

## Humanity 571

### Chapter 571 The Pursuit

Wei Que staggered, covered in wounds, presenting a sight too horrible to endure.

First, he was ambushed by Lu Ye and others within the Great Delusion Array. Although he fortuitously destroyed the array, he was already at the end of his tether. Afterward, he was besieged by the crowd, and then he recklessly sacrificed that broken arrow treasure. One could say that he was truly at the point of complete exhaustion.

His vision blurred, and when he looked up, all he could see was the figure of Lu Ye swooping down from the sky, his features already indistinct.

The brilliantly shining saber light flashed past as the Boulder Mountain Saber easily sliced through Wei Que's weak protective spirit force, chopping down at his neck.

As they passed by each other, Lu Ye's feet plowed through the ground for several dozen feet before slowly stabilizing.

The maggot-like sense of crisis also vanished as he made that cut; after all, the broken arrow was controlled by Wei Que. Once he died, the treasure lost its power, its light retracting, reverting to its original form, and falling from the sky.

Lu Ye took a deep breath, turned around to look back, and saw Wei Que's headless corpse collapsing to the ground, blood spurting from the neck.

A Cloud River Level 9 cultivator, slain by him and Li Baxian and the others!

To achieve such a battle record, the Great Delusion Array had played a pivotal role. Within that array, Wei Que had little chance of withstanding their combined attacks.

It must be noted that previously in the hunting grounds, Lu Ye and two others had struggled immensely against a Level 7 Hea Bing. In the end, Lu Ye even had to resort to the Beast Transformation Secret Technique to kill him.

Although there's only a two-level difference between Level 7 and Level 9, the disparity in strength is like that between heaven and earth. Even though Lu Ye and his party's cultivation had advanced since their time in the hunting grounds, and even though they now had Giant Armor with them, without the Great Delusion Array, the group of four would not have stood a chance against Wei Que. It's most likely they would have been defeated one by one.

With Wei Que's life force extinguished, Tan Sheng and Xia Liang, who were still entangled with the wolf pack, were shocked. They never imagined that a Cloud River Level 9 Wei Que would actually be killed by Lu Yiye and the others.

Their current condition was also extremely miserable, marred with injuries all over, their clothes soaked with blood. Although they were very strong, facing the onslaught of an entire wolf pack was too much.

If it weren't for the wolves being somewhat restrained and not pushing too hard, they probably would have already lost their lives. Even so, both were seriously injured and their breathing was erratic.

Almost at the instant of Wei Que's death, Xia Liang suddenly roared in anger, his long saber gleaming with a shocking saber light as he ferociously slashed forward.

With that strike, the already teetering trap array finally could no longer hold and exploded into fragments.

Previously, seeing Wei Que in a critical situation, they already knew that this mission to kill Lu Yiye was doomed, so they had been looking for ways to escape. Covered by the trap array, the only way out was to break it.

Under their guidance, the remnants of the fight with the wolf pack spread in every direction.

After all, it was an unmanned array; while strong, it wasn't invincible. Gradually whittled down, it finally shattered under Xia Liang's thunderous blow.

"Go!" Xia Liang shouted lowly. He dashed out first, and Tan Sheng quickly followed him. Although Wei Que had died right under their noses, neither had any intention of avenging him.

Their relationship was one of cooperation. Wei Que's careless mistake, which led to his death at the hands of several Cloud River Level 4-5 cultivators, was his own folly.

Besides, their own situation was perilous, and if they didn't flee soon, they too would be left behind.

The figures of the two dashed out one after the other. Howling wolves sounded, and pale green Wind Blades flew towards them, causing Xia Liang and Tan Sheng to fend awkwardly and sustain new injuries.

Unfortunately, the demon wolves could not travel through the air, so when the two men decided to flee, the wolves couldn't stop them.

Lu Ye on the other hand had just slain Wei Que, barely stabilizing his own surging spirit force, and hadn't had time to deal with Tan Sheng and Xia Liang when he saw them breaking the trap array and escaping.

He immediately dashed to pursue them.

Under normal circumstances, he would never chase two Level 9 cultivators, as this would be no different from seeking death.

But at this moment, both Tan Sheng and Xia Liang were severely injured and it was uncertain how much of their true strength they could exert. This was the perfect opportunity to eradicate them completely; otherwise, once they recovered it would become extremely difficult to kill them.

Seeing this, Li Baxian also hurriedly pursued with his Sword Control, and at the same time, called out, "Yuechan, stay behind to take care of Junior Brother Giant Armor!"

Giant Armor had been injured by that broken arrow earlier, and although physique cultivators were tough and had strong recovery abilities, he still suffered a wound that penetrated his body. Since then, he had been kneeling on the ground, his condition unknown.

The pursuit was enough for him and Lu Ye; if they could kill their targets, the two of them could do it together. If not, adding Feng Yuechan would not make a difference.

Feng Yuechan stopped in her tracks upon hearing this and watched as Lu Ye and Li Baxian turned into streaks of light, chasing out of the spirit ground and into the depths of Great Wilderness Mountain.

A pack of demon wolves, under the lead wolf's command, followed Lu Ye out, seemingly intent on aiding him. But after only half an hour, the wolves returned.

Not being able to fly was indeed a disadvantage; even if they could run swiftly through the mountains and forests, they could not outpace weapon control-flying. After chasing for a while and losing sight of Lu Ye and the others, the demon wolves could only return.

