

Humanity 481

Chapter 481 30,000 Battle Merits

This peculiar Insect Race, once they had lost control of their parasitized hosts, posed no threat to the cultivators whatsoever.

Lu Ye lowered his head and closely examined the insect he had caught in his hand, which was about the same size as the ones he had found before, resembling a cicada but cast in golden yellow, as if made of gold.

"Insect King!" he murmured softly.

"What?" Zhou Hai frowned.

"This is the Insect King!"

A group of people looked perplexed, especially a few from Cloud River Level 9 — Insect King, they had never heard of it. Having muddled through the Cloud River battlefield for so long, they had experienced one secret realm after another and had encountered many Insect Race individuals. However, those were just groups of monster beasts that knew nothing but destruction and slaughter. They had never met across any sort of "Insect King."

"How do you know it's the Insect King?" Xia Qianqian asked, puzzled.

"I had some sense of it when I was being parasitized earlier..." Lu Ye carefully recalled the sensation from that moment and thoughtfully said, "Kill it, and the crisis in the Ten Thousand Beasts Domain can be resolved!"

Hearing him say this, the others were immediately intrigued. Zhou Hai asked, "How can you be sure?"

Lu Ye organized the information he had received in that instant when he was parasitized and explained, "All the other Insect Race are controlled by this Insect King. If it dies, the rest are just for show, even if they remain parasitic within the demon beasts, they will have no effect on them..."

While being parasitized, he sensed many presences above him, clearly the auras of the insects that were parasitic inside the demon beasts, and millions of life imprints in the direction of Two Worlds City, which were obviously the markings of the Insect Race.

When Amber was parasitized in Two Worlds City, she sensed the location of the Black Tortoise Sect, which was an interaction with the Insect King.

"Does that mean, if we kill this Insect King, we won't have to deal with those demon beasts anymore?" Shen Xiaomao asked.

Previously, she had been full of worry because even if they killed Niu Meng here, they would still have to face the overwhelming horde of demon beasts once they went out. With everyone's current condition, there wasn't much fighting strength left. But if things were as Lu Ye had said, then killing just one Insect King would eradicate the madness afflicting the beast outside.

"Whether that's the case or not, we'll find out when we look back," Lu Ye said, as he exerted force in his hand, crushing the golden Insect King amidst its shrill squeals. The golden fluids that burst out were instantly obliterated by his raging spirit force.

At the same time, on the surface of the Black Tortoise Sect, the demon beasts that were furiously howling and trying to breach underground suddenly quieted down, with the crimson in their eyes quickly fading away.

Not only was this the case at the Black Tortoise Sect, but the situation was the same in the desperately imperiled Two Worlds City, which was nearly breached. The cultivators, who were faced with despair a moment ago, were astonished to find that the demon beasts, seemingly bound by a blood feud just moments before, were now retreating like the tide.

On stretches of ruined walls, the surviving cultivators slowly gathered, watching the withdrawing massive horde of beasts and basking in the joy of surviving a catastrophe.

No one knew why the demon beasts had suddenly retreated, but cultivators from the Nine Provinces vaguely guessed that someone had addressed the root of the problem in the Ten Thousand Beasts Domain.

At this moment, beneath the Black Tortoise Sect, people had already retreated from the sealed insect hive.

After Niu Meng died, the insect hive withered, and the sealed entrance naturally opened a gap.

Toxic mists still lingered inside the insect hive, making no one willing to stay longer than necessary.

However, because they could not ascertain the situation with the demon beasts above ground, they did not dare to go up rashly. They found a place in the underground passage to rest and recuperate.

Poisoning had a significant impact on the cultivators. Even though they had consumed quite a few Detoxification Pills before, they all felt weak and listless, their limbs powerless, and their spirit force depleted.

In such a state, it was necessary to return to the Cloud River battlefield and seek treatment from a healing cultivator. Relying solely on their own cultivation to recover was hardly enough to cleanse their bodies of the insidious poisons.

In the dim passage, Lu Ye swallowed a healing pill and slowly recuperated, while Yiyi had been sent out to probe the situation on the surface. If the situation was different from his expectations, then they would have to fight their way out.

This was undoubtedly something none of them wanted to face.

Looking at the condition of the group, with each one of them seriously injured and poisoned, they couldn't even muster half of their usual strength.

In the quiet, Pang Dahai suddenly chuckled with a low, heh heh, "Gentlemen, take a look at your battle merits!"

He had clearly achieved something, and his mood was quite cheerful.

Hearing his words, everyone hurriedly took out their inscribed tablets to check.

Lu Ye checked and was shocked to find that his battle merits were nearly thirty thousand points!

Battle merits were distributed by Heaven's Augury, so there was no chance of embezzlement or discrepancies. Lu Ye had earned just over three thousand points from killing many demon beasts with an array of Formations. While defending Two Worlds City, his merits increased to over five thousand points, which included not just the merits for slaying enemies but also for maintaining the Thunder Roar Array.

And now, he had nearly 30,000 points! In other words, his trip to the Black Tortoise Sect had netted him nearly 25,000 battle merits, the bulk of which surely came from joining forces with others to slay Niu Meng, and a portion from killing that Insect King.

Perhaps there was also the reason of diverging the secret of the Insect Race here...

No matter what, for Lu Ye, a Cloud River Level 2 cultivator, nearly 30,000 battle merits was a huge gain.

Over at the military supplies section of Two Worlds City, a gold-hued spirit fortune stick was only 16,200 battle merits, and Lu Ye almost had enough to exchange for two gold-hued spirit fortune sticks!

He didn't know how many battle merits others had, but he figured they wouldn't be less than his; especially Zhou Hai and Pang Dahai, who had exerted great effort in the previous battles. Niu Meng had died at the hands of Zhou Hai's flying sword, and Pang Dahai had also made a significant contribution in entangling Niu Meng.

If calculated this way, a single Niu Meng was worth almost one hundred and fifty to two hundred thousand battle merits. After his death, based on everyone's contributions, Heaven's Augury distributed the battle merits in different proportions.

As bitter as everyone had been when fighting Niu Meng, they were now equally jubilant; in the darkness, smiles were spreading from one to another.

However, there were over a dozen people when they set out, but now only seven or eight lived. The battle with Niu Meng was extremely dangerous; half of them bat cultivators had died, and one physique cultivator, not to mention that the female spectral cultivator had not managed to escape disaster either.

Great gains also meant tragic losses; a cultivator's life is always filled with crises that are difficult to resolve.

"Aren't we missing someone?" Pang Dahai suddenly asked.

Lu Ye turned his head to look around and counted the numbers, finding they were indeed one person short. On closer inspection, he realized it was Lan Ziyi who was missing.

This surprised him, as he didn't seem to have revealed any traces himself, yet this woman was alert, having left the group and hidden herself at some point.

Entering the Ten Thousand Beasts Domain secret realm under Heaven's Augury's arrangement and operating with Lan Ziyi was not a problem since it was orchestrated by Heaven's Augury, and moreover, Lan Ziyi was still his Maid in this realm, which was ultimately to Lu Ye's advantage.

But whether it was Lu Ye or Lan Ziyi, both were aware of each other's background.

Belonging to two opposing factions, they had already crossed paths on the Spirit Stream battlefield and had felt each other's strength. If the opportunity arose, Lu Ye would not mind slaying Lan Ziyi, and he believed she harbored the same thought.

He had not revealed such an intent before due to a lack of a suitable opportunity; he was unsure of the affiliations of the others in the team besides Pang Dahai and such an action in front of everyone might not be successful.

The opportunity was favorable now; Lan Ziyi was heavily poisoned and greatly weakened, while Lu Ye was also seriously injured but in much better condition than Lan Ziyi.

If he found an opening, he was confident he could kill this woman in one strike, and even if someone wanted to intervene, Pang Dahai would be able to block them for a moment.

Unexpectedly, Lan Ziyi didn't give him the chance at all.

It was somewhat regrettable, but he admired the woman's decisiveness. She evidently knew that, in her current state, it was not wise to appear before Lu Ye.

The disappearance of Lan Ziyi didn't cause much of a stir; Pang Dahai just asked briefly and did not pursue it further.

All of them were veterans of the Cloud River battlefield; Lan Ziyi's decision to hide at this moment clearly indicated wariness. Unspoken understanding didn't require words to be exchanged.

A message came through the battlefield marking, and Lu Ye checked to find it was from Yiyi.

It was confirmed, all the demon beasts on the surface of the Black Tortoise Sect had dispersed. Yiyi had even deliberately sought out a solitary demon beast nearby to observe, finding that it had returned to normal.

"How do we normally leave this kind of secret realm?" Lu Ye asked.

Pang Dahai replied, "Usually, if all problems are resolved, there would be a Heaven's Augury Pillar at a certain location... In this secret realm, the Heaven's Augury Pillar should appear in Two Worlds City. As for the exact location, we still need to search for it!"

Lu Ye raised his eyebrows. "When we left Two Worlds City, we did not have the City Lord's permission. The City Lord even said that if we dared to abandon, we would be branded as traitors to the human race and would never set foot in Two Worlds City again for the rest of our lives."

Pang Dahai chuckled, "That's why it'll be somewhat troublesome for us if we want to return to Two Worlds City." He seemed to have experienced such situations before, so he was not at all flustered.

"But we can't just not go back, the military supplies depot is still in Two Worlds City," Lu Ye said with a headache.

"That's not a problem. Your battle merits can be exchanged for the resources you want at the military supplies depot in Two Worlds City, or you can take them back to the Cloud River battlefield."

"Hmm? What do you mean?"

"Let's say this, battle merits are only attainable within certain secret realms and are a level above battle merit. Even if you don't spend them in a secret realm, you can take them back and just find any Heaven's Augury Pillar, connect with the Heaven's Augury treasure vault, and spend your battle merits. A friendly reminder: there are things you can get with battle merits that you can't with battle merit. For instance, various spirit fortune sticks, but what you can get with battle merit can definitely be obtained with battle merits because whether it's exchanging battle merits or battle merit, the source of all supplies is actually the Heaven's Augury treasure vault. Heaven's Augury is at play in this!"

Lu Ye understood; this was very convenient and made him even more aware of the mysteries of Heaven's Augury.

Chapter 482

The dimly lit underground passage was filled with people tending to their wounds.

Xia Qianqian, a secondary healing cultivator, played no small part in such an environment, having a healing cultivator was simply blissful, who cared if they were first-rate or second-rate.

It took a full three days before the group had mostly recovered.

It was time to leave.

As usual, Lu Ye led the way, ascending along the pathway they had made by, back to the collapsed dry well they had entered earlier. After some busy work moving the fallen rocks, they cleared a path.

A moment later, Lu Ye was the first to fly up, the dazzling sunlight filling his vision, giving him a surreal feeling of being alive.

The others followed suit, all with pleased expressions.

There wasn't much vigilance because, while healing earlier, everyone had already gathered some information through their own channels, knowing that the issue in the Ten Thousand Beasts Domain had been resolved. The demon beasts of the entire domain were no longer rampant, so naturally, there was no need to be cautious about anything.

"Young Sect Master, Great Elder!" A familiar voice entered their ears, and Lu Ye turned to see a few old members of the Ten Thousand Beasts Sect approaching.

Three days earlier, when they had decided to delve deeper into the insect hive, the old woman had led these Ten Thousand Beasts Sect cultivators to lure away the surface demon beasts, and then they had disappeared without trace.

It seemed they had been waiting outside all this time.

Honestly speaking, Lu Ye still did not understand the old woman's precise rank within the Ten Thousand Beasts Sect, he only guessed from her Cloud River Level 9 cultivation that her status must not be low.

When they came near, they regrouped.

The Great Elder said, "Young Sect Master, now that the matter with the demon beasts has been resolved, please return to the sect to rebuild the Ten Thousand Beasts Sect.

