

The Heavens 31

Chapter 31: Break Through!

Shang Xia's consciousness returned to the blood red tablet and he tried to look for anything that could help him.

It was a shame the blood red tablet remained completely silent this time. It didn't seem like it planned to give him any hints now.

Was the flash of inspiration he was supposed to receive contained in the water droplet that contained both yin and yang qi?!

Shang Xia understood the laws of fusion and harmony from the water droplet, and he opened his dantian. However, it was just a medium that allowed him to succeed. It wasn't exactly a flash of inspiration...

The flash of inspiration happened when he understood the laws of fusion. However, it was so advanced that his dantian failed to contain the heaven and earth qi pouring into him. As such, his understanding deepened once again. From fusion of the two different extremes, it became a fundamental transformation of the qi!

Separating the two different types of qi after they integrated with each other was a different concept from transformation. After transformation, Shang Xia could control it however he liked!

Clearly understanding the theory behind it, Shang Xia had no idea where to start.

All of a sudden, an image that was wildly popular in his previous life appeared in his mind. It was a symbol that signified the combination of yin and yang!

That was right... It was the yin yang diagram!

Taking another droplet of water from under his feet, Shang Xia examined the qi contained within.

With a thought, he controlled the qi within. Swirling around, they started to form the image of yin and yang. The instant they did, the two extreme qi within it separated.

Roaring with laughter, Shang Xia tossed the water droplet into his mouth.

With all the qi in his dantian rotating the same way as the qi in the water droplet, a giant Yin Yang Diagram was formed.

The amount of qi in his dantian no longer mattered. As long as he willed it, balance would be found once he rotated the qi around.

Both types of qi tempered his dantian slowly, making it incomparably solid.

From a certain perspective, Shang Xia's control over energy became part of his own self-created secret art!

He might have barely entered the Martial Extremity Realm, but his understanding of cultivation was far from a beginner!

“The qi in my dantian shouldn’t be called two extreme qis... Instead, it should be called the Yin Yang Essence Qi!” Shang Xia exclaimed in his heart. Even though he had only started to control it, he found many amazing ways to use it.

Cultivators who walked the same path as him in the past were a dime a dozen. Now that he comprehended the way to control the power of yin and yang, the number of cultivators who could be compared to him decreased dramatically. In fact, they were extremely rare!

Shang Xia understood that the concept behind equilibrium and the control of extreme heat and frost was far from comparable to the concept of yin and yang.

Cultivators who entered the Martial Extremity Realm would improve their control over fire qi before turning to cultivate icy qi. The process would result in a disequilibrium, causing a disaster.

Even with suitable secret arts to control the different qi, they wouldn’t be able to solve the root cause of the problem!

At any point of time, cultivators at the Martial Extremity Realm had a chance of losing control over their inner qi! Of course, there were also some geniuses who discovered that cultivating both types of qi at once could greatly reduce the danger.

Doing so came at a massive cost. There was no way ordinary cultivators would be able to afford the resources required to do so.

As such, cultivators would raise their cultivation with whatever resources they had, even if they could only increase their cultivation of one type of qi. After all, one couldn’t possibly stop cultivating if they failed to locate any resources...

Those might be problems for the average cultivator, but they were nonissues for Shang Xia!

The Yin Yang Essence Qi in his body surpassed the fundamental ‘balance’ cultivators needed. It even exceeded the ‘harmony’ level that came next!

He could transform the Yin Yang Essence Qi any way he wanted! Regardless of the time and place, Shang Xia could maintain the equilibrium in his dantian no matter what type of resources he consumed!

That also solved the problem of him losing control of his qi at the very root!

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With the new ability to control his Yin Yang Essence Qi, he could turn it into anything he wanted! As long as he wanted to, he could use both fire and ice qi.

After forming his dantian, Shang Xia understood that the Yin Yang Dao he comprehended was what Zhang Haogu told him before!

With the ability to turn his Yin Yang Essence Qi to any type of qi he wanted, he could hide his strength and avoid being suppressed by most cultivators!

Closing his eyes, he started to examine himself closely. When he finally awakened, he discovered that the celestial bodies in the skies had long since disappeared.

The part of the lake that was covered in lava before returning to its original tranquil state. The ice on the other side disappeared without him realizing.

The raging Origin Tide was nowhere to be seen, and the dense heaven and earth qi that came with the tide started to dissipate.

A sense of disappointment filled Shang Xia's heart. After all, it wasn't every day he got to experience a phenomenon like that!

As the Origin Tide was caused by the clash between the heaven and earth qi contained in both worlds, one could only imagine the impact it caused. It happened extremely suddenly, but it receded just as quickly.

From the moment Shang Xia entered the Crossroad of Purification to the time he opened his eyes, the time that passed was barely enough for a stick of incense to burn.

Wondering if the Origin Tide left anything special under the lake, Shang Xia quickly gave up on any foolish thoughts to venture deeper into the water body.

Everything that happened seemed like a blur. In fact, Shang Xia would have thought that everything was an illusion if he hadn't broken through to the Martial Extremity Realm!

Taking a step forward, ripples formed around him.

When he finally reached the riverbank, a soft chirp reminded him of the Mutated Rain Swallow's existence. He turned around in shock.

The moment he decided to risk it all and enter the Origin Tide, he was prepared to let the bird die.

Even though a Mutated Rain Swallow was worth a lot, Shang Xia didn't hesitate to choose to give it up the moment the Origin Tide erupted. Never in his wildest imaginations did he expect the bird to survive.

"Ha! I earned big this time!" Raising the cage slightly, a triumphant smile appeared on his face.

Walking slowly across the plains, he headed back towards the forest. Even though the Origin Tide caused a lot of damage to its surroundings, the lush greenery in the forest seemed to possess an astounding amount of vitality.

The moment he stepped into the forest, he noticed a figure emerging from the cluster of trees nearby.

The moment she saw Shang Xia, the knives in her hands slashed at his throat.

"What is your problem?!" Shang Xia yelled in irritation.

Releasing the Delicate Jade River Sword, the soft blade wrapped around both knives as Shang Xia flicked his wrist angrily. The knives clattered against each other as they fell to the ground.

Chapter 32: Who Did You Cheat With This Time?

Shang Xia disarmed her without much difficulty. Looking at Shang Xia incredulously, she couldn't believe what just happened. Even Shang Xia found it incredible.

Just several minutes ago, he would be thanking the gods if he could avoid her attack. Blocking it head-on was something he couldn't imagine! Now, disarming her took a mere flick of his wrist.

He had no idea how much his strength increased after breaking through. Even though he estimated it to be a lot, he wouldn't have met her attack directly if not for the fact that he was irritated by her actions.

It was at that moment Shang Xia realized that his breakthrough didn't just give him a slight increase in strength. It made him far stronger than he thought!

The sudden increase in his strength also shocked the female cultivator. Even though she didn't use her martial intent previously, her knife skills were nothing to scoff at! Her foundations were strong, and she was ready to break through to the Martial Intent Realm at any moment.

Even if she ran into a cultivator who was at the Martial Intent Realm, she would be able to hold her own for quite some time! Unfortunately, Shang Xia's actions shattered her pride.

Shang Xia couldn't be bothered with her reaction as he turned to look at the knives on the ground. Seeing the chips on the edges, the corners of his lips twitched violently.

The pair of low-grade weapons was almost as valuable as his Delicate Jade River Sword! However, they looked slightly damaged after their prolonged cat and mouse game.

"When I find a suitable secret art for cultivators in the Martial Extremity Realm, I have to look for a sword cultivation manual too..." Shang Xia whispered to himself.

The reason he damaged the twin knives was because he failed to control his strength. With an appropriate sword manual, he wouldn't have to use brute force to deal with everything!

When Shang Xia was still cursing himself for destroying her weapons, the female cultivator flew into a fit of rage. She used her martial intent to release a ray of green light towards Shang Xia.

Despite his first instinct to dodge the strike, an absurd idea flashed through his mind. He raised his Delicate River Jade Sword and drew a perfect circle in the air before him.

A wave of Yin Yang Essence Qi emerged from his body, forming the yin yang diagram. When the green light clashed into it, it quickly lost power. The yin yang diagram didn't stop there. As it started to rotate, the green light was completely nullified by the time it made the fifth rotation.

He might have created the move on the spot, but the results were more than satisfactory. Despite using up a lot of Yin Yang Essence Qi, it was the first time he unleashed the move. After refining his control over it, it would experience an all round increase in capabilities.

Moreover, that was merely an experiment conducted by Shang Xia. After nullifying the female cultivator's martial intent, his guesses were further solidified. It seemed as though his Yin Yang Essence Qi was very different from the qi used by other cultivators.

Immersing himself in joy, he didn't notice the change in her eyes. With complicated emotions filling her heart, she turned around to run. How could Shang Xia let her off so easily? She hunted him down the moment he left the convoy, and she left him in such a desperate state. If not for his sudden breakthrough, she would have killed him!

Without hesitation, he ran after her despite knowing that catching up would prove to be difficult.

Regardless, he just wanted her to experience the feeling of being hunted down. He wanted to disgust her by doing what she did to him.

A streak of silver light appeared not too long after he started the chase.

“Oh right, I forgot about this damn bird!” Shang Xia yelled. Despite his cries, he didn't use his Delicate River Jade Sword. Instead, the Ivory Fan snapped open in his hand.

The Lightning Bird was too damn fast. His eyes couldn't keep up with the little creature, and it was completely impossible for him to hit it with the sword considering the fact that he wasn't a sword cultivator in the first place.