By that time, Feng Yuechan had already bandaged Giant Armor's wounds. His injury appeared formidable, but in reality, it was not a big problem; he only needed a day or two of rest to recover.

She did not know the situation with Li Baxian and Lu Ye, attempted to send a message, but received no response; she could only wait silently.

At this moment, Lu Ye and Li Baxian had chased for about 30 miles. Tan Sheng and Xia Liang ahead showed no signs of stopping, desperately fleeing while their blood kept dripping behind them, which increasingly confirmed Lu Ye's suspicion that these two were in bad shape.

Otherwise, it didn't make sense for two Level 9 cultivators to appear so disheveled.

Back then, in the hunting ground, Lu Ye had been chased around with no place to hide, hardly two months later, the situation had completely reversed. Indeed, as the saying goes, "Thirty years on the east bank of the river, thirty years on the west; fortunes of the world can change in an instant."

In the midst of fleeing, Tan Sheng roared, "Lu Yiye, let's stop this, if we continue, nobody will end well!"

This area was deep within Great Wilderness Mountain, where many powerful demon beasts resided. Even if cultivators came here on regular days, they moved stealthily, daring not to cause any disturbances for fear of alerting some demon beast.

The ruckus caused by their chase was significant, and if it alerted some powerful demon beasts, not only would Tan Sheng and Xia Liang not end well, but Lu Ye and Li Baxian would be in the same situation.

So, the best response would be for Lu Ye to stop and let them go.

However, faced with Tan Sheng's shouting, Lu Ye remained unmoved.

If he missed such a rare opportunity, it would be impossible to kill these two on the Cloud River battlefield in the future. Both were Cloud River Level 9 cultivators, who could be promoted to True Lake at any time. Once they were promoted, they would certainly leave the Cloud River battlefield.

Lu Ye had been hunted down without a place to turn in the hunting ground, and he remembered this grudge well. Furthermore, they had found the spirit ground. If he didn't completely eliminate them now, the location of the spirit ground would certainly be exposed, and that could lead to future troubles.

Wei Que was already dead. As long as he could kill these two, then the existence of the spirit ground would at least not be revealed.

With such a resolute killing intent, how could Lu Ye sway by mere words?

Moreover, the more Tan Sheng spoke like this, the more it showed his dire situation. Otherwise, he would just stop and settle it with a fight.

"Lu Yiye, must we both perish together?" Tan Sheng roared again.

Lu Ye remained silent, but Li Baxian scoffed, "If you really have the ability, let's fight and see who dies and who, amongst us brothers, perishes!"

Tan Sheng fleeing ahead almost bit his teeth to pieces. He, like Xia Liang, was a Cloud River Level 9 cultivator. Usually, on the Cloud River battlefield, they wouldn't claim to summon the wind and rain, but they were at least among the very top tier of the strong. When had they ever been chased so miserably by two Level 4-5 Cloud River cultivators?

It's almost unbelievable when said out loud.

Yet, today, this bizarre event had happened to them, filling them with both rage and frustration.

If it weren't for the severity of their injuries, would Lu Yiye and Li Baxian dare to be so presumptuous before them?

Their injuries from the fight with the wolf pack were too severe, leaving them now unable to exert even one-third of their usual strength, let alone shake off the pursuit of their enemies.

What's more, as time passed, their condition became increasingly worse, slowing the speed of their weapon control-flying.

If this continued, being caught up by Lu Yiye and Li Baxian was just a matter of time.

"Brother Xia!" Tan Sheng turned his head toward Xia Liang and saw that the strong saber user from Mad Saber Sect looked pale as paper, with a chaotic breath, but his eyes were still as sharp as a blade.

During the tangle with the wolf pack, Xia Liang had sustained much more severe injuries than him because Xia Liang had shown greater strength, making the wolf pack target Xia Liang even more, which put most of the pressure on him.

In response to Tan Sheng's inquiry, Xia Liang coldly uttered one word: "Fight!"

There was no escaping now. If they continued like this, their condition would only worsen. By the time they were completely drained, they might not even have the chance to fight.

While they still had the strength for one last battle, perhaps there was a chance to kill those two, who were, after all, only Level 4-5 Cloud River cultivators.

Although Tan Sheng knew this wasn't the best course of action, there was no better option. He nodded slightly, "Then we fight!"

As the words fell, the two of them flew straight down toward the ground and landed one after another a moment later.

Given their condition, it was no longer suitable for them to fight through air, as that would consume even more strength. Hence, fighting on the ground was the best choice.

As soon as they landed, Lu Ye and Li Baxian followed close behind and stopped less than a hundred meters from them.

Eight pairs of eyes collided across the space, fiery sparks seemingly flying, and the atmosphere in the wilderness suddenly turned oppressive.

Li Baxian grabbed the wine gourd at his waist, took a casual swig, and casually asked, "Junior brother, which one will you choose?"

Lu Ye's gaze fixed on Xia Liang as he slowly advanced forward.

Li Baxian nodded, "Then I'll take the other one." As the words came out, he spat out a breath, and a dozen flying swords shot towards Tan Sheng.

