

Humanity 291

Chapter 291 Leaving

As the City Lord finished speaking, a slowly rotating vortex suddenly appeared in the sky. Initially small, the vortex rapidly expanded. In the blink of an eye, it enveloped an area with a radius of a hundred zhang.

Looking up, it was as if the sky had been punctured.

The vortex's destination was unknown, but within it, faint and unusual movements could be heard.

Every Spiritual Body in Xianyuan City was looking up.

Under the gaze of countless eyes, from the vortex emerged an insect of the Insect Race, three zhang in length, its body covered with a carapace, four limbs beneath it, and a triangular head reminiscent of a gigantic mantis. It clung near the vortex, its complex compound eyes reflecting the scenes of the city below.

Rustling sounds followed, and a second mantis-like creature of the Insect Race appeared, then a third, and a fourth... Until in an instant, they blotted out the sky.

It was as if a floodgate had been opened, and from within the swirling vortex, countless insects of various sizes and shapes poured out.

In just a short ten breaths, both the sky and ground near the vortex teemed with insects, and more were still rushing out from it.

"Kill!" A roar sounded as colorful lights surged from all directions, overwhelming the insects. Many of the powerful insects had not moved many steps before they were reduced to mush. Yet, the insects pressed on relentlessly, as if they were inexhaustible. The surviving insects stomped over the corpses of the dead and charged forward madly. Even as their mutilated bodies reached the Spiritual Bodies, they bit and slashed with their jaws and limbs, quickly diminishing the spirits' forms.

Half an incense stick's time later, the first defensive line organized by the Spiritual Bodies was breached. After one incense stick's time, the second line collapsed.

After two incense sticks' time, the fourth defensive line was once again broken, and countless Spiritual Bodies were shattered.

Inside the City Lord's Residence, within the Soul Cleansing Pool, a continuous stream of Spiritual Bodies used their Soul Seals to reform and flew out without looking back, rejoining the battlefield.

Even though the Spiritual Bodies would not truly perish, the sensation of being dispersed was no different from death.

Such brutal combat is something the Spiritual Bodies had experienced countless times.

Only half a day had passed since the start of the major battle, and already half of Xianyuan City had fallen. It was only at this point that the city's Spiritual Bodies gradually managed to halt the Insect Race's advance.

The two sides fought without end, using the city's central line as the boundary.

Every participating Spiritual Body had "died" several times.

One could imagine, if not for the Soul Cleansing Pool, Xianyuan City would have fallen long ago. It was by utilizing the Soul Cleansing Pool that the Spiritual Bodies could continuously resurrect from it and rejoin the battle.

This was the choice Xianyuan City made long ago, from the City Lord to the common residents. To use the entire city as a sacrifice, with the Soul Cleansing Pool as the foundation, they shed the limitations of the flesh and gained a power nearly akin to immortality, so they could resist the Insect Race.

Do not consider this a blessing, as, in the short term, immortality truly seems delightful. However, if on this basis they had to partake in gruesome battles time and time again, experiencing death over and over, it would be nothing short of torture.

At that time, Xianyuan City was also a first-class power within the Nine Provinces, in no way inferior to the current 1st grade sects, even stronger.

But for the Nine Provinces, Xianyuan City had no choice but to make such a decision.

Because someone always had to stand up.

There were another seventeen top-notch powers that stood up alongside Xianyuan City. These eighteen powers now reside in what is today known as the Boundless Mirage Realm!

Within the City Lord's Residence, the City Lord lifted his head to gaze at the vortex in the sky. He could sense faint, heart-trembling breaths from within the vortex, more pronounced than the last time.

Time... There wasn't much left. Xianyuan City might withstand this assault, and maybe the next one and the one after that, but there would come a day when it could no longer hold out. If no resolution emerged by then, the complete annihilation of the Nine Provinces would be just around the corner.

Hopefully, before that day comes, someone will step forward.

The City Lord couldn't help but think back to that young man. If it were him... there might be a chance.

...

A large ship-shaped Flying Spirit Artifact slowly approached, carrying members from Soaring Cloud Palace.

Previously, when the news of the Boundless Mirage Realm's opening spread, four nearby powers rushed over. However, Soaring Cloud Palace was delayed on the road, failing to arrive in time, which resulted in only three powers making it into Xianyuan City.

The people from Soaring Cloud Palace didn't leave but waited nearby until they received a message from Gu Anyang and came to assist.

This time, it was Deputy Governor Zhou Pei leading the team from Soaring Cloud Palace, roughly a hundred people in total.

He and Gu Anyang were old acquaintances since their respective territories were not far apart and had a good relationship.

Upon meeting, of course, there was a warm exchange of greetings.

Situated within Xianyu City, there was no way to communicate with the outside world, so no one knew where the Boundless Mirage Realm connected or the situation within.

Now that he learned the Boundless Mirage Realm was connected to Xianyu City, Zhou Pei was greatly surprised, for the environment within Xianyu City was rather harsh. The fact that the Surreptitious Palace had been able to survive against the odds, facing two enemies at once, really made him take a second look and filled him with admiration for Gu Anyang.

Gu Anyang blushed...

His own experiences this time were quite embarrassing. As soon as he had entered Xianyu City, he'd been captured and imprisoned in a dungeon. If not for Lu Ye's rescue, he would likely have lost his life by now. He hurriedly stopped Zhou Pei's praises and whispered the truth to him.

Gradually learning the truth, Zhou Pei's expression became increasingly animated.

He had heard of Lu Yiye of the Righteous Blood Sect from Golden Light Peak, but Lu Ye's cultivation was only at the Level 5 realm back then, still a distance from their own level, so he didn't pay too much attention.

Unexpectedly, in such a short time, the person who had made a name for himself atop Golden Light Peak had arrived in the inner circle and once again burst forth with brilliance within Xianyu City.

This time, it was even more astonishing. He nearly single-handedly devastated Fenghua Courtyard, allowing the Surreptitious Palace to stabilize the situation and turn defeat into victory.

Recognizing Lu Ye's potential, Zhou Pei naturally wanted to make his acquaintance.

A moment later, the large ship ascended and, under the control of the Soaring Cloud Palace cultivators, flew toward the Surreptitious Palace compound.

Meanwhile, Fenghua Courtyard and Illuminating Sun Mountain also received news of the closing of the Boundless Mirage Realm. What horrified them was that of the many cultivators from their own factions who had entered, not one survived, and even among the independent cultivators from Ten Thousand Demons Ridge only a few were left alive.

From these survivors, the two factions gradually pieced together what had happened inside Xianyuan City and found it hard to accept.

There were approximately five to six hundred cultivators that entered the Boundless Mirage Realm this time, with Ten Thousand Demons Ridge accounting for over sixty percent, which naturally placed them at an advantageous starting position.

Yet, the final outcome was the near total annihilation of Ten Thousand Demons Ridge, while over a hundred from the Haotian Alliance survived.

How exactly the Haotian Alliance achieved this, even the surviving few were not clear about, for they had already gone into hiding when they realized the situation was dire, and they didn't dare show themselves until Xianyuan City closed.

They only vaguely heard that someone from the Haotian Alliance was able to command the Spiritual Bodies of Xianyuan City to fight, which led to heavy losses for Ten Thousand Demons Ridge.

Upon hearing this news, the Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union also started verifying it through various channels. Although the mercantile union did not participate in the struggle between the two camps, such previously unheard-of information could command a good price. If they could figure out how to

command the Spiritual Bodies, they would undoubtedly reap huge profits since no one had ever been able to command Spiritual Bodies in Xianyuan City or other Boundless Mirage Realms before.

It was foreseeable that, before long, the events that occurred within Xianyuan City would spread. The cultivators of the Surreptitious Palace could certainly keep their lips sealed, but the independent cultivators from the Haotian Alliance who survived might not be able to do the same. They were already living a meager existence; once the mercantile union offered the right price, many pieces of information might well be sold.

Of course, even if the information spread, it didn't really matter. The ability to transform minion spirits was Amber's skill and had nothing to do with Lu Ye. Even if others knew about it, they wouldn't be able to emulate it.

Four hours later, within the Surreptitious Palace compound, the big array activated, and the large ship descended.

The people from the Soaring Cloud Palace didn't stay long. They had been waiting outside for a month just to rendezvous with the Surreptitious Palace survivors, and now that their mission was complete, they intended to return to their own compound.

However, before leaving, Zhou Pei extended an invitation to Lu Ye, inviting him to visit the Soaring Cloud Palace compound as a guest.

At night, Gu Canyang hosted a banquet to thank Lu Ye for saving his life and for everything he had done in Xianyuan City. With a round of toasts and the exchange of cups, host and guests were all joyous.

The next day, Lu Ye woke up the slumbering Giant Armor and led him straight to the Heaven's Augury Hall of the Surreptitious Palace.

Lu Ye was not far from reaching the Level 9 realm, and once a cultivator reached Level 9, they needed to find a Heaven Rank technique for themselves. Otherwise, they wouldn't be able to open up the next spiritual orifice. This was something that needed planning in advance, to avoid being unprepared when the time came.

Lu Ye was not lacking in merit, as long as he found a suitable Cultivation Technique.

As for Giant Armor, he had been stuck in the Level 9 realm for who knows how long. With Sima Yang dead, he had nowhere else to go. Since he was willing to follow Lu Ye, Lu Ye naturally aimed to recruit him into the Righteous Blood Sect.

Therefore, he also needed to find a Heaven Rank technique for Giant Armor.

Giant Armor had no merits, but that was not a problem. Merit could not only be earned by defeating enemies; it could also be obtained by selling items to the Heaven's Augury treasure vault.

Lu Ye had many Spiritual Artifacts he didn't need, particularly Flying Spirit Artifacts. He could let Giant Armor sell them to the Heaven's Augury treasure vault to accumulate enough merit.

This was undoubtedly a loss, because there was a significant difference in merit between buying and selling items in the treasure vault. Take his Boulder Mountain Saber, for instance—the gap in merit value was close to half.

But if he wanted to gather enough merit to buy a Heaven Rank technique for Giant Armor in a short period of time, this was the only way.

Many top sects used this method to quickly accumulate merit for their outstanding Disciples.

Side by side, the two entered the Heaven's Augury Hall. Giant Armor had probably never dealt with the Heaven's Augury treasure vault before. Luckily, although he might appear dim-witted and simple-minded, he was quite intelligent. After some basic explanations from Lu Ye, he understood.

Activating the battlefield marking to access the Heaven's Augury treasure vault, Giant Armor began searching for a technique that suited him.

Lu Ye searched as well.

Chapter 292 Heaven Rank Technique

Heaven Rank techniques were actually not scarce, but the easiest way to obtain them was only through the Heaven's Augury treasure vault, so for any cultivator, merit was indispensable.

Each cultivation technique had a different route for channeling spirit force, and with a total of three hundred and sixty spiritual orifices in the human body, these routes could be said to be infinitely variable. The quality of a technique was reflected in its channeling route; a good technique made cultivation and combat more effective and efficient, while the contrary was true for poorer ones.

The linking of spiritual orifices was not arbitrary either, and even two adjacent orifices could not necessarily be linked at will. Rash attempts could very likely lead to extremely dire consequences.

All sorts of cultivation techniques that were passed down in the Nine Provinces had been tested over time and by generations of cultivators. Regardless of their quality, they were all techniques that could be safely practiced.

If one did not follow the prescribed route of a technique to link the spiritual orifices, they might be unharmed if lucky, but there was a high chance it could cause chaos in their spirit force and damage to their spiritual orifices, which was a consequence no cultivator could afford to bear.

Cultivation techniques were important, but they were not the biggest factor influencing a cultivator's strength. Even if one practiced a slightly inferior technique, as long as the cultivator's own foundation was strong enough, they could still exhibit formidable strength.

There were nearly a hundred Heaven Rank techniques suitable for Lu Ye's cultivation in the Heaven's Augury treasure vault, with a wide range of prices.

The poorest one cost over thirteen hundred merit points, while the best one required more than five thousand merit points, a difference of up to fourfold.

However, the efficiency difference in practicing these two was not four times greater; in fact, it would not even surpass forty percent. Lu Ye estimated that the difference was at most ten to twenty percent.

In other words, if one chose the most expensive technique, the efficiency in cultivation might be ten to twenty percent higher compared to choosing the cheapest one, and the enhancement in combat power would also be around ten to twenty percent.

This kind of improvement was significant for any cultivator and was the benefit of spending more merit points.

But over five thousand merit points was really too much. Even cultivators from the top sects would unlikely accumulate that much from Level 1 to Level 9.

Take Sima Yang, for example, his goal was actually just to accumulate one thousand five hundred merit points, but he failed to achieve that amount before his death; otherwise, he would have switched to a Heaven Rank technique long ago.

And Phong Yue, the Governor stationed by the Phong family, occasionally used his authority to cook the books for personal gains and only saved up over four thousand merit points, which he ended up donating to the Righteous Blood Sect.

Lu Ye checked his own battlefield marking.

