

Humanity 491

Chapter 491 Masks

A moment later, in a compartment of the mercantile union, Lu Ye sat waiting.

A manager responsible for transactions came in, courteously performed a bow, and then asked, "May I know what esteemed guest wishes to purchase?"

"A Spiritual Artifact that can alter appearances."

Lu Ye stated his requirement.

He had considered this matter long ago during his time at the Spirit Stream battlefield because back then, all the major sects of Ten Thousand Demons Ridge had disseminated his image, making him easily recognizable wherever he went, subsequently making him a target.

The reason he had not purchased an appearance-altering Spiritual Artifact at that time was mainly due to Amber.

It was well known that Lu Ye the Sect Destroyer had a White Tiger demon beast by his side, so even if he managed to disguise himself, as long as he was still accompanied by Amber, this identifier, anyone who saw him would associate him with Lu Ye the Sect Destroyer, making the disguise somewhat futile.

However, things were different now. Inside the secret realm of the Ten Thousand Beasts Domain, he had acquired a spirit beast sack, which meant that he could completely conceal Amber inside the sack whenever necessary and use the appearance-altering Spiritual Artifact to change his identity. Who then could recognize him as Lu Yiye of the Righteous Blood Sect?

Having been at the Cloud River battlefield for many days, no one had yet recognized him, as the Cloud River battlefield and the Spirit Stream battlefield were two entirely different worlds, and excelling in one did not mean power in the other.

In such a vast battlefield, where talented individuals abound, no one would specifically search for a cultivator who had just ascended to Cloud River.

But Lu Ye had a feeling that as his strength increased, the forces from Ten Thousand Demons Ridge would definitely continue to target him, making it prudent to consider changing his appearance sooner rather than later.

"A Spiritual Artifact that can alter appearances..." the manager showed a troubled expression, "Esteemed guest's request is hard to fulfill."

"No stock?"

"Esteemed guest might not be aware, but these kinds of Spiritual Artifacts that can alter appearances and even change one's aura are generally not for sale at the mercantile union. If you truly wish to purchase one, you might want to visit the Heaven's Augury treasure vault. These special artifacts are usually only obtainable by spending merits, and their prices are quite high."

Lu Ye had never actually checked the prices of these Spiritual Artifacts; upon hearing this, he asked, "How expensive?"

"It starts at ten thousand merits!"

That was truly not cheap. Although Lu Ye had many merits, spending over ten thousand merits on such an artifact was a decision that needed careful consideration. After all, it was just an idea he had, not an absolute necessity.

"Moreover, these kinds of Spiritual Artifacts are generally fragile and could easily be damaged if affected during a fight," the manager added, observing Lu Ye's reactions, then spoke again, "If the esteemed guest only wishes to conceal your facial appearance, I recommend purchasing a set of masks. Each set includes various types, which can be worn according to preference and mood, and they are inexpensive. Even if damaged during a fight, the loss would not be great."

"Masks?"

"If esteemed guest wishes to see them, I can fetch them."

"Go fetch!"

"Please wait a moment," the manager said and turned to leave.

He soon returned carrying an item resembling a makeup box, placed it in front of Lu Ye, then pressed buttons on either side of the box. With a click, the box opened, and the contents immediately caught Lu Ye's eyes.

The upper half of the box was a mirror shining brightly enough to see one's reflection, and the lower half was layered with masks as delicate as masks, appearing to be what was referred to as masks.

Lu Ye scanned over them; there were eight masks in total, the one on top being a ghastly green-faced mask with fang-like features, the second being a sharp-nosed and droopy-eyed white fox-face mask, and the masks below also varied significantly in style.

"Esteemed guest might try them on. Wearing one only requires a minimal amount of spirit force to maintain its fit, feeling almost weightless. Compared to a Spiritual Artifact for altering appearance, wearing a mask consumes almost negligible energy," the manager enthusiastically recommended.

After briefly examining them, Lu Ye picked up the sharp-nosed, droopy-eyed white fox-face mask and fitted it to his face. It adhered to his skin without needing much adjustment.

A cool sensation came over him; soon, it vanished. If not for the slight amount of spirit force needed to maintain its fit, Lu Ye would not even feel anything on his face. He looked around; there was nothing obstructing his vision. Then, looking down at the mirror on the upper part of the box, the sharp-nosed, droopy-eyed view with thick purple eyeshadow appeared, giving off a spectral charm.

This was rather interesting; it was clear that a lot of care had been taken in crafting these masks. Every pattern on the mask had been meticulously carved.

More importantly, a set included eight different masks, offering a variety to choose from.

Lu Ye removed the fox-face mask from his face, picked another mask, and looked in the mirror. The image presented was that of a woman with alluring, cherry-red lips, her appearance seductively enchanting.

A muffled laugh could be heard coming from within Amber, who was crouching at the side.

Without a change in expression, Lu Ye took off the enchanting woman mask, placed it back in the box, and patted it, "How much?"

The manager's spirit immediately perked up, "Not expensive, only three hundred twenty mid-grade Spirit Stones."

The price was indeed not expensive; averaging it out, each mask cost only forty mid-grade Spirit Stones.

Recalling his initial days at the Spirit Stream battlefield, when he was financially embarrassed and even haggled with the merchant manager. Now, with substantial wealth, he was past the stage of nitpicking over every detail. He promptly took out three hundred twenty mid-grade Spirit Stones, settling the transaction.

After securing the box, Lu Ye said, "I'll take a top-grade room."

He was unsure if the youth who had been following him was still lingering around secretly; to be safe, it was better to stay here for the night before leaving.

However, unless that person was foolish, he likely wouldn't continue to stake out, as who didn't have a few powerful fellows within their sect or friends to call upon? Since he also didn't know Lu Ye's full capabilities, continued pursuit here would likely end with Lu Ye summoning others to deal with him thoroughly.

For some uncertain gains, it was not worth such a risky move.

Under the manager's arrangements, Lu Ye quickly moved into a guest room on the third floor.

Compared to the outdoors or spirit grounds, the accommodation environment within the Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union's guest room was undoubtedly much better. Lu Ye ordered some food to be brought over, and after he and Amber had a hearty meal together, he began his cultivation.

The spirit energy gathering array was set up, with top-grade spirit stones placed in several key positions to enhance the concentration of spirit force in the room. A dragon scale was also placed within the array. As the array operated, a faint blood Qi was released and absorbed by Lu Ye and Amber.

At Dragon Spring, Lu Ye had obtained a total of five dragon scales, each imbued with blood Qi that was significantly more intense than the initial one.

Lu Ye gave one of the scales to Amber to swallow and refine on its own. He still had four scales, one of which was reserved for Giant Armor. As a physique cultivator, the blood Qi in the dragon scales was undoubtedly very beneficial to him.

While cultivating and reading, Lu Ye suddenly received a message through his battlefield marking. He looked down in astonishment to find that it was Xia Qianqian who had messaged him.

He wondered what someone from Cloud River Level 9 Realm would want from him.

"What is it?"

"Are you in West 16 Heaven's Augury City?" Xia Qianqian asked.

Lu Ye instinctively wanted to ask her how she knew, but after their separation in the Ten Thousand Beasts Domain, he and Xia Qianqian had not been in touch. It was unreasonable for her to be able to track his whereabouts.

Lu Ye even suspected that she might have implanted some secret technique on him to track his movements.

However, it soon dawned on him how she could have known his location.

"Did Zhou Hai tell you?"

Just today, when he was entering the Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union, he happened to run into Zhou Hai. Only Zhou Hai knew his current whereabouts, and it was clear that Xia Qianqian had been in contact with him.

"Right, are you still there?"

"I am."

"Wait for me, I'm coming to find you!"

She didn't specify the matter and ended the transmission after speaking.

Lu Ye frowned, unclear about the reason she was seeking him out.

Xia Qianqian was undoubtedly nearby, and just two hours later, Lu Ye received another message from her. After a quick exchange, Lu Ye gave her his room number.

A moment later, there was a knock on the door. Lu Ye got up to open it, and standing outside was indeed Xia Qianqian.

The woman walked in without hesitation, looked around, took a sniff, and said with a meaningful tone, "I didn't interrupt anything, did I?"

"What?"

Lu Ye had no idea what she was talking about.

"Nothing," Xia Qianqian pursed her lips and smiled. She had heard that there were some very special services in the Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union that male cultivators particularly liked.

"You specifically came to find me. What's the matter?"

Xia Qianqian's expression turned serious as she began, "I came to ask for your help."

Lu Ye was surprised.

"What help could I offer at Cloud River Level 3 Realm?"

"It's precisely because you are at Cloud River Level 3 Realm. If your cultivation were too high, you really wouldn't be of much help."

"Let's hear it."

After Xia Qianqian explained the situation, Lu Ye understood what kind of help she needed from him.

Simply put, it was to help in a fight!

A few of her fellow sect members had accidentally discovered a newly formed spirit ground. However, several other people had discovered that spirit ground at the same time. The spirit ground was only a small one of low grade, able to accommodate no more than five people. With so many from both sides, coexistence was impossible. Moreover, their respective sects had grievances against each other, inevitably leading to a fierce battle. After a round of fighting, their strengths were fairly matched, and in the end, there was no victor.

This posed a difficult situation.

Eventually, both sides sat down to negotiate, agreeing to invite helpers and gather five people on each side to fight again and decide the ownership of the spirit ground. However, due to the approximate

equality in strength between them, one condition of the agreement was that the helper's strength must not exceed Level 5 of Cloud River Realm.

Xia Qianqian's fellow sect members had messaged her to find someone to assist.

Had Xia Qianqian been given enough time, she naturally could have found a better candidate, but there was a time limit on their agreement. Finding a suitable helper within the limited time was not easy.

Chapter 492 Fortune Stick Chest

Xia Qianqian had tried every method but could only find one candidate, still one short of her needs.

She had previously sent a message to Shen Xiaomao, only to learn that Shen Xiaomao was not nearby and had advanced to the Cloud River Level 6, which undoubtedly did not meet the requirements.

She contacted Zhou Hai to ask if he had any suitable candidates.

Zhou Hai, as a sword cultivator who usually kept to himself and seldom contacted his sect mates, naturally did not have any suitable candidates. However, during their conversation, he mentioned that he had just seen Lu Ye in West 16 Heaven's Augury City.

Xia Qianqian immediately decided to count Lu Ye in and thus sent him a message.

"You really think highly of me. The others invited must all be at Level 5. What help could I possibly be at Level 3?"

Lu Ye's instinct was to avoid such troublesome matters as he still had to look for Giant Armor. Poor Giant Armor, all alone, who knew which desolate wilds it had ended up in, if it was getting enough to eat, or if it was freezing...

"How could I not know your capabilities? Stop belittling yourself," she retorted.

In the Ten Thousand Beasts Domain secret realm, Xia Qianqian had always followed closely by Lu Ye's side, killing demon beasts, defending Two Worlds City, and even charging into the insect hive. She had witnessed all of Lu Ye's performances. Frankly speaking, she had never seen such a powerful cultivator at the Cloud River Level 2. Honestly, when she was at Cloud River Level 2, she probably couldn't have withstood even three of Lu Ye's saber strikes.

Lan Ziyi was also quite impressive, but no doubt a notch below Lu Ye.

Back then in the Ten Thousand Beasts Domain secret realm, Lu Ye was only at Cloud River Level 2, but now he had reached Level 3, so dealing with an average Cloud River Level 5 shouldn't be a problem.

Therefore, as long as she brought Lu Ye to participate, securing the spirit ground would be a sure thing.

"You might have some misunderstandings about me!"

"The great Lu Ye the Sect Destroyer of the Three Calamities of Spirit Stream, afraid of getting involved?"

Lu Ye's brow lifted, not surprised that she knew his real identity; this woman had a good relationship with Pang Dahai, so she must have learned it from him.

"What Three Calamities of Spirit Stream, Lu Ye the Sect Destroyer? Never heard of it."

Such a dark history, Lu Ye would never admit to, no matter what. The title might sound impressive, but it was most likely to attract hatred.

"Wouldn't it be fine if I owed you a favor?"

"You've already owed me a favor!"

By selling the Beast Seal Method to the Heaven's Augury treasure vault, Xia Qianqian and her team had already benefitted from Lu Ye's presence. For this, she had said that Lu Ye was now her cherished friend,

and if there was anything he needed help with on the Cloud River battlefield, he just had to say the word.

Yet, before Lu Ye could ask for her help with anything, she had come looking for him.

"There are benefits in it for you!" said Xia Qianqian through clenched teeth.

"I am not short of cultivation resources."

Without saying a word, Xia Qianqian took out a wooden chest radiating multicolored light. The chest, only the size of a palm, was being casually tossed in her hand: "Do you know what this is?"

Lu Ye really did not know what it was.