The old woman and others also said, "Please return to the sect, Young Sect Master, rebuild the Ten Thousand Beasts Sect!"

Had they not mentioned it, Lu Ye would have almost forgotten he still held the identity of the Young Sect Master of the Ten Thousand Beasts Sect. But as a Nine Provinces cultivator, howuld he possibly undertake such a task at the Ten Thousand Beasts Sect.

Turning his head to look at Pang Dahai, the chubby man averted his gaze, his expression one of helplessness.

He had never encountered such a situation either; mainly because even though he had entered various secret realms and been endowed with various identities by Heaven's Augury, his positions were never high, and he had never been granted a status like a Young Sect Master of a sect, let alone now when Lu Ye, as the Young Sect Master, was entangled in revitalizing a sect...

With several pairs of eyes fixed on him, Lu Ye could only say, "You all go back to the sect first, I have some business to attend to with my friends, I'll be back once it's settled."

The Great Elder immediately volunteered, "This old man will accompany the Young Sect Master."

Lu Ye quickly raised his hand, "No need, Great Elder should go back too."

The Great Elder wanted to say more, but the old woman gave him a look, and the Great Elder then said, "If that's the case, Young Sect Master, please be careful." After finishing his words, he looked at Xia Qianqian and Shen Xiaomao, his expression stern, "You two, must protect the Young Sect Master well. If he loses even a hair, I will hold you accountable!"

The two women reluctantly agreed, "Yes!"

The Great Elder carefully instructed Lu Ye for a while, then joined the old woman and others, ascending to the skies, and soon disappeared from sight.

Watching them leave, Lu Ye was somewhat puzzled, "If I don't return to the Ten Thousand Beasts Sect, will they keep waiting?"

Pang Dahai chuckled, "Heaven's Augury has its arrangements!"

All of a sudden, Lu Ye felt a pain in his scalp, turning his head, he saw Xia Qianqian holding a hair in her hand, clearly pulled from his head.

"What are you doing?"

Xia Qianqian snorted, "Young Sect Master, you've lost a hair, hurry and grow it back, otherwise, who knows how the Great Elder will punish us later."

She was clearly upset with the Great Elder's reprimand earlier, and now she was taking out her frustration on Lu Ye's hair!

Lu Ye wouldn't bother with her childish behavior.

"Let's go." Zhou Hai called out, summoning his flying sword, leaping up, and transforming into a streak of sword light, heading towards Two Worlds City.

The rest quickly followed suit.

Along the way, all was calm, beneath their feet was a landscape full of ruin, for the Ten Thousand Beasts Domain that had suffered great calamity, this was undoubtedly a new beginning.

Lu Ye did not know if this world had indeed been destroyed, nor did he know if it was as Xia Qianqian had said earlier, that everything they had experienced was something this world had once gone through.

The only thing he could be certain of was that what he was seeing now was all very real.

The beast tide had receded, the demon beasts had returned to normal, Two Worlds City had been saved, the human race in the Ten Thousand Beasts Domain had not been annihilated, and somewhere within the Ten Thousand Beasts Sect, there were still people waiting for him to return and revitalize the sect.

"If someone does not wish to leave, wouldn't they just stay here forever?" halfway there, Lu Ye suddenly spoke up, after all, leaving this secret realm required actively using the Heaven's Augury Pillar for teleportation, if one did not seek out the Heaven's Augury Pillar, then undoubtedly they would stay behind.

"It's possible, but have you ever seen anyone who stays in the Spirit Stream battlefield forever?" Xia Qianqian retorted beside him.

The path of cultivation is one where everyone is continuously moving forward, striving to reach the top, the many sceneries and experiences along the way are merely embellishments on the road to growth, who would linger and forget to return in such a secret realm.

Take Lu Ye for example, he would go to the Ten Thousand Beasts Sect, lead the Great Elder and others in reviving the sect, and then what? There was a high chance of encountering bounty hunters and assassins from Two Worlds City...

The world had changed drastically, the sects of the beast-taming faction were mostly destroyed, Two Worlds City, after being the last stronghold of the human race, had withstood the attack of the demon beasts.

By now, Two Worlds City had become a central pillar in the Ten Thousand Beasts Domain, and it was unlikely that the Two Worlds City Lord would allow the Beast Taming Sect to grow further and potentially overshadow him.

Despite only one direct encounter, Lu Ye would feel that the old fellow named Liew Wuzhai was not someone who tolerated others well.

This time, during the disaster of the insect hive and demon beast tide, Liew Wuzhai undoubtedly became the biggest winner, crowned the master of this world from the moment the demon beasts retreated.

Thus, for the Ten Thousand Beasts Sect to rise again was undoubtedly very difficult.

Ten miles from Two Worlds City, the group descended and did not continue their journey, because they were still uncertain about how they would be treated upon reaching the city.

Regardless, they had all abandoned their posts while on duty defending the city, which from another's perspective, amounted to desertion in the face of battle.

Even though they had fought desperately in the insect hive and resolved the problem at its root, who would believe such a tale if told?

If they were to rush in recklessly, being attacked by the cultivators of Two Worlds City was almost certain, and the outcome would surely be dire.

The group all looked to Lu Ye, clearly expecting him to put out the situation in Two Worlds City...

Originally, there were two ghost cultivators in the team, but one got lost on the way and the other died in the insect hive, leaving only Lu Ye capable of using ghost cultivator's techniques for espionage.

"I will go and check," Lu Ye said without shirking his responsibility.

Shortly after, at the gates of Two Worlds City, Lu Ye concealed his form and calmly observed several striking portraits on a nearby notice board.

As expected, they had been declared wanted by Two Worlds City.

Notably, the portraits of Lu Ye, the Great Elder, and the old woman were hung in the most conspicuous places.

Lu Ye guessed that if there had been no members from the Ten Thousand Beasts Sect among those who had previously left, perhaps Two Worlds City might not have pursued an arrest with such earnest; but it was because those from the Ten Thousand Beasts Sect were involved that gave Liew Wuzhai the opportunity to exploit the situation.

That old fellow certainly did not want the people of the Ten Thousand Beasts Sect to return; he would rather they all perished outside.

With such a warrant out for them, entering directly by flying in was clearly unrealistic, as it would definitely provoke a mass attack from the cultivators of Two Worlds City.

They had no choice but to enter through the city gates.

Hopefully, they all had concealment talismans.

Now, three days after the demon tide had receded, Two Worlds City was still in ruins, and many formations had yet to be re-established and maintained, so sneaking into the city with the aid of a concealment talisman was still hopeful. If they waited until Two Worlds City had all its formations perfectly set up, sneaking in would be much more difficult.

Lu Ye messaged Xia Qianqian to inform her of the situation.

Xia Qianqian quickly replied, asking him to find the location of Heaven's Augury Pillar first.

Even if she hadn't mentioned it, Lu Ye was already planning to sneak into the city to locate the Heaven's Augury Pillar as, with it, they would return to the Cloud River battlefield at any time. Xia Qianqian didn't bring up the concealment talisman, which likely meant that such life-saving spirit talismans were something every cultivator carried a few of, since it's always good to be prepared when you never know when you might need them.

Having successfully snuck in through the city gates, Lu Ye carefully navigated through the city, occasionally avoiding the pedestrians mingling face-to-face.

With the city being so vast, where to search for the Heaven's Augury Pillar was indeed a problem.

While at a loss, he suddenly heard someone nearby speak, "Is Fellow Daoist Sun preparing to return?"

Another person said, "Yes, having survived this major disaster, I even earned some battle merits and exchanged them for spirit fortune sticks. My cultivation should be able to advance further."

"Then congratulations are in order for Fellow Daoist Sun."

"Aren't you going back, Fellow Daoist Yooi?"

Cultivator Yooi replied, "I plan to stay here a while longer."

Cultivator Sun asked, puzzled, "Now that the crisis in the Ten Thousand Beasts Domain is resolved and no more battle merits can be earned by killing demon beasts, what benefit is there to staying?"

Cultivator Yooi chuckled, "I didn't want to say, but I have also practiced in the Beast Taming faction."

Cultivator Sun then understood, "I see, Fellow Daoist is looking to find that Beast Taming secret technique."

"It's tough. Now that many of the Beast Taming faction's sects in the Ten Thousand Beasts Domain have been destroyed, finding them isn't easy."

"Effort makes the difference. I wish Fellow Daoist success in what you seek."

The two men exchanged a few more words before saying goodbye to each other.

Lu Ye stood still, contemplating. When Cultivator Yooi passed by him, he suddenly spoke out.

"Fellow Daoist, try visiting the ruins of the Ten Thousand Beasts Sect. You might succeed."

"Who is it!" Cultivator Yooi looked around startled toward the source of the voice but saw nothing.

After Lu Ye spoke, he quickly followed Cultivator Sun's steps.

The Great Elder and the old women would have to wait, as they wouldn't be around to see him help in rebuilding the sect, but the Beast Taming faction shouldn't fade from this world. As long as the Great Elder and the others survived, the teachings of the Beast Taming faction would continue to be passed down. If

cultivators from the Nine Provinces should learn the essence of Beast Taming from them and carry it forward, that would be good.

Following closely behind Cultivator Sun, they continued until they reached the military depot, entered the grand hall, and there before his eyes was the Heaven's Augury Pillar.

Chapter 483 Fellow Daoist, Your Luck Reaches for the Skies

Lu Ye had been to the Military Supply Department before, but at that time, there was no such thing as a Heaven's Augury Pillar here, which showed that this Heaven's Augury Pillar only appeared after the issues in the Ten Thousand Beasts Domain had been resolved.

From time to time, Nine Provinces cultivators passed through the Heaven's Augury Pillar to leave this place.

For ninety-nine percent of the Nine Provinces cultivators, staying in this secret realm no longer offered many benefits. It would be better to return to the Cloud River battlefield and try their luck.

The Cloud River Realm was a stage where cultivators should rapidly advance their cultivation; any delay would slow down their progress in becoming stronger.

Only people like that Cultivator Yooi, who were either dual practitioners or already from the beast-taming faction, would have something to gain by continuing to stay here.

Lu Ye sent a message to Xia Qianqian, informing her of the location of the Heaven's Augury Pillar. She quickly replied, indicating that they were on their way here.

Lu Ye then hid in a corner to wait.

Suddenly feeling a pair of eyes on him, Lu Ye turned his head and saw a goateed elder smiling at him from behind a desk. Their eyes met, and the goateed elder nodded slightly to him.

Was he diverted?

Lu Ye frowned.

His concealment method was different from the ghosts' concealment techniques; it mainly relied on Concealment Spirit Runes, while the ghosts could conceal themselves through the use of secret techniques unique to their kind.

Compared, Lu Ye's concealment ability was slightly inferior to that of the ghosts, since it wasn't his specialty, but the difference wasn't too great.

He shouldn't have been discovered so easily.

"Fellow Daoist Ye, you may as well reveal yourself. Only cultivators from the Nine Provinces would enter this place. There's a Heaven's Augury barrier here—the cultivators from the Ten Thousand Beasts Domain will not be able to discover you and can never enter this place," the goateed elder suddenly spoke up.

This was the first time Lu Ye had heard of such a thing, and he hadn't expected the goateed elder to be from the Nine Provinces!

He had seen this elder in the grand hall of the Military Supply Department before when he had met with Xia Qianqian and the others, and he had thought the man belonged to the Ten Thousand Beasts Domain.

Moreover, this elder had called out his surname right away, showing that he clearly recognized Lu Ye.

After some thought, Lu Ye dispersed the Concealment Spirit Runes to reveal his figure, hand on his knife handle, and strolled to the elder: "Do you know me?"

With a smile and a stroke of his beard, the elder replied, "Your portraits are plastered all over the streets and alleys of the city. It would be difficult for me not to recognize you."