He swung the fan to release a strange energy wave that disrupted the Lightning Bird's flight. Wobbling in the air, it was no longer able to zoom around as it pleased.

When it finally flew out of the area affected by Shang Xia's strange energy wave, it realized that it was no longer as fast as before.

Watching it glide unsteadily through the air, another ridiculous idea appeared in Shang Xia's mind. He wanted to capture it alive!

However, a yell came from the side as the female cultivator stood between him and the Lightning Bird. It seemed as though she had chosen to work with the little creature.

“This bitch... I'll change my surname if I don't teach her a good lesson!” Shang Xia gnashed his teeth and growled. Of course, being angry was one thing. He didn't lose his rationality. He didn't dare to be careless when facing someone at her level even if she had already lost her weapons.

Her graceful movement couldn't conceal her deadliness as all her strikes went for his vital organs.

The bird wasn't dumb either. It could tell what the female cultivator's intentions were, and it started to accelerate in mid air. Releasing a high-pitched cry, it shot towards Shang Xia.

As Shang Xia's attention was placed on the female cultivator, he had no choice but to throw himself to the side when the silver streak flew towards him.

Adjusting its trajectory mid flight, the bird flew under his arms.

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Shit!

Realizing what the bird was after, Shang Xia didn't have time to react as the Lightning Bird tore through the cage hanging on his waist.

With the help of the female cultivator, the Lightning Bird managed to save its lover!

“Chirp chirp!”

Shang Xia's expression changed when the Mutated Rain Swallow was freed. However, he didn't have the luxury to care about that as the female cultivator increased the intensity of her attacks. She attacked him without a care for her life and managed to force him back slightly.

Even though Shang Xia's Yin Yang Essence Qi possessed many miraculous qualities, he hadn't cultivated any techniques or martial arts related to it! He could only use his Chaos Essence Palm and Lightning Palm to repel her strikes.

With his strength greatly restricted, he could only watch on as the Mutated Rain Swallow flew into the air.

“Chirp chirp!”

The Lightning Bird landed on one of the trees around them. Flapping its wings happily, it seemed to be expressing its excitement.

“Hehe, If I can’t obtain the Mutated Rain Swallow, you can’t either.” The female cultivator sneered. It was clear that her actions were all for the sake of annoying Shang Xia.

As the corners of his lips arched upwards, Shang Xia didn’t bother replying. Lightning formed on his palm as he unleashed his Chaos Essence Lightning Palm.

Caught off guard, she retreated instantly. To her surprise, a shocking change happened the moment he released the bolt of lightning. The Mutated Rain Swallow that was freed tried to leave his side, but found it difficult to do so.

Streams of qi emerged from his body and they swirled around him in a strange motion, and they sapped the energy of those trapped within. The Mutated Rain Swallow was no exception as it flapped its wings desperately.

At the same time, the bolt of lightning that scared off the female cultivator seemed to interest the bird. It flew back into Shang Xia’s hand and it narrowed its eyes. A look of enjoyment soon formed on its face. Enjoying the tingling sensation running through its body, it ignored the cries of the Lightning Bird on the tree nearby.

The female cultivator looked at the Mutated Rain Swallow before turning to the Lightning Bird. “This... This... This... You’re committing adultery!”

“What are you even talking about?!” Shang Xia raised his Ivory Fan and threw it at her. Yelling in terror, she leaped to the side.

Too bad for her, the distance between them was too small for her to escape the strike completely. She only managed to avoid letting it hit her vital organs.

Cutting through her robes, a long wound formed on the side of her belly. The pain caused her snowy white breasts to shake violently.

Shang Xia was stunned for a solid second as he stared directly at them.

“You... You hooligan!” She pointed at Shang Xia and screamed with rage, but her actions only caused the tear in her clothes to grow larger. She retracted her hand instantly.

When that went down, the Lightning Bird whose lover was ‘shamelessly’ stolen by Shang Xia cried out in rage and shot towards Shang Xia.

In its fit of rage, it failed to notice that the female cultivator wasn’t in a state to give it assistance.

Shoving the Mutated Rain Swallow into his sleeves, Shang Xia drew his Delicate Jade River Sword and drew a perfect circle in mid air.

Changing directions mid air, the Lightning Bird managed to avoid the edge of the blade. However, it crashed straight into the chaotic flow of energy around it. Struggling desperately to keep itself in flight, several feathers dropped from its body.

Chapter 33: Lightning Ball

“What a pity...” Shang Xia sighed when he saw the Lightning Bird flying away.

He used a huge amount of Yin Yang Essence Qi to restrict the Lightning Bird earlier. If it went just a bit better, he would be able to capture it alive!

Too bad for him, it sacrificed a full tail of feathers to break through the binding the Yin Yang Essence Qi had on it.

Because of Shang Xia’s sudden increase in strength, the Lightning Bird no longer dared to mess with him. It turned into a streak of light and escaped.

The female cultivator turned tail and ran, seeing as her only other ally was gone.

The two of them were barely able to suppress Shang Xia earlier. She knew that there was no way she could take him on alone.

Shang Xia didn’t hesitate to chase after the female cultivator. He knew that he wouldn’t be able to catch up, but all he wanted to do was to mess with her. He didn’t want to give her a chance to catch her breath.

He didn’t forget to retrieve the two damaged knives on the ground before giving chase.

This time, luck stood on his side.

When they left the cover of the trees, Shang Xia was greeted with the sight of a massive valley. It was dozens of feet deep and almost ten feet wide! If they ran into the valley earlier, he wouldn’t have been able to escape!

The appearance of the valley definitely had something to do with the Origin Tide. Shang Xia heaved a sigh of relief, but a trace of delight soon formed in his heart.

Regardless of how the valley appeared, it managed to stop the female cultivator from running away.

Shang Xia casually strode towards her and she asked, “Who are you?!”

Opening his fan, Shang Xia waved it slowly and sneered, “Are the cultivators of the Azure Spiritual World as rude as you? Don’t you know that you’re supposed to introduce yourself before asking for someone else’s name?”

Anger flashed in her eyes, but she quickly suppressed it. “I’m from the Wind Swallow Race of the Azure Spiritual World. My name is Yan Ming!”

Shang Xia snapped the fan shut and he turned serious. “You can call me Shang Xia. I’m from the Tongyou City of the Azure Origin World.”

“Shang Xia... Shang Xia...” Repeating his name a few times, she seemed to be carving the name deep into her memories. A sneer formed on her face and she continued, “I’ll remember your name. I’ll be back!”

Raising an eyebrow in surprise, he soon realized that something was wrong. The Delicate Jade River Sword shot towards in an attempt to stop her. He was a little too late as she leaped into the valley behind.

Rushing over to the edge, Shang Xia saw her robes fluttering in mid air and she resembled a giant butterfly as she drifted away.

“She managed to run away!” Shang Xia growled. He wanted to give chase, but that didn't seem doable. He could only roar behind her, “You're exposing yourself in public! Shameless woman!”

Shang Xia's gaze drifted up her long white legs and caught a faint glance at the jade white...

When she heard what she said, her flight became unsteady and she nearly crashed into the cliff face beside her.

When she arrived on the other side, she shot a glare towards Shang Xia.

Roaring with laughter, he turned back and disappeared into the darkness.

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Since his path out of the forest was obstructed by the massive valley, he used slightly more than a day to look for another route.

When he finally returned to the place where he separated from the convoy, he noticed that the battlefield had already been cleaned up. There were no traces of battle, and no one from the institution was anywhere to be seen.

He had no idea how his fellow disciples were doing, and his thoughts drifted to the outer disciples who followed them into the battlefield between two worlds. He knew that the chances of them being alive were slim to none.

“Chirp, chirp!” Shang Xia felt his arms sinking slightly as the Mutated Rain Swallow perched on his forearm.

“Alright, alright!” Shang Xia sighed helplessly as he gathered a ball of lightning in his arms.

It flew directly towards the ball of lightning and streaks of lightning danced about its body.

As its feathers stood erect, the Mutated Rain Swallow closed its eyes slowly and gave off a sense of enjoyment.

However, a dissatisfied chirp soon left the bird's lips after a few moments.

“That's enough! Can't you learn to take things slow? Even that damn lightning chicken can't give you as much lightning as you want, right?” Shang Xia snapped in frustration.

Crying out softly, the Mutated Rain Swallow returned to his shoulders.

Several cries came from behind and Shang Xia turned around slowly. On a tree quite some distance away, the Lightning Bird glared at Shang Xia, seemingly trying to intimidate the man.

This time, the Mutated Rain Swallow responded on his behalf.

Flapping its wings, the Mutated Rain Swallow chirped several times, and the two winged creatures seemed to be getting into a heated argument.

Luckily for Shang Xia, the Lightning Bird looked rather calm. It was the Mutated Rain Swallow's reaction that shocked him. The little bird on his shoulder fluttered about and Shang Xia seemed to barely understand it.

You useless bird! He's able to nourish me with lightning every day. What about you, you weak little lightning bird? Can your lightning last for so long?! You have so many other lovers... Think about how rarely I get to enjoy your lightning!

The Lightning Bird couldn't back down after that! Not a single member of the male species could endure such humiliation! So what if it was just a bird?!

However, Shang Xia could hear the helplessness in the Lightning Bird's chirps.

The only creature getting more and more agitated was the Mutated Rain Swallow on his shoulder. It was leaping about animatedly, and Shang Xia felt his ears stinging from the high-pitched cries. From the looks of it, the story started a while back.

