

Stranger 661

Chapter 661: Edict of Divine Thought

Su Xiu was the eighth named warrior on the Human Champions Ranking and a true genius. If he chose the first way and stole all of Su Xiu's potential, he would have been reborn as a Grandmaster.

Unfortunately, he had no time to waste. He was tasked with the important mission of retrieving Nanke by Di Shitian himself. If his greed resulted in the failure of his mission, then he would have much to answer for.

That was why he ultimately chose to be reborn the second way.

“Sigh...”

Dream Master suddenly let out another sigh as he stared at Su Xiu's Nature's Shell. Although he ultimately succeeded in obtaining Nanke, Dancer still perished as a result.

It wasn't because of emotional reasons, of course. It was because Dancer was a member of the Eight Legions, and her death would be seen as a failure of leadership. His reputation would certainly suffer because of this.

Earth Walker and Slaughterer flashed through his mind. At the beginning, he was hoping that the commotion of the battle would lure Earth Walker and Slaughterer to their side. With the four of them together, they should have no problems retrieving Nanke from the enemy. He would not need to use “From Cocoon To Butterfly”, and Dancer wouldn't need to die.

In reality, neither Earth Walker nor Slaughterer had shown up at all. He could not understand why.

As if on cue, a silhouette abruptly dashed out of the fog. Dream Master recognized him immediately.

“Earth Walker!”

Displeasure flickered in Dream Master's eyes, but Earth Walker struck him with a barrage of questions before he could say anything, “What happened, Dream Master? Who hurt you like this? And where is Dancer?”

As Earth Walker reached him, Dream Master opened his mouth to answer his questions. It was at this moment he realized that something was wrong. A curved finger was growing bigger and bigger in his vision!

Every hair on his skin stood on end as a pair of butterfly wings appeared behind his back and wrapped around him. As Dream Master jumped backward, invisible ripples appeared all around him, and his person grew more and more transparent. It looked like he was right in front of Earth Walker, when in reality he might as well be existing in a completely different world.

The finger did not hit Dream Master. Instead, it struck the space in front of it.

A ripple washed out soundlessly, but its power could not be understated. Dream Master lost consciousness for an instant, and bright red blood poured down the corner of his lips. More importantly, his body grew solid once more.

He looked like a celestial who had been pulled down to the earth.

“You’re not Earth Walker!”

Dream Master exclaimed in shock and anger as he glared at Earth Walker.

“Got it in one.”

Earth Walker, or more accurately, Ye Qing answered with a smile.

Although he was talking, Ye Qing’s movements hadn’t slowed down in the slightest. Moving so fast that he left behind a trail of afterimages, he fired a crimson ray straight at Dream Master.

Kick the dog when it’s down. He had no desire to experience a web novel villain who just couldn’t stop monologuing like an idiot when the upper hand was theirs. People like that weren’t just courting defeat, but also some of the worst kinds of humiliation.

No, kicking a dog when it’s down was one hundred percent the royal road; the way of the protagonist.

Besides, this was a golden opportunity that took him much effort and waiting to create. He would have to be retarded to let it slip through his hands for the sake of *monologuing*.

“It’s you! You’re the man who killed Huo Hao and stole Nanke!”

Meanwhile, Dream Master finally recognized Ye Qing’s aura and put two and two together. He exclaimed in shock, “Did you design all this from the start?!”

Suddenly, he understood why Nanke’s presence had gone on and off since they entered this city.

Suddenly, he understood why Nanke had fallen into Su Xiu’s hands, and why Earth Walker and Slaughterer did not appear to his rescue.

When he recalled everything that had happened until now, all those tiny details he had regarded as harmless or insignificant before suddenly surfaced to his consciousness. Since a while ago, it had felt like an invisible hand had been manipulating events so that things would turn out this way. Now, he knew it wasn’t just a feeling.

The man before him was the mastermind behind it all.

But how did he know they were coming?

How was he able to block the Edict of Divine Thought’s ability to detect Nanke?

Why was he so much stronger than his cultivation level?

And more.

One thing for certain, the man before him was the one who designed everything. He had even lured them to this ancient city to enact his nefarious plans.

When he thought until this point, a mixture of emotions he couldn’t quite describe welled inside his heart. It was a blend of humiliation, shame, anger, hatred, and more.

Since the day he embarked on the path of cultivation, he had always been the one toying and manipulating another’s fate from a lofty place. He never imagined that he would one day become the monkey he so often toyed with... until now.

“Right again!”

Ye Qing’s voice came from behind the crimson ray.

By now, the saber force was inches from Dream Master’s forehead.

“Very good. You’re the first person ever to dare to toy with me.”

Dream Master did not seem to care about the incoming attack, however. Long before he finished talking, a dazzling, bright, and powerful golden light burst out of the top of his head and annihilated the saber force in an instant.

Ye Qing himself was thrown back by the unexpected counterattack, his feet cutting through the ground for at least ten meters before he finally managed to arrest himself. Not only that, his whole body was covered in countless tiny, dense wounds that were oozing golden light instead of blood. It made him look like a golden body arhat.

The next moment, Ye Qing sucked in a deep breath and caused his vigor to churn like a raging river, and his body to grow so hot it was as if he was attempting to refine a world inside his body. The golden light oozing out of his wounds were instantly dispelled or refined, which allowed his body to heal at a slow pace.

Ye Qing’s mind was not on his wounds, however. The sky had his full attention right now.

A golden emblazoned word—“Edict”—was floating in the sky and shining brightly. It was only one word, but it looked as vast as the sun or moon itself. It possessed the power of the sun, and the brightness of the moon.

The endless fog that covered this city and the pitch black sky this whole time cleared up in an instant. At the same time, a terrific amount of pressure and light radiated toward the ground and silenced everything.

“So, in the name of Di Shitian, I sentence you to death. May you never escape damnation.”

The Edict of Divine Thought Di Shitian had bestowed on him wasn’t just a detector. It was also his final trump card.

To be honest, Dream Master didn’t want to use the Edict of Divine Thought if at all possible. Although it was just a wisp of divine thought, Di Shitian was the sovereign of the Devas, the supreme ruler of the Eight Legions, and a champion of the Heaven Champions Ranking. To say that his power was bottomless would be an understatement. The divine thought might amount to nothing to Di Shitian himself, but it was an opportunity and a boon of a lifetime for someone like him.

If he could obtain even a small enlightenment from the divine thought, his cultivation journey and future would become so much better than they would have been otherwise. That was why he was unwilling to use it unless he had absolutely no other choice.

Unfortunately, he had reached that point. The one and only way he might survive this crisis was to use the divine thought.

Naturally, the thief must die for the price. Not only that, nothing short of true death and eternal damnation would satisfy his thirst for vengeance.

The next moment, the word in the sky shone brighter and conjured illusions of dragons, tigers, Buddhas, gods, demons, and other creatures. At the same time, a tall, imposing, and terrible silhouette wearing a magnificent crown manifested at the center of the golden light.

The silhouette looked straight at Ye Qing, and terrible pain abruptly stabbed into his eyes. As blood trickled down his cheeks, the silhouette declared with a dignified voice,

“Permission granted.”

The silhouette then lifted his finger slightly before lowering it toward Ye Qing. The dragons and tigers flew beside the finger, the Buddhas began yelling and chanting, the gods and demons roared, and many, many more illusions sprung into existence like weeds.

The finger wasn’t moving particularly quickly, so it looked like all Ye Qing needed to do to save himself was to move out of harm’s way.

In reality, he felt as if the finger had locked down the three dimensions, the four cardinal points, the eight directions, and the nine heavens. Absolutely anything and everything was suppressed.

There was nowhere for him to go; nowhere for him to hide.

Chapter 662: Sentence Me To Death? You?

“You think you have the right to sentence *me* to death? Who the hell do you think you are?”

Despite the unimaginable amount of pressure pressing on against his body, despite the blood pouring down his cheeks like a flood, Ye Qing slowly but surely lifted his head and stared straight at the entity.

He certainly wasn’t looking his best right now, and yet his tenacity and unyieldingness shone through it all.

Ye Qing bent a finger and tapped himself in the forehead; the tianmen point to be exact. The tianmen point was described as the “Gate of Heaven”, and it was one of the most important lines of defense of one’s mind. Ye Qing wasn’t hiding celestial qi or auspicious aura inside his head, however. No, it was overflowing with demonic qi and calamity.

Demonic qi boiled like fog, and demonic thought washed out like a shockwave. Both the sky and the earth instantly became so lofty it couldn’t be perceived, and so far that it couldn’t be seen. Everything looked blurry and chaotic as if this was the beginning of time where the world wasn’t created yet, and all that was living had not yet been born.

Not even the dazzling golden light was strong enough to pierce Primal Chaos.

“Hihihhi...”

“Hahaha...”

“Wooooo...”

“Hehehe...”

Suddenly, strange, disturbing voices came from the Primal Chaos. It sounded like laughter, weeping, sighing, wailing and other sounds that could only be described as demonic. At the same time, dark, indistinct silhouettes appeared at the distance and flickered in and out of existence.

Fear, trepidation, cowardice, greed, anger and more negative emotions began to grow infinitely inside Dream Master's heart. All sorts of hallucinations assaulted his mind and shadowed his heart.

“Paranirmita Vasavartin, Boundless Heavenly Demon...”

It was at this moment a voice resounded throughout the world. It was neither high-pitched, loud, solemn, nor fickle, and yet it possessed seemingly infinite power. As soon as it appeared, the golden silhouette was shackled in place, and the descending finger abruptly froze in its tracks. The massive “Edict” also grew dimmer than before.

“How dare a mere heretic challenge the power of a sovereign!”

The golden silhouette roared, causing the massive “Edict” to regain its luminosity. Wind and clouds darkened, and heaven and earth trembled. The dazzling golden light took the form of a gargantuan, sky-piercing sword and shot straight toward the sky.

The impenetrable wall of Primal Chaos abruptly parted to reveal a person sitting on a throne in the infinitely tall, infinitely distant sky. They were resting their head against their knuckles and looking down on the golden silhouette from above.

The person's face was blurry, indistinct, and everchanging. Despite this, anyone could tell that they were wearing an expression of ridicule and scorn.

It was as if the golden silhouette was no more than an ant to them.

The person's response to the gargantuan sword was to lower his finger. At the beginning, his finger was no bigger than, well, a human's finger. But for every inch it traveled, it would grow a little larger. By the time it was about to make contact with the sword, it was big enough to blot out the sky itself.

The sword and the finger clashed, and it was the sword that shattered into smithereens. The person wasn't done though. The finger was still descending and growing larger by the inch.

“The audacity!”

The golden silhouette raged as the word “Edict” shot into the sky. Unfortunately, it too dimmed and shattered into pieces as soon as it made contact with the finger.