Xia Qianqian didn't wait for him to ask and explained proactively: "This is a fortune stick chest! The spirit fortune stick chest. When you open it, you'll get a spirit fortune stick. The worst can be white, and the highest gold."

Lu Ye's gaze lingered on the fortune stick chest, understanding that this woman had come prepared.

He wouldn't normally be interested in common benefits, and there was no need to agree to someone else's request just to save face, only to end up with troublesome issues. But spirit fortune sticks were something he found hard to refuse.

"I think this item suits you very well. What do you think?" Xia Qianqian looked at Lu Ye with a beaming smile.

"Opening this thing is a matter of luck?"

Xia Qianqian nodded: "Until it's opened, nobody knows what color the spirit stick inside is."

"Where did it come from?"

"There is a secret realm nearby that opens once a month. I found it there a few days ago."

Lu Ye nodded, reached out, and took the fortune stick chest from Xia Qianqian's hand. Gambling on luck, he, indeed, had great confidence.

"So, you've agreed?"

"If I can get a spirit fortune stick of blue or higher, I'll go with you!"

A blue spirit fortune stick was worth more than 1,800 merits and was worth a trip. Most importantly, spirit sticks were not items that could be bought with merits alone.

"How do I open it?" Lu Ye asked.

Xia Qianqian gave him some instructions.

Lu Ye touched a spot on one side of the chest, his eyes fixed intently as the chest slowly opened like a blooming flower, the colorful glow beginning to flow and converge, pouring into the chest.

When the chest was fully opened, a spirit fortune stick appeared before their eyes.

The multicolored light receded, and immediately after, a dazzling purple glow burst forth.

Xia Qianqian's eyes widened in astonishment. She knew Lu Ye was fortunate, but to directly obtain a purple spirit fortune stick from a fortune stick chest was still beyond her expectations.

Her fortune stick chests from the Spirit Stream battlefield, not one hundred but at least eighty, until now had yielded only two purple sticks. The majority were white, followed by green and then very few blue ones.

This was clearly Lu Ye's first time opening a fortune stick chest, but he had directly obtained a purple one—a practically unheard-of occurrence.

Xia Qianqian quickly took out another fortune stick chest and slapped it into Lu Ye's hand: "Help me open it!"

"Such good luck shouldn't go to waste, even though by selling the Beast Seal Method, her luck had already improved. But clearly, it was not comparable to Lu Ye, whose luck was astonishing."

She had only two fortune stick chests in total, and she had given one to Lu Ye. This was the last one.

With the second fortune stick chest in hand, Lu Ye did as before, reached out to touch a spot, and the chest slowly opened, the colorful lights converging.

White light burst forth!

Xia Qianqian was dumbfounded and full of indignation, "Why does he get to?"

Why did Lu Ye pull out a purple spirit fortune stick the first time and a white one the second time? The huge difference between the two was almost too much for her to accept.

If she had known this would happen, it would have been better if she had opened them herself. Given her current luck, she wouldn't have likely drawn a white one, but at least she would have gotten a green one.

"Are there any more?" Lu Ye asked, still feeling unsatisfied. The anticipation before the results of opening a fortune stick chest were revealed was truly addictive.

"No more!" Xia Qianqian pulled a face and snatched back the white spirit fortune stick, while still gazing longingly at the purple spirit fortune stick in Lu Ye's hand.

Lu Ye pocketed the purple spirit fortune stick and secretly decided that if he had the chance in the future, he should get more fortune stick chests to open.

"Let's go," Lu Ye called out.

He had taken someone's money to resolve their problems. A purple spirit fortune stick was enough for him to take action once. As for Giant Armor, it had already been waiting for so many days, so it could wait a couple more.

Moments later, in front of Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union, two figures soared into the sky.

Xia Qianqian's expression was still downcast. It's always the comparison that hurts the most, the great disparity between white and purple pained her to the core.

"Ye Liu, I have something to discuss with you..." Halfway through, Xia Qianqian suddenly spoke up.

"No need to discuss it!"

"I haven't even said what it is yet."

"It doesn't matter, we're not discussing it." With the purple spirit fortune stick in his possession, there was no way he would give it up.

"Alas!" Xia Qianqian sighed deeply, full of regret that she had thought of borrowing Lu Ye's luck. She felt she should have believed in her own.

After some distance, Lu Ye thought about it and took out a mask from his storage space to put on his face, and he also stowed away his Boulder Mountain Saber.

Xia Qianqian turned her head to look and saw a white-faced fox with narrow eyes and thickly applied eye shadow. She rolled her eyes, but remembering all the rumors she had heard from Pang Dahai, she could understand why Lu Ye was doing this.

Generally, cultivators who advance from the Spirit Stream battlefield to the Cloud River battlefield wouldn't attract much attention, not even the ones at the top of the Spirit Stream Ranking. After all, every few months, a new top ranker would emerge on the Spirit Stream battlefield, and over the years, there would be countless of them.

But some top rankers of Spirit Stream were different from others. Lu Ye the Sect Destroyer, with the Three Calamities of Spirit Stream to his name, was bound to be remembered by Ten Thousand Demons Ridge and others. If his true identity were exposed, it could lead to various targeted actions against him.

As for Lu Ye stowing away his Boulder Mountain Saber, Xia Qianqian naturally understood his cunning plan, and it was actually to her liking.

Suddenly, a streak of light shot into the sky from below, approaching them rapidly.

"It's one of our own," Xia Qianqian said.

Soon enough, the person arrived nearby. He was a burly man with a robust figure. Judging by his bulging muscles, it was clear he was a physique cultivator, and from the fluctuations of his spirit force, he was at Cloud River Level 5 realm.

Looks like this was another helper Xia Qianqian had found, who had been waiting outside for her.

As the physique cultivator approached, he cupped his fists and greeted Xia Qianqian, "Senior Sister Xia."

Xia Qianqian nodded slightly in response.

The physique cultivator glanced at Lu Ye, finding it strange that Lu Ye would be wearing a fox-face mask in broad daylight as though he had something to hide, but a cultivator at Cloud River Level 3 realm surely didn't deserve his extra attention.

The trio continued on their way, and Xia Qianqian sent out a message.

Four hours later, led by Xia Qianqian, the three of them descended on a spirit mountaintop. Just as they landed, three more figures approached them.

Two men and one woman, all fellow sect members of Xia Qianqian. Judging by their aura and attire, one was a combat cultivator, one was a ghost cultivator, and one was a magic cultivator.

"Senior Sister!" The three greeted her.

It was clear the three of them had been through a battle not long ago, as they all had injuries, but for cultivators, these were not severe and would not affect their strength.

Lu Ye couldn't tell what their cultivation realms were, but he assumed none of them was above Cloud River Level 5 realm.

The group joined forces, and not counting Xia Qianqian, there were now five of them in total.

They continued on their journey.

One hour later, they arrived at a valley.

Inside the valley, six figures were already waiting. The leader, a young man with a commanding presence, showed dissatisfaction when he saw Xia Qianqian, complaining, "Fellow Daoist Xia, you're a bit late."

"Stop the nonsense, it's not time yet!" Xia Qianqian retorted without politeness, indicating that there was some sort of recognition and perhaps some grudges between the two.

After looking around and ensuring there were no ambushes or traps, Xia Qianqian asked, "What's the plan? A rotation battle or a free-for-all?"

The young man almost sneered, "Fellow Daoist Xia seems quite confident?"

"Whether I am confident or not, we'll know after the battle. Enough of the chit-chat, let's mark off an area."

Chapter 493 Battle of Attrition

The young man nodded, "Since Fellow Daoist Xia is so eager, let's not waste time. We'll have one round of melee and one round of free-for-all. If we still don't have a winner after these two rounds, you and I will have another match. The victor in two out of three matches will win the spirit ground. How about that?"

Xia Qianqian squinted at him and snorted coldly, "I think you're just itching for a fight."

The young man smiled, "Then let's use this valley as the battlefield."

"Agreed!"

The area covered by this valley was neither too large nor too small, just right for cultivators around the Cloud River Level 5 realm to perform well. No one could take advantage of the terrain here.

The young man and Xia Qianqian each led their people to retreat to the spirit mountaintops on either side of the valley.

On Lu Ye's side, among the five people, there was one physique cultivator, one ghost cultivator, two combat cultivators, and one magic cultivator. This lineup was undoubtedly suitable for a melee, but the lineup on the other side was also comprehensive, including physique, magic, and combat cultivators. As for whether there was a ghost cultivator, Lu Ye could not tell.

Other than the physique cultivator and Lu Ye, the other three were from the same sect, naturally more familiar with each other. They hadn't interacted during the journey, only finding time now to become acquainted with each other.

Xia Qianqian's three sect-mates reported their names and cultivation, as expected, either at Level 4 or Level 5 realm, clearly having entered the Cloud River battlefield around the same time, so the disparity in their cultivation levels was not great.

The physique cultivator also reported his name and cultivation, then several pairs of eyes turned towards Lu Ye.

"Ye Liu, Level 3 realm."

Although they had inferred from the fluctuations of his spirit force while he controlled a weapon on the way that his cultivation was not high, hearing him say he was only at the Level 3 realm, the four of them were visibly taken aback.

The three sect-mates of Xia Qianqian even looked towards her together, as if asking how their senior sister ended up bringing someone from the Level 3 realm.

Xia Qianqian said, "Don't think someone is weak just because their cultivation is low. Ye Liu is very capable; in a one-on-one fight, none of you might be his match."

The four naturally didn't doubt Xia Qianqian's words. Hearing her say this, they became more curious about Lu Ye, who was wearing a fox-face mask, leaving them clueless about his appearance and his expression at the moment.

The combat cultivator said, "In that case, I'll trouble Fellow Daoist Ye to anchor our formation."

Lu Ye nodded. This arrangement was undoubtedly favorable for him, as if these four were strong enough, he might not even need to participate in this round of fights.

The combat cultivator continued, "I'll take the lead in the first round; the rest will be arranged based on the situation. What do you think, senior sister?"

Xia Qianqian nodded, "Do as you said."

Both she and the young man from the opposing side were there because their sect-mates had called them to lend support. At their level of cultivation, they were on the verge of advancing to True Lake and would prefer not to interfere in the affairs of their juniors if possible.

After all, they could protect their juniors temporarily, but not forever.

Seeing Xia Qianqian had no objections, the combat cultivator leapt out and landed in the center of the valley, followed swiftly by someone from the opposite side.

In the blink of an eye, the two were fighting in the valley.

The combat methods of Cloud River realm cultivators were much more numerous than those of the Spirit Stream realm; at the very least, Spirit Stream cultivators couldn't suddenly start flying during a fight, lacking the capability. Only Cloud River realm cultivators possessed the means to travel through air.

The combatant from the opposing side was also evidently a Level 5 realm cultivator, and the two combatants were evenly matched in strength. Their figures intertwined and dodged through the valley, their spirit force continuously clashing and swirling, turning the battlefield into something akin to a tornado-stricken area, with large trees toppling and debris everywhere.

After a fierce battle lasting one incense stick's time, our combat cultivator found an opportunity, striking his opponent and sending him flying through the air, clearly spewing a mouthful of blood mist.

The combat cultivator seized the opportunity to pursue with a few vigorous strikes, leaving his opponent in a dire state.

Once one side gained the upper hand, the dynamics of the battle drastically changed. When one mistake was made, many ensued, and that's exactly what happened.

Both being veterans well accustomed to battles, and having seized the advantage, they naturally wouldn't allow their opponent any chance to turn the tables.

Seeing the situation deteriorate, a resentful roar echoed through the valley, "I concede!"

Conceding was the only option, lest he be beaten to death.

Securing an opening victory, the two junior sect-mates beside Xia Qianqian cheered joyously, and even Xia Qianqian herself had a smile on her face, clearly pleased with her junior brother's performance.

After the opponent had shouted the words of concession, our combat cultivator ceased his pursuit and quickly, he stuffed an elixir pill into his mouth.

However, the opposite side wasted no time, immediately sending a second person from their mountaintop plunging down.

Despite the short duration, the consumption from the desperate battle was still immense, greatly impacting his own strength. The combat cultivator thought to either continue fighting if possible or at least exhaust the enemy's strength as much as possible and leave the rest to his teammates.

Upon seeing that the opponent had only sent a Cloud River Level 4 cultivator, one whom he had previously fought, he immediately felt elated and surged with energy, rushing forward quickly.

The Level 4 magic cultivator had not been fully prepared when he saw the enemy attacking him, so he naturally retreated hastily while using magic and spells as he fell back.

The clash was undoubtedly more explosive than the close combat earlier. His own combat cultivator made rapid progress amid the barrage of spells, trying to dodge every magic attack. When unavoidable, he used a Spiritual Artifact to block, making the fight extremely intense.