Identity: Disciple of the Righteous Blood Sect.

Cultivation: 155th orifice.

Location: Spirit Stream battlefield.

Merit: 5132.

He was around two hundred merit points short of the most expensive technique.

After the previous capture of the Phong Clan and Sky Fiend Hall domains, he obtained a lot of sect merits. Before the enhancement via the Heaven's Augury Pillar, Hua Ci had given him a monthly salary that rounded up his merit points to an even five thousand.

However, Lu Ye soon spent two thousand points to purchase ten portions of Earth's Core Fire, followed by acquiring Cactus, Breath-concealing, and Insight spirit runes.

When he left the Righteous Blood Sect's territory, his merit points were less than three thousand.

Having this much now, the merits from killing enemies were only part of it; the rest was from dealing with spoils of war on Silver Light Island last time.

From the Sky Supporting Sect, he acquired numerous cultivators' storage sacks, many of which included Spiritual Artifacts. Including those empty storage sacks, he sold them all to the Heaven's Augury treasure vault. For some reason, he needed to accumulate a large amount of merit points, so recently, except for the occasional venture into the Mirage Realm, he had been conserving his merit points.

But the merit points for buying a Heaven Rank technique could not be spared, as it related to the ease of his future cultivation and advancement to Cloud River.

Casually taking out a few Spiritual Artifacts from his storage sack and selling them, Lu Ye gathered enough merit points for the technique and made the purchase.

He did not receive a physical object, but a spark of light imprinted onto his forehead and disappeared.

A warm sensation spread throughout his body, and a flood of information entered his mind, revealing the mysteries of that technique.

Great Sun Glazed Glass Method, that was the name of the technique. Unlike the Red Lotus Soaring to Sky Technique, which came with associated magic and spells, this technique had no extras. Yet, practiced to the ultimate level, it held various profound mysteries, which perfectly suited Lu Ye's needs.

From Manager Yang he received the Golden Cicada Carefree Method, then purchased the Red Lotus Soaring to Sky Technique from Xuanmen, and now acquired the Great Sun Glazed Glass Method. Step by step, bit by bit, his growth made Lu Ye reflect a lot.

Of course, his cultivation level had not reached Level 9 yet, so there was no need to switch to this technique for the time being.

Checking his remaining merit points, good, there were only a bit over thirty left, not even enough for one trip into the Mirage Realm.

Looking at the Giant Armor beside him, the fellow was still engrossed in the Heaven's Augury treasure vault, presumably overwhelmed by the choices.

Lu Ye nudged him, and Giant Armor finally pulled back his mind, turning his head to look over.

Handing over a storage sack he had prepared earlier to him, Lu Ye instructed, "Keep what you want for yourself, sell the rest, and buy a cultivation technique."

Giant Armor took it and turned to reconnect with the Heaven's Augury treasure vault.

Lu Ye had no idea how much merit those items he gave to Giant Armor could sell for, but he estimated that selling them for around two thousand should not be a problem. In Xianyuan City, a fair number of cultivators had perished at their hands, and their storage sacks were all with Lu Ye, with each cultivator essentially possessing their own Spiritual Artifact.

Once a cultivator's cultivation reached Level 7, the Spiritual Artifacts they used would naturally not be of poor quality, and they could generally sell for twenty or thirty merit points each. Selling dozens or hundreds of Spiritual Artifacts would accumulate a considerable amount of merit.

Not to mention, the storage sacks Lu Ye handed over to Giant Armor contained some Flying Spirit Artifacts, which were even more expensive.

After waiting roughly the time it takes for half a cup of tea to brew, Giant Armor came back to his senses and nodded slightly to Lu Ye, indicating that he was ready.

Lu Ye didn't say much, and led him out.

However, they had only taken a few steps when a soft 'pop' came from behind.

Lu Ye couldn't help but look back at Giant Armor, who had an innocent expression.

After another step, there was another 'pop' from behind.

Lu Ye looked around and quickened his pace.

Giant Armor followed with large strides, the popping sounds unceasing...

To the uninformed, it might seem as if Giant Armor was passing gas, but Lu Ye knew better – those were not the sounds of flatulence, but rather the noises of spiritual orifice barriers breaking.

Previously in Xianyuan City, when Giant Armor showed him that thing resembling a demonic pill, Lu Ye knew that although Giant Armor's cultivation had been stuck at Level 9 for a long time, he hadn't fallen far behind in his cultivation progress because he was still able to cultivate and accumulate spirit force. With the proper Cultivation Technique, he could make a breakthrough in a short period of time.

But what Lu Ye didn't expect was that Giant Armor's breakthrough would be so swift and frequent.

Normally when a cultivator opens a spiritual orifice, there is a process to it, and Lu Ye was no exception. He needed to stimulate his own spirit force to break the spiritual orifice barrier, thus completing the process of opening a new orifice.

When one's cultivation wasn't high enough, this process was not enjoyable, and it also took some time.

Now that his cultivation had improved, breaking the spiritual orifice barrier became somewhat easier, but not like Giant Armor's.

For Giant Armor, the spiritual orifice barriers seemed to be just for show. As spirit force flowed through, they were easily breached. Of course, this was likely related to his sufficient accumulation of spirit force – a dike can hold back the washing of the stream, but definitely not the rush of a river.

On the way back to their residence from Heaven's Augury Hall, Lu Ye silently calculated that there was a total of fifty-nine sounds from Giant Armor's direction.

In other words, in that short time, he had opened fifty-nine orifices!

Being originally a cultivator who had opened 180 orifices, with an increase of fifty-nine, that made it 239, just one short of the next level.

This clearly wasn't a coincidence, but something intentional by Giant Armor.

After returning to their lodging, Giant Armor immediately started his cultivation practice, probably because the "demonic pill" drained too much power and he was eager to replenish it.

He was one of those with both exceptional cultivation talent and the ability to focus on cultivation. Even in Xianyuan City, Lu Ye noticed that whenever there was nothing to do, Giant Armor would always be cultivating, seemingly unwilling to miss any chance to accumulate spirit force.

Inspired by him, Lu Ye also took out a book to study while cultivating.

The place where the two of them were staying was a small courtyard with a beautiful environment, presumably used by Surreptitious Palace specifically for entertaining guests.

While the two of them were resting at Surreptitious Palace, Fenghua Courtyard and Illuminating Sun Mountain gradually learned about the various incidents happening in Xianyuan City. When they learned that their sect's members had been annihilated in Xianyuan City, all due to Lu Yiye of the Righteous Blood Sect, both sects harbored deep resentment.

Especially Fenghua Courtyard, which already had some enmity with Lu Ye – though that had been limited to the death of a disciple at Golden Light Peak. But now, their grudge had intensified.

Keen on revenge yet with no way to exert their strength, they were frustrated and decided to join forces against the cultivators from Surreptitious Palace. This led to significantly increased conflicts between Surreptitious Palace cultivators and both parties in the last few days. Even Soaring Cloud Palace got involved, and for a while, troops of all sides were fighting back and forth, extremely active and causing injuries to each other.

Several days later, Gu Canyang nodded slightly as he listened to Jik Yan reporting the recent skirmishes between his sect's cultivators and those from Fenghua Courtyard and Illuminating Sun Mountain, "Tell the disciples to be more cautious recently and not to give those two an opportunity to take advantage."

"Yes," responded Jik Yan.

Another youth dressed in white sitting beside him asked, "Brother, isn't there anything we can do about Giant Armor then?"

This person was the Deputy Governor of Surreptitious Palace and usually took charge of any large-scale operations when Gu Canyang led the team, while he stayed back to govern the grounds.

Any sect would find it difficult to reject such a powerful physique cultivator as Giant Armor, but since he had always been with Sima Yang, and now that Sima Yang was dead, naturally, the youth had some ideas. If he could bring Giant Armor into Surreptitious Palace, it would strengthen the sect's power. Apart from anything else, future conflicts with Fenghua Courtyard or Illuminating Sun Mountain would incur fewer losses with Giant Armor at the front.

Gu Canyang shook his head, "Stop thinking about Giant Armor. Brother Yiye has shown kindness to me and to our sect. Now that Giant Armor has chosen to follow him, he is Brother Yiye's man. Attempting to win him over rashly will only cause displeasure."

The white-clad youth said, "But I heard that Giant Armor hasn't yet formally..."

Before he could finish, Gu Canyang stared at him with a stern face, and the young man hurriedly said, "I understand, Brother. I won't target Giant Armor anymore."

"Good," Gu Canyang responded.

Chapter 293 Research on Array Destruction

Several people were talking when the young man in white suddenly bowed his head to check his battlefield marking, receiving a message. After a moment, he lifted his head and looked at Gu Canyang with a peculiar expression, "Brother Gu, is Fellow Daoist Lu skilled in the Array Path?"

Gu Canyang thought for a moment and said, "It is said that he has inherited the legacy of a spirit runes master, and he can also activate some spirit runes. The Array Path is closely related to spirit runes... Why do you ask?"

The young man in white could not help but laugh bitterly, "Fellow Daoist Lu is at the edge of the Sect Protection Array. It seems like he's studying how to break the formation."

"Break the formation?" Both Gu Canyang and Jik Yan were taken aback.

It was naturally possible to decode formations, but the cultivation level at the Spirit Stream Realm was still too low to break through such sophisticated formations. Even if they could break a formation, it would only be the simpler ones. Like the Sect Protection Array, such a massive formation was definitely not something that could be broken by a single individual.

This was also the reason why the big sects' locations were hard to breach, as each sect's location was enveloped by its own protective array.

"Maybe he's just practicing the Array Path. Send a message down, not to worry about it." Gu Canyang did not think much about it. Since Lu Ye wanted to study how to break the formation, let him be, as there wouldn't be any loss anyway.

Meanwhile, at the edge of the Surreptitious Palace's protective array, Lu Ye was observing the operation of the formation.

To break a formation, one must first locate the flaw in the formation, then apply targeted methods against this flaw. No matter the kind of formation, none was flawless.

However, the more sophisticated a formation, the fewer its flaws. For example, the Sect Protection Array at the Spirit Stream battlefield was essentially set up with array bases bought from the Heaven's Augury treasure vault. The people who set up and maintained the array might not even be well-versed in it.

Take the Righteous Blood Sect, for example. Now, Hua Ci controlled the protective array. Hua Ci knew nothing about formation, but with the corresponding jade cluster, she could easily control the array.

The situation was the same here at the Surreptitious Palace.

The controllers of the formation were not proficient in the array, so how perfect could such a large array be? But it was enough to fend off attacks from Spirit Stream Realm cultivators.

When he was at the Righteous Blood Sect, Lu Ye learned the Path of Spirit Runes from Madam Yun through a process of breaking first and then establishing. Madam Yun would construct spirit runes, and he would decode them. If one regarded these spirit runes as a formation, then Lu Ye's act of decoding spirit runes was essentially breaking a formation.

Of course, real formations were much more complex than just one or two spirit runes, especially a protective array that could cover an entire location, which might involve dozens of different spirit runes.

Previously, he did not know much about the Array Path, so even when the Righteous Blood Sect later acquired its own protective array, Lu Ye had not studied it.

It was only after leaving the Righteous Blood Sect that Lu Ye began studying aspects of the Array Path through books, gradually enhancing his expertise. By the time he was in Xianyuan City, he was already capable of setting up some simple arrays by himself.

Now that his theoretical knowledge was almost adequate, Lu Ye wanted to put it into practice.

But upon actually engaging, he realized that things were more complicated than he had thought. The entire Sect Protection Array was integrated as a whole. With his current level of insight and experience, he could not spot any flaws.

Unable to even find a flaw in the formation, breaking it was out of the question.

So, moments later, Lu Ye slowly closed his eyes, and spirit force began to gather in them, forming an extremely intricate pattern.

Insight!

This was the eleventh spirit rune he had acquired from the Talent Tree. When he had stormed the veins of the Sky Supporting Sect, Lu Ye had used this spirit rune to detect a ghost cultivator's whereabouts.

Upon opening his eyes again, the whole world seemed transformed. Everything appeared less real, with colorful lights flowing in his field of vision, fluorescent lights fluttering, and ribbons flying, constantly twisting and changing. It was the flow of nature's spiritual energy.

The greatest use of the Insight Spirit Runes was to clearly see the flow of spiritual energy and the changes in spirit force.

Even before, Lu Ye had vaguely felt that the use of this spirit rune was not just for detecting the hidden movements of enemies. It might be extraordinarily effective in breaking formations.

His eyes, augmented by the Insight Spirit Runes, looked towards the protective array. He immediately noticed some differences. The spirit force on the array's screen flowed like water from one direction. Since the array's screen was spherical, half above the ground and half below, this process could cycle repeatedly. As long as the array had sufficient spirit force reserves, it could be maintained indefinitely.

In the Spirit Stream battlefield, nature's spiritual energy was rich, and each sect's location was augmented by a Heaven's Augury Pillar. The array could store massive amounts of spirit force during ordinary days, enhancing its powers and protective capability upon attack.