Having shattered both the sword and the word, the finger finally pressed down on the golden silhouette without any mercy whatsoever. At that moment, the golden silhouette truly was an ant beneath the finger. There was absolutely nothing it could do to change its fate!

Crunch.

After the golden silhouette was crushed to bits, the person sitting above the Nine Heavens began to turn blurry, their face still wearing an expression of infinite scorn and ridicule.

“Sentence me to death? *You?*”

The voice said one last time before both the person and the Primal Chaos disappeared in an instant. The world returned to normal, and Ye Qing and Dream Master reappeared in the city.

Something was different though. Dream Master's eyes looked glassy and lifeless, and he was just standing there without moving a muscle. It was as if he had turned into a puppet.

Ye Qing's complexion was pale, and his energies were unstable. Even now, blood was still pouring out of his pupils like a flood.

“Heh... Had I gotten even just a little careless...”

Ye Qing chuckled to himself before wiping away the blood on his face.

He had to admit that Dream Master was a deadly, hard-to-kill opponent. He certainly hadn't expected the man to possess such a powerful trump card despite having one foot in the grave.

The golden silhouette was just a spiritual intent, and yet it had come very close to killing him. If he hadn't grasped the Boundless Heart Demon Tribulation and manifested his Paranirmita Vasavartin Heaven, he would not have been able to transform the surroundings into his domain and wipe it out using his Heavenly Demon Yin God. He would've been dead.

It was despairing to think that a wisp of spiritual intent was almost strong enough to kill him. He certainly could not imagine how powerful the master and creator of the spiritual intent was.

That person was almost certainly the Di Shitian Dream Master had spoken about.

In any case, Di Shitian was now his sworn enemy. After all, he had wiped out his whole team and even destroyed his spiritual intent. There was no way the man was going to let this slide.

“Sigh. The trees long for peace, but the wind will never cease.[1]”

Ye Qing shrugged, though he wasn't really too worried. As the gambling addicts loved to say, what was another debt when they were already drowning in debt? Plus, he had already earned the guy's eternal ire since the moment he killed Huo Hao and stole Nanke. What did it matter if he offended the guy a couple more times?

After tossing the stray thought to the back of his mind, Ye Qing walked up to Dream Master and took his Nature's Shells, Strange Artifacts, and everything else that was of value. Then, he turned around and left.

As if on cue, Dream Master's body crumbled into dust and scattered into the wind. Ye Qing did not look back. As he walked toward the exit, the fog covering the ancient city too faded away. For the first time in a very long time, starlight and moonlight graced the forgotten city once more.

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“That spiritual energy is... incredible. Was there *another* party hiding in the shadows?”

Inside a dilapidated building, a white-faced, weakened Greenlake Bai was leaning against a wall and taking a moment to catch her breath.

“The sandpiper and clam war together, and the fisherman catches both. I knew it was too good to be true that we would stumble onto Nanke in the middle of

nowhere. Nothing good ever happens by chance, just like there are no free lunches in the world.”

A sickly, somewhat crazed smile flashed across Greenlake Bai’s features. “I wonder who the fisherman is though. I would have loved to see their face with my own eyes.”

“Oh well, no point dreaming about something that will never come true. There are way, way too many bad people in this world, so much so that I’m starting to miss that innocent husband of mine. I wonder what he’s doing right now... assuming he’s still alive.”

Greenlake Bai giggled to herself as her energies slowly but surely stabilized.

Suddenly, Greenlake Bai blanched. “Hmm?! The fog’s fading. This is bad!”

Ah Su’s “Nethercall Demonic Possession Record” was a pure body-tempering martial art. That was why she was able to shake her off without too much effort. But now that the fog was gone, it wouldn’t take long for Ah Su to locate her once more.

“This fog’s timing is absolutely suspect. Is it the work of that fisherman?!”

For the first time, Greenlake Bai lost her smile and uttered through gritted teeth, “Pray that I don’t find out who you are, fisherman. Otherwise, you’ll wish you had done things differently.”

As soon as she finished, Greenlake Bai flinched and jumped out of a window.

As if on cue, the entire building exploded in a shower of dust and debris.

“You killed Ah Xiu. I will kill you...”

Ah Su dashed out of the rubble and pounced toward Greenlake Bai. She destroyed many more buildings while chasing after the woman.

“I really didn’t kill first senior brother, third senior sister! Did you sense that presence just now? It’s clear that I was framed!”

Greenlake Bai ran like her life depended on it while saying, “If you kill me, first senior brother would not be able to rest in peace!”

“You have to believe me, third senior sister! I promise I’ll find the real murderer for you!”

“You killed Ah Xiu...”

Her words bounced off Ah Su like water off a duck’s back, however. She just kept chasing and chasing and chasing.

“Third senior sister... would you please listen to me!”

“You killed Ah Xiu. I will kill you...”

“Third senior sister... what’s the point of having a brain if you’re not going to use it?!”

“Kill you...”

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“Haha... have fun, Greenlake Bai. I hope you’ll survive this.”

On a sand dune, Ye Qing smiled while listening to the tremors and reverberations coming from the city.

He was the one who withdrew the fog, and of course he did it to screw Greenlake Bai over.

Originally, he wanted to deal with Greenlake Bai personally, but Dream Master’s Edict of Divine Thought had cost him a lot more spiritual power than he expected.

He could heal practically any physical injury in the blink of an eye, but the spirit was a different story.

Sure, he could restore his spiritual power instantly with a golden dragon-serpent rune, but... seriously? The golden dragon-serpent runes were a precious resource and an emergency life-saving item. It would be a waste to pop one just to kill Greenlake Bai.

Besides, it wasn’t like he was letting her go for free. That Ah Su was singlehandedly doing his job for him.

Also, he had a feeling that Greenlake Bai would somehow turn Ah Su against him if he were to intervene now. As a victim of her machinations, he had the right to be wary of her.

Therefore, leaving them to their devices was definitely the best move he could make right now.

If Greenlake Bai died, then hurray. If not, then he would have another chance to make her life miserable. What’s not to like?

“Wuwu?”

It was at this moment Giggle pulled his sleeve. It was looking up at him with worry.

“Don’t worry. I’m fine.”

Ye Qing petted its head with a smile. “It’s been a very busy day. Let’s go find a safe place and enjoy a good rest.”

Chapter 663: Ruyi of Fortune

“Phew...”

As the sun rose, and purple qi greeted the world once more, Ye Qing let out a sigh before opening his eyes. A hint of joy peeked out of his features as he muttered under his breath, “Who doesn’t like a blessing in disguise?”

It was the third day after he left the city. That night, after locating a fairly safe hideout not too far away from the city, he immediately began meditating to heal his wounded mind and depleted spiritual power.

At first, he thought it would take him one or two weeks at least to recover from such an injury. In reality, not only did he recover in just three days, his reservoir of spiritual power had actually grown a little bigger than before.

And how was this possible? It was all thanks to the Edict of Divine Thought.

The Edict of Divine Thought was, in essence, a wisp of spiritual and martial intent. When he snuffed it out, he had destroyed Di Shitian's intent but not the vast spiritual power that empowered it.

It didn't sound like much, but Di Shitian was no weakling. What was an ordinary wisp of spiritual power to Di Shitian was a helluva treasure to a small fry like Ye Qing.

Obviously, the spiritual power it provided could not compare to the nine-hundred-years-old Moon Lotus Seeds Joy Bodhisattva had given him. However, its purity exceeded the Moon Lotus Seeds.

As a result, not only did he fully recover from his mental exhaustion and injuries, his spirit was stronger, and his Yin God was denser as well.

That wasn't all. He hadn't refined and absorbed all the spiritual power stored inside his headspace yet. Once he converted it all into demonic thought, he was sure his cultivation would advance further. He might even become a middle-stage Spirit Master thanks to this.

Of course, it was a little counterintuitive and silly to use a champion's spiritual intent purely as an item to grow one's spirit. After all, the most important element of a spiritual intent wasn't the spiritual power that fueled it, but the champion's insight into martial arts and the world itself. Even a mere glimpse into the world beyond was a great boon to any warrior.

Unfortunately for Ye Qing, he had completely annihilated Di Shitian's will. This meant that Di Shitian's martial understanding and insight were destroyed as well. So, he had no choice but to opt for the inferior option.

He would be lying if he said his heart didn't ache at the lost opportunity, but of course he was satisfied with this outcome. He had already gotten a blessing in disguise, it would be greedy and stupid to complain that the blessing wasn't better. Besides, the wisp of spiritual intent wasn't the only thing he got out of this venture.

First, he had retrieved Nanke. Obviously.

Second, Slaughterer, Earth Walker, Su Xiu and Dream Master had so kindly contributed their possessions to his cause, and a good amount of them were valuable natural treasures and martial arts manuals too.

Out of all the items, there were six that sat at the top of all the loot.

The first item was, of course, the Wenliang Pearl. He had found it in Earth Walker's Nature's Shell, meaning that Yaksa had killed Ancestor Greenwood and robbed him of his item. Too bad for Earth Walker, he died before he ever got to make use of the treasure.

The second item was three jade scrolls[1]. They came from Su Xiu, and he reckoned that it was the Demon Controlling Jade Manual Su Xiu and Greenlake Bai were talking about.

Although he called them jade scrolls, and their name was the "Demon Controlling Jade Manual", they were really made of some sort of unknown material that looked like metal or jade, but was neither. One thing for certain, it was unbelievably tough and impossible to damage.

Even stranger, he could not find a single word in either one of the scrolls. They were completely blank and seemingly useless. If there was something magical about them, he wasn't able to identify it despite his best efforts.

He was sure they were extraordinary though. Otherwise, Su Xiu and Greenlake Bai wouldn't have fought over it.

The third item was a pill called Pill of the Undying Spirit of the Valley. He had found in Dancer's Nature's Shell.

There was a passage in Tao Te Ching that went something like this:

“The spirit of the valley never dies.

This is called the mysterious female.

The gateway of the mysterious female

Is called the root of heaven and earth.”

To put it in more practical, secular terms, the Pill of the Undying Spirit of the Valley was a pill that helped a warrior to discover their true nature and realize their true self, which indirectly increased their chances of becoming a Grandmaster.

As amazing as the pill was, it was unfortunately useless for a body-tempering warrior like Ye Qing. A body-tempering warrior emphasized on honing the body and enriching the vigor. They sought perfection of the body and not the mind, which was why a pill that improved the cultivation of the mind—while appreciated—wasn't nearly as valuable or useful to him.

That was why the pill was useless to him—for now. He would have to put it out of his mind for the moment.

The fourth item was a Phenomenon-class Strange Artifact called the Ruyi^[2] of Fortune. Carved from jade and about as big as a human palm, one half of the ruyi was black, and the other half white. The black half of the ruyi had the word “Misfortune” engraved on it, and the white half the word “Fortune”. It possessed the power to turn fortune into misfortune and vice versa.

