the two of you live out of concern for Great Tang. However, this person who harmed Ji Liang has an evil heart. I cannot and will not forgive him.”

Wang Shizhong turned and looked at the horizon.

The cultivators on the cloud platform turned to look as well.

The people from the red lotus domain had never seen a technique like this before.

On the other hand, the members of the Evil Sky Pavilion were already used to it so they did not find it strange.

As expected, the energy arrow struck Wang Tuo in the distance, cleanly piercing through his heart.

From afar, the details were blurry, and no sounds could be heard.

The people on Cloud Mountain only saw the arrow passing through its target before the target fell.

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

In truth, Lu Zhou did not have to act. He had fired this arrow to save time that would have been wasted should they pursue the target. Apart from that, he wanted to use this opportunity to intimidate the others. This would serve as a warning and deter the others from trying to flee.

Lu Zhou possessed a desolate-grade weapon and strength akin to a Ten-leaf cultivator who had activated his Birth Chart. Coupled with his show of strength on the cloud platform, would anyone dare to run away?

Chapter 824: The Source of the Sky Martial Court's Confidence

The Ten-leaf elite, Nie Qingyun, watched this arrow that seemed to be carelessly shot out with a complicated gaze. If he was honest, he could not pull something like that off. This exceeded the bounds of logic.

For an ordinary Nascent Divinity archer, several thousand meters was already the limit of a reasonable firing range. Every new addition of a leaf would increase the range somewhat. The more profound the archer's cultivation base, the better their precision when they shot a target in the distance. This also depended on the weapon, the circumstances, and if anything stood in the way of the line of fire.

A cultivator's eyesight would improve as their cultivation bases improved. Without anything obstructing their view, they could even shoot down something several thousand or tens of thousands of meters away. The condition was that the energy arrow did not dissipate. After all, an energy arrow was only a body of energy. It would be weakened throughout its flight. This was the greatest restriction in regard to shooting a target from a distance. If someone could transport their energy arrows across such a distance, they would be invincible in a defensive battle.

Nie Qingyun did not expect Lu Zhou would be able to pull this feat off so easily.

Wang Shizhong said with a sigh, “Thank you for showing mercy, Senior Lu. Weaklings have no place to speak in front of an expert. I understand that... I agree to all the conditions, but I can speak on behalf of the royal court. Apart from me, there's a second head of the secretariat, and a third...”

“You don't have to worry about that. Take him away.”

With that, Wang Shizhong and Wang Shu were locked up in the prison by the Cloud Mountain disciples.

The remaining members of the Wang Family brought the survivors and left Cloud Mountain under Wang Shizhong's command. When they returned, they did not dare to speak carelessly as well. They only said their lord was accompanying the emperor on a tour of Cloud Mountain and would not be back for some time. After all, they knew a slip of tongue would result in the deaths of Wang Shizhong, Wang Shu, and the hostages from the Sky Martial Court.

Just like that, the matter was solved.

Next, it was time to figure out a way to fight the elites from the palace and the Sky Martial Court.

“Those who have no business here may leave,” Lu Zhou said.

Nie Qingyun understood Lu Zhou’s intention. He waved his hand, dismissing the Cloud Mountain disciples.

The disciples finally recovered from their shock of watching the energy arrow and quickly left the cloud platform.

In just a moment, only the four members from the Evil Sky Pavilion, a few people from the Thousand Willow Monastery, and Nie Qingyun and a few of his elders were left on the cloud platform.

Lu Zhou turned to look at Li Yunzheng who did not leave.

Li Yunzheng shuddered. Then, he hastily rose to his feet and said, “Grand... Grandmaster! I... I t-think I should learn archery from you!”

Lu Zhou steeled his expression. “You like novelties, and your temperament is still indeterminate. Are you planning on ruling the lands like this?”

“...” Li Yunzheng lowered his head, embarrassed. Without the people from the palace, he no longer looked like a monarch. In front of Lu Zhou, he was just a child who was still wet behind the ears.

Lu Zhou returned to his seat and sat down slowly. He said, “Tell me about the palace.”

Li Yunzheng sat down as well. He said with a sigh, “I barely had any chance to get involved in matters of the palace. The officials make most of the decisions. They’re all in cahoots, only seeking benefits. The royal military force is single-handedly managed by Commander Xiahou Sheng who’s on friendly terms with Yu Chenshu. The capital is guarded by five dukes. Wang Shizhong’s father, Wang Yun, is Duke of Zhen. The other four dukes, Duke Zheng Ting of Yun, Duke Cui An of Fu, Duke Li Tianning of Hu, and Duke Li Chang of Wei collectively control the royal court. The military and ten Circuits are guarded by eight generals and a provincial governor...”

Lu Zhou felt troubled after listening to this introduction. He grew increasingly regretful for not bringing Si Wuya here with him.

Although Li Yunzheng was just a puppet emperor, he understood the general power better than anyone else. He kept talking for some time, but no one remembered anything he said.

Finally, Lu Zhou raised his hand and interjected, “That’s enough.”

“I’m not finished yet. Give me two hours...”

“There’s no need to go into the details. You can fill your teacher in when he arrives,” Lu Zhou said as he stroked his beard. Then, he asked, “Just tell me this, are there any other cultivators that I should look out for?”

The structure of the palace was extremely complicated. Lu Zhou had no interest in understanding it. All he needed to do was keep an eye on the elites.

Li Yunzheng nodded and said, “By elites, do you mean those above the One-leaf stage, grandmaster?”

Lu Zhou smiled faintly before he said, "I'm talking about those at or above the Ten-leaf stage. There's no need to tell me about those from the One-leaf to the Nine-leaf stage."

Lu Zhou was confident in his ability. He thought nothing about cultivators at the One-leaf to the Nine-leaf stage.

For Li Yunzheng, he considered the Nascent Divinity cultivators elites. He did not expect the old man in front of him to be interested in only Ten-leaf cultivators.

"If we're talking about Ten-leaf cultivators, the only ones I know are General Xiahou and Court Master Yu Chenshu. As for the others..." Li Yunzheng mulled over it for a moment before he said, "It's said that there's an elite hiding inside the palace. However, I haven't seen him until now. When you snuck in the other day..."

"Hm?" Lu Zhou frowned.

"I mean, when you came to see me the other day, grandmaster, the elite didn't show up. Perhaps, it's just a rumor that people in the palace created. There might not be any truth to it at all," Li Yunzheng said.

Little Yuan'er said disapprovingly, "That doesn't sound right. If my master didn't want anybody to discover him, that so-called elite wouldn't even be aware of my master's presence, let alone show up."

"Yes, yes, yes, I misspoke. Grandmaster's cultivation base is unfathomable. How could others notice you if you don't wish to reveal your presence." Li Yunzheng quickly corrected his words. "However, if there's truly an elite hiding in the palace, it won't be easy to find him. The palace is huge, after all"

Lu Zhou stroked his beard and nodded. "Any other Ten-leaf cultivators you can think of?"

"The eight generals of the ten Circuits are all Nine-leaf cultivators. There might be Ten-leaf cultivators hiding in other cultivation sects as well. In the past 2,000 years, many sects downplay their strength in public. Ever since the Sky Martial Court confirmed the existence of foreign worlds, the sects kept an even lower profile. They're all worried that they would become a target of the golden lotus domain," Li Yunzheng said.

Nie Qingyun nodded in agreement as he chimed in, "Indeed. That's the reason I went into secluded cultivation as well. I wanted to try and initiate my Birth Chart or cultivate the karmic fire. Alas, my efforts are fruitless. Based on the speed of the growth of the cultivation world, there would be two or three Ten-leaf cultivators every 2,000 years."

"From the available public information, Yu Chenshu is the only Ten-leaf cultivator in the Sky Martial Court, and he has also cultivated the karmic fire. If that's true, doesn't it make the Sky Martial Court the most formidable force in Great Tang?" Yu Zhenghai asked.