However, on normal days, the array would maintain only the minimum operation.

To the normal eye, the entire array screen looked like a transparent water screen, but to Lu Ye, enhanced by the Insight Spirit Runes, the array screen was composed of interlocking Yin-Yang Dual Origins embedded with various spirit runes. Each of these runes could perform its function, such as enhancing the protective capability of the array or accelerating the flow of spirit force.

The whole array was like a vast, complex, and closely knitted restriction!

Unlike ordinary restrictions crafted in Spiritual Artifacts, this restriction, powered by the flow of spirit force, formed the entire protective array.

Lu Ye had a revelation. No wonder Madam Yun had said that array cultivators could be considered a branch of spirit runes masters, because the array itself was made up of a series of spirit runes that formed the restriction.

Seeing the previous technique of embedding those spirit runes, Lu Ye even recognized some familiar traces.

The leaves on his Talent Tree did not just bear spirit runes, but also a multitude of special embedding techniques and skills, which could marginally be considered as spirit runes, because if constructed, they could exist stably; however, they differed from normal spirit runes in that they couldn't function independently.

They themselves were merely bridges used for the integration of different spirit runes.

Lu Ye continued to watch, failing to find any obvious flaws in the light screen before him. After a brief moment of contemplation, he stepped forward, carefully probing as he moved.

Only after walking the duration it takes to drink a cup of tea did he suddenly halt and look up to assess what lay ahead.

This spot differed subtly from other areas; if other locations within the big array could be considered seamless, then here, there were traces of integration.

These traces of integration were flaws and also the nodes of the big array.

If he was not mistaken, the spot he stood upon was likely the central point between two array bases.

The protective array of the Righteous Blood Sect was constructed from sixteen array bases, spaced far apart, and even though they could resonate to form an array, the connections between them were weaker than in other spots.

If the Sect's big array were likened to a jigsaw puzzle, it would consist of sixteen pieces, each representing an area covered by an activated array base. Even if the integration among the pieces was perfect, gaps would exist; these gaps were the nodes.

A normal person couldn't see them, and neither could Lu Ye, but with the aid of Insight Spirit Runes, it was different.

Having identified the node, Lu Ye felt relieved, knowing his earlier thoughts were correct—Insight Spirit Runes indeed had unique effects in breaking arrays.

Staring at the node ahead, Lu Ye slowly drew out the Boulder Mountain Saber. With his spirit force stirred, a flash of brilliance vanished from the blade in an instant. Empowered by Double-Sharpness, he used all his strength to thrust the saber straight forward.

The tip of the saber struck precisely on that node, causing the Boulder Mountain Saber to hum as the spirit force surged. The next instant, the protective array trembled violently, as the smoothly flowing light screen twisted harshly.

Lu Ye sheathed his saber, continuing his actions. The long saber in his hand transformed into a series of afterimages, constantly striking at the node of the big array.

Boom... Boom... Boom...

The big array kept warping.

The entire premises of the Surreptitious Palace were disturbed; all cultivators who sensed this scene were shocked, and some even shouted loudly, "Enemy attack!"

Though they couldn't see the enemy, the unmistakable sign of an attack on the big array was there.

Gus Canyang, the man in white, and Jik Yan were all startled, appearing immediately. The man in white took out the jade cluster that controlled the big array and promptly maximized its power.

Amidst chaos, news arrived soon after, not of an enemy attack, but that the visiting Lu Yiye was attacking their own protective array.

Watching the disciple reporting the situation, Gu Canyang's eyes twitched, "All this commotion was caused by him alone?"

"Yes, I just saw with my own eyes him attacking the big array with a Spiritual Artifact." The reporting cultivator had been quite close to Lu Ye, so he saw everything very clearly. Honestly, he too was startled; never had he thought that someone could elicit such a strong reaction from the protective array all by himself.

To think that Lu Yiye was only at Spirit Stream Level 8. If he were to cultivate to the 9th Heaven Level, wouldn't he be able to break the protective array with a single strike?

"Let's go and see," Gu Canyang had also realized this, leading the man in white and Jik Yan towards Lu Ye's location, followed by a large crowd of cultivators.

Upon arrival, they found Lu Ye sitting cross-legged, seemingly recovering his spirit force.

After the man in white had taken control of the big array and enhanced its power, Lu Ye ceased his actions. Knowing his actions would certainly attract the attention of the Surreptitious Palace, he had deliberately waited here for them.

What he hadn't expected was for so many people to show up.

"Brother Yiye, were you attacking the array just now?" Gu Canyang stepped forward and asked.

"I had some ideas I wanted to test out."

"Did you gain anything?" Gu Canyang raised an eyebrow.

"More ideas have emerged. I apologize for disturbing everyone."

"No worries at all," Gu Canyang waved his hand repeatedly, "Brother Yiye, feel free to test whatever you like. Rest assured, the Surreptitious Palace will fully cooperate!"

He was so eager not just because Lu Ye had previously saved many cultivators of the Surreptitious Palace, but also because if Lu Ye could break the big array single-handedly, the implications would be significant!

Everyone knew the benefits of taking over another's premises, but capturing premises isn't easy when a protective array stands in the way.

Chapter 294 Research Bias

If Lu Ye were to develop an array destruction technique, afterward, all the major forces of Ten Thousand Demons Ridge would have nowhere to cry; the Surreptitious Palace is now fully supporting Lu Ye, and once he succeeds, they will be the first to benefit—it's like getting the first taste of the soup.

Attacking one's own protective array, what's that really? Even if the array is destroyed, so be it; Gu Canyang was even eager to witness this scene.

Seeing Gu Canyang's stance, how could Lu Ye not know what he was thinking?

"Then, thank you, Brother Gu."

Gu Canyang laughed heartily, "It's a minor matter, Brother Yiye, you're too polite."

"Who controls your sect's big array?" Lu Ye asked.

Gu Canyang pointed to the youth in white next to him, "Junior Brother Wey Li is in charge of the big array."

Wey Li immediately stepped forward, "Does Fellow Daoist Lu have any instructions?"

"Not at all, but please, Fellow Daoist Wey, adjust the array back to its previous state." The reason Lu Ye had stopped was that the big array had been pushed to its ultimate level by Wey Li, and continuing to strike would not have the same effect as before.

He had just begun to research how to decipher the protective array, naturally starting from the simplest. Once he understood the intricacies, it wouldn't be too late to increase the difficulty.

Upon hearing this, Wey Li quickly activated the jade cluster in his hand, and the humming and operant big array gradually stabilized.

Gu Canyang spoke a few more words with Lu Ye and then led his people away.

Researching the array destruction of a big array isn't something that can be done in a short amount of time; there was no need to gather here and spectate. However, one could foresee that in the coming days, their own protective array would likely suffer greatly.

Not only did Gu Canyang's side not bear any complaints, he was even somewhat looking forward to it, instructing Wey Li to fully cooperate with any of Lu Ye's needs.

Once the people from the Surreptitious Palace had left, Lu Ye once again activated the Insight to enhance his vision, looking towards the nodes of the big array.

The previous probing helped him understand that, even when the array was operating at its lowest level, and even if he could see the nodes, it was impossible to break the array by brute force.

Of course, if the array's power wasn't increased, given the power of his previous strike, he also had a chance to break the array, but such an event clearly wouldn't happen. Attacking the enemy's station, once he made a move, the enemy would definitely strengthen the array.

Since brute force won't work, his only option was to rely on the Path of Spirit Runes.

He observed the flow and changes of the Yin and Yang Dual Origins at the nodes, conceptualizing a way to solve the decryption, and raised his hand to press it below the light screen of the big array. When spirit force surged powerfully, using the spot under his hand as the source, the spirit forces spread out in all directions, and the Yin and Yang Dual Origins quickly expanded, instantly covering a radius of ten feet.

In the past, Lu Ye couldn't achieve this extent, even if he was a Spirit Runes Master and his control over his own spirit force was stronger than cultivators of the same realm, he couldn't construct Yin and Yang Dual Origins covering such a large area in an instant.

But after refining his psyche in the Soul Cleansing Pool in Xianyuan City, his control over his spirit force had greatly improved, allowing him to surpass his previous limits.

Breaking an array and opening the restriction lock of a storage sack work on the same principle, as an array itself is a massive restriction.

The difference is, array breaking demands higher requirements, Lu Ye could take it slow when unlocking the storage sack's restriction lock, just needing to activate his spirit force to create basic elements contrary to those of the restrictions, which could decode the storage sack's restriction lock.

Array breaking couldn't be done slowly, because the big array is constantly in operation, and being too slow meant it couldn't be broken.

This was still a big array without someone propelling it; if someone was propelling it, the changes in the array would be even more, and then breaking the array really would require seizing an instantly fleeting opportunity.

Right now, to break the array, Lu Ye needed first to clearly see the integration of the Yin and Yang Dual Origins near the nodes, and second, to create completely opposite basic elements within an extremely short time and perfectly align them.

By doing so, the basic elements he created could dissolve this part of the big array's light screen, therefore breaking the node and opening the array.

With the Insight Spirit Runes enhancement, the first point was no difficulty for him, the challenging part was the second.

After resting briefly, Lu Ye made a second attempt.

Even though he had strong control over his own spirit force, achieving this was not easy, because in just a few brief moments, he needed to create hundreds or even thousands of basic elements, each without any mistakes, otherwise, they would be ineffective.

In the following days, the cultivators from the Surreptitious Palace frequently saw a lone figure sitting beside the big array, occasionally their own protective array would suddenly hum and shake.

Initially, the cultivators were quite unaccustomed to it, but as it happened more often, they began to see it as normal.

The person in charge of controlling the array, Wey Li, also received messages from Lu Ye from time to time, making corresponding adjustments to the big array.

With the full cooperation of the Surreptitious Palace, the progress of Lu Ye's decoding of the big array gradually improved, summarizing experience and lessons from his numerous failures and adjusting his approach.

The books brought from Madam Yun's place were a great help at this time, as many perplexing problems could find inspiration or even answers in those books.

Time quickly flew by, and it was a month later.

It was still the same location of the previous node, Gu Canyang and Wey Li stood inside the big array while Lu Ye stood outside, the two sides separated by the big array's light screen.

"Starting now," Wey Li shouted lowly, pulling out the jade cluster controlling the big array. Under his command, the protective array was instantly prompted to its utmost limit, the light screen covering the station becoming much more solid, with halos flowing over it.

Opposite him, Lu Ye's eyes, bolstered by the Insight Spirit Runes, intently followed every minute change at the node of the big array. He watched for the duration of one incense stick's time before suddenly stepping forward.

A splendor flashed over his legs as the Move-Like-The-Wind Spirit Runes enhanced his speed to the utmost. At the same time, spirit force surged around his body, and hundreds of Yin-Yang Dual Origins were seamlessly integrated into his surface, spreading out and allowing him to don a layer of spirit robe constructed from basic elements.

Then he collided with the protective array, his entire being embedding into it. Under the stunned gazes of Gu Canyang and Wey Li, the body that had embedded itself into the big array freed itself from the array's confines. It felt as though he was pulling his body out of the array, even emitting a slight 'pop' sound.

"Just like that."

Lu Ye stabilized his spirit force, having moved from outside the big array to inside it, where he stood before Gu Canyang and Wey Li.

His initial research focused on how to break through the Formation, but as he delved into it, the direction of his research shifted, mainly because Lu Ye realized his current cultivation was still too low. Even if he could forcibly break through the nodes of the big array, he couldn't maintain it.

If one were to liken the protective array to a ripple on water, then the principle of array destruction would be to create an opening in this ripple. Thus, when attacking the enemy's territory, one's side could charge through this gap into the enemy's territory and engage the enemy directly, without being hindered by the protective array.

With his current abilities, Lu Ye couldn't create a lasting opening in the ripple; at best, he could only create a crack. However, this was meaningless since the big array had self-repairing capabilities, and the crack would quickly be sealed.

Realizing that his previous ideas were unattainable, Lu Ye almost gave up, but after reading something in a book, he had some creative new ideas.

The ensuing half-month of experiments led to the current results.

Gu Canyang and Wey Li gazed at Lu Ye in stunned silence for a long while.

"How did you do it?" Gu Canyang was utterly baffled. The big array was clearly still operational, yet Lu Ye had effortlessly walked from outside the array to inside it, a feat that seemed almost inconceivable.

"The big array has nodes, and the node's position is its flaw. Find the node, discern the integration of the basic elements at the node, then use spirit force to produce the exact same basic elements and forcefully insert them into the node. By doing so, you can merge yourself with the big array through its nodes and break into it," Lu Ye explained.

Gu Canyang pondered thoughtfully, "I see."

Internally, he screamed, I don't understand at all!

"Simply put, it's a disguise, a deception," Lu Ye clarified. "I envelop my body with spirit force, constructing the same basic elements as those at the node of the big array and disguising myself. Upon entering through the node, the big array mistakenly believes I am a part of it, thus accepting my presence."