Not until they were only a hundred feet apart did three streaks of weapon-controlling sword light suddenly appear, shooting towards the magic cultivator in a triangular formation. At the same time, the combat cultivator's speed sharply increased as he continued to close the distance between them.

Faced with such a situation, the opposing magic cultivator clenched his teeth, summoned a spirit force barrier around his body, and furiously bolstered his spirit force. With a raise of his hand, a spell took

shape. It was different from the ones he had used before and was incredibly fast, striking the combat cultivator squarely in the chest just as it formed.

The combat cultivator clearly had not expected the opponent to have such a trump card. Momentarily caught off guard, he was hit in the chest and sent flying backward, face-up. This caused the two cultivators next to Lu Ye to exclaim in shock.

Meanwhile, down in the valley, the magic cultivator was bleeding profusely from a wound inflicted by the enemy's controlled weapon, falling to the ground.

The outcome was unexpectedly damaging for both sides.

Two figures flew into the valley from both sides; it was Xia Qianqian and the young man from the opposing side, each checking the condition of their junior brothers' injuries. After a short while, they simultaneously carried the two away.

Clearly, both were seriously injured and could no longer continue fighting.

His side had only sent one person into battle but had managed to defeat two opponents. Although the situation seemed favourable, the combat cultivator was seriously injured and couldn't fight again in the short term, which was obviously disadvantageous for the upcoming phases of the battle, considering there was still a melee to come.

On the opposite spirit mountaintop, the young man's face was gloomy, clearly dissatisfied with the performance of his two junior brothers. Both were Level 5 combat cultivators; the first to fight had been straightforwardly defeated, and although the second, a magic cultivator of Level 4, should have had no problem dealing with an already-exhausted opponent, he ended up in a mutual take-down.

After a slight pause, the young man spoke, "Jiang Liuzi, you're up!"

He hadn't planned to send out the two helpers he had recruited so soon, because if they went into battle, the outcome would be predictable.

Jiang Liuzi and Jiang Chengzi, these young brothers, had once been famous in the Spirit Stream battlefield, with both having the strength to be at the top of the Spirit Stream Ranking. However, for more than a decade, a certain monster had monopolized the top spot, and the second spot had consistently been held by Yanh Xing of the Mad Saber Sect.

This had relegated the brothers to the third and fourth spots on the ranking.

Not just the brothers, but many talented young people had found it painful for the past decade to have the strength yet not the luck to be at the top of the Spirit Stream Ranking.

All this could be attributed to Li Baxian. If not for him, how would Feng Yuechan and Yanh Xing have been able to stay so long in the Spirit Stream battlefield?

It was said that half a year ago, both Li Baxian and Feng Yuechan had advanced to the Cloud River Realm and now many ambitious cultivators from Ten Thousand Demons Ridge were searching for them, ready to avenge the suppression they once faced.

One could say that every cultivator still on the Cloud River battlefield knew about Li Baxian and Feng Yuechan, having grown up looking up to them.

Once figures who easily suppressed him, these Ten Thousand Demons Ridge cultivators would hardly miss an opportunity for revenge, now that their own cultivation bases were even lower than their past oppressors.

One could say that the situation Li Baxian and Feng Yuechan found themselves in was akin to what Lu Ye faced before he dominated the Spirit Stream battlefield; they were targets everywhere they went, their whereabouts unable to remain hidden.

The young man felt fortunate to have secured the help of the Jiang brothers this time, which is why he was determined to win the fight for the spirit ground, as in his view, it was a foregone conclusion.

As his words ended, a young man who looked to be about seventeen or eighteen responded gloomily, "OK!"

He proceeded to lightly soar into the valley.

On Xia Qianqian's side, after her ghost cultivator and magic cultivator fellow had checked the injuries of the combat cultivator and confirmed there was no risk to his life, they finally relaxed.

Turning her head and noticing Jiang Liuzi entering the valley, the ghost cultivator frowned, "This is their invited helper. I'll go and test his mettle."

"Be careful," Xia Qianqian cautioned in a focused tone.

Since their side had lost two matches so quickly, and were now sending in their recruited helper, it was obvious they were trying to turn the tide. It was foreseeable that this helper's strength would not be weak.

However, ghost cultivators do not judge an enemy by their cultivation level; as long as they find the right opportunity, defeating higher-level enemies is routine for them.

The ghost cultivator concealed his presence, and no one knew where he had gone.

In the valley, Jiang Liuzi stood still, his face a calm sculpture-like visage, not moving an inch.

The mountain wind was bleak, with a killing intent pervading the air.

Suddenly, a flash of sword light erupted, and accompanying a muffled hum and a cry of alarm, the ghost cultivator revealed his presence, his chest bearing a deep sword wound from which blood spurted violently.

The ghost cultivator looked utterly horrified.

Chapter 494 I'll go

...

In the Nine Provinces, the cultivation sects are varied, but when it comes to the faction best suited to handle ghost cultivators, array cultivators are unquestionably the top choice.

Because array cultivators can set up formations in advance, and those with profound skills can conjure a formation with just a thought, preventing ghost cultivators from even dreaming of sneaking up on them.

Other cultivators don't enjoy this convenience. When facing ghost cultivators, they often adopt a strategy of stillness to counteract movement.

However, this requires great courage and confidence, for when a ghost cultivator reveals itself, that moment often coincides with the launch of their lethal attacks. If one cannot block in time, decapitation is a likely outcome.

Jiang Liuzi employed this method to handle his opponent.

He did not detect the ghost cultivator's presence in advance, but he knew it was bound to stealthily approach him from some direction, waiting for the right moment to strike. And as the ghost cultivator made its move, so did Jiang Liuzi retaliate.

His sword was incredibly fast. As he deflected the ghastly assault, he counterattacked, leaving the ghost cultivator wounded.

The exchange happened in a flash; the ghost cultivator nearly lost its life. Had it not instinctively stepped back, that single strike could have been fatal.

This was a true sword cultivator!

As it retreated, glimmers of sword light filled its field of vision. The flying sword was upon it, and feeling a chill engulf its body, it slapped a Golden Body Talisman on itself, while shouting, "I concede!"

A series of thudding sounds issued forth as the golden light around the ghost cultivator shattered. A streak of sword light pierced its right chest, hot blood spilling out.

The ghost cultivator barely escaped death and immediately soared into the sky, retreating to where Xia Qianqian was waiting, finally able to breathe a sigh of relief.

If it hadn't slapped a mid-grade Golden Body Talisman on itself in time, it probably would have been dead by now. Even so, it had sustained severe injuries.

This was the terrifying lethality of a sword cultivator.

Looking back at the valley, Jiang Liuzi still stood there quietly, as if he hadn't moved at all. Several strands of sword light hovered beside him; with one hand holding a sword and the other placed behind his back, he stood proudly between heaven and earth.

From the opposite spirit mountaintop, cheers erupted. Jiang Liuzi had easily evened the score, undoubtedly allowing his fellow cultivators to feel jubilant.

On the other hand, Lu Ye's side all wore grave expressions, especially the female magic cultivator, whose complexion had turned white. The thought of potentially facing such a formidable sword cultivator caused her heart to pound with dread.

In the early stage of cultivation, magic cultivators are the bane of combat cultivators due to their ability to cast spells from a distance. As long as they prevent combat cultivators from getting close, the latter are easy targets. But as everyone's cultivation improves, this advantage slowly diminishes.

By the time they reach the Cloud River Realm, what magic cultivators fear the most is sword cultivators, because the latter's speed is too great for magic to intercept. Once sword cultivators narrow the distance, the fragile magic cultivators have little choice but to wait for death.

Especially since the female magic cultivator is only at Level 4, she stands no chance against Jiang Liuzi. If she were to enter the fray, it would be tantamount to throwing her life away.

"I'll go," said the physique cultivator, tilting his head with a series of cracking sounds, and then striding forward.

The female magic cultivator visibly relaxed.

Under the watchful eyes of the crowd, the physique cultivator stepped into the valley, raised and steadied a spirit artifact big shield, gently bent his body, and hid his robust form completely behind the shield. Earthen-colored spirit force and crimson blood Qi surged forth, merging into an orange glow that encased him.

He assumed a defensive stance.

With no alternative, he knew that he couldn't outpace a true sword cultivator, so charging at his opponent would not help. Such an action would only make him a puppet in the enemy's hands.

By mounting a staunch defense and depleting the opponent's strength, searching for an opportunity to counterattack within his defenses was the only way to possibly win. This was also the sole strategy physique cultivators had when facing faster opponents.

Regrettably, under the premise of equal cultivation levels, almost all other cultivators are faster than physique cultivators, leaving them mostly to suffer in silence.

Across from him, Jiang Liuzi made no move, quietly waiting for the physique cultivator to get ready, exuding an air of total disregard for his opponent.

He indeed had the capital to feel so confident.

Sword cultivators are renowned for their lethal attacks, and a physique cultivator, even if defended like a tortoise in its shell, might not withstand the sword cultivator's flying sword.

Once the physique cultivator was prepared, the flying swords around Jiang Liuzi finally vibrated mightily, transforming into sword lights that lunged forward.

The next instant, a cacophony of clanging filled the air as the flying swords struck the spirit artifact big shield, causing it to flash wildly and sparks to scatter, with the physique cultivator's body shaking continuously.

The battle was intense, one attacking and one defending.

Three breaths later, the sword lights assaulting the physique cultivator suddenly increased. Jiang Liuzi had released even more flying swords. Numerous blades swirled around the physique cultivator, constantly swooping and striking. Most were blocked by the big shield, but a few found their way to spots unprotected by the shield, at the cultivator's sides and back.

Nevertheless, the physique cultivator's body was indeed robust. The amalgamation of spirit force and blood Qi formed a tremendously thick barrier, and the sharp flying swords could only inflict superficial wounds, unable to damage his bones.

In just a short time, the physique cultivator was covered in cuts, yet he made no sound, as if he wasn't the one hurt.

While focusing on protecting himself, he also observed gaps in his opponent's attacks, looking for a chance to counterstrike.

If magic cultivators are considered prey to sword cultivators at the Cloud River Realm level, then the bane of sword cultivators is none other than those with strong physiques.

Sword cultivators' killing ability is indeed fearsome, but they have a significant weakness: their attacks cannot last. Their formidable lethality comes at the cost of enormous energy expenditure.

Therefore, to counter a sword cultivator, a physique cultivator with a robust body is undoubtedly the best candidate. This was the reason for the physique cultivator's eagerness to step forward.

...

The female magic cultivator feared Jiang Liuzi, this sword cultivator, but as a physique cultivator himself, he wasn't scared. As long as he survived the enemy's strongest phase, he could turn the tables.

The endless sword light continued for a good length of a tea time, the shine from the spirit artifact big shield in the physique cultivator's hand had dimmed considerably, and his exposed back was covered in dense, innumerable wounds.

It was at that moment, the physique cultivator suddenly noticed that the opponent's attacks had weakened and the intervals between the flying swords had also lengthened.

A gleam flashed in his eyes as he realized the time to counterattack had come.

Leaning slightly forward, he stomped his feet on the ground, and like an arrow released from its bow, he lunged forward, wielding the massive spirit artifact big shield as if it were weightless, bravely closing the distance under the sword cultivator's fierce attacks.

Boom, boom, boom...

Each step the physique cultivator took was heavy and forceful, carrying the momentum of a collapsing mountain.

The sky full of sword light suddenly converged, and Jiang Liuzi's face remained expressionless. Numerous flying swords quickly gathered in front of him and, in the blink of an eye, a giant sword was formed.

The sword was three Zhang long, made entirely of many flying swords and pulsed with terrifying spirit force fluctuations within.

The charging physique cultivator's eyes narrowed sharply, instantly realizing the danger. He immediately halted, raising the spirit artifact big shield over his head, crouching slightly, with his feet sinking deeply into the ground. His blood Qi and spirit force were stimulated to the extreme, the orange glow that constantly enveloped his body becoming bright and dazzling.

Jiang Liuzi pointed forward with merged fingers and uttered in a low voice, "Slash!"

The three-Zhang-long sword instantly arrived above the physique cultivator's head and crashed down with a thunderous impact.

The fluctuation of spirit force in that moment was extremely chaotic, light dazzling to the eyes, rendering the spectators on either side temporarily blinded.

When the light dispersed, Xia Qianqian had appeared on the battlefield, somehow, a thick spirit force barrier gathered in front of her, blocking over a dozen flying swords. Behind her, the physique cultivator lay bloodied on the ground, his life and death unknown.

One could imagine that if Xia Qianqian had not come to the rescue in time, the physique cultivator would likely have been killed.

Jiang Liuzi raised an eyebrow.

Xia Qianqian looked at him indifferently, "Admit defeat!"

Jiang Liuzi stubbornly stared at Xia Qianqian, silent. Xia Qianqian narrowed her eyes slightly, "What? You want to make a move on me? Think carefully for yourself."