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Even though Shang Xia knew how precious the Mutated Rain Swallow was, the cage had been broken by the Lightning Bird. Shang Xia could only use his hands to capture the Mutated Lightning Swallow.

It solved his problem immediately, but it wasn't a long term solution. After all, he might slip up unconsciously.

When Shang Xia was searching for a way around the valley, he noticed the presence of the Lightning Bird once again. It wasn't willing to give up on its lover!

An idea formed in his mind. He wanted to repair the broken cage to prevent the Mutated Rain Swallow from escaping. However, he didn't have the appropriate materials to do so. If he used ordinary materials, the bird would slice through them in an instant!

In a fit of desperation, he released a surge of lightning, quelling the Mutated Rain Swallow's movements.

He found a way to solve the problem temporarily, but he still made a mistake when he sat down to take a short break.

Due to the extreme stress he had been under ever since leaving the convoy, his brain had been operating in overdrive. Being hunted down and risking it all to break through in the Origin Tide wasn't an easy thing to do! No matter how determined and resilient he was, his body was sleep deprived. Despite knowing that the battlefield between two worlds was filled with dangers, he fell asleep the moment he closed his eyes.

When he awakened, he heard some tweeting nearby.

Jumping to his feet instantly, he saw two birds lying pitifully beside him. One of them was the Mutated Rain Swallow and from the looks of it, it suffered quite a bit in a battle against the other creature.

A wave of fear swept through Shang Xia's mind. He didn't hear anything in his deep slumber, and if any one carried out a sneak attack...

Huh?

Shang Xia noticed an important problem all of a sudden.

The Mutated Rain Swallow was lying on the ground nearby. Logically speaking, it could have escaped when he fell asleep.

Did the Mutated Rain Swallow protect him while he was asleep?

His suspicions were quickly confirmed when the Mutated Rain Swallow soared into the air in excitement before returning to his side.

"Chirp, chirp!"

It praised itself and looked at Shang Xia expectantly.

Opening his palm cautiously, a ball of lightning started to gather.

The Mutated Lightning Swallow released a happy cry before leaping into the ball of lightning.

Chapter 34: A Bird In Hand Triumphs Over All

Shang Xia understood everything after thinking about the events that transpired.

The Lightning Bird was definitely the creature that led the flock of Mutated Rain Swallows. Moreover, it seemed to possess a large harem of female Mutated Rain Swallows.

From the looks of things, it was able to lead the flock because of the power of lightning it harnessed.

As Mutated Rain Swallows yearned for the power of lightning, the Lightning Bird was able to attract many partners.

Everything changed for the Mutated Rain Swallow when Shang Xia captured it. It not only managed to feel the familiar power of lightning around him, it also enjoyed the benefits of bathing in the ball of lightning he summoned.

When it was part of the Lightning Bird's harem, it was only able to receive the wonderful lightning it desired occasionally due to the Lightning Bird's limited stamina.

After interacting with Shang Xia for a short period of time, the Mutated Rain Swallow enjoyed several times more joy compared to when it followed the Lightning Bird.

Comparing the two, the Lightning Bird was barely able to fulfill its desires once every few months. Shang Xia allowed it to bask in lightning several times a day... There was no need to compare the two!

It was faced with a clear choice!

Forsaking its original partner, the Mutated Rain Swallow remained loyally by Shang Xia's side. Everything was so that it could enjoy the power of lightning whenever it wanted!

That was also why the Mutated Rain Swallow refused to run away when he was asleep. It even protected him in his slumber!

The time he spent with it while returning to the place the convoy once got raided confirmed his guesses even further!

Even without any restrictions around it, the bird seemed to be hell bent on following Shang Xia.

What Shang Xia couldn't understand was the Lightning Bird's actions. It had been following Shang Xia around since he awakened, and Shang Xia couldn't help but think that it was still trying to find a chance to retrieve its lover.

He cursed the bird several times in his heart.

Why the hell are you so adamant about this Mutated Rain Swallow? Don't you have the rest of your harem to care about?!

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He didn't wait long to realize that he was wrong. The interaction between the two birds was minimal. Even when the Mutated Rain Swallow chirped naggily at it, the Lightning Bird would reply curtly. No male in the right mind would do that if they were trying to regain the love of their woman...

Even though it had been following Shang Xia, the Lightning Bird made no attempts to attack. Eventually, Shang Xia gave up and allowed it to follow slowly behind him.

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Looking at the Lightning Bird in the distance, a weird look formed in Shang Xia's eyes.

"Does it have something to ask of me?" Shang Xia wondered. After all, its actions were too suspicious.

"Chirp chirp!"

Too bad Shang Xia didn't speak bird. He turned to the Mutated Rain Swallow for an explanation, and the little bird hovered in the air before him. The feathers on its body puffed up before returning to normal, and it repeated several more times.

Thinking about it for a second, he guessed, "Does it want to bathe in my lightning?"

The Mutated Rain Swallow cried out several times and it turned a little despondent.

The Lightning Bird snapped urgently, and it seemed to be blaming the Mutated Rain Swallow for meddling in its business.

As the Mutated Rain Swallow turned to stare at the Lightning Bird, it started to chirp angrily again. Even if Shang Xia didn't know bird talk, he could tell that the Mutated Rain Swallow was scolding the Lightning Bird.

Shaking its head, the Lightning Bird eventually lowered its head.

After thinking about it, Shang Xia gathered another ball of lightning in his hand before looking at the Lightning Bird.

Flapping its wings, the Lightning Bird turned its head away as though it didn't care about Shang Xia's gesture.

Chuckling helplessly, Shang Xia understood what the bird was feeling. The amount of lightning he gathered was enough for the Mutated Rain Swallow to enjoy itself, but it was far from enough for the stronger Lightning Bird.

“Chirp chirp...” The Mutated Rain Swallow cried out softly as it looked at Shang Xia.

Sighing inwardly, he wouldn't lower himself to argue with the little winged creatures. As his inner qi surged, the ball of lightning in his hand grew larger.

The faint golden lightning grew brighter, and a trace of red could be seen within.

The Lightning Bird stared at Shang Xia's hand instantly. Leaping around, it raised its head slightly.

Hehe, you're not being honest with yourself...

Shang Xia sneered. The lightning in his hand grew even stronger and a reddish hue overpowered the gold.

The Lightning Bird no longer hesitated. Leaping off the tree, it shot towards Shang Xia's hand.

Who would have thought that Shang Xia would retrieve his energy at the last second, scattering the lightning ball?

Crying out in displeasure, the Lightning Bird flapped its wings and tried returning to the tree before. However, the space around it started to solidify and no matter how hard it struggled, it couldn't move an inch.

Shang Xia walked over slowly and stopped when the bird was struggling at his chest level. The ball of lightning slowly reappeared in his palm again as he addressed it. “Why should I give it to you?”

The Lightning Bird was stumped. Now, the female cultivator, Yan Ming, wasn't there to work with it! In a fit of desperation, it could only cry out desperately.

Shang Xia stared at it while walking a complete circle around the creature. He examined it closely.

He didn't forget how the Lightning Bird tried to take his life several times back in the forest when it worked together with Yan Ming...

Now that it fell into his trap, Shang Xia felt that it should be thanking the gods that it didn't turn into bird barbecue. Of course, it had something to do with Yan Ni'er too.

Oh right... Yan Ni'er was the name Shang Xia gave to the Mutated Rain Swallow after it started following him.

“Chirp, chirp...” Yan Ni'er chirped softly by his ear as she tried to beg him for mercy.

Chuckling softly, Shang Xia eventually released the ball of lightning in his hands once again. The Lightning Bird that was screaming desperately fell silent.

“You're a glutton too...” Muttering softly, he directed the lightning in his palm towards the Lightning Bird's lips.

The damn bird was an absolute thief. It didn't show any gratitude at all as it swallowed as much as it could. When more than half of it was gone, it released a mighty cry.

Shang Xia reacted quickly by closing his palm.

“Chirp... Chirp...” The Lightning Bird quickly expressed its displeasure. Flicking his finger, he hit the damn bird’s head. “What are you shouting for?! If you want it, you’ll have to look for the owner of this item!”

Shang Xia could tell that the Lightning Bird was on the verge of breaking through. He could understand its thought process. There wasn’t a single cultivator who didn’t wish to break through.

In order to do so, the Lightning Bird would usually charge into the clouds to receive baptism from the endless lightning stored within. Those who succeeded would experience a fundamental transformation. Those who didn’t would be turned into ashes.

Since Shang Xia’s body contained the power of heavenly lightning, not only could he assist the Lightning Bird in its breakthrough, it could also reduce the risk significantly!

After he spoke, he tossed a bunch of items onto the ground. Those items belonged to the students of the institution, and they were scattered all over the place. Several of them belonged to the outer disciples and they had been deliberately buried underground.

Due to the sudden changes in the geography in the battlefield between two worlds, the cleanup crew failed to pick them up.

Shang Xia didn’t know if the Lightning Bird had the same sense of smell as a dog, but he knew that it definitely had amazing eyesight. As long as the bird gave its all, he might be able to locate his fellow disciples.

Moreover, Shang Xia’s plan didn’t just involve the Lightning Bird. One couldn’t forget that the Lightning Bird was the leader of the flock of Mutated Rain Swallows!

Shang Xia’s plan had long since taken them into account once he subdued Yan Ni’er.

Chapter 35: Finding the Trail

To be honest, Shang Xia was trying his luck.

He was more than ready to tear off all pretense with the Lightning Bird for the sake of getting it to help him. However, he seemed to have underestimated the Lightning Bird’s intelligence and desire to break through.

