

Doctor 981

Chapter 981: Thrilling

"The Stone Forest is just ahead. Let's push harder and rush!"

Huang Miao, while dashing forward, glanced in the direction of the approaching Spirit Beasts and saw that they were not far away; she could even clearly see their nostrils and eyes, and also felt the overwhelming pressure bearing down on them. A cold sweat broke out on her back as she yelled loudly.

The five of them were now racing against time with those dozens of Spirit Beasts.

If they entered the Stone Forest first, with its many layers of towering rocks, the Spirit Beasts would be unable to break through quickly, at least temporarily keeping them safe.

However, if the dozens of Spirit Beasts got ahead of them, then a deadly bloody battle would inevitably ensue, and all five of them could become a fine feast for the Spirit Beasts.

Hou Ziping, Liu Qingqing, and Liu Liehu also understood the importance of getting into the Stone Forest before the Spirit Beasts. The three of them frantically circulated their True Yuan, squeezing out their body's potential energy, pushing their speed to the limit to catch up with Huang Miao.

The Antlered Silver Lions were highly intelligent. Seeing Huang Miao and the others speeding up towards the Stone Forest, they also increased their pace.

Fang Bai brought up the rear behind Huang Miao and the other three, keeping an eye on the charging Spirit Beasts, to guard against any surprises.

Seeing the Stone Forest mere tens of meters away, Huang Miao and the others let out a sigh of relief. They needed only a few moments to enter the Stone Forest.

At this moment, although they knew the Spirit Beasts had reached a spot near them, there was no time to turn back and look.

For them, the very brief moment they had left could determine their life or death.

Huang Miao, the fastest, led the way ahead. With a flicker of her figure, she dashed through the massive stone pillars that formed the Stone Forest and disappeared into it.

Hou Ziping was the second to enter the Stone Forest. The moment he soared into the Stone Forest, he turned back in a hurry and saw that Liu Qingqing and Fang Bai were still over ten meters away from the forest, with Fang Bai following behind them.

When he looked at the Spirit Beasts, Hou Ziping's pupils constricted, his gaze revealing a flicker of sorrow and sympathy.

Dozens of Antlered Silver Lions charging at high speed burst out from an angle, with the three leading ones about to collide with Fang Bai, Liu Qingqing, and Liu Liehu.

The three Spirit Beasts had huge bodies, tough hides, and brought an unstoppable force of impact. If they hit Fang Bai and the others, they would surely inflict severe damage upon them.

And if they were badly injured, with dozens of Spirit Beasts piling on them from behind, the outcome was predictable.

"Sigh..."

Hou Ziping let out a sigh, knowing that even if he were to go back to help Fang Bai and the others, it would be futile, and he would only be sacrificing himself in vain. With a sense of guilt, he slipped into the Stone Forest.

Liu Qingqing and Liu Liehu, still a distance away from the Stone Forest, had pale faces filled with panic.

Although they didn't turn back to look, they were aware that dozens of Antlered Silver Lions were already close at hand and would collide with them in an instant.

Dozens of massive bodies of Spirit Beasts charging in a line could topple a small mountain, let alone their flesh and blood bodies.

Following behind Liu Liehu, Liu Qingqing suddenly spotted one of the Antlered Silver Lions hanging its large head low, madly using its antlers, as thick as arms and nearly three feet long, to charge toward Liu Liehu.

In the blink of an eye, the sharp tip of the antler was only about three yards away from Liu Liehu.

And with the Antlered Silver Lions' charging speed, that distance of three zhang was merely the work of a breath.

"Liehu, be careful!"

Liu Qingqing let out a heart-wrenching scream, rushing forward selflessly, ready to place herself in front of the Antlered Silver Lion, prepared to sacrifice her own life to save Liu Liehu.

She had just moved when Fang Bai grabbed her from behind.

"Brother Fang, you..."

Liu Qingqing turned around abruptly, looking at Fang Bai, her face stained with tears, showing confusion and incomprehension.

"Let's go!"

Fang Bai gave a soft shout, leading Liu Qingqing towards the Stone Forest up ahead.

Fang Bai's movement technique was much faster than the Antlered Silver Lion, reaching Liu Liehu before the creature, his other hand shot out quickly, seizing Liu Liehu's arm and forcefully pulling him along.

Liu Liehu, who had been scared stiff by the Antlered Silver Lion, had no choice but to fly forward with Fang Bai. He only felt darkness before his eyes, and they were already within the Stone Forest.

The Antlered Silver Lion pounced on emptiness, its anticipated prey gone, which made it furiously roar outside the Stone Forest, angrily ramming the giant stone pillars that formed the Stone Forest with the horns on its head.

The strength of the Antlered Silver Lions' impacts was astonishing; each collision caused the stone pillars of the Stone Forest to tremble.

At the same time, dozens of other Antlered Silver Lions had also arrived in front of the Stone Forest. Like that lone lion, they roared and howled, pacing around the perimeter of the Stone Forest without leaving.

The Stone Forest was composed of hundreds of stone pillars, with crevices between each just wide enough for a person. The massive bodies of the Antlered Silver Lions, however, could not fit through. They could only continuously collide with the stone pillars, attempting to knock them down.

However, those pillars were deeply rooted in the ground and seemingly bestowed with a supernatural power. No matter how the dozens of Antlered Silver Lions rammed them, they could only shake the stone pillars, none of which fell.

"Phew..."

Liu Qingqing and Liu Liehu both let out a long breath upon entering the Stone Forest, realizing only then that their clothes were soaked with cold sweat. Looking at each other, they saw the relief of having escaped a catastrophe in each other's eyes.

"Junior Brother Fang, Junior Sister Liu, Junior Brother Liu, are you all okay? That's great!"

Seeing the three of them enter the Stone Forest unharmed, Huang Miao, who had been worried about them, was both shocked and elated.

"Junior Brother Fang, right before I entered the Stone Forest, I saw those Spirit Beasts had already reached you, but I didn't turn back to help you. I... I really deserve to die!"

Hou Ziping, though temporarily safe after entering the Stone Forest, couldn't feel happy at all. Instead, he was filled with regret and self-reproach. He thought about how Fang Bai had helped him several times in the past, but when Fang Bai was in danger, he had chosen his own life over helping, thus repaying kindness with ingratitude. Had Fang Bai perished, he would have been consumed with guilt for the rest of his life.

Now, seeing Fang Bai appear before him, amidst his astonishment and joy, he felt even more remorseful and said to Fang Bai with teary eyes.

"That's enough, Senior Brother Hou. Seeking benefits and avoiding harm is human nature; don't feel guilty about it. Under those circumstances, the danger was indeed great. Had I been in your shoes, I might have made the same decision!"

Fang Bai patted Hou Ziping's shoulder, smiling indifferently, without any blame.

Hou Ziping straightened his back sharply, slapping his chest hard, and vowed loudly to the sky, "If such a thing ever happens again, I will never abandon Senior Brother Fang. Otherwise, may I be torn apart by Spirit Beasts, meeting a terrible end!"

Chapter 982: The Martial Arts Techniques on the Stone Pillar

Hou Ziping's words made Huang Miao feel somewhat guilty, and she sighed, "It's also my fault. As the captain, I should have been the last to retreat. Thankfully, all of you are safe, otherwise..."

Fang Bai waved his hand and said, "Senior Sister Huang, that's in the past now, let's not bring it up. We should think about how to deal with the spirit beasts outside!"

Huang Miao realized that, indeed, even though the five of them had entered the Stone Forest and were temporarily safe, with dozens of spirit beasts surrounding them, leaving would not be easy.

All being martial artists, being trapped for three to five days was bearable. However, if those spirit beasts outside the Stone Forest refused to disperse, they would be in trouble.

After all, though they were martial artists far surpassing ordinary people, they hadn't cultivated to the realm where they could go without food and water.

If they were trapped for ten to fifteen days, even if the spirit beasts couldn't harm them, they would struggle to survive due to hunger and thirst.

Thus, they could only pray that the dozens of Antlered Silver Lions wouldn't be able to break through the Stone Forest and would eventually lose patience and leave.

However, Huang Miao didn't believe the thick and sturdy stone pillars forming the Stone Forest could withstand the continuous ramming of the Antlered Silver Lions.

Listening to the constant roars of spirit beasts from outside the Stone Forest and feeling the vibrations from their impacts on the stone pillars, Huang Miao and the others looked solemn, remaining silent, contemplating a way to escape.

Upon entering the Stone Forest, Fang Bai discovered that it was actually a defensive formation. Although it wasn't a high-rank formation, it was more than sufficient to counter the attacks of the dozens of spirit beasts outside.

Fang Bai knew that this defensive formation hadn't been set up by the Bitao Martial Academy, as even Ren Jingbo, the dean of the academy, lacked the ability to set up such a formation.