"You managed to see through my movements!"

This was what Lu Ye was most concerned about. If his own concealment skills were this poor, he would have to be careful in the future. He had always considered his abilities in this area to be quite good.

The elder smiled, "Not only can I see through your movements, but I can also see other things."

"Other things?"

After looking at the space above Lu Ye's head for a moment, the elder's expression grew serious, "Over the years, I've seen countless people, but I've only ever met one person with a destiny soaring to the heavens like Fellow Daoist Ye's, enduring and prosperous."

Lu Ye's eyes narrowed slightly, "Do you practice the Fortune Watching Art, sir?"

The Fortune Watching Art was a very rare secret technique in the Nine Provinces, and Lu Ye never thought he would meet a practitioner of it here in the grand hall of the Military Supply Department in the Ten Thousand Beasts Domain's secret realm.

He didn't think the goateed elder was rambling nonsense, because ever since he had entered the Cloud River battlefield, his luck had been exceptionally good. It seemed this elder had indeed noticed something.

"However, abundant as your destiny may be, Fellow Daoist, it seems to be entwined with a trace of purple qi. You must be cautious. Furthermore... things have been going too smoothly for you lately. There may be setbacks, and you may lose something."

"Lose what?"

"That depends on what you can afford to lose."

Lu Ye looked at him expressionlessly.

The elder's words were mystical, mixing truth with vagueness, leaving Lu Ye uncertain whether to believe him or not.

"You just mentioned that you have seen someone else with a destiny like mine. Who was that person?"

With profound meaning, the elder said, "The person bore the surname 'Feng' and hailed from the Righteous Blood Sect in Bingzhou. Do you know of him?"

Lu Ye seriously suspected this old man had diverged his true identity; otherwise, there was no reason for him to suddenly bring up the man's elder brother. What concerned Lu Ye more was that the elder claimed to have seen his master sibling.

"Just casual conversation, Fellow Daoist Ye need not be too anxious," the elder said with a smile and stroked his beard, "After all, staying here is quite boring. Besides, Fellow Daoist, rest assured that as a member of the Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union, I do not involve myself in the struggles between the two major camps."

Lu Ye then realized somewhat belatedly, "You're with the Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union?"

"Precisely!"

That explained why a cultivator from the Nine Provinces would be presiding over this Military Supply Department. The elder was from the Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union, which made sense. In the Nine Provinces, the Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union was a very special entity, conducting all kinds of transactions with cultivators from both camps. Now in this secret realm, indeed only members of the Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union were suitable for presiding over this place. Otherwise, having a cultivator from either camp in charge here would be unfair to the other camp's cultivators.

Knowing that the elder was from the Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union, Lu Ye's hostility diminished slightly. After some thought, he asked, "What did you mean earlier by a 'Heaven's Augury barrier'?"

The elderly man with the goat beard explained, "Many secret realms have such military supply stations, where Nine Provinces cultivators can exchange materials for battle merits. Naturally, such places are not suitable to be diverged by the people inside the secret realm, so Heaven's Augury will shield this location

from them. Even if they pass by the door, they will not notice this place. In their perception, this area is blank. The reason I could see through Fellow Daoist's figure is not due to my own methods. In truth, inside this great hall, I have been granted certain powers by Heaven's Augury, so I could employ some methods I usually don't possess."

"Is the Fortune Watching Art also among them?"

"That is indeed my own skill."

Lu Ye nodded, and after being silent for a moment, he said, "Someone told me that everything in this secret realm has truly happened in this world. Is that so?"

"If it is, what difference does it make? If it is not, what difference does it make?"

"I just want to understand, with no other intentions."

The elderly man with the goat beard cast his gaze outside the hall, and after a while, he said, "Then, Fellow Daoist, do you know how many times this secret realm has been opened before?"

"What do you mean?"

"Before this instance, the Ten Thousand Beasts Domain secret realm had been opened seven times in the Cloud River battlefield. However, never has there been a time when a Nine Provinces cultivator resolved the issue at its source. All seven times ended with the demon beasts breaking through Two Worlds City, ending with the annihilation of the human race! Each time Two Worlds City was destroyed, I have witnessed it the same number of times here. This is the eighth time. Thanks must be given to Fellow Daoist Ye and your companions for saving the Ten Thousand Beasts Domain and Two Worlds City. Finally, I no longer have to watch those hellish scenes."

Seeing the shock on Lu Ye's face, the elder smiled and said, "That's right, just as you have thought, after each destruction of the Ten Thousand Beasts Domain, the next time it opens, it will return to the point in time when your fellow daoists entered, in an infinite cycle."

"Is Heaven's Augury at work?"

"Heaven's Augury is omnipotent!"

"But we have killed many demon beasts before and even taken their demonic pills. If everything is a lie, how do you explain this?" Those dozen or so demonic pills were still in his storage space. Even if Heaven's Augury is omnipotent, it surely cannot resurrect all the dead people and demon beasts.

"What Fellow Daoist sees might not necessarily be reality. Ofurse, your gains are real."

"Why would Heaven's Augury do this? Is it just to provide a place for Nine Provinces cultivators to hone their skills?"

"Heaven's Augury is profound and inscrutable; I dare not speculate."

Lu Ye fell silent.

"We have already resolved the issue at its source this time, will the Ten Thousand Beasts Domain secret realm still open as it did before next time?"

"It shouldn't. The problem with the Ten Thousand Beasts Domain has been resolved, and everything in this realm will likely develop along the trajectory of the current state. In the future, this place will surely attract a large number of cultivators from the beast-taming faction."

The essence of the beast-taming schools within the Ten Thousand Beasts Domain is something not found in the Nine Provinces. Once the news spreads, many cultivators from the beast-taming faction will surely find ways to enter this place, like Cultivator Yooi, to refine their Path of Beast Taming.

"Ofurse, there is also another possibility, that the secret realm disappears forever, never to emerge again." The elder added.

He suddenly looked outside the hall, "Fellow Daoist's friends have arrived."

Lu Ye turned his head to look, but saw nothing; however, soon enough, several hidden figures revealed themselves, clearly aware that this place was a haven, aside from Lu Ye.

Zhou Hai walked straight up to the elder and tossed his inscription tablet onto the desk, "Exchange for spirit fortune sticks."

The elder nodded with a smile and took action.

Soon, the others also exchanged their battle merits for spirit fortune sticks.

Lu Ye made his exchange as well. Even though Pang Dahai previously told him that battle meritsuld be saved for future use, for Lu Ye at the moment, advancing his cultivation as soon as possible was the main thing, so exchanging for spirit fortune sticks was essential.

With his cultivation at the Cloud River Level 2, he was still at the bottom when looking over the entire Cloud River battlefield.

He had nearly 30,000 points of battle merits, and in the end, he exchanged them for one gold-hued spirit fortune stick, two violet ones, one blue, one green, and two white.

Ultimately, he was left with only fifty-six points of battle merits.

Though these pointsuld still be exchanged for an elixir pill or a Spirit Stone or something like that, Lu Ye did not do so.

Battle merits were hard tome by anduld only be earned in certain secret realms; howuld their valuempare to elixir pills and Spirit Stones?

For cultivators, the greatest value of battle merits is to exchange for spirit fortune sticks.

To exchange battle merits for spirit fortune sticks, one still has to participate in an auction, and whether one can win depends on luck. But as long as one has enough battle merits, one can exchange for enough spirit fortune sticks anytime, anywhere.

Everyone had a rich harvest.

It was time to leave.

Zhou Hai was the first to approach Heaven's Augury Pillar, placed his hand on it, and his figure swiftly disappeared, followed by Pang Dahai and Xia Qianqian.

Afterward, the Level 7 physique cultivator left, and Lu Ye and Shen Xiaomao remained last. It wasn't that the two were being modest; rather, leaving a secret realm meant randomly appearing within about 30 miles of the entrance, so it was undoubtedly better for those with higher cultivation to leave first.

After placing his hand on Heaven's Augury Pillar, his vision shifted, and when he came back to his senses, he found himself in a barren wilderness.

Chapter 484 The Spring Spirit is Stolen

Lu Ye immediately surveyed his surroundings to ensure there were no dangers.

A message came from the battlefield marking. He lowered his head to check it and saw that Xia Qianqian had sent a message, asking to meet him at the nearby Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union.

Inside the secret realm of the Ten Thousand Beasts Domain, Lu Ye and others, including Xia Qianqian, had agreed that after they left the secret realm, they would sell the Beast Seal Method to Heaven's Augury treasure vault. For them, selling a secret technique capable of altering the framework of an entire faction was not about the merits earned; the real benefit was the attention from Heaven's Augury.

He took out the ten-part map to identify the direction and, with the map in hand, Lu Ye conjured his Flying Spirit Artifact and soared into the sky.

Two hours later, Lu Ye landed in front of the Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union.

At the entrance of the union, three figures stood erect. Seeing Lu Ye arrive, Shen Xiaomao waved at him, and Xia Qianqian was also there.

Lu Ye narrowed his eyes at the last figure, feeling quite surprised.

He had not expected Lan Ziyi to be there as well.

How she left the insect hive and returned to Two Worlds City was unclear to Lu Ye, but her being here obviously meant she had left the Ten Thousand Beasts Domain earlier than everyone else and had waited here on purpose.

As their eyes met, Lu Ye's face was expressionless while Lan Ziyi's demeanor was indifferent.

"I thought you wouldn't show up, kid," Xia Qianqian chuckled and patted Lu Ye on the shoulder, saying in a mature tone, "Young man, not bad. If there's anything you need on the Cloud River battlefield later, just give a shout!"

Lu Ye turned his head to look at her, "You should be close to advancing to True Lake, right?"

Once she advanced to True Lake, Xia Qianqian would undoubtedly leave the Cloud River battlefield. How could Lu Ye find her then?

Xia Qianqian laughed, "It's still early." Her tone shifted, "Everyone's here, so let's stick to our previous agreement and sell the secret technique to Heaven's Augury treasure vault. But before that, we need to draft a Heaven's Augury Pact to indicate that the four of us are selling this secret technique together. Of course, Ye Liu, you'll take the main share - about seventy percent. How about that? Each of us three will take ten percent."

Shen Xiaomao and Lan Ziyi naturally had no objections, and Lu Ye nodded as well.

He wouldn't go back on his word now. Although the secret technique was handed to him by the Great Elder, the four of them had worked together in the Ten Thousand Beasts Domain. The three women had always stayed by his side, acting as his maids, so if Lu Ye was to feast on meat, it was only fair that the three women also had a sip of soup.

"I will fetch the Heaven's Augury Pact." Xia Qianqian volunteered, her expression earnest. After murmuring for a while, a golden light descended from the sky. She reached out to grab it, pulling a Heaven's Augury Pact from the light, and handed it over for everyone to inspect.

Once verified to be correct, each person pressed their handprint onto it.

"Alright, let's sell it now."

Lu Ye stepped into the Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union and approached the Heaven's Augury Pillar.

Each Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union had its own Heaven's Augury Pillar, and cultivators could use it without having to pay any fee.

However, due to the constant stream of people at the union wanting to use the Heaven's Augury Pillar, a queue was necessary.

After waiting for a while, it was Lu Ye's turn. He raised his hand to touch the Heaven's Augury Pillar, his consciousness connecting with the Heaven's Augury treasure vault.

With a blur of vision, he found himself inside the Heaven's Augury treasure vault, surrounded by a dazzling array of items. He took out the jade slip given to him by the Great Elder and tried to sell it, checking the price.

As expected, the price was high. Selling directly to the Heaven's Augury treasure vault would bring in fifty thousand merits. Lu Ye, taking seventy percent, would earn a total of thirty-five thousand merits at once.

This was, after all, something that could change the entire structure of a faction, naturally warranting a high value.