To put it simply, the Ruyi of Fortune could change the luck of two people. For a short time, it could strip a target of their good luck to enhance the user's own luck. The user would become so incredibly lucky that their tribulations would turn into happy accidents, and every obstacle standing in their way would be swept clean.

On the other hand, the victim who was stripped of their luck would experience all kinds of misfortune and hardships.

To put it in even simpler terms, the Ruyi of Fortune was the Incense of Fortune and the Incense of Misfortune combined.

The power to steal another's luck was incredible to say the least. The word Ruyi meant “as one pleases”, and the power to do as one pleases was powerful indeed.

For a person, there were few things more important than luck. A lucky person could live their whole life happily and without hardships, whereas an unlucky person would be lucky to make it past childhood especially in this day and age.

Luck was a curious variable. An unlucky person could suffer all kinds of hardships and tribulations despite making all the right decisions, an unlucky family would not remain a family for long, and an unlucky country would decline and fall into ruin.

Everyone knows that luck was a key factor in life, but it wasn't an easy concept to grasp. Formless, everchanging and profound, there was a reason why the saying, "Let the heavens decide" existed. There was only so much a person could do to affect luck.

Everyone was born with a predetermined amount of luck. While it wasn't impossible to improve one's luck and change one's fate, it was certainly most difficult. Only a person with a special set of skill or an item that was blessed with great fortune and karma could alter one's natural luck and fate.

For example, Ye Qing had obtained an impressive amount of Profound Yellow Qi from the Earthly Sovereign's Coffin. It was something that could improve his luck and protect his luck to a certain degree. However, items like these were extremely rare.

A Strange Artifact that could steal another's luck was even rarer. The Ruyi of Fortune might just be a Phenomenon-class Strange Artifact, but its value was positively immeasurable.

However, its activation conditions were equally stringent. First, the Ruyi of Fortune must have a target. The target could not be too weak or too strong.

A weak target naturally possessed weak luck, so stealing their luck would not improve one's own luck by much. A strong target naturally had strong luck, and if they were too strong, then not only would the attempt end in failure, there was a chance the Ruyi of Fortune would backfire on the user.

Moreover, the Strange Artifact only worked once per target. The user could not steal luck from the same person twice.

Second, the user must know the target's birth date, true name, and background. They must write these details on a yellow talisman using a cinnabar brush before striking it with the black half of the Ruyi of Fortune for two hours per day, and forty nine days in total. If the ritual was interrupted even once, then it would have been all for naught.

If the ritual was successful, then the user would be able to continually steal their target's luck for forty-nine days straight. However, once their forty-nine days were up, their stolen luck would automatically be returned to the target. Not only that, the user would experience around seven days of terrible luck.

Naturally, they could not use the Ruyi of Fortune during this period.

In conclusion, the Ruyi of Fortune was much more complex and troublesome to use than any other Phenomenon-class Strange Artifact Ye Qing had used until now. Without ample preparation, one could even say that the Ruyi of Fortune was no more useful than a rock on the ground.

In the right circumstances though, the Ruyi of Fortune's power could not be understated. It could be the trump card that turned what seemed like an impossible situation around.

Ye Qing was sure that the Ruyi of Fortune was an invaluable Strange Artifact not just to Dream Master, but also to the Eight Legions of Devas and Nagas.

Chapter 664: This Is A Visit, Not An Application

The final two items were two martial arts manuals. The first item was “Call of the Nether”, which was kindly donated by Su Xiu, and the second was “Dream Butterfly True Scripture”, which was donated by Dream Master.

“Call of the Nether” was a Grandmaster-stage martial art, and Ye Qing had witnessed its power with his own eyes. He could confidently say that it was outstanding.

As a matter of course, he had no plans of replacing the “Paranirmitavaśavartin Heavenly Demon Sutra” with “Call of the Nether”. After all, the martial art wasn’t inferior to “Call of the Nether” in the slightest be it in terms of power or potential. That said, there were some Magias and secret arts in “Call of the Nether” that were good enough to be borrowed and applied to his current repertoire of skills, so he would do just that in the coming days.

Even if “Call of the Nether” wasn’t up to his standards, he wasn’t going to throw it away willy-nilly. After all, not everyone was as lucky and fortunate as him.

There was nowhere in the world where a Grandmaster-stage martial art would be valued any less than a priceless treasure. If it was leaked to the jianghu, it could singlehandedly trigger a massacre that would be remembered for years to come, not to mention this was the exclusive martial art of the Nethercall Abode, one of the thirteen West Kunlun abodes. Its quality was above average be it in terms of power or potential.

Therefore, “Call of the Nether” was valuable as a trade item or a gift even if he wasn’t planning on using it.

Of course, the risk was that the people of West Kunlun might find out about this. There was a saying that went something like this: “One does not teach Dao to those who are inhuman, nor should they pass down the arts to a third pair of ears[1].” Knowledge was power, and all sects practiced exclusivity of knowledge to a certain degree. If West Kunlun found out that he was selling their exclusive martial art to others, they were going to hunt him down like a dog. The fact that they were a demonic sect meant that they would be that much more ruthless with their methods.

Whatever he chose to do with “Call of the Nether”, he would have to be very careful about it.

Ye Qing wasn’t interested in “Call of the Nether”, but Dream Master’s “Dream Butterfly True Scripture”? Now that was a different story.

Just like “Call of the Nether”, “Dream Butterfly True Scripture” was also a Grandmaster-stage martial art. He hadn’t just witnessed its power either, he had personally felt it with his own flesh and bones. Mysterious, anomalous, evil and potent, it could kill without a trace and possessed many useful secret arts and Magia. In terms of flexibility and unpredictability, it was the equal of his “Paranirmitavaśavartin Heavenly Demon Sutra”.

Most importantly, the “Dream Butterfly True Scripture” and the “Paranirmitavaśavartin Heavenly Demon Sutra” complemented each other well to a certain degree. The “Paranirmitavaśavartin Heavenly Demon Sutra” beguiled the heart, whereas the “Dream Butterfly True Scripture” bewitched the mind through dreams.

If he could somehow combine their techniques, then his “Paranirmitavaśavartin Heavenly Demon Sutra” would become even better than it already was, not to mention that some of the secret arts and Magia taught by the “Dream Butterfly True Scripture” were pretty interesting. They deserved to be learned or referenced to.

These six items were the most valuable loot he obtained out of this venture. Of course, they weren’t the only valuables he had gotten out of this venture, but the other items paled in comparison to the likes of “Call of the Nether”, “Dream Butterfly True Scripture”, Ruyi of Fortune and more.

Whatever the case, the kind donations of Eight Legions and Su Xiu’s group had made him positively wealthy.

“Such kind souls. I sure hope that our paths will cross again in the future!” Ye Qing chuckled to himself.

After his excitement had subsided, Ye Qing began plotting his future training and cultivation.

Right now, his loot was just that, loot. In a sense, they were meaningless until he had converted it all into his power.

Some time later, when Ye Qing was finally done charting his future, he got to his feet, stretched a little, and waved at Giggie. “Come on, Giggie. It’s time to go.”

The young man’s smile was as dazzling and unchanging as the rising sun.

He was nothing like who he used to be, and yet his heart had not changed one bit.

He would beg neither celestial nor the Buddha for power. One step at a time, he would one day claim the universe for himself.

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A mountain was just a mountain until a celestial bestowed it a name,

And a body of water was just a body of water until a dragon chose to turn it into its nest.

The Dragonrider Mountain was one such place. It was neither tall nor beautiful, but it was a famous place everyone in Bei Mo revered and held in high esteem. Why? Because the Dragonrider Mountain was graced by both celestials and dragons.

The “celestials” in question were of course the martial sect who took residence in the mountain and called themselves “Dragonrider Mountain”, and the “dragons” in questions were referring to the legends that Dragonrider Mountain was protected by a true dragon.

No one actually knew if the Dragonrider Mountain was guarded by a true dragon, but it was one hundred percent true that it was the headquarters of a martial sect.

Dragonrider Mountain wasn't named among the Two Temples of Buddha or the Three Temples of Dao. It wasn't named among the Five Profound Sects, the Nine Demonic Ways, or even the thirty six unorthodox sects. However, it was a reputable sect in Bei Mo who was famed for their dragonslaying arts.

Countless jianghu warriors, dao seekers and immortality dreamers had sought out Dragonrider Mountain in hopes of learning their signature dragonslaying arts, but as many people quickly found out, finding the mountain was easy, but scaling it was a completely different story.

This was natural. One did not simply forge a karmic bond with celestials, just as true arts did not come easily to anyone.

All outsiders who wished to enter the Dragonrider Mountain must climb the Dragonscaling Road, cross the Dragon Nurturing Gorge, and overcome the Dragon Subjugating Arena. Only then were they granted the right to join the Dragonrider Mountain.

Unfortunately, the road was harsh, not a single one of the obstacles was easy to overcome. In fact, only three to five people out of a hundred succeeded in joining the Dragonrider Mountain. Almost everyone else was either dead or driven mad, and only a handful managed to withdraw with their mind and body intact.

Despite this, countless fearless, reckless people still showed up to challenge the obstacles every year. They all wanted to fight to better their future.

It was February 2nd, the Longtaitou Festival. It was a good day for prayers, and a bad day for burial.

Every year at this time of the year, many people would gather at the foot of Dragonrider Mountain. Why? Because it was February 2nd, the day where the Dragon Head Rises (Longtaitou), and the day where the celestial gates of Dragonrider Mountain was open to all challengers.

It was also the day the Dragonrider Mountain offered sacrifices to their ancestor, and the day they accepted new disciples.

Anyone who managed to scale the Dragonscaling Road, cross the Dragon Nurturing Gorge, and overcome the Dragon Subjugating Arena would become a disciple of the Dragonrider Mountain.

“What's the occasion, brother? Why are these people just standing here and doing nothing?”

At the foot of the mountain, a travel-worn youngster looked at the throng of people gathered at a clearing curiously and called out to a random passerby.

“It's February second and the Longtaitou Festival today, brother. It is the day the Dragonrider Mountain opens their gates to pray to their ancestor and recruit new disciples. That should be enough to answer your question, no? Also, it was rumored that whoever became the champion this year would be accepted as the

mountain lord's inner disciple directly. Naturally, there is an even bigger crowd than usual."

The speaker was an arrogant-looking young man carrying a sword at his waist. He declared arrogantly after answering the youngster's question, "Too bad for them, I, Zhou Xianyang have arrived. They would not get that chance."

Many pairs of eyes immediately glanced at the young man's direction upon hearing his name. Loud murmurs broke out as various people shot him stunned, envious, or jealous looks.

