

Humanity 2091

Chapter 2091: Deepening

After half a day, Lu Ye halted his cultivation, because he found that cultivating in a place like this caused quite a lot of impurities in the Mana he gained that he couldn't refine away, which would foul his own body.

This was clearly related to the Star Abyss ambience; Lu Ye suspected those impurities were precisely the Star Abyss ambience.

Since there was such a problem, naturally he couldn't continue cultivating, otherwise his Mana would only grow more and more turbid, his strength weaker and weaker.

He could only polish the Soul Suppressing Secret Technique.

Time slipped by, and two months passed just like that.

Their hiding place was quite good; during these two months they hadn't been disturbed at all. There were, however, several times when sounds of fighting came from nearby, but Lu Ye didn't pay them any mind.

On this day, Jiu Yan, who had been in a constant cultivation state, slowly opened her eyes.

Lu Ye felt something and quickly turned his head to look.

Jiu Yan's gaze came over, and she slowly shook her head.

Lu Ye knew at once that her cultivation over these two months hadn't made much progress. He consoled her, "Take it slowly, no rush. According to the records in the jade slip, forging a Dao foundation is no simple matter. Some people spent more than ten years before they succeeded, and even the shortest record took more than half a year. Senior Sister, it's only been two months for you."

"That's true in theory, but..." Jiu Yan felt somewhat lost.

These two months of cultivation had not been without harvest. Following the records of the Smelting Furnace Method, she had tried to forge a Dao foundation and had indeed seen some clues, but her progress was extremely slow. At this pace, to achieve the level of body transformation furnace and meld all her foundations, who knew how many years it would take.

She and Lu Ye were now stranded here. Though the Thunderbolt Battle Fortress had taken them in, the two of them ultimately were not cultivators of this Yiyuan stellar space and had no one to rely on.

She wanted to become stronger as quickly as possible; only then could she have a certain degree of self-preservation in an environment like this.

Her expression grew firm. "Junior Brother, I want to go deeper."

Lu Ye pondered a moment when he heard this, then got up and said, "Then let's go."

But Jiu Yan stopped him, looking seriously into his eyes. "I'll go alone. You go back to the Thunderbolt Battle Fortress."

If Lu Ye's cultivation were the same as hers, both of them qualified to forge a Dao foundation, then they could naturally watch over each other. But Lu Ye was only at Sun Blaze Early Stage right now, still far from her level. How could she bear to let Lu Ye take risks with her?

Lu Ye blinked. "Senior Sister, you're underestimating me. In terms of cultivation, I'm indeed not as good as you, but when it comes to methods of facing an enemy... I've got two affiliated treasures in my hands."

Jiu Yan wanted to say something more, but he no longer wished to listen. He took the lead, flying forward, and called back to Jiu Yan, "Let's go."

This was the first time Jiu Yan realized Lu Ye had such a domineering side. She was dazed for a moment. Seeing Lu Ye getting farther and farther away, she hurried to catch up. "Junior Brother, you don't need to take this risk."

Lu Ye tilted his head to look at her and smiled. "Then shall we part ways here? I'll go this way, which way will Senior Sister go?"

"I'm being serious with you!" Jiu Yan was a little annoyed.

"Shh... there's movement." Lu Ye suddenly raised a finger to his lips.

Jiu Yan jumped in fright and hastily probed the surroundings, but found nothing at all. When she turned her head again, Lu Ye had already run far off, leaving her both exasperated and amused.

Limited by their strength, Lu Ye and Jiu Yan moved with extreme caution over the period that followed, so their speed of advance was not fast.

Whenever they sensed signs of battle, the two of them would immediately find a place to hide.

This made Lu Ye feel a bit rueful. Since he'd started cultivating, he really hadn't experienced this kind of days on edge, afraid that a powerful enemy he couldn't contend with would suddenly rush out from nearby.

Fortunately, their luck was quite good. For a full half month, they didn't encounter a single battle. Even when they ran into enemies they could have fought, they avoided them, afraid that the battle fallout would draw in stronger foes.

After half a month, the Star Abyss ambience in their current location was undoubtedly more than twice as dense as before.

There were already Sun Blaze Late Stage Star Abyss outsiders appearing here. Both Jiu Yan and Lu Ye understood that this was their true limit; any farther ahead would be seeking death, and they might run into someone who had forged a Dao foundation at any moment.

Enemies of that level were not ones the two of them, at their current stage, could resist at all.

Lu Ye found a floating land formed from a Stellar Fragment. On it was a huge pit, which led deep inside and had passages running in all directions.

It was a natural Concealment spot.

Jiu Yan was clearly very satisfied with this place as well. As before, she picked a spot to cultivate, while Lu Ye laid down a Formation to obscure and hide them, then sat not far from her, ensuring that if anything went wrong they could support each other in time.

Lu Ye didn't know how Jiu Yan's progress was going. As for himself, he was polishing the Soul Suppressing Secret Technique while pondering one matter.

About Ma Bin.

Ma Bin had forged a Dao foundation. Lu Ye didn't know exactly how Ma Bin had accomplished this, because from the information he currently possessed, without coming into contact with the Star Abyss ambience, it was simply impossible.

But Ma Bin had indeed done it, and that was why he was so powerful.

However... Ma Bin didn't seem to possess the kind of overwhelming might he was supposed to have. Take this frontline battlefield for example: a cultivator who has forged a Dao foundation facing stellar space cultivators who don't even have Dao force is simply a one-sided slaughter; the latter are like ants before the former, utterly incapable of resistance.

Applied to Ma Bin, it didn't quite fit. Strong he was, but it felt like he was only a notch stronger than people like Charng Feng and Jiu Yan.

Otherwise, when he had faced the combined assault of Charng Feng and the other three back then, he wouldn't have ended up injured.

Lu Ye pondered for a long time and felt this still came down to a problem with Dao force. Ma Bin had indeed forged his own Dao foundation, but he might not have much Dao force, so his strength was in fact inferior even to that ox demon from back then. That ox demon might not have had a Dao foundation, but he did have Dao force!

Thinking along those lines, Lu Ye faintly felt that this thing called Dao foundation was more like a container, a container that held Dao force!

Ma Bin had this container, but the container was empty inside, so he couldn't bring out the power he ought to have.

But after this container was damaged, why did it have to be within a Spirit Jade Vein before there was a chance to repair it? Logically speaking, once a Dao foundation is damaged, the only thing that can repair it is Dao force.

Is there Dao force within a Spirit Jade Vein?

Lu Ye had gone in and out of Spirit Jade Veins more than once. Now, thinking back carefully, he suddenly remembered something.

Vein Source!

Every Spirit Jade Vein has its own Vein Source, and not just one. The larger the Spirit Jade Vein, the more Vein Sources there are. Spirit jade and spirit crystals are all nurtured near the Vein Sources. He had investigated the Vein Sources before, within which seemed to be hidden an extremely mysterious power, a power he could not comprehend.

Perhaps... that was Dao force?

So that's how it is. There is Dao force in a normal stellar space as well, it's just that ordinary cultivators have no chance to come into contact with it. Even someone like Lu Ye, who can come into contact with it, cannot comprehend it because his level is not high enough.

Also, in the stellar space, places that contain Dao force should not be limited to the Vein Sources.

Supreme treasures and affiliated treasures should all have Dao force!

Previously, when Lu Ye had roused the sword gourd's might to attack that ox demon, although it was blocked, Lu Ye still remembered something that ox demon had said.

The other party had been very annoyed at the time and had said something like, "You dare damage my Dao force"...

So, the power an affiliated treasure unleashes is also imbued with Dao force; this is why the might of affiliated treasures is so tremendous that ordinary Sun Blaze cannot withstand it.

If affiliated treasures are like this, then true supreme treasures must be even more so, since affiliated treasures are merely derivatives of supreme treasures.

A supreme treasure... is the condensation of the Dao! A realization rose in Lu Ye's heart.

Suddenly, a violent tremor came, breaking Lu Ye's train of thought. He hurriedly probed his surroundings, and once he understood what was happening, his expression instantly collapsed.

There were powerhouses clashing nearby. Judging from the aura spreading out, both sides were at the Sun Blaze Late Stage, about the same as that ox demon from before, perhaps even stronger.

An ordinary confrontation between Sun Blaze Late Stage cultivators couldn't produce such enormous Yu Bo, so Lu Ye immediately concluded that both of them possessed Dao force.

They weren't stellar space cultivators; they were two Star Abyss outsiders locked in a blood battle!

This was very common. According to what the cultivators of this stellar space had observed over the years, the relationship between Star Abyss outsiders was far from peaceful. Their mutual conflicts and slaughter were even more frequent and bloodier than their battles with stellar space cultivators.

Strictly speaking, of all the Star Abyss outsiders who had died within this frontline battlefield, at most thirty percent were killed by stellar space cultivators. The remaining seventy percent were all from their own internecine slaughter.

The ambience of the Star Abyss was evil; the beings born from the Star Abyss seemed innately bloodthirsty and brutal. They were synonymous with destruction.

Over on Jiu Yan's side, she also opened her eyes. In the darkness, the two exchanged a glance and each withdrew their own aura, so as not to be noticed by the two Star Abyss outsiders who were fighting.

Over these past few months, similar situations had occurred several times, but each time the fallout had not affected the two of them.

But it seemed their luck over these months had finally run dry this time. The ferocious aftershocks of the battle drew closer and closer, and soon spread to the floating land where they were hiding.

"Go!" Lu Ye knew they could no longer hide. Once this piece of floating land shattered, the two of them would be exposed all the same; better to leave quickly while they still had the chance.

As soon as he spoke, he and Jiu Yan flew out together.

But it was already too late. The battle between the two Star Abyss outsiders engulfed the floating land. Under that savage power, the floating land shattered, and even though Lu Ye and Jiu Yan desperately roused their Mana, they still struggled to maintain their footing, tossed about chaotically in the violent Yu Bo.

Jiu Yan seized Lu Ye's hand at just the right moment so he wouldn't be separated from her, and she frantically surged her own power, finally managing with great difficulty to steady herself.

When she looked up again, despair instantly surfaced in Jiu Yan's eyes.

At some unknown point, a figure had appeared ahead of them. It was an Insect Race being. This fellow had a human body but a hideous mandible-like mouthpart. His whole body was covered in bloodstains, and the thick carapace on his surface was broken in many places. In his hand, he was holding a limp body, a mass of mangled flesh and blood.

Clearly, the life-and-death struggle just now had concluded. This Insect Race had won, and the corpse in his hand was his trophy.

The Insect Race's face bore two pairs of eyes. Beneath his normal eyelids was another pair of narrow, slitted eyes that stared gloomily at Jiu Yan and Lu Ye. Then he lifted the corpse in his hand, brought it to his mouth, and tore off great mouthfuls, biting until his mouth was full of blood.

Chapter 2092: Fierce Battle

The struggle among Star Abyss outsiders often concludes with one side being devoured by the other, as if the victor gains some unknown benefit through this method!

As for what kind of benefits these are, even the Thunderbolt Battle Fortress doesn't know, although there have been previous speculations that the vanquished contain unexhausted Dao Force within their bodies, allowing the victor to recover their own Dao Force in such a way...

However, some cultivators from the Thunderbolt Battle Fortress have tried this before, only to find it utterly ineffective, instead making themselves feel quite disgusted.

Currently, this Insect Race has won; its ferocious maw opened wide, biting off the opponent's head in one gulp. As it chewed, Blood Water dripped from its mouth, its narrow compound eyes emanating a cruel light.

Jiu Yan fiercely urged her Mana, raised her hand to grasp in the Void, seizing a Silver Spear, and transformed into Liu Guang as she charged at the Insect Race.

Before she reached, the spear shower rained down, covering the Void ahead!

She certainly knew she couldn't be a match for this Insect Race; estimating from the earlier Yu Bo, the Insect Race was more powerful than the ox demon that appeared above the All Phenomena Ocean.

If it were a typical encounter, she would have no chance of survival.

But now is an opportunity, because this Insect Race just had a Fight to the Death with an enemy; although it killed another Star Abyss outsider, it itself also suffered significant injuries. The key is that such an intense battle must have greatly depleted its Dao Force; otherwise, it wouldn't look so battered.

Running away is impossible, so she can only Fight to the Death and perhaps find a chance for survival.

The Insect Race suddenly opened its maw wide in a voiceless roar, causing visible ripples to spread, enveloping Jiu Yan's body.

Upon stepping into the ripples, Jiu Yan instantly felt as if she had entered an invisible barrier, her speed significantly reduced, even her spear thrust weakened considerably.