#### Chapter 572 Unexpected Guests

Flying swords shot through the Void, relentlessly assaulting Tan Sheng, who thrust out his long spear, creating blooms of spear points that blocked the incoming flying swords. The clanging and clinking sounds were endless; indeed, as a Cloud River Level 9 cultivator, even when faced with such fierce and dense onslaught, he could defend flawlessly, and he even had the energy to counterattack. Withstanding the attack of numerous flying swords, he continuously pressed towards Li Baxian's direction.

Li Baxian was a sword cultivator, and moreover, the purest type of sword cultivator. Against such an enemy, Tan Sheng knew he couldn't afford to create distance; otherwise, under the constant assault of flying swords, there would be no chance to catch one's breath. Dealing with a sword cultivator was somewhat similar to dealing with a magic cultivator; one had to close the distance and not give the sword cultivator space for Sword Control.

But even if he closed the distance for close combat, it would be more dangerous than facing a magic cultivator because sword cultivators were also combat cultivators, and close-quarters fighting was their daily bread.

Li Baxian grabbed his wine gourd and took a big gulp; while letting out a satisfied burp, more flying swords appeared behind him, spreading out. With a single thought, numerous flying swords shot out as if chasing the stars and moon, blocking Tan Sheng's advance for a moment.

While the battle raged intensely on one side, Lu Ye and Xia Liang's figures were both rushing forward simultaneously.

Both of them were combat cultivators who wielded sabers, and one of them was even from the Mad Saber Sect, the most orthodox of saber users.

Compared with sword cultivators, saber users were not lacking in the ability to kill, and even had a more unyielding spirit.

So even though Xia Liang was heavily injured at the moment, pale-faced, and facing an opponent with several levels lower cultivation, he did not have the slightest intention to retreat.

Neither of them had any intention of testing the waters with weapon control; the hundred paces closed rapidly, and they collided with a boom.

With a loud clang, spirit force went berserk, and the two long sabers collided, locking eyes at close range.



The ground beneath their feet cracked like a spiderweb due to the collision, with violent air waves sweeping out in all directions, causing the surrounding trees to sway.

After a momentary deadlock, they both exerted force violently, the long sabers crossed each other, Lu Ye's saber aiming for Xia Liang's neck, and Xia Liang's saber thrusting towards Lu Ye's chest.

In that brief engagement, both were ready to stake their lives; such was the clash between saber users—no frills, only harsh ruthlessness.

Defense Spirit Runes shattered at Lu Ye's chest, blood sprayed, while a thin red line appeared on Xia Liang's neck with beads of blood seeping out. In that moment, both had brushed past Death's door.

Their retreating figures almost simultaneously pressed forward again, the long sabers slicing through the air, leaving a stark trail of light. With a tink, they separated after contact, searching for another opportunity to kill.

Moving swiftly, sabers constantly clashed, with an endless sequence of metallic collisions, each encounter a fierce collision of spirit force.

Since beginning his cultivation, Lu Ye had fought and struggled against countless enemies. Many foes had fallen to his Boulder Mountain Saber, the strong and the weak; the weak could fall to his saber with one strike, the strong were difficult to match. But never had he faced a battle as perilous as today's.

The fight with Xia Liang made him truly understand what it meant to walk on the edge of life and death.

Each of them wielded their sabers with the intent to kill the other while preserving themselves, but it only took moments to realize that this was impossible.

For if they sought to kill their enemy, they themselves would surely be killed in return. The most likely scenario would be mutual destruction.

A situation no one could accept.

The frequency of the flashing saber edges became faster and the collisions of the long sabers grew more intense. Lu Ye acutely sensed that Xia Liang's blood Qi was converging towards the arm that wielded the saber, obviously employing the Blood Moving Technique.

In terms of cultivation, he was inferior to Xia Liang; the gap spanned a good five levels, an insurmountable difference.

Yet in this moment, he was evenly matched with Xia Liang, all because his opponent, heavily injured, could not exert his full strength.

This was undoubtedly advantageous for him.

As time passed, Xia Liang's condition would worsen, while he, on the other hand, would grow stronger as he continuously merged with the Amber blood Qi.

Should he reach the stage where he could trigger the Beast Transformation, Xia Liang would certainly have no doubt of his death.

But this required time and accumulation of momentum; since obtaining the Beast Transformation Secret Technique, he had only managed to trigger it during his fight with Hea Bing.

Nevertheless, Lu Ye did not hesitate with his saber at all.

Xia Liang was clearly aware that dragging the fight out was to his disadvantage; thus, with each strike, he used almost all his strength, and despite the bleeding, his attacks grew more and more powerful.

Another collision of long sabers resulted in both of them faltering from the recoil, yet at that very instant, Lu Ye felt a surge of alarm in his heart.

Glancing up, he saw Xia Liang with his saber horizontal in front of him, one hand on the hilt and the other pushing across the blade. A burst of violent spirit force suddenly erupted, and a brilliant slash of saber light took shape.

The speed of this slash was so swift that Lu Ye did not have any time to react. Fortunately, he had already been retreating the moment he sensed danger.

Still, a sharp pain surged through his chest.

He had been hit, and as his heart sank, Lu Ye did not know what kind of technique Xia Liang's slash was, but it was definitely a secret technique, because it was stronger than all the previous strikes.

The moment he got hit, Lu Ye's figure did not retreat but advanced, and under Xia Liang's astonished gaze, he struck down with his saber.

Single Flash!

...

Blood splattered out.

Repeated Slashing!

However, by the time the second sabre came down, Xia Liang had already blocked it, the ferocious force sending him flying, and Lu Ye staggered a bit as well.