"2,000 years ago, the Sky Martial Court had a branch that was called Sky Research Court. The Sky Research Court gathered the best minds under the heavens, and they managed to recruit outstanding talents. Luo Xuan eventually became one of Sky Research Court disciples. Three centuries ago, 100 Sky Research Court cultivators went missing, and they were never found. Even so, the foundations laid by the Sky Research Court were too firm. Whether it was talismans, medicinal pills, or weapons, the other

sects could hardly compare to them. The Sky Martial Court became the greatest sect in Great Tang because of the Sky Research Court,” Nie Qingyun replied.

Yu Zhenghai was taken aback when he heard this. Then, he nodded as he said, “I didn’t expect the Sky Martial Court to have such a background. No wonder they’re able to bring so many boxes of treasures.”

There were more than 20 boxes on the cloud platform.

Nie Qingyun said, “This is nothing. When I was a Nine-leaf cultivator, I went to Guannei Circuit for my studies. When I was there, I visited the Sky Martial Court. At that time, the capital was under attack from a tide of beasts. About ten huge beasts besieged the capital. The Sky Martial Court used several hundred thousand extreme-grade talismans and worked with many elite cultivators, successfully repelling the beasts.

Chapter 825: Ambushed!

When the huge beasts were mentioned, Yu Zhenghai asked, “Ten huge beasts? How did they attract so many beasts? Isn’t it said that attempting the Nine-leaf stage would attract the beasts? Also, I noticed the huge beasts’ powers vary. How are they differentiated?”

The golden lotus domain had only recently broken through the cultivation limit, after all. Their understanding of the huge beasts could not compare to those from the red lotus domain. The red lotus domain had been fighting the beasts for many years and discovered many ways to fight the beasts.

Nie Qingyun said, “The people from the Sky Martial Court think that it was caused by a great earthquake, landslide, or tsunamis, which startled the beasts. It’s true that humans with profound cultivation bases were the preferred prey of the beasts. The beasts started coming for the humans in throngs. Indeed, when a person breaks through to the Nine-leaf stage, they would attract the beasts. The beasts’ senses are far superior to humans. They have a unique method of perceiving their environments. Although the intelligence of the huge beasts can’t compare to that of humans, they know when to advance and retreat...”

Nie Qingyun continued to say, “Nine-leaf cultivators are like a juicy piece of meat to the beasts. Eating Nine-leaf cultivators greatly boost the beasts’ strength. They can sense the presence of Nine-leaf cultivators. This is especially true for new Nine-leaf cultivators. They’re like newborns, delicious and not powerful...”

Yu Zhenghai coughed and cleared his throat before he said, “There’s no need to be so graphic. We get what you mean.”

Nie Qingyun smiled sheepishly. Then, he said, “According to the records, when humans in the red lotus domain weren’t that powerful, the people lived in peace. When the first Nine-leaf cultivator appeared was when the beasts first attacked human settlements, causing humans to suffer big losses. As time went on, humans learned to adapt. They began to carve Daoist veins and installed ballistae to keep the beasts at bay. After the emergence of Ten-leaf cultivators, many of the beasts were no longer a threat to humans. However, there would still be the occasional appearance of more powerful beasts. Although they did not show up that often, they were a great threat.”

After a beat, Nie Qingyun continued to explain as he looked at the others, "The most direct way to judge a beast's strength is by their size. Naturally, there are exceptions. If we categorized them by abilities, the offensive ones are usually more powerful while the assistive ones are weaker. There's another way to judge their strength. The more powerful the beast is, the higher the possibility that it possesses a powerful life heart. Hence, the most accurate way to judge their strength is through their life auras. However, mortal's senses are weak so they mostly rely on the first method to judge the beasts' strength."

Li Yunzheng nodded. "That's true."

Lu Zhou remembered the colossal beast he saw when he crossed the Endless Ocean. Its size should trump all the beasts in the red lotus domain. After a moment, he said, "Tell me about Yu Chenshu."

"Yu Chenshu is the only Ten-leaf cultivator in the red lotus domain who mastered karmic fire. Back then, the Sky Research Court supported him and nurtured him, and he became their chief. His strength is unfathomable," Li Yunzheng said.

"How unfathomable?" Lu Zhou asked.

"I've never seen him fight. Everything I know, I learned from the eunuchs in the palace," Li Yunzheng said with a shrug.

Nie Qingyun said, "Yu Chenshu's cultivation base is profound, but he rarely fights. Rumor has it that he's in possession of a special weapon close to the flood-grade. That weapon renders him undefeatable. However, nobody knows what weapon it is nor has anyone seen it. Even someone as cunning as Ye Zhen was cautious when it came to Yu Chenshu."

When Ye Zhen was mentioned, Yu Zhenghai asked, "By the way, how did you find out about Ye Zhen's Nine Infants avatar?"

"It's a long story. The conflict between Cloud Mountain and the Flying Star House goes way back. Naturally, I wouldn't allow the Flying Star House to devour Cloud Mountain. Before I went into secluded cultivation, I fought him for several hundred rounds. After I injured him, he unleashed his Nine Infants avatar to heal his wounds, and I happened to catch him in the act," Nie Qingyun replied, "After I returned, I secretly investigated the matter and even sent some men to the Cherry Blossom Nation."

The others nodded.

Although Meng Changdong was a Flying Star House elder and he had always felt there was something peculiar about Ye Zhen, he did not expect Ye Zhen to be hiding such a huge secret.

"Fortunately, you killed Ye Zhen with your amazing techniques, Senior Lu. If he had been allowed to accumulate nine lives and initiate his Birth Chart, it would've been a disaster," Nie Qingyun said.

At this moment, Xia Changqiu, who had been silent all this time, wondered out loud, "Birth Charts can be initiated using the Nine Infants?"

"The chances are extremely high."

Little Yuan'er nodded and said, "He can curse his rotten luck for running into my master."

At this moment, Meng Changdong suddenly recalled something. He cried out, "This is bad!"

Everyone turned to look at Meng Changdong in unison.

"What is it, Guardian Meng?"

"We've overlooked Jiang Xiaosheng!" Meng Changdong said.

Yu Zhenghai smiled and said, "There's no need to worry. I've already killed him. Also, I made sure to deal the finishing blow, which is the most important thing to remember when using a saber. We mustn't underestimate our opponents. When I make my move, I won't give my opponent any chances at all. Although he was merely a Five-leaf cultivator, I fought him as though he was a Ten-leaf cultivator."

Yu Shangrong. "..."

The others. "..."

Meng Changdong exclaimed in shock, "You killed him?!"

Yu Zhenghai said with a proud expression, "It's true. Second Junior Brother was there."

"How many times did you kill him?" Meng Changdong asked with a frown.

"How many times?" Yu Zhenghai frowned as well. He might not be as smart as Si Wuya, but he was not a fool. How could he not understand the implication behind Meng Changdong's question? His eyes widened imperceptibly, and his heart sank as he asked, "Guardian Meng, you're saying he's also a Nine Infants cultivator?"

"..." Meng Changdong neither nodded nor shook his head. He merely stared at Yu Zhenghai as though he was telling Yu Zhenghai he was not going to state the obvious.

After a brief moment of silence, Yu Zhenghai smacked his thigh, looking incredibly vexed. "I was careless! I didn't understand the essence of master's finishing blow philosophy deep enough!"

Then, Yu Zhenghai turned around to face Lu Zhou, preparing to apologize.

Lu Zhou waved his hand and said, "That's enough."

"Don't worry, master. When I run into him again, I'll cut him down until he can no longer get back up," Yu Zhenghai said.

"..."

Yu Shangrong smiled and said, "He's someone who fears the powerful and bullies the weak. He's not much of a threat."

"Second Junior Brother, we're talking about the Nine Infants... Give him enough time, and he'll become a huge threat."

Lu Zhou's two eldest disciples seemed like they were going to start bickering again.

Little Yuan'er leaped between her two senior brothers and said, "Eldest Senior Brother, Second Senior Brother, there you go again, quarreling all of a sudden. If you have so much free time, why don't you join me in going through these boxes?"