Clenching her teeth, she held her breath and fiercely urged her Mana; even her Soul Power exploded fiercely in that instant.

During the momentary stalemate, she finally broke through the barrier ahead, thrusting her spear toward the opened maw.

Yet this strike failed to succeed. Just as it was about to make an impact, the Insect Race suddenly discarded the spoils in its hand and punched, landing right on the spear's tip!

Jiu Yan's body abruptly halted; her magic treasure spear nearly slipped from her grip, her hands burning with pain, and her whole body flew backward.

The Insect Race was about to pursue, but then suddenly turned its head to look at Lu Ye.

Lu Ye now wore a solemn expression, summoning his sword gourd, its mouth opening toward the Insect Race's range. Urging his Mana, a sword light shot out from the gourd mouth, swiftly attacking.

What Jiu Yan could perceive, Lu Ye certainly wouldn't remain unaware, so almost simultaneously as she acted, Lu Ye was already prepared.

If they wanted to survive today, escaping immediately was unrealistic; they needed to join forces and fight the opponent, or seize an opportunity to kill and find a chance to flee.

"Affiliated treasure!" The Insect Race's deep voice sounded, its normal eyes gazing at the sword gourd, filled with a greedy expression as if having seen a precious treasure.

The sword light rushed forth; the Insect Race dared not slacken its vigilance. Lu Ye and Jiu Yan were insignificant to him as he could sense both had no Dao Force, so they were merely ordinary stellar space cultivators. Regardless of their strength, they were like ants before him.

But the affiliated treasure was different; its power could inflict harm upon him.

Furthermore, once the affiliated treasure's might was urged, it couldn't be avoided without prior preparation, only enduring it.

Hurriedly, the Insect Race steadied its stance, activated its Mana, and protected itself.

The sword light struck his surface, blocked by his Mana, just like when Lu Ye faced the ox demon above All Phenomena Ocean before.

At that time, Lu Ye marveled at how the ox demon managed to refine its Mana to such resilience, but now he knew it was not about Mana; it was because of Dao Force.

The sword light grew increasingly dazzling, the Insect Race roared in resistance.

Jiu Yan returned to the fray, although earlier her blood Qi had been shaken, she was unimpeded, and seeing the Insect Race harassed by the sword light, she wouldn't miss this opportunity.

"Begone!" The Insect Race impatiently countered the sword light while punching at Jiu Yan from afar. Jiu Yan's advancing form halted; her protective magic shattered under the punch, her heart filled with dread. She knew this was just a casual strike from the opponent, separated by a distance, yet it carried such power. If struck closely by such a punch, she might perish immediately.

At the moment her protective magic shattered, another layer of light emerged over Jiu Yan's body, evidently her Protective Dharma Treasure in action.

Seizing the chance, Jiu Yan closed in, channeling her mighty cultivation into the spear, stabbing fiercely, aiming at the Insect Race's waist.

However, if even the sword light from the sword gourd couldn't penetrate the opponent's defense, how could her strike succeed?

The spear seemed to stab into an extremely tenacious force field, quickly arrested in its path, not even touching the Insect Race's skin. Yet Jiu Yan didn't give up, desperately pushing her power, knowing it was the best chance to deplete its Dao Force.

But after three breaths, Jiu Yan had to retreat because the Insect Race, infuriated, turned its murderous gaze on her, clearly intending to eliminate her first.

Almost simultaneously as Jiu Yan retreated, the dazzling sword light abruptly shattered, the sword gourd's power unable to sustain itself any longer.

The Insect Race finally withdrew its gaze from Jiu Yan, more eager to obtain the affiliated treasure in Lu Ye's hand than to kill Jiu Yan!

For all Star Abyss outsiders, affiliated treasures are of great use. Utilizing the power of affiliated treasures, they can gain extra Dao force, accelerating their growth.

Just as it took a step forward, the Insect Race was shocked to see a burst of fire erupting from Lu Ye's side, sweeping toward it. The terrifying power within that burst of fire was no less than the previous sword light!

Even though the gourd in Lu Ye's hand appeared no different from the previous one, the Insect Race keenly realized one thing: "Another affiliated treasure?"

Affiliated treasures are not abundant like cabbages. Although they are derivations of supreme treasures, their numbers are limited in both the stellar space and Star Abyss. For a cultivator to possess one affiliated treasure is a huge fortune, yet now someone has two!

The Insect Race was overjoyed, almost bursting into laughter, with only one thought surging in its mind: Mine, all mine!

But it quickly realized something was amiss, for its Dao force was severely depleted, and whether it could withstand the power of this second affiliated treasure was questionable.

Yet, at this moment, Lu Ye had already unleashed the fire gourd's power, leaving it with no room for retreat, forcing it to bite the bullet and fiercely stimulate its own strength.

A burst of fire engulfed the Insect Race, instantly igniting it, turning it into a blazing fireball.

Even under the power of the fire gourd, the Insect Race still charged toward Lu Ye. With two affiliated treasures within reach, it was determined to seize them first. As for the fire gourd's power, as long as its Dao force wasn't exhausted, it wouldn't suffer any harm.

It could sense that Lu Ye's cultivation wasn't high. At the very least, with such cultivation, he shouldn't appear in this position.

But reaching Lu Ye made it realize that, although Lu Ye's cultivation was low, he was very agile, managing to evade capture despite several attacks.

Lu Ye was full of helplessness. Initially, after unleashing the fire gourd's power, he planned to flee with Jiu Yan. Regardless of whether the Insect Race could withstand the fire gourd's power, this place was no longer safe with the aftermath of the fight spreading. Taking advantage of the distraction caused by the fire gourd's power, they might have a chance to escape.

Who knew the Insect Race would target him, preventing his escape? Now he was forced to dodge using the Brazen Plundering Technique, not daring to confront it directly.

After all, the blazing power of the fire gourd did not differentiate between friend and foe. If he accidentally got caught in it, it wouldn't end well. Currently, he couldn't rely on the Talent Tree.

Not far away, Jiu Yan watched anxiously, unable to think of a good solution. She could only unleash a magic treasure, attacking from a distance, sending out waves of mystic light to hinder the Insect Race.

After more than ten breaths, the fire suddenly dissipated, and the Insect Race's figure reappeared.

Almost simultaneously, a mystic light struck the Insect Race's body, an offensive from Jiu Yan.

The mystic light struck the chest of the Insect Race, causing it to stagger, a huge wound appearing on its chest with blood flowing.

Jiu Yan was taken aback but immediately realized: "Its Dao force is exhausted!"

As she spoke, she charged with her spear.

Lu Ye also became aware of this, swiftly moving like Spectral Bewitchment to the side of the Insect Race, drawing the Boulder Mountain Saber and making a slash.

A faint roar of beasts echoed, a giant beast's head phantom appeared, opening its bloody maw.

Barghest fangs bared!

Despite looking disheveled, the Insect Race suddenly turned its head, coldly fixing its gaze on him, its mouth curling into an eerie smile, reaching out to grasp him.

Lu Ye's heart skipped a beat, thinking to himself, "Trouble, the Insect Race's injury just now... was feigned weakness!"

The claws pierced through the beast shadow, causing it to shatter, then easily tore through Lu Ye's protective magic, making a fierce grasp.

Lu Ye felt a sharp pain in his chest, and, in addition, an extremely peculiar power seemed to penetrate his chest, invading his body.

Hurriedly retreating, he broke into a cold sweat.

Fortunately, he quickly sensed the danger. Otherwise, if it had succeeded, he would be severely injured even if he survived. Presently, only a chunk of flesh had been torn from his chest, which wasn't too big a problem.

But the crisis hadn't been averted. Failing to land a blow, the Insect Race immediately pursued relentlessly.

An unprecedented sense of crisis enveloped his mind, making it seem as if time around him slowed down.

Lu Ye glanced past the Insect Race, seeing Jiu Yan anxiously rushing to assist, but she was still some distance away, unable to make it in time.

In haste, Lu Ye flicked his fingers, sending droplets of treasure blood flying towards the Insect Race, instantly releasing four droplets of treasure blood.

Without even having time to let the treasure blood transform into a doppelganger, a terrifying and powerful energy erupted from the treasure blood.

Four bursts of blood light exploded almost simultaneously, enveloping the Insect Race's figure, with the massive impact force sending Lu Ye flying, worsening the injury on his chest.

Chapter 2093: Dao Force Enters the Body

Struggling to steady his form, Lu Ye felt his blood Qi churning, a sweet taste in his throat, his mouth full of the scent of blood.

Looking ahead, his expression was grave, for despite enduring the explosion power of four drops of Treasure Blood, the Insect Race creature showed no sign of damage!

The opponent clearly had Dao force for protection.

The prolonged battle had made the Insect Race extremely impatient, and he gritted his teeth, growling low: "Damn garbage, why are you so stubborn? Wouldn't it be better to die obediently?"

He had never suffered such a setback before any ordinary stellar space cultivator; after battling against strong foes previously, his Dao force was already depleted, and after a fierce fight with Lu Ye and Jiu Yan, his Dao force was nearly exhausted.

Although Star Abyss living creatures, due to their special physique, were eligible to accumulate Dao force even without establishing a Dao foundation, it was significantly harder for those without a Dao foundation compared to those who entered the Dao Realm. Every bit of Dao force was precious to him, his foundation in this battlefield, and could not be easily lost.

In anger, his killing intent became increasingly concentrated. As long as he could acquire two affiliated treasures this time, the Dao force he consumed would eventually be replenished, and he might even have the opportunity to forge his own Dao foundation, genuinely becoming a Dao Realm powerhouse.

Raising his gaze, he coldly stared at Lu Ye, the Insect Race creature pressed forward step by step: "I refuse to believe you have a third affiliated treasure!"

Despite saying this, he was slightly worried. If Lu Ye truly took out a third affiliated treasure, he would immediately turn to flee.

Speaking of which, without even looking, he backhanded a punch, causing Jiu Yan, approaching swiftly, to groan and fly back even faster.

"Die!" As if sensing Lu Ye's lack of options, he no longer delayed, speeding up suddenly.

Just at that moment, a flash of bloodlight suddenly erupted from Lu Ye's side, spreading rapidly into a Blood Sea.

"Hmm? You're a Blood Race?" The Insect Race creature appeared incredibly startled, seemingly unprepared to encounter a Blood Race here, but his actions didn't pause for a moment. In the Star Abyss, creatures, not to mention different races, even within the same race, have little trust and reliance. The chaotic, harsh environment bred many Star Abyss creatures relying solely on themselves.

So even if the opponent was a Blood Race, faced with two affiliated treasures, he wouldn't hesitate at all.

Flashing forward to Lu Ye, he threw a punch, exhaling deeply: "It is over!"

Lu Ye raised the Boulder Mountain Saber, blocking the strike as his body uncontrollably slid backward.

The Insect Race creature was shocked: "How is this possible?"

A stellar space cultivator with such weak cultivation actually blocked his casual strike? Despite slightly urging Dao force into it, he found it incredibly unbelievable.

But he soon noticed something amiss because in the Blood Sea, there wasn't only one aura. Around him and in all directions, there were five additional auras, each identical to his opponent's in front, as if cast from the same mold.

"Treasure Blood Avatar?" The Insect Race quickly realized the truth.

Having dealt with many Blood Race members, he naturally knew about the Treasure Blood Avatar, but...how could there be so many? And the unusual blood that exploded before must also be Treasure Blood, which meant the number was even greater.

He didn't even notice when Lu Ye deployed the Treasure Blood Avatar. He knew this must have been done while expanding the Blood Sea.

Within the dense Blood Sea, Lu Ye's true self, along with five Treasure Blood Avatars, had already formed a Black Tortoise Array.

With the Talent Tree undergoing transformation, the As-Close-As-Siblings Spirit Runes couldn't be used, but the Treasure Blood Avatars were part of Lu Ye, so even without spirit runes, the connection between true self and avatars allowed easy formation of the array.

This was the strongest method he could employ other than using the affiliated treasures.

The Insect Race was undoubtedly out of arrows at the end of the battle; victory and defeat were about to be decided, and of course, he would exert every effort, with the array's power enabling him to block the Insect Race's strike.

This was equivalent to six Lu Ye forming an array.

Relying on his true self's strength alone, it would be impossible to do so effortlessly.

Having failed to land a decisive blow, and upon noticing the various elements within the Blood Sea, the Insect Race, although unwilling, realized the situation had worsened and conceived a retreat.

Yet within the Blood Sea, leaving was no simple matter. Moreover, the Black Tortoise Array had him completely enveloped.