Sensing their gaze and hearing their discussions, Zhou Xianyang grew even more pleased and proud of himself. He shot them a disdainful look and declared loudly, "I, Zhou Xianyang, will be the one to become the mountain lord's inner disciple!"

It was at this moment Zhou Xianyang finally recalled the travel-worn youngster he was speaking to and shot him an arrogant look. "Aren't you here to join the Dragonrider Mountain as well? How did you not know about this?"

"I see." The travel-worn youngster saluted him good-naturedly. "Apologies, but I'm not here to join them."

"If you're not here to join Dragonrider Mountain, then why are you here?" Zhou Xianyang asked in confusion.

"I'm here to pay them a visit," the youngster answered.

"Excuse me?" Zhou Xianyang only looked even more confused. "I don't understand."

"It's very simple."

The youngster stepped around Zhou Xianyang, looked at Dragonrider Mountain and clasped his hands in salute. Then, he declared in a loud, crisp voice that deafened the ears, stirred the clouds, and sent reverberations throughout the Dragonrider Mountain,

"Joyless Ye has come to pay Dragonrider Mountain a visit as promised."

Chapter 665: Talks

There was a great hall at the peak of Dragonrider Mountain. They called it the Dragonslaying Hall.

Right now, five people—four men and one woman—were seated inside the Dragonslaying Hall.

The leader—an old man with the face of a child, the hair of a crane, and a simple yet elegant attire that made him look like the model of a Taoist or celestial—was sitting at the head seat of the table. Everyone else was seated to his left and right.

He was the mountain lord of Dragonrider Mountain, and his monastic name was Yu Longzi (Son of Jade Dragon).

"Are the offerings ready, Hualong?" Yu Longzi asked.

"It is ready."

Hualong was a big man over two meters tall. His exposed skin was covered by a layer of golden scale armor that was shaped like fish scales[1], and there were big bulges on the left and right side of his forehead. His presence was vast and domineering, and he gave off a tremendous amount of pressure even though he was simply sitting at his seat.

He was the hallmaster of the Dragonmorph Hall, Yue Hualong.

Yu Longzi and looked at another person. “How is the preparation for the welcome ceremony, Chaoyu?”

A handsome man wearing a blue wide-sleeved robe rose to his feet and answered, “Everything is ready, my lord. You have nothing to worry about.”

The speaker’s name was Yun Chaoyu, and he was the hallmaster of the Flying Dragon Hall.

“Elder Yuan, Ningxin, the two of you shall assist as needed. Today is the day we pray to our ancestor and welcome a new year. I require your utmost attention to ensure that everything must go smoothly.” Yu Longzi looked at the remaining two people.

An old man whose eyes were tightly shut for some reason answered slowly, “Do not worry, my lord. With Hualong and Chaoyu at the helm, I don’t believe that anything can go wrong with this year’s ceremony.”

The old man’s name was Zhao Yuanrong. He was the hallmaster of the Hidden Dragon Hall.

“I’m glad to hear that.” Yu Longzi nodded before issuing a couple more instructions to the group.

It was at this moment Yu Longzi recalled something and looked at the white-robed woman who hadn’t said a word since the beginning. He asked, “Ningxin, how is Innocent[2]?”

“Her mind is severely damaged. It would be difficult to nurse her back to full health,” the white-robed woman replied, her voice as icy as her own aura.

The woman’s name was Yu Ningxin, and she was the hallmaster of the Dragon Subjugating Hall.

“Will she ever wake up?” Yu Longzi asked another question.

“I doubt it.” Yu Ningxin shook her head. “According to Han Shuang, her mind was injured because her attacker scoured her soul. Even if she awakens, she would be mentally disabled.”

“That monster! Not only did he steal our opportunity, he even murdered our disciples and injured our hallmaster such that she is beyond recovery! Truly despicable!”

Yue Hualong slammed his hand on the stone table and left behind a clear palm print. “Have we found anything about that man yet, Ningxin?”

Yu Ningxin shook her head. “Not yet.”

“Haven’t your disciple met that man face to face? How is it possible that we haven’t found anything if that’s true?” Yue Hualong pressed, “Your disciple isn’t hiding anything, isn’t she?”

“What do you mean by that, Hallmaster Yue? Are you suspecting my disciple of collusion?” Yu Ningxin raised an eyebrow, and the temperature within the hall instantly nosedived.

“Of course not! She’s just an insignificant disciple. She would never dare to do such a thing!” Yue Hualong replied meaningfully.

“So, you’re suspecting me.” Yu Ningxin narrowed her eyes coldly.

“What do you think?” Yue Hualong sneered. “Practically everyone who went to the Celestial Spring this time was dead. Even Innocent was injured past the point of recovery. However, your disciple is completely unharmed. Don’t you think this deserves looking into?”

“Everyone here knows you hate getting involved in trivial matters like this, but when we were discussing who we should assign to search for this man, you did a one-eighty and insisted on taking charge. Why is that?”

“Your disciple clearly saw that man’s face. If it was me in charge, his head would be sitting on this table already. However, you failed to come up with a single clue even though it’s been more than ten days. How are you going to explain this?”

“Are you done?” Yu Ningxin asked in an icy voice.

He wasn’t. Yue Hualong said harshly, “Everyone knows that you and Innocent do not see eye-to-eye with one another. It’s obvious that you colluded with an outsider to take out Innocent! That would explain why that man left your disciple and only your disciple alive, and why you haven’t found a damn thing even though it’s been nearly two weeks! The two of you were in cahoots from the beginning!”

“Hualong! You should be careful about what you say!” Yun Chaoyu spoke up with a frown.

“Hmph! Am I wrong? If I was, then how do you explain this bullshit?” Yue Hualong glared at Yu Ningxin. “What do you have to say for yourself, Yu Ningxin?”

“Are you done?” Yu Ningxin repeated as she slowly rose to her feet. While staring straight into Yue Hualong’s eyes, she said, “If you’re done, then you can die.”

As soon as she finished, the cold air in the hall abruptly condensed into an ice dragon. It descended right on top of Yue Hualong.

“Hahaha! See? I knew you were a traitor! You think a traitor like you can kill me?!”

Yue Hualong laughed as the golden scales on his right arm flashed brightly, and his right hand took the shape of a claw. Then, he reached out to grab the ice dragon with his bare hands.

“Enough!”

It was at this moment Yu Longzi intervened with a rebuke. His was high-pitched, loud, and resounding like that of a dragon.

A muffled groan escaped Yu Ningxin and Yue Hualong’s lips, and both the ice dragon and the draconic claw abruptly crumbled into nothing.

“Are you done fooling around?”

Yu Longzi stared at both hallmasters for a moment before declaring, “If you’re done, then sit.”

Yu Ningxin and Yue Hualong exchanged a glance with each other. Then, they took their seats without a word.

“We haven’t even found the man who killed our disciples and wounded our elder, and you’re going to start a civil war and tear our sect asunder? Are you two stupid?”

Yu Longzi rebuked both hallmasters mercilessly before looking at Hualong. “Hualong, I know you and Innocent share a deep bond with each other, and everyone here is saddened by what happened to her. However, it is folly to run amok over pure conjecture.”

“Innocent is no weakling. The fact that the murderer was able to defeat her with ease proved that his strength is not to be underestimated, and he is no one to be trifled with. It makes sense that Ningxin could not locate him quickly.”

“In any case, I will not hear this either of you again, or you will be punished by our laws. Do you understand?”

“Yes, my lord.”

Everyone in the hall answered respectfully.

“What do we do then?” Yue Hualong asked with an unhappy grunt.

“We keep searching, of course,” Yu Longzi declared without hesitation. “This murderer has intercepted our opportunity, killed our disciples, harmed our elder, stole our treasures and humiliated us. Their crimes are unforgivable.”

“One way or another, we will find him and imprison him at the bottom of the Dragonslaying Tower so he may suffer the eating of a million insects and the burn of our most poisonous fire!”

“As you command, my lord.” The four hallmasters rose to their feet and saluted him.

“Anyway, it looks like it’s time. Open the gates and prepare to welcome the challengers!” Yu Longzi declared seriously with a wave of his hand.

It was at this moment a loud noise ripped through the clouds and shook their mountain like a thunderclap. When it subsided a little, a crisp, young voice rang clearly in everyone’s ears:

“Joyless Ye has come to pay Dragonrider Mountain a visit as promised.”

“Who is that? How dare they!”

The hallmasters’ shock quickly morphed into rage. It was very common for a sect to receive visitors, but custom dictated that the visitor must first pay the host a visitation letter before anything. If the host accepted the request to visit, then they could enter the sect. If not, then they must take their leave. This was the rules of etiquette that had been practiced since time immemorial.

An announcement like this without a visitation letter usually only meant two things. Either the visitor was here to challenge their authority, or they were here to seek revenge. Obviously, neither scenario was welcomed considering the occasion.

“Joyless Ye? Has anyone heard of this man before?” Yu Longzi asked with a deep frown. He could tell from the announcer’s voice that they were quite powerful, but he had never heard of such a moniker before.

“We have not, much less earned the grudge of such a man,” Yun Chaoyu answered after a moment.

“In that case, why did he choose this time of all times to pay us a visit? What is he trying to do?” Yu Longzi pondered.

“Who cares? He’s entering the mountain without issuing us a visitation letter first. It is clear he thinks that our sect is beneath him, the audacity! I’ll head down and deal with that bastard right now!”

Yue Hualong was quite angry to say the least. He had been enduring a bellyful of fire since over a week ago, and now a punching bag was kindly delivering himself to their doorsteps. Of course he was going to make good use of him.

“Patience. It is clear that this man is quite strong. Let’s figure out his identity and background before we try anything,” Zhao Yuanrong suggested.

“Very well.” Yu Longzi nodded in agreement before lowering his palm. The clouds above the mountain churned, and a draconic roar filled heaven and earth.

Chapter 666: Youthful Arrogance

“What... what are you doing?”

At the foot of Dragonrider Mountain, Zhou Xianyang was staring at Ye Qing with a dumbfounded expression on his face. It wasn’t just him. The entire clearing had fallen silent before they knew it.

“Haven’t I told you already? I’m paying them a visit,” Ye Qing answered with a smile on his face.

Are you sure? Because it sure looks like you’re crashing the party to me! Zhou Xianyang’s mouth opened, but he couldn’t say anything for a time. Also, you know that your “visit” is almost certainly going to invite retaliation, right?

As if on cue, the clouds covering the peak of Dragonrider Mountain suddenly stirred violently. Then, a draconic roar erupted from the clouds and shook both heaven and earth, and a gargantuan dragon’s head peeked out of the clouds to look down on Ye Qing like he was an ant.

