

## M. Slaying 143

Chapter 143: A Validation of Identities

Quite challenging?

Upon hearing Chu Liang's words, black question marks popped up over Luo Yao and Pushan's heads.

Technically, there was nothing wrong with that statement. The fifth-realm Fiend possessed formidable cultivation and mastered a variety of techniques. They had just experienced a brief and perilous fight with the Fiend.

But it felt as though these words shouldn't have been said by Chu Liang... Especially after he had effortlessly killed that Fiend with a single strike.

When they first met, Luo Yao and Pushan never considered Chu Liang as an equal. They had treated Chu Liang with courtesy. However, being gifted cultivators, they naturally exuded a sense of pride in their behavior.

Regardless of the circumstances, Chu Liang was a third-realm cultivator. While he might have been impressive for his age, he was not on the same level as them.

Even at the start of the battle, they instinctively overlooked Chu Liang's presence. They didn't expect any significant help from this disciple of the Mount Shu Sect.

When their attempts proved futile in preventing the Fiend from escaping, they didn't hold Chu Liang responsible. After all, Chu Liang was a cultivator at the Spiritual Awareness Realm. What more could they have expected from him?

The ease with which they overlooked Chu Liang was matched only by the astonishment that swept over them when he suddenly launched his attack.

Unlike Yun Chaoxian, who perceived Chu Liang as a formidable expert due to him meeting Chu Liang when he was brandishing the Crimson Executioner, Luo Yao and Pushan viewed Chu Liang as a weakling. Now, their impression of Chu Liang has completely changed, and the impact was significant.

Chu Liang's casual remark, "Quite challenging," uttered after executing a world-shaking sword seal that ultimately vanquished the Fiend, left them utterly bewildered. What could be considered not challenging then? Scaring your opponent to death with a sneeze?

Chu Liang's intervention, coupled with his nonchalant comment, rendered even the usually talkative Pushan momentarily speechless.

However, Chu Liang genuinely meant every word he said.

Initially, Chu Liang had planned to stay out of the fight. Even though the Crimson Executioner had become scorching hot due to its vibrations, there was no reward for killing the villain. Chu Liang was willing to let Luo Yao and Pushan take all the credit as long as the Fiend was killed.

Given their cultivation level and proficiency in divine skills, combined with a carefully planned surprise attack, they were indeed capable of eliminating a fifth-realm cultivator. However, the Fiend, armed with diverse techniques, managed to escape.

Chu Liang had no choice but to intervene.

This was why he had found it challenging.

The hesitation to take action stemmed from the fact that the other two had already identified his cultivation level earlier. Unleashing such powerful force now could only imply that he either concealed his cultivation level before or possessed a precious treasure of considerable power!

Even though Luo Yao and Pushan didn't appear to have a penchant for coveting other people's treasures, Chu Liang couldn't afford to be careless. In a world full of uncertainties, even unintentional information leaks could lead to unnecessary risks.

However, now that he had already taken action, it was simply pointless dwelling on these thoughts.

The task of searching the corpse would be of a higher priority.

Chu Liang lit a bone torch and soared towards the spot where the Fiend had met his end. He then started searching based on faint recollections.

Nevertheless, due to the Fiend having exploded entirely, even if his belongings remained intact amidst the expansive fog, they would be scattered and lost.

Despite having circled the vicinity persistently, he only discovered a black jade slip, likely containing records of a cultivation legacy.

"Haaa..."

"Chu Liang sighed deeply once again, truly feeling a sense of loss.

A fifth-realm cultivator who has been part of the Dark King Sect for many years must be a moving treasure chest. It was simply a shame that all his belongings were lost.

While he intended to continue searching, he heard the sound of the wind coming from behind.

"Careful!" Pushan warned.

Chu Liang had turned back with his sword brandished. However, he wasn't holding the Crimson Executioner this time. It was the Dustless Sword.

Sure enough, as Chu Liang busied himself searching for scattered items, a Sickly Ghost appeared behind him, shamelessly taking advantage of his distraction and attempting a sneak attack.

With the Dustless Sword in hand, he delivered a slashing strike to the skeletal form of the Sickly Ghost, compelling it backward with a resonant clang!

"Ah!" The skeletal form of the Sickly Ghost bore a deep gash from the strike, emitting a furious roar as it leaped away.

When the Dustless Sword failed to cut through the Sickly Ghost's corporeal body, Chu Liang was astonished by its resilience. Of course, the shortcomings shouldn't be entirely attributed to the Dustless Sword.

With a flick of his wrist, he instantly drew a Dual Talismanic Sword of Ice and Fire. With a graceful left-hand gesture and a forceful right-hand push, the Dustless Sword soared through the air, its impact echoing with a resounding boom—

Finally, the Sickly Ghost was shattered into pieces by that strike.

The bones lay scattered across the ground, but fortunately, the force of this strike was not as powerful as the previous one, allowing Chu Liang to easily collect them.

Once again, the two behind him found the situation peculiar.

While the strike of the Dustless Sword was powerful, it was much weaker than the attack that killed the Fiend.

Luo Yao remained composed, but Pushan, unable to contain his curiosity, inquired, "Young Hero Chu, why does the power of your sword qi fluctuate so much?"