Yu Zhenghai and Yu Shangrong said in unison, "Not interested."

"..."

At this moment, a Cloud Mountain disciple sped over from the main peak's great hall. He landed on the cloud platform and panted heavily as he said, "Sect Master, Senior Lu, this is bad!"

"What is it?" Nie Qingyun asked with a frown.

"Before daybreak, I received news that the Sky Martial Court attacked the Ninth Temple. Hence, I sent Senior Sikong and the two First Seats away from Cloud Mountain. However, they were ambushed by the Sky Martial Court. In fact, the Sky Martial Court never went to the Ninth Temple. Yu Chenshu... Yu Chenshu personally made a move!"

Everyone was shocked.

Lu Zhou looked at the Cloud Mountain disciple and asked, "What's the situation now?"

"Senior Sikong has been captured while First Seat Yao and First Seat Zhao are injured! They're hurrying back," the disciple replied.

Yu Zhenghai shook his head and asked, "Why did they leave without a word?"

"Senior Sikong went to Senior Lu's room, but he did not want to disturb Senior Lu so he left."

At this moment, an elder flew over from the distance as well. He bowed and said, "Sect Master, Senior Lu, the two First Seats of the Ninth Temple are in the main peak's hall!"

Lu Zhou looked at the others and said, "Xia Changqiu, you deal with these boxes."

"Understood."

"Yu Zhenghai, Yu Shangrong, stay on the cloud platform. Protect Li Yunzheng, and don't contact anyone for the time being."

"Yes, master."

After assigning tasks to the others, Lu Zhou looked at the main peak and said, "I'll go and have a look."

Chapter 826: Desolate-grade Confinement Seal

Lu Zhou flew toward the main peak.

Nie Qingyun, Meng Changdong, and a few others followed closely behind Lu Zhou.

...

On the cloud platform.

Yu Shangrong and Yu Zhenghai turned to look at Li Yunzheng at the same time.

Li Yunzheng was unnerved by the duo's gaze.

After appraising Li Yunzheng for a long time, Yu Zhenghai finally asked, "Second Junior Brother, do you think that it's possible that master made a mistake? Every one of our fellow disciples is a genius or an elite. What does master see in him?"

Yu Shangrong shook his head. "We can never hope to fathom master's thoughts."

"Still, he's a young puppet emperor who doesn't even know how to cultivate..." Yu Zhenghai looked at Li Yunzheng with a slightly disdainful gaze.

After witnessing the duo's strength earlier, Li Yunzheng was thoroughly impressed. He mustered his courage and said, "Senior uncles... I... I'm actually not that weak..."

Yu Zhenghai nodded, satisfied. Then, he said with a smile, "Good, good. You sound like me when I was your age. Make sure to study well and don't embarrass the Evil Sky Pavilion."

Yu Shangrong shook his head and walked toward the boxes. Rather than listening to his senior brother brag, he was more interested in looking at the boxes' contents.

Li Yunzheng could tell it was easier to talk to Yu Zhenghai. Yu Shangrong was not as approachable. Hence, he carefully walked to Yu Zhenghai's side and asked, "Eldest Senior Uncle, can you tell me what kind of person my master is? Is my master a he or a she? Is she beautiful? What's she skilled in?"

When Yu Zhenghai heard this, he laughed and said, "Beautiful?"

"..."

Yu Zhenghai said, "Your master's name is Si Wuya. He's the seventh disciple of the Evil Sky Pavilion. He has the greatest vision and wisdom among all of us, and he has a keen eye. Seventh Junior Brother once said that my Jasper Saber is the best in the world..." When he mentioned the Jasper Saber, he glanced at Yu Shangrong who was standing nearby. As he had expected, a frown could be seen on Yu Shangrong's face.

After a moment, Yu Zhenghai said in a gruff voice, "Naturally, we're not taking your grandmaster into account."

"Is my master that great?" Li Yunzheng was motivated when he heard Yu Zhenghai's description of Si Wuya.

Yu Zhenghai continued to say, "Your master is well-read and is knowledgeable in astrology and geology. When you meet him, don't brag about how knowledgeable you are."

"I understand. Then, what's my master's cultivation base?" Li Yunzheng asked eagerly.

"Well, let's not talk about that. Your master doesn't rely on his cultivation base," Yu Zhenghai said.

"..."

Meanwhile, Yu Shangrong ignored the two of them. He went through the contents of the boxes with Xia Changqiu. When he saw a box of purple rocks, he asked in confusion, "Monastery Master Xia, what are these?"

Xia Changqiu said, "Purple crystals. This is one of the most important materials to reforge a weapon. Oh, that's right! With these, there's hope for your Longevity Sword, Mister Second!"

Something stirred in Yu Shangrong's heart when he heard these words. "What else is needed apart from purple crystals?"

"We'll need more rocks, but those aren't a problem. They can be easily found. We'll have to completely melt the Longevity Sword to reforge it. Hence, we need a furnace that can withstand the high temperatures of a desolate-grade weapon. We'll also need a profound cultivation base to defend against the corrosion of the heat. It would be best if we have an elite cultivator who knows Formations to inscribe the runes when the sword is reforged. Alas, not many meet all these requirements," Xia Changqiu said.

Yu Shangrong nodded, "Some matters can't be forced. Let's just go with the flow."

"Mister Second, with your magnanimity, you'll surely reach great heights on the sword path," Xia Changqiu said.

"Thank you."

...

Meanwhile, Lu Zhou and Nie Qingyun returned to the great hall on the main peak.

The others entered at the same time.

Yao Qingquan and Zhao Jianghe's chests were stained with blood. They were lying on stretchers at this moment. When they saw Lu Zhou, they tried to lift their heads.

"S-senior Lu..."

"Senior Lu..."

Both of them tried to get up to greet Lu Zhou.

Lu Zhou placed his hands on his back and said, "There's no need for that."

An expression of despair could be seen on Yao Qingquan's face as he pleaded, "Senior Lu, you must save the temple master! The temple master has been taken away by Yu Chenshu!"

As soon as Yao Qingquan finished speaking, he launched into a coughing fit.

Wuwu hurried over at this moment and said, "I'll heal you!"

She opened her small and tender hand, revealing a glowing red ball. Then, she pushed the red ball toward the two First Seats.

After being healed by Wuwu, the two First Seats seemed to be in a better condition. They were breathing much more easily now.

Seemingly dissatisfied with the effect, Wuwu said, "Again."

Wuwu kept tossing out red balls and unleashed her techniques more than ten times.

In the end, Yao Qingquan and Zhao Jianghe did not seem to be in pain anymore, but Wuwu was flushed from the effort and depleting almost all her Primal Qi. She panted heavily.

“Miss Wuwu, don’t waste your energy. It’s karmic fire... Your healing can’t heal with injuries from karmic fire,” Yao Qingquan said.

Wuwu pouted and stomped her foot. A helpless expression could be seen on her face.

Ji Fengxing scratched his head awkwardly and said, “My junior sister doesn’t have a profound cultivation base. All she knows is this healing technique from the Forgetful Method. I apologize on her behalf.”

Lu Zhou stroked his beard as he nodded and said, “Forgetful Method? How many leaves does she have?”

Ji Fengxing immediately replied, “Two-leaf! Senior Lu, she’s a Two-leaf cultivator now! She’s the genius with the greatest potential in the Thousand Willow Monastery!”

“Not bad,” Lu Zhou said, “It’s rare for one to have such considerations.”

As Lu Zhou spoke, he raised his hands. Two blue lotuses appeared in his palms immediately.

The others watched with eyes shining with admiration.

The blue lotus radiated dense vitality. Those nearby could clearly feel the rich aura.

For a moment, everyone wondered where Lu Zhou came from? Was there, perhaps, a blue lotus domain?

The blue lotuses landed on Yao Qingquan and Zhao Jianghe.

When the blue lotuses blossomed, Lu Zhou felt the burning flames in their bodies. The flames were clearly stronger than those from Blood Sun Temple’s Fa Kong. Even its aura felt scorching hot.