The formation was made up of one hundred and eight stone pillars, most of which were covered with a thick layer of moss, clearly indicating their ancient age.

From this, one could deduce that the formation was set up many years ago by a powerful expert knowledgeable in formations.

And the expert who had set up this formation had to be at least of Vast Level in terms of cultivation realm.

Once the formation was set up, those stone pillars, which could have been easily knocked down by the Antlered Silver Lions, seemed to have been endowed with magical power, becoming incredibly sturdy.

Fang Bai's gaze soon fell on a few stone pillars within the Stone Forest.

He walked up to one of them, extended his right hand, and gently exerted effort to scrape off a layer of moss from the pillar.

Beneath the moss, many inscriptions were engraved.

As his gaze swept over these inscriptions, Fang Bai realized that they comprised a set of martial arts techniques suitable for cultivation by Vast Level martial artists.

Looking at other pillars, each pillar bore a set of martial arts techniques for the cultivation of Vast Level martial artists.

Noticing Fang Bai's unusual behavior, Huang Miao and the others stood behind him and also looked at the stone pillars. As they did so, they quickly became captivated by the martial arts techniques, utterly enchanted and irresistibly drawn in.

"These... these martial arts techniques are so profound..."

After a long while, Huang Miao murmured to herself, yet her eyes couldn't bear to move away from the stone pillar in front of her.

"Indeed profound. I only understand a little, but I have already benefited greatly. I wonder who engraved these martial arts techniques here."

Hou Ziping interjected.

"Senior Brother Hou, just like you, I only have a vague understanding. The person who engraved these Martial Arts Techniques must have been an incredibly powerful Martial Artist."

Liu Liehu scratched his head as he spoke.

Although Liu Liehu's talent was significantly stronger than Hou Ziping's, having received Fang Bai's guidance in Liuhu Village, his strength was the weakest among the five. However, his comprehension of the Martial Arts Techniques on the stone pillar was no less than that of Huang Miao and Hou Ziping.

Speaking of which, he glanced at Liu Qingqing beside him and asked with hope, "Sister, you must have understood a lot, right?"

"Yes, I understood quite a bit..."

Liu Qingqing said.

Liu Qingqing was naturally intelligent and possessed an Innate Spiritual Root. Moreover, having received careful instruction from Fang Bai, her understanding and perception of the Martial Dao were incomparable to ordinary Martial Artists, so it was natural for her to understand a large part of the Martial Arts Techniques on the stone pillar.

Fang Bai had merely glanced over the techniques inscribed on the stone pillar, completely uninterested.

For Fang Bai, who was once the Immortal Emperor and knew thousands of Martial Arts Techniques, the techniques left by the Vast Level Martial Artist simply did not catch his eye.

Seeing that Huang Miao and the others were immersed in the techniques on the stone pillar, Fang Bai did not disturb them and walked alone towards the center of the Stone Forest.

Since the Stone Forest was a Defensive Array, the center of it was likely the location of the Array Eye.

Right as Fang Bai entered the Stone Forest, he sensed fluctuations of Spiritual Energy from the Array Eye, indicating that there could be Cultivation Resources there, and it was possible that the Vast Level Martial Artist who left the techniques on the stone pillar had fallen there.

The Martial Artist who set up the Stone Forest array clearly did not want anyone approaching the central area. Inside the array, a Mini Confusion Array was also set up.

If a Martial Artist who did not understand formations approached the center of the Stone Forest, they would feel dizzy and lose their direction, wandering in circles and ending up back where they started.

This Mini Confusion Array seemed merely like a decoration in Fang Bai's eyes, having no effect whatsoever. He walked slowly, bypassing the stout stone pillars, and soon arrived at the central area of the Stone Forest.

As Fang Bai had predicted, at the center of the forest was a circular space about ten feet in diameter, upon which was built a Cultivation Platform about three feet high.

Around the Cultivation Platform, thousands of Essence Stones were piled into a Mini Gathering Array, designed to gather the Essence Energy from Heaven and Earth, thus making this small platform the place with the richest Essence Energy in the entire Stone Array.

On the Cultivation Platform, an elderly man dressed in hemp sat cross-legged.

Though the vitality of this elderly man in hemp had long ceased, because he was situated on the Cultivation Platform, bathed in ample Heaven and Earth Origin Energy, his facial features still looked vivid, as though he had not died but had simply entered a state of forgetful Cultivation.

Fang Bai walked up to the Cultivation Platform, eyed the man in hemp for a moment, then examined the Mini Gathering Array and roughly estimated that the man in hemp had died about a hundred years ago.

Over these one hundred years, disciples from the Bitao Martial Academy entered the mountain annually for practice, yet none had managed to reach the center of the Stone Forest, hence no one had discovered the demise of the man in hemp.

Otherwise, the thousands of Essence Stones piled around the Cultivation Platform would have been divided up by those practicing disciples, and even the body of the man in hemp might have been destroyed.

Currently in dire need of Cultivation Resources, Fang Bai would not let go of even the limited number of Essence Stones.

However, Fang Bai did not take away all the Essence Stones; instead, he took most of them and used the small portion left to re-establish a Mini Gathering Array, to prevent the body of the man in hemp from decaying too quickly.

Chapter 983: Mid-grade Elixir

When it came to formations, Fang Bai was truly an expert among experts, a master among masters. Although he only used a few thousand Essence Stones to set up a Mini Gathering Array, the effect of gathering Essence Energy was much stronger than that of the Gathering Essence Array the mysterious old man had set up during his lifetime.

"I may have taken your Essence Stones, but I also set up a better Gathering Essence Array for you, so I've done right by you."

Fang Bai collected the few thousand Essence Stones into his Spatial Ring. Seeing a slight bulge at the waist of the mysterious old man, his heart stirred and he walked over to crouch before him, feeling several jade bottles from the man's waist.

These kinds of jade bottles were usually used for storing elixirs. As Fang Bai opened the lid of the jade bottles, he immediately sensed streams of Essence Energy emanating from within them.

There were a total of eight jade bottles: four contained Gathering Yuan Pills, two Explosive Essence Pills, and two Healing Pills.

The Gathering Yuan Pills could be used to gather Essence Energy and were indispensable auxiliary resources for a martial artist's cultivation.

Explosive Essence Pills could provide martial artists with an instantaneous boost in power, playing a surprising and vital role in combat.

However, the Explosive Essence Pills also had significant side effects. After their effects ended, martial artists would feel almost drained for a period of time, and if strong enemies were to attack, they would find themselves in a dangerous situation.

As for the Healing Pills, as the name implies, they were very effective for healing the injuries of martial artists.

Therefore, these three types of elixirs were necessary for martial artists.

What delighted Fang Bai was that these three types of elixirs were all of mid-grade quality, far surpassing low-grade elixirs in both value and medicinal effect.

In the True Martial Realm, a single mid-grade elixir could certainly provoke a frenzy among martial artists.

For a fourth-tier Sect like Bitao Martial Academy, the elixirs they usually used were low-grade, and mid-grade elixirs were considered a luxury that remained tantalizingly out of reach for the disciples of Bitao Martial Academy.

Even for low-grade elixirs, every year Bitao Martial Academy had to bring a large amount of Cultivation Resources to Thousand Lakes Capital City to seek the help of pharmacists to refine them or to exchange them at the Cultivation Resource Exchange Market.

The Thousand Lakes Capital City was home to not only third-tier Sects but also gathered some pharmacists and artifact refiners. If martial artists in Thousand Lakes Country needed elixirs or Spiritual Artifacts, they would make their way there.

However, the pharmacists and artifact refiners in the Thousand Lakes Capital City were not of high level, only capable of producing low-grade elixirs or low-grade Spiritual Artifacts.

Although mid-grade elixirs were for sale at the capital city's Cultivation Resource Exchange Market, the prices were exorbitant and beyond what ordinary Sects or martial artists could afford.

This demonstrated just how precious the eight bottles of mid-grade elixirs that Fang Bai had acquired were.

Of course, with Fang Bai's current cultivation realm, as long as he had mid-grade Spiritual Medicines, he could refine mid-grade elixirs, and they would be even more outstanding than those refined by pharmacists of the same level.

While Bitao Martial Academy did cultivate some Spiritual Medicine, they were all low-grade. Even if Fang Bai wanted to refine mid-grade Spiritual Medicines to aid in cultivation, it would be equivalent to a skilled cook with no rice.

Fang Bai put the eight bottles of mid-grade elixirs he had collected into his Spatial Ring. However, after thinking for a moment, he took out two bottles of Explosive Essence Pills and two bottles of Healing Pills, planning to give them to Huang Miao and the other three.

Because whether it was Explosive Essence Pills or Healing Pills, they weren't very useful for Fang Bai, but for Huang Miao and the others, they were extremely beneficial.