Without hesitation, he sold the jade slip. The battlefield marking on the back of his hand warmed up slightly, and Lu Ye checked it.

Name: Lu Yiye.

Status: Disciple of the Righteous Blood Sect.

Cultivation: Cloud River Level 2.

Location: Cloud River battlefield.

Merits: ninety-two thousand two hundred and fifty.

Battle merits: fifty-six.

His original merits were over fifty-seven thousand, and now with an addition of thirty-five thousand, the numbers matched up.

Moreover, compared to the previous records in the battlefield marking, there was now an additional entry for battle merits, displaying the number left after he exchanged for the spirit fortune stick at the military supplies area.

Ninety thousand merits were undoubtedly substantial. Looking over the entire Cloud River battlefield, there were probably only a few cultivators with that many merits.

After all, no one would deliberately accumulate merits as they generally converted them into their own strength as quickly as possible.

The secret technique had been sold and the Heaven's Augury treasure vault had recorded it. From now on, cultivators from the beast-taming faction could spend a certain amount of merits to purchase it from the vault.

Lu Ye was curious. The item sold for fifty thousand merits, but he wondered how much it would cost to buy it.

Upon searching, he quickly found the Beast Seal Method secret technique and saw its price tag—over eight thousand merits, more expensive than the best Heaven Rank technique.

Compared to the fifty thousand he had sold it for, eight thousand did not seem like much. But one must not forget that while Lu Ye made a one-off sale, the Heaven's Augury treasure vault could sell it repeatedly. The number of cultivators from the Nine Provinces Beast-taming Faction was not small, and while it was a minor faction compared to the mainstream, it was considered large compared to other minor factions.

Undoubtedly, many would be interested in this secret technique. Selling one copy for eight thousand might seem less, but selling ten copies would amount to eighty thousand.

In terms of business, the Heaven's Augury treasure vault had a natural advantage. However, Lu Ye could not possibly seek buyers to sell the technique on his own, as transactions between cultivators could not utilize merits, and selling to cultivators wouldn't garner the attention of Heaven's Augury. Compared to the merits earned, this was the greatest benefit.

Lu Ye's fortune was indeed good enough as it was, but no one would mind their fortune being a little better.

His mind disconnecting from the Heaven's Augury treasure vault, Lu Ye stepped out of the Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union. Xia Qianqian and Shen Xiaomao were still waiting for him, but Lan Ziyi was nowhere to be seen.

The woman had obviously taken the chance to run away.

She had waited here only because she didn't want to miss this opportunity. Now that she had reaped the benefits, why would she stay any longer? If Lu Ye found an opportunity, he would undoubtedly kill her. Currently, she probably wasn't a match for Lu Ye.

Xia Qianqian said, "With the matter here settled, I will also take my leave. Call on me if you need anything in the future."

Shen Xiaomao bade her farewell and watched as Xia Qianqian soared into the sky.

"Ye Liu, shall we head back?" Shen Xiaomao asked.

"I need to buy some things. You go ahead first."

"I'll wait for you, since it's not urgent."

Lu Ye turned around and entered the Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union once more.

He needed to buy materials for crafting array banners. During his time in the secret realm of the Ten Thousand Beasts Domain, he had nearly exhausted all his array banners, and for an array cultivator like him, not having enough array banners and array bases significantly affected his performance.

In the past, when he was still in the Spirit Stream Realm, Lu Ye could only buy premade array banners from the Heaven's Augury treasure vault because his cultivation was too weak to craft array banners out of thin air. Lu Ye had been constantly on the move, and even if he had materials, he had no suitable place to craft them.

But now that he had reached the Cloud River Realm, things were different.

His cultivation had improved greatly, and he could almost craft array banners in midair without relying on external forces.

Lu Ye planned to craft a batch of array banners himself, which would save him a great deal of merit.

Half a shichen later, Lu Ye once again stepped out of the Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union, having spent nearly all his Spirit Stones and exchanged them for a large pile of materials for crafting array banners.

Shen Xiaomao was still waiting outside.

"Let's go," Lu Ye called to her and shot into the sky, with Shen Xiaomao following closely behind.

Two streaks of light, one after another, swept toward the direction of the spirit ground.

Suddenly, Shen Xiaomao remembered something and asked in surprise, "Ye Liu, where is Yiyi?"

Since entering the secret realm of the Ten Thousand Beasts Domain, she hadn't seen Yiyi at all. Although it was strange at the time, she hadn't thought much of it, but now that Yiyi was still nowhere to be seen, it was somewhat abnormal.

"She didn't enter the secret realm. I asked her to stay and watch the house," Lu Ye casually made up a story.

"Oh," Shen Xiaomao said, not doubting his words.

Half a day later, when Lu Ye and Shen Xiaomao returned to the airspace above the spirit ground and looked down at the chaotic scene below, they both stood frozen in place.

There used to be a hidden big array covering the area, and even if ordinary cultivators passed by nearby, they might not be able to discover the spirit ground without careful investigation. But now, the ruined spirit ground was exposed in plain sight, making it obvious that the big array Lu Ye had left behind had been destroyed.

The two hastily entered the spirit ground to investigate.

After a while, Lu Ye stood before a dried-up spring, his brow furrowed deeply.

Shen Xiaomao came over from the side, her face serious: "Ye Liu, I didn't find Yiyi!"

Lu Ye had said that Yiye was watching the house, but now Yiyi was missing, and the spirit ground had been invaded. It was clear that Yiyi's fate was more likely grim than not!

This worried Shen Xiaomao a great deal.

Although Yiyi had always been cool towards Shen Xiaomao, she wasn't a petty person. Since Yiyi was Lu Ye's sister, that naturally made her a partner to Shen Xiaomao.

Lu Ye still looked at the dried-up spring, his expression puzzled.

When he first settled here, the spring had been dry, which is why, despite the remaining buildings, it was an abandoned spirit ground. However, he was lucky enough that on the night he arrived, the Spiritual Spring revived, making the spirit ground once again rich with Spiritual Energy.

But after his time spent in the secret realm of the Ten Thousand Beasts Domain, this once-revived Spiritual Spring had dried up again.

If it were a natural drying up, it would have been different.

But the traces left in the big array clearly indicated that this was the result of someone's deliberate actions.

"Can a Spiritual Spring be destroyed?" Lu Ye turned to ask Shen Xiaomao. To him, this was clearly the work of someone with malicious intent, not only destroying his big array but also ruining his Spiritual Spring.

"It's not the Spiritual Spring that has been destroyed, but the spring spirit has been stolen," Shen Xiaomao corrected.

"What is a spring spirit?"

"Every spirit ground has a Spiritual Spring, and every Spiritual Spring has a spring spirit. The spring spirit is the source of the Spiritual Spring's gushing Spiritual Energy. Without the spring spirit, the Spiritual Spring is just a dead thing. Therefore, the spring spirit is the core of a spirit ground," Shen Xiaomao patiently explained.

Furthermore, if cultivators are willing to spend some merit, they can ask the Heaven's Augury to manifest the spring spirit and use a special container to collect it, enabling them to take the spring spirit with them.

As a result, the Spiritual Spring becomes a dead object.

Lu Ye listened with a face full of surprise. Although he had bought a lot of information from the Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union when he first entered the Cloud River battlefield, none of those reports had mentioned anything about a spring spirit.

It seemed there was still much he didn't understand.

Chapter 485 Cloud River Level 3, Threefold Joy Arrives

Lu Ye thought that the worst scenario he and Shen Xiaomao would face upon returning to their spiritual land after these days would be a case of the magpie occupying a dove's nest, with someone having usurped their land.

If that were the case, they would inevitably have to fight to win back the spiritual land.

A Class C spiritual land wouldn't catch the eye of truly powerful cultivators. Those who were interested in Class C lands generally didn't have high cultivation levels.

Together, he and Shen Xiaomao might not fear others.

But what he really didn't expect was that something even worse than he imagined had occurred. No one had usurped their spiritual land; instead, someone had pulled the rug from under their feet and plundered the spring spirit!

"What would they snatch the spring spirit for?"

"It could be sold or used personally," Shen Xiaomao continued to explain: "For example, if we were to snatch someone else's spring spirit and place it here, then the Spiritual Spring would revive – a dead spring turned alive. If placed in an active spring, the quality of the Spiritual Spring would improve. Currently, there are many Class A spiritual lands in the Cloud River battlefield that were not naturally Class A; most have gradually risen in rank by integrating many spring spirits."

"So, that's possible!"

"Many who own a spiritual land do just that."

"With this in mind, having a spiritual land but not enough people for cultivation would simply invite disaster."

"That's right, which is why people who find an unclaimed Spiritual Spring generally try to gather enough manpower in a short time, otherwise it's difficult to keep it safe." She hesitated for a moment, then added, "Yiyi really is missing."

Lu Ye waved his hand: "Yiyi is fine, she just sent me a message."

A perfectly good spiritual land, now rendered into this state, a terrible loss!

Not only was a spiritual land lost, but many array banners he had left here and a set of array bases for the protective array had been forcibly destroyed.

Although he still had several sets of array bases for a protective array, each was valued at over 10,000 points of merit.

Even someone as wealthy as Lu Ye couldn't help but feel pained.

The entrance to the Ten Thousand Beasts Domain secret realm was nearby, which previously had drawn many cultivators. Many couldn't reach the secret realm in time for its opening, but the news brought more cultivators, increasing the risk of exposing this spiritual land. It was most likely in this way that the land was discovered.

Now, tracing who was responsible was unrealistic, and even if they could find out, Lu Ye and Shen Xiaomao might not be a match for them.

The opening of the Ten Thousand Beasts Domain previously attracted several cultivators from the Cloud River Level 8-9. To see through the formations Lu Ye had set up, their strength must not have been weak. The intruder had forcefully broken the formation, indicating they were not well-versed in Array Path.

Lu Ye remembered what the old goat-bearded man from the Ten Thousand Beasts Domain had said before. The old fellow had mentioned his recent success might encounter obstacles and that he could lose something...

His words had truly become a prophecy.

That old man spoke in half-truths—though he had the ability to predict fortunes, Lu Ye had not really taken his words seriously. Now, it seemed he had underestimated him.

He also said that there was a strand of purple qi tangled in his fate, warning him to be careful.

Purple qi... Lu Ye couldn't think of what it could be.

With the spiritual land destroyed, it was useless to ponder further. Lu Ye started setting up some simple formations nearby for warning and protection before entering his own house.

No matter what, advancing his cultivation was the priority.

With a gold-hued spirit fortune stick, two purple fortune sticks, one blue, one green, and two white ones in his possession...

These many fortune sticks were enough for him to ascend to the Cloud River Level 3.

First, he constructed a large Spirit Energy Gathering Spirit Runes formation. Lu Ye then built several small spirit energy gathering funnels on himself before sitting down with his legs crossed. Amber hopped down beside him, staring intently at him, while Yiyi flashed out from within Amber, ready for cultivation.

Lu Ye first took out the gold-hued spirit fortune stick and squeezed it firmly.

Just as before, with the shattering of the fortune stick, golden powder coalesced and swirled in front of Lu Ye, forming a golden circle. From within the circle, a massive amount of pure spirit mist spontaneously emerged. As soon as the spirit mist appeared, it twined around Lu Ye, coalescing without dispersing. With his breathing and the consumption of the small spirit energy gathering funnels, it quickly surged into his body, transforming into his own spirit force.

The spirit mist was flawlessly pure, not needing any refinement. Just by absorbing it, one could turn it into their own strength, which was the reason a spirit fortune stick could quickly enhance a cultivator's power. This kind of cultivation was several times more efficient than cultivators simply inhaling nature's spiritual energy.

Amber and Yiyi sat to Lu Ye's left and right, sharing the pleasure of growing stronger together.