The pressure the gargantuan dragon’s head was giving off could only be described as overwhelming. Zhou Xianyang and everyone else around him shaking like leaves as the blood drained away from their face. Some of them were even shaking and feeling like they might black out at any moment.

Seeing this, Ye Qing took one small step forward. It was just a small, insignificant step, and yet the entire Dragonrider Mountain shook like an earthquake, and even the dragon’s head in the clouds wobbled a little.

The crowd immediately felt the oppressive pressure on their bodies disappearing like it never was.

“Who are you? Why have you come to our Dragonrider Mountain?”

A few breaths later, a loud, imposing voice boomed from the dragon’s head.

“My name is Joyless Ye. I have come to pay you all a visit as promised!” Ye Qing answered gently while still clasping his fists.

“Promise? Do you mean an appointment? We don’t remember having an appointment with you.” The dragon’s head replied in a doubtful voice.

“Hmm? Did Miss Han Shuang not bring my message to you? I remember telling her that I would personally pay Dragonrider Mountain a visit in a few days or so,” Ye Qing asked.

“Han Shuang? Who are you?” A hint of nervousness and killing intent entered the speaker’s voice.

“Looks like she really hasn’t given you my message. It’s fine though. It’s fine though. You’ll find out who I am very soon.”

Chuckling, Ye Qing gave the Dragon Nursing Nest hanging on his waist a gentle slap, and a tiny head immediately poked out of its opening. Giggie looked up at the dragon’s head in the sky with a hint of fear in its eyes.

“Don’t worry. I am here.” Ye Qing petted Giggie’s head before raising his voice again, “You may not recognize me, but surely you recognize it?”

“The lotus flower Stranger of Celestial Spring and the Dragon Nursing Nest?!” The voice grew angry and murderous. “It’s you!”

“It is I,” Ye Qing confirmed.

“You dare come to our Dragonrider Mountain?!” The dragon’s head roared so loud that the clouds scattered, and the sky darkened.

“Why wouldn’t I?” Ye Qing countered. Despite the waterfall of pressure crashing down from the heavens and right onto Ye Qing, he continued to speak as if it did not exist.

“We Dragonrider Mountain do not remember ever offending you in any way, so why had you intercepted our opportunity, killed our disciples, wounded our elder and stole our treasure?”

Maybe it was because Ye Qing was acting too calm, but the voice behind the dragon’s head too calmed down and fired off a series of questions.

To that, Ye Qing only had one thing to say. “Because it’s the right thing to do.”

“Because it’s the... right thing to do?” The dragon head seemed very surprised by this answer. “... Is that it?”

“That is all,” Ye Qing answered.

The dragon head fell silent. High atop the Dragonrider Mountain, Yu Longzi, Yue Hualong, Yun Chaoyu and the rest of the elders fell silent as well.

They had anticipated all kinds of answers when the question was asked. They had expected this Joyless Ye to respond with fame, self-interest, or power. Instead, he had given them an answer they never expected.

It was exceedingly common for people to fight over fame, kill over profit, and harm over power. They would’ve accepted these answers without a second thought. But “justice”?

To say that the answer felt unfamiliar and distant to them would be an understatement. They could not help but feel that this Joyless Ye was both childish and laughable.

Nearly all youngsters dreamed of living as they pleased and becoming a hero at least once in their life. Nearly all of them had entered the *jianghu* for that dream. Their hearts were pure because they were young, and they were heroic because of youthful arrogance.

However, the *jianghu* slowly but surely washed away their innocence, the violence shaved away their edges until they became completely bland, and promises of fame and glory corrupted their once innocent heart.

Before they knew it, they had devolved who could not help but overworry both the past and the future, carry out every action as if they were treading on thin ice, and take every step with profit and loss in mind.

Before they knew it, the youthful arrogance and heart of heroism that once occupied the center of their hearts were nowhere to be found. Always looking out for number one and only number one,

they had become like flies who swarmed around shit for good, or dogs who hung around humans for food.

They had become people who looked at those who said things like, “It’s the right thing to do,” and thought from the bottom of their heart that they were unfamiliar, childish, and laughable.

A few breaths later, as if to confirm that Ye Qing was actually being serious or not, the dragon’s head finally spoke up again, “You seriously killed our disciples and harmed our elder just for *that*?”

“Is that not enough?” Ye Qing countered.

“In that case, why have you come to our Dragonrider Mountain today?” the dragon’s head asked.

“Why would anyone pay another person or household a visit? To meet you all in person, of course,” Ye Qing answered.

“It is bad enough that you killed our disciples and harmed our elder, but you would taunt us at our doorsteps as well? Don’t you think that you have gone too far?” The dragon’s head asked.

“Not at all,” Ye Qing replied indifferently, “Those who humiliate others will always be humiliated by others; those who bully others will always be bullied by others[1].”

“Gasp!”

Everyone at the foot of the mountain gasped while chanting “Mother of heavens” inside their head like a mantra when they heard this. It was bad enough that this guy killed the Dragonrider Mountain’s disciples and stole their stuff, but now he was slapping their face left, right and center in broad daylight as well! People had gone to *war*

for less!

“Good. Very good. It looks like you truly don’t think much of us at all. We may be a small sect, but even we have our own dignity.”

The dragon’s head declared, “I don’t care who you are or what sect you belong to. One way or another, you will pay for what you have done to Dragonrider Mountain today!”

His voice was calm, but it was clear that it was the calm before the storm.

“Perfect. I have come to seek justice for my friend, and it would be terribly disappointing had you chosen to tuck your tail between your legs and run away.”

Ye Qing performed another salute with a daring grin on his face. “I look forward to your guidance.”

“Since you have come to visit us, surely you don’t expect to hold a dialogue at our doorsteps? We hereby invite you to climb our mountain and partake in our hospitality... if you dare.”

“Why not? If the mountain won’t come to me, then I shall go to the mountain myself.”

Ye Qing smirked and lowered his fists. Then, he began walking toward the mountain pass.

“You...”

It was at this moment Zhou Xianyang called out to Ye Qing. He didn’t know why he did it. Maybe it was because he was moved by Ye Qing’s audacious announcement at the very beginning; maybe it was because of that heroic, “It’s the right thing to do,” maybe it was because of his courage to “go to the mountain since the mountain refused to come to me”, or maybe it was all of the above. Whatever the case, he could not let Ye Qing walk to his death without at least trying to stop him.

In his opinion, Ye Qing could not possibly stand up to an entire sect alone no matter how powerful he was. That was the kind of stories people told after a few drinks in, and as much as he wanted it to be otherwise, they were just that: stories.

“Do you need me for something?”

Ye Qing paused in his steps and turned around to face Zhou Xianyang.

“You...”

When Zhou Xianyang met Ye Qing’s clear eyes, he suddenly found himself unable to say the words he meant to say. In the end, he could only offer two words, “Be careful...”

“Don’t worry.”

Ye Qing gave him a smile. “They’re just a bunch of clay chickens and pottery dogs[2]. What is there to be afraid of?”

With that, Ye Qing faced toward the mountain pass once more and stepped forward. The moment he crossed the threshold and planted his foot on the mountain path, lightning roared, the wind howled, and draconic roars deafened the ears. It was as if he had intruded into divine territory, and the gods were very, very angry at the offense.

Ye Qing paused for a brief moment and lifted his head to stare at the terrifying phenomena happening above his head.

.....

“My lord! He has trampled all over our dignity and *spat* on it! If you’ll just allow me to pluck that *bastard’s* head...”

Inside the Dragonslaying Hall, Yue Hualong uttered while wrathfully glaring at Ye Qing on the Dragonscaling Road.

Chapter 667: Shattering Dragonscaling In One Stomp

“Since this man dared to challenge us alone, he must be emboldened by something more than just pure audacity. Moreover, we don’t yet know what kind of strength or art he possesses. If you win, then it is the expected outcome. But if you lose, then our reputation would suffer.”

Yu Longzi answered slowly, "Rather than taking the fight to him, I would rather wait in leisure and probe our quarry's strength using the Dragonscaling Road, Dragon Nursing Gorge, and Dragon Subjugating Platform. If he does not survive our arrays, then perfect. If not, then we would find out how strong he is and deplete his strength. Why take an unnecessary risk if we can defeat our quarry without doing anything?"

"You're right, my lord. Once we captured him, you have all the time in the world to torture him, Hualong!" Zhao Yuanrong added.

Yue Hualong grunted and returned to his seat. "Fine. I will wait. We might as well find out what this bastard is capable of, but whatever the case, he must have a death wish to challenge our mountain alone!"

"If we are all in agreement, then let us see how he'll overcome the Dragonscaling Road," Yu Longzi ended the conversation before returning his gaze to Ye Qing.

.....

"So this is the Dragonscaling Road. Interesting!"

Ye Qing remarked with interest while allowing the lightning, thunder and gale of the Dragonscaling Road to strike him again and again. It was as if the deadly elements were no stronger than a harmless breeze.

He already knew from Innocent Miao's memories that there were three stages and arrays protecting Dragonrider Mountain. They were the Dragonscaling Road, the Dragon Nursing Gorge, and the Dragon Subjugating Platform.

Legend had it Trueman Dragonrider, founder of Dragonrider Mountain, slew countless true dragons in his life. After he founded the Dragonrider Mountain, he forged the Dragonscaling Road using their bones, built the Dragon Nursing Gorge using their blood, and created the Dragon Subjugating Platform using their soul. They were both the great arrays that protected the mountain and the obstacles Dragonrider Mountain used to test potential recruits and disciples.

The Dragonscaling Road was forged using the bone of true dragons, so it was imbued with the pressure and elements of a true dragon. The higher one climbed, the greater the pressure and elements would become. It was an obstacle that tested the tenacity and determination of a challenger.

The Dragon Nursing Gorge was built using the blood of true dragons. Although it was called a gorge, its actual depth was unknown. Countless dragons, serpents, and mixed breeds were raised within the gorge. Impossible to cross via flying, the only way a challenger might cross the Dragon Nursing Gorge was to walk across a single iron chain. It was an obstacle that tested a challenger's courage.

Finally, the Dragon Subjugating Platform was created using the souls of true dragons. Imbued with the power of true dragons, a challenger must enter the platform, overcome its trials, and subjugate the dragons. It was an obstacle that tested one's resolution.

Obviously, the three arrays were only partially activated during recruitment day. In fact, the power the potential recruits were subjected to was less than one percent of their true power.

When the three arrays were activated as lines of defense against the enemy though, they could destroy heaven and earth and repel even Sages.

Take the Dragonscaling Road for example. When it was activated to test potential recruits, the lightning, thunder and gale would not be present at all. They only needed to endure the pressure of true dragons.

At full power though, it would manifest its deadly elements to destroy the enemy's soul.