Even if they didn't need it for themselves, in the future, they could take it to the Cultivation Resource Exchange Market in the Thousand Lakes Capital City to exchange for the Cultivation Resources they needed.

When Fang Bai left the center of the Stone Forest and returned to Huang Miao and the other three, he found that each of them was seated in front of a stone pillar, eyes slightly closed, True Yuan flowing around their bodies—they had already entered a Cultivation State.

Fang Bai didn't disturb them and flashed out of the Stone Forest.

Outside the Stone Forest, those dozens of Antlered Silver Lions had still not left.

The Antlered Silver Lions were very intelligent; they knew that although Fang Bai and the others had hidden in the Stone Forest, they couldn't possibly stay inside for too long. Thus, they patiently waited around the Stone Forest, biding their time until their prey was driven to leave due to hunger and thirst.

When Fang Bai's figure appeared outside the Stone Forest, the Antlered Silver Lions became extremely excited, thinking that the human Martial Artists had been unable to endure staying within the Stone Forest.

However, when they realized that only Fang Bai had come out, they became furious.

So many Antlered Silver Lions, but only Fang Bai as prey—how could that be enough for them to share?

The enraged Antlered Silver Lions roared to the sky, but not one advanced to attack Fang Bai. They planned to first surround Fang Bai, preventing his escape, then patiently wait for the other four human Martial Artists to appear, and feast on their flesh together.

But what was unbearable for those Antlered Silver Lions was that the human Martial Artist not only showed no fear of them but also walked toward them with a face full of scornful, mocking smiles.

The human Martial Artist walked until he was only about a dozen meters away from them then stopped, lifting his right hand and casually flicking his fingers at them.

This provocative gesture immediately agitated the dozens of Antlered Silver Lions. Their eyes flashed with a cold light as they took on a charging stance, ready to launch an all-out assault at the signal of their leader, to kill and devour the despicable human Martial Artist.

"Roar!"

The strongest of the Antlered Silver Lions, the leader, let out a deep roar. Then one of the Antlered Silver Lions beside it shook its large body, bowed its massive head down, and aimed its antlered horns straight at Fang Bai.

"Whoosh!"

Like an arrow released from a bowstring, the Antlered Silver Lion launched itself at Fang Bai with high speed, bringing with it a wailing and stirring wind.

With the speed of that Antlered Silver Lion, the dozen-meter distance was closed in the blink of an eye, almost reaching Fang Bai.

Fang Bai stood as straight as a javelin, facing the fierce charge of the Antlered Silver Lion without a trace of fear or attempt to dodge. Suddenly, he lunged forward with both hands, and just as the Antlered Silver Lion was about to slam into his chest, he firmly grasped its two sharp antlers on top of its head.

Originally, the Antlered Silver Lion had not taken Fang Bai seriously at all, thinking that its charge would easily pierce through his body. But when Fang Bai's hands gripped its antlers, the beast felt as though it had collided with a small mountain.

The small mountain stood unmoved, and the momentum of the lion's charge came to an abrupt halt, while it felt that the hands of the human Martial Artist, clasping its antlers, were like incredibly tough steel ropes and iron locks, firmly binding them and rendering its struggle futile.

The Antlered Silver Lion, feeling humiliated, became extremely furious. It tossed its head upwards fiercely, hoping to fling Fang Bai up into the sky, but instead, Fang Bai used the momentum of this flick to leap up, flipping through the air before landing on its back.

Mounted by a human Martial Artist, the Antlered Silver Lion grew even more enraged. It spun in place, madly bucking and shaking its body in an attempt to fling Fang Bai to the ground, before viciously crushing him beneath its paws.

Chapter 984: Suppressing the Realm, Clash Head-On!

Fang Bai chuckled softly, his hands tightly grasping the silver mane on the back of the Antlered Silver Lion, no matter what the beast did, he remained firm and unshakable atop it.

Moments later, the Antlered Silver Lion seemed to have exhausted itself, its legs gave way, and it lay prostrate on the ground, breathing heavily through its mouth and nose, a stark contrast to its wild demeanor just before.

"Let's see if you can still be wild now!"

Fang Bai laughed heartily, leaping off the back of the Antlered Silver Lion, and then grabbing one of its right legs, he hurled it forcefully into the air.

Fang Bai possessed the Chaos True Body, his physical strength was immense. The Antlered Silver Lion, although it weighed a thousand kilograms, felt like a small toy in his hands. Its massive body was lifted off the ground and hurled toward a group of nearby Antlered Silver Lions, crashing down like a small mountain with stunning force, causing the others to panic and scatter.

"Boom!"

The Antlered Silver Lion, thrown by Fang Bai, smashed down from the sky into a group of its kind, instantly crushing two who had no time to escape. They lay on the ground, bones shattered, howling in pain.

Spirit Beasts, who prey on weakness but fear strength, saw how effortlessly Fang Bai had subdued one of their own. The rest of the Antlered Silver Lions, hesitant to attack, spread out tens of meters away, circling Fang Bai in the middle, growling lowly, eying him warily.

The Spirit Beasts did not dare to attack Fang Bai, but that didn't mean Fang Bai was content just to stand off.

Barehanded, Fang Bai strode toward the nearest Antlered Silver Lion, which, intimidated, quickly backed away.

As it moved, so did Fang Bai.

With one step, Fang Bai was already twenty meters away; by the second step, he was right in front of that Antlered Silver Lion.

His speed was almost inconceivably godlike at this point, the Antlered Silver Lion hardly had time to react. All it saw was a blur, then an image of a fist emitting the sound of a tiger's roar and thunder rapidly enlarging in its pupils before a "crack" echoed in its skull, and excruciating pain overwhelmed its consciousness.

To the other Antlered Silver Lions, it appeared that their kin had been struck on the head by Fang Bai's punch, blown back several meters, then collapsed to the ground, dead, blood oozing from every orifice.

With a single Tiger Roar Thunder Fist, Fang Bai had unleashed a force of thousands of kilograms. Although the Antlered Silver Lions had tough skin and strong bones, none could withstand this astonishing blow; their skulls were simply smashed by Fang Bai's fist, killing them instantly.

With one punch, Fang Bai had killed a lion, demonstrating his formidable power. Though he had still not used his full strength, the dozens of surrounding Antlered Silver Lions were profoundly shaken, their wariness turning into fright.

Perhaps realizing they were no match for this human martial artist, the dozens of Antlered Silver Lions began to feel the urge to retreat.

The leader of the Antlered Silver Lions let out a nearly sobbing growl, and then, one by one, they turned around, poised to flee.

"I haven't had a good fight in a long time, today seems like a perfect opportunity to enjoy myself!"

Fang Bai declared loudly, then employing the Dragon Soaring to the Heavens Technique, he moved like a darting dragon, charging towards the Antlered Silver Lions that were trying to escape.

His current cultivation level might not unleash one percent of the Dragon Soaring to the Heavens Technique's speed, but it was still incredibly fast.

His body shot out like a cannonball just fired from its barrel, emitting a whooshing sound as it sliced through the air, and he plunged directly into a group of dozens of Antlered Silver Lions.

Whenever he reached an Antlered Silver Lion, he threw a punch, then immediately pivoted towards the next target, and punched again.

His form wove in and out among the dozens of Antlered Silver Lions, becoming a faint blur. With each punch thrown, accompanied by the sound of a tiger's roar and thunder, an Antlered Silver Lion would be sent flying, only to die tragically upon falling.

Fang Bai's heroics terrified the Antlered Silver Lions. They began to scatter haphazardly, each one fleeing without concern for the others.

Fang Bai let out a low roar, which when it reached the ears of the scattered fleeing Antlered Silver Lions, seemed like a siren's song, making them lose their self-consciousness, turn around, and furiously attack Fang Bai.

Fang Bai controlled the dozens of Antlered Silver Lions to attack him by using the Beast Taming Scripture, seeking to use this opportunity to hone his combat strength, awaken his potential, and achieve a higher cultivation level and realm.

Dozens of formidable Antlered Silver Lions, with red eyes and crazed expressions, lunged at Fang Bai from all directions, like mountains collapsing and thunders roaring, the ground trembling— a sight incredibly fearsome.

If it had been Huang Miao and the others facing the onslaught of dozens of Antlered Silver Lions, they had no other choice but to turn and run, and whether they could escape was uncertain.

But Fang Bai alone faced the attack of dozens of Antlered Silver Lions with eagerness, fists ready, his expression excited.

"Hey!"

Fang Bai locked eyes with the leading Antlered Silver Lion and let out a growl. He moved forward to meet it head-on, intending to see whose body was stronger.

"Bang!"

The collision of man and beast produced a muffled sound. Fang Bai's small body burst with a force several times stronger than the Antlered Silver Lion, sending it flying away.