The difference was that while Amber and Yiyi were seriously breathing in and out, Lu Ye felt somewhat bored and took out a saber skills cultivation manual to study.

...

With the improvement of his cultivation and through numerous bloody battles, he had gained a deeper understanding of his saber skills, especially after the fierce battle with Niu Meng, the Sect Master of the Black Tortoise Sect. The spark of enlightenment between life and death had brought him great benefits. Regarding his saber skills, he might experience a breakthrough in the near future.

Time trickled by until, after a day and a night, the golden circle slowly disappeared. The effect of the gold-hued spirit fortune stick had been exhausted.

Lu Ye then immediately took out a purple fortune stick, crushed it in his hand, and soon, the original golden circle was replaced by a purple one, from which a rich and pure spirit mist emerged.

He had tested before that there was no difference in the energy generated after using spirit fortune sticks of different colors; it was only the duration that varied, which accounted for the difference in their value, with the gold fortune stick being the most valuable, and the white the least.

After all, a gold fortune stick was equivalent to eighty-one white fortune sticks.

Four hours later, the effect of the purple fortune stick had not yet worn off, when Lu Ye suddenly felt something stir within him, putting down his insights on saber skills to silently sense his inner self.

The river of spirit force within his body surged ceaselessly, seemingly reaching a bottleneck. As a large amount of pure spirit force continued to pour in, the river of spirit force gradually brought a sense of fullness to Lu Ye.

This sensation of fullness intensified slowly until, at a certain moment, the raging river waters surged fiercely, and the volume of the river of spirit force suddenly expanded. The feeling of fullness also disappeared, and the previously fierce flow of the river of spirit force calmed down at this moment.

Cloud River Level 3!

Lu Ye was slightly stunned. Even though he had anticipated this, advancing to Level 3 so quickly still brought him immense joy.

The Cloud River Realm was indeed a magical realm. He had been in the Cloud River battlefield for only half a month and advanced to Level 2. Now, less than twenty days had passed since his advancement to the Level 2 realm.

When he was in the Spirit Stream Realm, his advancement had not been this swift. Every level advancement had taken months of effort, and he could only open one spiritual orifice at a time.

Of course, such a quick pace of advancement was inseparable from his consumption of a significant number of spirit fortune sticks. The last time he advanced to Level 2 was because he spent a lot of merit at the Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union auction to bid for spirit fortune sticks. And before that, he had already used up one green and one purple fortune stick.

This time, it was because he had acquired nearly thirty thousand points of merit in the Ten Thousand Beasts Domain and exchanged them all for spirit fortune sticks.

For an ordinary Cloud River Realm cultivator just entering the Cloud River battlefield, such good fortune and financial resources were not common. Not to mention, there were so many cultivators entering the Ten Thousand Beasts battlefield that only a few who participated in the Black Tortoise Sect mission reaped huge rewards. The rest, even if they were defending Two Worlds City, would at most earn a few thousand points of battle merit. A few thousand points of merit could at most afford one purple fortune stick, which would no longer bring a significant improvement to cultivators above the Cloud River Level 5.

Comparing the consumption of previous cultivation sessions, it could be seen that advancing to the Cloud River Level 3 consumed much more than advancing to Level 2. From this, it could be inferred that with each increase in level within the Cloud River Realm, the resources required would be exponentially more.

With spirit fortune sticks still in hand, Lu Ye naturally continued his cultivation. Judging by the current situation, advancing to Level 4 was impossible, but exhausting all the fortune sticks would take him a long way within Level 3.

All of a sudden, Amber let out a roar, its body shimmered with golden light, and it uncontrollably revealed its true form. Lu Ye turned his head to look and could clearly sense that Amber's power was converging toward a certain point inside its body.

With a pet contract in place, and having established a Life Origin connection and formed a Beast Seal with Amber, Lu Ye could immediately tell what was happening with his beast companion.

It was about to advance!

A double stroke of fortune!

Yiyi also hurriedly said, "Lu Ye, Amber is about to form its demonic pill!"

Amber had always been at the demon beast realm. It could enter the Cloud River battlefield because it was bound by a pet contract with Lu Ye, which allowed it to go wherever its master could.

While Lu Ye cultivated, Amber had also been cultivating all this while, consuming a large number of elixir pills daily, and it had even consumed several demonic pills before. Now, it had finally reached its limit and was ready to advance to Demon General.

"What's wrong with you?" Lu Ye was astonished as he looked at Yiyi, whose spiritual body was flickering erratically, a sign which usually indicated that she had sustained serious injuries.

Yiyi seemed somewhat groggy, mustering her energy to speak, "I am Amber's minion spirit. Its advancement affects me too, and I will probably advance along with it. Lu Ye, I... I can't hold on much longer. You need to be careful on your own these days..."

No sooner had she spoken than she suddenly floated into Amber's body.

Immediately after, Amber's majestic body also collapsed onto the ground with a thump.

Lu Ye, alarmed, quickly checked and discovered that the fellow had actually just fallen asleep...

Amber's advancement had to be completed in its sleep, which was a curious event. However, having never experienced anything like this before, Lu Ye did not know if this was normal.

Amber's power was still converging toward a certain point within its body, a sensation that Lu Ye could feel.

The advancement of a demon beast to a Demon General involved forming its own demonic pill within its body. That focal point of convergence was undoubtedly the formation of its demonic pill.

Even as Amber slept, the pure spirit mist continued to flow into its body, with the infusion speed even increasing slightly due to the formation of its demonic pill.

For Lu Ye, Amber's advancement was undoubtedly good news, and if Yiyi was included, it would be not just double, but triple fortune knocking at his door.

Chapter 486 Heavy Snow

Previously, Amber had not been able to provide Lu Ye with much help, but if Amber were promoted to a Demon General, then with its own abilities alone, it would also have the capital to stand firm on the Cloud River battlefield.

Especially now that they had established Life Origin and Beast Seal connections, the stronger Amber became, the greater the benefits it could bring to Lu Ye.

There was also Yiyi... She was Amber's minion spirit, and they had always shared honor and disgrace, growing together. Once Amber was promoted to a Demon General, Yiyi would inevitably possess the strength of the Cloud River Realm.

It could be said that this round of cultivation had brought about a leap in overall strength for Lu Ye's side.

Four hours later, the effect of the purple fortune stick wore off, and Lu Ye took out a second one and crushed it...

Time passed quietly amidst the monotonous cultivation.

Until three days later, when a steady knocking sounded from outside,

Lu Ye put away the scroll in his hands, got up, and opened the door, where Shen Xiaomao was standing outside.

"Is there something you need?"

Shen Xiaomao's gaze passed over him, glanced inside, saw Amber who was in deep sleep, didn't pay much attention, and asked, "The spring spirit has been taken, this spirit ground is considered destroyed, what are your plans from here?"

Lu Ye shook his head, he really had no plans.

Unlike on the Spirit Stream battlefield, where each sect had its own base and one could return there for cultivation if there were nowhere else to go,

On the Cloud River battlefield, cultivators without a spirit ground were homeless and pitiful, forced to wander and seek opportunities everywhere.

"Then, would you like to come with me?" Shen Xiaomao asked expectantly.

"Where to?"

"A friend of mine just sent me a message saying she's found a newly formed spirit ground that needs people. I'm planning to meet up with her. If you want to come along, it would be great since you are an array cultivator, and I believe she would not refuse you."

Across the entire Cloud River battlefield, array cultivators were undoubtedly some of the most sought-after people, as having one to govern a spirit ground made a significant difference compared to not having one. Thus, even if Lu Ye's cultivation level was lower, with his expertise in the Array Path, any spirit ground below Class B would likely take him in, as long as he was willing.

Shen Xiaomao thought of Lu Ye immediately when she got the message and had asked her friend, who had agreed, before coming to invite him.

After a brief contemplation, Lu Ye shook his head, "I appreciate the gesture, but I'll not be joining you. I still need to find my fellow sect member."

The accursed Giant Armor, he didn't know if it was lost or what, but it had been a month or two, and he still hadn't made it here. Just yesterday, Lu Ye had contacted him and discovered his location was still at least a fortnight away at the normal speed of a Cloud River Realm cultivator.

Considering Giant Armor's previous performance, it would take months to arrive.

Moreover, now that Amber was at a critical point in its promotion, it was not a good time for Lu Ye to leave, nor was it convenient to take it along. Although he could use the spirit beast sack, if that affected Amber's promotion, it would be a loss not worth the gain.

"I see..." Shen Xiaomao's hopeful eyes turned disappointed, she probed, "Maybe you could reconsider?"

Lu Ye shook his head.

Shen Xiaomao smiled, "Then alright, I won't force you. I hope when we meet again, we won't be enemies."

Until today, neither knew each other's real names or which faction the other belonged to.

Such anonymity was not common on the Spirit Stream battlefield but quite usual on the Cloud River battlefield.

Moreover, two people who were just as close as fellow sect members could turn against each other the next moment, fighting bitterly to the death, as was not unusual. Recently in the Ten Thousand Beasts Domain secret realm, if Lan Ziyi hadn't run fast, Lu Ye would have taken the opportunity to kill her.

"Safe travels!"

"Take care." Shen Xiaomao gave Lu Ye a bright smile, then turned around, soared into the sky, and transformed into a flowing light, quickly disappearing into the horizon.

The two, who had met by chance, naturally could not continue side by side forever. Once the bond that held their relationship together was gone, it was inevitable they would part ways eventually.

With no profound sorrow at parting, as the depth of their relationship hadn't reached such a level, Shen Xiaomao left nonchalantly, and Lu Ye also remained undisturbed.

In a cultivator's life journey of cultivation, such events were not rare.

Lu Ye looked up to see little white flakes falling; he reached out, and the coldness landed in his palm, quickly melting.

It had started snowing.

He hadn't even noticed the drop in temperature before, which reminded him of the days when he was a mining slave in Evil Moon Valley. That winter had been the most difficult one he had endured, with many mining slaves freezing to death in the mines due to lack of food and warm clothing. He had survived by stripping the dead of their clothes for warmth.

Today, as a cultivator in the Cloud River Level 3, such natural changes in seasons were not so perceptible to him because such weather no longer affected him.

Turning, he went back inside to continue his cultivation and reading.

After using up all the spirit fortune sticks, he could only rely on consuming elixir pills for further cultivation. Compared to other cultivators, Lu Ye had a significant advantage in consuming elixir pills for cultivation, as he would not face any risks as long as the Talent Tree had fuel and as long as he could timely refine the efficacy of the elixir pills.

This was also why he didn't rely much on spirit grounds.

The snow fell heavily, and after a long period of cultivation, Lu Ye stepped out of the house to stretch and practice his saber skills, dancing with his saber amidst the falling snow, creating a unique scene.

He had a strong feeling recently that his saber skills had reached a bottleneck and there were looming signs of a breakthrough. However, the breakthrough in saber skills was not the same as the breakthrough in cultivation, which had very obvious, intuitive, and precise sensations — such as the activation of spiritual orifice in the Spirit Stream Realm or the expansion of spirit force like a long river in the Cloud River Realm. Those were palpable.

But the breakthrough in saber skills was a mysterious feeling, which could not be helped by consuming elixir pills or absorbing Spiritual Energy.

If he could use the Breath Fruit Core to enter the Mirage Realm, it might benefit his breakthrough. However, under the current circumstances, with Amber in a deep sleep for advancement, it was inconvenient for him to enter the Mirage Realm.

If enemies came while his mind was immersed in the Mirage Realm, he would be utterly defenseless.

This place was indeed secluded, but for Cloud River Realm cultivators who could fly, there was no place that was truly remote.

During these days, quite a few cultivators had flown over this area, but Lu Ye had already set up a Cover-up Array. As long as he didn't cause too much commotion, others wouldn't discover him unless they investigated carefully.