It was worth noting that the arrays really did possess the power to “destroy heaven and earth” and “repel even Sages”—when Trueman Dragonrider was still alive, that was. After his passing, Dragonrider Mountain declined day after day, and no successor were ever able to reach Trueman Dragonrider's heights again, much less surpass him. Over time, Dragonrider Mountain lost even the ability to maintain their three arrays, and the long neglect meant that the arrays were far, far weaker than what they used to be.

Otherwise, Ye Qing would not dare to show his face within a hundred kilometers of Dragonrider Mountain, much less challenge their arrays alone. He was daring, not stupid or suicidal.

“What a shame.”

Ye Qing sighed as he felt the terrible pressure pressing down on him, and endured the various elements striking his body.

He was sighing because Trueman Dragonrider's successors were disappointments who allowed such a magnificent array to decay to this extent.

He was also sighing because he had no choice but to deal the array a grievous blow and add to its misery.

Clasping his hands behind his back, Ye Qing opened his mouth and sucked in a deep breath. The wind, rain, lightning and thunder permeating the road all disappeared into his abdomen, and the Dragonscaling Road abruptly returned to calm.

The welcoming sun beams peeking out of the clouds almost seemed to add insult to injury.

“What the...”

On the mountain, Yu Longzi and the rest of the elders were speechless. Beneath the mountain, Zhou Xianyang and the crowd were speechless as well.

Ye Qing wasn't done though. Something even more shocking happened the next moment.

After he devoured the elements, Ye Qing's bones and muscles popped like a crow's cry, and his vigor swelled so much it touched the sky itself. As soon as he transformed into a demonic ape, he let out a roar so vigorous that both heaven and earth turned as red as blood.

Finally, he raised his foot and brought it down mightily.

It was a stomp that felt like it tipped the sky over and shook the nine provinces.

BOOM!!!

As soon as Ye Qing's right foot made contact with the ground, countless people's ears fell silent for a brief moment. It took them a moment to realize that their eardrums had burst. At the same time, people both on the mountain and below the mountain fell to the ground even though most of them were warriors. That was how hard the earth was shaking.

Crack crack crack...

The people could only watch in stunned horror as a crack appeared beneath Ye Qing's foot and stretched up toward the mountain like some sort of dragon. At the same time, they could hear a mournful wail from the Dragonscaling Road before the pressure still encompassing the area abruptly vanished like it was never there.

In one breath, Ye Qing had swallowed the wind and thunder, and in one stomp, he had shattered the Dragonscaling Road. With that done, Ye Qing shrank back to normal and calmly began his ascent up the Dragonrider Mountain.

“What... in the...”

Inside Dragonslaying Hall, Yu Longzi's face was a storm of anger and worry. He had no words to offer his retinue or himself.

Yue Hualong, Yun Chaoyu, Yu Ningxin and Zhao Yuanrong were exchanging heavy looks with each other as well.

If before they did not think much of Ye Qing's “challenge” at all, now they were forced to accept that he was a true threat.

Although the Dragonscaling Road's power was a pale, pale shadow of what it used to be, it still wasn't something anyone—not even a powerful warrior—could overcome as they pleased.

However, that youngster they thought were in over his head had consumed its skyful of wind and thunder in one breath, and shattered the Dragonscaling Road in one stomp.

Everyone in the Dragonslaying Hall possessed the power to perform the same feat, but to do it with the level of ease Ye Qing had displayed? They weren't conceited enough to believe that they could.

That was why even the loudest, most disdainful among them had fallen silent.

“My lord...”

Yun Chaoyu broke the silence and tried to say something, but Yu Longzi waved him off.

“There's still the Dragon Nursing Gorge and the Dragon Subjugating Platform. Let us keep watching for now.”

Without the draconic pressure and the deadly elements, the Dragonscaling Road was just a normal, perfectly harmless road. It took Ye Qing no effort to reach the main gate.

A group of Dragonrider Mountain disciples were standing in front of the main gate. Their faces were a mixture of emotion as they watched Ye Qing leisurely making his way toward them like he was taking a walk in the park.

There were anger and hatred, shock and fear. Regardless of what they thought, they automatically opened up a path for Ye Qing when he finally reached them.

Ye Qing ignored their complicated gazes and passed through the main gate. He continued forward without a single pause in his footsteps.

Despite its name, Dragonrider Mountain was made up of two mountains. The mountain at the front was where the outer disciples and servants resided, whereas the mountain at the back was where the inner disciples, hallmasters, and the mountain lord stayed. What this meant was that the mountain at the front was just the support. It was the one at the back that was the heart of Dragonrider Mountain.

Legend had it that Dragonrider Mountain didn't originally have two mountains. It was Trueman Dragonrider who, during the inception of his sect, split a single mountain into two with his palm. Henceforth, there was a front mountain and a back mountain in Dragonrider Mountain, and the deep gorge between the two mountains was what they called the Dragon Nursing Gorge.

Right now, Ye Qing was standing in front of the Dragon Nursing Gorge. As it was foretold, the gorge seemed bottomless from where he stood, and the cliffside looked as smooth as a mirror. Floating within the gorge was a sea of persistent dark red fog or water.

The dark red fog were the true dragon's blood. Back in the day, when Trueman Dragonrider was building the Dragon Nursing Gorge, he had dropped the blood of true dragons into this gorge until it formed a lake of blood. The steam rising from the lake of blood was what had permeated the gorge for decades.

On a related note, Trueman Dragonrider had used his immense power to lock down the space of this area after splitting the mountain in half. That was why it was impossible to cross the gorge via flying.

There were no bridges or paths that linked the two shores of the Dragon Nursing Gorge; none save for a singular, finger-width iron chain. The only way to cross the gorge was to walk over the chain.

Obviously, the chain was no mundane object. Forged from the Cold Metal of Supreme Yin, the chain was very, very cold. What this meant was that those who tried to walk over the chain must endure a constant stream of unbelievable cold that only got worse as time passed.

Chapter 668: Suppressing the Dragons and Serpents With One Palm

The iron chain alone was an impossible obstacle for many warriors. Only the most courageous would dare to attempt a crossing. That wasn't all the Dragon Nursing Gorge had to offer its challengers, however. The lake of blood beneath the Dragon Nursing Gorge was a nursing ground for all sorts of Strangers and creatures, and the blood of true dragons was famous for their miraculous powers. Naturally, the Strangers living beneath the Dragon Nursing Gorge were both powerful and dangerous.

Obviously, the Strangers weren't set against the challengers during the recruitment ceremony. Not a single soul would be able to pass the trial if they did. No, they only needed to deal with the cold chain.

Ye Qing had no doubt that he was an exception. The second he planted one foot on the chain, the Strangers residing below the Dragon Nursing Gorge would surely do everything in their power to

ensure his demise. If he could not maintain his footing and fell into the lake of blood, it would be quite the dangerous situation even for him.

As if that wasn't enough, he learned from Innocent Miao's memories that something far more terrible and unspeakable than the Strangers resided within the Dragon Nursing Gorge as well.

At first, Ye Qing was racking his brain for a way to swiftly and stunningly overcome this obstacle. After all, he was here to crash Dragonrider Mountain's party. How would it look if he crossed the Dragon Nursing Gorge the safe, "ordinary" way, especially since he devoured wind and thunder and shattered the Dragonscaling Road in one stomp a moment ago? It would ruin his efforts to crush their useless pride and make him look like a wimp, wouldn't it?

Luckily for him, a better idea entered his mind when he came to a stop in front of the chain. He looked down into the Dragon Nursing Gorge, held his arm out with his palm facing downward, and slowly flipped it around.

"What the hell is he doing?"

Inside the Dragonslaying Hall, everyone was confused by Ye Qing's inane action.

"He's not scared, is he?" Yun Chaoyu asked.

"It doesn't look like it." Yu Ningxin shook his head.

"A charlatan, that's what he is. The Dragon Nursing Gorge is much harder to deal with compared to the Dragonscaling Road. The moment he sets foot on the Chain of Supreme Yin is the moment he dies!" Yue Hualong uttered through gritted teeth.

Yu Longzi didn't say anything. He simply watched Ye Qing's movement with a growing sense of unease; one he was unable to explain or define.

"Always wanted to turn a river upside down with my bare hands..."

Back at the Dragon Nursing Gorge, Ye Qing muttered under his breath while slowly flipping his palm around. At first, it seemed like nothing was happening, but several breaths later, the sounds of waves splashing against the cliff sides began growing louder and louder. It wasn't long before the lake of blood beneath the gorge slowly climbed upward as if they were being pulled by some sort of invisible energy.

Inside the lake, countless Strangers of all shapes and sizes howled with indignation and fury as they struggled to break free. But try as they might, they were unable to break free from the lake's confines.

"How is that possible? I thought he's a body-tempering warrior?"

Inside the Dragonslaying Hall, everyone was standing on their feet before they knew it and staring at the scene with utter shock etched on their faces.

Isn't he a body-tempering warrior?

Since when could a body-tempering warrior manipulate qi remotely well enough to scoop up an entire body of water?

Even if he isn't a body-tempering warrior, our founder had created the Dragon Nursing Gorge using immense power, and the lake of blood is filled with the blood of true dragons. Not even a Grandmaster who's an expert in water manipulation might be able to manipulate the blood beneath the gorge, so how on earth was this body-tempering warrior doing it?

“What should we do, my lord?”

Eyes still shut, Zhao Yuanrong spoke up on behalf of his lord, “Calm. There is still the Blood Serpent. If he thinks he can overcome the Dragon Nursing Gorge so easily, he will be sorry.”

“That's right! The Blood Serpent spends most of its time hibernating at the bottom of the lake of blood. With the commotion he's causing, there's no way the Blood Serpent would not be alert to it. He's going to be in deep trouble very soon!” Yue Hualong echoed in agreement.

As they were sleeping, the lake of blood was on the same level as the Chain of Supreme Yin. It looked like a piece of red fabric that was stretched across the entire Dragon Nursing Gorge, and it looked rather impressive to say the least.

“Roar!”

Suddenly, a furious roar came from the bottom of the Dragon Nursing Gorge. It sounded both like the roar of a tiger or a dragon, dignified and full of violence. At the same time, a thick cloud of bloody energy gushed into the skies above.

All the Strangers inside the lake of blood suddenly stopped struggling all of a sudden. They were as quiet as mice and trembling like a leaf. The lake of blood was shaking as well.

The next moment, what looked like a gargantuan red boa shot out from the bottom and straight toward the lake of blood.

Its body was as thick as a century-old tree trunk that would take at least several people to envelop. It was over fifty meters long and covered in scarlet, shiny scales.

A boa was the general description, but in reality, the Blood Serpent had the head of a tiger, four legs growing out of its abdomen, a thin, long neck, a fish's body, and a snake's tail. According to “About Dragons”, snakes were one of the many creatures that fell under the category of creature with scales. A snake who lived a hundred years would evolve into a boa, and a boa had scales that functioned like armor, a body as thick as a century-old tree trunk, and movement speed that sounded like whipping wind.