Move-Like-The-Wind was applied to his legs, and Lu Ye, seizing the advantage, mercilessly attacked Xia Liang with an oppressive ferocity. The blade whirled, and momentarily Xia Liang was pressed so hard that he struggled to defend himself, incurring several new wounds on his body.

Although his sabre secret technique had injured Lu Ye, using the technique with heavily wounded body also placed a tremendous burden on himself.

Under normal circumstances, having been injured by Xia Liang, Lu Ye would have retreated, giving Xia Liang a chance to breathe and prepare his next attack.

But to his surprise, instead of retreating after sustaining the injury, Lu Ye counterattacked on impulse and then pressed on, which made Xia Liang's situation even more dire.

What made him feel worse was that his opponent seemed to become stronger as the battle raged on. When they first crossed blades, they were equally matched, but at this point, the speed and power of Lu Ye's sabre strokes had intensified compared to before, breaking the balance, and all Xia Liang could do was defend against Lu Ye's attacks.

Even as he was being steadily driven back, Xia Liang did not give up resistance; he snatched glances toward the other side of the battlefield and felt a chill run through him.

Because Tan Sheng's situation was even worse than his own.

That was Li Baxian after all, a legend who had spent more than a decade in the Spirit Stream Realm. Although he now only had the cultivation of Level 5, the power he could wield was undoubtedly beyond that.

Tan Sheng was no lighter in injury than he was, and was inferior in strength. Facing Li Baxian in such a condition, there was no chance for a good outcome.

He couldn't even get close to Li Baxian, and despite his utmost effort, could only block the incoming swords, occasionally receiving new injuries.

How did things develop to this stage?

The three of them, all at Level 9, came to Great Wilderness Mountain spiritedly seeking revenge on Lu Yiye, but ended up with one dead first, and the remaining two being chased to this point, with their lives hanging by a thread.

Before setting out, they had considered countless possibilities, including Lu Yiye escaping through a teleportation array, using the Heaven's Augury Pillar to flee, or using some other means to flee... But now, they were the ones fleeing, and still got caught up to.

This is the end!

Xia Liang knew that this time, he was unlikely to escape calamity.

Without the will to live, a determined look appeared on his face, and Lu Ye, who was fiercely attacking, immediately noticed the change and kept a reserve of strength, just in case.

As expected, in the next moment, Xia Liang completely gave up on defense. His spirit force surged wildly, adopting a posture of fighting for life with life, clashing with Lu Ye using a variety of exquisite sabre skills, and momentarily there was a sign of turning the bleak situation around.

However, by now the integration of blood Qi between Lu Ye and Amber had reached an extremely profound level, with each strike of his sabre able to borrow strength from Amber. It wouldn't take long before he might even be able to unleash the Beast Transformation Secret Technique. So no matter what Xia Liang did, it was merely the struggle of a trapped beast.

Just then, Lu Ye suddenly noticed some unusual noise, which made him furrow his brows.

In the next moment, a series of sounds of breaking air closed in rapidly from not far away, followed by a series of Liu Guang flashing into his field of vision.

The Liu Guang scattered, revealing many figures, encircling the battlefield where several people were located.

How could there be so many people deep inside Great Wilderness Mountain? Lu Ye wondered.

Most importantly, he did not know the origins of these people.

There were not a few who came; there must be more than a dozen of them, and judging from the fluctuations of spirit force emanating from them, several were unmistakably at the Level 9 cultivation, while the rest were mostly above Level 6.

Such a group of uninvited guests was indeed not low in cultivation.

The fierce battle ceased instantly, not only did Lu Ye and Xia Liang stop fighting, but Li Baxian and Tan Sheng stopped as well, separating and gathering in pairs, each on their guard.

In a life-and-death struggle, suddenly this group of people appeared. Who would dare to make a move without knowing the situation?

Even if Lu Ye and Li Baxian were unwilling, they were helpless.

In contrast, Tan Sheng and Xia Liang both breathed a sigh of relief. Regardless of which camp these people belonged to, at least the two of them had no immediate threat to their lives.

To live a little longer is to live a little longer... What if these were people from Ten Thousand Demons Ridge?

Next to Li Baxian, Lu Ye held the Boulder Mountain Saber, his spirit force steaming and blood Qi churning. He turned to glance at him.

Li Baxian slowly shook his head to indicate he didn't recognize anyone who had arrived.

Although he had a wide network and lingered for more than a decade on the Spirit Stream battlefield, seeing off one batch after another of Spirit Stream Realm cultivators, he mostly stayed in the Loyal Heart Sect encampment during his time on the Spirit Stream battlefield, and seldom went out. Those he encountered were mostly the powerhouses listed on the Spirit Stream Ranking, and he did not know many who were not on the Ranking. Thus, although there were quite a few newcomers, he truly hadn't seen them before.

Chapter 573 Everybody is Family

In the midst of the chaotic battlefield, a group of unexpected visitors suddenly arrived and surrounded the area, causing the four fighting individuals to cease their combat.

Li Baxian was sizing up the group, trying to guess their origins, and so were Xia Liang and Tan Sheng.

Their situation was rather grim; they were unlikely to live past today if things went as expected, so they actually welcomed the arrival of these cultivators.

If they were from the Haotian Alliance, then there would be nothing more to say, as death was the only outcome either way.