Perceiving the shift in the Insect Race's mindset, Lu Ye felt assured and initiated his offensive, causing the Blood Sea to roil, and rampaging force swept through wildly.

Jiu Yan also returned to battle, penetrating the Blood Sea, utilizing stealth attacks with Lu Ye's assistance, striking decisively whenever the Insect Race was too distracted to defend.

After thirty breaths, the Blood Sea subsided, and three figures emerged from within.

Lu Ye appeared pale, sheathing his saber, while Jiu Yan stood not far away with her Silver Spear, looking exhausted. She had never experienced such a fierce battle since beginning her cultivation.

In this battle, she once again felt the terrifying power of Dao force.

Yet the Insect Race had fallen, its body severed, the neck wound neat—evidently inflicted by the Boulder Mountain Saber. Once his Dao force was exhausted, his strength was not so formidable.

"Hurry!" Lu Ye called out to Jiu Yan, who quickly rushed to his side, supporting him as they fled rapidly into the distance.

Both were extremely exhausted, but comparatively, Jiu Yan's condition was undoubtedly much better. She felt deeply ashamed because the main force in this battle was Lu Ye, whose cultivation was weaker, and her own contribution wasn't very significant.

Two hours later, on a vast piece of floating land, they landed and searched for a place to hide.

There was no time to rest; Jiu Yan immediately took out an array disc and set up a formation nearby. Although her expertise in the Array Path wasn't high, she could still arrange a simple formation. This was a skill that all cultivators who reached a certain cultivation level were expected to master, as everyone has times when they must act alone.

"How are you?" Jiu Yan asked nervously, looking at Lu Ye.

Lu Ye's condition was very bad, with large beads of sweat pouring from his forehead, his clothes soaked, and his face devoid of any color.

This was clearly not due to the exhaustion from the previous battle. As they spoke, Jiu Yan looked at the wound on his chest, where a large chunk of flesh was missing, almost revealing the bone.

Given Lu Ye's physique, such a wound should have healed quickly, but ever since he was injured by the Insect Race, the wound had not healed and even showed signs of worsening.

"Dao force invaded my body!" Lu Ye replied through gritted teeth, his entire body trembling uncontrollably.

The color drained from Jiu Yan's face; despite expecting this possibility, the confirmation was still hard to accept.

According to records from the Thunderbolt Battle Fortress, once a stellar space cultivator is invaded by Dao force, the situation is deemed intractable, because it cannot be resolved unless a Dao Realm expert is found to assist, and even then it carries great risks, as different Dao forces clashing within the body often lead to unpredictable outcomes.

"Let's return to the Thunderbolt Battle Fortress, I'll take you back!" Jiu Yan said as she prepared to help Lu Ye up again, knowing that his only hope of survival was to seek help at the fortress.

"There's no time!" Lu Ye waved her off, realizing that even if they traveled at full speed, it would still take several days to get back to the Thunderbolt Battle Fortress, not even considering the potential dangers on the way.

Jiu Yan clearly realized this too, and for a moment was at a loss, then suddenly thought of something and said urgently, "Let me go out and search; maybe I can find a Dao Realm expert from the Thunderbolt Battle Fortress."

Lu Ye grabbed her, shaking his head gently, "Don't go out, and don't worry about me, I'm probably going to be fine!"

"How can you say you'll be fine!" Jiu Yan's voice trembled, thinking Lu Ye was just trying to comfort her, and gazed at him steadily before lowering her head, speaking in a tone of disappointment and self-reproach, "It's my fault for being useless!"

If she could establish a Dao foundation and enter the Dao Realm, this problem would not exist, and they wouldn't have had to struggle so hard against the Insect Race.

An invisible needle seemed to stab into her heart, causing pain!

Her vision blurred and became moist...

Seeing her like this, Lu Ye knew no matter how he tried to explain, Jiu Yan probably wouldn't believe him, and he sighed helplessly, "Don't leave, just stay with me, Senior Sister!"

Neither returning to the Thunderbolt Battle Fortress nor seeking out a Dao Realm expert was realistic, so he had to keep her here for now.

Jiu Yan raised her head, her eyes red, and her lips bitten until they were broken, nodding vigorously, "Alright!"

Lu Ye closed his eyes, immersing his mind, probing the fire seed of his Talent Tree within his Root Spiritual Orifice!

At this moment, the invasive Dao force was converging at the fire seed area, and seemingly stimulated by this external Dao force, the fire seed burst forth with a brilliance even more dazzling than before, the tiny seedling of the fire seed swaying wildly, showing signs of breaking out!

Lu Ye didn't understand why this was happening, but it was clear that the Talent Tree's fire seed was reacting to the Dao force.

The reason he told Jiu Yan that he might not face any substantial problems was precisely because of this anomaly.

The Dao force invading his body, regardless of its nature, was ultimately an External Force. As long as the Talent Tree completed its transformation, it would be able to burn it away completely.

He had confidence in his Talent Tree!

As he watched, the tiny seedling in the fire seed became increasingly vivid, and the entire fire seed seemed to undergo subtle changes.

Lu Ye felt elated, as although he had previously determined that the transformation of the Talent Tree wouldn't take long, the Dao force invasion from the Insect Race appeared to have accelerated this process.

A thought struck him: was the fourfold transformation of the Talent Tree correlated with Dao force? Otherwise, why would there be such a change?

Before he could think it through, Lu Ye felt himself enveloped by a warm and soft body. When he opened his eyes, he found Jiu Yan sitting beside him, holding him in her arms.

"Are you cold?" Jiu Yan asked in a choked voice.

Lu Ye was momentarily stunned, then he couldn't help but smile wryly as he realized that due to the pain caused by the Dao force invasion, his constant trembling had led Jiu Yan to mistakenly believe something else.

And seeing Jiu Yan's demeanor, it seemed she intended to accompany him to the very end of his life.

Chapter 2094: Fourth Transformation

"I'm not cold..." Lu Ye shook his head slowly, his teeth chattering as his upper teeth knocked against the lower.

Then he felt Jiu Yan hugging him tighter.

In such a moment, he couldn't say much, so he simply closed his eyes.

A moment passed, and a soft humming sound came to his ears. It seemed to be a lullaby, with a simple yet gentle melody, something Lu Ye had never heard before. Yet he knew it was likely a tune meant to soothe a child to sleep.

It's hard to imagine a powerful figure like Jiu Yan humming such a tune.

Uncontrollably, an image of a young Chu Shen appeared in his mind, restlessly sleeping as Jiu Yan comforted him in this manner...

The gentle melody flowed softly, and Jiu Yan's heart ached even more because she could clearly feel Lu Ye's shivering body gradually calming down until there was no movement.

At the same time, Lu Ye's aura grew exceptionally weak, almost imperceptible.

"Lu Ye..." Jiu Yan called softly, unaware that tears were already streaming down her face.

No response came, and she bit her red lip, crying silently, pressing her cheeks against Lu Ye's forehead, overwhelmed by indescribable sorrow that enveloped her completely, leaving her feeling as if torn apart.

She couldn't understand why this was happening...

Within the Spectral Sedan Chair, she had explained to Lu Ye very clearly that Ban Ci was long gone, that Ban Ci's matters had nothing to do with her, and she had been firm in that belief.

She had once thought she could adhere to that belief.

But only at this moment did she realize she had never truly faced her own heart.

Ultimately, some things can only be truly understood through experience, but it's often too late.

Jiu Yan's emotional turmoil was completely unknown to Lu Ye, for at this moment, all his focus was immersed in the Root Spiritual Orifice due to the stimulation from the intruding Dao force. The Talent Tree's fire seed was undergoing marvelous changes, emitting an immensely powerful devouring force that frenziedly consumed his foundational essence.

This was the root cause of his aura being so weak that it was nearly undetectable.

"Crack..."

The faint sound of something breaking echoed in the depths of his mind, as the fire seed split open, the fiercely burning Talent Tree finally reappeared.

Lu Ye's taut focus suddenly relaxed.

Four transformations, completed!

It wasn't easy; this time the transformation of the Talent Tree was entirely different from the previous three. The fire gourd obtained from Yiyuan World was a great help. Without it, Lu Ye wouldn't even have detected the conditions required for the Talent Tree's transformation for a long time.

And the breaking of the fire seed at the last moment was quite different from before, as previously at least the fire seed wouldn't devour his foundation.

Lu Ye faintly felt this transformation completed might not be the normal process; it was likely expedited due to the fire seed being stimulated by the Dao force, requiring him to pay a certain price.

This resulted in the Talent Tree completing the transformation, yet he was now extremely weak.

The critical moment had arrived. Can the Talent Tree that has undergone four transformations burn away the Dao force invading the body?

Observing intently, the Talent Tree burned intensely, and Lu Ye clearly felt the reserves rapidly depleting, then thick black smoke rose from the crown of the Talent Tree. The Dao force invading his body melted away like snow under the scorching sun!

The crisis was resolved, and Lu Ye's mind eased.

A moment later, Lu Ye slowly opened his eyes, his extreme weakness causing his vision to blur. He felt that even if a three-year-old child stood before him and poked him with a finger, he would topple over...

Unable to see much, he only saw a face that seemed vaguely familiar, and he opened his mouth to speak, only to find his throat parched, as if it were aflame.

He wished to convey audio transmissions, but his Divine Sea was nearly exhausted. The fire seed of the Talent Tree had devoured everything holistically, leaving Lu Ye with almost no mana, Soul Power, or blood Qi energy—only a basic vital force remained.

"What do you want to say?" Jiu Yan wiped the tears from her face, leaning her ear close to Lu Ye's mouth.

She couldn't comprehend the situation either, for Lu Ye's vitality was dim, seemingly ready to extinguish at any moment, yet this state had persisted for some time, leaving her incredulous.

Nevertheless, it's a glimmer of hope; Lu Ye had not truly perished.

"Elixir... pill..." With great effort, Lu Ye finally managed to squeeze out two unclear words.

Jiu Yan understood, quickly retrieved a bottle of the finest elixir pills from her storage ring, took one out, and gently placed it into Lu Ye's mouth.

But she quickly noticed the problem because, with the elixir pill in Lu Ye's mouth, he showed no sign of swallowing or chewing.

"Is he so weak he can't even do this?" Jiu Yan's heart trembled slightly as she pondered briefly. She urged her mana, extracted the elixir pill from Lu Ye's mouth, and placed it into her own mouth to chew, then pressed her red lips against his.

Her other hand lightly placed against Lu Ye's throat, and an extremely gentle flow of mana helped him swallow.

With the elixir pill entering his stomach, the Talent Tree's power activated, and the medicinal effects spread, merging with his body.

Jiu Yan's expression changed, as she observed Lu Ye's faintly flickering vitality seeming to strengthen slightly...

This left her feeling incredulous, yet her heart surged with hope.

She quickly took out a few more elixir pills and followed the same method.

A bottle of elixir pills was quickly consumed, and Jiu Yan took out another bottle.

Time passed, and Lu Ye's aura slowly recovered. Although it wasn't very strong, it had at least stabilized.

When Jiu Yan administered the elixir pill again, she found Lu Ye quietly watching her. His eyes, which had previously been cloudy and dull, now seemed bright and full of spirit...

She quickly adjusted her posture and glanced at the wound on Lu Ye's chest. The previously terrifying scar was now visibly healing rapidly.

Jiu Yan seemed to sense something, lowered her head to hide her expression, and pushed a few bottles of elixir pills toward Lu Ye: "If there are no issues, continue recovering on your own."

Her earlier action was out of necessity; she didn't think much at the time, as saving lives was the priority. Now, she suddenly realized the implications.

Moreover, Lu Ye's current condition, although not fully recovered, at least allowed him to take the elixir pills himself. She certainly shouldn't continue to act as she did before.

"There is a problem." Lu Ye replied.

"What problem?" Jiu Yan looked up, feeling tense.

Lu Ye hesitated before saying, "I'm so weak..."

Jiu Yan couldn't help but glare at him!

Lu Ye tugged at the corner of his mouth and said sincerely, "Thank you, Senior Sister."

If not for Jiu Yan's presence this time, he could have faced dire consequences. During the Talent Tree's crazy devouring process, it left him with just enough life-sustaining energy. Without timely replenishment, he wouldn't have lasted long. If that last bit of energy dissipated completely, disaster was inevitable.

Thanks to Jiu Yan, he finally stabilized.

He picked up the bottles of elixir pills in front of him, didn't bother to check what they were, and poured them all down his throat.

But this didn't end there; Lu Ye proceeded to take out a large number of elixir pills and continued consuming them.