A thousand-year-old boa would evolve into a serpent. A serpent was shaped like a dragon but without the horns. It had a head like a tiger, a thin, long neck, four legs, a fish's body, and a snake's tail. Its cry sounded like a tiger's, and it possessed the power to manipulate wind and water. It could also ride on clouds and command fog. A serpent who swam the waters for at least three thousand and six hundred years would evolve into a dragon.

Clearly, the giant “boa” in front of him was a serpent who had evolved from a boa.

“Roar!!!”

About halfway up the gorge, the Blood Serpent let out a mighty roar and emitted a blood red light like a red sun. Everyone above and below Dragonrider Mountain instantly felt their blood stirring restlessly inside their veins, and their mental defenses shaking under the outburst of power.

“I’ve been waiting for you.”

Ye Qing was unmoved, however. In fact, he was very glad to see the Blood Serpent.

He learned from Innocent Miao’s memory that a rare, exceedingly powerful serpent resided in the lake of blood at the bottom of the Dragon Nursing Gorge. The Blood Serpent was a serpent-type creature and a Phenomenon-class Stranger. Not only that, it was one of the rarer types of serpents out there. Born from blood, it fed on blood and was an expert in manipulating vigor. It could consume and control the blood essences of both humans and livestock remotely.

Legend had it that Trueman Dragonrider had personally captured this Blood Serpent and suppressed it at the bottom of the Dragon Nursing Gorge. It was to function as the sect’s guardian beast.

In most cases, a Blood Serpent was just a Phenomenon-class Stranger. For it to grow stronger, it must slaughter countless living beings and consume massive quantities of blood. If it wished to evolve into a dragon, then it required a body of blood equal to hundreds of thousands of living beings to “swim” on.

This was also why Blood Dragons only appeared during wartime, and why there was a saying that went something like this: “The Blood Dragon rises in times of chaos.”

Although it was extremely difficult for a Blood Serpent to evolve into a Blood Dragon, those who succeeded were exceedingly powerful. They could manipulate blood via sound and were supposedly unkillable.

Obviously, it wasn’t wartime right now. Although the state of the world couldn’t exactly be described as peaceful, the major nations weren’t officially at war, and the people weren’t wanting in basic necessities. Even considering the growing tension between Chu and Yan, there had not been any large-scale armed conflicts in recent years. However, this Blood Serpent had huge bulges growing out of its head, and both its power and presence were greater than your average Blood Serpent. This was clearly a Blood Serpent who was close to evolving into a Blood Dragon, and it was as strong as an ordinary Disaster-class Stranger.

Clearly, the Blood Serpent got this far all thanks to the Dragon Nursing Gorge.

Trueman Dragonrider was the one who created the Dragon Nursing Gorge, and he had used his immense power to set up a great fengshui array called the “Great Hidden Wind Dragon Nurturing Array” that nurtured dragons over the lake. That was why the Blood Serpent grew so much despite the lack of strife.

If Ye Qing wasn’t mistaken, the Blood Serpent only needed a few hundred more years to “swim the waters” and become a Blood Dragon. Not only that, a Blood Dragon who was born this way would not trigger the wrath of heavens because it wasn’t born out of death and slaughter. Not only that, it was favored by the heavens and possessed the power to protect one’s fate. As a Blood Dragon, it could have secured their future for at least a hundred years and return them to their former glory.

Ye Qing had to admit that Trueman Dragonrider was an amazing man. He did not blindly believe that Dragonrider Mountain would remain strong long after he was gone and took steps to secure his descendants' future.

It was too bad he had to ruin his effort. There were faces that needed to be slapped after all.

As he stared at the rising Blood Serpent, Ye Qing abruptly flipped his palm downward.

The silk-like lake of blood suddenly became so still it was like it had turned into ice, and Ye Qing whispered,

“You thought you held dominion over blood? Well, you thought wrong.”

The lake of blood came crashing down on top of the Blood Serpent. Powerful it might be, it could not possibly the weight of an entire lake.

The Blood Serpent let out a painful wail as its tough scales shattered like glass. As if it had lost consciousness, it fell all the way back to the bottom.

Ye Qing withdrew his palm, and the lake of blood slowly receded back to the bottom of the Dragon Nursing Gorge. Then, he clasped his hands behind his back and stared into the distance. From Yu Longzi and the elders' point of view, it almost felt like the young man could pierce through the veil and stare straight at them.

It was so silent inside the Dragonslaying Hall that one could hear a pin drop.

With that done, Ye Qing stepped onto the Chain of Supreme Yin and casually made his way across the Dragon Nursing Gorge as if he was walking on flat ground.

Chapter 669: Who Let The Dogs Out

“Roar!”

As soon as Ye Qing reached the other side, an angry roar came from the bottom of the Dragon Nursing Gorge. Then, while surrounded by bloody fog, the Blood Serpent rushed toward Ye Qing once more.

Ye Qing did not look at it, however. He clasped his hands behind his back and continued forward almost as if he hadn't heard or felt the Blood Serpent.

Right before the Blood Serpent would leave the gorge completely, it abruptly flew backward as if it was pulled by some sort of invisible hand. Such was its force that it smashed against the cliff side.

This triggered the Blood Serpent's innate violence and caused it to let out another roar. Again and again it tried to go after Ye Qing, and again and again it was pulled back to the Dragon Nursing Gorge.

Someone who was looking closely would notice that the Blood Serpent's limbs were restrained by four invisible chains. That was why the Blood Serpent was unable to stray too far from the Dragon Nursing Gorge.

The lake of true dragon blood and the Great Hidden Wind Dragon Nurturing Array could accelerate the growth of a Blood Serpent, and the Blood Serpent could protect Dragonrider Mountain from danger and ensure a glorious future, it wasn't all benefits and no drawbacks.

A Blood Serpent was naturally cruel and difficult to tame. If it evolved into a Blood Dragon, but there was no one in Dragonrider Mountain who was powerful enough to restrain it, then it was entirely possible for it to turn against its own people or even destroy them. That was why Trueman Dragonrider had set up a restriction that trapped the Blood Serpent within the Dragon Nursing Gorge and prevented it from straying too far.

That was why Ye Qing dared to do what he did and even turn his back on the Blood Serpent.

Meanwhile, the Blood Serpent grew increasingly violent and irritable as its prey grew farther and farther away from it. It began ramming the cliff sides and tearing and biting at the chains restraining its limbs. Its struggles were such that the entire Dragonrider Mountain were shaking a little.

Unfortunately for the Blood Serpent, Trueman Dragonrider had made the two mountains that were Dragonrider Mountain the roots of its restriction. Unless the Blood Serpent was strong enough to rip both mountains from their bases, it would never be able to break free.

A furious but futile struggle and a couple of defiant roars later, the Blood Serpent finally gave up and sank back into the lake of blood. Ye Qing smirked when he sensed this.

If he were to be honest, he had crossed the Dragon Nursing Gorge through a combination of luck and trickery.

The luck part came from him realizing that he could sense and even manipulate the lake of blood at the bottom of the Dragon Nursing Gorge upon arrival. Since the lake of blood was created from the blood of true dragons, his blood naturally desired to consume it. Add to the fact that he cultivated the “Blood Demon Sutra”, a blood manipulation martial art that was based on blood, and he found himself capable of manipulating the lake of blood as he pleased.

The trickery part came from him exploiting the fact that the Blood Serpent could not move too far away from the Dragon Nursing Gorge. First, he lifted the lake of blood away from the Dragon Nursing Gorge to rile up the Blood Serpent. Then, he struck it with the full weight of the lake and temporarily repelled it, buying him enough time to cross the Chain of Supreme Yin like nothing and stunning the masses as he intended. After that, well, there wasn’t an after that. The Blood Serpent could not leave the Dragon Nursing Gorge, so as soon as he was out of range, he had already won.

Could he have fought the Blood Serpent for real? Sure. He could even defeat it. But why would he waste his time and energy when he had already wowed the audience by lifting a lake of blood of true dragons and stunning their guardian beast with one hand? Besides, he felt like he would lose face if he engaged a beast in melee.

In fact, there was an easier, more brutal way of doing this. He could simply devour every last drop of the blood lake using his unique blood. That would most certainly scare the shit out of everyone involved.

He did not do it for several reasons though. First, he would make a sworn enemy out of Dragonrider Mountain if he did that. The lake of true dragon blood was the heart of the Dragon Nursing Gorge, so if he consumed it all, the array would more or less be ruined, and the Blood Serpent would never be able to transform into a Blood Dragon. He would have ruined the sect’s future and their shot at a resurgence, which was a far more severe transgression than him saving Giggie and intercepting their opportunity. There was a saying called, “Ruining someone’s livelihood is like killing their

parents”, but this was even worse. They would have thrown all caution to the wind and done everything in their power to end him where he stood.

Besides, he really was here to pay Dragonrider Mountain a visit. Sure, he was also going to give them the proverbial black eye for what they did to Giggie, but to ruin the Dragon Nursing Gorge would be like setting someone’s house on fire just because they bullied his son or something. That was entirely too much retribution. He wasn’t here to massacre their sect, nor did he possess the power to do so.

Second, he had no idea if Trueman Dragonrider left some sort of hidden trap within the Dragon Nursing Gorge. If he consumed the lake of blood willy-nilly, it was very possible he would trigger some sort of hidden restriction and make life difficult for himself. Worst case scenario, it would be some sort of death trap that could very well kill him where he stood.

This wasn’t just his paranoia talking either. Trueman Dragonrider was a true legend back then not just for his martial prowess, but also his impressive wealth of knowledge. Assuming that the legend was to be believed, he was a master in martial arts, martial theory, *fengshui*, numerology, arrays and restrictions. Not only did this man dared to leave an entire lake of true dragon blood out in the open, it had somehow remained safe and untouched for centuries. That was why Ye Qing did not believe for a second that the Blood Serpent was the lake’s final line of defense. There had to be deadlier traps and defenses lurking within the lake.

Tempted he might be, he had no choice but to abandon the idea.

After crossing the Dragon Nursing Gorge and entering the back mountain, Ye Qing was soon greeted by an impressive forest of pavilions, towers, houses and more. He could tell how much wealth and history Dragonrider Mountain possessed just by looking at their buildings.

Unfortunately, his view was quickly blocked by a bunch of angry Dragonrider Mountain disciples. Their reactions were understandable though. He was here to slap their faces. How could he possibly expect them to show him the hospitality of a host?

At first, Ye Qing ignored them and continued on his way. However, an arrogant-looking man with eyes that were brimming with fighting spirit stepped out of the crowd and barred his path. He had a pair of straight eyebrows and bright eyes, and he was wearing a golden robe.