But if those who had come were from Ten Thousand Demons Ridge, it would be akin to finding a lifesaver in a dire situation.

As he observed, Xia Liang's eyes suddenly brightened and he called out to one of the cultivators at Level 9, "Is that Zhou Yuntian from the Burning Sky Valley, Brother Zhou?"

As soon as these words were spoken, both Lu Ye and Li Baxian's expressions turned solemn.

Things had become troublesome!

The Burning Sky Valley was a known force within Ten Thousand Demons Ridge, and Xia Liang's ability to name Zhou Yuntian indicated a familiarity, suggesting a high probability that these people were from Ten Thousand Demons Ridge!

Recognized by his name, Zhou Yuntian glanced at Xia Liang, his eyes flashing with thoughtfulness, "Are you Xia Liang from the Mad Saber Sect, Brother Xia?"

Xia Liang nodded his head, "Indeed, it's Xia!"

From their conversation, it was clear they knew each other, though they were not very close. However, even so, this was a disaster for Lu Ye and Li Baxian.

They had dared to pursue someone at Level 9 simply because Xia Liang and Tan Sheng were seriously wounded. But now facing so many cultivators from Ten Thousand Demons Ridge, how could they be considered their match?

Even the hope of escape was a luxury; the opposition had immediately surrounded the area, greater in both numbers and strength, leaving no space for escape. Any rash move would likely trigger an all-out assault.

Lu Ye's thoughts raced as he tried to devise a strategy to break through, but he could find none; the situation was seemingly a certain death scenario.

After a brief exchange of pleasantries, Zhou Yuntian asked, "Brother Xia, what has brought you to such a sorry state?"

Xia Liang sighed, "A tiger that falls to the plains is better off not mentioned. There's something I'd like to ask of Brother Zhou."

Zhou Yuntian gestured with his hand, "Please speak, Brother Xia."

Xia Liang cast a cold gaze towards Lu Ye and Li Baxian and sternly said, "I ask you to kill these two men; I would be immensely grateful." His current physical condition was not suitable for fighting; his injuries were too severe. Without some time to recover, he wouldn't regain his vital energy. Although he disliked the idea of relying on someone else, there was no better choice at this point.

His main purpose for coming here was to avenge Yanh Xing and to quench his desire for revenge, Li Baxian's death would fulfill that wish, regardless of whether or not it was by his own hand.

"Oh?" Zhou Yuntian lightly chuckled, seemingly curious, "I wonder, Brother Xia, what grievances do you have with these two Fellow Daoists that led to such a fierce fight here?"

They had also been drawn here by the intense fighting that they had detected; otherwise, in the vast Great Wilderness Mountain, and so deep within, how could they fortuitously have arrived at this location?

Pointing at Li Baxian, Xia Liang sneered, "Brother Zhou, take a good look, do you see who that is?"



Zhou Yuntian then turned his gaze to Lu Ye and Li Baxian, briefly glancing over Lu Ye without much concern, but his expression changed when he saw Li Baxian, voicing his astonishment and doubt, "You are... Li Baxian?"

Li Baxian didn't recognize him, but he recognized Li Baxian.

The legend of the Spirit Stream battlefield was known to all. Indeed, if Li Baxian were not wearing a mask, were he to walk through the Cloud River battlefield, at least five out of ten people would likely recognize him, including Feng Yuechan.

Therefore, upon seeing Li Baxian, Zhou Yuntian was quite surprised as he hadn't expected to encounter this legend at the Cloud River battlefield.

With his words, others also began to cast their gazes towards Li Baxian, with someone nodding, "That's indeed Li Baxian. I saw him from a distance once at the Spirit Stream battlefield, it's definitely him."

"Wasn't he and Feng Yuechan always self-sealing their cultivation, staying at the Spirit Stream battlefield? How come he suddenly appeared at the Cloud River battlefield?"

"Judging by his cultivation, he's already reached Level 5 of the Cloud River Realm. It seems he's been at the Cloud River battlefield for some time now. We've been out of touch with the outside world for a long time and have missed a lot of interesting events."

"..."

The group of people chatted among themselves without hiding anything, making Lu Ye and Li Baxian look rather awkward.

Both were prepared for a desperate battle to the death. Truly, they had no chance against these people, but they would never sit around and wait for death. Even if they couldn't escape, they intended to take a few enemies down with them before dying. Those at Level 8-9 were not easy to kill, but Tan Sheng and Xia Liang were definitely going to die!

But now, it seemed that this group had no ill intentions towards them?

Lu Ye was at a loss, and so was Li Baxian, who glanced at Zhou Yuntian and nodded, "Indeed, I am Li Baxian. What advice does Fellow Daoist have for me?"

A trace of panic appeared on Zhou Yuntian's face. "Fellow Daoist Li takes this too seriously. I dare not offer any advice. When I was cultivating on the Spirit Stream battlefield, Fellow Daoist Li's reputation was already well established. Although my cultivation is higher than Fellow Daoist Li's now, it is only because I entered the Cloud River battlefield earlier. If we had entered the Cloud River battlefield at the same time, Fellow Daoist would probably have already advanced to the True Lake. Please do not belittle me."

His extremely humble demeanor made Li Baxian feel quite uncomfortable, and he internally lamented, What is this nonsense? A cultivator from Ten Thousand Demons Ridge, upon recognizing him, not only did not show any hostility but was also so respectful... When did his reputation become so significant?