“So this is the karmic fire of a Ten-leaf elite?” Lu Zhou was puzzled. He increased his input of extraordinary power.

Yao Qingquan and Zhao Jiangge felt a cooling sensation wash over them. The karmic fire that could not be extinguished seemed to be drowned out by a tide of water that was the blue lotuses. In just a few breaths, the karmic fire was completely extinguished. Both of them felt better instantly.

“Thank you, Senior Lu.”

“All I did was extinguish the karmic fire. You’ll have to recuperate on your own,” Lu Zhou said.

“Understood.”

“What happened? With Sikong Beichen’s skills, even if he can’t defeat Yu Chenshu, he still shouldn’t be captured,” Lu Zhou asked with his hands on his back.

Yao Qingquan sighed and said, “He had the Confinement Seal.”

“Confinement Seal?!”

The others were shocked by this piece of information.

Nie Qingyun said, "So, it's the Confinement Seal! Senior Lu... This Confinement Seal isn't something that should be taken lightly. Back then, the Sky Research Court had 100 genius researchers studying foreign worlds. In just a century, they created many weapons. This Confinement Seal is one of their best creations. It's said to be the weapon that's closest to the flood-grade in Great Tang! No wonder, no wonder!"

"What's so special about this Confinement Seal?" Lu Zhou asked.

Nie Qingyun shook his head and said, "I've only heard about it. I don't know what it looks like nor do I know its use."

Since Yao Qingquan and Zhao Jianghe were the only ones who had seen it before, the others turned to look at the duo.

Yao Qingquan said, "That Confinement Seal is green and resembles a jade ruler's seal. When it's used, it's as huge as a sky curtain. When it lands on the ground, it forms an impenetrable cage. It was exactly the Confinement Seal that trapped Temple Master Sikong."

Chapter 827: Prying into the Location

Yao Qingquan was still panting heavily from the lingering fear.

After the scorching sensation from the karmic fire subsided, the two First Seats gradually calmed down. They were speaking more coherently as well. Although two disciples supported them, it was still difficult for them to sit up. In the end, they disregarded their appearance and remained seated on the stretchers.

"That Confinement Seal is tricky to deal with. It's similar to the Square Box, but the Square Box is more often used for restricting and defending. It's more of an auxiliary tool. On the other hand, the Confinement Seal has an earth-shattering and domineering force," Yao Qingquan said.

Nie Qingquan exclaimed in shock, "The old fiend, Sikong, is a Ten-leaf cultivator no matter what! His name is renowned, and he's greatly experienced in combat! I didn't expect the Confinement Seal would be able to trap Old Fiend Sikong so easily!"

Yao Qingquan said with a sigh, "Indeed, it would be difficult to capture the temple master with the Confinement Seal alone. However, Yu Chenshu had mastered karmic fire, and he's a Ten-leaf cultivator as well. Their battle dragged out for a long time. As they moved eastward as they fought, they flattened no less than ten mountains. The forest near the eastern swamps was bathed in a sea of flames as well. Karmic fires are truly powerful. Nearing the end of the battle, Temple Master was completely worn out, and as a result, he fell prey to the Confinement Seal."

Zhao Jianghe added, "Senior Lu, the Confinement Seal is extremely dangerous. It has the abilities of the Square Box, and its defenses are amazing. Once someone's trapped, they wouldn't be able to circulate Primal Qi at all."

"It can restrict one's Primal Qi as well?" Nie Qingyun frowned.

The two First Seats only sighed and shook their heads. From the beginning until now, they were only looking at Lu Zhou; they did not trust Nie Qingyun very much. Now that Sikong Beichen had been captured by Yu Chenshu, the Ninth Temple was at its most vulnerable.

Lu Zhou asked, "How did both of you manage to escape?"

Zhao Jianghe pressed his hand on his chest when he coughed. Then, he said, "Since the Confinement Seal was only used on the temple master, we managed to escape. However, if the temple master didn't keep Chen Yushu occupied, I'm afraid we..."

Zhao Jianghe trailed off and shook his head.

Lu Zhou stroked his beard and said, "Apart from this, does Chen Yushu have any other tricks up his sleeve?"

Understanding one's enemy would almost guarantee a victory. Lu Zhou knew he could not afford to make the same mistakes he made the first time he killed Ye Zhen. Although he possessed the Golden Taixu Mirror, he had to guard against the possibility that his enemies might have mastered techniques that could bypass the mirror as well. Moreover, his enemy this time was the Sky Martial Court's Yu Chenshu. It was impossible that someone like Yu Chenshu did not have any means to preserve his life.

Yao Qingquan shook his head and said, "Alas, he only needed his karmic fire and the Confinement Seal to deal with us. The elders who came with him didn't even join the fight."

Nie Qingyun's expression was grim when he said, "I didn't know Yu Chenshu is so powerful." Then, he turned to Lu Zhou and said, "In my opinion, Yu Chenshu is trying to divide and conquer us. If my speculation is right, it would be Cloud Mountain's turn sooner or later."

Lu Zhou stroked his beard as he mulled over the matter.

If Yu Chenshu had other methods of saving his own skin, it was not wise to directly challenge him. Perhaps, he could use the Appearance Alteration Card and infiltrate the Sky Martial Court? At that time, he would swiftly use the Deadly Strike Card to end Yu Chenshu. Alas, things were not that simple.

After a moment, Lu Zhou said, "Cultivators above the Nine-leaf stage should remain on Cloud Mountain for the time being."

Nie Qingyun nodded. He waved his hand at the elders at the side, "You heard Senior Lu!"

"Understood."

Lu Zhou looked at Yao Qingquan and said, "Tell the remaining three First Seats of the Ninth Temple not to act rashly. Since Yu Chenshu didn't kill Sikong Beichen, there's hope for him yet. I think he wants to use Sikong Beichen as bait."

"Understood!" Yao Qingquan was moved. The Ninth Temple could only rely on Senior Lu now. After a moment, he asked, "What if Yu Chenshu seizes this opportunity to attack the Ninth Temple?"

"There's no need to worry. The Ninth Temple is protected by the Grand Formation. It's not easy to take the Formation down. If Yu Chenshu shows up, I'll personally take him down."

Upon hearing this, Yao Qingquan shifted his body before he fell to his knees.

Zhao Jianghe followed suit and knelt as well.

Lu Zhou frowned. He waved his hand, and a surge of energy lifted the duo. He said, "You are men, and you shouldn't kneel on a whim."

Hearing these words, the two First Seats were moved. After they struggled to their feet, they bowed at Lu Zhou.

"Thank you, Senior Lu. I don't know how we'll be able to repay your kindness."

Lu Zhou turned to look at Nie Qingyun and said, "Tell your men to inspect Cloud Mountain's Grand Formation."

"Alright." Nie Qingyun wasted no time in ordering his men to thoroughly inspect Cloud Mountain's Grand Formation.

After that, Lu Zhou left the hall.

...

When Lu Zhou returned to his room, he called up the system dashboard.

Merit points: 147,440

Remaining life: 219,730 days

Items: Ji Tiandao's Peak Trial Card x1, Deadly Strike Card x1, Impeccable Card x1, Critical Block Card x138, Disguise Card x1, Golden Taixu Mirror, Appearance Alteration Card x3, Shining Stone x3, Refining Talisman x1, Reversal Card x77

Mount: Whitzard, Bi An, Ji Liang, Qiong Qi, Dang Kang.

Weapon: Unnamed, Jade Horsetail Whisk, Magistrate Brush, Nine String Zither, Square Box, Purple Glazed Ceramic, Cold Wind Trident

Lu Zhou discovered the dashboard seemed to have been upgraded. The categorization seemed to be clearer now.

Unfortunately, there were too few main power cards.

If he had known that this would happen, he would have cut down on his usage of item cards when he was still in the golden lotus domain and spent more time on raising his cultivation base.

He sighed. The thoughts of men often changed depending on the stages of life and the circumstance they were in.

Lu Zhou brought Unnamed out.

Black runes revolved around it.