Jiu Yan occasionally glanced at him, secretly shocked. There was no one else like Lu Ye who would consume elixir pills in such a manner. Although elixir pills were beneficial, consuming too many in a short time could lead to muddled mana and affect one's strength. It would later require quiet cultivation to purify, wasting time and effort.

However, considering Lu Ye's current situation, Jiu Yan decided not to dissuade him further. Regardless, recovery was imperative in such a place.

Yet, the more Lu Ye's actions grew absurd, the more Jiu Yan was astonished...

Initially, he was just consuming elixir pills, but later, Jiu Yan saw him take out several demonic pills, crunching them crisply.

Not only demonic pills but also the crystal cores of star beasts... The absurd scenes left Jiu Yan speechless.

After a few moments, Lu Ye seemed impatient, casually pulling out a large amount of spirit jade and scattering them around, piling them into a small mountain, and burying himself within.

Jiu Yan then noticed that the spiritual energy within the small mountain of spirit jade was being rapidly devoured by some force, flowing into Lu Ye's body and causing his aura to expand continuously.

In a mere moment, the small mountain of spirit jade was completely consumed, turned to powder!

Only then did Jiu Yan understand why Lu Ye's cultivation was advancing so rapidly. The first time Lu Ye entered her sight was during the Constellation Palace's opening, where Lu Ye competed alongside Chu Shen.

At that time, Lu Ye was only a Constellation cultivator, and now, in just a few years, he had advanced to Sun Blaze.

The speed at which he refined spirit jade was so fast; as long as there were enough resources, his cultivation level surely surpassed ordinary people greatly.

Not to mention Jiu Yan's awe, as Lu Ye was recovering, he was also exploring the changes in his Talent Tree after the transformation.

Compared to before, it seemed the Talent Tree had undergone some changes, though it was hard to pinpoint. Superficially, the Talent Tree seemed largely unchanged, but Lu Ye could feel it wasn't the same as before. The specific changes remained to be explored.

The most noticeable improvement was the efficiency of refining resources had increased significantly.

He also tested the Talent Tree's spirit runes deriving ability, which had clearly improved.

However, this wasn't the focus; according to Lu Ye's previous speculation, this transformation of the Talent Tree related to the Dao force, as it was evidently stimulated by external Dao force previously.

That being said...

Lu Ye focused his mind, activating the Talent Tree's power to construct numerous small Gathering Spirit Runes on his body surface.

When he first embarked on the cultivation path, he used this technique to absorb nature's spiritual energy for cultivation. However, with the Talent Tree's second transformation, it hadn't been used for a long time.

He now applied it again, feeling nostalgic.

The small, funnel-like Gathering Spirit Runes had their effect, converging the Star Abyss ambiance around him and flowing into his body.

On the Talent Tree, gray smoke rose.

Ordinary stellar space cultivators would never use this method to cultivate or restore power, because although the Star Abyss ambiance contained spiritual energy, it also had impurities that stellar space cultivators couldn't refine, which Lu Ye had experienced before.

But times changed, as the Talent Tree's transformation completed, Lu Ye naturally wasn't afraid of those impurities. He wanted to test a conjecture.

Chapter 2095: A Quantum Leap from Nothing to Something

Time flowed by as Lu Ye carefully observed, discovering that the refined Star Abyss ambiance entering his body could be divided into three parts. The first part was impurities burned away by the Talent Tree, things useless or harmful to cultivators.

The second part was regular Spiritual Energy, which could be found anywhere in the stellar space, and cultivators relied on this Spiritual Energy for their cultivation.

As for the last part... Lu Ye initially didn't notice it because its presence was so minuscule, yet it undeniably existed.

Strangely, this tiny presence merged into the Talent Tree as he refined and cultivated.

It wasn't absorbed by the Talent Tree; it merged instead. After two hours, Lu Ye noticed a slight mark on a blank leaf of the Talent Tree. If he hadn't been continually focused on sensing it, he would have hardly noticed this change.

With a calm inspection, Lu Ye keenly felt that this tiny mark was an extremely mysterious condensation of power, just too sparse to be easily detected.

This is... Dao force!

Despite already having this conjecture, Lu Ye was immensely exhilarated when it was confirmed.

Because, according to the information provided by the Thunderbolt Battle Fortress, being a creature not born from the Star Abyss, without constructing his Dao foundation, one can't possess their own Dao force. Only by establishing the Dao foundation and entering the Dao Realm can Dao force enter one's body.

Yet now, with the unique feature of the Talent Tree, he was able to break this rule by refining the Star Abyss ambience!

It was always an exclusive advantage of Star Abyss living creatures.

This wisp of Dao force was not complete, and even if activated, it wouldn't greatly enhance Lu Ye, but this was ultimately a good start, it was a leap from nothing to existence, a qualitative change!

If he could have more Dao force, his safety on the front line battlefield would be greatly guaranteed.

Gradually opening his eyes, Lu Ye spoke, "Senior Sister, I need to cultivate for some time."

Jiu Yan paused for a moment, then nodded, "Alright, I will protect you."

In just this brief time, her expression had returned to normal, as if nothing had occurred before.

Lu Ye closed his eyes again and resumed the cultivation state he was maintaining earlier.

As time passed, the Dao force marks on the Talent Tree leaf became increasingly distinct and complete.

After a full ten days, Lu Ye finally obtained a complete wisp of Dao force. With examination, this wisp of Dao force was like a golden thread, flowing and moving on the leaf like a living thing. Just by looking at it, one could feel the infinite mystery contained therein, where the inner profound force seemed capable of evolving the ultimate truths of the world.

Lu Ye finally understood why those Star Abyss outsiders valued their Dao force so dearly; cultivating this stuff was incredibly difficult. With the power of the Talent Tree, he constructed numerous small spirit energy gathering funnels on his body, and his cultivation speed was astonishingly fast, yet even so, it took him this much time to gain a wisp of Dao force.

Other cultivators would definitely spend more time!

And once engaging in combat, Dao force was easily consumed, no wonder those Star Abyss outsiders would eat their enemy's corpses to replenish themselves after fierce battles.

Of course, this was also related to the richness of the Star Abyss ambience here. Though this place was not the frontier of the battlefield, it wasn't a central location either. If in a place with denser Star Abyss ambience, the efficiency should be higher.

Difficult to cultivate yet essential to cultivate, because in this place, Dao force was the foundation of survival.

Lu Ye spent another twenty days, cultivating an additional two wisps of Dao force, before finally pausing.

These three wisps of Dao force all converged on a single leaf of the Talent Tree, appearing like three golden fish swimming back and forth.

The main reason for entering the battlefield this time was to assist Jiu Yan in establishing her Dao foundation. He had already made progress on his side, so there was no need to rush; he could slowly cultivate and obtain more Dao force.

First, he must nurture the powers of the fire gourd and sword gourd because the power of these affiliated treasures was crucial for dealing with Star Abyss outsiders who held Dao force.

"Senior Sister, I'm done on my side." Lu Ye opened his eyes and said to Jiu Yan.

Jiu Yan turned to observe him for a while before nodding, closing her eyes to start her own cultivation.

Lu Ye contemplated, summoned a drop of treasure blood, transforming it into a doppelganger to remain vigilant outside while his main body began nurturing the sword gourd and fire gourd.

This task was quite simple, requiring only sufficient resources to complete, and he had brought plenty of resources to nurture the two treasure gourds, especially the fire gourd, for which he had specifically reserved enough Scorching Sun Essence to nurture dozens of uncanny fires when on the Giant Red Planet.

Under the devouring of a large number of magic treasures of different qualities, the Sword Qi within the sword gourd gradually became whole.

Once the sword gourd was nurtured to completion, Lu Ye began nurturing the fire gourd.

With the consumption of Scorching Sun Essence, uncanny fire slowly gestated within the fire gourd.

Lu Ye was about to put away the fire gourd when he suddenly remembered a question, that being whether the Talent Tree would experience another transformation? If so, what are the conditions for that?

Ordinary fire-type resources clearly no longer contribute to the Talent Tree's transformation, only serving as supplemental fuel. The opportunity for the fourth transformation was the devouring of a large amount of uncanny fire. Will the next transformation also require such fire?

A thought struck Lu Ye, and he decided to give it a try. After all, it was merely consuming one piece of uncanny fire. As for whether this was the opportunity, one experiment would tell.

He activated the Talent Tree, allowing the invisible roots to probe into the gourd's mouth. However, in the next moment, Lu Ye's expression changed, and he quickly withdrew the Talent Tree's power.

At that fleeting moment of contact, he felt something amiss.

The Talent Tree... seemed to want to devour the fire gourd!

Recalling carefully, Lu Ye confirmed it was no illusion. If he hadn't reacted quickly, the fire gourd might truly have been devoured by the Talent Tree. Even if it couldn't be devoured instantly, any damage to the fire gourd would surely greatly diminish its power.

A Talent Tree that has undergone four transformations can even devour affiliated treasures?

Even though he knew the Talent Tree would definitely have some unusual changes after this transformation, he didn't expect such a change... It was still surprising.

After pondering for a while, Lu Ye didn't dare let the Talent Tree have any direct contact with the fire gourd. Although devouring the fire gourd might bring him significant benefits, the fire gourd was still very useful.

He had to activate the fire gourd to release the uncanny fire inside, hovering not far in front of him. Then he activated the Talent Tree's power, letting the invisible roots penetrate the uncanny fire. In an instant, the uncanny fire vanished without a trace.

Lu Ye quietly sensed, soon revealing a disappointed expression. The Talent Tree had little reaction, even none at all. This undoubtedly indicated that even if it could transform again, the opportunity wasn't the uncanny fire.

Just as he thought this, he suddenly sensed something unusual.

Because after the uncanny fire was devoured, the Talent Tree's fuel reserve didn't change.

Logically, if devouring uncanny fire wasn't a condition for transformation, it would boost the fuel reserve. But since it didn't increase, where did the devoured uncanny fire go? It couldn't have just disappeared; that was a treasure nurtured by many Scorching Sun Essences.

Calming his mind and checking carefully, Lu Ye soon discovered a change on one of the Talent Tree's leaves.

That leaf, which had three threads of Dao force from a month's cultivation, now unexpectedly had an additional golden thread, becoming four threads.

The Dao force increased...

Did this come from devouring the uncanny fire?

Thinking carefully, this seemed to be the only explanation. He had previously speculated that the power displayed by affiliated treasures contained Dao force; otherwise, they couldn't pose such a threat to those Star Abyss outsiders. This speculation couldn't be verified before, but now the evidence was right in front of him.

The additional thread of Dao force couldn't appear out of nowhere, and the uncanny fire couldn't have disappeared without a trace. It was transformed into this thread of Dao force by the Talent Tree!

Although he felt quite certain, such matters needed verification.

Lu Ye used some more Scorching Sun Essence to nurture another uncanny fire for the Talent Tree to devour. This time, he closely observed the leaf bearing the Dao force. As expected, as the uncanny fire was devoured, another golden thread of Dao force appeared on the leaf, transforming four threads into five...

Lu Ye was overjoyed.

With his own cultivation efficiency in this environment, it would take ten days for just one thread of Dao force. However, with the power of the affiliated treasures, the efficiency was far greater. The only limitation was resource supply. Even if he exhausted all the magic treasures and Scorching Sun Essence he carried, he could gain nearly a hundred threads of Dao force.

With a hundred threads of Dao force at his disposal, according to the Thunderbolt Battle Fortress's intelligence, this was the capital only available to those in the Dao Realm. Those who hadn't entered the Dao Realm, even the Star Abyss outsiders, couldn't wield so much Dao force.

In other words, if Lu Ye converted all his resources into Dao force, he would rival the Dao Realm even if he hadn't reached it.

Is there a more advantageous deal in the world?

Moreover, one piece of uncanny fire in the fire gourd equates to one thread of Dao force. So, if he allowed the Talent Tree to completely devour the fire gourd, how much Dao force could he gain? It surely wouldn't be just one thread. Supreme treasures are the condensation of the Dao, and affiliated treasures are derivatives of supreme treasures, thus containing significant Dao force within!

Dao Tree... So it was like this; the name of the Dao Tree holds such deep meaning. Suddenly, many things seemed clear. Lu Ye had never understood why the Talent Tree was called the Dao Tree until today, when he glimpsed the truth.

He certainly wouldn't let the Talent Tree devour the fire gourd, nor the sword gourd, but he had more than just these two affiliated treasures!

A thought came to mind, and he took out a palm-sized, tattered little umbrella.