Confused about the situation, Tan Sheng and Xia Liang were just as puzzled. Xia Liang frowned and said, "Brother Zhou, Li Baxian is from the Loyal Heart Sect!"

Zhou Yuntian nodded: "I am well aware of that."

You are aware?

You know and still don't strike immediately?

Seeing that Xia Liang seemed to want to say something else, Zhou Yuntian laughed and raised his hand to stop him, "Brother Xia, I know what you mean, but there is no factional distinction here. Since we've come here, we are all one family; there's no need to speak of Haotian Alliance or Ten Thousand Demons Ridge anymore. I do not know what grudges existed between the four of you before, causing such a fight here, but since fate has brought us together, let's leave those past grievances behind."

The incomprehensible speech left the group of four startled. Historically, the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge and the Haotian Alliance were always in opposition, and the cultivators of these two camps fought endlessly, accruing blood feuds that could never be washed away. In the Spirit Stream and Cloud River

battlefields, regardless of whether the cultivators knew each other or not, if they were from different camps, they had a reason to fight.

Even if Zhou Yuntian were just at Cloud River Level 9, let alone the peak of the Divine Sea Realm, he wouldn't have the authority to resolve the enmity brought about by the opposition of the two camps.

Moreover, the four not only stood on opposing sides but also had personal enmities. Otherwise, Lu Ye wouldn't have chased after and tried to utterly annihilate them here.

Yet Zhou Yuntian's words seemed heartfelt, and strangely, not a single cultivator around showed any sign of rejection. Instead, they all nodded in agreement, with some even advising the four that it would be better to keep the peace. The situation was truly bizarre.

Xia Liang and Tan Sheng both looked at Zhou Yuntian as if he were crazy. If they weren't in such poor shape, they probably would've cursed out loud by now.

Although Li Baxian sensed something strange, he kept nodding his head, "Quite right, quite right, it is always best to live in harmony, constantly fighting and killing, what kind of behavior is that!"

Cornered, and although annoyed that these uninvited guests disrupted his plan with Lu Ye to eliminate all threats, the current situation was much better than being surrounded and attacked by this group of people.

When Xia Liang outright exposed Zhou Yuntian's full name, Li Baxian almost had his last words prepared...

"Fellow Daoist Li really understands the bigger picture and recognizes righteousness!" Zhou Yuntian smiled at Li Baxian, looking greatly appreciative.

Li Baxian responded with a smile, looking genteel and cultured.

Just then, a wooshing sound accompanied by the surge of spirit force approached from the depths of the dense forest, and Zhou Yuntian looked up, his expression suddenly solemn, and whispered, "The Venerable One arrives!"

As he spoke, the dozen or so cultivators all underwent a serious change in demeanor, slightly bowing their bodies, ready to receive with respect.

Their exaggerated reaction, coupled with Zhou Yuntian's mention of a 'Venerable One', caused both Lu Ye and Li Baxian to grow serious, faintly sensing that Zhou Yuntian's 'Venerable One' must be an extraordinary person, or else they wouldn't have brought such reverence from a group of Cloud River Realm cultivators.

Looking in the direction of the sound, whether it was Lu Ye, Li Baxian, Tan Sheng, or Xia Liang, they all showed astonishment in their eyes.

They saw four figures flying through the air, and judging by the fluctuations of spirit force emanating from them, these four were all cultivators of Cloud River Level 9.

If there were only four Level 9 cultivators, that wouldn't be enough to shock Lu Ye and the others.

What astonished them was the attitude of these four Level 9 cultivators. They surrounded a leisure lounge couch, floating forward, positioned at the front, back, left, and right, all carrying it together.

The leisure lounge couch was draped with a layer of pink, semi-transparent curtains, and through them, one could vaguely see a figure reclining lazily inside, whose enchanting lines alone were enough to excite one's blood. The enchanting fragrance wafted with the wind even before the person arrived, casting an amorous aura over the battlefield, which had been filled with the scent of blood.

Lu Ye was puzzled, failing to understand who could possibly be lying on that couch, commanding such lowly submission from four Cloud River Level 9 cultivators. In the Cloud River battlefield, those who could cultivate to Cloud River Level 9 were all proud individuals; even when facing someone more powerful than themselves, at most they would address them as a 'Fellow Daoist.'

Just from the faint glimpse of the silhouette through the curtains, it was apparent that the person on the couch was a woman!

In the blink of an eye, the leisure lounge couch arrived above everyone's heads, with the four Level 9 cultivators standing solemnly in the air.

The mountain breeze blew stronger, intensifying the fragrance around everyone's noses – a scent Lu Ye had never encountered before, indescribable yet fascinating, with a mysterious power that invited intoxication, compelling anyone who smelled it to desire more.

"We welcome the Venerable One!"

Led by Zhou Yuntian, the dozen-plus cultivators who had already arrived, all spoke in unison, their demeanors utterly reverent.

Lu Ye even noticed a few discreetly inhaling desperately, as if trying to savour more of the fragrance.

His face grew somber as he quietly observed Li Baxian, noting that the other was also on guard. Clearly, both of them sensed the abnormality of the situation.

#### Chapter 574 Mysterious Method

From the moment he encountered Zhou Yuntian and his group, the air was filled with an eerie, strange aura.