At this moment, he recalled seeing a black lotus descending from the sky through the memory crystal.

"Black lotus..."

All signs indicated that black lotus cultivators were extremely terrifying. If he encountered one, and the Deadly Strike Cards were exorbitantly priced, he would be in trouble.

Once bitten, twice shy.

It seemed he could no longer use his Deadly Strike Cards in the red lotus domain as he pleased.

“Yu Chenshu...”

Lu Zhou remembered the new Heavenly Writing Power he had obtained and wondered if he could find Yu Chenshu’s current location.

‘Let’s give it a try.’

Lu Zhou closed his eyes and recited the mantra.

Soon after, his eyes glowed blue.

However, he soon received a system notification.

“Target cannot be visualized. Current limitations only permit this to be used on friendly targets.”

“It doesn’t work? I thought I’d be able to spy on everyone with this power.”

A feeling of déjà vu washed over him.

After a moment, he closed his eyes again.

“Sikong Beichen.”

Then, he recited the mantra again, “For all life in the universe, their lives, deaths, kindness, evil, merits, and sins can be clearly seen.”

His eyes glowed blue.

The Heavenly Writing’s extraordinary power swiftly surged out of his body.

It was dark all around. The only source of light beamed down Sikong Beichen from above. His arms were chained to the sides, and his hair was disheveled. He looked exhausted.

The sounds in the surroundings entered Lu Zhou’s ears.

Clink! Clink! Clink!

The sound of chains rang in the air.

“Hey, newcomer. Were you fooled by that old geezer as well?”

“Say something, newcomer...”

Since the surroundings were dark, Lu Zhou could only hear the voices.

After a short moment, he stopped using the power. With this, he had swiftly used up a lot of his extraordinary power. Moreover, there was a limit to what he could see.

“Where would that place be?” Lu Zhou fell deep into his thoughts.

He knew too little about Sky Martial Court.

Although he caught a glimpse of Sikong Beichen, he could not pinpoint Sikong Beichen's location. However, he managed to confirm that Sikong Beichen was alive, at least.

Lu Zhou no longer used the power. Instead, he inspected his cultivation base. After the efforts he expended, his cultivation was now at the late Nine-leaf stage. He was confident he would be able to attempt the Ten-leaf stage roughly after ten days or so.

Then, he looked at the Reversal Cards in his possession. Currently, he had 77 of them.

"Use."

He used 10 cards in a go.

The rich vitality around the mountain peak surged and converged immediately.

...

Meanwhile, Nie Qing Yun and a few others were delegating tasks and sorting the boxes on the cloud platform. All of them looked up when they sensed the peculiar phenomenon.

"What's this?" Nie Qingyun's expression was rather complex.

Xia Changqiu stepped forward and explained, "There's no need to worry, Sect Master Nie. Senior Lu does this a lot. You've seen him manifest the blue lotus earlier, right? If I'm not mistaken, this is probably one of the ways to cultivate the blue lotus."

"Blue lotus? Monastery Master Xia, in your opinion, do you think Senior Lu really came from the golden lotus domain?" Nie Qingyun asked.

Instead of responding to Nie Qingyun's question, Xia Changqiu said, "Sect Master Nie, my cultivation base might be a far cry compared to yours, but I have some words of advice for you. I wonder if I should say it."

"By all means!"

"The elites have their own ways of doing things. Senior Lu's cultivation base is unfathomable. We should be broadminded and act no different from usual. It's important that we don't ask too many questions about their cultivation. Naturally, it's a different story if Senior Lu willingly imparts his knowledge on us," Xia Changqiu said, "What I'm trying to say is that it doesn't matter if it's the red, golden, or blue lotus. Since it benefits us, why must we trouble ourselves unnecessarily? Moreover, if we unintentionally stepped on Senior Lu's bottom line..."

Xian Changqiu did not finish his sentence and left it to Nie Qingyun's imagination. He only smiled faintly.

After listening to these words, Nie Qingyun cupped his fists together and said, "Thank you for the reminder, Monastery Master Xia."

Chapter 828: Ten-leaf Old Villain Ji

Xia Changqiu nodded and said, "The members of the Thousand Willow Monastery have troubled you recently, Sect Master Nie."

Since Xia Changqiu was living under someone else's roof, he had to maintain a certain level of courtesy. Moreover, in the past, nobody would even spare the Thousand Willow Monastery a glance.

Nie Qingyun laughed before he said, "If it's up to your standards, Monastery Master Xia, treat Cloud Mountain as your home. You can visit and stay here as often as you like."

"Thank you," Xia Changqiu said before he left. It felt wonderful to have a powerful backer.

As Nie Qingyun looked at Xia Changqiu's retreating back, he thought to himself that Xia Changqiu was talented, wise, and had a great perspective. In retrospect, if he was able to perceive things clearly from the beginning, he would not have to take so many detours. He was even hit by Senior Lu twice! When he recalled this, he felt truly inflexible in the past.

At this moment, a huge surge of vitality energy converged at the mountain peak where Lu Zhou was residing again.

Nie Qingyun only nodded and no longer dwelled on the matter.

...

Lu Zhou used 30 Reversal Cards in two sessions. Each card granted him 600 days of life. With that, he became younger by 30 years. His body no longer felt as stiff, and he had more black hair as well.

After that, he did not use the remaining 57 Reversal Cards. He was afraid their price would increase in the future so it was better to save some. Apart from that, he had a feeling the Reversal Cards would become more useful in the future.

Remaining life: 231,730 days

Following that, Lu Zhou looked at the lucky draw interface.

"Lucky draw."

"Ding! Spent 50 merit points. Spent 110 luck points. Obtained Critical Block Card x50, Shining Stone x1."

"Forget it!"

Lu Zhou had his doubts about the outcomes of the lucky draw.

"I have 188 Critical Block Cards now. Does this mean that I'm going to die 188 times?" Lu Zhou frowned.

This was probably the most useless card of all.

'If I'm invincible, this card is useless.'

Lu Zhou closed the lucky draw interface and entered his meditative state.

...

Meanwhile, in the Sky Martial Court's underground prison.

It was so dark that one could not even see one's hands.

At this moment, Yu Chenshu sauntered into the prison with his hands on his back. A disciple carrying a lamp followed him respectfully from behind.

When he looked at the exhausted Sikong Beichen, he shook his head and said, "I don't think you killed Chen Beizheng, not with your abilities."

Sikong Beichen only chuckled. His voice was hoarse.

"We're both from the red lotus domain. Why must we fight each other? Sikong Beichen, you of all people should understand this. Tell me, what did that foreigner with the surname Lu offer you? Why are you so loyal to him?" Yu Chenshu asked emotionlessly.

"Yu Chenshu, if you're man enough, you'll release me from the Confinement Seal and fight me fairly... At that time, you'll be able to find out if I have what it takes to kill Chen Beizheng," Sikong Beichen said with a sneer.

"You're the Ninth Temple Master, a person renowned in this world. Why are you so naive? You should know there's no fairness in the world. Moreover, do you think the Confinement Seal is all I have?" Yu Chenshu said mercilessly.

Sikong Beichen remained silent.

At this moment, a scoff rang in the darkness.

"Newcomer, you're really immature and naïve. Old Fiend Yu has many tricks up his sleeve, especially those despicable and dirty third-rate tricks..."

"Yu Chenshu, you're useless! Where did you pick up this gourd bottle? He won't even talk to us. Aaaahhh! Let me out!"

Yu Chenshu roared, "Silence!"

The soundwave resounded in the prison.

"Oooh... How scary! Your breath is as smelly as ever. It stinks in here. You better watch out. If I ever get out of this place alive, I'll sever all four of your limbs. Oh, I mean give limbs! I'll keep them in a wine jar!"

Yu Chenshu turned around and launched a palm strike.

The red lotus karmic fire palm seal sailed in the darkness through the space between the black and cold iron bars toward a savage and filthy madman.

Bam!

Sikong Beichen merely caught a glimpse of the man's emaciated body and maniacal expression.