Releasing his Yin Yang Essence Qi, the Lightning Bird soon gained its freedom. Rising into the air, it didn’t fly away immediately. Instead, it circled the air above Shang Xia.

Realizing that it wouldn’t be able to obtain the other half easily, it shot into the skies, hoping to quickly discover traces of the convoy.

As Shang Xia left under Yuan Zilu’s orders, he had no idea what happened after.

From the looks of it, the members of the Tongyou Peak failed to reinforce them in time. Otherwise, they wouldn’t have left stuff like silver essence on the ground.

In order to trade with Shang Xia, Yan Ming wanted to give him her low-grade weapons and fifty pieces of silver essence!

Shang Xia might have rejected her easily and scoffed at her offer, but fifty pieces of silver essence wasn’t a small amount in the Tongyou Peak!

Many disciples at the Martial Extremity Realm wouldn't be able to take out so much money anyway!

For ordinary cultivators in the Martial Realm, they would consider themselves lucky if they had three to five pieces of silver essence. They would use copper boards as their currency of choice instead.

Since they buried their money in the ground, there was definitely some sort of special meaning behind their actions.

On the off chance that the outer disciples weren't killed, they wouldn't have gotten far with their cultivation.

More than a dozen Embroidered Cloud Carriages were robbed and sixteen disciples who were about to enter the inner division disappeared. There were the disciples of the Protection Division too! No matter how slow they were at reacting, the Tongyou Peak should be in complete chaos at the moment.

If anyone managed to rescue them, they would have returned for their stuff. After all, disciples who hadn't broken through to the Martial Realm would never be able to give up on treasures like that!

Sighing slightly, Shang Xia hoped that nothing serious happened in the Tongyou Peak.

Since the members of the Wind Swallow Race could openly plunder resources, Shang Xia could tell that trouble was definitely brewing at the Tongyou Peak.

It was too late to panic. Regardless, he wouldn't be able to go head to head with the Wind Swallow Race alone. He could only wait patiently for the Lightning Bird to return.

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The only other thing he could think about was the blood red tablet in his sea of consciousness. Even if he knew that he wouldn't be able to gain anything useful from it, he knew that it contained a massive secret. Uncovering the secret the best he could, he could only find two uses for it.

One was to improve his secret art, the other was to obtain the most optimal recipe from whatever half baked recipe he was given.

Other than the two times it worked, it didn't react in the slightest.

Those novels told amazing legends of how cultivators transmigrated and received a special guide or an invincible system... It helped them grow strong extremely quickly and turn into the main character of the story... Those characters either had insane plot armor or freakish help given from the heavens...

Look at me! What the fuck is this?!

All he got was a damn tablet that stood in the middle of nowhere. No matter how hard he tried, he couldn't do anything with it!

According to Shang Xia, the blood red tablet was probably ranked extremely high in the list of 'most useless treasures after transmigrating'.

Was there even a need to mention how one face was cracked?! If he managed to dig out a way to use the blood red tablet, it might crack even more!

Once all four faces of the tablet cracked, it was probably time for it to shatter...

That wasn't a god-given talent or system... That was a goddamn time bomb!

Shang Xia racked his brains but came up with nothing.

The only time it reacted was during the eruption of the Origin Tide. It was one of the reasons Shang Xia decided to go deeper. Deep in his heart, he thought of an idea of repairing the blood red tablet with the help of the Origin Tide. From the looks of it, he overestimated himself.

When his mind nearly broke down in the Origin Tide, the tablet remained completely motionless! It might not have helped him, but looking at things from another point of view, the tablet was strong enough to withstand the eruption. It had to be hiding even more secrets.

Naturally, he would be unable to uncover anything with his low cultivation level.

"Let's just hope that the tablet doesn't destroy itself before I grow stronger..." Shang Xia sighed in his heart.

He was brought back to reality by sounds of chirping and quickly discovered that his surroundings were changing again.

Dark clouds gathered in the skies, but a warm breeze swept through the lands.

Raising his head, Shang Xia saw the Lightning Bird circling around him with Yan Ni'er following closely behind it.

Looking closely, he realized that Yan Ni'er's speed had increased by quite a bit.

Even though it was slower than the Lightning Bird, it was much faster than when it attacked the convoy. If it could fly so quickly then, Shang Xia wouldn't have been able to capture it!

The lightning bath it enjoyed recently definitely allowed it to improve significantly.

... Was he going to nurture another Lightning Bird?

Shang Xia thought of the possibility, but his thoughts soon returned to the Lightning Bird. For it to return so quickly, it might have found traces of the other disciples!

This lightning chicken doesn't know what's good for it... I'm the one giving it the lightning, but there it is flying around playing with Yan Ni'er...

Putting his fingers in his mouth, a loud whistle tore through the air. Catching the birds' attention, he waved to them.

Yan Ni'er ignored the Lightning Bird immediately and she soared towards him. She released several cries to hurry it up while flying.

Who would have thought that the Lightning Bird would turn around and fly in another direction seeing as it had Shang Xia's attention?

Chasing behind the damn lightning chicken, Shang Xia quickly discovered that there were Mutated Rain Swallows every seven or so miles out. They were resting on anything they could find, and they would fly away when Shang Xia arrived.

They were obviously sitting there to act as guides for Shang Xia.

Flames of hope ignited in his heart the further he went. After passing nearly forty birds, two hours later, Shang Xia found that he traveled nearly two hundred and fifty miles.

He caught sight of the Lightning Bird again, flying high above a tiny hill in the distance.

Not in a rush to barge into whatever the hill contained, Shang Xia took a short break, restoring himself to his peak state. When he was well rested, he circled the hill once in order to avoid running into a trap.

Indeed... He discovered something wrong with the hill after walking around it.

Even though he didn't alert the enemy, he discovered horse tracks outside a hidden valley and signs of people trying to remove it.

The signs of battle didn't continue into the valley. Instead, it went in another direction.

Shang Xia guessed that the battle was a result of the members of the Tongyou Peak discovering traces of cultivators of the Azure Spiritual World after they robbed the convoy. The cultivators of the Azure Spiritual World probably retreated, and the experts of the Tongyou Peak started to hunt them down.

Light flickered in his eyes when he looked at the entrance of the hidden valley.

Since the experts of the Tongyou Peak discovered the place, they would definitely enter the valley to take a look.

After all, there were too many cultivators of the Tongyou Institution involved. The experts of the Tongyou Peak who arrived later had to save the cultivators of the Tongyou Institution no matter what! If they were dead, they had to retrieve the corpse!

Since the battle had ended, it made no sense for there to be anyone in the hidden valley! However, from how the Lightning Bird was flying about in mid air, the people he wanted to find had to be inside!

Holding caution towards the bird that annoyed him since the raid on the convoy, Shang Xia was extremely suspicious of it. His instincts told him otherwise.

Choosing to take another route to enter the hidden valley, he crawled up one of the wall faces to avoid detection. When he arrived at the top, he peeped downwards only to be greeted with a sorry sight.

Dozens of disciples were tied up, and they were squatting in a circle with their backs against each other.

Chapter 36: A Gift from the Heavens!

"The damn bird was right!" Shang Xia heaved a sigh of relief in his heart. A trace of excitement started to form when he discovered his fellow disciples.

Even though the valley was hidden, it was pretty small.

Aside from the disciples, there were six complete Embroidered Cloud Carriages sitting in the valley. On one of them sat a cultivator from the Azure Spiritual World. From what he was doing, he looked to be cultivating.

Turning to look at a nearby boulder, Shang Xia saw another cultivator staring at the captives.

“Are there only two of them?” Shang Xia muttered to himself. Even though there were only two of them, he didn’t make any rash movements.

“Looks like I was right... A group of cultivators of the Azure Spiritual World discovered the patrolling disciples of the Tongyou Peak. They baited them over and pretended to flee for their lives. Once they left, the disciples of the Tongyou Peak wouldn’t return!”

“The other group of cultivators from the Azure Spiritual World went over to rob the convoy while they were at it! Hiding under their enemy’s nose was dangerous, but no one would think to look there!”

“Since they erased the traces of battle and struggle, the experts of the Tongyou Peak wouldn’t look twice... If not for the Lightning Bird, I wouldn’t enter the valley either!” Shang Xia chuckled to himself. “Shady b*stards...”

When Shang Xia was thinking of how to save them, a voice distracted him.

“Is there no news?” The person sitting on the carriage spoke. It seemed as though his status in the Azure Spiritual World was higher than the others as the cultivator on the boulder responded respectfully, “Senior Brother Ling Que, we haven’t heard from the young lady...”

The disciple on the carriage frowned in response. “Qing Que, there’s no need to cover for her. She has always been so stubborn. If not for her, we would have left the area a long time ago! Caretaker Hua Que and the others wouldn’t have to draw the patrol squad away while risking their lives!”

The disciple on the boulder chuckled, “The young lady was thinking about our race’s bloodline... If she manages to capture the Mutated Rain Swallow...”

“As a disciple with a pure bloodline, she should just look for a few more guys to continue the bloodline... What’s so good about hunting a Mutated Rain Swallow?!” ? Ling Que sneered.

An awkward expression appeared on Qing Que’s face. “My legs are numb from squatting in this place. Huang Que has been standing guard outside for some time now. I’ll call him back.”

He leaped off the boulder and left for the entrance to the hidden valley as soon as he spoke.

Glancing at Qing Que from the corner of his eye, Ling Que snorted, “Wuss...”

...