From the opposite spirit mountaintop, the voice of that young man came, "Since Fellow Daoist Xia conceded for him, Jiang Liuzi, stop there!"

He didn't want to completely fall out with Xia Qianqian here, and besides, Jiang Liuzi couldn't possibly be a match for Xia Qianqian, the disparity in cultivation was too great.

Only then did Jiang Liuzi retract his flying swords.

Xia Qianqian gave Jiang Liuzi a deep look before using her spirit force to envelop the unconscious physique cultivator and returned to the rear spirit mountaintop.

In the valley, the fair-skinned, handsome youth stood still, like an undefeated war god.

On the spirit mountaintop, the Level 4 reality female magic cultivator's face was as pale as paper, almost on the verge of tears, "Sister, I'm not his match."

She had witnessed Jiang Liuzi's terrifying power with her own eyes; even a Level 5 realm physique cultivator had been beaten without the slightest ability to fight back, so what could she, a Level 4 realm magic cultivator, possibly do?

Try to act cute?

Seeing the youth's serious and unsmiling demeanor, he didn't seem to be the type to pity and cherish the fairer sex.

Xia Qianqian briefly examined the injuries of the physique cultivator, her brows furrowed. The three who had gone into battle on their side were all badly wounded, and while there was no danger to their lives, they wouldn't be able to fight in the upcoming melee.

On the other side, among the two who had gone into battle before, the second was not lightly injured, but the first's injuries were not severe.

It was clear that the current situation was extremely disadvantageous for their side.

She looked up at Lu Ye.

It had been agreed that Lu Ye would be reserved for the final fight, but given the current situation, he had no choice but to take the field.

"I'll go."

Lu Ye stepped forward and walked out.

Whether he was reserved for the final fight didn't matter to him. After all, he was just earning his keep, nothing more than lending a hand to those in trouble.

The sword cultivator named Jiang Liuzi was very strong; Lu Ye figured that the man must have ranked at least in the top ten in the Spirit Stream battlefield earlier on, or else he wouldn't have such a strong foundation.

But what of the top ten? During the months when he ruled the Spirit Stream Ranking, the entire Spirit Stream battlefield had only one Lan Ziyi worthy of his attention. As for the rest, they were all trash.

His only disadvantage now was his cultivation, two minor realms lower than his opponent.

However, since he began his cultivation journey, what he did most was defeating enemies above his level.

He landed lightly in the valley, coming to a stop fifty Zhang away from Jiang Liuzi.

Chapter 495 Something is Wrong

In terms of age, Lu Ye wasn't much different from Jiang Liuzi. Generally, those who could enter the Cloud River battlefield at such an age were all people with exceptional talent.

However, Lu Ye was currently wearing a fox-face mask, hiding his true face. Jiang Liuzi naturally couldn't see what he looked like, but from his physical characteristics, he could tell that Lu Ye was a man.

This displeased him.

Generally speaking, those who hid their faces under broad daylight weren't up to any good.

What confused Jiang Liuzi even more was that he couldn't tell which faction Lu Ye belonged to.

Based on Lu Ye's attire, he seemed like a combat cultivator, since only those who needed to fight in close quarters would wear clothes that wouldn't hinder their movement, such as those with wide-sleeved robes, which were generally worn by magic cultivators.

But there was also a small white beast perched on Lu Ye's shoulder... From this, he seemed to belong to the beast-taming faction, but he couldn't be sure, because the number of cultivators who had demon beasts with them wasn't small, and not every cultivator accompanied by a demon beast was from the beast-taming faction.

He didn't quite fit the mold of a combat cultivator, nor did he look like someone from the beast-taming faction. Jiang Liuzi could tell at a glance that the man in front of him was devious, so there was no reason for such a charade, especially wearing an ugly mask. This was obviously an attempt to confuse him.

A thought flashed through his mind, and Jiang Liuzi raised his hand and slashed a flying sword at Lu Ye.

As a sword cultivator dedicated to the path of the sword, what he hated most was those who skulked about and couldn't show their faces. What faction the other party belonged to, a fight would reveal it all!

The flying sword was incredibly fast, reaching Lu Ye almost the moment it was released.

To Jiang Liuzi's surprise, Lu Ye stood still, making no move. His supplies box at his waist vibrated slightly, and a streak of weapon control light met the flying sword head-on.

With a clear, ringing sound, the incoming flying sword was deflected. In the instant the Spiritual Artifacts collided, sparks seemed to fly.

Such a quick response!

A keen look appeared on Jiang Liuzi's face, which had been as calm as still water. Although it was a hurried exchange, he could infer a lot. His opponent's reaction was incredibly fast, and he seemed to have a lot of confidence in his own strength. Without sufficient confidence, he wouldn't have stood still in the face of a sword cultivator's flying sword.

This was the kind of opponent a sword cultivator needed! Not like those from before, who had strength but couldn't pique his interest.

The first flying sword was blocked, followed immediately by three more flying swords attacking.

The supplies box hummed again, and likewise, three Weapon Control Techniques met them.

Clang clang clang.

The sounds of collision continued unabated. The two figures stood fifty zhang apart, motionless, not showing any movement, yet their weapon controls were constantly clashing midair, the battle fierce, with spirit force waves chaotic.

After a moment, Jiang Liuzi's face showed surprise, for he found himself at a disadvantage in the contest of weapon controls!

Although both unleashed four weapon controls, the opponent's techniques were even more exquisite. Each control seemed as natural as moving one's own limbs, and the weapon controls flickered with light from time to time. Whenever that light passed, the opponent's weapon control speed and power would sharply increase.

This guy... what formidable mental fortitude!

What shocked Jiang Liuzi even more was that the fluctuation of the spirit force emanating from Lu Ye's body clearly indicated that this fox-faced man only had the cultivation of Cloud River Level 3!

It always had been him challenging those at higher levels, being challenged in return was a first for him, and by someone two levels higher no less. For a moment, it felt surreal.

Seeing his flying swords overpowered, Jiang Liuzi gritted his teeth and summoned nearly ten more sword lights.

If his weapon control technique was inferior to his opponent's, then he'd rely on quantity!

In an instant, more than ten sword lights chased after one another. Some were intercepting Lu Ye's weapon controls, while others were attacking Lu Ye directly.

Lu Ye's supplies box shook three times, and the remaining weapon controls also shot out.

The sounds of dense collisions continued to echo.

Jiang Liuzi was in trouble!

His over ten flying swords could only fight to a draw with the opponent's nine weapon controls. He couldn't help but suspect that the limit of the opponent's weapon controls wasn't nine; they could control even more; otherwise, it didn't make sense how skillfully they were being handled.

The limit of Lu Ye's weapon controls indeed wasn't nine. A long time ago, he had been able to control even more. But because he considered the lethality of weapon controls and the consumption on his own mind, he didn't refine more.

He was a combat cultivator. His main tactic was close-combat fighting, with Weapon Control Technique merely as an embellishment to supplement his long-range offensive capabilities. There was no need to pursue the extreme.

Besides, his supplies box could only nourish nine weapon controls.

Jiang Liuzi's expressionless face flickered with a trace of severity, and he summoned ten more flying swords!

He was determined, now let's see how you block this!

Lu Ye truly didn't have more weapon controls to block with. Watching the over ten sword lights approaching from all angles, he could only raise a hand. Red spirit force surged as a lifelike Fire Phoenix burst out of his palm, its tail feathers clearly distinguishable as it was made up of condensed spirit force.

Following the Fire Phoenix, the Fire Dragon Technique was unleashed. Both the dragon and the phoenix attacked in different directions.

Above the spirit mountaintop, the female magic cultivator of Level 4 stared blankly at the battlefield below, exclaiming softly, "Such quick spell casting, senior sister, is he a magic cultivator?"

Like Jiang Liuzi, this female magic cultivator had yet to figure out which sect Lu Ye belonged to, and such things weren't easy to pry into. It was only upon witnessing Lu Ye cast spells that she began to vaguely guess.

Xia Qianqian remained silent, recalling her experiences in the Ten Thousand Beasts Domain's secret realm.

Once, she naively thought Lu Ye was simply a combat cultivator, but after fighting side by side with him on several occasions, she realized that not only was he a combat cultivator, but he could also tame beasts, set up formations, and cast spells...

Xia Qianqian sometimes couldn't help but doubt whether a person's talent could be so grand. How could there be a cultivator in this world who excelled in several sects, and be quite skilled in each?

Just by looking at the speed and power with which Lu Ye was casting spells now, anyone would think he was a true magic cultivator. Without extensive time immersed in and cultivating spells, it would be impossible to cast them so swiftly.

But if anyone thought he was just a magic cultivator, they would probably be in for misfortune.

In the valley below, after initial probing, the battle suddenly intensified.

Sword light soared, magic and spells fluttered through the air.

The Fire Phoenix Technique and Fire Dragon Technique are accompanying techniques from the Red Lotus Soaring to Sky Technique. Since Lu Ye had cultivated it, he naturally hadn't forgotten, especially the Fire Phoenix Technique. After acquiring the Fire Phoenix Spirit Runes, Lu Ye found this particular technique even easier to use, and its might had increased considerably.

But Lu Ye was capable of more than just Fire Dragon Technique and Fire Phoenix Technique.

Previously, many spell-type spirit runes had been unlocked on his Talent Tree, such as Golden Arc, Lightning Attracting, Leaf Dance, Fiery Flames, Water Arrow, Earth Spike. Alone, each of these spirit runes could form an individual spell. Beyond that, they could also serve as the cores of various killing arrays. The effects of these spirit runes depended on how Lu Ye chose to utilize them.

Regardless, with the unlocking of these spirit runes on the Talent Tree, Lu Ye had ventured further and further down the path of a magic cultivator. If he were to pretend to be a magic cultivator, no one could see through his ruse.

However, back on the Spirit Stream battlefield, everyone knew that Lu Yiye from the Righteous Blood Sect was a sword-wielding combat cultivator. He couldn't pretend to be anything else even if he wanted to.

It was different in the Cloud River battlefield. Even without wearing the fox-face mask, no one knew who he was.

Just like now, seeing Lu Ye block every one of his flying swords with his spells, Jiang Liuzi immediately concluded one thing: This guy was a magic cultivator!

And then he became furiously angry. As a sword cultivator, what he feared the least was a magic cultivator—he was the bane of magic cultivators!

Yet today, his flying sword technique had been completely countered by a magic cultivator, and what was even more irksome was that this opponent was two levels lower than him in cultivation.

How could he tolerate this!

People like Jiang Liuzi are extremely proud.

Before, he had only utilized his flying sword because he believed that his flying sword technique was sufficient to defeat or even slay his opponent. It was also a way to probe the latter's strength.

But reality slapped him in the face. A magic cultivator two levels lower than him had such superb methods; he still had a long way to go in his own cultivation journey.

His flying sword technique alone could no longer resolve his opponent. If that was the case...

The sky filled with sword light suddenly retracted and swirled back. Jiang Liuzi now held a longsword in his hand, his fingers swiping over the blade. As spirit force surged around him, numerous flying swords spun like dragons, enfolding him within a sword dragon as he transformed into a beam of sword light rushing towards Lu Ye.

Every incoming weapon control and spell was blocked by the swirling sword dragon, with clanging and booming sounds stitched into one.

In an instant, the sword light barreled towards Lu Ye. As it dissipated, Jiang Liuzi's figure appeared at Lu Ye's side. No one saw how he did it; a sword cultivator's speed was just that fast.

The longsword radiated with a cold gleam as it thrust towards Lu Ye's neck.

Meet your doom!

Atop the spirit mountaintop, the female magic cultivator exclaimed in shock, while Xia Qianqian's heart also tensed.

Although she knew that Lu Ye was capable of defeating higher-level opponents, the helper summoned this time was evidently not ordinary. Faced with a Level 5 Cloud River sword cultivator, whether or not Lu Ye could win, Xia Qianqian couldn't leap to conclusions just yet.

In the midst of battle, the assured look on Jiang Liuzi's face turned to astonishment, for at the very moment he struck with his sword, he saw Lu Ye suddenly wielding a long saber in his hand...

Something seemed amiss!

The fierce spirit force that had been swirling around Lu Ye completely receded at that instant. With one hand on the sheath and the other on the saber handle, his blood Qi began to surge, merging and accumulating with that of Amber, who was perched on his shoulder.

His right arm slightly bulged for a moment. After a brief silence, an explosive force erupted like a volcano.

Single Flash!

The long saber was unsheathed, and as its bright light flashed, blood sprayed.

Jiang Liuzi was sent flying backward even faster than he had arrived. Struggling to maintain his posture, his eyes now brimmed with shock.

With another flash of saber light, a crescent-shaped saber light sliced out, chasing after Jiang Liuzi's retreating figure.

Boom...