The prison fell silent again.

"Sky Research Court?" Sikong Beichen was shocked.

Yu Chenshu did not say anything about the Sky Research Court. Instead, he said, "That Foreigner Lu is from the golden lotus domain. He's already infiltrated the palace and met the young emperor. What I understand and know is much more than you can imagine. You'd better come clean."

“You wish to understand Senior Lu?” Sikong Beichen chuckled.

“He killed Chen Beizheng, Chen Tiandu, and Ye Zhen. His cultivation base is unfathomable. Rumor has it that he has initiated his Birth Chart. Is that true?” Yu Chenshu asked.

“Why do you ask questions you already have answers to?”

Clank! Clank! Clank! Clank! Clank!

The sound of rattling chains rang from both sides again.

“Someone has initiated their Birth Chart? Ahahahaha... For real? That’s great. Come, come! Save us from this dark world and purge the filth from this world. We must give him all the best women we have to change the filthy bloodline of the red lotus domain!”

“Impossible! It takes 1,500 years to initiate one’s Birth Chart. A monster like that has long left the red lotus domain. We can longer find beasts and harvest many life hearts anymore! Yu Chen, tell me, quick, what’s the meaning of this?”

Upon hearing the ramblings of these ‘madmen’, Sikong Beichen was convinced these prisoners were from the Sky Research Court. Then, he looked at Yu Chenshu knowingly and said, “I see. So you’ve imprisoned the people from the Sky Research Court here...”

Yu Chenshu did not comment on this remark. Instead, he said, “From this day on, you’ll become one of them until you die. If you’re willing to cooperate, I’ll consider releasing you.”

Sikong Beichen smiled mockingly and said, “In that case, I’ll be honest with you. Senior Lu has, indeed, initiated his Birth Chart! Yu Chenshu, I can sense the fear and unease in your heart.”

Yu Chenshu’s eyelid twitched. He clenched his hands as he said, “Do you think I’ve been idle all these years? Do you think I didn’t make any preparations at all? So what if he has initiated his Birth Chart? If he dares come, I’ll kill him.”

Sikong Beichen spat. “Arrogant!”

Yu Chenshu shook his head and said, “One needs to have the capability to be arrogant after all, and I have that capability.” He turned around slowly and placed his hands on his back before he said, “Birth Chart... I think there’s a great way to deal with someone like that. Isn’t that right, everyone?”

The chains rattled in the dark, but no one answered Yu Chenshu.

...

A week later.

In the morning.

Lu Zhou had already replenished his extraordinary power. At this moment, he did a set of Taiji in the courtyard.

The Cloud Mountain disciples who were cleaning saw Lu Zhou but did not disturb him. They only watched and did not ask any questions. Nie Qingyun had ordered them not to bother Lu Zhou without due reasons.

After Lu Zhou entered the room, he sensed his Sea of Qi that was being filled before he counted days. "Three days... Another three days, and I should be able to reach the Ten-leaf stage."

...

Over the next three days, Lu Zhou's slow Tai Ji sets became a topic for the others.

One of the disciples even reenacted the move in front of Nie Qingyun.

After Nie Qingyun replicated moves and trained for two days, he discovered he did not gain anything from it.

"Looks like Monastery Master Xia is right. The elites have their own ways of doing things. It's best not to ask too many questions. However, I've never seen or heard about such a cultivation method before. Perhaps, I'm just too dumb to understand its essence."

At this moment, a disciple entered the hall. After bowing, he said, "Sect Master Nie, Senior Lu has said that nobody should go close to his room over the next few days. He said that you're now in charge of protecting His Majesty. Mister First and Mister Second have been summoned by Senior Lu as well."

"Alright," Nie Qingyun said with a nod, "Bring His Majesty to the main peak."

"Yes, sect master!"

...

Meanwhile, Yu Sangrong and Yu Zhenghai were puzzled as well. Why did their master suddenly summon them back?

Both of them were still wondering about the reasons when they arrived at their master's room door.

The duo bowed and said in unison, "Greetings, master!"

Lu Zhou's voice rang from inside the room immediately. "I've gained some new insights on cultivation, and I'll need to cultivate in seclusion for a few days. I need both of you to guard me."

"Yes, master," the duo replied without any hesitation.

"I hope both of you will gain something from this as well. Apart from that, summon Yuan'er and Conch here as well," Lu Zhou said

"Yes, master!"

Lu Zhou hoped that Mentor and Eternal Paragon would take effect as well. Although the others already regarded him as a Ten-leaf cultivator based on his strength, being an actual Ten-leaf cultivator would benefit him and his disciples.

...

In the afternoon.

In the spacious and bright room.

Lu Zhou's sea of Qi was finally full thanks to the Purple Glazed Ceramic. Then, he opened his eyes...

Chapter 829: The Melon Will Fall When It Ripens

The sun shone into the hall.

Lu Zhou felt as though he had slept through an entire era.

He had been in the red lotus domain for a long time now. Crossing the Endless Ocean alone took more than one month. Then, he made his way from the Thousand Willow Monastery to the Ninth Temple, and finally, to Cloud Mountain. He had successfully drawn the ire of the palace and the Sky Martial Court. Meanwhile, the golden lotus domain was safe now under his disciples' protection.

It was time for him to sprout the tenth leaf...

Throughout the time he was on Cloud Mountain, he had spoken to Sikong Beichen and Nie Qingyun frequently. He had heard about the experience of a Nine-leaf cultivator when attempting the Ten-leaf stage. Naturally, there was a chance these might only be applicable to red lotus cultivators, not golden lotus cultivators.

Apart from that, there was something important he had to confirm. He needed to know if sprouting the tenth leaf would decrease his lifespan. To obtain answers, he would have to be bold! Since he had Reversal Cards, he should confirm this matter as soon as possible. After all, he could clearly feel his disciples' cultivation bases improving and were fast approaching his own. He could not live with himself if he could not, at least, have cultivation bases on par with his disciples. Moreover, he had a cheat.

Lu Zhou could not help but marvel out loud, "Indeed, the effects of the Great Void Seed are outstanding!"

Finally, he cleared his mind of distracting thoughts and no longer hesitated. Then, he extended his hand. Perhaps, he was already used to living as an old man, strangely, his wizened hand boosted his confidence when he looked at it.

Whizz!

The familiar and unique sound of power resonance rang in his ears as a miniature Nine-leaf golden lotus avatar appeared above his palm.

This was his true avatar, the one that everyone mistook as an avatar of someone who had initiated the Birth Chart.

Golden flames soon appeared around the avatar. They shone like the slowly rising sun. Many envied these golden karmic flames of his.

Shortly after, Lu Zhou circulated the Primal Qi inside his sea of Qi.

A golden radiant circle appeared around the waist of the avatar and dropped down. This was normal when sprouting a leaf.

...

In the sky to the north.

Yu Shangrong and Yu Zhenghai exchanged a look.

"What's master doing again?" Yu Zhenghai was puzzled.

"It's the unique resonance when an avatar is manifesting. Perhaps, he's sprouting a leaf."

Usually, cultivators would not simply manifest their Hundred Tribulations Insight avatar. After all, it would take a heavy toll on their Primal Qi to maintain the avatars.

Yu Zhenghai exclaimed in shock, "Master is already at the Ten-leaf stage! Does this mean he's going to become an Eleven-leaf cultivator?"

Yu Shangrong smiled and said, "Eleven-leaf?"

"I was only saying what came to my mind. Perhaps, it's Thousands Realms Whirling, and he's attempting the Mysterious Heaven realm."

Since the duo had no experience or knowledge beyond this, they could only speculate.

Yu Shangrong did not entertain Yu Zhenghai. Instead, he asked, "Eldest Senior Brother, can you keep watch on your own for a while? I'll fetch our junior sisters here."

"Go," Yu Zhenghai said with a wave of his hand.

Yu Shangrong leaped and flew toward the back of the mountain.

Shortly after, Yu Shangrong returned with Little Yuan'er and Conch in tow.