This time, Gu Canyang vaguely understood a bit, but he genuinely couldn't fathom it—could one really deceive an array?

"Brother, it's the same principle as a fly not targeting a seamless egg," Wey Li suddenly mentioned.

Gu Canyang realized, "The protective array is like an egg, and Brother Yiye is..."

"If you really want to think of it that way... it's not impossible," Lu Ye replied.

"But that seems hardly meaningful," Gu Canyang frowned.

Although Lu Ye had demonstrated in front of them how to break into the big array through deception, this method wasn't very helpful for overtaking the enemy's territory; without breaking the array, it was hard to capture the place.

"Here's what I'm thinking..." Lu Ye began elaborating carefully, and Gu Canyang's and Wey Li's eyes gradually lit up as they listened.

By the time Lu Ye finished, the two exchanged glances, each seeing the eagerness in the other's eyes. If this plan succeeded, it would certainly be a significant achievement, with rewards from their sect surely to follow.

Thus, without any hesitation, Gu Canyang declared, "It's rare for Brother Yiye to brave such risk; our Surreptitious Palace has no reason to shrink back."

"Shall we wait for news from you too?"

"I'll arrange the other matters,"

Shortly afterward, at the Soaring Cloud Palace outpost, Zhou Pei, who was meditating, received a transmission. Checking it, he found it was from Gu Canyang and replied, "Brother Gu, what's the matter?"

"Good news!"

"Oh? Where does the joy stem from?"

"Interested in attacking Fenghua Courtyard's outpost, Brother Zhou?"

Zhou Pei's spirit immediately rallied, his eyes clearing significantly.

Half a day later, at the boundary between the territories of Surreptitious Palace and Fenghua Courtyard, several cultivators were engaged in battle. However, one side soon fell into disadvantage, and after being injured, retreated.

The victors did not rashly pursue, as it was hard to ascertain whether the enemy was luring them deeper—such incidents had occurred often before.

The injured were from the Surreptitious Palace, among them a spirited young lady who clearly was not resigned. After escaping to a safe distance, she turned back and shouted at several people from Fenghua Courtyard, "Just you wait, I'll call Senior Brother Gu to wipe you all out."

The leading person from Fenghua Courtyard sneered, "Bark all you want, dog. Come if you dare!"

The young lady, infuriated, screamed and rushed forward with her sword, but fortunately, her companions, still rational, quickly restrained her.

Chapter 295 Sneaking into the Night with the Wind

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The injured cultivators from the Surreptitious Palace fled, and from afar, the loud shouting of that young girl could still be heard, clearly agitated.

"That girl seems to be the descendant of an elder from the Surreptitious Palace, and it looks like she has been spoiled." One person from Fenghua Courtyard shook their head with a wry smile.

They found this behavior of spewing fierce words when unable to win a fight to be quite childish. If fierce words were effective, what would be the point of cultivation? After so many years of confrontation between the two major factions, with both sides incompatible as fire and water, anyone with real ability to kill would not bother with empty talk.

Thus, no matter how fiercely the girl ranted, they did not take her seriously.

However, merely a day later, they received a message that their governor had ordered them to quickly return to their base, as a large number of cultivators from the Surreptitious Palace were about to attack.

The members were somewhat dumbfounded, now recalling the girl's threats before her departure. They had thought she was just spitting out fierce words after being beaten, but to their surprise, she actually managed to convince Gu Canyang to lead an attack on the Surreptitious Palace.

Everyone felt that they had underestimated the girl's status in the Surreptitious Palace, and they did not dare to conceal anything, hastily reporting the incident.

In response, the governor of Fenghua Courtyard, Moon Charm, did not say much, simply replying with a brief acknowledgment.

One by one, the cultivators of Fenghua Courtyard who received the message hurried back to their base, the atmosphere not showing obvious tension. With the protective array there, they still felt secure. It wasn't as if the Surreptitious Palace hadn't attacked before, but each time they had come fiercely and left disheveled.

Soon, another piece of news spread.

This time, those who came to invade their base were not only from the Surreptitious Palace but also the Soaring Cloud Palace had taken action. An additional group was currently on the way to join them, suggesting the two had coordinated in advance.

In the Heaven's Augury Hall, the governor of Fenghua Courtyard, Moon Charm, looked at the report that had just been delivered from outside, her expression calm. Two forces from the Haotian Alliance attacking simultaneously was within her expectations.

Like her fellow disciples, she wasn't worried that their protective array would be breached. What needed to be considered was whether this joint action was merely a gesture or if there were other motives. If it was the former, then there was no need to worry too much. But if it was the latter, they would need to be more cautious in their response. At the very least, they had to be mentally prepared for a prolonged resistance against the enemy.

After a moment of contemplation, she sent out several messages, and soon, other nearby forces from Ten Thousand Demons Ridge became aware of the attack by the Surreptitious Palace and the Soaring Cloud Palace on Fenghua Courtyard.

Moon Charm's action was not a call for reinforcements since asking for help at this time would not be very meaningful. Currently, with the bases of both the Surreptitious Palace and the Soaring Cloud Palace left vulnerable, these forces from Ten Thousand Demons Ridge would surely act once informed. This would then put pressure on the Surreptitious Palace and the Soaring Cloud Palace, hopefully prompting an early withdrawal.

The tactic of relieving Zhao by besieging Wei was a common occurrence on the Spirit Stream battlefield, where nearby allied forces would aid each other during such times.

Moon Charm patiently waited half a day until evening, when two large ships resembling Flying Spirit Artifacts appeared side by side in the cultivators' field of view from Fenghua Courtyard.

The prow of one ship bore the insignia of the Surreptitious Palace, while the other was marked with the emblem of the Soaring Cloud Palace.

The two ships stopped about three miles away from the Fenghua Courtyard's base, and from within them, figures began to stream out in succession.

Within the grounds of Fenghua Courtyard, Moon Charm floating in mid-air activated her Ocular Power to observe, her expression becoming slightly grave.

She noticed that the deployed forces from both Haotian Alliance families seemed quite numerous, with at least four hundred from each faction.

It is important to note that the manpower in an inner circle sect's base generally ranges around five to six hundred. To dispatch four hundred at once meant only a hundred were left to defend the base.

Moon Charm immediately understood that this battle would not end easily.

Could it be just as those disciples reported, that the descendant of the Surreptitious Palace elder was the one who instigated Gu Anyang to act in this manner? Was Gu Anyang that foolish?

She had a feeling that something was not quite right, but now that things had come to this point, pondering these thoughts was meaningless. With the Haotian Alliance cultivators at their doorstep, Fenghua Courtyard had no choice but to engage in battle.

Assembled together, the cultivators from the Surreptitious Palace and the Soaring Cloud Palace numbered nearly eight hundred strong, which was the maximum force each could muster.

In comparison, Fenghua Courtyard had a little over four hundred people.

Fenghua Courtyard had nearly five hundred cultivators originally, but with Choo Qing's team suffering heavy losses in Xianyuan City and nearly a hundred perishing, nearly twenty percent of their manpower was gone. This loss kept Moon Charm restless at night.

Under the leadership of Gu Anyang and Zhou Pei, nearly eight hundred cultivators marched mightily towards the base of Fenghua Courtyard.

Without any prelude or verbal confrontation, the moment the eight hundred cultivators reached the outskirts of the big array, the attack commenced.

Magic and spells, as well as weapon control flow lights, began to flit about, battering against the big array's light barrier, like stones thrown into a still lake, causing ripples to spread across its surface.

The big array hummed as Moon Charm stood before the plaza of Heaven's Augury Hall, holding the Great Array Jade Cluster and adjusting the defensive capacities of the big array.

At the same time, at each array base's location, Fenghua Courtyard cultivators continuously replenished Spirit Stones, allowing the big array to draw from the stones' power to sustain itself.

Although the big array itself stored a substantial amount of spirit force during normal times, no one knew how long the Surreptitious Palace and the Soaring Cloud Palace's assault would last. Using Spirit Stones to replenish the big array's consumption was undoubtedly a way to maintain its protection for an extended duration.

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No matter which power it was, they would all choose to do the same thing when their base was under attack.

The natural spiritual energy within Fenghua Courtyard's base was very rich, likely enhanced by Heaven's Augury Pillar, hence the big array was extremely sturdy. Nearly eight hundred members from the two major forces of the Haotian Alliance took turns attacking continuously for one hour, yet the array stood unyielding; other than layers of ripples washing over it, not even the luster of the array's light screen changed much.

And clearly, this was still not the limit of the big array.

Through the light screen of the array, Moon Charm watched Gu Canyang and Zhou Pei with an expressionless face, somewhat puzzled about what exactly the two were trying to do.

Having clashed many times, they were familiar with each other's tactics; Moon Charm did not believe that these two, joining forces, would engage in futile actions. However, she hadn't spotted anything suspicious, which made her feel somewhat uneasy.

The unknown was the greatest enemy.

Fortunately, she had sent out a message earlier, and several powers from Ten Thousand Demons Ridge had started to gather to attack the bases of Surreptitious Palace and Soaring Cloud Palace. By now, they should already be on their way.

As long as Gu Anyang and Zhou Pei received the message, they would definitely not dare to linger here long; they would have to retreat.

Just as she was thinking this, a faint anomaly suddenly transmitted from the jade cluster. As the person controlling the big array, through the jade cluster in her hand, she could sense changes in every part of the array. The anomaly she just felt was as if the big array had been breached at a certain position.

Moon Charm's expression changed instantly, and she turned her head to look in that direction, yet what she saw was that part of the array's light screen was as stable as before.

An illusion? Moon Charm was not sure, being always cautious. She immediately dispatched a team to inspect the potentially abnormal area.

Meanwhile, in a certain part of the array, Lu Ye had already stealthily infiltrated the place without a sound.

The anomaly that Moon Charm sensed was precisely the disturbance caused by his infiltration. Under normal circumstances, he would not be capable of such a feat.

But it was currently nighttime, and the attention of Fenghua Courtyard's cultivators was all drawn by the actions of Surreptitious Palace and Soaring Cloud Palace. Who would notice him?

After infiltrating Fenghua Courtyard's base, he immediately activated the power of the trace-erasing bangle on his hand, concealing his presence and hiding his tracks.

If it weren't for this life-saving item bestowed by Madam Yun, Lu Ye would never dare to act in such a way. Even though he was now capable of breaking into someone else's protective array, his tracks would be quickly exposed without it.

With the trace-erasing bangle, things were different, after all, it was a gift from Madam Yun. Its concealment abilities were much stronger than those of ghost cultivators.

In the plan he and Gu Canyang agreed on, Surreptitious Palace and Soaring Cloud Palace were responsible for the frontal assault on the big array, distracting the focus and attention of Fenghua Courtyard's cultivators. He would then seize the opportunity to sneak in, conceal his form, and find a chance to kill Moon Charm and seize her jade cluster. Once the jade cluster was in hand, the protective array would become totally useless.

The plan was straightforward, but sometimes simplicity led to victory. The more complex a plan, the more flaws it contained, and the more likely it was to reveal mistakes.

So far, everything was progressing smoothly. His method of infiltrating the array and the trace-erasing bangle were a perfect match. To perfectly hide himself, he even refrained from bringing Amber and Yiyi on this trip.

He stood still and waited quietly for a moment, and sure enough, a team of cultivators from Fenghua Courtyard hurried over.

During a prior exchange with Wey Li, Lu Ye had learned something – the moment he infiltrated the array, Wey Li would be able to sense some anomalies on his side. But that was all; he couldn't define what the anomalies were specifically unless he saw them with his own eyes.

Therefore, Lu Ye knew that after he entered the Fenghua Courtyard base, there would definitely be investigators coming.

The investigating team consisted of six cultivators. After looking around and finding nothing, they quickly left to inspect nearby areas.

Lu Ye did not move because in his perception, there seemed to be something not quite right several dozen feet away. There appeared to be some signs of life flowing there.

In the past, he would not have been able to detect such things, but his perceptive abilities had greatly improved after cleansing his psyche in the Soul Cleansing Pool.

Within a dozen feet radius, he could perceive any movement, and the closer to him, the more distinct the perceptions.

It must be a ghost cultivator!

The governor of Fenghua Courtyard was indeed a cautious person. On the surface, only one team was sent to investigate, but in reality, there were two groups. If Lu Ye had acted rashly earlier, his tracks would have already been exposed.

The ghost cultivator drifted around the area for a while, discovering nothing, and then left. From beginning to end, Lu Ye had not seen a glimpse of the person.

After the ghost cultivator had departed, Lu Ye waited in place for the time it takes an incense stick to burn before he began to move.

The trace-erasing bangle's ability to conceal his form was very powerful. The only downside was that it didn't allow him to activate his spirit force or move; as soon as he did, his figure would immediately be revealed.

Lu Ye was not sure if there were others hiding nearby, but if his tracks were truly exposed, then he would just have to exit the way he had come.

Since he could enter, naturally, he could also leave.