Lu Ye's stance broke the ground beneath him as he shot forward, following the saber light he had unleashed. Not only that, but nine weapon control items flanked him, attacking the enemy from both sides, disturbing the opponent's state of mind.

Chapter 496 How Can This Person Be So Lucky?

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In the valley, Jiang Liuzi's blood ran cold as he looked at the figure pouncing towards him, feeling as if he were facing an unleashed ancient ferocious beast, an indescribable pressure that almost left him breathless.

This guy... is actually a combat cultivator! It was only at this moment that Jiang Liuzi truly confirmed Lu Ye's school, realizing that all the previous displays were nothing but means to deceive him!

Truly treacherous!

He vigorously shook the longsword in his hand, dispersing the miscellaneous thoughts in his mind, and the sword light became piercingly cold, as blossoming sword flowers began to unfold.

The Boulder Mountain Saber was covered with fiery-red spirit force, an inch of saber light enveloping it added sharpness, and with slashes and stabs, the saber light flickered, extinguishing the blooming sword flowers one by one.

Amid continuous sharp sounds, sparks flew in all directions, and Jiang Liuzi couldn't help but retreat, a deep, bone-visible gash now on his chest – an injury he received when he was caught off guard by Lu Ye's slash.

Having already fought a fierce battle and suffered heavy losses, Jiang Liuzi was no longer the calm and composed figure he had been before, and even his breathing became somewhat disordered.

Every strike from his opponent felt unblockable to him; the ferocious strength and lightning-fast speed were not something a Cloud River Level 3 cultivator should possess. Based purely on the outburst of power, he almost believed his opponent was a physique cultivator who specialized in physical strength.

Only a physique cultivator could possess such immense power.

And that swift speed of the saber was something even he, as a sword cultivator, could only dream of matching.

What made Jiang Liuzi even more distressed was that from time to time, a trace of spirit light would flash on the opponent's longsword. Sometimes it struck down as light as a feather, other times as heavy as a mountain, leaving him utterly unable to defend properly.

Even as he kept retreating, he couldn't diminish the storm-like onslaught of attacks, and within barely ten breaths, his body had accumulated several deep, bone-revealing wounds, the most severe of which was a penetrating wound. Normally, such an injury wouldn't be a big deal if it wasn't at a critical spot, but Jiang Liuzi distinctly felt that when the opponent's longsword stabbed into his body, something burst inside of him – these were extremely sharp spikes that pierced through his organs!

His strength rapidly drained away, and multiple images began to appear before Jiang Liuzi's eyes, but even in such a dire situation, he clenched his teeth and persisted.

He was a sword cultivator, an unbending sword cultivator. To make him utter the words "I concede" would be worse than letting him die in battle here!

He only regretted how naively he treated the skillful display of magic and spells by his opponent, mistaking him for a magic cultivator. If he hadn't trusted his judgment too much and been caught off guard by Lu Ye's deceptive attack, his situation might not have been so difficult.

He had encountered the treacherous kind before, but never someone as cunning as this one. Primarily because everything this fox-faced man had done up until now resembled that of a magic cultivator too closely, anyone would find it hard to believe his true identity was that of a combat cultivator.

Which combat cultivator can cast so many spells, and with such swift casting...

Now looking at that slanted-eyed fox, his cunning expression seemed to contain endless mockery. Jiang Liuzi's chest felt suffocated, and unable to contain it any longer, a mouthful of fresh blood surged forth from his lips.

Jiang Liuzi bit down hard, his spirit force crazily poured into the longsword in his hand, causing it to suddenly radiate brilliant spirit light.

On the other side, Lu Ye sensed his opponent's intentions. Clearly, he meant to put all his effort into this one attack. Lu Ye didn't know what trump card the opponent was about to play, but with the upper hand now, he naturally had no fear.

His blood Qi surged around his body, intertwining more deeply with his Amber blood Qi, and began to gather in his right arm.

Before he could execute his own saber skills, however, his brow furrowed, and suddenly he leaped backward, retreating more than ten yards.

Jiang Liuzi, who had been ready to unleash his killing move, saw his earth-shattering sword flash blocked by a raised hand from a figure.

It was none other than that young man from Cloud River Level 9. Even as a Level 9, he was forced back several steps as he blocked Jiang Liuzi's attack and spirit force surged in his body.

Then he turned around, looked at Lu Ye, and frowned, "Concede!"

Previously, Xia Qianqian had conceded on behalf of their combat cultivator, and now he stepped out to concede for Jiang Liuzi, which didn't break the rules, especially since he knew that, had he not intervened, Jiang Liuzi might have truly died here.

Sword cultivators all had this sort of temperament; if Lu Ye's cultivation had been a notch higher than Jiang Liuzi's or on the same level, it wouldn't have mattered. But the key point was that Lu Ye's cultivation was two minor levels below Jiang Liuzi's, making it hard for him to compromise willingly.

He wouldn't let himself tarnish his Sword Heart.

After uttering those words, a thud sounded from behind him. The young man turned his head to see that Jiang Liuzi had collapsed on the ground, covered with fresh blood, evidently his last sword strike had exhausted all his energy.

"You are good!" The young man looked at Lu Ye again, his face full of confusion.

A Cloud River Level 3 cultivator managed to overcome Jiang Liuzi, who was two levels higher, through tricks and cunning, which also demonstrated the opponent's formidable strength.

Who is this kid?

To have such a strong foundation, he surely couldn't be an unknown person. And judging from his Level 3 cultivation, he probably hadn't been at the Cloud River battlefield for more than half a year, or maybe even shorter.

So if someone really wanted to investigate this kid's identity, it wouldn't be difficult; all that was needed was to send a message asking if there had been any prodigious individuals at the Spirit Stream battlefield in the past half a year.

The young man flew away carrying the unconscious Jiang Liuzi, while Lu Ye still stood in the same place.

To put it fairly, he had the advantage in the battle against Jiang Liuzi. Not to mention the fact that Jiang Liuzi had previously used up some spirit force, the most crucial factor was his own feigned role as a magic cultivator that let him get close enough for that decisive strike.

...

Whoever stood in Jiang Liuzi's position would likely not have been able to withstand the premeditated slash from his opponent.

"Single Flash" erupted with great momentum—only strong enough protection could have defended against it.

As a sword cultivator, his defenses naturally weren't that strong.

Of course, even without these tricks, Lu Ye felt confident he could defeat Jiang Liuzi in a direct confrontation. The opponent was indeed not weak, but he was hardly inferior.

It just wouldn't have been as easy.

From atop the spirit mountaintop, the Level 4 female magic cultivator's mouth formed a perfect O, unable to close for a long time.

When she realized that Lu Ye was a magic cultivator, she worried greatly since sword cultivators strongly suppressed magic cultivators. Once a sword cultivator closed in, a magic cultivator hardly stood a chance at winning.

She had been anxiously watching the whole time, until Jiang Liuzi lunged at Lu Ye. Then she saw him miraculously pull out a saber and—like the autumn wind sweeping away fallen leaves—defeated Jiang Liuzi completely, totally disrupting the flow of the battle. The female magic cultivator was so emotionally stirred by the turn of events that she still hadn't snapped back to reality.

"Senior Sister, is he a combat cultivator?" she asked, somewhat belatedly.

"Sort of," Xia Qianqian wasn't sure how to categorize Lu Ye's sect, as he seemed quite complicated.

"He's really amazing!" the female magic cultivator's beautiful eyes sparkled with admiration, wondering where her senior sister had found such a formidable helper.

The strength Jiang Liuzi had demonstrated made her look up to him as if to a high mountain, but now she saw that there was a mountain even higher.

Indeed, this world always had many geniuses, each shining brightly, making an ordinary cultivator like her feel inferior.

On a spirit mountaintop opposite, a young man and another youth finished checking Jiang Liuzi's injuries. The young man said, "Don't be careless, there's something strange about this guy!"

At this point, he even began to wonder if Lu Ye was wearing a Spiritual Artifact that concealed his cultivation. Otherwise, how could a Cloud River Level 3 possibly be this strong?

The youth, who bore some resemblance to Jiang Liuzi but looked even more sinister, nodded when he heard this. "He's as good as dead!"

As Jiang Liuzi's brother, seeing his own sibling seriously injured and unconscious, he was naturally furious and silently vowed to kill that fox-face to show him the ferocity of he and his brother.

In terms of direct combat ability, he wasn't as good as Jiang Liuzi. However, if it concerned the art of assassination, three Jiang Liuzis combined couldn't compare to him—because he was a ghost cultivator!

His figure darted out, flying straight toward the valley.

Lu Ye looked up, eyeing his approaching opponent. However, soon the enemy concealed his figure and disappeared without a trace.

A ghost cultivator, huh!

Underneath the mask, Lu Ye wore a peculiar expression.

Of all the sects, his favorite were the ghost cultivators. They always relied on their ability to commune with the Netherworld to sneak up on their enemies and then strike suddenly.

But to Lu Ye, the ghost cultivator's Concealment Technique was basically non-existent.

Imagine a confident ghost cultivator silently approaching the enemy, and before they could attack, the enemy strikes first—how terrifying that would be!

Without their stealthy assassination techniques, a ghost cultivator of the same level was much weaker than a combat cultivator in a head-on fight!

So, seeing his opponent disappear, Lu Ye immediately layered the Insight Spirit Runes into his eyes while his figure sprang forward to meet the challenge directly.

The scenery around him drastically changed. Under the Insight Spirit Runes, a variety of colors flowed and changed in his field of vision. When Lu Ye first activated the Insight Spirit Runes, he had been quite unaccustomed to it. But now, he was fully adapted to this peculiar sight.

Jiang Chengzi, who had concealed his figure, had not expected Lu Ye to dare to take the initiative against a ghost cultivator and was surprised, yet he admired Lu Ye's courage.

Normally, cultivators preferred to remain still against ghost cultivators, like the way Jiang Liuzi had defeated Lu Ye's ghost cultivator earlier using the same method.

Those who dared to take the initiative were mostly hoping to get lucky and break through the ghost cultivator's Concealment Technique. Since a ghost cultivator wouldn't move too far immediately after hiding, as long as the attack range was large enough, it was very possible to reveal the ghost cultivator.

Jiang Chengzi had met such enemies before, but without exception, he had given them a harsh lesson. So, he thought that the individual with the fox-face mask had the same idea.

What surprised him, however, was that although his opponent rushed over, there was no sign of attacking. Holding the longsword simply in hand, surrounded by 9th Dao weapon control swirls, he directly lunged towards the area where Jiang Chengzi was hidden.

Jiang Chengzi frowned and hurriedly shifted his position.

The weapon control's Liu Guang burst forth, aiming in all directions, and Jiang Chengzi's concealed figure suddenly appeared. He blocked a stream of Liu Guang with a dagger in hand, inwardly crying out: How could this man's luck be so good!

Chapter 497 Ownership of the Spirit Ground

In mid-air, Jiang Chengzi's figure appeared, his face full of astonishment. He hadn't expected his Concealment Technique to be so easily cracked.

It wasn't so much that it had been cracked, but rather that his opponent was incredibly lucky. A casual attack with the 9th Dao weapon control almost hit him, forcing him to counterattack.

Just as he deflected the weapon's flowing light, his vision suddenly dimmed. Looking up, he saw the eerie gaze of a sharp-mouthed, slant-eyed fox-faced mask staring at him.

A flash of saber light passed, and a sudden sense of alarm rose in his heart. Jiang Chengzi quickly raised the dirk in his hand to parry the incoming attack.

With a loud clang, Jiang Chengzi immediately experienced the same shock his brother had felt before, his heart filled with terror. What was the source of this wild power...

The continuous saber light, like a violent storm, slashed down without mercy.

Jiang Chengzi's form kept falling, and within just 5 breaths, his body plummeted to the ground like a meteorite from the sky, landing heavily.

The ground trembled, and a crater immediately appeared where he landed. In that crater lay Jiang Chengzi, grinning in pain, feeling as if all the bones in his arms were broken, with no part of his body that didn't hurt.

He was, indeed, a ghost cultivator, and his ability to fight head-on was certainly not as good as a combat cultivator's, but after all, he was a Cloud River Level 5 ghost cultivator!

To be so easily overpowered by a Cloud River Level 3 opponent was simply unacceptable.

The breath of death loomed over him, and he quickly shouted, "I concede!"

The shimmering saber light stopped right before his forehead, the fiercely sharp tip pressing against his skin. An inch of saber light flickered like a snake's tongue, ripping into his flesh and causing drops of bright red blood to flow.

Jiang Chengzi broke out in a cold sweat. If he hadn't shouted in time, he might have truly died.

His brother was a stubborn sword cultivator who would rather die than submit, but as a ghost cultivator, he didn't hold on to so many principles. Conceding was certainly humiliating, but it was still better than losing his life. After all, he had been hired just to fight, there was no need to fight to the death.

Lu Ye sheathed his saber.