After Amber slept for seven days, heavy snow still swirled outside, and the snow had piled up three feet deep in the wilderness.

Lu Ye was practicing his saber skills outside when a strange noise came from inside the house. He quickly turned his head to look.

He saw Yiyi's figure directly flying out of the house.

Lu Ye's eyes lit up, and he sheathed his saber to greet her.

Yiyi directly threw herself into Lu Ye's arms, knocking him over onto the snowy ground.

With her small hands tightly embracing Lu Ye's waist and her head buried in his chest, her hair spread out, and Lu Ye even smelled a wonderful fragrance from it.

Raising his hand to touch the small head in his embrace, Lu Ye asked in confusion, "What's wrong?"

Although they had been through life and death together for two or three years and had grown from insignificance to where they were now, treating each other as family, Yiyi had never had such a strong emotional outburst before. Lu Ye could clearly feel her small body trembling slightly, a sign of lingering fear and fright.

"Lu Ye, I had a very long, heavy dream, I thought... I thought I would never wake up," Yiyi's voice carried a sobbing tone.

Amber's deep sleep during her advancement directly impacted Yiyi, a minion spirit. While only seven days had passed in Lu Ye's world, in Yiyi's world, it was far more than just seven days, perhaps even longer than seven years.

This feeling reminded her of the past. Long ago, she had this feeling until one day she suddenly woke up, and since then, she had been Amber's minion spirit.

So for her, the most frightening thing was that feeling of being trapped in a deep sleep, unable to wake up.

"Wuuuuuuuu... I'm so scared!" Yiyi burst into loud crying.

Lu Ye gently stroked her head, comforting her, "Don't be scared, the dream is over."

"Wuuuuuuuu..." Yiyi cried even louder.

In Lu Ye's view, a tiger head appeared; Amber had walked out of the house. Seeing its spirited appearance, it was clear that the advancement had ended, and that was why both it and Yiyi had woken up together.

Lu Ye gave Amber a meaningful glance, and Amber immediately turned its head away, indicating that consoling a girl was something it completely did not understand.

Lu Ye immediately glared at it fiercely.

Amber looked innocent.

Seeing no help could be expected from Amber, Lu Ye could only raise his hand to gently pat Yiyi's back and softly hummed a cheerful tune to dispel the sadness in her heart.

Amber perked up its large ears to listen.

Gradually, Yiyi's crying subsided, turning into soft sobs, until it finally stopped completely.

She raised her head, lying on Lu Ye's body, and looked at him with wide, astonished eyes.

Because she had never heard Lu Ye sing before, and she had also never heard this kind of melody...

"What song is this?" Yiyi asked with a sniffle.

"Don't be scared."

"Such a strange name for a song?" Yiyi looked doubtful, suspecting Lu Ye was deceiving her, and then demanded, "Sing it to me."

"I can only hum..."

"I don't care, sing it to me!" Yiyi said, her mouth starting to pout again.

"Sing!"

Clearing his throat, Lu Ye tried to recall the scattered lyrics buried deep in his mind. After a moment, the off-key singing voice flew in the heavy snow.

Amber listened for a while, then covered its face with one of its front paws...

Yiyi also held back laughter, her face turning red.

At first, Lu Ye was a bit reserved, but as he continued, he began to sing without any restraint, as there were only Yiyi and Amber as his audience, and there was nothing embarrassing about it.

After finishing, Lu Ye sneakily stuffed a snowball down the back of Yiyi's neck, laughing wickedly, "You dare laugh at me!"

Chapter 487 Copper Shard

In the dilapidated spirit ground, tiger roars, laughter, and shrieks continually sounded as clumps of snowballs flew back and forth.

After Lu Ye stuffed a snowball at the back of Yiyi's neck, the scene became uncontrollable.

For Lu Ye, having a snowball fight on a snowy day was something deeply embedded in his memory, and fortunately, his skills had not grown rusty. Especially now, as a Cloud River Realm cultivator with extraordinary physical qualities, a wave of his hand conjured a snowball with just a summoning of his spirit force.

Big and small clumps of snowballs whizzed around, causing a buzzing noise in all directions.

Amber and Yiyi, connected by telepathy, coordinated flawlessly— one defending against Lu Ye's attacks, the other counterattacking, heating up the battle spectacularly.

It wasn't until Amber found an opportunity to knock Lu Ye to the ground and then a huge snowball, as big as a water barrel, engulfed by the strong wind, buried both the man and the tiger.

Yiyi leaped up high, cheering excitedly, "We won!"

Snow surged, and a majestic tiger's head emerged, shaking off the snow on its body.

Yiyi walked forward, looking down at Lu Ye lying on the ground, and chuckled, "I won!"

Lu Ye, buried in the snow with only his face showing, quietly watched the large snowflakes falling from the sky, his eyes reflecting deep thoughts.

Suddenly, he sprung to his feet, squatting slightly, his hand gripping the saber handle. A clearly discernible heat steamed out of his mouth, quickly melting any snowflakes that neared him. A sharp aura gathered around him, and he seemed to transform into a long saber himself.

The man and the tiger hurriedly jumped aside, assuming a defensive posture.

However, Lu Ye did not move for a long time. He slowly closed his eyes, maintaining his grip on the saber until, at a certain moment, his eyes snapped open and the saber suddenly unsheathed. A bright, fiery-red saber light flashed, and a brilliant streak of saber light slashed out!

The saber light, like a crescent moon, flew from the blade, breaking through spatial constraints, and slashed more than thirty meters, embedding deeply into the rock wall, leaving a profound mark.

After releasing that slash, Lu Ye slowly inhaled, sheathed his saber back, and contemplated his saber skills. Compared to before, he gained a deeper insight.

Who says breakthroughs can only happen through intense and isolated cultivation? That snowball fight was very worthwhile.

But the breakthrough in his saber skills at this time was also related to the accumulation of experiences during this period. This accumulation had reached a limit. All he needed was an opportunity for a breakthrough, which Lu Ye had been seeking without success until now.

It wasn't until he wholeheartedly engaged in a snowball fight with Yiyi and Amber that the elusive opportunity presented itself.

Indeed, the saying that in cultivation, relaxation should be blended with practice, holds much truth.

"Lu Ye, the house is gone," Yiyi said with a grim expression.

Lu Ye looked up to see that the house where he and Shen Xiaomao had lived was now collapsed, brought down by one snowball after another. The other houses too were reduced to ruins. This spirit ground, already desolate without its Spiritual Spring, now looked even more wretched.

"Where do we live now?"

"We don't. Let's find Giant Armor!"

Since the spirit of the spring had been stolen, there was no point in staying. Lu Ye had planned to leave this place after Amber's promotion to Demon General.

Upon hearing this, Amber's spirits lifted. It had a great relationship with Giant Armor; they had been inseparable at the Spirit Stream battlefield. Unfortunately, since Giant Armor's promotion to Cloud River, Amber had not seen him.

With surging Demon Origin energy, Amber shrunk to the size of a small cat and jumped onto Lu Ye's shoulder.

Lu Ye summoned his spirit ark. Yiyi jumped in front of him, sat cross-legged, and amid the swirling snow, the spirit ark soared into the sky.

Compared to a low-grade spirit artifact, a mid-grade artifact like the spirit ark offered much more comfort, at least protected by a spirit force barrier. Thus, even the fiercest wind and snow could not affect Lu Ye and Yiyi.

Charging in one direction like lightning, Yiyi's cheerful singing floated along the way, singing the very song Lu Ye had taught her before.

While controlling the weapon for flying, Lu Ye held Amber in his hand to check its changes.

Compared to before, Amber, now a Demon General, seemed to have smoother and glossier fur, and its aura was much more robust.

The promotion of a demon beast to Demon General, similar to a cultivator's promotion from Spirit Stream Realm to Cloud River, marked a tremendous leap in strength.

However, without a battle outbreak, Lu Ye was currently unsure about the extent of Amber's strength.

"Awoo!" Amber growled.

Understanding the gesture, Lu Ye retrieved a demonic pill from his storage space. Amber took it in one bite, keeping it entirely in its mouth, and immediately, chewing noises came from within.

Amber could eat elixir pills and even Spirit Stones, but its favorite food was still the demonic pill of demon beasts. Ever since it tasted a demonic pill on the Cloud River battlefield, Amber had been obsessed with them.

Lu Ye didn't have many demonic pills, having obtained only about a dozen from the Ten Thousand Beasts Domain secret realm.

The thick clouds in the sky dispersed, and sunlight spread out below.

The snow stopped.

"Yiyi, you take control," Lu Ye pointed in a direction for her to control the spirit ark, while he retrieved some materials he had bought from the Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union from his storage space to craft an array banner.

Lu Ye had previously crafted array banners, but at that time his cultivation was insufficient, and he did so in the Artifact Refining Workshop of the Tianyan Sect headquarters. Now, having reached the Cloud River Level 3, he already possessed the capability to refine array banners in midair without relying on external forces.

While waiting for Amber to advance previously, he had crafted some, but for a cultivator who was skilled in Array Path like him, the more array banners the better, since they were often consumable items.

When night fell, Yiyi found a spot to rest, planning to continue their journey at dawn.

The campfire crackled as Lu Ye took a palm-sized copper shard from his storage space and stimulated his spirit force to examine it.

"Is this from the storage sack of that Blinding Speed Sect member we found last time?" Yiyi came over and asked.

"Yes."

Last time on their way back to the spirit ground from the Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union, they encountered a grievously injured cultivator from the Blinding Speed Sect, who entrusted Lu Ye with returning his companion sword to the sect while leaving the rest of his possessions to Lu Ye.

This copper shard was found in the cultivator's storage sack.

When Lu Ye first stimulated his spirit force into it, he detected that something was connected with the copper shard in a certain direction.

However, at that time Lu Ye was not in the mood to explore the secrets held by the copper shard. The reason he had taken it out now was that the direction that had reacted with the copper shard was precisely the direction he was currently traveling.

"What exactly is this?"

"Not sure."

Since the directions aligned, it seemed a good opportunity to investigate, although priority would still be given to meeting up with Giant Armor if the distance was too vast.

Tucking away the copper shard, Lu Ye then took out some materials and continued refining array banners until late into the night, when he finally rested a little.

Traveling by day and resting by night, they encountered no issues on their way.

Three days later, with the copper shard in hand, Lu Ye controlled the spirit ark to circle over a range of undulating mountains, guided by the shard in his hand that indicated that the place he was searching for should be within this range, though its exact location still needed to be pinpointed.

The ten-part map showed nothing noteworthy about this mountain range, and such ranges were countless throughout the Cloud River battlefield.

Lu Ye saw nothing special in this area, but since the copper shard had led him here, it apparently concealed something.

Only half an hour later, Lu Ye confirmed the precise location and descended to a rock face.

Upon reaching this spot, the copper shard suddenly burst into light and even became somewhat hot to the touch.

"Lu Ye, over here!" Yiyi waved from the side, evidently having discovered something.

Following her voice, Lu Ye walked to the rock face where he saw a recess that perfectly matched the shape of the copper shard in his hand.

Holding the copper shard, he lifted his hand to place it into the recess, with his other hand on the hilt of his saber, secretly stimulating his spirit force as a precaution against any unforeseen dangers.

He did not know what he might find here or if he would encounter any dangers, so naturally he had to remain vigilant.

No danger emerged when the copper shard was set into the recess. Instead, the solid rock face in front of them suddenly surged with spirit light, transforming into a light screen.

Lu Ye hesitated, then called Yiyi to return to Amber before he stepped forward.

His figure moved through the light screen unimpeded and at the same time, the copper shard flashed with golden light and a streak of gold descended toward Lu Ye.

After Lu Ye entered the light screen, the rock face returned to its original appearance, and even the copper shard that had been set into the rock face mysteriously disappeared, leaving only the recess.

