

The God-level Snatching System Chapter 5 - Star Cloud Stone

C5 Star Cloud Stone

The Guu and Lo families stood as the two preeminent lineages within Heavenly Fire City.

A millennium prior, Guu Zhantian, the Guu family's illustrious First Ancestor, surpassed all martial cultivators in the Azure Nether Country in might. His prowess was such that even the most formidable royal family of the Azure Nether Country held him in awe.

Yet, following Guu Zhantian's demise, the Guu family's power gradually eroded. Now, they were relegated to the confines of the modest Heavenly Fire City, contending with the City Lord's Mansion for influence.

At present, the vast square before the City Lord's Mansion was teeming with spectators. At the square's heart stood a majestic platform, hosting a gathering of dignitaries: three elders from the Guu family, senior officials from the City Lord's Mansion, and emissaries from the Three Sects.

"Guu Tianyi, I'm surprised you have the audacity to show up for the Heavenly Fire Competition," Guu Linyuan remarked, approaching Guu Tianyi amidst a throng of onlookers, his sneer palpable.

"You've been practicing a forbidden Devil Technique, siphoning Martial Souls in secret. Just recently, within the Star Cloud Sect, you even attempted to seize Ningjing's Martial Soul. Ningjing is your betrothed! To act so malevolently toward your own fiancée, what gives you the right to compete in the Heavenly Fire Competition? What makes you think you're worthy of joining the Three Sects?"

Guu Linyuan's fervent accusation drew the crowd's gaze.

Whispers of Guu Tianyi's conduct within the Star Cloud Sect had already rippled through Heavenly Fire City days before, igniting widespread scrutiny.

"I can't believe the renowned Guu family would produce such a disgrace!"

"He was once my role model. Now, I'm utterly embarrassed!"

"Guu Tianyi, get out! We won't stand for someone like you in the Heavenly Fire Competition!"

"Get out!"

Amidst the jeers, Guu Tianyi remained stoic. Guu Linger, standing behind him, timidly tugged at his sleeve and whispered, "Brother Tianyi, let's just leave. I can manage the Cold Aura with Fire Fruits each month, and I hate to see you mistreated."

A tender look crossed Guu Tianyi's face as he reassured her, "Linger, don't worry. I'll silence them all soon enough."

Before Guu Linger could respond, a commanding figure rose from the platform, his voice cutting through the murmurs:

"Silence! The Heavenly Fire Competition is about to commence. Contestants, please ascend the stage."

His tone, though not thunderous, carried an authoritative weight that hushed the crowd.

A momentary stillness fell over the arena.

Guu Tianyi cast a lingering glance at the man. In his forties, with a balanced build and an aura of innate authority, he wore a purple-gold robe with distinction.

He was Lo Feng, the Lo family patriarch and the City Lord of Heavenly Fire City.

Soon after, a cadre of twenty to thirty individuals took their places on the stage. These young contenders, ages fifteen to eighteen, represented the cream of Heavenly Fire City's youth. They stood poised and full of vigor.

In this assembly, Guu Tianyi's Level Five Martial Cultivator status did not stand out, with the crowd's focus drawn to several prodigies.

"Guu Moyu, the Second Elder's direct disciple, had a lackluster showing at last year's Heavenly Fire Competition. He even lost to Guu Tianyi in the third round, missing his shot at the Three Sects. But just a month ago, I heard he's reached Martial Cultivator Level Eight, and his Martial Soul has evolved!"

"Lo Chenfeng is the son of the City Lord. Just last year, at the tender age of fifteen, he had already reached Level Six as a Martial Cultivator. I'm eager to see how he'll do this year."

"Quick, look over there—that's Lau Yue, one of the three great beauties of Heavenly Fire City! Not even sixteen, and she's already attained Level Seven as a Martial Cultivator. To marry her would be to die without regrets."

At that moment, a middle-aged man dressed in a seven-star Taoist robe rose from his seat on the elevated platform and announced, "My name is Hsing Wenruo, an elder of the Star Cloud Sect. You all represent the cream of the crop among Heavenly Fire City's

youth. In this year's Heavenly Fire Competition, those who excel will earn a chance to join one of the Three Sects."

"Let's skip the formalities. It's time to test yourselves with the Star Cloud Stone!"

With a gentle tap on his Cosmos Bag, Hsing Wenruo summoned a three-zhang-tall boulder onto the stage. The boulder was unremarkable in appearance—rough and pitted—but it was pure white and set with nine black Falling Stars on its face.

"You're all familiar with the Star Cloud Stone, I presume. Just channel a strand of Genuine Qi into it, and it will reveal your cultivation level and innate talent. Let's get started."

"I'll lead the way!" declared Guu Moyu, stepping forward with a look of self-assurance.

As he infused the Star Cloud Stone with Genuine Qi, it glowed brilliantly. The once pure white stone began to darken from the base, the blackness creeping upward until the entire stone was shrouded in shadow, revealing six Falling Stars.

"Martial Cultivator Level Nine with Six-star talent. Impressive," Hsing Wenruo remarked, nodding approvingly with a smile.

The envoys from the Three Sects were visibly pleased with Guu Moyu's performance, nodding to each other in quiet approval.

"Thank you, Elder," Guu Moyu said, rejoining his peers.

"Next in line!"

Guu Moyu had set a high bar, and one by one, the other candidates took their turns. Yet none shone quite as brightly as he had.

That is, until Lau Yue took the stage.

Her mere presence elicited cheers from the crowd. Her beauty alone was a sight to behold, regardless of her performance.

As Lau Yue channeled her Genuine Qi into the Star Cloud Stone, the Falling Stars illuminated sequentially.

One, two, three... six.