The Heavenly Net Umbrella.

This thing couldn't be repaired by Hua Ci, nor at the Constellation Palace, because their natures were incompatible. Lu Ye originally planned to place it in the Spirit Jade Vein but had forgotten it.

Since this treasure was already damaged, it was just right to bring it out for devouring!

However, just as Lu Ye was about to proceed, he stopped and, after some contemplation, diverted the Dao force to infuse it into the Heavenly Net Umbrella.

Chapter 2096: Devouring the Affiliated Treasure

At this point, Lu Ye roughly understood why an affiliated treasure could be repaired beside a supreme treasure after being damaged. It's because the supreme treasure is the condensation of the Dao, so as long as their affinities match, the affiliated treasure can use the Dao force from the supreme treasure to perfect itself.

If that's the case, can his Dao force serve the function of repair?

If possible, then this Heavenly Net Umbrella still has some utility, at the very least, it can be used by Jiu Yan for protection.

A strand of golden Dao force disappeared from the leaf of the Talent Tree, and a layer of golden light appeared on the damaged Heavenly Net Umbrella, which then quickly subsided.

It was still in tatters, but Lu Ye discovered that the Heavenly Net Umbrella was obviously better than before.

It can really be repaired!

His Dao force and the Heavenly Net Umbrella clearly did not have any affinity, because he is a cultivator, not a supreme treasure, and this result was expected.

Of the remaining four strands of Dao force, Lu Ye used up one more. Like before, a golden light flashed across the Heavenly Net Umbrella, and its damage improved again.

He didn't continue because Lu Ye realized that at this rate of progress, just a few strands of Dao force would not be enough to repair the Heavenly Net Umbrella.

He needed more Dao force!

The Heavenly Net Umbrella still has utility, it can't be devoured, so ...

Lu Ye rummaged through the storage ring and took out a fist-sized, rectangular object.

The Dice of Fate!

This affiliated treasure obtained from the Asura Field is undoubtedly the most suitable for devouring. Although it possesses mystical powers, it is neither a treasure for attack nor for protection. For Lu Ye, such a treasure is honestly quite useless. Since returning from the Asura Field, he has not even actively used it, just in case he rolled a great misfortune, bringing bad luck upon himself.

Holding the dice, Lu Ye activated his Talent Tree, invisible roots spread out from his palm and plunged into the dice.

Under the mad devouring, Lu Ye raised his eyebrows.

A steady stream of pure and continuous mystical Dao force flowed from the dice into his body. At this moment, the Talent Tree bloomed with a brilliance never seen before, and the entire tree swayed.

Lu Ye concentrated his mind, exploring the changes.

He could feel that the Dao force flowing from the dice, after being devoured by the Talent Tree, did not immediately become his own Dao force but underwent some mysterious sedimentation and transformation within the Talent Tree.

Lu Ye pondered slightly, then understood the reason. Even Dao force is not completely uniform. Take the affiliated treasures as an example: the Dao force nurtured in the fire gourd is extremely hot and intense, while the Dao force in the sword gourd is unmatched in sharpness. This kind of Dao force does not naturally align with him, thus requiring the Talent Tree's transformation. Only after that mysterious sedimentation and change, does it become his Dao force.

The tree leaf, which originally had only three strands of Dao force, now began to radiate a golden light, with strands of new Dao force appearing and gradually increasing in number.

Within moments, a leaf was entirely covered with golden light, with no space left.

Another adjacent blank leaf began to radiate golden light, with new Dao force appearing ...

As time passed, more than half a day later, when Lu Ye opened his hand, the Dice of Fate that had originally been in his palm had completely vanished, as if it never existed.

In its place, however, were four radiant leaves on the Talent Tree, three of which were completely filled with Dao force, with the fourth still having space left.

Lu Ye carefully counted and found that the Dao force he now possessed unexpectedly amounted to as many as one hundred and twenty-six strands!

He exhaled heavily. Since arriving at this frontline battlefield, he had been cautious and on edge, fearing he would encounter an unbeatable strong foe, but at this moment, all those worries vanished.

I, Lu Yiye ... have stood up again!

One hundred and twenty-six strands of Dao force! Excluding the original three strands he had, the Dao force obtained from devouring one Dice of Fate amounted to as much as one hundred and twenty-three. Such an increase is simply terrifying.

Based on the current situation, only experts who have entered the Dao Realm are qualified to possess hundreds of strands of Dao force. Lu Ye has clearly surpassed this standard.

But that said, although theoretically having more Dao force makes one stronger, it is not absolute. When those possessing Dao force confront enemies, they integrate the Dao force into their own Mana, either for attack or defense, exponentially increasing their power, making it vastly different from ordinary cultivators.

However, whether it be stellar space cultivators or Star Abyss outsiders, the activation of Dao force is not unlimited. Take the current situation of Lu Ye, for example, he cannot simultaneously activate over one hundred strands of Dao force, as that's beyond his capacity to handle.

Therefore, during encounters with enemies, the usage of Dao force becomes the critical factor for victory or defeat.

The only absolute aspect is that the more Dao force one has, the stronger their sustained combat ability!

Now with enormous capital, Lu Ye once again took out the Heavenly Net Umbrella and activated his Dao force to repair it. Although doing so was quite consuming, in such a place, he couldn't confidently ensure Jiu Yan's safety. Having an affiliated treasure for protection, Jiu Yan could be safer.

His own Dao force continued to deplete until, with only over eighty strands of Dao force left, the tattered Sky Asura was finally fully repaired.

Without delay, Lu Ye called out to Jiu Yan.

Jiu Yan opened her eyes, looking at him puzzled. She knew that unless it was urgent, Lu Ye wouldn't disturb her, but at this moment there was no sign of enemies appearing, so she didn't understand why Lu Ye was calling her.

"This is for you." Lu Ye handed over the Heavenly Net Umbrella.

"What is this?" Jiu Yan took it curiously, examined it closely, and then seemed to realize something. She exclaimed in surprise, "This wouldn't be the Heavenly Net Umbrella, would it?"

It was already known by everyone that the Shern Yun of Winged Heaven Planet was killed in the All Phenomena Ocean, and the Heavenly Net Umbrella was destroyed. Jiu Yan naturally had heard of it, so she recognized this valuable treasure at a glance.

"It is indeed." Lu Ye did not hide from her, "Senior Sister, refine this treasure for protection first, then cultivate at your leisure."

"No way!" Jiu Yan flatly refused, handing the Heavenly Net Umbrella back, "This item is too precious; I can't accept it!"

After all, her relationship with Lu Ye was somewhat unclear. Accepting such a supreme treasure, what would that mean?

Lu Ye had anticipated her attitude, so he said, "Just consider it as me lending it to you, Senior Sister..."

"That still won't do. You should refine it yourself. The protection of this treasure is formidable; it could ensure your life remains unaffected at crucial moments."

"It's like this, Senior Sister..." Lu Ye explained the reasoning he had prepared beforehand: "The reason why the power of the affiliated treasure is so strong is that it contains Dao force when activated. If you refine it and immerse yourself in comprehension, you might uncover the mysteries of Dao force, which should greatly benefit you in establishing your Dao foundation!"

"Affiliated treasure power contains Dao force..." Jiu Yan pondered, her eyes lit up, "That makes sense! How did you think of this?"

Lu Ye blinked, "Because I have several affiliated treasures. I've already comprehended the mysteries of Dao force!"

Even though Jiu Yan knew some of Lu Ye's background, she couldn't help but feel like hitting him after hearing this... So many stellar space cultivators sought after these affiliated treasures, yet Lu Ye had several!

"So, there's no need for you to worry about my safety, Senior Sister. My current strength should not be weaker than those in the Dao Realm!"

"Bragging!" Jiu Yan didn't believe him, as just a little while ago, Lu Ye had narrowly escaped death. How could his strength have transformed so drastically in just over a month?

But what Lu Ye said earlier undoubtedly made her very tempted. If she could understand the Dao force from an affiliated treasure, it would indeed benefit her in establishing her Dao foundation.

"This treasure... I will borrow it for now. Whenever you need it, just let me know." Jiu Yan pursed her lips and sighed inwardly, feeling indebted once more.

She knew in her heart that if it weren't for her, Lu Ye, regardless of how many affiliated treasures he had, wouldn't lend them out so casually.

Restarting her cultivation, this time Jiu Yan didn't rush to transform her body into a furnace but began to refine the Heavenly Net Umbrella. Refining an affiliated treasure is not particularly difficult; strictly speaking, an affiliated treasure is just a higher quality magic treasure. As long as one proceeds step by step and has sufficient cultivation, anyone can refine it.

Meanwhile, Lu Ye kept vigilant while also cultivating.

When it comes to Dao force, there can never be too much. Given that he was now in this part of the stellar space with no immediate means of returning, he could only strive to make himself stronger.

The only regret Lu Ye had was his insufficient cultivation.

If he were currently at the Peak Sun Blaze and had condensed the Divine Flower, he should easily establish his Dao foundation and enter the Dao Realm.

After all, even he could cultivate Dao force, so establishing a Dao foundation shouldn't be a difficult task.

However, things rarely go as planned in life; rarely is anything perfect.

An additional two months passed in this way.

A thousand miles away from where Jiu Yan was in secluded cultivation, Lu Ye's figure swept over. He had sensed the disturbance of a battle here and came to investigate to prevent any aftereffects from interfering with Jiu Yan.

As for Jiu Yan's safety, there was no need to worry. She had already refined the Heavenly Net Umbrella, and the Treasure Blood Avatar remained there, allowing Lu Ye to return at any time.

Looking up, he immediately saw several figures engaged in a fierce battle here, and one of them was clearly a cultivator from the home planet, as the individual was piloting a humanoid cover armor.

Besides this person, the rest were all stellar space outsiders. Although varied in race, the Star Abyss ambience from each was unmistakably obvious.

Fighting against many, even though that cover armor cultivator was a Dao Realm expert who had established a Dao foundation, he repeatedly found himself in perilous situations.

This individual was exceptionally brave, enduring a round of enemy encirclement and even managing to forcefully slay one of the stellar space outsiders.

But this act of taking a risk left his cover armor damaged, rendering it somewhat battered.

Seeing this, Lu Ye realized that this cover armor cultivator couldn't hold on much longer. The prolonged battle had severely drained his Dao force, and once it was exhausted, only death awaited him.

Faced with such circumstances, Lu Ye ultimately couldn't stand by and watch. Although he didn't originate from this Primordial Star Sky, his stance regarding the Star Abyss aligned with that of the Primordial Star Sky.

Without hesitation, Lu Ye flashed and entered the battlefield.

The group of stellar space outsiders surrounding the cover armor cultivator noticeably sensed Lu Ye's presence, and immediately, one figure separated from them to confront Lu Ye.

This guy belonged to the Two-headed Race, naturally having two heads: one with a full-face smile and the other looking sinister and terrifying, appearing extremely bizarre.

Chapter 2097: Five-Dao Cultivators

The Mental Consciousness spread out, detecting Lu Ye's cultivation, and the Two-headed Race member immediately showed a disdainful expression. For cultivators like Lu Ye, it was impossible to possess Dao force. Such a cultivator, in his eyes, was akin to an ant, easily killed.

The distance between them closed rapidly. Lu Ye slowly drew the Boulder Mountain Saber, and as he activated his mana, a trace of Dao force imbued itself into the blade.

As they brushed past each other, not only did Lu Ye not slow down, but he quickened his pace. Behind him, the Two-headed Race member was frozen in place, and his body split in two. His astonished eyes were full of shock and reluctance, unable to comprehend how he could die at the hands of an ant.

Arrogance led to his downfall, and he hadn't even activated his Dao force, which is why his death came so suddenly.

He didn't anticipate this, and neither did the other figures within the battleground. When Lu Ye suddenly joined the fray, several Star Abyss outsiders were taken aback.

Even the cover armor cultivator, who was under siege, paused momentarily.

However, he quickly realized it was an opportunity. He immediately shouted angrily, and a cylindrical object suddenly protruded from his chest, emitting a strong burst of light.

This move caught the Star Abyss outsiders off guard, rendering them blind, and even their psyches felt disrupted.

Lu Ye, however, remained unaffected, as the cover armor cultivator had discreetly sent an audio transmission beforehand, alerting him to prepare.

Lu Ye moved with the saber, his figure darting around. Each pause was marked by a burst of blood light.

These enemies, who would have given him and Jiu Yan a hard time months ago, now fell effortlessly before him. This showcased the difference brought by the ability to wield Dao force.