“I am Jiang Youhu, a disciple of the Dragonmorph Hall. I would like to request a duel with you!”

“Senior brother Jiang!”

“Senior brother Jiang is Hallmaster Yue’s main disciple, and he is the twenty-seventh ranker on the Human Champions Ranking. He will surely defeat this arrogant fool[1]!”

“Yeah! Show him that Dragonrider Mountain is no one to be trifled with!”

“Dragonrider Mountain’s honor must remain intact. Kill him, Senior brother Yue!”

“Kill him!”

“Kill him!”

“Kill him!”

The crowd was well and truly riled up. The roars subsided a little only when Jiang Youhu motioned for them to quiet down. He stared at Ye Qing and began arrogantly, “You heard that? The honor of Dragonrider Mountain must remain intact. If you’re smart, you will fall on your knees and kowtow nine times in apology. Only then will you have a sliver of a chance of surviving this. Otherwise, this day next year will be the anniversary of your death.”

In response, Ye Qing smiled and dug his ears a little. “Man, it’s so noisy around here. Who let the dogs out?”

“The audacity!”

“How dare you insult us! Are you courting death?”

“Kill a soldier, but never humiliate them! You will die for this!”

The crowd grew even louder and angrier. They could not wait to rip Ye Qing into shreds.

Jiang Youhu’s expression turned ugly. “Don’t you think that your arrogance is a little too much, Joyless Ye?”

“Of course. If I wasn’t arrogant, then I wouldn’t come here in the first place, would I?” Ye Qing admitted. “Anyway, I thought you were planning to duel me? Come on then. If you defeat me, then you can act just as arrogant as I am!”

“If you want to die that badly, then sure!” Bloodthirst quickly covered Jiang Youhu’s eyes completely. “Remember this: your killer is Jiang Youhu of the Dragonmorph Hall!”

Before he even finished talking, Jiang Youhu was already jumping into the air and extending his right hand when he was about ten meters away from Ye Qing’s head. At the same time, the image of a sky dragon scattered the wind and clouds with a stretch of the limbs before extending a claw toward Ye Qing.

“Sky Dragon Stretches Claw”

Even before the claw landed, a draconic roar deafened the ears and tore a gash in the air. It was quite the aggressive opening.

Chapter 670: I’ll Take All of You At Once

“Incredible!”

“As expected of senior brother Jiang! Kill him!”

It was said that one does not need to be an expert to recognize an expert’s mastery. The crowd cheered loudly as they waited with bated breath for Jiang Youhu to crush Joyless Ye like an ant.

Unfortunately, their cheers quickly ceased, and their eyes widened into saucers as if someone had caught them by their neck. In response to Jiang Youhu’s attack, Ye Qing simply flicked his fingers

at the claw. Just like that, what looked like an attack that could sunder heaven and earth crumbled into pieces as if it was made of paper.

Not only that, Ye Qing's finger also struck Jiang Youhu's fingers and twisted them in all sorts of undesirable fashions. His sleeve exploding into shreds, Jiang Youhu let out a muffled grunt as he was sent flying all the way back into a stele. The stele shattered under the impact, and Jiang Youhu hit the ground with a dull thud. His breathing was shallow, and he was barely conscious.

For a time, the scene was so silent that one could hear a pin drop. No one could believe that the powerful Jiang Youhu had failed to take even one hit from the intruder.

Not only that, Joyless Ye should be tired after overcoming the Dragonscaling Road and the Dragon Nursing Gorge in a row, so how was he still so powerful?

In fact, a lot of people knew that Jiang Youhu was trying to take advantage of Joyless Ye's fatigue and get lucky. But not only did his gambit fail, Joyless Ye had mopped the floor with his face!

"Ah, shit. Is there anyone else who wants to duel me? That one was way too weak," Ye Qing called out after sending Jiang Youhu flying with a flick of the finger. His expression was dripping with disdain and he shook his finger a little.

"You...!"

"He's going too far! Too far!"

"The arrogance! The arrogance!"

For a time, everyone was glaring at Ye Qing with furious, bloodshot eyes.

"Chi Lie of Flying Dragon Hall requests a duel!"

A man with fiery red hair declared while leaping into the air. Having witnessed Jiang Youhu's terrible defeat from the start until the end, Chi Lie recognized just how strong Ye Qing was and did not foolishly get close to the man like his fellow disciple. Instead, he opted to defeat him from range.

Hovering in the sky like a divine dragon, he summoned what looked like rain clouds and started a rain. However, the rain droplets were crimson in color and boiling hot. The sky was also covered by a crimson fog that, unlike an ordinary rain mist, was suffocatingly hot and difficult to breathe in. As if that wasn't enough, inhaling the steam would make the victim feel like their body was burning on the inside and suffocate them even more.

"Summon Rain"

Ye Qing looked up while covering his forehead with one hand. He seemed to be searching for Chi Lie, but couldn't quite open his eyes because of the scalding steam[1]. A long and futile search later, when it looked like the crimson steam and rain was about to envelop Ye Qing, he abruptly reached forward half an inch using the palm he was covering his forehead with and made a clenching motion.

BOOM!

It was as if he was holding a thunderclap between his fingers. The air within tens of meters of him abruptly exploded like a gigantic, invisible hand had squeezed it until it burst, and the spectators fell backward feeling dizzy and painful in the ears. The weaker ones straight up bled from all orifices and blacked out just like that.

In the sky, Chi Lie was also bleeding from all orifices. His energies were in shambles, and he seemed unconscious as he was falling straight toward the ground.

Luckily for him, someone caught him before he would hit the ground. Otherwise, he might become the first Dragonrider Mountain disciple ever to die from a fall.

“Anyone else?”

Ye Qing lowered his arm and scanned his surroundings. “Seriously, can you send someone tougher for me to chew on? I don’t ask for much. Anyone who can take two strikes from me without keeling over is good enough.”

The disciples were more furious than ever before as a matter before. However, having witnessed Jiang Youhu and Chi Lie’s downfall with their own eyes, no one was stupid enough to step up. Jiang Youhu and Chi Lie were among the best of the disciples. If even they had been defeated so cleanly and decisively, then how could they possibly do better?

“Is there no one at all? I had no idea that the people of Dragonrider Mountain are such cowards!”

Ye Qing sighed. “Fine, I guess there’s no one here who’s strong enough to fight me one on one. In that case, why don’t you attack me together? I’m serious! I’ll take all of you at once! Dare you accept my challenge?”

Ye Qing’s smile was warm and gentle, and his words were anything but. The combination was, however, very, very insulting. For a moment, everyone felt their cheeks burning up as if they had been slapped by an invisible hand.

“The arrogance!”

“The audacity!”

“Do you really think there is no one in Dragonrider Mountain who can stand up to you?!”

Finally, someone lost control of their emotions and raced toward Ye Qing, and when there was one, there were two, three, and many, many more people.

“Wang Xiangrui of Dragonrider Mountain requests a fight!”

“Zhao Shuxiang of Dragonrider Mountain requests a fight!”

“Lei Shutong of Dragonrider Mountain requests a fight!”

“Sunzi Feng of Dragonrider Mountain requests a fight!”

The disciples came crashing down on top of Ye Qing like a downpour, and their forces like an avalanche. Unfortunately, any passion they felt during their charge quickly morphed into terror and disbelief when Ye Qing blew them away like bowling pins.

Despite facing a downpour of people and an avalanche of forces, Ye Qing had calmly and collectively raised his foot about one meter above the ground. Then, he brought his foot down in one mighty stomp.

It was said that thunder existed in the space between a man's foot and the ground. At first, there was no sound at all. Then, a wind began blowing from the point of impact. It caught everyone who was charging toward Ye Qing in its invisible embrace before throwing them in every direction. Even those farther behind were bowled over by their own sect mates.

It was like an unstoppable scythe had swept across an entire field of wheat. When all was said and done, not a single person was standing, and no one could stand up again.

"Is that all Dragonrider Mountain has to offer?"

Standing at the center, Ye Qing looked down at the fallen disciples and smirked.

"You...!"

Not everyone had lost their fighting spirit, but try as they might, but they could not lift even a finger. Even speaking became a difficult task that demanded their full concentration. It was because Ye Qing's counterattack had not only toppled them, but also scattered their internal forces and energies. Naturally, they could not muster the strength to pilot their body.

"You can't even speak? I wanted to call you impotent, but I think even that insult is an understatement."

Ye Qing shook his head regretfully. "No wonder they say that every generation of Dragonrider Mountain is worse than the last. I cannot help but feel sad on behalf of Trueman Dragonrider."

It was at this moment a voice spoke up, "You should stop while you're ahead, young man. Whatever happens to Dragonrider Mountain, an outsider has no right to remark about our private matters."

The voice had appeared out of seemingly nowhere. It sounded completely emotionless and indifferent.

"Oh my god, the tortoise is finally squeaking. And here I thought you're going to hide in your shells until the end of time!"

Ye Qing chuckled. "So, have you gotten my measure yet? You know what, I'm going to save you the trouble and just tell you myself. I'm a wandering nobody with no sect or master to call to his name. All I have is a couple of good friends and a jar of dirty wine. There you go!"

"Your arrogance is truly unbecoming, young man." Now the voice sounded a little angry, though it was impossible to say if it was because they could not stand Ye Qing's insult, or they were embarrassed because Ye Qing had figured out their ploy.

"As you say, I'm a young man. What am I if not arrogant and egotistical?" Ye Qing laughed. "Anyway, why are you still hiding in your hole and doing nothing? I

literally just told you I'm a nobody that you can take out with no consequences whatsoever. If even this isn't enough to make you face me personally, then what will?"

When he waited for a moment and received no response, Ye Qing continued, "I see that you are as patient as a tortoise as well, senior. You should have named yourself Divine Tortoise Mountain instead of Dragonrider Mountain."

"You don't know the immensity of heaven and earth, arrogant child. I was going to give you a chance to turn back and change your ways on account of your youth, but it seems that nothing will get through your thick skull besides reality. In that case, I shall fulfill your desire."

The voice said indifferently, "However, I am the host, and you the guest. I see no reason to debase myself over your demands. Come challenge the Dragon Subjugating Platform. If you succeed, then you will see me naturally. If you dare, of course."

"Hah! I stomped your Dragonscaling Road to the ground and toyed with your Dragon Nursing Gorge with one hand a while ago. What makes you think I'm going to be intimidated by your Dragon Subjugating Platform?" Ye Qing declared with a level of confidence and command that would accept no rebuttal.

"You are bold if nothing else. Come then. Let's see if your mouth can remain this sharp once you have set foot on the platform." The voice declared, "Come forth!"

Ye Qing smirked, clasped his hands behind his back, and continued onward.