Chapter 296 Snatching the Jade Cluster

What reassured Lu Ye was that after revealing himself, he hadn't encountered any attack. He slightly concealed his own aura and then ran toward the more crowded areas, looking hurried.

The plan had, at this point, mostly succeeded.

Now, he didn't need to deliberately hide his tracks. With hundreds of people stationed, including members from the sect headquarters, those attached from outside the sect, and some independent cultivators, it was impossible for everyone to recognize each other. Thus, even if someone spotted him, it wouldn't matter much unless they recognized Lu Ye and could identify him on sight.

Moreover, it was nighttime, which made it even more convenient to act.

As he ran, Lu Ye slightly bowed his head, his hair in front of his forehead falling over, covering most of his face. He quickly arrived where the cultivators from Fenghua Courtyard were gathered.

Since their own station was under attack, they gathered in groups of three to five. Although there was no fear of the defensive array being breached, it was still necessary to maintain vigilance and precautions.

When Lu Ye rushed over from behind the station, he indeed attracted quite a bit of attention, but most only glanced at him before losing interest. After all, no one could imagine that someone could infiltrate undetected while the protective array was intact.

The few who gave Lu Ye a second look only thought he looked somewhat unfamiliar, and did not think too much about it. In the big sects' stations, it was common to see unfamiliar faces, whether they were from other sects who had come to affiliate, or recent independent cultivators attaching themselves. Cultivators often secluded themselves in cultivation or went out, and no one dared claim they recognized everyone in the station.

Outside the array, Gu Canyang watched Lu Ye merge with the crowd and couldn't help but twitch his eye.

He secretly admonished himself that it appeared necessary to arrange some simple formations within the station to prevent enemies from sneaking in undetected in the future. It wasn't necessary to set up complex arrays, just some simple alerting formations, so that even if someone managed to infiltrate like Lu Ye, their tracks would be revealed.

While he was lost in these thoughts, Lu Ye had already approached within fifteen feet of Moon Charm.

He had spotted this woman from his hiding spot before breaking into the array, and from the information provided by Gu Canyang, he knew she was the Governor of Fenghua Courtyard. The woman wore a close-fitting gown that accentuated her graceful figure.

This was a magic cultivator!

When Lu Ye's cultivation was very low, what he hated the most were magic cultivators. Luo Ji and Dong Shuye, those two fellows, had caused him significant psychological trauma.

However, as his cultivation grew, he gradually grew fond of combatting magic cultivators. With the Move-Like-The-Wind Spirit Runes enhancing him, his speed was sufficient to quickly close the distance with opposing magic cultivators, and he could easily dodge their casts. If he couldn't dodge, he had the Defense Spirit Runes to block them.

Once such a combat cultivator like him got close, the fate of magic cultivators was generally quite miserable.

One could say that magic cultivators of the same level usually couldn't make much of a splash in front of him, even if their cultivation was one or two levels higher.

Moon Charm's cultivation was undoubtedly at Spirit Stream Level 9, and she was close to advancing to the next level.

Originally, her plan was to hand over her position as governor to Choo Qing upon her return and select a deputy governor from within the sect.

Unfortunately, Choo Qing had died in Xianyuan City, and the previously designated deputy governor candidate had also died, leading to the position remaining vacant for over a month now at Fenghua Courtyard, with her handling everything alone.

It was said that the elders of the sect bickered daily over this position, each of them wanting their disciple to take the role. After all, becoming a deputy governor had many benefits - not only was the monthly salary increased, but it also made gaining merits easier, and with Moon Charm about to step down, whoever got the position could soon be promoted.

After this incident, it was urgent for the sect to decide on a candidate for deputy governor. Moon Charm was planning this in her mind, determined not to let this drag on any longer.

As she thought this, a sharp foreboding struck her heart, and out of the corner of her eye, she noticed a figure rapidly approaching her.

She quickly turned her head to see that a young man with his head bowed was already within ten feet of her.

Moon Charm was instantly terrified. She had never seen this young man before!

As the Governor of Fenghua Courtyard, she could recognize and even name all the several hundred individuals within the station, whether they were from the headquarters, from outside the sect, or independent cultivators attached to them.

It could be said that in the entire Fenghua Courtyard, only she and the late Choo Qing knew everyone, as cultivators, whether from outside or attached independents, had to go through them to enter the station.

Though the young man had his head lowered, Moon Charm could still glimpse his general features.

Thus, she was sure she had never seen this young man before, and he had not appeared in the sect headquarters before that day.

With this sudden anomaly in mind, Moon Charm immediately raised her hand to the side and pointed, and with a flick, spirit light erupted, casting a magic spell towards the newcomer.

Moon Charm's strength was rather impressive; the ease with which she instantly invoked this spell showcased her prowess. Such a spell wouldn't be very powerful, but it was enough to repel most cultivators at Level 8.

However, when the magic and spells were activated, Moon Charm not only failed to feel any sense of safety but felt even more horrified because the moment she raised her hand, the figure of the young man had already turned into an afterimage. As her magic was cast, a streak of bright saber light flashed before her eyes.

Death, like a ferocious beast, extended its steamy tongue, licking her psyche, causing her to shudder.

A grating sound of friction arose, and various scenes flashed before Moon Charm's eyes like a revolving lantern. A massive force came from her throat, nearly breaking her neck, as luminescent fluorescence scattered with the slide of the saber light, causing a slight pain in her throat.

Moon Charm immediately came back to her senses. In that instant, she had almost instinctively mobilized her spirit force, forming a barrier around her neck, even before she could understand why she had done so.

But undeniably, this instinctual action saved her life because Lu Ye's slash was aimed right at her neck, and the scattered fluorescence was the shattered spirit force barrier.

The spirit force barrier, activated by the magic cultivator, was somewhat similar to Defense Spirit Runes, both offering strong protective capabilities. It's considered a type of magic, so basically, every magic cultivator would employ it.

Having missed with his first strike, Lu Ye immediately activated his contingency plan. The Boulder Mountain Saber in his hand flashed brilliantly as he stabbed fiercely.

In his plan, as long as he could get within fifteen meters of Moon Charm and stealthily make his move, there was an eighty percent chance he could kill her with one strike. However, reality often deviated from expectations, and Moon Charm's vigilance was too strong, coupled with her quick reaction, resulted in his strike not being fully effective, albeit wounding Moon Charm. Nevertheless, that injury was not lethal.

Now that he was inside enemy territory, he had to fight quickly. He had at most one more strike before he would be attacked by the alerted cultivators of Fenghua Courtyard.

Thus, his second strike was not aimed at killing Moon Charm, to avoid another miss.

When Lu Ye launched his second strike, Moon Charm hurriedly retreated, and at the same time, she raised one hand, her delicate fingers pointing at Lu Ye while her entire body surged with spirit force, evidently ready to cast some unknown magic.

Before she could activate this magic, Lu Ye had already stabbed through her other arm, eliciting a muffled groan. The intense pain distorted Moon Charm's facial features.

The Boulder Mountain Saber stirred and then sliced, sending half of her arm flying.

Moon Charm's face instantly changed, and she roared, "Kill him!"

Lu Ye had already spread his wings and soared into the sky, simultaneously grabbing the severed arm.

Only then did the cultivators of Fenghua Courtyard start to realize what exactly had happened. It wasn't that they were slow; it was that Lu Ye's actions were too swift. He had only made two strikes, and his engagement with Moon Charm lasted no more than two breaths. In such a brief moment, who could fully comprehend what had just transpired?

As Moon Charm's order was issued, streaks of flowing light burst from the hands of the cultivators of Fenghua Courtyard. However, Lu Ye had already soared into the sky, those streams of light following him, stretching thirty to forty meters before reaching the limits of weapon control, although the attack distance of the magic was much farther. But Lu Ye wasn't going to stay in one place to be a target, his crimson, light-flowing wings flapping lightly as he agilely dodged each incoming magic attack.

Moon Charm watched the figure dancing in the air with a pale face, watching as he tossed down her severed arm, feeling her blood run cold.

She realized what he was about to do.

"Return to the Nine Provinces!" she shouted, "Quick, everyone back to the Nine Provinces!"

It must be said, Moon Charm was a very decisive woman. Even with an arm severed and pain eroding her spirit, she made the correct judgement in an instant.

One could say that none of the governors of the major sects were foolish; they all had their own capabilities.

Hearing her command, the cultivators of Fenghua Courtyard stalled for a moment, still protected by the great array. There was only one intruding cultivator, and he was just at Level 8. Why retreat back to the Nine Provinces now?

But soon, someone realized the crux of the issue.

The array was indeed still intact, but the control jade cluster was gone!

Lu Ye's motive for severing Moon Charm's arm with the second strike was because she held the Great Array Jade Cluster in that hand, constantly adjusting the power of the array.

In attacking the headquarters of Fenghua Courtyard, the most crucial step was to destroy this jade cluster. Once this was done, the protective array of Fenghua Courtyard would collapse on its own.

"Quick, quick!" Moon Charm yelled, leading the way towards Heaven's Augury Hall. Seeing this, the cultivators of Fenghua Courtyard who dared to hesitate followed her lead.

Lu Ye, hovering in the air, gripped the jade cluster forcefully but could not crush it. This object, though appearing to be carved from jade, was made of an unknown material.

Pressed for time, he didn't bother to try more. He tossed the jade cluster gently in front of him and then thrust with his saber, the Sharpness instantaneously reinforced on the blade.

Chapter 297 - Capturing Fenghua Courtyard

...

With a light clink, the jade cluster shattered. Without the jade cluster's control, the protective array of Fenghua Courtyard buzzed, and the flow of spirit force upon the light screen halted. Although it wasn't broken, it could no longer receive replenishments of spirit force.

After a fierce assault by the combined forces of eight hundred cultivators from Surreptitious Palace and Sky Supporting Sect, the big array that enveloped the garrison crumbled into pieces.

Beneath the night sky, swaths of phosphorescent lights scattered like fireflies dancing through the air.

"Kill!" Gu Canyang roared, taking the lead and charging into the Fenghua Courtyard with his troops. At this moment, the cultivators from Fenghua Courtyard had barely run fifty yards!

Hearing the commotion behind them and looking back, the group of Fenghua Courtyard cultivators grew even more panic-stricken, and they ran faster. Although many among the group were female cultivators, no enemy would show mercy simply because they were women.

A bustling crowd rushed into the Heaven's Augury Hall, using the Heaven's Augury Pillar to continuously return to the Nine Provinces sect headquarters.

However, the Heaven's Augury Pillar could only accommodate so many, and nearly four hundred people required some time to return. By the time the cultivators from Surreptitious Palace and Sky Supporting Sect arrived, nearly a hundred people had yet to make it back.

The last group fought back desperately, but they were no match for the overwhelming numbers and were quickly overcome, falling into pools of their own blood.

After several moments, the battle subsided, and dozens of bodies lay strewn in haphazard fashion within the Heaven's Augury Hall—all Fenghua Courtyard cultivators.

These unfortunate souls, the slowest runners, met the most tragic deaths, perfectly illustrating the harsh truth that in the face of danger, one need not outrun the enemy, only outrun one's companions.

"Thrilling!" Gu Anyang laughed loudly.

As neighboring powers, Surreptitious Palace and Fenghua Courtyard held long-standing grudges against each other, mutually disdainful, but without the means to conclusively settle the dispute, they were unable to harm one another—until today when divine providence came to their aid, allowing them to overcome Fenghua Courtyard.

The only regret for Gu Anyang was not having killed many from Fenghua Courtyard, as the battle from start to finish had very little actual combat. In the end, the dozens of deaths were mostly due to their failure to make it back to the Nine Provinces in time.

Nevertheless, it was enough!

To overtake Fenghua Courtyard's garrison was to strip their marks of merit from the Heaven's Augury Pillar—benefits accumulated by generations of their sect. And the merits to be gained were certain to be substantial.

"Everyone, hurry up and clean up the battlefield. I give you the time of one incense stick's burning. After that, regroup!" Zhou Pei yelled, his face aglow.

According to the plan, if Fenghua Courtyard's defenses could be successfully breached, then next in line would be Illuminating Sun Mountain. As rivals to Sky Supporting Sect, one could infer the depth of their enmity from that between Surreptitious Palace and Fenghua Courtyard.

The biggest concern Gu Anyang and Zhou Pei had when they concocted this plan was whether Lu Ye could successfully infiltrate and, upon doing so, succeed in his mission!

The outcome proved all their worries to be superfluous. Lu Yiye from the Righteous Blood Sect was more reliable than they had imagined!

Upon his call, the cultivators from both sects immediately sprang into action, knowing that time was limited.

"Where is Brother Yiye?" Gu Canyang called out.

"Here." Lu Ye walked into the Heaven's Augury Hall from outside, with Yiyi beside him, checking for any injuries.

After leaving Xianyuan City, Yiyi had fallen into a deep sleep, waking only half a month prior. Compared to before, she had undergone dramatic changes, the most evident being that she now appeared as a real person to any observer, even to the point where the Second Senior Sister might not be able to detect any flaw.