Fang Bai's body slightly trembled, his clothes slightly torn, but he remained unharmed.

In contrast, the Antlered Silver Lion was beyond dead. Its head, as large as a millstone, had collapsed in the front, clearly indicating that its bones had completely shattered.

Setting aside other strengths, just in a contest of physical endurance, Fang Bai thoroughly defeated the Antlered Silver Lion.

"A low-level Spirit Beast like this made me feel some pain! My physical strength isn't nearly comparable to what it was at my peak in my previous life!"

Fang Bai rubbed the slightly sore spot on his chest and chuckled wryly, shaking his head.

In his previous life, even though his physique was not as robust as the Chaos True Body, Fang Bai was incredibly strong. For a Spirit Beast like the Antlered Silver Lion, he didn't even have to lift a finger. Just a breath of Essence Energy could sweep it up like a fierce wind sweeping leaves, sending it flying to its doom.

"Sigh..."

Fang Bai let out a long sigh. After a circulation of Essence Energy, the slight pain in his chest disappeared.

"Next one!"

Fang Bai's gaze settled on another charging Antlered Silver Lion. His fighting spirit soared, his eyes sparkled with an electric gleam. He stepped forward to meet it, and with a flying kick, sent the Antlered Silver Lion hurtling through the air.

Dozens of Spirit Beasts, one after another, charged at Fang Bai. They attacked with bites and claws, employing various tactics to assault Fang Bai, giving him no chance to catch his breath.

Chapter 985: Spirit Core

If Fang Bai had released his full strength, even without using the Beast Taming Scripture, he could have easily dispatched these dozens of Antlered Silver Lions. However, such a one-sided overwhelming advantage wouldn't have allowed him to experience the exhilarating and intense thrill of battle.

Therefore, Fang Bai deliberately suppressed his Cultivation Level, placing himself amidst the near-mad onslaught of dozens of Antlered Silver Lions, continuously roaring as he fiercely battled with them.

The site of Fang Bai's fierce battle with the Antlered Silver Lions was far from the Stone Forest, and thus, the commotion here did not alarm Huang Miao and the other three who were deeply engrossed in comprehending Martial Arts Techniques within the Stone Forest.

By suppressing his own Cultivation Level, Fang Bai's current strength was equivalent to a High-Rank Martial Artist at the Desolate Level.

With such strength, if he were to face a single Antlered Silver Lion, he naturally could kill the opponent with ease, but facing the attacks from dozens of Antlered Silver Lions from all directions, there were moments of oversight, making it difficult for him to cope.

The Antlered Silver Lions, controlled by Fang Bai's Beast Taming Scripture, had already lost their self-awareness, only knowing to relentlessly launch the most ferocious attacks on Fang Bai, completely disregarding their own life and death.

Such Spirit Beasts were undoubtedly the most terrifying.

Soon, Fang Bai tasted bitterness.

He punched and sent a frontal Antlered Silver Lion flying, only to suffer a sudden and powerful collision from another Antlered Silver Lion from behind.

The one that struck Fang Bai was the leader of the pack of Antlered Silver Lions, with the strongest body and the most formidable attacking power.

Although Fang Bai's body was exceptionally tough, the majority of his attention was on the Antlered Silver Lion before him, so he was solidly hit by the leader approaching from behind.

The leader's antler on top of its head instantly snapped, and its massive body was flung away, struggling for a moment upon landing, then gradually grew silent and motionless, devoid of life.

Despite the leader of the Antlered Silver Lions dying, it had caused Fang Bai some injuries.

Under its collision, Fang Bai's figure was propelled forward, the clothes on his back torn, bloodied and bruised.

Fang Bai's strong body had been injured, which showed just how powerful the leader of the Antlered Silver Lions' collision had been.

Fang Bai stumbled to the ground, and before he steadied himself, two more Antlered Silver Lions charging from the left and right sides simultaneously collided with his body.

The pincer attack of the two Spirit Beasts caused Fang Bai's blood to surge and his internal organs to shake, nearly resulting in internal injuries, adding two new wounds to his body.

However, Fang Bai's Chaos True Body was unmatched through the ages, endowed with an astonishing Self-Healing ability. As long as he wasn't instantly crushed by his opponent, losing both body and soul, he could rely on this Self-Healing capability to recover.

Therefore, the injuries he had sustained were really nothing much.

The wounds on his body caused Fang Bai to feel a twinge of pain, but that pain made him even more determined to fight.

He let out a loud laugh, clenched his fists tightly, and once again faced an Antlered Silver Lion charging at him...

Dozens of breaths later, the scene finally calmed down, with only the sound of the wind howling across the plain and Fang Bai's heavy gasps lingering in the air.

Fang Bai had killed dozens of Antlered Silver Lions, relying almost entirely on his formidable physical body. However, this type of pure hard-fought battle took a significant toll on his physical stamina.

After punching away the last Antlered Silver Lion, Fang Bai felt his whole body sore and weak, his fists powerless, and he collapsed to the ground, gasping for air in huge, labored breaths.

Within a few hundred meters radius centered on him, the bodies of dozens of Antlered Silver Lions were scattered about, with hardly a single one intact, the air filled with a thick scent of blood.

Fang Bai's body was covered in wounds, his clothes torn and ragged, failing to cover his body.

After a brief rest, Fang Bai began to sit cross-legged and circulated his cultivation technique to regulate his breath.

His physical strength had been greatly depleted, but it recovered quickly. In less than a hundred breaths, he felt his strength return to his body, full of vigor once again, and the external injuries on his body had scabbed over.

Taking out a new set of Inner Court disciple's attire from his Spatial Ring, Fang Bai moved his body a little and felt an additional strand of formidable strength between his muscles and bones.

If he could only shatter the skull of an Antlered Silver Lion with one punch before, now he was confident he could crush the bones of the entire body of an Antlered Silver Lion in one fell swoop.

"After this battle, my physical body has become much stronger. Such intense fighting where one exchanges blows directly and stakes one's life is indeed the best way to enhance the strength of the body."

Fang Bai felt some new changes in his physical body, a trace of joy showed on his face as he murmured to himself.

"These Spirit Beasts, if taken back to the Bitao Martial Academy by Huang Miao and the others, would surely be an incredible achievement and could be exchanged for many cultivation resources. It's just a

pity there were no mid-tier Spirit Beasts, which would have been of great use to me. Let's keep looking, since there are mid-tier Spirit Beasts in the core area of the Bitao Mountain Range, we are bound to encounter them."

Fang Bai thought to himself as he looked at the corpses of the Antlered Silver Lions scattered on the ground.

A Spirit Beast is only considered to have advanced to mid-tier if it has lived for over five hundred years.

The biggest difference between a mid-tier Spirit Beast and a low-tier one is the formation of a Spirit Core within its brain.

A Spirit Core is formed as the Spirit Beast continuously absorbs Heaven and Earth Origin Energy and fuses it with its own essence blood.

Spirit Beasts with a Spirit Core absorb Heaven and Earth Origin Energy faster than ordinary Spirit Beasts, and thus their strength advances quicker.

Mid-tier Spirit Beasts are merely the weakest existences among those with a Spirit Core, but within the Bitao Mountain Range, they are unrivaled kings.

The Spirit Core of a Spirit Beast is extremely valuable.

For ordinary Martial Artists, the greatest value of a Spirit Core lies in being able to exchange it for many cultivation resources at the Cultivation Resource Exchange Market.

For Pharmacists and Artifact Refiners, using a Spirit Core to exchange for cultivation resources is, frankly, a crime.

Because if a corresponding Spirit Core is added during the process of refining elixirs or Spiritual Artifacts, it can greatly enhance the effects, making the elixirs more potent and the Spiritual Artifacts stronger.

From this, it is evident that Fang Bai was eager to encounter a mid-tier Spirit Beast, then kill it and retrieve its Spirit Core.

This was Fang Bai's greatest wish for this mountain training.

After standing in place and reflecting for a moment, Fang Bai suddenly sensed the fluctuations of Essence Energy coming from the Stone Forest, indicating that Huang Miao and the others were about to end their Cultivation State.

Fang Bai did not want Huang Miao and the rest to know that he had killed the Spirit Beasts, so he quickly re-entered the Stone Forest.

"Brother Fang, where did you go? When I came out of my cultivation state just now, I didn't see you nearby, and I thought... I thought..."

Liu Qingqing, overjoyed to see Fang Bai, began to say but stopped midway, seemingly realizing the inappropriateness of what she was about to imply.

"You thought something happened to me, right?"

Fang Bai, with a smile in his eyes, asked Liu Qingqing in return.

Liu Qingqing fidgeted, her face flushed red, and she didn't know how to respond.

Fang Bai let out a hearty laugh and decided not to tease her further, saying, "I was bored just now, so I wandered around the Stone Forest, almost getting lost. Somehow, I found my way back here."