Jiang Chengzi hurriedly got up and flew away into the sky.

"What the..." the Level 4 female magic cultivator watched from the spirit mountaintop, dumbfounded.

Lu Ye had resolved the confrontation with the opposing ghost cultivator so quickly and neatly, something she had never expected. Although Lu Ye had already demonstrated his immense strength in the previous battle, facing a ghost cultivator wasn't just about being strong.

Many heroes in the Nine Provinces had fallen to ghost cultivators simply because they had been careless; ghost cultivators killed without any sense of fairness.

She had been worried for Lu Ye when Jiang Chengzi concealed himself, but the battle had ended so quickly.

Comparing her fellow sect members and Ye Liu to Lu Ye, she felt her companions were weak to the extreme!

On the opposite spirit mountaintop, a Level 9 young man stared into the valley at Lu Ye, frowning.

Not far from him was a Level 5 physique cultivator who had not yet fought, but seeing the strength that Lu Ye had unleashed, he knew that even letting this physique cultivator fight would only lead to a beating, with no chance of victory.

He looked up at the opposite spirit mountaintop, "This round, you win."

Since there was no chance of winning, there was no point in further humiliation. He had thought that by inviting Jiang Liuzi and Jiang Chengzi, the two brothers, victory was assured. But their opponent had brought someone even more formidable.

Just who was this guy?

The young man was immensely curious.

"How about a melee?" Xia Qianqian asked.

The young man said, "How many people can each side still send into battle now?"

Initially, he thought of having a series of one-on-one matches followed by a melee, then the two Level 9 cultivators would have a final fight, two out of three rounds, fair and square. But after the series of fights, of the ten people from both sides, there were only four or five left that could still fight, the rest were seriously injured.

Moreover, if they really were to fight a melee, the young man knew his side's chances of winning were very small. His side's strongest, Jiang Liuzi, was still unconscious, while their opponent's strongest, the one with the fox-face mask, was full of vigor. Even though Jiang Chengzi could still fight, his morale had been diminished by defeat, and sending him into battle again would probably not result in much performance.

"What do you propose then?"

"Let's have a battle between you and me," the young man responded calmly.

"I think you're really itching for a fight!" As her words fell, Xia Qianqian's figure had already appeared in the valley, standing beside Lu Ye, "You go back first, I'll teach him a lesson!"

Lu Ye nodded, and without a word, flew towards the spirit mountaintop where his side was located.

Before he even landed, intense sounds of fighting came from behind. Xia Qianqian was a magic cultivator, and so was the young man opposite her. Moreover, their cultivation levels were equal, making it a true clash of equals. The figures of the two moved continuously in the valley, casting powerful spells back and forth, leaving the valley in complete disarray.

Lu Ye watched silently, finding it rather interesting to observe others battle. Often, one could learn a thing or two this way, like how others resolved crises or sought the right opportunity to strike at their opponents.

As he watched intently, he suddenly sensed something and looked down, meeting a pair of beautiful eyes.

"Is something wrong?"

The female magic cultivator quickly shook her head, "It's nothing, just... you're really amazing!"

Lu Ye nodded slightly, "I know!"

Female magic cultivator: "?"

The battle between the two Level 9 magic cultivators was fierce and cool, but after watching for a moment, Lu Ye couldn't tell who was stronger, only feeling that their powers were matched and that it would likely end in a draw.

If that were indeed the case, a melee would still be necessary.

The female magic cultivator beside him clearly realized this as well, and whispered to Lu Ye, "Junior Brother, if we need to make a move later, you must protect me well."

Under the fox-face mask, Lu Ye's gaze shifted slightly downward.

"No problem!"

"You're so kind, Junior Brother." The female magic cultivator's smile bloomed.

Amber perched on Lu Ye's shoulder growled lowly at her, and although she reached out to tease it, Amber bit her, causing no blood but enough pain for her to cry out, looking utterly aggrieved.

Meanwhile, the battle in the valley below came to a stop for some reason, with two figures standing opposite each other at a distance.

The young man said, "The spirit ground is yours!" Although he hadn't lost this round, he also didn't bring up the matter of a melee anymore because his chances of winning were really not great. Forcing a melee would just be humiliating himself.

"You know what's good for you!" Xia Qianqian snorted coldly.

The young man's gaze swept past Xia Qianqian and glanced at Lu Ye on top of the spirit mountaintop before he turned and flew away. Moments later, a spirit ark shot up into the sky and quickly disappeared from sight.

Xia Qianqian returned, and the female magic cultivator cheered as she approached, "Sister, you're amazing."

Xia Qianqian shook her head, "I didn't win."

It was just a draw.

"Fellow Daoist Xia, now that the matter here is resolved, I shall take my leave," Lu Ye said, stepping forward.

"There's no rush; let me take you to see the spirit ground," Xia Qianqian said and produced a Flying Spirit Artifact, helping several injured onto it, and gestured to Lu Ye, "Let's go."

Lu Ye hurriedly followed.

The spirit ground was not far from there, located on top of a spirit mountaintop.

Once there, the group landed in succession.

Lu Ye looked around and saw a Spiritual Spring spurting Spiritual Energy. After feeling it for a moment, he found that this spirit ground was about the same as the one he had before, both being Class C Spirit Grounds and not very large in scale.

"If you are willing to stay, the five of you can just occupy this spirit ground. Although it's only a Class C Spirit Ground, it's still quite good and can meet the needs of your current cultivation," Xia Qianqian spoke up.

Such a small spirit ground was best occupied by five people. It was not that more couldn't be accommodated, but with more, the Spiritual Energy gushing from the spring would be insufficient.

Furthermore, with the combined strength of five people, the protective power of the spirit ground was assured, enough to handle most situations.

Besides, having Lu Ye stationed here would be better than several Level 5s, so Xia Qianqian genuinely hoped he would stay.

However, she had no idea if Lu Ye was willing. If it were any other Cloud River Level 3 cultivator, they would be eager for such a windfall, but Lu Ye was no ordinary Cloud River Level 3. With his mastery in Array Path, if he truly wanted to enter some spirit ground for cultivation, he would likely be welcomed in any below the Class B level as long as there was space available.

"I need to go find a Junior Brother of mine, thank you for your kindness," Lu Ye tactfully declined.

Xia Qianqian didn't insist, "Then help lay out some formations."

Lu Ye looked at her speechlessly, thinking everything had been resolved, yet this woman still insisted on bringing him here, apparently to get him to do some work.

"I'll need array banners and array bases!"

Helping with the array setup was fine by Lu Ye—it wouldn't take much effort—but he had no intention of providing the materials. Not to mention, just a set of array bases for a protective array was quite valuable. If other formations were to be laid out as well, the various array banners would also be a significant expense.

"I've bought them already," Xia Qianqian said, taking a storage sack off her waist and tossing it to Lu Ye.

She had specifically purchased a set of array bases and many array banners for a protective array from Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union when looking for Lu Ye, planning for this moment.

With such thorough preparation from the others, what more could Lu Ye say?

After opening the storage sack and checking the contents, he saw that the protective array Xia Qianqian had purchased was not the highest grade but a slightly inferior one, with only eight array bases.

Frankly speaking, for such a small spirit ground, a protective array of eight array bases was sufficient; there was no need for anything fancier. Lu Ye had previously set up a protective array with sixteen array bases on his own spirit ground, which ended up being forcibly breached, destroying the array bases and costing him over ten thousand merits.

The several wounded were healing, Xia Qianqian was cultivating, and Lu Ye was busy setting up the array. However, the female magic cultivator was always nipping at Lu Ye's heels, praising and fawning over him, occasionally acting coy in hopes he would stay.

Having such a strong person nearby could indeed add to her sense of security.

This provoked Amber to reveal its true form and catch her off guard, tackling her to the ground with its huge mouth opened, roaring at her. The female magic cultivator was so scared that she went pale, and dared not come close to Lu Ye anymore.

A protective array, a concealment array, an alarm formation, and finally several killing arrays were set up within the spirit ground, with Lu Ye working busily all day long.

Finding Xia Qianqian, he informed her of the various formation locations and handed over the jade cluster for controlling the formations, demonstrating their use, only then was the job completed.

Chapter 498 Big Fish

In the spirit ground, Xia Qianqian and the female magic cultivator watched Lu Ye leave together, the latter waving continuously with a reluctant expression on her face.

Xia Qianqian glanced at her, "He's already gone, you little flirt, stop waving your hands."

The female magic cultivator felt extremely wronged, "Senior Sister, how can you say that about me?"

"Utterly useless," Xia Qianqian lamented, frustrated at her lack of steel.

"That guy isn't interested in women, what could I do..." The female magic cultivator felt even more aggrieved. She had followed Lu Ye around, trying her best to showcase her charms, but she still couldn't make him stay.

"Take good care of them, I'm going ahead. I'll find an array cultivator to come over later," Xia Qianqian instructed, handing over the Great Array Jade Cluster to the female magic cultivator and soared into the sky.

"Senior Sister, take care!" The female magic cultivator continued to wave her hand.

In mid-air, Lu Ye controlled his flight, still wearing that fox-face mask, feeling as free as a bird in the sky and a fish in the sea, his mood joyful.

It wasn't like when he was at the Spirit Stream battlefield, where he was recognized everywhere he went, and everyone called for his head. Life now was much more comforting.

By nightfall, he descended to find a cave in the wilderness for shelter and rest.

Inside the cave, the bonfire crackled loudly, with a large piece of beast meat roasting over it, turning golden brown and the aroma of the meat spreading all over.

In the deeper part of the cave, Lu Ye was busy setting up an array.

Yiyi's figure suddenly emerged from the ground, coming beside Lu Ye and spoke in a low voice, "Didn't find it."

Lu Ye nodded, "Not finding it is normal, it must be a ghost cultivator."

And it was very likely Jiang Chengzi, whom he had fought yesterday!

Not long after saying goodbye to Xia Qianqian and setting off, Lu Ye started feeling like he was being watched. He had felt this way before in the Spirit Stream battlefield, and it turned out he wasn't being paranoid; someone was indeed tracking him in the shadows.

Now at the Cloud River Level 3, his mental strength had grown stronger than when he was in the Spirit Stream Realm, so even though he wasn't sure who was tracking him in the shadows, he was certain he was indeed being targeted.

Yiyi had been looking for the person who was secretly tracking him, but she came back empty-handed. A ghost cultivator from Cloud River Level 5 realm, wanting to hide, wouldn't be found by Yiyi unless Lu Ye used Insight Spirit Runes to probe at a close distance.

Indeed, the benefits offered by Xia Qianqian weren't so easily obtained; as it turned out, his previous attack had brought him some unwanted attention.

It was to be expected, after all, a cultivator from Cloud River Level 3 defeating two from Cloud River Level 5 - and the Jiang brothers were not just any Level 5 cultivators, they were known for defeating those above their level.

It was hard not to draw attention under those circumstances.

But facing Jiang Liuzi, the sword cultivator, back then, Lu Ye couldn't afford to hide his strength. Already at a cultivation disadvantage, fighting a renowned killer sword cultivator and still concealing his strength would be like courting death. It was necessary to win that fight decisively and quickly.

Although he realized someone was following him and could speed up to shake off the pursuer, doing so would be too obvious.

There were other ways to shake off a pursuer, and quietly searching for the pursuer now wasn't a good idea; if the other party was tracking him, they surely had help. The Level 9 youth was very likely involved, perhaps even leading this, and facing such a formidable opponent, Lu Ye was no match.

A moment later, Lu Ye walked out of the cave and rocketed into the sky.

In the darkness, Jiang Chengzi watched Lu Ye's figure, perplexed.

As Lu Ye suspected, the one watching him was indeed Jiang Chengzi, who had been tasked by the Level 9 youth to track him all the way here.

Lu Ye's actions puzzled him; it was late at night, and instead of resting, why was he suddenly in a hurry to travel? Jiang Chengzi quickly sent a message out and continued to follow Lu Ye's figure.

An hour later, Lu Ye landed about 30 miles away and again entered a cave.

In the shadows, Jiang Chengzi also landed and sent another message out.

A few dozen miles away, the Level 9 youth, along with Jiang Liuzi, hurried toward this direction. They hadn't dared to get too close before, to avoid alarming Lu Ye. If alarmed, Lu Ye would definitely call for help, and it would be troublesome if they drew Xia Qianqian over.

After a day's recovery, Jiang Liuzi's injuries had significantly improved. Following behind the young man, he asked in puzzlement, "Senior Brother Wei, what's so important about that fox-face that it warrants such attention from you?"

The fox-face was incredibly strong, much stronger than one might imagine, clearly not someone obscure, but his importance seemed disproportionate, even to someone like Wei Que, a Level 9 cultivator from Cloud River, nearly ready to advance to True Lake.

After all, an ordinary person would not catch his eye.