Previously this wouldn't have been possible; a cultivator as advanced as the Second Senior Sister could perceive Yiyi's true nature with a single glance.

If the benefit Lu Ye and Giant Armor Amber received from the Soul Cleansing Pool were considered as one, then the benefit Yiyi received could be rated as four or even five—since that was where many Spiritual Bodies of Xianyuan City rested, a Spiritual Body like Yiyi would gain substantially more from soaking in the pool compared to Lu Ye and others.

If it were not for her status as a minion spirit constraining her Cultivation Realm from surpassing Amber's, she might have left Lu Ye far behind by now.

"Brother Yiye, please!" Gu Canyang gestured with a smiling invitation.

Having taken down Fenghua Courtyard, it was natural to divide the spoils. As previously agreed, the blessings upon the Heaven's Augury Pillar would be equally shared among the three parties.

Lu Ye didn't hesitate to reach out to the Heaven's Augury Pillar, activating his battlefield marking and began plundering.

He had done this once before with the Sky Supporting Sect and was fairly familiar with the process.

As the various blessings were stripped away from the Heaven's Augury Pillar, the concentration of nature's spiritual energy in the garrison of Fenghua Courtyard began to diminish, and the range of the territory affected by the garrison also began to shrink...

Feeling that it was sufficient, Lu Ye withdrew his hand, and Gu Canyang continued, followed by Zhou Pei as the third.

After one incense stick's time had passed, everyone assembled in the square in front of the Heaven's Augury Hall, boarded their vessel, and set off towards Illuminating Sun Mountain.

Midway through the journey, Gu Canyang and Zhou Pei received news that a considerable number of Ten Thousand Demons Ridge cultivators were attacking their respective garrisons. This was clearly a typical ruse used by both sides. The Ten Thousand Demons Ridge attempted to force Surreptitious Palace and Sky Supporting Sect to retreat with this tactic, in hopes of breaking the siege on Fenghua Courtyard.

In the past, both sects would have struggled to find a solution, as it would have been impossible to breach Fenghua Courtyard's garrison in such a short time. Attacking the opponent's strong protective array would only deplete their own strength, weakening their position and giving the enemy an opportunity to strike back.

...

But at this moment, those cultivators from Ten Thousand Demons Ridge probably still had no idea that the Fenghua Courtyard outpost had fallen, and that the forces of Surreptitious Palace and Soaring Cloud Palace had been thoroughly routed, with troops now dispatched to Illuminating Sun Mountain.

The speed was too fast—so fast that not even Fenghua Courtyard itself had reacted in time, let alone the other factions of Ten Thousand Demons Ridge.

Therefore, even though they received a message from the cultivators of their sect headquarters, Gu Canyang and Zhou Pei did not pay it much attention, only ordering the personnel left behind at their outposts to strengthen the might of the big array until their triumphant return.

One incense stick's time later, another message arrived: for some unknown reason, those several powers from Ten Thousand Demons Ridge had all withdrawn, and judging by their hurried manner, it seemed like their retreat was rather urgent.

On the great ship, Gu Canyang and Zhou Pei gathered, realizing that the news of Fenghua Courtyard's occupation must have leaked out, otherwise those several powers from Ten Thousand Demons Ridge would not have retreated so swiftly.

Indeed, that was the case. Earlier, when Moon Charm ordered the Fenghua Courtyard cultivators to retreat back to the Nine Provinces, there was no time to send a message to the faction allies at Ten Thousand Demons Ridge. After returning to the Nine Provinces, they immediately sought to contact the governors of those several factions at the first opportunity.

After quite some difficulty, they finally conveyed the message.

There was no direct way to send messages between the Nine Provinces and the Spirit Stream battlefield, and information needed some intermediaries—for example, Moon Charm first relayed the message to the cultivators of those factions in the Nine Provinces and then had those cultivators pass it on to their respective sect members on the Spirit Stream battlefield.

With the message relayed in this manner, it naturally wasn't so fast.

When those governors received the message, they were all stunned. They had deployed troops to attack Surreptitious Palace and Soaring Cloud Palace mainly to relieve the siege on Fenghua Courtyard and force the defenders of Surreptitious Palace and Soaring Cloud Palace to come to its aid. As long as they offered support, the crisis at Fenghua Courtyard could be alleviated.

But it hadn't been long before Fenghua Courtyard's outpost was actually occupied!

If it weren't for the fact that they couldn't contact her in time, they really wanted to ask Moon Charm if Fenghua Courtyard's protective array was made of paper. No protective array had ever been breached so quickly before.

Now that Fenghua Courtyard's outpost was occupied, their attacks on the outposts of Surreptitious Palace and Soaring Cloud Palace were pointless. What alarmed them even more was another message from Fenghua Courtyard.

Lu Yiye from the Righteous Blood Sect actually had a means to infiltrate the protective array without anyone noticing!

The reason Fenghua Courtyard fell so quickly was because Moon Charm was ambushed by him, the jade cluster was lost, leading to the breaking of the big array.

The governors of the several powers from Ten Thousand Demons Ridge became anxious and realized where the problem lay.

There was nothing wrong with Fenghua Courtyard's protective array; the problem was that Lu Yiye from the Righteous Blood Sect.

With a Cultivation Realm of Spirit Stream Level 8, silently infiltrating a protective array was unprecedented.

The might of their own protective arrays was not much different from that of Fenghua Courtyard, so if Lu Yiye could infiltrate Fenghua Courtyard's array, their own arrays would also undoubtedly be unable to stop him.

Especially at Illuminating Sun Mountain, where, because of the incident at Xianyuan City, they had formed a personal grudge against Lu Ye—now that Fenghua Courtyard's outpost was gone, would they be the next target?

In such a situation, who would dare to linger outside? Naturally, they all retreated swiftly. If they didn't return soon, they might lose their home.

As the cultivators of Illuminating Sun Mountain, led by their Deputy Governor, hurried on their way back, a message came from the direction of their outpost.

The people from Surreptitious Palace and Soaring Cloud Palace had indeed gone to their own outpost and were now furiously attacking the big array.

The Deputy Governor nearly spat out a mouthful of blood in frustration, and he quickly ordered his subordinates to accelerate their pace. At the same time, he cursed inwardly at his governor brother's unchanged lustful heart—when Moon Charm had sent him the message that the outpost was under attack, he had him lead more than three hundred cultivators to assist in the battle.

Illuminating Sun Mountain had only a little over four hundred cultivators altogether, and now only a hundred were left to defend the outpost. If Lu Yiye managed to break through the big array, how would they have the strength to resist?

Hastily arriving outside the outpost, he saw the multi-colored lights flickering and darting in the distance. His heart felt unbearably stifled, but he could only stand and watch from afar, not daring to approach.

Aside from that, his side had just over three hundred people while the other side numbered eight hundred. Rushing in like that would be no different from courting death.

He even dared not reveal his whereabouts, lest he attract danger to himself.

Meanwhile, outside the great array of Illuminating Sun Mountain, the sounds of battle thundered as the cultivators from Surreptitious Palace and Soaring Cloud Palace attacked the array in waves, determined to break through.

Inside the big array, the cultivators of Illuminating Sun Mountain formed squads under the arrangements of their governor to patrol around, to prevent Lu Yiye from infiltrating their ranks unnoticed.

And close to the governor, several people formed a circle, keeping vigilant on all sides.

This was because, according to the message passed on from Moon Charm, although Lu Yiye was only at Spirit Stream Level 8 in terms of cultivation, he was extremely powerful. He had only attacked her twice:

once nearly decapitating her, and the second time severing one of her arms, and that was how the Great Array Jade Cluster was lost.

The current governor of Illuminating Sun Mountain, who had originally been the deputy, had assumed the position after Qi Ming's death in Xianyuan City. He had interacted with Moon Charm and knew of her strength.

If even Moon Charm couldn't withstand his two strikes, he was even less confident. So, despite looking a bit flustered at the moment, he was taking utmost caution to deal with this crisis.

Chapter 298 Attempt

The opponent's response left Lu Ye, who was hidden in the shadows, quite helpless.

After observing for a while and confirming that he could not repeat his previous actions at Fenghua Courtyard, Lu Ye simply revealed his figure.

The transmission of messages between cultivators was too efficient; his actions at Fenghua Courtyard must have already been communicated here, or Illuminating Sun Mountain would not have such meticulous preparations.

Lu Ye sighed inwardly, it seemed that this method of infiltrating the enemy's stronghold to snatch the jade cluster could no longer be used in the future.

Members of Surreptitious Palace and Soaring Cloud Palace were launching a fierce attack on the big array under the command of Gu Canyang and Zhou Pei, with a thunderous momentum that was astonishing.

Lu Ye emerged from the darkness, approaching step by step.

Seeing this, Zhou Pei felt a surge of emotion and hurriedly went up to meet him.

"Brother Yiye, you can't get in?"

Lu Ye shook his head.

Not only could he not get in, but even if he did, he would be hard-pressed to accomplish anything on his own. Being able to snatch the jade cluster from Moon Charm was primarily due to the fact that no one had ever attempted such a feat before. Fenghua Courtyard was completely unguarded against this, which allowed Lu Ye to brazenly approach within three zhang of Moon Charm.

If Moon Charm hadn't been cautious and quick to react at the last moment, she would probably be dead.

Now, the situation was different. After the news that he could infiltrate the protective array spread, Illuminating Sun Mountain had tightened its defenses, even surrounding the governor with several cultivators. In such a situation, it was no longer possible for Lu Ye to snatch the jade cluster again.

"Ah, this..." Zhou Pei's expression was bitter.

If they could successfully take over Illuminating Sun Mountain's base, Soaring Cloud Palace would have much better days ahead. Just taking Surreptitious Palace as a comparison, although Fenghua Courtyard's losses in cultivators were not significant during the assault on their base, the loss of the Heaven's Augury Pillar's enhancement was something that could not be compensated for in a short period of time.

With insufficient enhancements, the spiritual energy of nature within the base would not be strong, and even if Fenghua Courtyard reset the protective array, its power would not be as great as before.

In other words, Fenghua Courtyard would only be able to be at the mercy of Surreptitious Palace from now on, possibly never able to turn the tables again. It goes without saying that Surreptitious Palace would never give Fenghua Courtyard another opportunity.

Fenghua Courtyard was settled, and Zhou Pei was counting on arranging Illuminating Sun Mountain in a similar way, but things had not gone as hoped, which inevitably led to his disappointment.

"If it doesn't work, then we'll attack forcefully!" Gu Canyang spoke up from the side.

An assembly of eight hundred cultivators from both sects could indeed launch a powerful attack, but it would take time, perhaps several days of effort before slowly breaking through the big array of Illuminating Sun Mountain.

In the past, such a thing would not have happened because nearby forces of Ten Thousand Demons Ridge would definitely come to support or take other actions. But who amongst Ten Thousand Demons Ridge would dare to make a move so easily now?

The lesson learned from Fenghua Courtyard served as a warning to others. No one dared to make hasty moves, all hunkering down in their own territories to prevent any mishaps, lest they be robbed of their base by Lu Yiye while attempting to support others, with nowhere to even cry.

"There's still one method we can try."

Lu Ye slowly began to speak.

Zhou Pei's eyes lit up, he asked eagerly, "What method?"

"I can't guarantee this method will definitely succeed, but there's a certain chance."

"A chance is good enough. Please tell us what to do, Brother Yiye."

"Then find ten... no, nine physique cultivators. I need the strongest physique cultivators from both of your sects, and have them wear any defensive spirit artifacts that they can."

Although Gu Canyang and Zhou Pei did not know what Lu Ye intended to do, since he had made a request, they naturally obliged.

Soon, nine physique cultivators chosen from both sects stood before Lu Ye. He looked them over and saw that each of them was robust with ample blood Qi, and there were even two demon cultivators among them.

At this moment, these nine carried defensive spirit artifacts and wore defensive treasure armor, each looking formidable.

Lu Ye called over Giant Armor.

Giant Armor stood to the side, and the gazes of the nine physique cultivators towards him turned fervent. In terms of size, Giant Armor was not the biggest among the ten, but in terms of blood Qi, he was the most abundant. Even the strongest of the nine had less blood Qi than Giant Armor.

With a reputation like Giant Armor's, he naturally attracted the admiration of physique cultivators from the nearby big sects. No one would look down on him for being an independent cultivator.

A saying spread across these thousand miles: without Giant Armor, Sima Yang would have died countless times by now. It was only with Giant Armor's staunch protection that Sima Yang could live so comfortably.

Now, many knew that Sima Yang was dead. Even among the cultivators of the Haotian Alliance, many celebrated, happy that Giant Armor had shaken off that burden.

The only downside was that Giant Armor followed Lu Ye instead of being recruited by their sect.

Leading ten physique cultivators, including Giant Armor, Lu Ye went straight to the node of the big array, arranged them to the side, and gave detailed instructions.