Shang Xia was slightly surprised by what Qing Que said. “There actually is someone else hiding out there. Luckily I didn’t enter from the entrance. Instead of saving them, I’ll probably run straight into their traps...”

Retreating sneakily, Shang Xia waved his hand to call the two birds circling in the air back to him. He explained his plan to them using awkward hand gestures for half a day before returning to the edge of the cliff face overlooking the valley.

A trace of anxiety filled his heart when they flew away. He didn't know if the two birds actually understood what he said...

Not too long after, he saw a young man clad in yellow robes walking into the hidden valley.

He wasn't far, but his deep voice rang through the air. "Brother Ling, did you say something bad about the young lady again? I'm not one to butt into your business, but she's our junior. Why are you picking on her?"

Ling Que muttered in response, "I'm not picking on her. We're hiding in a valley in a region controlled by the Tongyou Peak right now! We might be surrounded any time! The cultivators of the Azure Origin World might not be too strong, but there's too many of them! They'll discover us sooner or later! Why should we let the young lady gamble with our lives?"

Huang Que took out a small pouch from his sleeves and popped the cork. As soon as he did, the aroma of wine filled the valley.

Taking a good swig, a smile formed on his face. Stuffing the cork back into the pouch, he raised it towards Ling Que. "Do you want some?"

Watching Ling Que shake his head, he kept the pouch before saying, "Relax... Don't you know that most of the experts on the Tongyou Peak are distracted right now? Those people chasing Caretaker Hua Que and the others won't be able to do much."

Ling Que frowned in response, "Can we really trust what the Rose Party says? It's true that the Slaughtering Hall brought a group of experts away from the Tongyou Peak, but do you really believe that Kou Chongxue is seriously injured? That bastard is extremely treacherous. The four great races of the Azure Spiritual World suffered countless times in the past twenty years because of his schemes... How should we know if this entire thing is a plot or not?"

As soon as the name left his lips, Huang Que's expression turned a little unnatural. Taking out his pouch again, Huang Que took a huge gulp of his wine. His newfound courage eclipsed the fear in his heart. "Who cares about that! We have a lot of bargaining chips now that we captured them!"

Pointing at the cultivators they captured, he continued, "Even if Kou Chongxue kills his way over here, he'll have to listen to us!"

The alcohol started to take effect as blood rushed into Huang Que's face. "They won't expect us to be here anyway! They won't think we're stupid enough to hide in their own territory! When the time comes, we'll extort the Tongyou Peak before returning to the Four Spiritual Peak. When we return, we'll tell them that the people they're looking for have always been in their territory!"

Roaring with laughter, Huang Que continued, "The looks on their faces will be a sight to behold! The more I think about it, the more I can't wait to see their reaction!"

An odd expression appeared on Shang Xia's face after hearing what Huang Que said. He knew who Kou Chongxue was. In fact, everyone from the Tongyou Institution was familiar with his name. He was the creator of the institution, and he was their patriarch! He was also the strongest expert in the You Continent!

Despite his terrifying reputation, he was an extremely mysterious individual. He would rarely appear in the institution, and many disciples wouldn't be able to see him throughout their journey to the upper division!

There were even several upper disciples who joked that they wouldn't recognize the patriarch even if he walked by them!

Mysterious, low-key, elusive... Those were the words they would use to describe their patriarch!

Amidst Huang Que's laughter, Qing Que's voice tore through the hidden valley.

"Hey! Come here! Hurry up!" By the time his cries reached their ears, they discovered that he had already arrived at the entrance.

Huang Que's laughter stopped abruptly as he turned to look at the entrance.

Getting to his feet, Ling Que frowned, "What's wrong?!"

His question was met with silence. Qing Que seemed to have left the valley already.

"I'll go take a look." Huang Que muttered. However, he was stopped by Ling Que.

"You stay here. I'll go."

...

After Qing Que took over Huang Que's post, he had been hiding near the entrance of the valley to observe the surroundings.

Even though his fellow cultivators of the Azure Spiritual World led the patrol team away, they were stuck in the depths of the territory controlled by the Tongyou Peak! There might be wandering cultivators who might discover their presence.

As such, the three of them didn't dare to let their guards down at all. Keeping themselves on high alert, fatigue soon started to set in.

When Ling Que was scolding him earlier, he didn't feel the onset of lethargy. Now that he arrived at the quiet spot in the outpost, he nearly fell asleep the moment he closed his eyes.

Yawning softly, he struggled to keep his eyes open. However, he caught sight of a creature and he rubbed his eyes to make sure he wasn't dreaming.

That... That was a Mutated Rain Swallow!

Pinching his thighs ruthlessly, the pain woke him up.

When he caught sight of the little bird flying away from the hidden valley, his thoughts fell into disarray. That was definitely a Mutated Rain Swallow!

Moreover, it was a Mutated Rain Swallow that was traveling alone!

"Hurry up" He didn't forget to yell after leaving the hidden valley.

However, he soon realized that it wasn't a wise move to alarm the Mutated Rain Swallow. Seeing how it went to perch over on a branch on a nearby tree, a trace of excitement formed in his heart. Wasn't their goal to capture a living Mutated Rain Swallow to improve the bloodline of the members of their race?

Now that they saw a lone Mutated Rain Swallow outside the hidden valley, it was a sign from the heavens! No... It was a gift! It was a gift from the heavens!

Chapter 37: One Strike

As the Mutated Rain Swallow was extremely vigilant, Qing Que used all the cover he could find to slowly approach it. While he inched closer, he tried to recall everything he knew about the Mutated Rain Swallow.

Ordinarily, Mutated Rain Swallows moved together in a giant flock.

Now, a single Mutated Rain Swallow was sitting alone. It had to be left behind by its group, unless...

Qing Que was starting to suspect that something was wrong when the Mutated Rain Swallow flapped its wings and jumped around the branch. His heart leapt into his throat and he stopped moving entirely.

However, he soon discovered that the little creature didn't fly away. Instead, it started falling towards the ground in an unsightly manner. Flapping its wings desperately, it managed to drag itself over to another tree nearby.

"Ha! Just as I thought! It's injured! No wonder it was left behind." Excitement filled Qing Que's heart. "Humph! The moment I get my hands on this Mutated Rain Swallow, I'll be able to obtain the pure bloodline of our race! When that happens, they'll bestow me a new name! In the future, They can call me Yan Qing!"

He didn't realize that he was getting further and further away as he tracked the Mutated Rain Swallow.

...

Shang Xia coldly watched on as Ling Que, the strongest of the three, slowly approached the entrance.

Shang Xia heaved a sigh of relief after noticing that Qing Que hadn't returned. A trace of joy filled his heart after noticing that the Lightning Bird and Yan Ni'er understood his meaning earlier.

Now, the only problem was how long Yan Ni'er could stall for!

No... I have to end this as quickly as possible. It's good enough that the little bird managed to draw them out. I can't expect too much from them!

Shang Xia used the cover in the hidden valley to slowly approach Huang Que.

Oblivious to the danger approaching, Huang Xua sauntered around the hidden valley slowly. When Ling Que was still there, he held himself back. Now that his senior brother was gone, he finished the alcohol with a few large gulps.

Walking towards one of the Embroidered Cloud Carriages, he dragged out a barrel of wine before refilling his pouch. When it was full, he didn't forget to take a large swig from the barrel itself. Smiling in satisfaction, he kept his pouch securely.

The aroma of wine filled the air once again. The wine was made with a herb called the Hundred Grass, and the effects were slightly different to Shang Xia's Hundred Flower Wine. The Hundred Grass Wine could help cultivators recover from inner injuries, but Shang Xia's wine could replenish a cultivator's inner qi!

By the time Huang Que kept his pouch, Shang Xia had nearly descended the cliff. As the amount of cover grew lesser, many disciples had discovered his presence.

Traces of anticipation and hope filled their hearts.

Luckily for Shang Xia, the disciples were smart enough to remain silent. They couldn't let the cultivators of the Azure Spiritual World discover his presence. They quickly turned away to avoid looking at him.

Even so, Huang Que noticed the change in their eyes. He growled angrily at them, "Humph, do you think that you will find a chance to escape because I'm the only one left?"

As they lowered their heads, Huang Que revealed a contented look. A sinister smile soon formed on his face. "Let's play a game. I'll give all of you a chance. You can go ahead and run. Before I finish my wine, I won't chase you down. How's that?"

"Begin!"

Huang Que popped open the cork on his pouch again and took a huge swig of wine.

"Don't listen to him! All he wants is a chance to beat us up!" Huang Zihua.

"Humph! Brat, how dare you slander me?" Huang Que glared at the person who spoke. When Huang Zihua saw the look in Huang Que's eyes, he flinched.

However, he caught a glimpse of Shang Xia closing in on Huang Que and the look in his eyes hardened. He raised his head to glare at Huang Que and yelled, "You're a despicable bastard! Our seniors will soon discover this place! When that happens, you'll..."

"Brat, there's no need to wait for them to find me. I'll help you loosen your bones right now!" Huang Que grabbed Huang Zihua by the collar and dragged him around.

Noticing the figure behind Huang Que, a cold smile appeared on Huang Zihua's face. "Too bad you won't have the chance any more."

Staring at Huang Zihua in shock, Huang Que seemed to have thought of something and he whipped his head around violently.

The last thing he saw was a pair of vaguely familiar knives!

"Aren't those the young lady's weapons?" With doubt filling his heart, his vision went black.

"Senior Brother Shang!" Huang Zihua couldn't care less about the blood that sprayed onto his face and he cried out happily.