Surroundings engulfed in darkness, Lu Ye lifted his Boulder Mountain Saber and created a Sun Blaze Spirit Rune, holding it like a small sun that illuminated every fine detail around him.

There was no scent of living beings, and the place gave Lu Ye a strong sense of familiarity.

He had often entered such places in Evil Moon Valley.

This was unmistakably a mine tunnel.

Looking back, he could not see the rock face they had entered through; behind him lay another deep mine tunnel stretching into the darkness.

After passing through that layer of light screen, Lu Ye seemed to have been transported directly inside.

This made him quite puzzled as to what this place was. He had assumed that following the copper shard's guidance would lead him to some treasure, yet he found himself directly inside this mine tunnel.

Under the illumination of the Sun Blaze Spirit Rune, the surroundings of the mine tunnel glittered.

Moving forward to examine them, Lu Ye raised an eyebrow in surprise, and Yiyi also appeared suddenly, exclaiming moments later, "Lu Ye, there are so many spirit stones, we're going to be rich!"

The twinkling objects were indeed numerous spirit stones, exposed and embedded around them.

This was a spirit stone vein!

For all cultivators, spirit stones were indispensable resources for cultivation. Consuming elixir pills would lead to accumulation of pill poison, and drawing nature's spiritual energy was limited by the environment, so cultivators often held spirit stones in their hands during recovery and cultivation, drawing the spirit force from the stones. Spirit Stream Realm cultivators usually used low-grade spirit stones, advancing to mid-grade ones in the Cloud River Realm because the spirit force provided by low-grade spirit stones was no longer adequate for the cultivators of Cloud River Realm.

Chapter 488 Spirit Stone Vein

Spirit Stones, as an essential resource for cultivation, naturally played an indispensable role for cultivators and also served as a currency for trade.

As long as one had enough Spirit Stones, cultivators could basically buy anything they wanted.

Of course, Spirit Stones couldn't be used inside the Heaven's Augury treasure vault, where only merit was acknowledged for transactions.

Following the guidance of the copper shard, Lu Ye surprisingly found a vein of Spirit Stones here.

Lu Ye suddenly remembered that when he first found nearly ten thousand Spirit Stones of varying quality on the body of a dead Blinding Speed Sect cultivator, he had thought that person was quite wealthy. Now it seemed that the Spirit Stones on the body of the deceased could very well have been mined from here.

For any cultivator in the Cloud River Realm, nearly ten thousand Spirit Stones constituted a considerable fortune—and that didn't even count the value of the other items in his storage sack.

Standing in the mine tunnel, Lu Ye was shrouded in a layer of golden light. The light was not his own spirit force, but rather emanated from the copper shards embedded in the rock walls as he entered this place. Lu Ye gave it a brief sense and found that the light had no protective power and did not cause him any trouble; however, it lingered on the surface of his body, not dissipating, and its purpose remained a mystery.

Surveying the exposed Spirit Stones in the vein, Lu Ye could tell without checking that they were all mid-grade Spirit Stones; there must have been at least several hundred of them.

As Lu Ye was observing, Amber, who had been perched on his shoulder, suddenly leaped down. Her Demon Origin surged as Amber revealed her true form, growling lowly into the darkness ahead.

Lu Ye also reached for the hilt of his saber; from the darkness ahead, there was a rustling sound, and it was clear that something was approaching rapidly.

Yiyi had already burrowed underground at the first opportunity.

The noises grew louder, and moments later, a beast the size of a calf emerged from the darkness. The creature had an antler-like thing on its head, and at first glance, it resembled a rhinoceros, but its body was covered with a thick carapace.

Amber immediately charged forward. The creature ducked its head, aiming its lone horn at Amber to charge her. At the moment of close contact, Amber deftly dodged to the side with a nimble turn, raising her paw and smacking it down onto the creature's body.

It was like hitting steel; a dull sound echoed. The creature staggered from the hit, and Amber took the opportunity to pounce, opening her giant mouth and biting fiercely. However, the creature's carapace seemed to be extremely protective, and after several bites, Amber couldn't break through it, getting thrown off when the creature twisted its body.

As the creature tangled with Amber, Lu Ye had already sprinted to the spot. Amber had just been tossed aside, and Lu Ye had drawn his Boulder Mountain Saber, fire-red spirit light climbing the blade, with a flash of saber light extending an inch from the blade. He swung down the saber, and the creature let out a piercing cry as most of its head was cleft open, spilling greenish fluid everywhere.

Staggering in place for a few steps, the creature crashed to the ground.

Insect Race! Lu Ye raised an eyebrow, finding it surreal how he could encounter these peculiar beings everywhere he went.

There were Insect Race members on the Spirit Stream battlefield, as well as on the Cloud River battlefield, and he often encountered them while training in the Mirage Realm. Now, a casual treasure hunt in a vein of Spirit Stones had led him to another encounter.

When Lu Ye first saw it, he thought it was a demon beast, but after he had killed it, he confirmed that it was a member of the Insect Race.

Moreover, it was comparable to one in the Cloud River Realm, though if one were to really assess its strength, it would only be on par with the Level 1-2 realms.

Killing such an Insect Race member was naturally not too troublesome for Lu Ye, even if he had not intervened, Amber herself could have handled it.

The strength of the Insect Race lay in their vast numbers and reproductive capabilities; usually, a single member of the Insect Race could hardly pose a threat to a cultivator.

Flicking off the bloodstains on the Boulder Mountain Saber, Lu Ye sheathed his weapon, and he and Amber stood there waiting for a while.

Yiyi suddenly emerged from the side, speaking in a low voice to Lu Ye, "The mine tunnels here are convoluted, all filled with Spirit Stones. The deeper you go, the higher the quality and the greater the number of Spirit Stones. However, in each tunnel resides an Insect Race member, and the deeper in you go, the stronger they get."

"So, to mine the Spirit Stones, we'll need to deal with these Insect Race members first," Lu Ye realized.

It looked like the copper shard was a sort of fortunate opportunity, allowing a cultivator to obtain a large number of Spirit Stones.

But to gain such an opportunity, one must first deal with the Insect Race members in the tunnels—this was probably a sort of test, too.

Without a doubt, the workings of Heaven's Augury were involved in both this opportunity and test.

Not too long ago, Lu Ye had spent almost all of the Spirit Stones he had on hand, so naturally, he wouldn't miss such a chance to acquire a large quantity of Spirit Stones.

Without further ado, he and Yiyi started mining the Spirit Stones from this section of the tunnel.

All were Spirit Stones exposed on the surface, so it wasn't difficult to mine them. In just half a Shichen, all the mineable Spirit Stones were extracted, roughly matching his previous estimate—about six or seven hundred Spirit Stones from this tunnel.

Moving forward and turning a corner, another tunnel appeared before Lu Ye. This time he did not activate the Sun Blaze Spirit Runes but instead held up a torch.

Torches were among the many items he always carried with him, almost an essential tool for all cultivators. Even though cultivators could see a bit in the dark thanks to their eyesight, having the light from a torch naturally made everything much clearer.

Like the situation just before in the mining tunnel, a large number of Spirit Stones reflected the torchlight, dazzling to the eye.

Lu Ye had just steadied himself when rustling noises came from ahead. Clearly, the Insect Race creatures guarding this place had been alerted and were now coming to attack him.

Lu Ye turned his head to look at Amber, who was perched on his shoulder...

Throughout all of Lu Ye's battles, Amber had hardly been involved, usually just crouching on his shoulder. When the opportunity was right, she would assist Lu Ye with the "Tiger Roar Intimidation".

The reason for this was mainly that Lu Ye's enemies were mostly not the kind that Amber could casually deal with. Over time, Amber had developed the habit of not causing trouble for Lu Ye.

Of course, perhaps it simply didn't want to partake in the battles, either.

But just now, it had taken the initiative to confront the enemy, probably because it had just advanced to Demon General and wanted to test its own strength. After biting the Insect Race a few times, it nearly broke one of its tiger teeth.

After suffering a setback, Amber lost interest in these creatures, so even after sensing Lu Ye's gaze, it remained indifferent, still squatting obediently on Lu Ye's shoulder, swaying its big tail behind him, as if saying, "What are you looking at me for?"

Lu Ye then knew he couldn't count on it.

He hadn't counted on it for anything anyway...

Fortunately, there was Yiyi, who summoned a large Fireball that lightened the darkness. With a loud bang, the Fireball attacked the incoming Insect Race, its intense heat distorting the view as it powerfully smashed into its target, causing the creature to stumble while its unique screeching sound filled the air...

Following the Fireball were crescent-shaped Wind Blades, slashing against the carapace of the Insect Race, making thumping sounds.

The creature's screeching intensified.

All sorts of magic and spells burst out from Yiyi's hands, creating dazzling patterns of destruction until the Insect Race lay motionless. Lu Ye hadn't even seen clearly what it looked like.

Following their advancement alongside Amber, Yiyi's strength had indeed seen a massive increase. The spells she had cast before didn't possess such formidable power.

Now, Yiyi could very well be considered a magic cultivator of the Cloud River Realm! Moreover, unlike ordinary magic cultivators, because she was a Spiritual Body, she could cast spells of any element sign without being restricted by her own element sign.

After dealing with this Insect Race, Lu Ye as usual started extracting Spirit Stones from the mining tunnel together with Yiyi.

They were still mid-grade Spirit Stones, but there were more of them this time, approximately eight hundred in total.

They continued moving forward.

Soon, Lu Ye noticed a problem; the golden light that enveloped him was gradually fading over time. He had only passed through two mining tunnels, and already the color of the golden light on his body had diminished. At this rate, he feared that within a few Shichen, the golden light would completely disappear.

Lu Ye had yet to understand the purpose of this golden light; it provided neither strength nor hindrance, and even with changes, it remained so.

Perhaps its significance would only become apparent once it had fully extinguished.

As Yiyi had previously investigated, each mining tunnel contained an Insect Race creature, seemingly appointed as guards by Heaven's Augury. Any cultivator coming here with the intent to mine Spirit Stones had to pass the test of these guards.

The first Insect Race creature Lu Ye had killed had the strength of Level 1-2 of the Cloud River Realm, the one Yiyi killed was stronger, and with the third, then the fourth, they were obviously stronger still.

After six hours, Lu Ye stepped into the eighth mining tunnel. He had nearly ten thousand Spirit Stones collected by then.

This time the Insect Race creature that emerged was a Mantis Insect Race, which he often encountered in the Mirage Realm, roughly at a Level 5 of the Cloud River Realm strength.

This kind of Insect Race was not easy to deal with; its twin mantis sabers moved as fast as lightning, giving Lu Ye the impression he was dueling a real saber user.

On his own, Lu Ye would indeed find it difficult to kill it, because the carapace provided strong protection to the Insect Race.

Fortunately, he never had to fight alone. Yiyi continuously cast spells at the creature's side, distracting it. While Amber did not make a move, the bond of Life Origin and Beast Seal allowed it to provide assistance to Lu Ye just by sitting on his shoulder.

An ice-type spell bombarded the creature, covering its body with ice quickly and affecting its speed and response. Seizing the opportunity, Lu Ye charged forward and swung his Boulder Mountain Saber, creating a few crescent-shaped saber lights that sent the mantis flying. Its two mantis saber arms were held high, exposing the weak spot on its belly.

Lu Ye stamped his feet on the ground, propelling himself upward as a brilliant light flashed over the Boulder Mountain Saber. He thrust it fiercely into the mantis's vulnerable abdomen. With the Enhancement of Explosion Spirit Runes, there was a loud boom. The mantis screeched as its belly was ripped open and spilled its entrails. It fell to the ground unable to move anymore.

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They were still mid-grade Spirit Stones, but there were more of them this time, approximately eight hundred in total.