"Hehe." Chu Liang smiled and responded, "I am just someone who detest evil. Whenever I encounter a wrongdoer, I can't control my anger, which will result in an explosive surge of power."

"I see." Pushan nodded with a smile. "I understand."

He hadn't understood the reason why the power of Chu Liang's sword qi would fluctuate so much.

Instead, it was a recognition that when someone resorts to telling an obvious lie to avoid answering questions, there would be no point in pursuing the matter further.

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In the gathering of individuals who were waiting on the spot.

The Southern-Route Guider glanced at the bone torch in his hand. The second torch had already burned partially. Logically speaking, all three teams that left for the hunt should have returned.

But now, only two teams have returned.

Just as he was contemplating this, a figure emerged from the fog. It was a Soul Subjugator with a "Fifty-Eighth" sign hanging from his waist, stumbling back as if he had exhausted his foundational qi.

"What happened?" The Southern-Route Guider abruptly stood up and asked.

"Honorable Guider!" Fifty-Eighth bowed and said, "The Fiend... the Fiend was killed!"

"What?" The Southern-Route Guider frowned.

"We were hunting Sickie Ghosts when suddenly, a figure dressed in a black robe like ours emerged from the fog. That person possessed an extremely high cultivation level. With the activation of a sword seal, he severely injured the Fiend! In the midst of this panic, we scattered, and it took me a long time to find my way back here!" Fifty-Eighth exclaimed.

"Did you come back by yourself?" the Southern-Route Guider asked sternly.

"Yes!" Fifty-Eighth replied.

"You're lying!" The Southern-Route Guider exclaimed. "This fog is filled with lost souls. Even with the bone torch, if you're alone, they would still cling to you! How could you possibly come back on your own?"

"I dare not lie!" Fifty-Eighth trembled, quickly explaining, "Indeed, there were numerous lingering spirits in the fog, but I managed to resist all the temptations of the lingering spirits through my sincere dedication and loyalty to the sect and persisted in walking back!"

The Southern-Route Guider fell into contemplation.

In fact, he wasn't entirely convinced that Fifty-Eighth was lying just now. It was just a test.

After all, with the entire team annihilated, it was suspicious that Fifty-Eighth had been the only one to make it back alive. If they were truly hiding something, a bit of intimidation could have made them reveal their true intentions.

However, Fifty-Eighth's immediate and loud defense quelled Southern-Route Guider's suspicions. The Southern-Route Guider was aware that this area marked just the start of the Valley of Bewildering Fog, where the lost souls were not particularly powerful, making it possible for a cultivator at the Golden Core Realm to walk back.

While the Southern-Route Guider was contemplating, another figure emerged from the fog. It was the Sixtieth this time.

"Honorable Guider!" Sixtieth first glanced at Fifty-Eighth and said, "Someone attacked the Fiend in the fog. I became separated from the others. After much struggle, I managed to find my way back to you..."

"Hmm?" the Southern-Route Guider stared at Sixtieth and asked, "Did you see the Fiend die?"

"Yes... I was slow to escape. The last thing I saw was the Fiend being slain by a sword seal attack. After that, I turned and fled," answered Sixtieth.

The Southern-Route Guider's gaze lingered between Fifty-Eighth and Sixtieth. The testimonies of these two seemed consistent with each other.

However, the possibility of collusion couldn't be ruled out.

Just as he pondered, shouts and cries echoed from inside the fog, preceding the appearance of a figure. The person wore a tag with the number "Fifty-Ninth."

"Honorable Guider..." Fifty-Ninth exclaimed. Their voice trembled with a hint of sobbing as they collapsed to the ground. "I almost thought I wouldn't see you again! A person in black suddenly appeared earlier and killed the Fiend. We all scattered and fled! Along the way, the fog was filled with lingering spirits, and hordes of Sickly Ghosts. The journey back was incredibly challenging!"

Another one...

The Southern-Route Guider scrutinized the three of them, and his suspicions were entirely dispelled. While one person could be lying and two people might conspire to lie, the possibility of three people colluding and lying seemed unlikely.

It seemed more likely that someone had ambushed and killed the Fiend in the fog.

But who could this person be? And for what purpose?

The Southern-Route Guider furrowed his brows for a long time.

Nevertheless, the journey had to continue. After some contemplation, the Southern-Route Guider ordered, "The three of you! Return to the team for now. We'll resume the journey. We will go hunting again later. For now, join another Fiend's team."

The three Soul Subjugators who had "luckily survived" and were still in shock retreated to the back of the group.

Luo Yao and Pushan looked at Chu Liang with a touch of admiration in their eyes.

It was Chu Liang who had advised them moments ago, suggesting that if the three of them went back together and claimed only the Fiend with the highest cultivation level had perished, it would be suspicious.

It would be better to go back individually.

In this manner, the testimony was effectively divided into three parts. The statements of the three individuals could mutually support each other, creating a more convincing narrative that could be reiterated to gain trust.

This mutual corroboration also effectively dispelled the Southern-Route Guider's doubts about them, allowing them to continue participating in the subsequent actions.

A validation of each other's identity!

And his portrayal of depleted foundational qi and overall weakness was not a performance as he had indeed ventured back alone through the dense fog!