"Shhh..." Shang Xia placed his finger to his lips and he nodded at the rest of the captives. Handing one of the knives over to Huang Zihua and the other to Jiao Haitang, he got them to cut the rest loose. He stealthily moved over to the entrance of the hidden valley.

Only then did the rest of the disciples realize that they weren't out of the woods. There were still two other cultivators from the Azure Spiritual World around!

"Huh? He actually gave us low-grade weapons!" Huang Zihua examined the knife in his hand and a light flashed in his eyes.

"Hurry up! One of the carriages contains Cloud Piercing Crossbows. We haven't broken through to the Martial Realm, but we can use them to help Senior Brother Shang!" Jiao Haitang yelled.

She went over to free the others as soon as she cut off her restraints.

Huang Zihua didn't remain idle and soon, everyone was free.

Huang Zihua turned to look at Huang Que's corpse and he sighed, "I wonder how Chief Shang did it... This guy seems to be at the large completion stage of the Martial Realm. However, Chief Shang killed him before he could react!"

A bundle of arrows for the Cloud Piercing crossbows flew into his arms, and he grabbed it hastily.

"Senior Brother Shang might have already broken through!" Jiao Haitang's voice came from inside the carriage. "Of course, your stupid move to draw the guy's attention away probably helped."

Huang Zihua chuckled haughtily in response. "Of course I had something to do with it!"

As soon as the words left his lips, a massive blast rang through the valley.

When they saw flashes coming from outside and heard the curses flying over, they yelled, "Let's go!"

The disciples of the Tongyou Institution ran out quickly.

...

"... A Mutated Rain Swallow?! Do you really think you can catch it yourself?! If it's that easy, why would we bring so many people over and kick up such a huge fuss?! Do you think the others are completely useless?!" Ling Que refused to believe Qing Que's explanation as he yelled at him for leaving the hidden valley.

"It's true! I definitely found an injured Mutated Rain Swallow. It couldn't even fly properly! I thought it was a good opportunity and I..." Qing Que tried his hardest to explain.

"Even if it is true, are you sure you can capture it alive?!" Ling Que snapped at him angrily. After all, capturing a live Mutated Rain Swallow was easier said than done.

Too stunned to speak, Qing Que could only follow behind Ling Que. He forgot about the fact that the Mutated Rain Swallow would kill itself the moment it was captured.

A sense of superiority filled Ling Que's heart as he led Qing Que back. He continued to lecture Qing Que on their way back. Helpless, Qing Que could only shake his head and listen to his senior brother.

When they entered the hidden valley, Ling Que was still droning on while Qing Que looked into the distance to soothe his feelings from the criticism he was receiving.

When he casually raised his head, he felt his soul leaving the body.

Ling Que noticed the problem too, and when he followed Qing Que's gaze, a curtain of red light enveloped his vision.

“Ah!”

Raising his hand in a desperate attempt to defend himself, a bolt of lightning struck him, turning his arm into charcoal.

The rest of the lightning sank into his body, turning half his face into a mixture of coal and mush. He smashed into the ground with a massive thud.

Chapter 38: One Vs Two

Shang Xia's sudden attack caught the two of them off guard and he basically incapacitated the stronger of the two!

The change in situation caught Qing Que completely by surprise. However, as a cultivator who survived in the battlefield between two worlds for quite some time now, he reacted quickly. Energy gathered in his fists and he punched upwards.

After landing his initial sneak attack on Ling Que, Shang Xia leaped out from his hiding spot. He was less than ten feet away from them, and the distance was covered in an instant. His Delicate Jade River Sword flashed as a soft glow emerged from the tip of the blade. It stabbed straight towards Qing Que's chest.

Shang Xia clearly underestimated his enemy. Qing Que was at the Martial Realm, or in the terms of the Azure Spiritual World, the Blood Essence Realm, but he was no weakling. His ability to react to changes and adapt wasn't poor!

Shang Xia's sword didn't contain any special moves. All he had to supplement it was his inner qi and brute strength. Under Qing Que's nimble fist art, it was redirected.

Of course, Qing Que wasn't able to escape completely unscathed. The mid-grade weapon sliced deep wounds in his fists.

Using the impact from the exchange, Qing Que quickly retreated. After opening the distance between himself and Shang Xia, he took a protective stance in front of the seriously injured Ling Que.

The shockwave of the exchange caused the hills beside them to crumble and massive chunks of rocks came raining down on them.

Struggling to get to his feet, Ling Que brought out his nine-segmented staff from his robes.

His left arm might have turned to ash, but that wasn't what impacted his combat abilities the most. The left side of his face was charred black, and all he could see out of his left eye was a blurry picture of the world.

However, he was at the Vital Blood Realm in the Azure Spiritual World! He was comparable to experts at the Martial Extremity Realm here, and he was able to withstand a wound at that level.

"It's you!"

Ling Que obviously remembered the man before him.

He was the person who fled with the Mutated Rain Swallow, drawing Yan Ming, Hong Que, and Hui Que away from the team. He was the reason they were unable to leave the god forsaken place!

Wait a minute...

He left with Yan Ming in hot pursuit. However, he was the only one who appeared! Where did the others go?!

Ling Que might have criticized Yan Ming previously, but that was only because of her actions. He understood the importance of her bloodline in their race.

"Where is she?! Where did Yan Ming go?" Ling Que was able to keep his calm when half his body was incapacitated, but his hands started to tremble when he thought of the possibilities.

Shang Xia finally understood how important she was to the group of cultivators from the Wind Swallow Race. If he messed with them, he might be able to make them go crazy...

"Hehe, since I'm here, where do you think she is?" Shang Xia had to admit that her pursuit caused a massive grievance to build up in his heart. He wanted nothing more than to annoy the members of the Wind Swallow Race.

He didn't expect Ling Que's reaction to be that large after hearing what he said. As the blood drained from his face, his hands stopped trembling. He glared at Shang Xia with hatred in his eyes.

"Since that's the case, you can go to hell!" Ling Que lunged at him without warning. A sharp whistle could be heard in the air as his nine-segmented staff cut through the air.

Shang Xia stared at Ling Que in shock. It seemed as though he had underestimated the man's determination! How could he, a newcomer to the battlefield between two worlds, compare to Ling Que who had been toeing the line of life and death there?

His will was stronger than steel. It wasn't something that Shang Xia could destroy with a sentence or two.

Ling Que might be acting impulsively, but Shang Xia didn't dare to let down his guard. He made Shang Xia lower his guard while fighting for an additional breath of time to recover when he asked about Yan Ming.

In fact, Ling Que knew the answer in his heart. Now that he was caught in a surprise attack and lost a huge portion of his fighting strength, he no longer held back. He wanted to injure Shang Xia at the expense of his own life!

At the crucial moment, Shang Xia calmed himself down and released a heavy palm towards the incoming Ling Que.

The second form of the Chaos Essence Palm, Empty Distance!

A torrential amount of qi emerged from his palm and the space three feet in front of him flipped upside down.

A dent appeared in Ling Que's chest as blood sprayed out from his orifices.

Even so, he ignored all the damage he received and he charged at Shang Xia. He staked his life on his final strike!

Shang Xia could see his intentions, and his sword trembled slightly. It slashed at the nine-segmented staff in Ling Que's hand.

A cold light sliced across Ling Que's arm and formed multiple lacerations.

Spitting out a mouthful of blood, Ling Que imbued his inner qi into them. Bloodied droplet filled with true qi shot at Shang Xia.

Not expecting that type of suicidal attack, Shang Xia hastily retrieved his fan to protect himself. He managed to block a portion of the blood rain, but the rest fell on his body.

Because of that, his sword missed its consecutive strikes. It clattered against Ling Que's weapon and failed to stop his advance.

Ling Que's plan was to create an opening with his life, allowing Qing Que to deal the final blow.

It was too bad his desperate attempt failed. Shang Xia's sword soon wrapped around his arm.

In his last ditch attempt, he stumbled forward to close the distance as much as possible.

Circulating his inner qi, Shang Xia sent a massive lightning bolt into Ling Que's body. It went through his staff and out the other side of his body, causing Ling Que's body to tremble violently. He instantly lost all mobility.

"Qing... Que... Why... Why haven't you killed him..."

Ling Que forced the words out of his lips.

Even though a lot had happened, the time that passed was barely enough for Qing Que to blink! How was he supposed to land a killing blow on Shang Xia?!

Roaring in rage, Qing Que appeared from behind Ling Que. His fists came crashing down towards Shang Xia's skull. Before it could arrive, the sound of arrows tearing through the skies rang through the air. Stopping a few of them with the strength he had, the arrows soon overpowered him.

"Run... Run..." Ling Que knew that Qing Que only had a single chance to hurt Shang Xia. Now that he lost it, there was only one thing left to do. He had to run for his life!

Shang Xia no longer bothered with Ling Que. As a yell escaped his lips, the lightning bolt running through Ling Que's body exploded. It brought with it the destruction of his weapon. As the segments of his staff flew in all directions, most of it crashed against the cliff faces beside them but one flew straight into Ling Que's chest.

A hole was blown through his body, and from it, Shang Xia could see Qing Que's escaping figure.

A mirthless smile formed on Ling Que's face as he crumpled to the ground.

While Qing Que was focused on running away, a familiar silver streak appeared in front of him. When the two crossed paths, Qing Que continued to stumble forward several steps before his head fell from his shoulders.

Huang Zihue and the other disciples quickly arrived on the battlefield and they caught sight of Qing Que's headless corpse lying not too far away from them. They raised their heads to look at the Lightning Bird standing on a branch and a look of shock formed on their faces.