In the blink of an eye, only one Star Abyss outsider remained. The cover armor cultivator already charged at him, every move he made was lethal and exceptionally fierce.

While under siege, he couldn't stand his ground, but in a one-on-one fight, the Star Abyss outsider was no match as he had already entered the Dao Realm.

Seeing this, Lu Ye did not linger and swiftly departed.

A moment later, after the cover armor cultivator had slain the last Star Abyss outsider, he looked up to find that Lu Ye was nowhere in sight, feeling a sense of loss.

After all, it was a life-saving grace, and he originally wanted to express his gratitude. But as the rumors suggested, this cultivator who practiced the ancient method always left after finishing his business.

His presence wasn't by chance; he came here intentionally after hearing about a powerful individual in the vicinity who had saved people multiple times. So when he was under attack, he fled in this direction, harboring a glimmer of hope.

The result proved the rumors true, solely from Lu Ye's previous intervention, he felt at least a 4th Dao expert's presence; otherwise, it wouldn't have been possible to kill enemies like cutting grass.

However, the aura Lu Ye displayed left him somewhat baffled because the ambiance was only akin to that of an Early Stage Divine Realm...

On second thought, he shook his head and chuckled. If he were truly just at the Early Stage Divine Realm, how could he possibly control Dao force?

The Mental Consciousness surged, transmitting audio messages sincerely expressing his gratitude, regardless of whether Lu Ye heard it or not, as it was the etiquette he ought to follow before departing. Having consumed much energy in the battle, he needed to recover quickly.

At that time, Lu Ye had already used the Void Spirit Runes to return to his Treasure Blood Avatar, naturally unable to hear the gratitude of the other party.

He had been serving as a protector for Jiu Yan, while amassing his own Dao force, only intervening when there were skirmishes nearby to assess the situation and had saved a few home planet cultivators' lives in the process.

Through several interventions, he roughly figured out his current limits.

According to the classification of the home planet, he should now be a 5th Dao cultivator.

The 4th Dao, 5th Dao... aren't levels but a categorization of strength, based on how many strands of Dao force one can wield at once. The more Dao force a cultivator can control, the stronger they are.

In other words, the maximum Dao force he could wield at once was five strands.

With five strands of Dao force, whether used for defense or attack, it could unleash immense power. A cultivator's limit in wielding Dao force directly correlates to their foundational strength; the more robust the foundation, the higher the limit.

Typically, Star Abyss outsiders who hadn't entered the Dao Realm could only wield a strand of Dao force, but once in the Dao Realm, at least two strands were possible.

Lu Ye hadn't encountered many Dao Realm experts, so he wasn't sure how he compared at a 5th Dao level, but based on his experiences during battles, a 5th Dao level seemed adequate.

His foundation was always robust, thanks to the Talent Tree, which equipped him with the ability to defeat stronger opponents from the onset of his cultivation, and Constellation and Moon Jade had reached their utmost potential.

Compared to his smooth sailing, it seemed Jiu Yan had little to show for her efforts.

Since entering the frontline battlefield, nearly half a year had passed. Despite spending a month in hiding and healing, there was still no sign of Jiu Yan forming her Dao foundation.

Lu Ye couldn't be of much assistance in this matter; it depended entirely on her.

Jiu Yan's foundation wasn't weak; anyone who reached the Peak Sun Blaze wasn't weak, and this Yiyuan stellar space had many cultivators who entered the Dao Realm, so Lu Ye believed Jiu Yan would cross that threshold one day.

It seems that there is an Enlightenment Pool at Thunder Fortress, crafted by the cultivators of this stellar space, a place to help build one's Dao foundation. It simulates the various mysteries of the Smelting Furnace Method; a visit inside would certainly be greatly beneficial for Jiu Yan.

But their foundations here are still shallow, lacking the qualifications and the connections.

The only way is to exchange battle merits.

Slaying Star Abyss outsiders grants battle merits, either by recording with an image stone or collecting the enemy's bodies. After bringing them back to Thunder Fortress, they are verified and checked by specialists, accumulating battle merits thereafter.

Lu Ye hadn't considered this much before, but now it seems he needs to prepare more thoroughly.

The Frontline Battlefield is a vast area; entering it can result in battles erupting at any time. No place is absolutely safe, and this battlefield is continually expanding due to the invasion of the Star Abyss ambience.

Perhaps because Lu Ye intervened to help people several times, and each intervention was a sweeping victory, his reputation has begun to spread gradually.

This leads to stellar space cultivators in danger occasionally fleeing towards his vicinity.

Nobody knows his precise location; the only known fact is that if one escapes close enough to where he is, they can receive his assistance.

The area where he and Jiu Yan reside has slowly become a safe harbor for stellar space cultivators escaping hardship, and he is slowly becoming aware of this change, feeling somewhat amused.

On this day, Lu Ye senses nearby commotion, with wide-ranging movements from both sides involved. If this situation continues, it could very likely interfere with Jiu Yan.

Helpless, he decides to move forward to investigate.

Moments later, he arrives at the periphery of the conflict zone, raising his eyes towards the direction, and the scene he sees leaves him momentarily stunned.

Because this time, the two parties in battle are surprisingly two cover armor cultivators!

One drives a three-foot-tall humanoid cover armor, appearing formidable and striking fiercely, while the other maneuvers a cover armor shaped like a giant python, its movements mysterious and unpredictable.

Lu Ye frowned.

How did the cultivators from this Primordial Star Sky start fighting each other? He's never encountered this situation before.

Due to the stellar space facing invasion by the Star Abyss, survival is at stake, so for the past few centuries, stellar space cultivators have been incredibly united, with hardly any friction between them. Moreover, according to Thunder Fortress's rules, striking against comrades is a grave offense; if discovered, one is subject to strong opponent's sanctions.

Initially, he thought this was the same circumstance as before, but seeing this now, he couldn't intervene.

Just as he intended to retreat, he suddenly furrows his brows and turns to look beside him.

At some undefined moment, a striking yet graceful figure appears in that direction, a woman with hair tied high, wearing a tight-fitting leather armor, with a prominent chest, appearing extremely capable. Her eyes, framed by sword-like brows, reflect a decisive and dynamic presence.

She eyes Lu Ye with interest, holding something in her hand, casually investigating, raising her sword-like eyebrows: "Lu Ye?"

The item in her hand Lu Ye also possesses; it was obtained from Thunder Fortress. It contains the basic information of all registered cultivators, which is how she knows Lu Ye's name.

Yet soon, she displays a puzzled expression: "Unknown origin, unknown background, cultivation... Divine Realm Early Stage? Quite peculiar?"

Lu Ye instantly becomes vigilant because as the woman appears, the two cover armor duking it out also cease fighting, looking this way, as if watching a show.

These two fellows... were acting earlier! By now, he realizes that these three intentionally caused such a ruckus to make him reveal himself.

"This elder sister... how should I address you?" Lu Ye asks while secretly urging his mana, feeling that his trip here seems unfavorable.

"Come to know my name, first take my punch!" The woman sets aside the item in her hand, smiling slightly, suddenly appearing before Lu Ye, and reminds: "This punch of mine, power of the 3rd Dao, fail to take it and you'll die!"

Her actions are incredibly swift, the fastest Lu Ye has ever seen, clearly no ordinary strong opponent. Although the woman is smiling, the punch she throws is steeped in killing intent, engulfing her in a strong aura of bloodlust!

Lu Ye's expression turns grim, immediately understanding the opponent is unquestionably a strong opponent forged through battles amid blood and mountains of corpses. Hearing her declare that her punch contains the power of the 3rd Dao, how could he neglect to act? He promptly activates mana to guard himself, adding Dao force!

Upon a single punch, Lu Ye's posture shakes, his protective mana shatters, and the activated Dao force dissipates.

Lu Ye's expression changes, this woman... actually tricked him!

She claimed the power of the 3rd Dao, but clearly, it's the 4th Dao, even the 5th Dao! Otherwise, there's no way a punch could break his protective mana; if she truly only released the power of the 3rd Dao, he should have been able to take it safely.

There's no time to further activate mana to protect himself; as the saber is unsheathed, it slashes down towards the opponent's head.

Chapter 2098: Du Qingsha's Summons

This slash, however, couldn't really cut down, because just as the Boulder Mountain Saber was about to fall, the woman reached out with two fingers, precisely pinching the blade, her strength so formidable that it abruptly halted the saber that charged like a thunderbolt.

Her bright eyes gazed at Lu Ye, showing a satisfied expression as she nodded continuously, "Very good, you are indeed qualified; I didn't come here in vain."

Lu Ye frowned, shaking the long saber in his hand to break free from her grip and retreated gracefully, "What do you mean?"

"What do I mean?" The woman chuckled, then immediately her smile faded, taking out a token which she waved toward Lu Ye from a distance, shouting, "I am Du Qingsha, the captain of Team A-3 of the hunting camp at Thunderbolt Battle Fortress. I hereby recruit you to join our squad and slaughter the enemy together!"

Upon hearing these words, Lu Ye couldn't help but twitch the corner of his eye.

In fact, he had vaguely anticipated this.

The hunting camp at Thunderbolt Battle Fortress is a special entity and a major force against the Star Abyss outsiders. The minimum requirement to join the hunting camp is to establish a Dao foundation and enter the Dao Realm. Cultivators without a Dao foundation are not qualified at all.

The entire hunting camp is almost composed of 80% of Thunderbolt Battle Fortress's elite forces, divided into squads on the frontline battlefield, hunting enemies everywhere.

And for Du Qingsha to serve as a squad leader, she is evidently not an ordinary Dao Realm cultivator. Just judging by her previous exhibition of power, it's clear she's at least a 4th Dao expert. Such character naturally qualifies to serve as a squad leader.

And the two who were previously fighting intensely yet are now standing not far, watching the show, are undoubtedly her team members. She obviously came here after hearing some rumors, to test Lu Ye's strength and developed the intention to recruit him.

What a hassle!

In recent times, Lu Ye acted several times, saving the lives of some cultivators from Thunderbolt Battle Fortress, but he never interacted with them since he had to protect Jiu Yan.

Yet he never expected Du Qingsha to come seeking him anyway.

As the captain of a hunting camp, she has the authority to recruit, and according to the rules of Thunderbolt Battle Fortress, such a recruitment by her cannot be refused by Lu Ye.

If he were to refuse, it would be deemed as evasion of battle, a conscious evasion of battle being something all cultivators can't tolerate in the current stellar space environment. At that time, Du Qingsha only needs to report back to Thunderbolt Battle Fortress, and Lu Ye would become a wanted target across the entire stellar space cultivators.

If he was truly alone, perhaps being wanted would not matter, as he could hide in some desolate corner where no one could touch him.

But Jiu Yan still needs to cultivate on the battlefield. If Lu Ye takes her to hide in some remote place, the matter of Jiu Yan establishing a Dao foundation would become indefinitely delayed.

Should he kill these three? This thought rose and then was discarded; he indeed had confidence to handle the two cover armor cultivators watching the show from not far, but this Du Qingsha... is somewhat beyond his perception.

"Interesting, you actually harbored a killing intent toward me?" Du Qingsha suddenly raised her eyebrows, looking at Lu Ye with keen interest.

"It's a misunderstanding, Senior Sister Du," Lu Ye responded calmly.

This woman... Her perception is exceptionally strong. His killing intent flashed momentarily, and was not even strong, yet she sensed it.

"Never mind any misunderstanding, now you have two paths to choose!" Du Qingsha raised a finger, "One, join my squad and fight under my lead. Two, refuse my recruitment, and then I'll kill you, you can try and see if you can escape."

When she said this, Du Qingsha appeared eager, as if hoping Lu Ye would spout the word no.

Lu Ye folded his hands in salute from afar, "To be noticed by Senior Sister Du and recruited, it's an extreme honor, I am willing to join Senior Sister's team, and live and die with you all." Since he couldn't refuse, joining became the only option.

"At least you're sensible!" Du Qingsha nodded in satisfaction.

"But..."

"You can put forth conditions, being my team member, I can give you whatever you want, as long as you behave!"

Lu Ye originally intended to propose a different condition, but since she said so, then...

"I want an opportunity to enter the Enlightenment Pool once!"

Du Qingsha blinked, then cursed, "You must be delusional, you know how big a price it costs to enter the Enlightenment Pool once? To enter it, fight with me and after killing plenty, naturally, you'll have enough battle merit!"

Lu Ye merely mentioned it casually, fully aware that Du Qingsha would likely not agree to such a condition.

Then, opting for something more achievable, "In that case, I hope to get a recommendation slot from Senior Sister!"