The cultivators all responded eagerly, with Giant Armor even slightly lowering his body, assuming a posture ready to charge.

Lu Ye glanced at him but did not stop him, then immediately raised a hand and covered it over the light screen of the big array.

How could Illuminating Sun Mountain not be prepared for such obvious movements on his side?

Immediately, more than eighty cultivators under the direction of Illuminating Sun Mountain's governor hurried to the area, standing across the light screen of the big array, confronting Lu Ye and the others from afar. Each of these cultivators quietly urged their spirit force, with the glow of their Spiritual Artifacts flickering in their hands, ready to deliver their strongest strike at any moment.

Seeing Lu Ye placing his hand on the light screen of the big array, the cultivators from Illuminating Sun Mountain felt their hearts rise to their throats.

They had all heard that this fellow named Lu Yiye could infiltrate someone else's protective array undetected, so seeing Lu Ye's actions, they all wondered if he was about to employ that strange technique.

Feeling tense and uneasy, they also were very curious about how exactly Lu Ye would manage to infiltrate, so they watched unstintingly.

Outside the array, ten physique cultivators were ready to erupt, while inside, eighty cultivators were ready to engage. Compared to the roaring commotion elsewhere, this silent confrontation here held an even greater sense of oppression.

Spirit force gathered in Lu Ye's eyes, augmented by Insight Spirit Runes, and the world in his vision immediately altered, revealing the Yin-Yang Primordial Elements flowing and changing on the big array.

When spirit force gushed out from around him, centering on the spot under Lu Ye's large hand, elements quickly connected and spread, covering a three-zhang area in the blink of an eye. To the observer, it appeared as though Lu Ye had laid a spirit membrane on the light screen of the big array.

Seeing this scene, the cultivators of Illuminating Sun Mountain's hearts beat even more violently, all of them inwardly exclaiming, Could this really be the method Lu Yiye uses to infiltrate protective arrays?

A nervous cultivator immediately activated his weapon control, transforming it into a beam of light that struck their own protective array.

His action triggered a chain reaction, with at least half of the eighty cultivators immediately following suit. A series of luminescent attacks struck, causing ripples to surge across the light screen of the big array.

Lu Ye looked at the opposing cultivators expressionlessly and dispersed the spirit force from his hands.

The hastily acting cultivators from Illuminating Sun Mountain also realized their mistake, with awkward expressions.

The first attempt had failed.

It was precisely because he was not certain of breaking the array in this manner that Lu Ye had not made any promises to Zhou Pei beforehand.

Strictly speaking, Lu Ye's current actions were the true attempt at array destruction, the original direction of his research. However, during his time at Surreptitious Palace, his research direction had shifted. He eventually developed a method that, without breaking the array, involved disguising oneself to deceive and infiltrate the array. Compared to the former, the latter was undoubtedly easier.

While the research direction had changed, the method was correct. The problem was that Lu Ye was unable to seize the fleeting opportunity, as the elements on the light screen of the array were constantly changing, with the array becoming more volatile and changing more rapidly the more vigorously its power was employed.

Take the current array of Illuminating Sun Mountain, for example, which was undoubtedly stimulated to its limit.

The frequency of change had reached a level of altering every three breaths!

In other words, for Lu Ye to achieve his objective, he would need to discern the composition of elements at the node of the array within three breaths. Then, he would need to urge his own spirit force to construct completely opposite elements to blend with them. By doing so, he could directly break a hole at the node and thus succeed in destroying the array.

To discern the composition of hundreds, if not thousands, of elements and to construct their complete opposites within only three breaths was extremely difficult.

Even though Lu Ye had strong control over his spirit force and possessed a high talent in the Path of Spirit Runes, achieving such a feat would still require some luck.

Of course, his biggest assurance was having eyes augmented by Insight Spirit Runes. Without the Insight Spirit Runes to penetrate the various changes of the array, with his current proficiency in the Array Path, he would need several more years of cultivation to break through such a protective array.

One failure didn't matter; there would be a second time, a third time. He could fail countless times without any loss, but as long as he succeeded once, what awaited Illuminating Sun Mountain would be a catastrophe.

After briefly stabilizing his spirit force, Lu Ye continued to observe the changes in the array. Shortly after, he made another attempt and failed again.

The time he was given was too short.

Initially, every attempt made by Lu Ye caused the eighty cultivators of Illuminating Sun Mountain to be on tenterhooks, but with the number of attempts increasing, they had almost become numb. It wasn't that they thought Lu Ye couldn't break the array, but rather the tormenting nature of this process was too much to bear.

Their hearts would rise and fall with every move Lu Ye made, and their mental states were long blown apart.

As Lu Ye failed in another attempt at breaking the array, Giant Armor slowly straightened up beside him; having been bent over for a long time, he was a bit tired. But soon, he bent down again, assuming the posture of readying to charge into battle.

Perhaps due to spending too much time with Sima Yang, he usually lacked initiative. However, if given a clear directive, he could execute it meticulously.

Lu Ye made several more attempts, still without success. He had reached his limit, but simply couldn't meet the requirement of breaking the array within three breaths.

Perhaps, after he later switched to cultivating a Heaven Rank technique, he would have the ability to do so. After all, a cultivator's control over their spirit force experiences an exaggerated improvement after switching to a Heaven Rank technique, which is why cultivators experience such a drastic increase in strength post-transition.

Chapter 299 Charging the Formation

Just when Lu Ye was about to give up, a pleasant surprise suddenly arrived.

The basic elements of the great array changed once more, yet this time part of them gave Lu Ye an incredibly familiar sensation.

He almost instantly realized where this feeling came from.

On the Talent Tree, there were many leaves that carried unique spirit runes, which unlike Sharpness or Weapon Control, didn't directly assist Lu Ye in battle or cultivation. They were more like a method or technique of integration.

Lu Ye benefited greatly from these, which was why he had made rapid progress in the Path of Spirit Runes these days, closely related to these methods and techniques.

At this very moment, the composition of the basic elements on the array node was exactly the pattern carried on one of the leaves of the Talent Tree!

Without any hesitation, Lu Ye immediately constructed that pattern, and more basic elements spread out from it in all directions.

As all the basic elements formed, a soft popping noise echoed, sounding like the burst of a bubble.

With the sound, a 30-foot-wide hole was torn in the protective array's light screen in front of Lu Ye.

"Go!" Lu Ye shouted.

Almost as soon as he spoke, Giant Armor charged out, crossing the big hole in the formation and storming into the residence at Illuminating Sun Mountain, with Lu Ye flashing in right behind him.

It was only after he rushed into the formation that the nine physique cultivators finally reacted and hurriedly followed.

The broken hole rapidly sealed itself.

The protective array had self-healing capabilities. Unless the damage was too severe, it would quickly mend itself. A big protective array like this wouldn't be fundamentally affected by a 30-foot-wide hole.

The expressions of the eighty cultivators from Illuminating Sun Mountain turned fearful, instinctively unleashing a barrage of attacks.

While Lu Ye tirelessly attempted to break the formation without success earlier, their emotions had fluctuated greatly, feeling tortured. But when Lu Ye actually managed to create an aperture and stormed in, they realized that their earlier agitation was nothing but bliss, for now, they had to face the assault led by Giant Armor and ten physique cultivators.

Blood Qi boiled, and a crimson glow emanated from every physique cultivator, especially from Giant Armor. The attacks coming from the front boomed against him, mostly blocked by the Blood Qi enveloping him, with the few that got through vastly weakened.

He lowered his head and wielded a big shield spiritual artifact like a mad bull, crashing fiercely into the ranks of the Illuminating Sun Mountain cultivators.

Following closely behind him, Lu Ye reached into his storage sack and threw out four streaks of Liu Guang, which merged into a ribbon of light, cleaving waves and making way for Giant Armor.

Since returning from Xianyuan City, Lu Ye's psyche power had greatly increased, and his control over his own spirit force had improved further. The number of items he could control had grown from two to four, and this wasn't even his limit. However, considering that controlling more items would reduce their power, he didn't refine more items for control.

The other nine physique cultivators also charged forward. Led by Giant Armor, they formed a sharp formation and protected Lu Ye in their midst, charging ahead fiercely.

"Stop them!" A cultivator from Illuminating Sun Mountain bellowed, but to little effect.

Though their numbers were eight times that of Lu Ye's group, they struggled to halt the enemy's fierce charge.

Giant Armor's ability to charge into formations was simply too powerful, and once he started, at the level of the Spirit Stream Realm, no one could stop him unless they had the ability to kill him.

On the other side, upon hearing the commotion, Sima Yang and Zhou Pei flew up into the air together, looking towards the residence at Illuminating Sun Mountain, watching as the team of ten physique cultivators, like a torrent, furiously carved a bloody path through the Illuminating Sun Mountain ranks, both watching dazzled and in awe.

"It worked!" Gu Canyang was slightly dazed. It had been a long time since there was any noise from Lu Ye's side, and he had thought that this operation was doomed to fail. Unexpectedly, Lu Ye suddenly broke through into the enemy's domain, and not just by himself; he had brought ten robust physique cultivators with him.

"Truly a tiger among men!" Zhou Pei watched Giant Armor enviously.

Soaring Cloud Palace had also tried to recruit Giant Armor, but Sima Yang, that damned fool, had rejected it. He couldn't tie people up and force them to join his sect; that would be unseemly. Besides, that would not guarantee their loyalty and might even backfire.

Fortunately, after Sima Yang's death, such a tiger among men fell into Lu Ye's hands, which was not considered a waste.

Breaking through the formation and storming into the Illuminating Sun Mountain residence was just the beginning; the real challenge was yet to come.

The breach in the array had already self-repaired, meaning that Lu Ye and his group had no way back. Although they could display momentary bravery with Giant Armor leading, they were vastly outnumbered, being only eleven against over a hundred from Illuminating Sun Mountain.

So, if they wanted to survive, they had to seize the Great Array Jade Cluster from the hands of Illuminating Sun Mountain as quickly as possible, break the formation, and let the eight hundred cultivators from both sects storm in.

This was precisely why the group of eleven kept charging forward relentlessly, with no intention of engaging with the eighty cultivators.

Despite the desperate attempts of the Illuminating Sun Mountain cultivators to block them, they couldn't stop such a forceful team. In just about ten moments, the eleven, like a sharp knife, had broken through the Illuminating Sun Mountain cultivators' lines. They kept moving, continuing their charge forward.

The disheveled cultivators from Illuminating Sun Mountain roared in fury, chasing after them, with numerous attacks hitting the physique cultivators and making thudding noises.

The defensive treasure armor and spiritual artifacts he had worn in advance provided strong protection, but even the finest treasure armor and spiritual artifacts couldn't withstand such relentless attacks. The bodies of the physique cultivators illuminated explosively, a sign that the treasure armor or defensive spiritual artifacts were being shattered.

The giant armor tossed aside the big shield he was holding, which had become tattered and torn.

It's important to remember that this big shield spiritual artifact was given to him by Lu Ye in Xianyuan City, and it was a Restriction Level 9 spirit artifact with excellent protective abilities. Yet, in just a short time, this Restriction Level 9 spirit artifact was nearly wrecked, indicating how vicious the enemy's onslaught was.

He silently took out another big shield spiritual artifact from his storage sack...

Previously, when he followed Sima Yang, who aimed to earn enough merit, Sima Yang never equipped him with spiritual artifacts because each artifact was extremely valuable. But ever since he followed Lu Ye, he could have as many spiritual artifacts as he wanted.

The giant armor's storage sack was always equipped with four or five defensive spiritual artifacts.

Fortunately, the most dangerous moment had passed, and the eleven of them had already breached the defense line formed by eighty cultivators from Illuminating Sun Mountain.

They raced forward, but the enemy relentlessly pursued them, making it difficult to shake them off. Several physique cultivators at the rear knew that if this continued, none of them would escape, so they steeled themselves and turned around to face the enemy.

One of them shouted, "You guys go ahead!"

With just a few of them against dozens, such bravery was admirable.

However, the difference in numbers was destined to be insurmountable, and within a few breaths, those physique cultivators at the rear fell into pools of blood, a sight that caused both Gu Canyang and Zhou Pei to have their eyes turn red.

It's important to note that these physique cultivators were the strongest within their sect, each one a rare talent. Losing any of them was a huge loss, and now several had fallen, which deeply pained them.

Although the enemy was eager to pursue Lu Ye and the others and didn't wipe them out completely, no one knew whether those few physique cultivators were still alive.

Using the time bought by those physique cultivators, Lu Ye and the others had already sprinted a hundred yards and now they could see more than thirty panic-stricken cultivators from Illuminating Sun Mountain in the distance.

One of them, surrounded by others, bore a look of disbelief, apparently not anticipating that their protective array would really be broken through.

Lu Ye's gaze fixed on this person, realizing that this guy must be the Governor of Illuminating Sun Mountain, and the Great Array Jade Cluster was in his hands.

Once the target was clear, taking the jade cluster from this man and destroying it would allow the eight hundred cultivators blocked outside to charge in.