"Senior Brother Shang..." Jiao Haitang carefully approached him.

Turning his head, a brilliant smile hung on his face. He looked at the bow in their hands and chuckled, "Cloud Piercing Crossbow? Who would have thought that there were such treasures in the carriage..."

A bitter smile formed on Huang Zihua's face in response. "We might be able to kill some undead corpses with them, but cultivators at the Martial Realm will be able to avoid them easily."

"At least they came in handy at the crucial moment! If you didn't stop the other cultivator, I might be a corpse lying on the ground too!" Shang Xia laughed.

"Senior Brother Shang, have you entered the Martial Extremity Realm?" Jiao Haitang asked softly, interrupting their conversation.

Seeing no point to hide it, Shang Xia nodded. "That's right. We'll clean up the battlefield first. Check their corpses carefully! Make sure not to leave behind any valuables!"

Huang Zihua and Jiao Haitang walked towards the corpse, and as soon as they took their first steps, the sound of crumbling came from behind them.

Shang Xia looked at the cliff faces around him and saw cracks forming all over their surface. Soon, the entire structure fell.

Thinking back to Ling Que's staff, he recalled how they crashed into them.

Could they actually cause the valley's destruction?

Shang Xia ran out of the valley, but when he saw the group of disciples rushing towards him, he yelled in fright, "Stop right there!"

As the words left his lips, the entrance to the valley carved in. It was blocked off from the outside world.

"What... What do we do now?" Huang Zihua looked at the blocked entrance and asked helplessly.

After searching through the corpses, Jiao Haitang sighed, “The entrance is sealed, but none of us are injured. We can follow in Senior Brother Shang’s footsteps and climb out...”

Huang Zihua patted his chest and sighed, “Oh right... I was worried for nothing. Too bad we won’t be able to save the carriages and the horses...”

Chapter 39: Gains

Shang Xia soon appeared and he brought them out of the valley by climbing out the top.

“Senior Brother Shang, what do we do now?”

“Yeah! Chief Shang, we’ll listen to you!”

The disciples gathered around him and they clearly took him as the core of their group.

Sweeping his gaze across those present, a frown appeared on Shang Xia’s face. “Why are there three people missing?”

The atmosphere around them dampened immediately and a deafening silence filled the area.

With a bad premonition in his heart, Shang Xia turned to look at Huang Zihua.

A streak of pain flashed in Huang Zihua’s eyes and he muttered, “Zhang Wei, Li Qu, and Zhou Sitian are no longer with us...”

Despite already knowing about the dangers in the battlefield between two worlds and that their lives were at risk at every turn, it was their first time facing such a situation. They might have received countless warnings from their instructors before coming, but the feeling was completely different when they experienced it for themselves.

They finally knew what risking their lives meant. Their fellow cultivators who were laughing beside them turned into a stiff corpse by their side. Everything they stood for turned to dust.

Jiao Haitang choked, “Zhang Wei was killed because he ran away in terror... Li Qi was beaten to death by Huang Que while trying to protect Zhou Sitian, and when she tried stabbing Huang Que with her hidden dagger, they crushed her skull!”

Shang Xia was from the same outer division as them and he knew the relationship between Li Qi and Zhou Sitian. However, he didn’t expect their love to run so deep.

As for Zhang Wei, Shang Xia had a guess on why he tried to run. He knew that the other disciples faintly disliked him due to the stunt he pulled back in the institution and decided to risk it all by taking the chance to run away.

Speaking of which, Shang Xia seemed to have some sort of grudge with him. However, he wasn’t particularly thrilled to learn that Zhang Wei had died.

“We’ll remember this... In the future, we’ll claim our debt from the cultivators of the Azure Spiritual World!” Shang Xia declared.

“That’s right! They’ll pay the price in blood!” The other disciples roared in unison.

“Gather all our rations and all the water we have. Rest up for now and recover your strength. We’ll leave for the Tongyou Peak when everyone is ready.” Shang Xia ordered after looking at their tired faces.

“Yes!”

With their fighting spirit ignited, the disciples quickly did as they were told. However, one of them thought of an important matter and asked, “Senior Brother Shang, what about the carriages and Scarlet Cloud Horses?”

Recalling that the supplies they were supposed to bring to the Tongyou Peak were stuck in the hidden valley, they realized that there were still six large carriages stranded!

Once they left, they wouldn’t know if the cultivators of the Azure Spiritual Peak would return to retrieve the goods. If that happened, they would have lost a lot!

Shang Xia dismissed their concerns with a wave of his hand. “We’ll deal with that later. Hurry up and eat something.”

Since they were captured, the cultivators of the Azure Spiritual World treated them like hostages. After all, their goal was to extort the Tongyou Peak with their lives. They were given some food and water, but that was barely enough to keep them alive. After Huang Que’s constant abuse, they weren’t too far off from death.

That was also the reason why Shang Xia didn’t bring them away the first instance he could.

In actuality, Shang Xia wasn’t confident of bringing them all to the Tongyou Peak. Without the protection of the disciples from the Protection Division, a group of disciples who hadn’t reached the Martial Realm would be a massive burden in the battlefield between two worlds. If they really ran into dangerous situations, how many of them could Shang Xia protect?

Deep down in his heart, Shang Xia knew that. However, there wasn’t much he could do.

As the thoughts ran through his mind, Shang Xia continued to look through the bodies of the three cultivators from the Azure Spiritual World to look for his spoils of battle. He might have asked Huang Zihua and Jiao Haitang to check the corpse, but they were tactful enough to hand over everything. After flipping through Huang Que’s body, Shang Xia managed to gather a pile of items.

There were three small cloth bags that looked like they were made from ordinary cloth, but the clattering sound when he shook them caused a smile to form on his face.

The three bags were where they kept their money! He counted thirty seven silver essence and hundreds of copper boards after looking through them.

As Qing Que and Huang Que were ordinary cultivators, they didn’t have much. Ling Que had strength comparable to a cultivator at the Martial Extremity Realm, and he had a lot more than the two.

Even so, they barely had much. Shang Xia understood that currency in the battlefield between two worlds was truly hard to come by.

They only served to prove that the offer Yan Ming made to trade her weapons and fifty silver essence for the Mutated Rain Swallow was more than fair.

After counting the money, Shang Xia turned to look at a manual he picked up from their body.

The manual was written on metal boards, and there were precious materials mixed in when creating those boards. That was the only reason it hadn't turned into shreds.

The manual might be precious, but they were completely worthless to Shang Xia. The only thing that intrigued him was a tiny box on Qing Que's body.

Opening it slowly, he saw three eggs protected by a layer of foam.

"This..." Shang Xia raised an eyebrow after looking at them. He could tell that there was a faint aura coming from all three eggs.

The sense of familiarity he had grew the more he looked at them, and if he wasn't mistaken, they were eggs of Mutated Rain Swallows.

They looked larger than ordinary eggs, but when Shang Xia thought about how a Mutated Rain Swallow was larger than ordinary Rain Swallows, he swallowed his doubts.

As Rain Swallows traveled in a huge group, there was no way Qing Que managed to obtain it himself. The only explanation was that the cultivators of the Wind Swallow Race ambushed the nest of the swallows to obtain them!

Carefully closing the box, Shang Xia planned to hand the eggs over to Yan Ni'er. He wanted to see if she could recognize them.

After storing the box away, his gaze turned to a dagger beside him. It was something that intrigued Shang Xia. It belonged to Huang Que, but it looked extremely new. When he held it, the circulation of inner qi in his body would speed up. That alone spoke volumes about the dagger's quality. It was a low-grade weapon, and it was a rare thing for cultivators in the Martial Realm to have!

Injecting a tiny amount of inner qi, the dagger started to fade.

Camouflage?

Shang Xia knew that the dagger in his hand didn't really disappear. Instead, it became really transparent. It blended in with his surroundings, and from other people's perspective, Shang Xia wasn't holding anything in his hand.

Shang Xia was content with the spoils of war. Reading the inscription on the dagger, he learned that it came from the Hundred Profession Pavilion, and it was called 'Origin Light'!

The Hundred Profession Pavilion was naturally loyal to the Tongyou Peak. They didn't sell the weapon to Huang Que. Instead, Huang Que only found it after scouring the Embroidered Cloud Carriages.

A treasure like that was obviously meant for an important disciple in the Tongyou Peak, but if it was stolen by the members of the Azure Spiritual World, no one could do anything about it.

However, if Shang Xia brought it back, he knew that the experts of the Tongyou Peak would definitely force him to give it up. In fact, the Hundred Profession Pavilion might move in the dark to retrieve the treasure!

Shang Xia could tell that even though the outer disciples seemed focused on eating their rations and restoring their strength, their gazes flashed subconsciously. There was no way for him to keep the secret of him obtaining the dagger.

“Senior Brother Shang, that’s a low-grade weapon!”

Huang Zihua muttered softly as an itch filled his heart.

To ordinary disciples, they barely had any contact with treasures at that level! Moreover, most of the graded weapons they saw belonged to Shang Xia!

Shang Xia chuckled and concealed the dagger in his boots in front of everyone present.

Jiang Haitang tactfully declared, “Chief Shang killed the enemy himself to obtain this treasure. It definitely belongs to him!”

“Of course!” Huang Zihua responded immediately.

After dealing with the dagger, Shang Xia saw several plant-like items on Huang Que. He had no idea what they were, but from the dense qi it emitted, he knew that it was definitely a rank two herb!