Guu Moyu's brow furrowed with worry.

Seven.

A Seven-star talent!

"You possess the strength of a Martial Cultivator Level Eight with a Seven-star talent!"

At just sixteen, Lau Yue's potential was clearly set to surpass that of Guu Moyu.

"Unless something unexpected occurs, the victor of the Heavenly Fire Competition is likely to be either Guu Moyu or Lau Yue. Lau Yue, should you choose to join the Spirit Void Sect, I would be honored to take you on as my Direct Disciple," declared Elder Faang Yunhe from the platform, sparking a wave of gasps among the onlookers.

"Elder Faang is an Outer Sect Elder of the Spirit Void Sect. Lau Yue's prospects are about to skyrocket!"

"Heavenly Fire City hasn't seen a Seven-star talent in many years. Lau Yue's opportunity is a stroke of destiny."

Hsing Wenruo scoffed slightly, "Mr. Faang, the Heavenly Fire Competition consists of three rounds, and we're only at the first. Isn't it a bit premature to be taking on disciples?"

"Do you really believe anyone left could surpass a Seven-star talent?" Faang Yunhe retorted with a cold, confident smile.

"Elder Faang, don't be so full of yourself."

On the martial arts platform, a striking young man in white stepped onto the Star Cloud Stone. His name was Lo Chenfeng.

Instantly, the Star Cloud Stone began to tremble subtly as darkness spread across it, and Falling Stars illuminated one by one.

One, two, six, seven.

Faang Yunhe's complexion soured.

But the spectacle wasn't over. When the eighth Falling Star ignited, the crowd gasped in astonishment.

"A Martial Cultivator of Level Eight with an Eight-star talent!"

"He's a once-in-a-century prodigy!"

The envoys seated on the high platform were visibly stunned. An Eight-star Martial Cultivator was a rarity indeed!

Yet, due to Faang Yunhe's presence, they refrained from immediately taking on disciples.

While everyone else was astounded, Lo Chenfeng remained unfazed. He descended from the Star Cloud Stone, his gaze tranquil and undisturbed.

Then, Guu Linyuan ascended the stone. A Level Six Martial Cultivator with a Four-star talent, and only fifteen at that. Despite his youth, his performance was deemed average.

But then, Faang Yunhe spoke up: "Guu Linyuan, your cultivation is impressive for your age. Would you consider becoming my disciple?"

Faang Yunhe's offer left many scratching their heads.

Taking Lau Yue as a disciple made sense, given her exceptional Seven-star talent. But Guu Linyuan was merely a privileged young master with a Four-star talent, his status achieved with the aid of numerous Medicine Pills.

"I would be honored!" Guu Linyuan responded eagerly, bowing with his fists clasped.

Hsing Wenruo cast a dismissive glance at him and then addressed the crowd, "Is there anyone else who hasn't tried the Star Cloud Stone? Don't let this chance slip by."

"It looks like that's everyone," Elder Tang Yun of the Purple Polar Sect remarked nonchalantly, his eyes fixed on Lo Chenfeng. He was intent on securing him.

Just then, from within the throng at the platform, a figure made a deliberate approach toward the Star Cloud Stone.

"Guu Tianyi?" The murmurs began to circulate among the onlookers, surprised to see him step forward.

Regardless of Guu Tianyi's tarnished reputation and the rumors of his lost Martial Soul, rendering him effectively useless, his boldness to disrupt the Heavenly Fire Competition was unexpected. Even as the Guu family's Young Patriarch, he would have to face the consequences.

"Guu Tianyi, after your recent expulsion from the Star Cloud Sect, how dare you show your face at the Heavenly Fire Competition? The Three Sects value integrity, and no matter how clever your tricks, you won't be accepted into their ranks!" Guu Linyuan taunted with a sneer.

"Exactly. Without a Martial Soul, you're just wasting everyone's time by being here," added Guu Moyu, his voice dripping with scorn.

He had not forgotten his defeat to Guu Tianyi in last year's competition and still harbored resentment.

Lau Yue shot him a contemptuous look and said sarcastically, "I truly pity Ningjing. She gave you her heart, and you repay her with betrayal. Are you hoping to rejoin the Three Sects just to make trouble for her again?"

"As for the Spirit Void Sect, we stand by our principles of purity and righteousness. We categorically refuse to accept someone like him!" declared Faang Yunhe with finality.

Guu Tianyi narrowed his eyes at Faang Yunhe's words, which were nothing short of venomous. The ongoing strife among the Star Cloud Sect, Purple Polar Sect, and Spirit Void Sect was well-known, and with that statement, Faang Yunhe had craftily positioned himself above the fray on moral grounds. It was clear that neither of the other two sects would sully their reputations on his account.

Sure enough, Elder Tang Yun of the Purple Polar Sect cleared his throat and declared, "The Purple Polar Sect has built a sterling reputation over many years. I decline his request for affiliation."

"Guu Tianyi, fetch the Star Cloud Stone!" Hsing Wenruo gestured to Guu Tianyi with a flick of his hand, a hint of impatience in his tone.

"Hsing Wenruo, this man is the vermin who has inflicted harm upon our Star Cloud Sect's disciples. Allowing him to ascend to the Star Cloud Stone is to defile it!" Faang Yunhe protested.

"And what concern is the squabble of the Outer Sect's Seven Peaks to my Hundred Herb Garden? Moreover, why should it matter to you if I permit Guu Tianyi to use the Star Cloud Stone?" retorted Hsing Wenruo.

"Guu Tianyi, why the hesitation?"

With a nod, Guu Tianyi stepped forward onto the Star Cloud Stone. Channeling his Genuine Qi into the artifact, a subtle tremor ran through the entire martial arts platform.