Chapter 986: No Connection

"Could this Stone Forest really be a Formation?"

After hearing Fang Bai's words, Huang Miao looked around and suddenly felt that the Stone Forest was filled with a sense of mystery.

Fang Bai nodded in agreement. "I also think it might be a Formation."

Huang Miao frowned, muttering, "It must not be an ordinary person who could set up this Stone Forest Formation and carve such sophisticated Martial Arts Techniques on these stone pillars. This person must be both an Array Master and a formidable Martial Artist."

Hou Ziping's eyes sparkled, his expression excited as he said, "We entered the mountain for an adventure, seeking opportunities. If we could meet this powerful individual, wouldn't that be a great opportunity?"

Liu Qingqing and Liu Liehu also perked up, excitement clear in their expressions.

Huang Miao sighed. "If I'm not mistaken, this powerful individual must have already perished. And this Stone Forest is likely his burial ground. He set up this Formation to protect his body after death. And his leaving behind these Martial Arts Techniques on the stone pillars might have been his way of ensuring his Cultivation Level wouldn't be lost, left for someone fated to find."

Liu Liehu said, "So, this could be a Martial Artist's Remnant we've found? Wow, we should meticulously search this Stone Forest, maybe we'll discover some treasures left by this powerful individual!"

As he said this, he rubbed his hands and looked around, though after hearing Huang Miao's explanation of the Stone Forest being a Formation, he cautiously refrained from wandering off lest he get lost within it.

Huang Miao turned to Fang Bai and asked, "Junior Brother Fang, when you were walking through this Stone Forest earlier, did you find anything?"

Fang Bai shook his head. "No."

Fang Bai had found some Cultivation Resources left by the fallen Martial Artist, which put him in the man's debt, and he did not wish for anyone else to disturb his remains.

Therefore, he decided to keep it to himself that he had encountered the fallen Martial Artist at the heart of the Stone Forest.

Since the Stone Forest was originally a Formation and Fang Bai had just set up a Gathering Essence Array at the spot of the Martial Artist's demise, stacking two Formations, it would be impossible to reach the heart of the Stone Forest without being an Array Master.

Huang Miao naturally didn't suspect Fang Bai's words. After thinking it over, he suggested, "Since this place might be a Martial Artist's Remnant, we can't afford to overlook it. But none of us are versed in Formations; it's best we stick together and search. That way, even if we get trapped, at least we can figure it out together."

After a pause, he continued, "If we find a Martial Artist's Remnant and discover any treasures, the five of us could share them equally. How does that sound?"

Hou Ziping, Liu Qingqing, and Liu Liehu naturally had no objections.

Fang Bai merely smiled faintly, raising no objections either, thinking to himself that even if Huang Miao and the others could locate the fallen Martial Artist, the few bottles of mid-grade Elixirs that were on him were already in his possession, and there were no other items left.

Fang Bai planned to find time to give those Elixirs to the siblings Liu Qingqing and Liu Liehu, who could either use them or exchange them for other Cultivation Resources in the future.

As for Huang Miao and Hou Ziping, having made their acquaintances, Fang Bai was not inclined to short them, and would definitely provide some benefits to them during this adventure.

The five of them moved cautiously around the Stone Forest, treading carefully, but to their astonishment, they kept returning to their original location, unable to access the heart of the Stone Forest.

Huang Miao and the others exchanged glances, their sense of mystery and awe towards the Stone Forest deepening.

"What a strange Formation! It seems this Martial Artist's Remnant is not fated for us!"

Huang Miao sighed helplessly.

Although Hou Ziping felt reluctant, he knew that they weren't capable of breaking the Formation and said with a bitter smile, "Since it's not destined, we shouldn't waste our time here any longer, let's leave the Stone Forest and see. If those Antlered Silver Lions are still around, then we'll continue to hide inside the Stone Forest; if they've left, let's try our luck elsewhere!"

Huang Miao nodded, "We can only do so."

The five of them circled around several stone pillars and filed out of the Stone Forest, only to see, at first glance, that the ground not far outside was strewn with the bodies of Antlered Silver Lions.

"What..."

"What happened?"

"So many Antlered Silver Lions' bodies!"

"My god! How did they die?"

Huang Miao, Hou Ziping, Liu Qingqing, and Liu Liehu stared blankly at the bodies of the Antlered Silver Lions, their faces filled with shock and disbelief.

Before, the five of them had been attacked by dozens of Antlered Silver Lions and had been forced to flee into the Stone Forest to hide. They thought that the lions might besiege them for a long time and wouldn't easily leave, and they also worried that they might eventually die of hunger and thirst while trapped in the Stone Forest.

However, what they had never expected was that the dozens of Antlered Silver Lions, which had been causing them fearful concern, had all died around the Stone Forest, effectively resolving their worries.

What puzzled them was who exactly could have killed so many Antlered Silver Lions, creatures with formidable attack power comparable to that of a mid-level Spirit Beast. Was it a Spirit Beast or a human Martial Artist?

If it was a Spirit Beast, that would be plausible; this was the core area of the Bitao Mountain Range where mid-level Spirit Beasts existed, and it was not impossible for them to appear here and attack those Antlered Silver Lions.

However, it seemed unlikely that a single mid-level Spirit Beast could kill dozens of Antlered Silver Lions by itself—it would be more plausible if several mid-level Spirit Beasts attacked together.

And if it were a human Martial Artist, how powerful must he be? Even if Ren Jingbo, the dean of the Bitao Martial Academy, came in person, he likely wouldn't have the capability to kill dozens of these Spirit Beasts alone.

After all, Ren Jingbo was a Desolate Level Perfection Martial Artist.

Huang Miao, Hou Ziping, and the others exchanged glances, unable to comprehend the scene before them.

They approached several of the slain Antlered Silver Lions' bodies, crouched down, and upon examining their injuries, confirmed that the lions had been killed by a human Martial Artist.

"Who would've thought that there'd be such a powerful individual deep in the Bitao Mountain Range."

Huang Miao drew in a breath of cold air, feeling both excited and fearful.

The exciting part was, if they could meet this powerful individual and receive his guidance, it would be a tremendous opportunity—his own strength might greatly increase as a result.

The fearful part was, if this powerful individual was a malevolent and murderous person, then meeting him could spell a life-and-death catastrophe for the five of them.

"If only we could bring all these Spirit Beasts back to the Bitao Martial Academy!"

Hou Ziping's gaze swept over the numerous bodies of the Antlered Silver Lions on the ground, and he excitedly said, "These Spirit Beasts, most of which are around three to four hundred years old, could each be exchanged at the Bitao Martial Academy for thousands of Essence Stones and dozens of Elixirs. There are dozens of them! What a pity... what a pity..."

Chapter 987: Meeting Tu Hu Again

Dozens of Antlered Silver Lions, although exchangeable for a considerable amount of Cultivation Resources, weighed a thousand catties each. Moreover, considering the long journey back to Bitao Martial Academy and the numerous dangers on the way, it was not easy to bring back even one, let alone dozens.

For their upcoming cultivation experiences, they could only leave the bodies of these dozens of Antlered Silver Lions behind, which made Hou Ziping feel regretful.

"There's actually not much to regret..."

Huang Miao's eyes suddenly lit up, fixing upon the pair of antlers on the head of one of the Antlered Silver Lions. Her right hand wielded the Willow Leaf Saber, slashing fiercely.

"Spurt!"

A flash of silver light and a soft sound later, a pair of antlers fell neatly from the top of the Antlered Silver Lion's head.

The antlers of an Antlered Silver Lion were known for being extremely hard and sharp, comparable to Hundred Refined Fine Steel. However, after the death of an Antlered Silver Lion, for a short period, its antlers became extremely fragile and could easily be severed with a sword.

If a little more time had passed, the antlers of the Antlered Silver Lion would have become hard and sharp again, and Huang Miao's Willow Leaf Saber, even if broken, would not have been able to cut them off.

"The most useful part of an Antlered Silver Lion is these antlers. It's said that grinding these antlers into powder and adding them to the forging process can make weapons tougher and sharper..."

As Huang Miao spoke, she continuously swung a pair of Willow Leaf Sabers, and with each swing, an Antlered Silver Lion's antler was cut off.

"Don't just stand there, everyone join in cutting the antlers! Although we can't take the bodies of these dozens of Antlered Silver Lions, we can take their antlers! With these in hand, we can later exchange them for a lot of Cultivation Resources in the capital."

Huang Miao worked quickly and had harvested seven or eight pairs of Antlered Silver Lion antlers in the blink of an eye.

Hou Ziping, Liu Qingqing, and Liu Liehu also reacted, each drawing their own weapons and imitating Huang Miao to harvest the Antlered Silver Lions' antlers.