Wei Que heard and said, "Do you know of the Righteous Blood Sect?"

"Naturally, I do."

Thirty years ago, the Righteous Blood Sect of Bingzhou had dominated the region as a leading sect, and it was also the front-runner of the Haotian Alliance.

"There's a Lu Yiye in the Righteous Blood Sect, have you heard of him?"

Jiang Liuzi was surprised, "Are you saying that the fox-face is Lu Yiye from the Righteous Blood Sect?"

"It seems you have heard of him," Wei Que said with a slight smile.

Finding out about Lu Ye's identity was not difficult; one just needed to ask who the monstrous talent that emerged in the Spirit Stream battlefield in the last six months who also happened to be a combat cultivator using a blade was.

After leading his men to retreat, Wei Que had immediately sent word out to investigate this matter, initially out of mere curiosity about Lu Ye's identity, wanting to uncover the truth.

The result turned out to be a big fish!

Lu Yiye of the Righteous Blood Sect—many sects of the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge had issued bounty rewards for him, and the combined bounty from all the big sects was enough to even make those at the Cloud River Level 9 envious.

It could be said that if one could kill this Lu Yiye, then one needn't worry about cultivation resources for the rest of one's life.

This huge temptation made it hard for Wei Que not to be moved, and he immediately had Jiang Chengzi lurk near the spirit ground, tracking Lu Ye's movements, waiting for Lu Ye to leave before following him from a distance.

As for Jiang Liuzi knowing about Lu Ye, it was not surprising since he was at the Spirit Stream battlefield when the battle at Golden Light Peak broke out. At that time, the Jiang brothers were at 9th Heaven level, and Lu Ye was just a common Level 5 realm cultivator—not paying much attention to it as Lu Ye's life or death was intertwined merely with the survival of the Righteous Blood Sect. He had not yet shown any threat to the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge forces.

Two months after the battle at Golden Light Peak, the Jiang brothers were promoted and came to the Cloud River battlefield, where they had not left since.

Thus, they had not heard about the various upheavals Lu Ye later caused on the Spirit Stream battlefield.

However, they did know about the warrant for Lu Ye issued by the various major sects of the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge; it was precisely because of this that thousands of cultivators gathered at Golden Light Peak, enabling Lu Ye to achieve the feat of fighting forty-three battles without a single defeat.

"This speed of cultivation is just too fast, isn't it?" Jiang Liuzi felt shocked. It hadn't been long since the battle at Golden Light Peak, and that minor figure who had triggered a contest between two camps had already been promoted to and arrived at the Cloud River battlefield?

And he was also at Cloud River Level 3!

One must know that the Jiang brothers had come to the Cloud River battlefield a year or two earlier than Lu Ye, and they were only at Cloud River Level 5 so far.

"It's not just his cultivation speed that's fast; you brothers may not know what he has done on the Spirit Stream battlefield." To be honest, when the detailed information about Lu Ye reached Wei Que, he too was quite taken aback.

Considering Lu Ye's two years on the Spirit Stream battlefield, it was truly a distressing and tormented time for the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge. Especially later on, Lu Yiye of the Righteous Blood Sect had essentially taken up the overlord status with a cultivator's identity, wherever he went, all the major sects of the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge trembled in fear. Even the territories of the 1st grade sects, he shattered whenever he pleased, until finally the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge collectively compromised and offered protection money to the core circle's major sects to preserve their own safety.

Said to have been on the day he was promoted to the Cloud River Realm, there was widespread celebration at every major sect's stronghold on the Spirit Stream battlefield, with gongs and drums blaring.

In history, no cultivator had ever caused such a massive reaction from one camp.

Lu Yiye of the Righteous Blood Sect had done it, and his reputation would likely remain legendary on the Spirit Stream battlefield for the next decade or two.

Hearing Wei Que say this, Jiang Liuzi couldn't help but ask curiously, "What did he do on the Spirit Stream battlefield?"

Wei Que remained silent for a while before sighing and sharing some intelligence.

Jiang Liuzi felt he had asked too much out of curiosity—why ask such things? Every part of this intelligence was a disgrace to the major sects of the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge. Being a cultivator from the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge, listening to this made him feel his face burning.

"So after Lu Yiye was promoted to the Cloud River, all the top major sects of the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge raised the reward money, letting people on the Cloud River battlefield find his whereabouts and try to eliminate him! Sadly, due to difficulties in message transmission, and because he had not been on the Cloud River battlefield long, his whereabouts haven't been discovered yet."

Lu Ye's talent shown in the Spirit Stream Realm was too frightening, which made those of the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge fearful. It was natural to want such a person dead sooner rather than later.

On the Spirit Stream battlefield, he was invincible, undefeated across the world; but arriving at the Cloud River battlefield was different, this was a chance for the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge side.

But communication between the Cloud River battlefield and Nine Provinces wasn't very convenient, unlike at the Spirit Stream battlefield, where a sect's governor might not return to Nine Provinces but could still exchange messages with his sect's Seal Envoy through the battlefield marking.

The Cloud River battlefield didn't offer this convenience; one needed to enter to deliver the messages, and once one left the Cloud River battlefield, re-entry wasn't possible within a month due to the rules set by Heaven's Augury that no one could break. This prevented Cloud River Realm cultivators from using the quick in-and-out method to transfer intelligence.

This time, if Wei Que hadn't become curious about Lu Ye's identity, he wouldn't have taken the trouble to investigate and discover Lu Ye's real identity.

If Lu Ye knew about this, he would definitely feel wronged. Previously, when he showed his real face, even when encountering some cultivators from the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge, nobody paid him any attention. Finally, having a chance to hide his identity and wearing a fox-face mask, just to almost have someone dig out what color his underpants were—truly, fate is unpredictable.

Chapter 499 Disappeared

Jiang Liuzi frowned, "How long has he been in the Cloud River battlefield?"

"It's unclear exactly when he entered the Cloud River battlefield, but intelligence shows that he advanced to the Cloud River in less than two months!"

Jiang Liuzi gasped in shock.

Advancing to the Cloud River in less than two months. In other words, even if he had entered the Cloud River battlefield immediately after advancing, it had only been this long.

Yet he was already at the Cloud River Level 3!

What kind of freakish cultivation speed was this?

Indeed, the Cloud River Realm is a realm that allows for rapid cultivation advancement, thanks to the existence of mystical objects like spirit talismans. However, spirit talismans aren't so easily obtained, and even though one might encounter a Heaven-bestowed spirit fortune stick, there's a need to fight over it with hundreds or thousands of people, battling until bloodied to have a chance of snatching one or two, without any guarantee of quality. Those purple or gold-hued ones are definitely targeted by strong cultivators at Level 8-9, and someone of Jiang Liuzi's cultivation can only dare to compete for the blue ones at most. If he set his sights on purple or gold-hued spirit fortune sticks, he would surely be taught a lesson.

How many spirit talismans had this Lu Yiye obtained to reach Cloud River Level 3 in one go?

Everything fears comparison. Jiang Liuzi considered his own cultivation speed to be quite fast, yet compared to Lu Ye, he was utterly subpar.

"We're here."

As they spoke, their figures descended. Jiang Chengzi, who had been hiding in the shadows, revealed himself and came forward to greet them.

"Is he still there?" Wei Que asked.

"Over there, there's a cave. He's hiding inside and hasn't come out," Jiang Chengzi pointed in a direction.

"Very good!" Wei Que revealed a look of joy and ordered, "Jiang Chengzi, go and ambush him. If you can succeed, all the better. If you can't, Jiang Liuzi and I will join forces to kill him. Once we succeed, I shall take sixty percent of the spoils, and you two brothers can have forty percent!"

Even though Wei Que demanded to take the lion's share of the benefits, his cultivation at Level 9 gave him the qualifications to do so. Naturally, Jiang Liuzi had no objections.

As for Jiang Chengzi, he still hadn't figured out Lu Ye's identity and thus didn't understand the concept of forty percent of the so-called spoils. But since his brother didn't speak up, he naturally wouldn't say anything either.

"Then I'm going," Jiang Chengzi said, producing a jet-black dirk in his hand. His figure swiftly vanished as he crept toward the direction of the cave.

Previously, when Jiang Chengzi had clashed with Lu Ye in the valley and his Concealment Technique was directly broken, resulting in a miserable lesson, he naturally felt indignant. He believed it was simply Lu Ye's good luck. After his Concealment Technique was broken, he couldn't use any of his assassination techniques and was forced into close combat, where he unfortunately stood no chance.

Determined to restore the prestige of the Spectral Bewitchment cultivators, this time he wanted to show that fox-faced man the terror of a Spectral Bewitchment's assassination!

After his figure disappeared, Wei Que and Jiang Liuzi prepared to provide support at any moment.

After a short wait, a sudden explosion came from the direction of the cave, followed by flames reaching for the sky!

The well-prepared Wei Que and Jiang Liuzi were both startled, unable to comprehend why Jiang Chengzi would cause such a commotion in an attempt to assassinate just a Cloud River Level 3 cultivator.

Furthermore, that commotion sounded somewhat unusual, as if it were...

"Damn!"

Jiang Liuzi exclaimed and transformed into a beam of sword light, rushing toward the source of the disturbance, with Wei Que frowning and following close behind.

Moments later, among a pile of collapsed rocks, Jiang Liuzi dug out Jiang Chengzi, who was buried underground. At this moment, Jiang Chengzi was a blood-soaked mess, hair in disarray, body charred, and in the utmost disarray.

Fortunately, his life was not in danger.

"What happened? Where's Lu Yiye?" Wei Que asked.

The cave had already collapsed, but there was no sign of Lu Yiye, only Jiang Chengzi.

In between heavy breaths, Jiang Chengzi—looking like someone who just had a close brush with death—finally responded after a while, "Didn't see him, there was an explosion magic array set up here!"

He had thought this attempt would redeem his previous embarrassment. However, shortly after he entered the cave, he stepped into an explosion magic array.

There wasn't much space to move around inside the cave, so even when he noticed something amiss at the moment the magic array activated, he couldn't escape. Once the magic array detonated, the cave collapsed, and he was buried inside.

As for that fox-faced man... he hadn't seen him at all.

"Didn't you say he was here?" Wei Que's expression turned ugly.

"He was indeed inside, but for some reason, he's gone!" Jiang Chengzi explained. He had personally watched the fox-faced man enter the cave, and from start to finish, there had been no indication that the man had left.

Yet, somehow, the man had vanished like a ghost.

Now, the only explanation seemed to be that Lu Ye had already detected someone tracking him, so he purposefully arranged an array in the cave as an ambush, and used a concealment talisman to quietly slip away.

Wei Que's face darkened with irritation, disappointed.

He had thought this would be a highly rewarding endeavor, but it turned out to be a wild goose chase. The key issue now was that it was impossible to track down Lu Ye! In the vast Cloud River battlefield, if the target intended to hide, who could find him?

Of course, if they leaked the information and mobilized the entire Ten Thousand Demons Ridge force, Lu Yiye would have nowhere to hide. However, the Cloud River battlefield was far more complex than the Spirit Stream battlefield, and with such a great opportunity at stake, Wei Que was not willing to share with too many others. With his cultivation at Cloud River Level 9, as long as he found Lu Ye's whereabouts, he was confident he had a good chance of killing him.

The reason he brought Jiang Liuzi and his brother this time was merely to use Jiang Chengzi's ghost cultivation abilities to track Lu Ye.

He had been extremely careful and cautious, yet he still ended up short of success!

The problem did not lie with Jiang Chengzi. As a Level 5 realm ghost cultivator, his concealment techniques were superb. Logically speaking, Lu Yiye, with his Level 3 cultivation, shouldn't have been able to detect him at all.

But, against all odds, he still sensed them and even set up a trap.

This guy... what keen perception!

"Split up and search, he surely couldn't have gone far!" Wei Que declared, soaring into the sky and leaving the Jiang brothers looking at each other.

He wasn't worried that the Jiang brothers would find Lu Ye and not report it to him because, based on the abilities that Lu Ye had previously shown, they wouldn't be able to kill him quickly. If they did find him, they would definitely inform him.

On the other hand, if he found Lu Ye, he could claim the prize for himself!

The only concern was that these brothers might contact their own people from their sect. Behind the Jiang brothers stood a 2nd grade sect, naturally having quite a few powerhouses active on the Cloud River battlefield.

This wasn't something he could stop, nor did he intend to.

"Who is that guy, and why does Senior Brother Wei seem to value him so much?" Jiang Chengzi asked after Wei Que left.

"Righteous Blood Sect, Lu Yiye."

"Sounds somewhat familiar, like I've heard it somewhere?"

"The battle at Golden Light Peak." Jiang Liuzi gave a brief reminder.

"Ah! It's that kid... Sss, I remember he's wanted by all the big sects."

"Now you know why Wei Que values him so much, right?"