As someone like Du Qingsha, taking the rank of a hunting camp captain, her strength is formidable, and her status isn't lacking either. She has recommendation slots, having her recommendation allows not only precedence in entering the Enlightenment Pool but also requires much less battle merit.

Du Qingsha frowned, giving him an up-and-down glance, "You've already Entered the Path, you don't need the Enlightenment Pool. Is this for someone else?"

"Yes!" Lu Ye nodded.

Du Qingsha pondered for a moment, suddenly raising her hand to summon, "All of you, get over here!"

At her command, the two cover armor cultivators who had been watching from afar hurriedly flew over.

The three gathered together, exchanging through mental consciousness for a while, Lu Ye didn't know what they were discussing, so he waited quietly on the side.

A moment later, Du Qingsha said, "I can give you the recommendation slot, and I just calculated that with the combined battle merits of the three of us, it's almost enough for one entry into the Enlightenment Pool. If you need it, take it! But let me be clear, the battle merits are lent to you, and you'll have to return them afterward."

Lu Ye couldn't help but be taken aback. He originally didn't have a good impression of Du Qingsha because she had just depleted some of his Dao force right away; at this stage, Dao force is crucial and not easy to cultivate.

Moreover, Du Qingsha's manner of doing things was domineering, which he wasn't fond of.

But for someone to make such an offer, what more could Lu Ye say?

"Why me?" he couldn't help but ask.

Du Qingsha snorted: "Don't think too highly of yourself. It mainly is because there are too few 3rd Dao cultivators on the battlefield now, and you happen to meet my standards for recruitment. My Team A-3 is the most elite unit, and I'd rather have none than someone unqualified, you understand?"

"Alright." Lu Ye touched his nose and respectfully made a salutation. "Regardless, many thanks to Senior Sister and the two Senior Brothers!"

With their combined battle merits and Du Qingsha's recommendation, Jiu Yan could have a chance to enter the Enlightenment Pool, solving his urgent crisis.

After a while, Lu Ye led his team of three to find Jiu Yan and explained the situation to her.

Jiu Yan naturally understood that being summoned by the captain of the hunting camp wasn't something she could refuse, and she also wasn't suited to act with Lu Ye at the moment. She was merely surprised that the hunting camp even approached Lu Ye because she had always thought his strength was inferior to hers. During this time, she had been focused on cultivation, completely unaware that Lu Ye's strength had undergone a dramatic transformation.

It wasn't until Lu Ye displayed his Dao force that Jiu Yan realized that in the path of cultivation, Lu Ye had already taken a significant lead ahead of her, leaving her feeling both happy for Lu Ye and ashamed of her inadequacy.

Jiu Yan wasn't one to dwell on things, and now that the situation had developed like this, all she could do was accept Lu Ye's kindness and strive to forge her Dao foundation as soon as possible.

The group, numbering several individuals, embarked on the journey back to the Thunderbolt Battle Fortress without interruption.

After just a few days, they arrived at the Thunderbolt Battle Fortress and leisurely entered.

The ensuing matters didn't require Lu Ye's involvement as Du Qingsha had things well arranged. Her standing and position here were far superior to Lu Ye's.

Half a day later, Du Qingsha found Lu Ye waiting somewhere: "Everything's set, but your woman will have to wait two months before she can enter the Enlightenment Pool."

Too many people wanted to enter the Enlightenment Pool, so even with Du Qingsha's recommendation, there was some waiting involved; it wasn't immediate access.

Lu Ye naturally understood and thanked her again.

"Anything you need to prepare, do it quickly!" Du Qingsha glanced at the other two.

These two were the ones who previously staged the scene to force Lu Ye into the open. One was a man, Xsu Rong, the owner of the human-shaped cover armor, and the other was a woman called Snake Girl, who piloted the snake-shaped cover armor. True to her name, she had a seductive physique, supple and boneless, with an enchanting face, though her tongue was forked like a snake's; she was born of the Demon Race's snake demons.

Over the days, Lu Ye didn't become fully acquainted with them, but at least they had some understanding of each other.

Including Lu Ye, the four constitute all of Team A-3.

There was originally one more, but they died deep within the battlefield not long ago, so Du Qingsha wanted to recruit new people and had heard of Lu Ye's presence, deciding to take a chance. As it turns out, Lu Ye's performance met her requirements precisely.

Both Xsu Rong and Snake Girl were 3rd Dao cultivators, whereas Du Qingsha was a 5th Dao cultivator, making her significantly stronger than Xsu Rong and Snake Girl.

Facing Du Qingsha's inquiry, Xsu Rong smiled, "Nothing to prepare, just keep my head attached; I have nothing but my life!"

"Then, let's go!" Du Qingsha waved her hand and flew out first.

Xsu Rong and Snake Girl followed closely, and Lu Ye took one last look back before promptly catching up.

He hoped the next time they returned, Jiu Yan would enter the Dao Realm.

The group of four quickly distanced themselves from the Thunderbolt Battle Fortress, heading into the battlefield.

Lu Ye keenly noticed that compared to when he entered six months ago, the battlefield's edge had significantly expanded due to the encroachment of the Star Abyss ambience.

And there were many such battlefields across this stellar space.

Continuing like this, one day, the entire stellar space would be submerged by the Star Abyss ambience, and there would be no place of peace.

Suddenly, an object flew towards him, and Lu Ye reached out to catch it.

Du Qingsha's voice sounded by his ear: "I previously depleted your Dao force; this should make up for it. Refine it on the way."

Lu Ye looked down to find a bone the length of a chopstick in his hand, shaped like the upper arm bone.

"Dao foundation?" Lu Ye raised an eyebrow.

Whether a stellar space cultivator or a Star Abyss outsider, upon entering the Dao Realm, they choose a part of their body as their Dao foundation. It could be internal organs, bones, or even a piece of flesh. It becomes the most important body part because it carries the Dao force garnered through cultivation. Once lost, the Dao foundation is destroyed.

Generally, people choose a bone because bones are the hardest. This one in Lu Ye's hand should be the Dao Bone of a Star Abyss outsider's Dao Foundation.

Chapter 2099: Life and Death Wuchang

After stellar space cultivators slay Star Abyss outsiders who have entered the Dao Realm, the best spoils are the Dao foundations they leave behind, which enable stellar space cultivators to quickly replenish their Dao force.

This, rather than closed-door cultivation, is how stellar space cultivators maintain their strength.

Although Lu Ye has killed several Star Abyss outsiders during this period, due to not venturing deep enough into the battlefield, he has only encountered enemies without Dao foundations, so even though he killed them, they held little value, only yielding some spoils at best.

But he knows that after joining Team A-3, the enemies he will face won't be at the same level as before.

He's somewhat anticipating this.

Composing himself, he carefully examines the bone in hand, faintly observing a subtle golden glow within it.

He grips the bone, channeling the power of the Talent Tree, and in just a moment, refines the residual Dao force within the bone completely.

Upon inspection, his own Dao force increases by just over four threads, indeed making up for his previous losses.

They gallop along the way, saying nothing.

Even when occasionally encountering some stellar space outsiders, Du Qingsha pays no attention, leading the way deeper into the battlefield.

Apparently noticing Lu Ye's confusion, Xsu Rong explains, "Our Team A-3 is the sharpest blade of the Thunderbolt Battle Fortress. As such, we naturally deal with the mightiest foes. Dao force is difficult to recover; those weaker enemies are for others to handle. We need not waste our Dao force."

Lu Ye comprehends.

Days later, the team surpassed the furthest depth Lu Ye had previously ventured and kept advancing.

Some days after that, Du Qingsha, leading at the front, halts, glances around, and says, "It's time. Conceal yourselves."

Xsu Rong and Snake Girl instantly nod, each summoning their magic treasures to obscure their forms and gather their auras, disappearing from Lu Ye's sight in an instant.

Du Qingsha turns to Lu Ye again, "Your task is simple: walk freely, wander as you like, but don't be too deliberate. Stay alert!"

Lu Ye chuckles silently, knowing Du Qingsha is using him as bait.

Yet, speaking of it, among the four-member team, none is more suitable as bait than he is, being the one with the lowest cultivation. In a setting like this, a cultivator of his level is unlikely, making him an irresistible target for any Star Abyss outsider.

Having instructed Lu Ye, Du Qingsha also uses some method, swiftly vanishing.

Nearby, Xsu Rong's voice comes through, "Brother, don't be afraid. We're all beside you. At the slightest sign of trouble, we'll rush to your rescue."

Lu Ye is unfazed; with a plan in place, he merely needs to fulfill his role.

Team A-3 likely uses this method to slay foes often. After all, if four appeared at once, even the most simple-minded Star Abyss outsider would know it's wise to flee, not fight.

Lu Ye wanders cautiously, occasionally using his Mental Consciousness to sense the surroundings while minimizing his presence. Yet, despite his caution, his cultivation remains evident when he activates his mana.

This is already considered deep within the battlefield, with a much higher density of Star Abyss outsiders compared to where he and Jiu Yan were previously.

Thus, it's only a moment before a Star Abyss outsider falls for the trap, unable to resist rushing out. This one looks like he has recently fought, his wounds still unhealed as he dashes aggressively toward Lu Ye, who feigns panic and flees.

The Star Abyss outsider suspects nothing and gives chase.

Suddenly, Snake Girl's snake-shaped cover armor attacks from the side. Her timing is impeccably precise; after appearing, the serpent-like cover armor, as if alive, swiftly wraps around the Star Abyss outsider, ensnaring him tightly.

Xsu Rong's cover armor follows closely, using the moment when the enemy is bound to smash his head with a powerful blow.

The fight ends just three breaths after Snake Girl appears, marking the death of a Star Abyss outsider who had entered the Dao Realm.

Snake Girl releases the corpse, and Xsu Rong precisely dismantles a bone from it, storing it away.

The two leap again, vanishing into nothingness.

The seamless execution of killing and plundering clearly shows their experience in this practice, while Du Qingsha's presence remains unseen throughout.

"Well done, relocate now!" Du Qingsha's voice reaches Lu Ye, acknowledging his fine performance.

Lu Ye follows her instructions.

In the following days, Team A-3 relies on this simple and brutal method to hunt Star Abyss outsiders within this range, engaging in battles multiple times daily.

During this period, Xsu Rong and Snake Girl are primarily responsible for killing the enemies. Du Qingsha only intervened once, during an encounter with a formidable foe with the power equivalent to the 3rd Dao. Even with Xsu Rong and Snake Girl teaming up, they failed to promptly resolve it, spurring the enemy's fierce reaction, allowing him to shake off Snake Girl's entanglement.

Yet, as Du Qingsha stepped in, the battle swiftly concluded.

On this battlefield, the earlier a cultivator ends a fight, the better—engaging in attrition is a burden no one can bear regarding Dao force loss. For this reason, despite Du Qingsha's formidable strength, she requires a few members to assist her.

Furthermore, the sooner the battle ends, the more Dao force remains in the loot obtained, increasing its value.

On a dead star shattered into several pieces, the four members of Team A-3 found a secluded spot to rest and divide their spoils.

The four sat in a circle, with more than a dozen Dao bones in front of them, all gained from killing enemies in recent days. Du Qingsha scanned them with her Mental Consciousness, picked out two pieces, and tossed them to Lu Ye: "These are yours."

Then she picked another two pieces for herself, leaving the rest for Xsu Rong and Snake Girl.

Xsu Rong cheerfully stored away all the Dao bones.

Du Qingsha looked at Lu Ye and said, "Don't feel like you're getting the short end of the stick. The distribution of loot depends on the contribution during the fight. If you contribute little, you gain less!"

"Understood." Lu Ye nodded. In recent days, he had barely acted and served simply as bait, so getting two pieces of Dao bone was already quite good.

Though Du Qingsha also received two pieces, the quality of her pieces was undoubtedly better because they contained more residual Dao force.

Dao bones need to be refined promptly because the longer you wait, the Dao force within them dissipates gradually. Therefore, as soon as some spoils are collected, they should be divided quickly to avoid waste, while cultivators also need them to restore themselves.

Xsu Rong, hugging Snake Girl, cheerfully stood up and invited Lu Ye, "Brother, want to join us?"

"Join what?" Lu Ye looked up, puzzled.

Xsu Rong slapped Snake Girl's round buttocks and grinned, "Life and death are unpredictable, we must enjoy ourselves timely!"

Snake Girl also threw a seductive look at Lu Ye, her tongue flicking out like a snake's, licking her red lips with charm.

Lu Ye couldn't help but twitch at the corner of his eye and politely declined, "Thank you for the offer."