This Zhou Yuntian hails from Burning Sky Valley and belongs to the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge camp. If so, then the other cultivators with him must also be from Ten Thousand Demons Ridge.

Yet even after recognizing Li Baxian, they showed no hostility towards him and even went as far as declaring that there were no factional divides here, presumptuously offering to dissolve the grievances between both parties.

At this point, an inexplicably prestigious Venerable One made a dazzling entrance, commanding the utmost respect from Zhou Yuntian and his company.

The ones carrying the leisure lounge couch that the Venerable One was on turned out to be four Cloud River Level 9 cultivators!

This Venerable One... who in the world could they be?

The sight before his eyes was undoubtedly difficult for both Lu Ye and Li Baxian to comprehend, and Xia Liang and Tan Sheng were equally full of doubts.

In the silent field, a voice suddenly rang out, "Newcomers, huh?"

The voice came from within the leisure lounge couch, lazy and sweet, touching one's heartstrings invisibly as if a little hand was playing music upon them, causing Lu Ye's heart to throb violently with the sound and an inexplicable craving to surge within him.

With the sound of the voice came not only the pounding of the heart but a relaxation of the spirit. Despite not being able to see clearly the woman on the couch, just hearing this voice alone gave a sensation of profound warmth, as if one could drown in it completely.

Lu Ye felt a strong sense of alarm inside, and Li Baxian by his side clearly sensed something was amiss as well. His brows knit together tightly, his eyes vigilant. Glancing over at Tan Sheng and Xia Liang, Li Baxian's expression turned even more solemn.

Because at this moment both of them appeared to be in a daze, their gaze fixed on the silhouette atop the couch, their eyes brimming with a fervent glow.

Tan Sheng and Xia Liang possessed strengths far above that of Lu Ye and his company, both of noble birth, so logically they shouldn't be in such a weak state. However, both were heavily injured with vast consumption of spirit force and mental energy, explaining why their reactions were significantly worse than Lu Ye's group.

Zhou Yuntian respectfully replied, "To inform the Venerable One, these four Fellow Daoists seemed to have some disputes and were fighting here, which we have stopped."

"Mhm," the lazy voice from the lounge couch sounded again, murmuring faintly, "These two at Level 9 aren't bad."

Then, Lu Ye felt a gaze that seemed to penetrate the curtains and fall upon him, "Those two are somewhat lacking."

Zhou Yuntian immediately said, "For the Venerable One to know, one of these two is Fellow Daoist Li Baxian, a legend of the Spirit Stream battlefield. Although his cultivation is modest, his potential is boundless. Should he advance to Cloud River Level 9 one day, he will undoubtedly help the Venerable One achieve long-held wishes. As for the individual by his side... this subordinate does not recognize him, but anyone who travels with Li Baxian must not be inept."

"Is that so..." The Venerable One murmured softly, as if pondering something, then quickly made a decision, "Then bring them all back."

"Yes!"

Zhou Yuntian's conversation with the Venerable One did not miss a single word in reaching Lu Ye's ears, making his mood inexplicably heavier. Before, he just felt the situation was somewhat strange, many things hard to understand, and now, there were even more puzzling matters.

Because Zhou Yuntian, a Level 9 cultivator, was actually calling himself a subordinate in front of that Venerable One!

This Venerable One... who exactly are they?

Looking at the current situation, not only Zhou Yuntian, but all the cultivators present here were subordinates to that Venerable One.

What miraculous methods does she possess, to have so many proud cultivators serve her?

Suddenly, a vast expanse of pink mist wafted out from the lounge couch, rolling towards Lu Ye and the others' position.

Lu Ye reached his hand to the Boulder Mountain Saber, his spirit force surging, while Li Baxian was surrounded by the clang of swords, with flying swords circling him.

But before either could act, they were firmly locked in place by powerful auras from all directions, their movements instantly frozen as Zhou Yuntian said, "Fellow Daoist Li, there is no need to be restless. The Venerable One harbors no ill will towards you all, merely wishing to invite you as guests."

His words sounded pleasant, but should Li Baxian and Lu Ye truly resist, they would surely face suppression from these people.

Given the current situation, how could the two of them contend? Perhaps even escaping was a luxury.

Lu Ye and Li Baxian exchanged a glance, each seeing helplessness in the other's eyes. Now they were indeed lambs to the slaughter.

The pink mist engulfed a vast area and was filled with the intoxicating scent they had smelled earlier.

Lu Ye immediately noticed something off with his Talent Tree his spirit delved into it, only to see a layer of grey mist engulfing the tree.

This pink mist... it was poisonous, albeit not fiercely so, which is why the Talent Tree's reaction was mild.

He was about to channel his spirit force for protection when Zhou Yuntian's voice rose again, "I must ask all Fellow Daoists not to resist!"

The sound had lost its previous gentleness and taken on a chilly tone, clearly indicating that if Lu Ye and others resisted, these people would proceed to suppress them.



Lu Ye stood quietly in his spot, pondering the purpose of this pink mist. Given its mild toxicity and their apparent lack of intention to kill, what could it be for?

"Plop, plop," two soft sounds were heard. Lu Ye turned his head, only to see Xia Liang and Tan Sheng suddenly collapse, falling into a deep slumber.

Li Baxian next to him staggered, then slumped down languidly.

Following close behind Li Baxian, Lu Ye pitched forward onto the ground, with Amber on his shoulder succumbing to sleep as well.