Fang Bai flipped his right hand, pulling out a dagger from his Spatial Ring and made a show of cutting a few pairs of antlers to hang at his waist.

Just as they were joyfully harvesting antlers, a Cultivation Team swooped in from afar with great speed.

This team originally consisted of ten members, but now only five remained, the other five having perished along the way.

The remaining five, each wielding a weapon, clothed in tattered garments, and covered in bloodstains, hadn't even reached them when an aggressive aura assaulted their senses.

"It's Senior Brother Tu and his team!"

Huang Miao looked up at the five fast-approaching members of the cultivation team, seeing that the leading person was none other than Tu Hu, the top-ranked Inner Court Disciple.

If this had been before their recent mountain expedition, Huang Miao would not have been afraid of Tu Hu. However, not long ago, Tu Hu had seriously injured Zhou Tong, who ranked eighth on the Core Disciple power list, displaying strength far beyond that of an Inner Court Disciple, which made Huang Miao realize the considerable gap between them and brought about a sense of awe.

The sudden appearance of Tu Hu and his companions here made Huang Miao feel a mix of tension and worry.

The bodies of the dozens of dead Antlered Silver Lions were undeniably tempting for any team out on a mountain training expedition. Once Tu Hu and his companions saw these bodies, they couldn't possibly remain unmoved.

Moreover, among teams that entered the mountains for cultivation training, they were allowed to compete against each other for resources. If Senior Brother Tu and his group decided to forcibly monopolize the corpses of the Antlered Silver Lions, Huang Miao felt that her group of five would not be able to contend with them.

At this moment, Senior Brother Tu, although appearing wounded with his clothes stained with patches of blood, exuded an unyielding fighting spirit and an intense desire for battle, emitting an unstoppable aura that imposed an immense pressure on Huang Miao.

Huang Miao suddenly felt a sense of despair, believing that just Senior Brother Tu alone could defeat her group of five. If they were to try and snatch the Antlered Silver Lions, her group would definitely not be able to protect them.

Although Senior Brother Tu usually gave a good impression to Huang Miao, the value of several dozen Antlered Silver Lions, each with a lifespan of three to four hundred years, was not trivial. Huang Miao did not believe Senior Brother Tu could resist such temptation.

If Huang Miao were in Senior Brother Tu's position, she likely would not have shown mercy either, because what Senior Brother Tu was doing was not just for himself but also for his team members.

Huang Miao stopped her actions of harvesting the antlers from the Antlered Silver Lions. She clenched her Willow Leaf Twin Saber tightly, straightened up, and watched warily as Senior Brother Tu and his group approached.

Hou Ziping, Liu Qingqing, and Liu Liehu also tightly gripped their weapons and stared back at Senior Brother Tu and his group with guarded expressions.

Among the five, only Fang Bai appeared relaxed.

Fang Bai's Divine Sense radiated outward, able to detect any movement within a distance of nearly two thousand meters. He had known about the arrival of Senior Brother Tu's group long ago but had just not mentioned it.

Compared to the heightened tension and full alertness of Huang Miao and the others, Fang Bai was leisurely, seemingly not worried at all that Senior Brother Tu and his group would try to take what they had collected.

"Ha ha, Junior Sister Huang, we meet again!"

Senior Brother Tu, leading his four team members, approached Huang Miao and others. He first glanced at the corpses of the Antlered Silver Lions scattered around, then scanned the pairs of antlers hanging from the waists of Huang Miao's group, and laughed heartily.

Huang Miao, seeing a fiery eagerness in Senior Brother Tu's eyes, felt her heart skip a beat, knowing he harbored thoughts of plundering.

"Yes, Senior Brother Tu, what a coincidence indeed!"

Although Huang Miao was extremely nervous inside, she maintained a calm exterior, sizing up Senior Brother Tu and his group, and asked with surprise, "Senior Brother Tu, what happened to you all? Did you encounter a powerful Spirit Beast, or did you have a conflict with another cultivation team?"

Senior Brother Tu sighed and said, "Don't even mention it. A few hours ago, we encountered several Red-Tailed Long-Haired Wolves, each with a beast age of three to four hundred years, and barely managed to escape after a fierce battle."

The Red-Tailed Long-Haired Wolf, naturally born with a red tail, is an extremely agile and ferocious Spirit Beast. Although its body is much smaller than an Antlered Silver Lion of the same beast age, its attack power is not inferior.

It was very fortunate for Senior Brother Tu and his group to have escaped from the encirclement of the Red-Tailed Long-Haired Wolves, and with non-severe injuries at that.

"Junior Sister Huang, so many Antlered Silver Lions ... you didn't kill them, did you?"

Senior Brother Tu's gaze was fixed on Huang Miao's face, as if trying to discern some clues.

Huang Miao shook her head and said, "No, we were just attacked by these Antlered Silver Lions and hid in that Stone Forest over there. When we emerged, we found all these Antlered Silver Lions dead ... not sure which senior master took them down, unfortunately, we couldn't meet him!"

Hearing this, the eagerness in Senior Brother Tu's eyes intensified.

The sight of these dozens of Antlered Silver Lions' corpses already stirred a strong desire within him to claim them as his own. Meeting the senior master who had slain these dozens of Antlered Silver Lions and receiving some guidance from him would truly make this trip worthwhile.

Chapter 988: Excessive? I Don't Think So!

Tu Hu and Huang Miao exchanged pleasantries with each other; on the surface, both seemed amicable, but inside, each had their own schemes.

The team members standing behind Tu Hu and Huang Miao, however, were not nearly as courteous.

The four team members behind Tu Hu, upon seeing the corpses of the Antlered Silver Lions scattered all over the ground, already had their eyes gleaming with greed. Clenching their fists, they circulated their True Yuan, their fighting spirit rising, ready to battle with Huang Miao and her five companions.

In terms of numbers, Tu Hu's team and Huang Miao's team were evenly matched. Before Tu Hu revealed his true strength, the overall power of the two teams was fairly equal. But after Tu Hu defeated Core Disciple Zhou Tong, his team's confidence inflated tremendously; they didn't take Huang Miao's team seriously at all.

"Junior Sister Huang, I'd like to discuss something with you..."

After exchanging a few pleasantries with Huang Miao, Tu Hu's expression suddenly turned serious.

"What must come, will always come..."

Huang Miao knew Tu Hu was ready to lay his cards on the table and sighed inwardly, saying with a solemn expression, "Whatever it is, please speak directly, Senior Brother Tu."

Tu Hu pointed at the corpses of the Antlered Silver Lions on the ground, and said firmly, "We will take sixty percent of these Antlered Silver Lions' antlers, leaving forty percent for you. What do you think?"

As soon as Tu Hu made this proposal, not only did several members of Huang Miao's team show signs of outrage, but even the four members behind Tu Hu were also dissatisfied.

Huang Miao's team was outraged because they had discovered the corpses of the Antlered Silver Lions first; by rights, they should belong to them. Yet, Tu Hu, the newcomer, had the audacity to demand sixty percent of the antlers, which was simply bullying and unreasonable.

As for the four members behind Tu Hu, their dissatisfaction stemmed from believing that their own team's strength was more than enough to crush Huang Miao's team. They could take all the antlers for themselves and felt no need to leave forty percent for the other side.

"Senior Brother Tu is too kind-hearted! If it were any other team, they would take all the antlers of the Antlered Silver Lions without saying anything! If the other side dared to resist, they would get a brutal beating!"

This was what Tu Hu's teammates were thinking. However, Tu Hu had the absolute say among the five of them, and after he made his statement, no one dared to object.

In fact, Tu Hu wasn't offering to leave forty percent of the Antlered Silver Lions' antlers to Huang Miao's team out of kindness, but rather, he always had a certain wariness of Fang Bai from Huang Miao's team.

Tu Hu himself was an expert at concealing his strength, and from the first moment he saw Fang Bai, he felt that Fang Bai was enigmatic and impossible to see through, speculating that Fang Bai might have hidden part of his strength just as he had.

Though Tu Hu appeared rugged and straightforward, he was actually very meticulous. He would never act without full confidence in success.

Because he couldn't gauge Fang Bai's true strength, he harbored a sense of caution, not daring to openly confront Huang Miao's team.

His proposal to take sixty percent of the Antlered Silver Lions' antlers wasn't really too excessive. If it were someone else, they might not have been so agreeable.

"Senior Brother Tu, is this what you wanted to discuss with me? Don't you think you're being too presumptuous?"

Huang Miao's expression turned cold as she spoke.

Huang Miao was straightforward by nature, gentle on the outside but tough on the inside. Even though she knew her team might not be able to contend with Tu Hu's team in terms of overall strength, she felt indignant towards Tu Hu's request and was not inclined to compromise easily.

Tu Hu's gaze swiftly swept over Fang Bai, seeing his arms crossed and his expression indifferent, as if he didn't care at all about the situation at hand, which only made him feel more uncertain.