"Greetings, Eldest Senior Brother." Little Yuan'er and Conch greeted Yu Zhenghai in unison.

"There's no need for such formalities; we're fellow disciples, after all. Ninth Junior Sister, your aura has grown stronger lately. Not bad!" Yu Zhenghai praised Little Yuan'er.

Little Yuan'er smiled and said, "I'm almost at the Eight-leaf stage. However, I still have much to do compared to Eldest Senior Brother and Second Senior Brother."

"With your talent, you won't have a problem catching up to both of us. There's no need to be in such a hurry. Who knows? Maybe Eldest Senior Brother might even have to rely on you in the future," Yu Zhenghai said.

"You're teasing me again, Eldest Senior Brother."

Whizz!

At this moment, the resonance of energy rang from Lu Zhou's room again. Invisible Primal Qi rippled out into the surroundings as well.

“What’s master doing again?” Little Yuan’er asked curiously.

“Who knows? We’re supposed to guard him,” Yu Zhenghai said with his hands on his back, “Yuan’er, you and Conch take the lower areas.”

“Oh.”

“Second Junior Brother, the east or the west. I’ll let you choose,” Yu Zhenghai said.

Yu Shangrong looked east before he said, “West.”

“Alright.”

Both of them stood guard in the respective directions they had chosen. Whenever flying beasts drew close, the duo would kill them mercilessly.

...

Meanwhile, Lu Zhou was completely focused on sprouting the tenth leaf.

The radiant rings continued to slide down. Nothing seemed unusual or out-of-the-ordinary. Unfortunately, this applied to his golden lotus as well; there were no changes in the golden lotus at all. It looked like how it usually did, as though it was frozen in time.

Lu Zhou shook his head. “This will take some time.”

The golden lotus would not change so quickly. At this speed, this would probably take longer than when he sprouted the ninth leaf.

Fortunately, the leaf-sprouting process did not require that much Primal Qi. He could keep this up for a long time.

This continued for half an hour. Then, half an hour turned into an hour.

The speed of the golden lotus spinning and the convergence of energy did not change. The input of energy continued to maintain the spinning golden lotus.

There were no signs of the emergence of a new leaf at all.

“What’s the problem?” Lu Zhou frowned.

No cultivation was smooth sailing, after all.

“How humiliating would it be if I fail to sprout another leaf?” Lu Zhou’s frown deepened. He tried to increase the spinning speed of the golden lotus and his input of energy.

The golden lotus spun at high speed. The nine leaves look indistinguishable from each other, seeming as though they had merged into one.

Another hour passed.

The sun was setting. It was almost night.

“Still not working?”

If sprouting the tenth leaf was going to devour his lifespan, he should have felt it by now. If that happened, he could just stop the process. After all, with enough Reversal Cards, he could always try again. However, there were no changes until now.

Lu Zhou waved his hand.

The golden lotus spun at normal speed again.

He relaxed and organized the state of his psyche. Then, he used the Heavenly Writing's extraordinary power and activated his hearing power. The range of his hearing covered the entire mountain.

It was rather quiet.

Yu Zhenghai was in the east, and Yu Shangrong was in the west.

On the other hand, Little Yuan'er and Conch were outside the hall.

Lu Zhou stopped using the power.

After a moment, he suddenly recalled the time when Ye Zhen sprouted a leaf. "I see..."

When Ye Zhen sprouted his leaf that day, he maintained the spinning of the red lotus at a uniform pace. He did not channel any energy into it nor did he intentionally try to hasten the leaf-sprouting process. Even with Lu Zhou pressuring him heavily, he could have sprouted the leaf.

"So there's no need for an input of energy?"

As the saying went, 'The melon would fall after it ripens.'

'Should I just go with the flow?'

After he made up his mind, he withdrew his energy from the golden lotus.

As he expected, the golden lotus continued spinning normally. Its speed was not too fast or slow.

Lu Zhou nodded lightly.

The different paths of cultivation led to the same end. Whether it was the golden lotus or red lotus, to a certain extent, apart from the different colors, they were almost the same.

At this moment, the golden lotus emitted the unique energy of vitality. With this, the nine leaves shone brightly and grew lively.

This was just like raising plants. Too much water and the plant would die; too little water and the plant would wither.

For the golden lotus, energy was akin to water that powered its growth.

"I see."

Lu Zhou saw a ray of hope.

He maintained the leaf-sprouting process.

The vitality energy rose from the flaming golden lotus. The energy surged up and left the room through the seams and windows.

...

At this moment, winged beasts appeared in the sky once again.

Yu Shangrong looked up at the mountain peak.

There were dozens of flying beasts trying to get close to the mountain peak. However, they were kept at bay by Cloud Mountain's Grand Formation.

"Someone's here." Yu Zhenghai shot toward the horizon. "I think master has attracted an assassin here. Be careful."

"Alright." Yu Shangrong did not waste time on unnecessary words. With a burst of movements, he flew toward the western sky. A puzzled expression appeared on his face as he looked at the vitality energy surging from his master's room. Naturally, he knew it was this very energy that attracted the winged beasts.

Then, Yu Shangrong projected his voice toward Yu Zhenghai in the east and said, "Eldest Senior Brother, look out for the huge beasts."

Chapter 830: Birth Chart Beast

"There's no need to be overly worried. Master is here. Even if a huge Ten-leaf beast isn't a match for master," Yu Zhenghai replied carefreely.

The disciples were unaware that their master was, in fact, only a Nine-leaf cultivator. Not only were they convinced their master had long reached the Ten-leaf stage, but they also believed their master had initiated his Birth Chart. After all, their master had defeated elites like Ye Zhen, Chen Tiandu, Chen Beizheng, and Sikong Beichen all lost to him.

...

Outside the hall.

When Little Yuan'er felt the dense vitality energy, she pulled Conch down and hastily said, "Quick, Little Junior Sister, sit down and cultivate!"

"Oh."

Both of them sat cross-legged in front of the hall, reaping the benefits from the master's cultivation.

...

Lu Zhou's speculation was proven right. Indeed, there was no need to rush the leaf-sprouting process. All he needed to do was go with the flow.

Letting the melon drop after it ripened was indeed the best way to raise his cultivation base. The precondition was that his cultivation base would have to be at its peak.

During that prolonged battle, Ye Zhen was still capable of maintaining the leaf-sprouting process. He must have mastered some special technique.

When Lu Zhou recalled this, he thought to himself, 'It feels like a waste to have killed him so quickly... I should've kept him alive to interrogate him!'

...

Another hour passed in just a blink of an eye. At the same time, more and more winged beasts appeared in the sky.

The dense life energy shrouded the entire mountain and hung in the air like the morning mist, casting a hazy filter over the mountain.

...

Inside the main hall.

Nie Qingyun was chatting with the emperor, Li Yunzheng.

At this moment, a disciple hurried into the hall to report. "Sect master, there seems to be a huge disturbance in Senior Lu's residence."

"Disturbance?" Nie Qingyun had prohibited everyone from approaching Lu Zhou's room except for those who needed to clean the place. What disturbance was there?

"Beasts!"

Nie Qingyun rose to his feet and said, "Your Majesty, I'll be right back."

"I'll go with you." Li Yunzheng had been living in the palace for a long time. It was rare that he was able to leave the palace. Naturally, he was curious about almost everything, even the mundane things. Now that such a great opportunity presented itself, how could it let it go?

"Alright. Please be careful, Your Majesty." Nie Qingyun waved his hand and moved to the cloud platform.

The cloud platform provided the best view of the twelve peaks of Cloud Mountain.

Nie Qingyun looked in the distance when he sensed the rich life energy in the air.

At this moment, the five elders of Cloud Mountain flew over as well.

"What happened?"

Nie Qingyun said, "Go and take a look. Assist Senior Lu in any way you can."

"Understood." The five elders flew away.

Li Yunzheng asked, "Did something happen to grandmaster?"