"Stop them!" Seeing the few, led by the giant armor, charging straight towards him, the Illuminating Sun Mountain Governor, knowing that survival was hanging by a thread, issued a command, and streaks of Liu Guang shot out from their side.

The giant armor roared, lifting his shield high, resisting the incoming attacks. The glow on the shield visibly dimmed at a speed visible to the naked eye, vastly reducing his speed due to the great resistance.

The momentum of the charge was contained, and the pursuing enemy grew closer, soon trapping everyone in a pincer situation.

If the situation unfolded like this, then Lu Ye and the giant armor were not far from death.

Red spiritual force flowed, Lu Ye sprang up with wings unfurled behind him, instantly drawing everyone's attention.

The streams of weapon control shifted direction, targeting Lu Ye.

Lu Ye grabbed Amber, who had been crouching on his shoulder, flexed his wrist, and hurled the foot-long, cat-sized Amber forward.

Two streams of Liu Guang grazed Amber's petite body, drawing a burst of fresh blood.

Demonic power surged, earthy yellow demonic power billowed, and Amber's form suddenly expanded, transforming into a majestic White Tiger.

Propelled by the force of Lu Ye's throw, it pounced toward the thirty-some Illuminating Sun Mountain cultivators a dozen yards away in an instant.

Amber's tiger eyes reflected many figures, seemingly possessing the power to captivate and seize souls, making every cultivator who locked eyes with those tiger pupils involuntarily feel an indescribable force of slaughter, causing their hearts to tremble.

"Roar!"

Amber opened its mouth, emitting a deafening tiger roar, a visible wave of air sweeping forward.

Together with the sound of the roar, it was as if an invisible hammer had fiercely struck the heads of those Illuminating Sun Mountain cultivators, causing their minds to briefly falter and even feel a slight tingling in their heads.

Long ago, Lu Ye had discovered that Amber's roar seemed to possess some special power, but at that time his cultivation was too low to understand what it was, and sometimes it was even hard to be sure if that power existed.

But now, as his cultivation and horizons had improved, he had roughly figured out the purpose of Amber's roar.

It was a power that targeted the psyche.

Chapter 300 Breaking Illuminating Sun Mountain

It is not unusual that Amber's howl possesses such power, as it can transform minion spirits, which are formed based on the psyche. Therefore, it inherently has some methods, incomprehensible to ordinary people, targeted at the psyche.

This may be either its instinct or its innate talent.

In the Soul Cleansing Pool, not only did Lu Ye benefit, but Giant Armor and Yiyi reaped rewards as well, which enhanced the might of Amber's howl, making it somewhat stronger than before.

At this moment, as the howl resonated, the cultivators from Illuminating Sun Mountain, caught in a daze by the sonic assault, saw a significant drop in the power of their various attacks, with numerous controlled weapons falling uncontrollably from the sky.

Seizing the moment, Yiyi floated out from within Amber and, with her arms raised high, a massive spirit force disc suddenly emerged above her head, covered in complex and flowing patterns, exuding an air of mystery.

The next instant, from within the disc, streaks of golden arcs slashed down like a fierce storm, raining a barrage of blows below.

Outside the protective array, Gu Canyang and Zhou Pei watched this scene in a daze. Feeling the fluctuations of spirit force from Yiyi, and glancing at the immense disc, they simply could not comprehend how someone of Yiyi's caliber could execute such a large-scale magic and spell.

This kind of magic and spell was something only those magic cultivators who had transitioned to Heaven Rank techniques were qualified to unleash, for only they had such exquisite control over their spirit force and such profound reserves!

Such an improbable occurrence was unfolding right before their eyes, no doubt delivering a significant shock to them.

The cooperation between Amber and Yiyi was epitomized by a perfect complement to each other; first, a tiger's roar to assault the enemy's mind and psyche, and then, while the enemies were still disoriented, Yiyi swiftly deployed a Golden Arc Shower. As the slashes of Golden Arc cut through the air, several cultivators were slain on the spot, with the remainder in utter disarray.

Simultaneously with the Golden Arc Shower, Lu Ye had already unfolded his wings and fiercely charged toward the Governor of Illuminating Sun Mountain, trailing a fiery red streak of light through the midair.

The fast-moving flashes of the four weapon controls crisscrossed ahead, and amidst the incessant screams, the disoriented Illuminating Sun Mountain cultivators were splattered with blood where they stood.

The speed of the weapon controls was exceedingly fast, and with the addition of Move-Like-The-Wind Spirit Runes, it was nearly impossible to catch a glimpse of them. Even though Lu Ye no longer had the energy to enhance the Sharpness, the inner circle cultivators couldn't defend against such weapon controls.

Although imbuing weapon controls with spirit runes could increase their lethality, the effect only lasted a brief period due to the limited spirit force stored within the controls.

It was enough though; by the time Lu Ye lunged towards the Governor of Illuminating Sun Mountain, more than ten out of the thirty-some enemies had been felled.

Taking advantage of the momentum, Lu Ye drew the Boulder Mountain Saber from his waist and brought it down in a fierce cleave.

The Governor had been lucky; although his mind had been clouded by Amber's howl, Yiyi's attack had not reached him, and since he was surrounded by others in the center, he remained unscathed up to this point.

When faced with Lu Ye's descending strike, the Governor grabbed a Spiritual Artifact and held it in front of him, only to find his eyes bulging in shock as his Spiritual Artifact was knocked out of his grip, his palms split open, and he fell to the ground with a thud.

Lu Ye was far stronger than him, and with the momentum behind the ferocious strike, there was no way the Governor could withstand it.

Unfortunately, Lu Ye could not deliver a second blow because the enemy had begun to counterattack, and they would not give him a chance to use his saber again. Forcing another strike would only put him in a precarious situation.

So, after one slash, Lu Ye took advantage of the rebound to soar into the sky once more.

The thunderous roars signaled Giant Armor's arrival with the remaining physique cultivators. They had been suppressed by the forces of Illuminating Sun Mountain and found progression difficult, but following the combined onslaught from Amber and Yiyi, the pressure on them lessened, and just as Lu Ye rose, they rushed headlong into the enemy's formation.

Under the desperate gaze of the Illuminating Sun Mountain cultivators, Giant Armor led the other physique cultivators as they forcefully barged into the crowd.

A tumult ensued as Amber also roamed nearby, pouncing and biting at targeted enemies, while Yiyi did not continue to invoke large-scale spells, but each time she raised her hand, she unleashed a powerful spell.

In the midst of this chaos, Lu Ye had dived down once again.

The floored Governor of Illuminating Sun Mountain felt a chill spread throughout his body and hurriedly got up and looked up, only to see a flash of saber light passing before his eyes. His Spiritual Artifact had been knocked away in his earlier clash with Lu Ye, and in this pressing moment, he lunged with a desperate punch at Lu Ye.

The punch hit Lu Ye's shoulder, causing Lu Ye to swerve in his flight and crash into the Governor, rolling together in a heap.

However, Lu Ye quickly rose, clutching a jade cluster in his hand, while the Governor of Illuminating Sun Mountain lay motionless on the ground, blood oozing out beneath him.

The jade cluster, which resonated with the array bases used in setting up the big array, had to be carried at all times and could not be stored in a storage sack, otherwise the resonance would be severed and the array would cease to function.

This jade cluster had been hanging from the Governor's waist. Lu Ye had already set his sights on it during his first move against him, and now with the Governor slain, the jade cluster naturally fell into Lu Ye's hands.

Clutching the jade cluster in one hand and the saber in the other, Lu Ye brought down the Boulder Mountain Saber with a forceful chop. With a crisp snap, the jade cluster shattered, and the great array thrummed ominously.

Along with the fierce attacks from the cultivators of Surreptitious Palace and Soaring Cloud Palace outside, the protective array completely crumbled away. Hordes of cultivators surged into the Illuminating Sun Mountain stronghold like tigers descending the mountain, and those surviving Illuminating Sun Mountain cultivators suddenly looked panic-stricken as they fled toward the direction of Heaven's Augury Hall, evidently intending to retreat back to the Nine Provinces.

We must retreat; once the great array is broken, our only option is to wait for death if we do not.

This led to a peculiar situation where the cultivators from the two sects who had charged in hadn't killed many before they looked around and saw that the enemy had vanished.

However, another battle was erupting outside the range of the protective array.

It involved over three hundred cultivators, led by the Deputy Governor of Illuminating Sun Mountain, who had previously been ordered by their own Governor to attack the dwelling of Soaring Cloud Palace in an effort to relieve the siege on Fenghua Courtyard. But they had only just arrived when they heard that their own dwelling was under attack.

In their haste to return, they saw from a distance eight hundred cultivators from Surreptitious Palace and Soaring Cloud Palace gathering together, so the Illuminating Sun Mountain group did not dare to show their heads, choosing instead to hide nearby.

However, when they saw Lu Ye break through the Formation and lead ten physique cultivators into their dwelling, the Deputy Governor, knowing it was not the time to reveal their position, had no choice but to come forward.

If the dwelling was taken, the consequences would be unimaginable.

So, he led his three hundred-plus cultivators in an attack on Surreptitious Palace and Soaring Cloud Palace, hoping to divert the attention of the cultivators from both sects.

Unfortunately, the fight hadn't lasted long before the protective array was completely breached. Watching the light shield of the array turn into a shimmering glow and dissipate, the cultivators from Illuminating Sun Mountain were pushed to the brink of despair.

Their worst fears had still come to pass, and they were powerless to stop it.

With the array broken and their dwelling lost, there was no need to continue fighting. Moreover, they were already at a significant numerical disadvantage. Following the command of the Deputy Governor, the cultivators from Illuminating Sun Mountain retreated while fighting, attempting to withdraw from the battlefield.

How could the cultivators from Surreptitious Palace and Soaring Cloud Palace let them go?

This operation had succeeded in breaking through the dwellings of two big sects, but the actual combat hadn't lasted long—most of the time, the cultivators from both sects were attacking the enemy's protective arrays.

When the Fenghua Courtyard array was broken, its cultivators immediately retreated to the Nine Provinces under Moon Charm's orders, giving their opponents little opportunity to capitalize on the breach, and the casualties were not significant.

Now that the Illuminating Sun Mountain's great array was broken, there were only a few dozen people left inside the dwelling, all of whom had fled.

It could be said that the cultivators from both sects were still full of pent-up energy with nowhere to release it, so when more than three hundred cultivators from Illuminating Sun Mountain dared to initiate an attack, it was exactly what they had been hoping for.

For a time, the cultivators from the two sects relentlessly pursued them, leaving a trail of corpses. Of the three hundred plus people, fewer than half survived. Only after they scattered did they manage to escape their pursuers.

If the two sects hadn't been worried about their enemies' desperation, they could have wiped them out completely, but to do so would surely have resulted in many casualties on their side as well, which was not worth the cost.

The Deputy Governor of Illuminating Sun Mountain survived, but by now he must be filled with regret.

The sole reason he had led his people into battle was the fear of losing the great array, but in the end, they couldn't protect it, and they also suffered heavy casualties among their ranks. Had he known, he would never have shown himself.

Even if the great array was broken, it would have been better for his disciples to live, for they would always have the chance to rise again.

What followed next was simple—the cultivators from both sects began to loot the dwelling of Illuminating Sun Mountain. Lu Ye, Gu Canyang, and Zhou Pei divided the various enhancements from the Heaven's Augury Pillar among themselves, each making a huge profit.

The only downside was that of the ten physique cultivators Lu Ye had led into battle, four had died, five were seriously injured, and only Giant Armor had sustained relatively minor injuries.

This clearly demonstrated the disparity among physique cultivators—those who died or were seriously injured were among the strongest of the two sects, with cultivation levels not inferior to Giant Armor's.

But Giant Armor, who had led the charge, was almost unscathed, while the other nine were killed or gravely wounded.

It can be said that among the various factions of cultivators, the physique cultivators' faction places the highest importance on innate ability. While other factions can accumulate strength through postnatal effort, physique cultivators cannot. If they lack the necessary innate conditions, they are bound to die eventually because they are always at the forefront during battle.

Therefore, the big sects take extra care of their physique cultivators. The resources available to physique cultivators are relatively more abundant than for other factions, for only if physique cultivators

withstand the enemy's attacks does their side have a chance to counterattack. If the physique cultivators can't hold, there's nothing left to counterattack.

In the past, Hua Ci had once said to Lu Ye that the faction of physique cultivators enjoys the best resources but also bears the brunt of the harshest blows.

Two hours later, two large ships rose into the sky one after another. The cultivators on board were all in high spirits, laughing and chatting jubilantly, while below the ships, a vast blaze was raging.

After occupying the enemy sect's dwelling, burning everything that could be burned is almost a norm on the Spirit Stream battlefield. Since the two camps are inimical as fire and water, naturally, they do whatever they can to vex each other.

The two Spiritual Artifacts parted ways mid-journey and returned to their respective homes.