"Over the top? I don't think so!"

By this point, Tu Hu had ridden the tiger and found it hard to dismount, so he had to maintain a tough posture and continued, "Junior Sister Huang is a smart person, I believe that after weighing your options, you'll make the choice that best serves your own interests."

Without a second thought, Huang Miao directly shook her head and said, "No need to weigh, my choice is two words: refuse! We found the corpses of these Antlered Silver Lions first, they should rightfully belong to us, you have no share!"

Tu Hu's face also grew cold as he said, "Senior Sister Huang, this world will always respect martial force, the fist is what speaks. If we start a fight and forcibly take them, do you think your team has the strength to stop us? I'm letting you take forty percent, that's already very sincere!"

Huang Miao scoffed and said, "We don't want your sincerity! Also, if you forcibly start a fight, we will surely retaliate with all our might, and even if we can't hold you off, we won't let you get your way easily! Moreover, you should have heard the saying, 'Kill a thousand enemies, harm yourself eight hundred,' right?"

The fact that Huang Miao could say this last line meant she had a certain level of confidence.

She and Hou Ziping, Liu Qingqing, and Liu Liehu had spent a considerable amount of time in the Stone Forest studying several pillars engraved with Martial Arts Techniques, each with their own insights, and had all made significant progress in strength.

Huang Miao didn't know how much Hou Ziping, Liu Qingqing, and Liu Liehu had improved in their Cultivation Level, but she herself was already at the threshold of another promotion.

With a breakthrough at this critical point, Huang Miao would possess a high rank Heaven Level Cultivation Level and could become a Core Disciple of the Bitao Martial Academy.

Although Huang Miao's current strength was still not a match for Tu Hu, she believed that the four team members behind her could easily take down the four team members behind Tu Hu.

Therefore, once a conflict arose, as long as Huang Miao could hold off Tu Hu for a while, waiting for Fang Bai and the other three to deal with Tu Hu's subordinates, they could join forces to confront Tu Hu.

In that case, it would be hard to say whose hands would ultimately claim the victory between the two teams.

Seeing Huang Miao's resolute attitude and her preparedness to fight to the death, Tu Hu couldn't help hesitating.

Their team had faced trials and tribulations along the way, and to date, their numbers had dwindled from ten to five, so it wasn't an overstatement to say their losses were heavy.

However, these five team members were all survivors of numerous battles, with rich combat experience, extremely precious to Tu Hu, their captain, so naturally, he didn't wish for a situation where they suffered heavy losses while killing a thousand enemies.

Besides, there was the unfathomable Fang Bai who Tu Hu couldn't see through, making him even less willing to make a rash decision.

To fight or not to fight?

Tu Hu turned his gaze to the four team members behind him, seeking their opinions.

"Senior Brother Tu, since they refuse our toast only to drink a forfeit, why should we be courteous? Let's fight them!"

"That's right! Defeat them, and the corpses of these Antlered Silver Lions will all be ours!"

"We've already given them a chance, but they didn't cherish it, who's to blame?"

"Take all those Antlered Silver Lion horns they have hanging at their waists!"

The four team members behind Tu Hu were rubbing their hands together, faces filled with excitement, and they began to clamor loudly.

Chapter 989: Let Me Do It!

Tu Hu saw his team members each brimming with enthusiasm, all intent on seizing the antlers of the Antlered Silver Lions and couldn't help but smile bitterly to himself.

He knew that if he showed any mercy now, it would lead to great disappointment among his team members and subsequently affect their unity as well as his own prestige within the team.

This was something Tu Hu did not want to see.

"Junior Sister Huang, I have been as kind and righteous to you as I could, yet you remain ungrateful. It seems that a battle between our two teams is inevitable."

Tu Hu spoke with a stern expression.

"If you want to fight, then we'll fight!"

Huang Miao brandished her Willow Leaf Saber, adopting a battle-ready stance with a sneer on her face, and mockingly said, "The Senior Brother Tu I used to know in my mind was someone who was reasonable, could discern right from wrong, had a chivalrous heart, and wouldn't bully others with his power. Now I realize I was wrong. Senior Brother Tu is no different from Core Disciple Zhou Tong and Direct Disciple Ouyang Jian; you all talk about benevolence and righteousness, but in reality, you're hypocritically virtuous..."

Facing Huang Miao's scornful ridicule, Tu Hu didn't get angry. Instead, he calmly responded after she had finished speaking, "We disciples of Bitao Martial Academy enter the mountains for cultivation and our teams are competitors. It is natural that stronger teams plunder the Cultivation Resources of weaker ones; it is a matter of course and has nothing to do with right or wrong, benevolence, or morality!"

After a pause, his gaze swept across the faces of Huang Miao, Hou Ziping, and the other three, then he continued, "The reason I just suggested sharing the antlers of these Antlered Silver Lions with you was out of respect for our shared status as Inner Court disciples, not wanting to take things too far. But if you don't want to, you can't blame me!"

Liu Liehu, despite his young age, had an honest and fiery temperament. He pointed his iron staff at Tu Hu and shouted, "Stop the nonsense! If you want to take our stuff, ask my iron staff if it agrees!"

Tu Hu didn't take Liu Liehu seriously at all, simply giving him a glance before saying to Huang Miao, "Junior Sister Huang, you and I are the leaders of our respective teams. To minimize unnecessary losses, I suggest we represent our teams in battle. If I win, the corpses of these Antlered Silver Lions are mine; if you win, we'll leave without a word. How about it?"

What he meant by "minimizing unnecessary losses" was to avoid a full-scale battle between the team members, which would inevitably lead to injuries, something disadvantageous for both sides.

Although Huang Miao had grasped part of the Martial Arts Techniques from the stone pillar, and her strength had improved, she still lacked complete understanding and integration due to the short time of study, hence her progress was limited.

She knew she was not yet a match for Tu Hu and would certainly lose in a duel, but since Tu Hu had made the proposal and she was the leader of her team, how could she refuse?

"Fine, let's decide the victor with this one battle!"

Huang Miao glared with wide eyes, her eyebrows inverted like willow leaves, and she positioned her Willow Leaf Twin Saber for both attack and defense, instantly elevating her aura to its peak.

After all, Huang Miao was the second-ranked combatant in the Inner Court Disciple rankings. When she exerted her power, it immediately subjected the four members behind Tu Hu to immense pressure, causing their expressions to change as they involuntarily stepped back several paces.

Tu Hu's Cultivation Team, originally composed of ten members, had lost five with relatively weaker strength. Now, although the remaining five were all Inner Court disciples, not one of them could contend with Huang Miao.

Their team had made it this far in their journey because whenever danger arose, it was Tu Hu who would turn the tide—either repelling opponents or carving out a bloody path.

Without Tu Hu, their team wouldn't have even been able to cross the Nether River, much less arrive here.

This team was highly dependent on Tu Hu, and without him, those four members would not dare provoke Huang Miao's team. Their earlier bravado while standing behind Tu Hu was nothing but borrowed courage.

Now, as Huang Miao released her Martial Artist Aura, asserting her dominance, it caused them to feel panic and retreat in surprise.

Tu Hu stepped forward, releasing his Martial Artist Aura, immediately pushing back the pressure Huang Miao had exerted.

"Such powerful pressure! Senior Brother Tu really is formidable. No wonder he could defeat Zhou Tong, who ranks eighth on the Core Disciple combat power list!"

Facing Tu Hu's pressure directly, Huang Miao had to fully circulate her True Yuan to barely counter that mountainous momentum, secretly astonished in her heart.

Knowing she couldn't defeat Tu Hu, Huang Miao still chose to fight him, not for anything else, but to defend the dignity of a Martial Artist.

"Hu..."

Huang Miao took a deep breath, pointed her Willow Leaf Saber towards Tu Hu, and said in a stern voice, "Since it's a duel, we must go all out. Senior Brother Tu, I don't want to take any advantage—draw your saber!"

Tu Hu shook his head, his expression serious as he replied, "My saber is an ominous weapon. Once drawn, it must taste blood, or it cannot be sheathed. Junior Sister Huang, I do not wish to harm you, so I will not draw my saber. You won't like to hear this, but I can defeat you with just my fists!"

Huang Miao's eyebrows raised, and she retorted indignantly, "A Martial Artist may be killed but not insulted! Senior Brother Tu, you've gone too far!"

"Whether it's too far or not, we'll know after we fight!"

Tu Hu grinned, his face holding a trace of pride.

Tu Hu was originally a modest and restrained person, but after this mountain training, ever since he defeated Zhou Tong, who ranked eighth among the Core Disciples combat power list, it was as if a tiger that had lain dormant for a long time suddenly pounced out, unleashing powerful offensive strength and becoming somewhat more aggressive and domineering.