As Huang Que was a cultivator close to breaking through, he probably prepared it for use at the crucial moment.

Shang Xia turned to look at the final two items.

They came from Ling Que, and a trace of anticipation filled Shang Xia’s heart.

His face froze when he realized that he didn’t recognize any of them.

One of the two was a glass bottle slightly thicker than his thumb. There was a blood-red liquid rolling about inside it, and it seemed to be some sort of blood essence.

He wanted to open the bottle to inspect it again, but he eventually decided against it.

The other resembled a big ball of wool. It gave Shang Xia the same feeling as that of the Mutated Rain Swallow.

Is that made from the hair of the Mutated Rain Swallow?!

Shang Xia thought about the eggs again and he wondered if it was an item they found in the nest of the Rain Swallows.

Chapter 40: Instant Breakthrough

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“... Zhang Wei actually thought that the cultivators of the Azure Spiritual World would allow him to leave. The moment he turned his back, Huang Que smashed his skull.” Jiao Haitang recounted the events that happened back then.

After collecting the treasures, Shang Xia decided to gain a clearer picture of what happened after he left the other day.

“How naive could he be to believe that the cultivators of the Azure Spiritual World would let him go?” Shang Xia frowned.

“After we were ambushed, Zhang Wei’s sanity was on the verge of collapse. He told everyone that you abandoned us to make more time for your escape. Also that the institution wouldn’t care about outer disciples like us anyway.” Jiao Haitang continued.

Shang Xia sneered in response. “Humph. It’s one thing to be selfish when we run into danger. However, spreading lies like that to destroy our morale is unforgivable! He’s a burden to our convoy!”

“The cultivators of the Azure Spiritual World saw through his thoughts and lied to him that they would let us live as long as we told him your identity and the way you captured the Mutated Rain Swallow. They even told him that they would release him to inform the instructors of the Tongyou Institution about the negotiation. He told them everything after that.” Jiao Haitang sighed.

Huang Zihua added, “We pleaded with him not to talk, but we received a punch in the face from Huang Que in response. They dragged him away and made him talk.”

Jiao Haitang reminded Shang Xia hastily, “Senior Brother Shang, you have to be careful. Now that they know everything about you, they’ll definitely think of ways to counter your fighting style.”

Shang Xia’s expression turned serious for a second, but it soon returned to normal. “Whatever. We’ll leave it at that.”

Waving his hand, he handed over some of the silver essence and copper boards along with several other treasures. “You helped in killing them earlier. Split these among yourselves.”

Huang Zihua and Jiao Haitang tried to refuse his gift as all they did was to shoot a few arrows. Shang Xia saved their lives to begin with, and they didn’t think they were worthy of the reward.

However, Shang Xia didn’t plan to lug so many items with him. He insisted that the other disciples get a share of the spoils.

Seeing as they were unable to refuse the gift, everyone split the treasures up among themselves as joy filled their hearts.

Huang Zihua laughed, “Now that we have some money, we might be able to exchange for some herbs to break through to the Martial Realm when we reach the Tongyou Peak.”

The battlefield between two worlds contained a lot of treasures. As the Tongyou Peak was affiliated to the Tongyou Institution, they would be able to obtain treasures for a little cheaper than the market rate there.

Shang Xia chuckled in response when he heard what they said. “What herbs do you require? You might not have to go all the way to the Tongyou Peak to buy them.”

Huang Zihua and Jiao Haitang looked at Shang Xia in shock. Getting to his feet, he looked at the various disciples around him. “Everyone, we have to leave. But first, how likely do you think it will be for us to arrive at the Tongyou Peak unscathed?”

The fighting spirit in their eyes died instantly.

They knew the risks, but they had been ignoring it all this while.

Shang Xia continued, “What do you think our chances will be if a few of you broke through to the Martial Realm?”

“How is that possible?!” Someone asked.

However, someone who was a little brighter felt his eyes lighting up as he looked at Shang Xia in shock.

“Senior Brother Shang, are you suggesting that we use the resources in the carriages?” Someone quickly suggested.

Shang Xia recognized that the disciple who spoke was called Wang Hua, and he nodded. “That’s right.”

Many people rejoiced silently. However, there were looks of hesitation on their faces.

“Senior Brother Shang, we need to think this through. The resources are used to reinforce the Tongyou Peak. We do not have permission to use them!” Jiao Haitang reminded him.

Huang Zihua was extremely tempted, but his sense of reasoning stopped him from agreeing with Shang Xia completely. He sighed, “We might be able to use the resources for ourselves, but the list of treasures in the convoy has already arrived at the Tongyou Peak. Instructor Yuan Zilu should also possess a complete inventory list of the items. The moment they conduct a proper search, they’ll discover that we had something to do with it! After all, several people entering the Martial Realm at once is suspicious in itself.”

Shang Xia knew that the two of them were reminding him out of goodwill, but he had his reasons for the suggestion. Sighing softly, he explained, “We won’t be able to retrieve the carriages now that the valley is blocked. The moment the cultivators of the Azure Spiritual World return, all the resources will fall into their hands. When that happens, they’ll be the ones who benefit from our resources!”

Shang Xia’s explanation caused all of them to look at each other quietly.

In fact, Shang Xia never planned to retrieve the six carriages! They were pulled by the Scarlet Wind Horses, but they were basically asking to be targeted if they did that!

The moment they were attacked by anyone, Shang Xia wouldn’t be able to protect any of them! He couldn’t even ensure the safety of the outer disciples as it was. How was he supposed to protect six more carriages?!

“When the institution carries out their investigation...” Wang Hua might be moved, but they were all too afraid of the repercussions. In fact, Wang Hua had his eyes on the resources a long time ago!

“I’ll take responsibility.” Shang Xia hit the final nail in the coffin.

“No, no, no... We’ll take the responsibility together!” Wang Hua added.

“Yes! We’ll all be responsible for this!” Huang Zihua and Jiao Haitang commented from the side. Seeing as a few of their fellow disciples had already agreed, the others quickly agreed.

Looks of anticipation could be seen on their faces. Shang Xia smiled and said, “Alright, we’re doing this in order to survive. Look for the resources suitable for yourselves. As for the others...”

The footsteps of those who were already racing back into the valley paused.

Even though there was no one to stop them from taking as much as they could, Shang Xia’s words seemed to remind them of something. The greed in their hearts quickly disappeared.

Chuckling in amusement, Shang Xia continued, “If you’re not afraid that bringing more treasures will affect your journey towards the Tongyou Peak, feel free to take as many as you want. The enemy will probably grab whatever we leave here and it’s better for the treasures to remain with us. However, let me remind you once again. If you affect our journey to the Tongyou Peak because of your greed now, no one will save you when danger comes.”

Shang Xia swept his gaze across those present and gave a proper warning. “No matter how precious those treasures are, you need to be alive to use them.”

Since he gave them the reminder, he didn’t mind giving another piece of advice. “As long as you refine the herbs, the institution won’t be able to take it back. After all, we had to use them to ensure our survival. As for the other treasures that you might find... you might not be lucky enough to keep it.”

His words caused them to become a lot more obedient when looking through the carriage.

A mischievous glint flashed in Shang Xia’s eyes all of a sudden. “Of course, the more you take, the better it will be for us. It’s better for us to get the good stuff. We shouldn’t leave it for the members of the Azure Spiritual World. Take as much as you can and live!”

His continued ‘reminders’ caused waves to batter against their hearts. Wang Hua raised his head that was covered in sweat and sighed, “Senior Brother Shang, you made your point clear... Can you stop scaring the rest of us?”

Laughing in response, Shang Xia no longer spoke. He followed behind them to look for useful treasures.

Soon, a new problem arrived.

“What?! Only eight of you have a way to break through?” Shang Xia snapped.

A bitter smile appeared on Jiao Haitang’s face. “The others barely reached the requirement. The institution was unable to provide a suitable method in time...”

Actually, the number of disciples who could break through immediately was already a respectable amount.

There were fifty disciples in their third outer division, and other than the anomaly that was Shang Xia, four other cultivators had already broken through to the Martial Realm. Two of them were retainees, and the other two were like Shang Xia. They entered the Martial Realm in their first year.

However, all of them entered the battlefield before the convoy and took their own paths to the Tongyou Peak.

With the sixteen outer disciples who followed the convoy, there were twenty one students in the third outer division who would be promoted to an inner disciple this time. It had long since broken through the institution's initial estimate.

“You should have a rough sense of how to break through, right? Try to follow in the footsteps of someone before you. Alright whatever, grab all the resources that aids in a breakthrough. Even if something happens, we'll be able to switch out the herbs. The institution won't be stingy enough to scold us for it since we did it to survive...”
Shang Xia sighed.

He only realized how delusional he was after he spoke. There might have been a lot of resources on the carriages, but the amount that could aid in a breakthrough was few and far between.

After all, the Tongyou Peak was filled with cultivators. They wouldn't need to break through to the Martial Realm as the lowest requirement to be there was to be a cultivator at the Martial Realm. The carriages were filled mostly with weapons, food, and herbs for recovery.

The convoy going back to the Tongyou Institution would probably be the one that contained herbs used for breaking through...

Indeed, the disciples only managed to obtain several herbs from the carriages. There were only enough resources for five disciples to break through!

The other three that were on the verge of breaking through lacked several extremely important herbs, and there was no way to substitute them.

As for those who weren't close to breaking through, they could only blame their luck.

Of course, they were able to obtain several precious herbs from the carriages. If they managed to keep their treasures after arriving at the Tongyou Peak, they would definitely be able to exchange them for treasures they needed.