Jiang Chengzi suddenly became spirited, no longer feeling the pain as much, "Then what are we waiting for, let's hurry up and find him."

"First, we need to send a message to Senior Brother Loo Shu and the others. Wei Que wants to ditch us and hog all the reward for himself, but we'll see if he's really capable of that." Jiang Liuzi said, sending out several messages.

Though they were all cultivators from the same camp, and they stood united on major issues, when it came to personal gains, there were bound to be overt and covert struggles.

Such is human nature.

Soon, more people learned the news of Lu Yiye from the Righteous Blood Sect. These powerhouses, often active on the Cloud River battlefield at Level 8-9, might not have heard of this name before, but with all the information about Lu Ye provided by Jiang Liuzi, how could they remain unmoved? After all, a Level 3 Cloud River Realm cultivator was linked to a vast amount of cultivation resources. Such an opportunity was rare. They all set out towards the direction, afraid of being beaten to the punch by others.

Meanwhile, back in the cave where he first hid, Lu Ye was chowing down on roasted beast meat with big bites.

The two caves were about 30 miles apart. His quick return was, of course, thanks to a teleportation array.

He had previously left a parent teleportation array here and went to set up a child teleportation array about 30 miles away, which allowed him to directly teleport back.

When Jiang Chengzi stepped into the cave, he triggered the explosion magic array that Lu Ye had left behind. The cave must have collapsed by now, as well as the child teleportation array he left, being destroyed with it. No one who went there would be able to uncover any clues.

The round trip was perfectly timed; the meat he left behind was just nicely roasted.

Lu Ye hadn't used the teleportation array in quite some time, and using it this time, he noticed something interesting: the sensation during teleportation wasn't as unpleasant, and the connection between the child and parent arrays was tighter.

No doubt, this had to do with the improvement of his cultivation. After all, when he set up the teleportation array on the Spirit Stream battlefield, he only had a 7th Heaven cultivation level.

In other words, given his current cultivation level, the teleportation array he set up could transport him much farther, no longer limited to a mere 30 miles!

This was good news. The value of teleportation arrays was undoubtedly greater the farther they could transport.

Lu Ye did not linger in the cave for long. He packed up the array banners and left with the roasted beast meat.

He needed to get away from this area quickly.

Thirty miles was not much for Cloud River Realm cultivators. Those who were after him and had been foiled in that cave would surely continue their search. If he delayed too long, they might actually be able to track him down.

The night was as dark as ink, without a single star in sight.

Lu Ye traveled through the night, naturally making sure to avoid the direction of the second cave. By dawn, he had covered several thousand miles and finally found a place in the wilderness to rest.

There was a spring in the mountains. Dusty and weary from the road, Lu Ye first took Amber for a bath, then found a secluded spot, set up a few simple arrays, and rested for a bit.

After recovering his energy and spirit force, he finally took out a purple-colored spirit fortune stick.

Of course, it was from the fortune stick chest that Xia Qianqian had given him.

Fortune sticks were an item that cultivators loved, and upon obtaining one, it was natural to use it promptly, transforming it into one's own strength.

Chapter 500 Hunting Grounds

Several hours later, the purple spirit circle dissipated. Lu Ye examined his own river of spirit force and noted an increase in its volume, yet he was still far from advancing to the Level 4 realm.

After emerging from the secret realm of the Ten Thousand Beasts Domain, he had ascended directly to Level 3 by exchanging nearly thirty thousand battle merits for a spirit fortune stick. He had substantial accumulation at the Level 3 stage, but as a cultivator progresses, the required resources increase exponentially.

From his own estimation, within the realms of Cloud River, if spirit fortune sticks were to serve as a resource proxy, advancing from Cloud River Level 1 to Level 2 would require just one gold-hued spirit fortune stick, from Level 2 to Level 3 would need two such sticks, from Level 3 to Level 4, perhaps three or four, and going from Level 4 to Level 5 would require even more...

Therefore, even with his considerable accumulation at the Level 3 stage, a single purple spirit fortune stick was insufficient to effect any change in his cultivation.

However, Lu Ye was quite satisfied with this.

Since his entry into the Cloud River battlefield less than two months ago, he had achieved the cultivation of Cloud River Level 3. While not unprecedented, such a rate of cultivation was rare in a century, giving him little cause for dissatisfaction.

Just as he was about to set off, a deep humming sound from an unknown source suddenly filled the air, instantly altering the color of the heavens and the earth.

Instinctively, Lu Ye raised his hand to grip the hilt of his blade, alert to his surroundings.

Before he could discern what had occurred, a dazzling light suddenly rose in the distant horizon, as bright as a newborn star.

Yet unsettlingly, this brilliant light emitted a blood-red hue.

The crimson light climbed to great heights, growing ever more intense. At that moment, cultivators within hundreds of thousands of miles could surely see it clearly.

Gazing at the ominous red light, Lu Ye furrowed his brow, pondering the various pieces of intelligence he had purchased from Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union.

He did not know what it was, but such tremendous disturbances were clearly not of human doing. On the battlefield of Cloud River Realm, cultivators of Cloud River did not possess such formidable powers.

If it was not man-made, then it must be a display of heaven's will.

Quickly, Lu Ye recalled some intelligence he had seen before. His expression changed abruptly. He turned around without summoning his spirit ark, instead activating the wings spirit runes. Fiery red light unfurled behind him, forming a pair of wings. With a flap of his wings, he soared skyward. Moreover, he augmented himself with the Move-Like-The-Wind Spirit Runes.

In that instant, Lu Ye maximized his speed, utterly disregarding the furious consumption of his spirit force as he fled in panic, as if pursued by a flood beast.

"Lu Ye, what's wrong?"

Amber's voice carried from within Yiyi, who was unaware of why Lu Ye seemed to be fleeing from pursuers. Sensing their surroundings, she detected no trace of enemies.

"We'll talk later!" Lu Ye was too busy fleeing for his life to explain further.

If this truly was as he suspected, then this was no place to linger, despite the potential opportunities it might offer; the dangers were far greater.

As a cultivator of Cloud River Level 3, it was best for him not to get involved in such matters.

Lu Ye fled in disarray, and behind him, the star-like brilliant red light hovered in the mid-air for at least one incense stick's time without any change until after one incense stick's time, the red light suddenly exploded. Immediately from that point, visible red spirit lines radiated outward in all directions.

Looking up, the sky seemed to be undergoing a meteor shower, with streaks of blood-red light slashing through the heavens, their range immensely vast.

In the time of one incense stick, with both the wings and the Move-Like-The-Wind Spirit Runes, Lu Ye had flown at least around two to three hundred miles!

Just then, Yiyi's alarmed voice reached him, "Be careful!"

The dazzling red light suddenly dropped into his field of view, plunging directly ahead and instantly transformed into a red spirit force screen.

Lu Ye's eyes narrowed. He had no time to slow his pace and could only cross his arms in front of him while twisting his body sideways.

With a boom, Lu Ye's body collided with the red spirit force screen, akin to hitting a wall. The red screen remained unmoved, while Lu Ye was violently bounced back, crashing heavily onto the ground, dazed and in pain all over.

Rising awkwardly, as he faced the red screen again, Lu Ye felt conflictably complicated emotions.

He had failed to escape after all... and the red screen appearing right before him seemed too coincidental.

After moving his body to ensure there were no fractures, Lu Ye turned to look up, seeing a layer of red screen enveloping the sky. The bright big sun was obscured.

If viewed from high above, this red screen would resemble a huge, inverted bowl, completely enclosing this land within tens of thousands of miles, isolating it from the outside, with Lu Ye currently at the edge of this inverted bowl.

Now that he was trapped here, he no longer needed to search for the Giant Armor.

Yiyi emerged, looking at the vast red screen with shock. The screen seemed to flow with red light, like blood circulating, exuding an ominous presence of doom and slaughter.

"Lu Ye, what is this?"

"A hunting ground!"

As Lu Ye spoke, he handed the intelligence jade slip he had previously purchased from the Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union to Yiyi. Explaining the complexity of the hunting ground in a moment was feasible, so he let Yiyi explore it on her own.

Yiyi took it and immersed her mind to explore the information about the hunting ground within.

Meanwhile, Lu Ye was surveying his surroundings.

If before he had only suspected, now he could confirm that this was indeed a hunting ground.

He just hadn't expected that he would encounter such an event.

The hunting ground is a term as well as a type of sudden event unique to the Cloud River battlefield, signaled by the rise of a red star and a curtain of blood covering the heavens.

The scope of a hunting ground can vary greatly, and the pattern of their occurrences is difficult to predict; sometimes they may not appear for a year or two, while other times several may appear within a single year.

The location of their emergence is completely random, but once a hunting ground appears, there is no leaving the area covered by the blood curtain until the hunting ground vanishes.

In other words, cultivators can enter a hunting ground from outside, but cannot leave until it disappears.

Judging by the expanse covered by this blood-colored light screen, this was undoubtedly a large hunting ground, as it instantly covered hundreds of thousands of miles.

Even for the cultivators of the Cloud River Realm, this was a vast area, yet relative to the entire Cloud River battlefield, hundreds of thousands of miles were but a trivial part of it.

Being called a hunting ground, there naturally wouldn't be a shortage of strife and slaughter.

On regular days, when unfamiliar cultivators of the Cloud River Realm met, conflicts were rare as no one knew which faction the other belonged to.

However, in the hunting ground, as soon as cultivators came within a certain distance of each other, their affiliations were blatantly exposed.

This aspect was somewhat similar to declaring war on the Spirit Stream battlefield.

On the Spirit Stream battlefield, when one sect declared war on another, the affiliated cultivators of both sides would reveal their own factions upon encountering each other, aiding unfamiliar cultivators in discerning friends from foes.

Since entering the Cloud River battlefield, aside from killing a few cultivators from the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge when reclaiming the spirit ground, Lu Ye had not killed anyone else.

This wasn't because he had cultivated his disposition; rather, he hadn't had the opportunity, as even if he encountered other cultivators in the wilderness, conflicts were unlikely to arise without clear knowledge of the other's faction.

But in the hunting ground, it was different; as long as the distance between each other was close enough, their affiliations were instantly clear, which could easily trigger conflicts and killings, especially when there was a vast difference in their cultivation levels.

This was also why Lu Ye had wanted to escape as soon as he sensed something was amiss.

As a Level 3 cultivator of the Cloud River Realm, regardless of his ability to defeat higher-level opponents, if he truly encountered someone from a Level 8 or 9, not to mention fighting them, escaping would likely be impossible.

For him, a sudden event like a hunting ground was far too dangerous.

Unfortunately..., he had not escaped; the scope of the hunting ground had just encompassed him, making him strongly suspect that he had been targeted, otherwise, it made no sense that he was only a few steps short.

Undoubtedly, the emergence of the hunting ground involved the workings of Heaven's Augury. Lu Ye felt Heaven's Augury to be elusive when he first encountered it, but as his cultivation increased and his horizon broadened, he gradually realized that the workings of Heaven's Augury were omnipresent in a cultivator's journey.

Though the hunting ground was rife with conflict and slaughter, correspondingly, it also held immense benefits and opportunities.

Not to mention anything else, the most commonly occurring items in the hunting ground were Heaven-bestowed spirit fortune sticks, and gold-hued spirit fortune sticks were likely to appear.

Heaven-bestowed spirit fortune sticks did not always contain gold-hued ones.

Just like when Lu Ye first entered the Cloud River battlefield, at that time, the clouds that appeared were only four-colored, so the highest-quality spirit fortune sticks that appeared were only purple.

Only five-colored clouds could bring forth gold-hued spirit fortune sticks.

Correspondingly, if there were three-colored clouds, then the highest-quality would be blue spirit fortune sticks.

If there were two colors, then only white and green spirit fortune sticks would appear.

Not only that, every emergence of a hunting ground was accompanied by the birth of a Hunting Ground Kills Ranking. Like the Spirit Stream Ranking, the top hundred spots were awarded by Heaven's Augury; as for what those rewards were, Lu Ye did not know, as the intelligence jade slips from the Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union did not record that detail.

Besides, Heaven's Augury selected one person in the hunting ground every day to bestow a gold-hued spirit fortune stick.

Do not think this was a fortunate event; for cultivators of low cultivation, it was simply a nightmare.

Because the gold-hued spirit fortune stick bestowed by Heaven's Augury was a special kind of spirit fortune stick, it could not be used directly or even stored in a storage sack. Only after twenty-four hours would this special gold-hued spirit fortune stick turn into a regular one, and only then could it truly be owned and used.

In other words, if a cultivator bestowed with a gold-hued spirit fortune stick wanted to keep it, they must possess it for twenty-four hours.

If it were only that, actually, it wouldn't be too hard, because if one could find a completely concealed place, hiding for twenty-four hours would suffice, something ghost cultivators excel at.