"Alright then, I shall witness Senior Brother Tu's impressive skills!"

Huang Miao smiled angrily in response. Since Tu Hu disdained to draw his saber against her, there was no need for her to be polite. She twirled her Willow Leaf Twin Saber in her hand, took a slight step forward, and prepared to initiate the attack.

Suddenly, a figure flashed before her eyes, appearing right in front of her, facing Tu Hu directly.

"Junior Brother Fang, get out of the way!"

Huang Miao, seeing that it was Fang Bai who had blocked her, was taken aback at first and then frowned.

She surmised that Fang Bai's strength wasn't weaker than hers, perhaps even stronger, but Tu Hu had specifically challenged her to this duel. If she didn't accept, it would be considered a sign of weakness and would be ridiculed if it spread.

"Senior Sister Huang, let me do this!"

Fang Bai turned his head to glance at Huang Miao, knowing she was a stubborn woman who would rather die than submit—it wasn't easy to persuade her—and said seriously, "Senior Brother Tu is right; you are not his match. Even if he is unarmed, it would be hard for you to last ten moves against his attack. This is the gap between a Core Disciple and an Inner Court Disciple!"

After this mountain training session, Tu Hu's sudden rise to Core Disciple status was a foregone conclusion, while Huang Miao, despite making some advances in strength, still had a minor realm gap with Tu Hu.

Among Martial Artists, a minor realm difference often represented an insurmountable chasm.

When Fang Bai said Huang Miao could last ten moves against Tu Hu, he was actually complimenting her. If Tu Hu truly exerted his full strength, he might even be able to take her down instantly.

Chapter 990: Tit for Tat

Huang Miao had the self-awareness to know that what Fang Bai was saying was the truth, yet she did not have a high opinion of Fang Bai, considering him to be no match for Tu Hu either.

It was a lose-lose situation either way; instead of letting Fang Bai face Tu Hu and get hurt, she preferred to step forward and battle Tu Hu herself.

Moreover, Huang Miao felt that having been in the Inner Court with Tu Hu for many years, they shared some rapport. Even if she were to lose, Tu Hu would probably not strike with full force, but since Fang Bai was new to the Inner Court, it was hard to say whether Tu Hu would show him any mercy.

Out of the desire to protect Fang Bai, she did not want him to step forward.

"Junior Brother Fang..."

Huang Miao pondered for a moment, then opened her mouth, ready to persuade Fang Bai to change his mind and not get involved.

"Senior Sister Huang, I'm more confident than you when it comes to dealing with Senior Brother Tu!"

Before Huang Miao could speak, Fang Bai immediately added, "If you step in, you will surely lose, while I have a chance to win. Therefore... to preserve the antlers of those Antlered Silver Lions, let me battle Senior Brother Tu!"

Until this point, Huang Miao's impression of Fang Bai was that he was low-key and restrained, never aggressive or eager to outdo others, always appearing as if he was detached from worldly concerns, with a light-hearted demeanor.

Yet at this moment, Fang Bai was like a drawn sword in a fierce battle with Zhou Tong, suddenly revealing his sharp edge, dazzling brilliance, and an overwhelming aura.

Watching a confident Fang Bai, Huang Miao's lips moved as if she wanted to say something, but then she saw Fang Bai already striding toward Tu Hu.

"Senior Brother Tu, I represent our team and challenge you to a battle!"

Facing the daunting martial artist's aura released by Tu Hu, Fang Bai walked until he was only ten feet away from him and came to a stop. Then he pointed at Tu Hu and called out loudly, "Come, Senior Brother Tu, let me see your masterful techniques!"

As Fang Bai spoke, he no longer deliberately suppressed his cultivation level, but unleashed an aura that matched Tu Hu's martial artist presence.

"High Rank Heaven Level Martial Artist..."

Tu Hu sensed the martial artist's aura emanating from Fang Bai, an aura not weaker than his own. His eyes widened sharply, pupils contracted in disbelief.

"I wasn't mistaken, Junior Brother Fang, you truly are a hidden dragon!"

After coming back to reality, Tu Hu looked at Fang Bai with a complicated expression and exclaimed.

Before this, Tu Hu had suspected that Fang Bai, like him, might have concealed part of his strength, but he had not anticipated that Fang Bai's cultivation level would be on par with his own. This realization shocked him greatly, far exceeding his expectations.

With good natural talent and a stroke of enviable fortune, Tu Hu became the youngest person ever to top the Bitao Martial Academy Inner Court disciple combat power ranking list in his early thirties.

Before this mountain training exercise, Tu Hu's cultivation level had actually advanced to the High Rank Heaven Level realm, qualifying him to join the ranks of Core Disciples. He kept it under wraps with the intent to surprise everyone during this mountain exercise and achieve a stunning impact.

Not long ago, in a battle with Zhou Tong, who was ranked eighth on the Core Disciples combat power list, Tu Hu revealed his true strength, defeating Zhou Tong with ease, shocking many members of the Cultivation Team, achieving his aim of a thunderous impact.

This made Tu Hu somewhat complacent, feeling that among the thousands of disciples in the Bitao Martial Academy, no one improved faster than he did. He even thought it wouldn't be long before he could advance to a higher level, enter the ranks of Direct Disciples, or even join the higher echelons of the Bitao Martial Academy, a dream that was no longer far-fetched.

But at this moment, Fang Bai's performance was a heavy blow to Tu Hu, leaving him disheartened.

In Tu Hu's eyes, Fang Bai's cultivation level was comparable to his own, but Fang Bai was about a decade younger. Moreover, Fang Bai had a Dual Attribute Innate Spiritual Root. Unless he encountered an even greater opportunity, as time went on, Fang Bai would surely leave him far behind in both realm and cultivation level.

Seeing Fang Bai burst out with an aura equal to Tu Hu's, the surprise was not limited to just Tu Hu. Standing not far behind Fang Bai, Huang Miao and Hou Ziping were also dumbfounded, staring at Fang Bai's back with expressions of disbelief.

Liu Qingqing and Liu Liehu, however, were excited and thrilled.

Ever since the siblings had met Fang Bai, they had witnessed him creating one miracle after another that seemed unimaginable.

Just now, Fang Bai had taken Huang Miao's place in the fight. Huang Miao and Hou Ziping had secretly worried, thinking Fang Bai was no match for Tu Hu, but only the siblings had great confidence in Fang Bai.

Because the two sisters knew Fang Bai well, they knew that if Fang Bai made a move, it meant he was sure of victory.

When Fang Bai released a Martial Artist aura on par with Tu Hu's, the siblings were overjoyed and completely relieved.

The sisters knew that Fang Bai had the ability to challenge those of a higher level than himself. Now that Fang Bai's cultivation level was equal to Tu Hu's, it meant that Fang Bai could easily defeat Tu Hu.

So, the outcome of the duel was already clear in the eyes of the siblings before it even began.

The sisters were already picturing the scene of Tu Hu being brutally beaten by Fang Bai. Looking at Tu Hu, they couldn't help but show a bit of sympathy and pity.

Tu Hu did not notice the strange looks from Liu Qingqing and Liu Liehu as his attention was entirely focused on Fang Bai, his expression serious, as if facing a great enemy.

Although the aura Fang Bai emitted was comparable to his own, Tu Hu felt immense pressure because he realized that up until now, he still couldn't quite see through Fang Bai. His younger junior brother seemed like the deep sea, unfathomable.

"Senior Brother Tu, if we're talking about concealing one's strength, we're in the same boat!" Fang Bai said with a light smile, responding to Tu Hu.

Tu Hu laughed heartily, then his expression turned solemn, "Junior Brother Fang, our contest for the corpses of the Antlered Silver Lions is not intended to be an act of enmity towards you. It's a necessity for cultivation. I hope Junior Brother Fang can understand!"

"I understand!" Fang Bai nodded, "In the Martial Dao World, distribution of benefits is always determined by the strength of one's fists. It's the same principle when we enter the mountains to cultivate! So, although I somewhat despise Senior Brother Tu and your team members for taking advantage of the situation, I won't hold a grudge."

"Thanks for understanding!" Tu Hu, observing Fang Bai's reactions, knew that Fang Bai really didn't hold any ill feelings against him, and he couldn't help but breathe a sigh of relief internally.

With Fang Bai's extraordinary talent and the infinite possibilities on his Martial Dao path, Tu Hu did not want to make an enemy of Fang Bai.

"So now, let's have a duel over the ownership of these Antlered Silver Lion corpses. If I lose, you can take all their antlers and the few pieces of Spiritual Medicine we've harvested. We will have no complaints!"

"I'll do the same! If I lose, the Antlered Silver Lions are still yours, and we won't touch them again. Moreover, any Spiritual Medicine we've harvested will also belong to you!" proclaimed Tu Hu, thumping his chest.