"Don't worry, Your Majesty. We're just taking precautionary measures. Usually, beasts don't show up near Cloud Mountain. Huge beasts would only show up when there are Nine-leaf cultivators. However,

they're usually weak. They're no match for me. Still..." Nie Qingyun looked at the mountain peak with a complicated gaze. "Senior Lu seems to be sprouting a leaf."

"Sprouting a leaf? Is the grandmaster attempting the Eleven-leaf stage?" Li Yunzheng scratched his head.

Nie Qingyun chuckled and said, "Based on the waves of Primal Qi and aura, it feels more like an attempt to reach the Ten-leaf stage. However, this doesn't make sense. The leaf-sprouting process from the One-leaf to the Eight-leaf stage can be repeated to stabilize a cultivator's cultivation base. The lotus accumulates energy to sprout a leaf. Hence, repeating the process can improve one's strength. However, this method doesn't work once one has reached the Nine-leaf stage. Why is Senior Lu doing this?"

Nie Qingyun was puzzled as well.

Li Yunzheng said with a wry smile, "Even a Ten-leaf cultivator like you can't make sense of this, there's no hope for me to figure it out."

At this moment, some distance away from the last of the twelve peaks, the sky turned dark. It looked like black clouds were rolling toward them.

Li Yunzheng was familiar with the records of beasts. He pointed at the sky and exclaimed, "Yong!"

"Yong?" Nie Qingyun frowned slightly. He immediately turned around and said, "Your Majesty, please head back. It's not safe up there."

Before Li Yunzheng could protest, Nie Qingyun grabbed him and flew to the fourth peak.

Xia Changqiu and Meng Changdong flew to the fourth peak as well.

Nie Qingyun said, "Beasts have shown up on Cloud Mountain. I'll deal with them. Look after His Majesty." He flew toward the third peak as soon as he finished speaking.

Now that Nie Qingyun had left, Meng Changdong had the highest cultivation base among those who were present. He moved to Li Yunzheng's side and said, "I'll look after His Majesty. All of you should be prepared to provide assistance if needed."

The others nodded.

...

The dark clouds hung low in the sky.

There were many Yongs in the air. Collectively, they looked like a trail of ink snaking their way forward.

Yu Zhenghai moved to Yu Shangrong's side as he looked at the beasts. "This doesn't look good."

"Are you afraid?" Yu Shangrong smiled faintly.

"This is just a small issue. Why should I be afraid?"

Yu Shangrong looked down and said, "Ninth Junior Sister, look after Little Junior Sister."

“Oh.”

After Yu Shangrong finished speaking, an energy sword materialized in his hand. Following that, he charged toward the tide of beasts without another word.

Naturally, Yu Zhenghai would not allow himself to lag behind. He brandished his Jasper Saber and charged out as well.

Two Nine-leaf avatars towered in the air and formed a wall, blocking the wave of beasts.

Bam! Bam! Bam!

Energy sabers and energy swords began to slash, slice, and hack at the Yongs.

“There’s more up above.”

Yu Shangrong smiled faintly. “Don’t blink, Eldest Senior Brother.”

“Hm?”

Yu Shangrong pushed his palm out.

Swoosh!

An energy sword flew up before it split into many other energy swords. In just a few breaths, the energy swords seemed to have covered the sky.

At this moment, there were close to 60,000 energy swords slashing at the beasts.

It was like a storm.

“It’s amazing you’re able to pull this off without a weapon.” Yu Zhenghai praised before he tossed his Jasper Saber out. He cast the Sovereign Descent first.

Energy sabers spun out, dismembering the beasts in their paths.

Soon after, a huge dragon formed from energy sabers plunged into the midst of the beasts and began its savage dance, leaving beasts carcasses that dropped from the sky in its wake.

Yu Zhenghai asked with a smile, “What do you think about Water Dragon Song?”

“I must say it’s amazing that you’re able to unleash Water Dragon Song after casting Sovereign Descent,” Yu Shangrong said.

Two consecutive ultimate moves could easily make a person careless.

Swoosh!

Meanwhile, Nie Qingyun who had just arrived overheard the duo’s conversation. He looked at the beasts that were raining down from the sky and wondered inwardly, ‘Aren’t Senior Lu’s two eldest disciples usually at odds with each other? I’m not used to it now that they’re complimenting each other.’

Yu Shangrong and Yu Zhenghai did not stop bickering and debating about the superiority of the sword and saber since they came to Cloud Mountain, after all.

At this moment, the two disciples turned around at the same time when they discovered Nie Qingyun's presence. "Sect Master Nie?"

"Uh..." Nie Qingyun waved his hand awkwardly. "It... It seems like I'm not needed here."

At this moment, the trail of Yongs had scattered and retreated. Among the few that were left, there was a Yong the size of a huge chariot.

Its face was that of a man with bark-like skin. At the same time, its four large eyes and huge ears gave it an owl-like appearance as well. It radiated a strong life energy.

Yu Shangrong said tonelessly, "I'm afraid that this is going to get really troublesome."

"Who cares? Let's kill it!"

The duo rose higher in the sky.

Yu Zhenghai manifested his avatar first. Then, an energy saber appeared around the Jasper Saber as he gripped it with both hands.

Bam!

A 50-meter energy saber dropped from the sky and struck the Yong.

As a few feathers fell from the Yong's body, it screeched in pain immediately. Its cry was hoarse and thunderous, seemingly capable of injuring one's eardrums. Even the smaller

After a beat, it lunged at the duo and opened its beak that seemed as wide as a chasm.

"Trying to eat me? You'll have to see if you have what it takes!" Yu Zhenghai unleashed the Sovereign Descent.

Energy sabers rolled out like a tidal wave.

Then, Yu Zhenhai rode on the momentum as he retreated.

Meanwhile, Yu Shangrong appeared above the huge Yong at lightning speed. He pushed his palm down, and an energy sword shot toward the beast.

Bam!

The energy sword broke!

Yu Shangrong felt his arm go numb. He leaped and flipped a few times in the air before he moved back. A faint smile could be seen on his face as he said, "Your head is really tough. It's unfortunate that I don't have my Longevity Sword..."

Piercing the Yong's head with an energy sword was no less difficult than ascending to the heavens.

The Yong was infuriated. It tried to ram the duo with its body. Its black body easily covered the entire mountain peak.

At this moment, Nie Qingyun said gruffly, "Allow me."

With two bursts of grand techniques, Nie Qingyun appeared above the beast. He gripped the Sky Soul Saber with two hands as he shouted, "Livestock, take this!"

An energy saber that was wider and longer than Yu Zhenghai's energy saber appeared as Nie Qingyun brought the Sky Soul Saber again.

Bam!

The saber dropped down.

The huge backlash caused Nie Qingyun to lose grip of the Sky Soul Saber.

After he retrieved his saber, he moved near Yu Shangrong and Yu Zhenghai at lightning speed. "This beast is tough! Look for its weak spot!"

Yu Shangrong and Yu Zhenghai nodded.

The trio then flew out again.

...

Meanwhile...

Several miles away from Cloud Mountain, several cultivators stood on a small hill as they looked at the black Yong with a terrified expression on their faces.

"Birth Chart Beast?"

"Pass on the information quickly. Say that a Birth Chart Beast has appeared near Cloud Mountain."

"Yes, boss. Uh, what's a Birth Chart Beast?"

"It's been a long time since such a beast appeared in the red lotus domain. It's said that initiating a Birth Chart requires at least 1,500 years of life. This beast's life aura is powerful. Beasts that can provide enough longevity for this purpose are called Birth Chart Beasts," the cultivator explained.

"But... there are elites on Cloud Mountain."

"Just pass on the message... The Sky Martial Court has ordered us to keep an eye on Cloud Mountain. We must report every single thing we see."

"Understood!"

"Do it quickly. The Sky Martial Court has been searching for Birth Chart Beasts all these years. They scoured almost every mountain and forest in Great Tang. They'll like this piece of information for sure."

"Understood! I'll send a letter immediately"

The cultivator looked up at the huge beast and said, "Cloud Mountain... I don't think you can handle a Birth Chart Beast. However, where did this Birth Chart Beast come from?"