"Hahaha, no worries, we can share good times together in the future!" Xsu Rong laughed joyfully, hugging Snake Girl as they headed in one direction, soon disappearing from sight.

After they left, Lu Ye took a while to recover, unable to resist asking, "Captain, aren't they Dao companions?"

Du Qingsha replied with a nonchalant expression, "So what if they are Dao companions? The stellar space is on the brink of destruction, and nobody knows when they might die. With such little concern, the erosion of humanity and the collapse of morality are trivial compared to the future of the stellar space."

Lu Ye frowned, deep in thought without a word.

The state of this Yiyuan stellar space is the future of All Phenomena stellar space. Will it become equally chaotic one day?

He was uncertain.

Looking up at Du Qingsha, Lu Ye asked, "What about you, Captain?"

"Me?" Du Qingsha's lips curved, "I only want to slay all those Star Abyss monsters!"

That's the normal response, Lu Ye nodded in silent agreement.

Unexpectedly, Du Qingsha changed her tone, "Actually, I'm curious about one thing... make that two things." Without waiting for Lu Ye to speak, she directly asked, "How did you forge a Dao foundation with only Divine Realm Early Stage cultivation?"

She had always wanted to ask Lu Ye this, but never had the chance.

Lu Ye shook his head, "I haven't forged a Dao foundation!"

Du Qingsha's expression turned extremely surprised, "You haven't forged a Dao foundation? Then how can you wield Dao force?" And not just any wielding, as previous experiments indicated, Lu Ye was at least a 3rd Dao cultivator.

This was a skill possessed only by Star Abyss monsters; stellar space cultivators had never exhibited such a trait.

Lu Ye couldn't explain, and simply said, "I'm not sure either, perhaps my physique is unique."

Du Qingsha frowned, seeming skeptical. Were it not for the absence of the distinctive aura of Star Abyss outsiders on Lu Ye, she might truly suspect he was from the Star Abyss.

"And the second matter?" Lu Ye changed the topic.

Du Qingsha recovered, "Why is your background such a mystery? At this stage, the origins of any cultivator can be traced, with complete records during registration, and I have never seen one like yours."

Lu Ye paused, then said, "About this, you can ask the fort master; he is well aware."

The fact that he and Jiu Yan came from another Yiyuan stellar space was ultimately hard to disclose. Du Qingsha, being the captain of the hunting camp, should be able to reach the Thunderbolt Battle Fortress's fort master, who would naturally explain if willing.

"Chen Wulei, huh..." Du Qingsha murmured, glancing at Lu Ye with a thoughtful expression, "Seems like your background isn't ordinary."

Otherwise, how could it involve a person of the fort master's caliber?

Turning perplexed again, if Lu Ye indeed had a significant background, why would he need her nomination opportunity?

Lu Ye offered no explanation, gripping the two Dao bones he earned, he activated the power of the Talent Tree to refine them. Soon, additional threads of Dao force appeared on the leaves of the Talent Tree, nearing a breakthrough of a hundred count once again.

Chapter 2100: Unusual Feelings

For a month, Team A-3 killed enemies in this efficient manner. Because every battle was resolved quickly, their losses were minimal, and with Dao Bones as spoils to supplement them, everyone's Dao force was accumulating.

After another rest and distribution of loot, Du Qingsha spoke: "Tomorrow, we enter the central zone!"

Xu Rong was taken aback, then nodded: "Understood!"

Du Qingsha turned to Lu Ye: "This is your first entry. The situation in the central zone is different from outside. There are more and stronger enemies. Remember one principle: prioritize your safety above all else."

"Alright," Lu Ye agreed.

He knew the so-called central zone was the area where the Star Abyss Insect Path was located. Because the Insect Path leads to the Star Abyss, Star Abyss outsiders there were endless to kill.

In the past, Team A-3 was mainly active in the central zone, but this month they hadn't gone in for two reasons: First, they had absorbed Lu Ye as a new member and needed time to get familiar. Second, they aimed to increase their Dao force reserves as much as possible.

Now that they were familiar with each other, it was naturally time to enter their battlefield.

Lu Ye checked the leaves of his Talent Tree. His Dao force was at 162, already breaking the initial record. Although he didn't know how much Dao force Du Qingsha and the others had accumulated, he reckoned that within the entire team, his Dao force should be the highest.

Although he received the smallest share from each round of loot distribution, he compensated with his high refining efficiency. Du Qingsha and the others were different; they wasted a lot when refining Dao Bones and often could only refine a small portion of the residual Dao force in them.

This time during the rest, the four of them each meditated quietly. Even Xu Rong and Snake Girl lost the will to relax.

Once the rest ended, the team set out.

The hunt mode continued as before, with Lu Ye acting as bait. Half a day later, the first battle broke out. The first enemy they encountered turned out to be a 4th Dao powerful expert.

It's worth noting that in the past month, they had only encountered such enemies three times in total. But after entering the central zone, they faced one immediately, and Lu Ye personally experienced the danger of this area.

Even so, the squad didn't spend much effort slaying him.

In the second battle, they encountered three Star Abyss outsiders traveling together...

This was something they rarely saw in other regions, and it was Lu Ye's first time experiencing such a situation.

While Star Abyss outsiders were indeed bloodthirsty and violent, they weren't stupid. With strong cultivators from this stellar space active here in team formations, some among them naturally chose to join forces in response.

Fortunately, these three Star Abyss outsiders only had the Power of the Path, with each at 3rd Dao. Du Qingsha and Lu Ye each took on one, while Xu Rong and Snake Girl together handled the third, without too much trouble.

After spending so much time together, everyone more or less understood Lu Ye's strength, which was obviously beyond the 3rd Dao.

This led Du Qingsha to repeatedly sigh in relief; recruiting Lu Ye was like striking gold. He was a unique presence in the entire stellar space, being so powerful despite his low Cultivation Realm.

Killing enemies, cleaning up loot, retreating—similar scenes kept replaying.

Lu Ye's Dao force accumulation grew, and this way of cultivation, nurturing war through war, was undoubtedly more efficient than mere meditation and not as monotonous, though it did require taking some risks.

In one rest period, after refining his share of the loot, Lu Ye suddenly felt something strange in his heart.

This unusual feeling came from the Talent Tree.

He immediately immersed his mind to check and found that the Dao force had filled six leaves, and the adjacent seventh leaf started to glow with golden light, with golden threads swimming within it.

Two hundred crossed!

It seemed that this different change occurred because the Dao force had surpassed the two hundred mark.

Though Lu Ye couldn't immediately understand what these changes entailed, he quietly investigated but found nothing.

Even when they set off again to kill enemies, he still hadn't figured out the source of this sudden oddity, leaving him no choice but to let it go.

In a vast area of gathered meteorites, Lu Ye wandered through them as if taking a leisurely stroll. Suddenly, a sense of malice emerged from a nearby meteorite, followed by a figure rapidly attacking from that direction.

Lu Ye looked up and saw, to his surprise, that the attacker was a human. It shocked him because although he'd encountered many Star Abyss outsiders during this period, it was rare to see a human.

Feeling the opponent's powerful Dao force, Lu Ye felt a chill and immediately became cautious. Through all these battles, he had developed a knack for gauging an enemy's strength—not perfectly accurate, but within a reasonable range.

This human suddenly attacking must at least have the force of 4th Dao.

Not daring to neglect, he immediately integrated five strands of Dao force into his Mana...

Against the Star Abyss outsider, there was no room for concealment. Knowing the opponent's strength, he'd naturally give it his all.

Yet at this moment, Lu Ye suddenly paused. Despite quickly recovering and summoning the Boulder Mountain Saber to slash horizontally, he was still a beat late.

As the saber light shattered, Lu Ye's body was knocked back, his blood Qi surging, and his attacker halted momentarily.

Though he had sent Lu Ye flying, the attacker had also suffered a recoil.

"5th Dao, be careful, everyone!" Lu Ye promptly transmitted this audio warning in all directions.

The collision in that brief moment allowed him to gain insight into the opponent's background; unexpectedly, it was a 5th Dao powerful expert, precisely on the same level as him and Du Qingsha.

This was also the first Star Abyss outsider with 5th Dao power he had encountered so far.

Almost simultaneously with his audio transmission, Du Qingsha and Xsu Rong Snake Girl, who were concealed on all sides, appeared. Du Qingsha was also driving a human-shaped cover armor, but compared to Xsu Rong's heavy one, her armor clearly took a nimble route, appearing agile just at first sight.

She was the first to rush to the enemy, mana surging as she tangled with the foe, while Xsu Rong Snake Girl quickly attacked from both sides, striking and retreating instantly.

The gap between the 5th Dao and the 3rd Dao is immense, almost to the point where mere contact inflicts injury or death, so they never dared give the opponent a chance to counterattack. All their offensive efforts now had only one goal — to break the enemy's protective magic!

But their offensive was not very effective, only serving to wear down the enemy.

In an instant, Du Qingsha collided fiercely with the enemy several times, the surrounding meteors shattering simultaneously, the two powerful experts showing an equal status; this was normal, as both were 5th Dao powerful experts, fighting solo meant competing in their individual Dao force accumulation.

However, as the enemy suddenly exerted force, Du Qingsha seemed overwhelmed, her figure stumbled and flew to the side.

The human race was about to pursue, but caught sight of a figure charging forward from the corner of his eye.

Unexpectedly, it was Lu Ye, who initially was knocked away due to a small mishap, rushing back.

Without cover armor, his target wasn't as large, and using Du Qingsha's concealment, he returned silently, precisely when all the enemy's focus was on Du Qingsha.

This was a surprise attack, as Lu Ye's long saber swung down, forcing the human race to defend with full strength.

Yet at this moment, Du Qingsha, seemingly flying awkwardly, adjusted her stance and attacked from the side; her earlier distress was merely a facade!

Not only this, but Xsu Rong and Snake Girl displayed extreme coordination, launching attacks from the enemy's rear.

In an instant, this human race was surrounded by Team A-3's four members.

The stubborn protective magic shattered loudly.

Lu Ye's eyes brightened — now!

The shattered protective magic can be regrouped, as long as the opponent's mana is not exhausted, yet this regrouping requires a bit of time.

And this bit of time is often the crucial moment deciding life or death.

His right arm trembled intensely, and the edge of the Boulder Mountain Saber vibrated back and forth within a very small range.

Vibrating Saber!

As if slicing through something exceedingly resilient, Lu Ye swept past the enemy, his long saber bringing forth a blood bloom, rushing out tens of meters before stabilizing his stance, slowly sheathing his saber.

Looking back, Du Qingsha had already begun collecting loot, dismantling a Dao Bone from the enemy whose head was severed by him and called out to the team before quickly retreating.

This time fighting the 5th Dao powerful expert took no more time than dealing with those 3rd and 4th Dao before, yet the peril within could only be understood by the squad's four members.

Without pause, they continued to lure and slay enemies.

The subsequent enemy waves encountered did not include any 5th Dao powerful experts, all resolved smoothly.

After several days of warfare, they routinely sought a spot to rest and divide the spoils.

Du Qingsha picked up one Dao Bone from over ten others and tossed it to Lu Ye: "This is for you, the rest are not for you."

This Dao Bone, left from the deceased 5th Dao powerful expert, clearly retained substantial Dao force with evident golden light.

Lu Ye naturally had no objection.

After quickly dividing, Xsu Rong looked at Lu Ye with a different gaze: "Brother, you're 5th Dao?"

It wasn't until today that he realized Lu Ye was exceptionally strong, otherwise, it would be impossible for him to compete against that 5th Dao human race; he previously thought Lu Ye was 4th Dao.

Beside Xsu Rong, Snake Girl also looked with watery eyes, her snake tongue flickering.

Lu Ye nodded.

Du Qingsha looked at him with a complex expression: "Monster!"

She was also a 5th Dao powerful expert, and naturally understood that harnessing 5th Dao power required a profound foundation that only cultivators who reached the Peak Divine Realm could hope to achieve, but Lu Ye was clearly only at the Divine Realm Early Stage.

This undoubtedly indicated that his foundation was still accumulating, and once cultivated to the Peak Divine Realm in the future, how much Dao force could he control?

Having a strong expert on par with herself in the team was undoubtedly beneficial; the stronger the team, the greater the margin for error in crises, and the higher the efficiency in killing enemies.

Yet... as such 5th Dao powerful experts, they have the qualification to form their own team. Du Qingsha had thoughts of keeping him somehow.

Turning her head, she looked at Snake Girl with spring on her face, unable to help but scoff; she's useless, clearly he's not interested, yet still flirting.