They continued moving forward.

Soon, Lu Ye noticed a problem; the golden light that enveloped him was gradually fading over time. He had only passed through two mining tunnels, and already the color of the golden light on his body had

diminished. At this rate, he feared that within a few Shichen, the golden light would completely disappear.

Lu Ye had yet to understand the purpose of this golden light; it provided neither strength nor hindrance, and even with changes, it remained so.

Perhaps its significance would only become apparent once it had fully extinguished.

As Yiyi had previously investigated, each mining tunnel contained an Insect Race creature, seemingly appointed as guards by Heaven's Augury. Any cultivator coming here with the intent to mine Spirit Stones had to pass the test of these guards.

The first Insect Race creature Lu Ye had killed had the strength of Level 1-2 of the Cloud River Realm, the one Yiyi killed was stronger, and with the third, then the fourth, they were obviously stronger still.

After six hours, Lu Ye stepped into the eighth mining tunnel. He had nearly ten thousand Spirit Stones collected by then.

This time the Insect Race creature that emerged was a Mantis Insect Race, which he often encountered in the Mirage Realm, roughly at a Level 5 of the Cloud River Realm strength.

This kind of Insect Race was not easy to deal with; its twin mantis sabers moved as fast as lightning, giving Lu Ye the impression he was dueling a real saber user.

On his own, Lu Ye would indeed find it difficult to kill it, because the carapace provided strong protection to the Insect Race.

Fortunately, he never had to fight alone. Yiyi continuously cast spells at the creature's side, distracting it. While Amber did not make a move, the bond of Life Origin and Beast Seal allowed it to provide assistance to Lu Ye just by sitting on his shoulder.

An ice-type spell bombarded the creature, covering its body with ice quickly and affecting its speed and response. Seizing the opportunity, Lu Ye charged forward and swung his Boulder Mountain Saber,

creating a few crescent-shaped saber lights that sent the mantis flying. Its two mantis saber arms were held high, exposing the weak spot on its belly.

Lu Ye stamped his feet on the ground, propelling himself upward as a brilliant light flashed over the Boulder Mountain Saber. He thrust it fiercely into the mantis's vulnerable abdomen. With the Enhancement of Explosion Spirit Runes, there was a loud boom. The mantis screeched as its belly was ripped open and spilled its entrails. It fell to the ground unable to move anymore.

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Realizing this, the youth chased even more vigorously, shouting, "Kid, if you know what's good for you, just leave your valuables behind, and I'll spare your life!"

Lu Ye had clearly ascertained his intentions, so he didn't bother to pretend anymore.

As the words left his mouth, the fleeing Lu Ye indeed threw out a storage sack.

The youth was stunned, having not expected Lu Ye to be so compliant.

He had robbed many solitary cultivators on the Spirit Stream battlefield, but each one was unbending, and no matter how much he threatened, it did no good; most of them were chased down and killed, with only a few from the same faction spared, but even they lost a lot of their belongings, fortunate just to survive.

Since he never revealed his identity when doing such things, even if someone wanted to seek revenge later, there was nowhere to find him.

So, seeing Lu Ye actually throw out a storage sack, he was somewhat unaccustomed to it at first.

But he reacted quickly, veering toward it, and before the storage sack could touch the ground, he scooped it up and immediately resumed the chase.

He didn't know what was in the storage sack and couldn't open it right away, but coming across someone so timid and fearful, he certainly wouldn't let him go easily; what he truly coveted was Lu Ye's spirit ark.

"Lu Ye, he's catching up again," Yiyi on the spirit ark kept looking back to update Lu Ye on the situation behind them.

"Hide yourself."

Yiyi immediately flashed and hid inside Amber.

Throwing a storage sack was of little consequence to Lu Ye; nowadays, all his belongings were stored in a storage space constructed from Void Spirit Runes. The storage sack he carried was just for deception, containing at most some clean water and food. He hoped to use the storage sack to break free from the pursuit, but seeing that his pursuer was relentless, it was clear that he was intent on catching him.

He took out the ten-part map to check.

The youth behind shouted again, "Kid, leave the spirit ark, and I'll stop chasing you!" After speaking, he seemingly realized his demand was too excessive and added, "Heaven's Augury as witness!"

An individual robbing others on the road actually wanted Heaven's Augury as a witness; the normally stoic Lu Ye almost laughed at him.

Putting away the ten-part map, spirit force surged around him, and with a rustling sound, a pair of fiery red wings unfolded on his back. Bathed in sunlight, the wings looked like two flowing flames; they were absolutely beautiful.

Immediately after, Lu Ye put away his spirit ark and bestowed Move-Like-The-Wind upon himself. With a flap of his wings, he flew forth faster than before...

The youth chasing behind was taken aback, staring blankly as Lu Ye quickly sped away, not expecting such a low-cultivation individual to have such an ace up his sleeve.

But this only made the youth more eager; in his eyes, despite Lu Ye's low cultivation, not only did he possess a swift spirit ark, but he also had such methods, surely indicating a remarkable origin. People of extraordinary origins usually possess immense wealth, and robbing this one would be worth more than robbing seven or eight others!

The youth immediately gave chase with all his might.

Even though he went all out, he was still unable to close the gap, barely managing to keep up without being thrown off by Lu Ye.

That was enough; the youth didn't know what kind of method Lu Ye was using, but whatever it was, it surely entailed a great expenditure. For a cultivator of low cultivation, such methods couldn't last for long.

It must be said, the youth's judgment was correct.

The reason Lu Ye seldom used wings spirit runes for flying was that they consumed a lot, much more than weapon control-flying, especially with the additional drain from Move-Like-The-Wind. Even though Lu Ye was currently at Cloud River Level 3, he could not maintain it for several Shichen.

He didn't need to last that long.

Four hours later, the youth realized the nature of the problem as the silhouette of a city suddenly appeared ahead of him.

Moments later, he watched helplessly as Lu Ye flew down into the city and disappeared from his sight.

The Cloud River battlefield did contain cities, and quite a few of them, but unlike the Spirit Stream battlefield, the cities in the Cloud River battlefield did not have space for ordinary people to live. In fact, there were no mortals in the entire Cloud River battlefield; those who entered were mostly cultivators from the Nine Provinces at the Cloud River Realm.

The cities in the Cloud River battlefield were essentially built around the Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union; these cities had no names of their own and were generally named after Heaven's Augury City, distinguished by different numbers.

For example, the Heaven's Augury City where Lu Ye was currently located was West 16 Heaven's Augury City, which was also marked on the ten-part map.

The city was not small in scale, fit for the comings and goings of Cloud River Realm cultivators; it wouldn't look right if it were too small. Each building was a considerable distance from the next. From a bird's-eye view, the variously sized buildings within the entire city were sparsely scattered, like chess pieces on the land.

In the very center of the city was the colossal Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union.

Looking across the entire Cloud River battlefield, the cultivators fell into two types: those who had spirit ground and those who didn't. Cultivators with their own spirit ground generally stayed within their domain, committed to cultivation, and rarely left their grounds. Even if they did, they would arrange for companions to rotate shifts, ensuring someone was always there to guard their domain.

Otherwise, it was very easy to encounter the situation that Lu Ye and Shen Xiaomao had before: stepping out for a while only to return and find their spirit ground gone.

There is also a type of cultivator who lacks a spirit ground; these cultivators generally lead a nomadic life, either alone or in the company of a few close friends, wandering the Cloud River battlefield in search of opportunities.

There are many opportunities on the Cloud River battlefield, such as the heaven-sent spirit fortune sticks and numerous secret realms, all of which can bring the cultivators unexpected surprises.

So, under normal circumstances, there shouldn't be any cities or similar places on the Cloud River battlefield, as most cultivators don't stay in one place for long.

However, the existence of some special secret realms has led to the emergence of cities.

There are many types of secret realms on the Cloud River battlefield; almost every day, in various parts of the battlefield, secret realms open. Some secret realms open at fixed locations and times, while others have been opening in the same place year-round.

For example, the Ten Thousand Beasts Domain secret realm that Lu Ye experienced last time, if the goat-bearded elder from the supplies depot wasn't mistaken, then the Ten Thousand Beasts Domain secret realm would become a year-round open realm, allowing any cultivator to enter in search of benefits after paying a certain price.

However, the nature of the Ten Thousand Beasts Domain secret realm is destined to attract only those cultivators from the beast-taming faction. Over time, a large number of cultivators would surely gather at the entrance to the realm, eventually forming a city.

West 16 City was born this way, with a secret realm nearby that opens once a month for five days. It's a labyrinth-like realm, full of various traps and opportunities. Those who enter, if lucky, can find various spirit fortune sticks.

Such a secret realm is naturally a place that cultivators favor, so when the secret realm is not open, many cultivators gather in West 16 Heaven's Augury City to wait. When the realm opens, those interested in seizing the opportunity will enter.

There are even many cultivators who reside here year-round, entering the secret realm once a month to seek chances.

Lu Ye wasn't familiar with the nearby secret realms; he had merely seen this Heaven's Augury City on the ten-part map and came here seeking refuge.

The city didn't have many rules, nor was flying prohibited. After all, the visitors were mainly Cloud River Realm cultivators. Without a strong background, no one would set up any significant rules.

People frequently soared to the sky or descended from above, showcasing the unique fervor of cultivators here to the fullest.

The number of cultivators in the entire Heaven's Augury City wasn't too great, but it definitely wasn't small either, with at least a thousand people.

There were no streets in the city; various buildings with different styles stood erect, some as residences for cultivators, and others as shops selling items.

The hustle and bustle of the passing cultivators was evident, with no conflicts occurring. After all, causing trouble here could attract countless enemies, and as Cloud River Realm cultivators, they were no longer children and wouldn't do things that easily provoke public anger.

Although Lu Ye had visited city-like places in the Spirit Stream battlefield, the cities in the Cloud River battlefield were completely different.

He walked around and stopped in front of a spirit fruit shop.

The business inside the shop was good, with many cultivators coming and going. Lu Ye went inside to take a look and found a great variety of spirit fruits for sale, some of which were clearly sourced from different places. Each spirit fruit was fragrant, making one wonder about its effects.

After calling over an attendant from the store to inquire, he learned that the spirit fruits here came from all over the Nine Provinces, brought over by cultivators from their own sects. Regardless of the type, all the spirit fruits had some effect of replenishing spirit force.

The spirit fruits that were put up for sale here were naturally not too precious.

After inquiring about the prices, Lu Ye spent a hundred mid-grade Spirit Stones and bought four to five hundred of various types of spirit fruits, storing them all in his storage space.

Stepping out of the spirit fruit shop, he casually took out two spirit fruits, giving one to Amber and keeping one for himself. He bit into it, finding the taste crisp and sweet, unexpectedly delicious.

A moment later, Lu Ye tossed away the fruit core and looked up at the building in front of him.

Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union!

He had been in and out of many Heaven's Augury Mercantile Unions, but he had never seen one as grand in scale as this before.

Just the steps leading up to the mercantile union were likely to number thirty-four, and the exterior of the union was decorated in glimmering gold, as if afraid others wouldn't know of their wealth.

He took strides and began ascending the steps.

Suddenly feeling something, he turned his head to look and saw a man in a green shirt looking over at him from the side.

As their eyes met, Lu Ye's eyebrows rose slightly; it was the sword cultivator Zhou Hai. He nodded slightly in greeting.

The other party also nodded lightly in return.

Without much interaction, there wasn't much of a relationship between them to begin with; they had only cooperated briefly during an earlier encounter in the Ten Thousand Beasts Domain.

As for asking him to take action against the young man who harbored malicious intentions toward him before, Lu Ye hadn't even considered it. They owed each other nothing; why should he help?

Stepping into the mercantile union, he was immediately greeted by a welcoming maid.