"Bring them all back," said the Venerable One in that soft, sweet tone once more.

"Yes!" Zhou Yuntian replied.

Suddenly, Lu Ye felt someone grab his clothes by the waist and lift him up. A gust of wind whizzed by, and he stealthily opened his eyes to look; he saw that Amber was being carried in another hand by the same person.

They headed deeper into Great Wilderness Mountain, and it wasn't until roughly an hour later that there were signs of descending.

Lu Ye pretended to remain unconscious, not daring to open his eyes, and thus unaware of their exact location. However, the sounds of many people greeting each other reached his ears, along with many strong fluctuations of life force around them.

It seemed that quite a number of cultivators had gathered here.

There was the sound of a door being pushed open, and shortly after, Lu Ye felt himself being placed on a bed. Then Zhou Yuntian's voice followed, "You all go and rest. I will watch over here."

Someone responded, "Then we'll leave it to Brother Zhou."

"No problem."

The others left one after another, leaving only Zhou Yuntian behind to keep watch.

Lu Ye lay motionless, quietly sensing his surroundings. He could hear several even breathing sounds next to him, presumably from Li Baxian and the others who were unconscious.

After a moment, the door was pushed open again, and Zhou Yuntian said respectfully, "Venerable One."

A fragrant breeze blew in, the same intoxicating scent that Lu Ye had smelled earlier.

Then, Lu Ye felt the Venerable One standing not far from him, though he didn't know what she was busy with. Lu Ye distinctly felt a unique force fluctuating intensely.

A few moments later, a soft groan could be heard—it seemed to come from Xia Liang.

The Venerable One moved her steps, and that unique force fluctuated again. After a while, another grunt was heard, this time from Tan Sheng.

It wasn't killing, for Lu Ye could tell that Tan Sheng and Xia Liang were still alive, which piqued his curiosity about what exactly the Venerable One was doing.

Soon it was Li Baxian's turn. Just like the previous two, a muffled groan was heard.

The scent lingering at the tip of his nose became much stronger. Lu Ye felt the Venerable One had moved closer to him, and the next moment, two warm and soft fingers touched his forehead.

That unique force fluctuated again, and instantly, Lu Ye felt his mind suffer a slight shock, followed by some inexplicable things entering his mind.

Involuntarily, he also grunted.

The warm fingers like jade moved away, and the Venerable One's voice, with a hint of weakness, commanded Zhou Yuntian, "After they wake up, have them wash up and bring them to see me. They stink to death."

"Yes!" Zhou Yuntian respectfully acknowledged.

The footsteps receded quickly, evidently, the Venerable One had left.

At this time, Lu Ye concentrated on inspecting his Talent Tree. As he observed, a great deal of gray fog arose on the tree, but it soon completely disappeared, and the Talent Tree returned to normal.

What kind of mysterious method had the Venerable One used on him?

Lu Ye reflected on the recent events. When the Venerable One had employed her method, his mind had clearly suffered a huge shock, and some inexplicable things had appeared in his mind.

It shouldn't be poison, but since the Talent Tree reacted, it indicated that whatever had entered his body was harmful. Thus, no matter what it was, it had been completely burned away by the Talent Tree, sparing him any effects.

He had the Talent Tree to protect him, but his fourth senior brother did not.

In other words, whatever the method was, his fourth senior brother had already been affected by it!

Not only his fourth senior brother but also Tan Sheng and Xia Liang had fallen victim.

Looking back, Lu Ye would have to be cautious. If he behaved differently from his fourth senior brother and the others, he might very well give himself away. While he was considering this, he suddenly heard the sound of many footsteps, followed by someone asking, "Brother Zhou, I heard Li Baxian has come?"

Zhou Yuntian, who stayed behind, laughed, "Your information is really timely. We have only just returned and you've already heard the news?"

The speaker retorted, "Brother Zhao told us, is it true that Li Baxian has arrived?"

"Indeed, he has!"

The next instant, Lu Ye felt many people crowding around, and various voices began to rise.

"Is it really Li Baxian?"

"Brother Zhou has made a great contribution this time. To be able to recruit such talent for the Venerable One will certainly not go unrewarded."

"Serving the Venerable One is our honor, what need is there for rewards."

"Indeed, indeed."

"However, I've heard that Li Baxian is only at Cloud River Level 5 now. Isn't his cultivation a bit low?"

"Current cultivation doesn't mean much. He is Li Baxian, after all. If we let him grow to Level 9, none of us would be a match for him."

Chapter 575 Psyche Secret Technique

Lu Ye had known before that his fourth senior brother had a formidable reputation, and this time, he truly felt it.

Strictly speaking, their current status was that of captives, yet even so, the arrival of Li Baxian had attracted many cultivators who had long heard of his fame to come and visit.

In comparison, Tan Sheng and Xia Liang, who had higher cultivation levels than Li Baxian, were ignored.

After a lot of chirping and chatting for a good while, Zhou Yuntian said, "Alright, alright, the Venerable One had already planted the secret technique on them, from now on they're one of us, there will be plenty of opportunities to communicate, disperse now."

Only then did the noisy crowd start to leave one after another; Zhou Yuntian closed the door of the room and quietly stood guard at the side, inside the room there was only the sound of several unconscious people breathing evenly.

A myriad of thoughts traversed through Lu Ye's mind.

From the Venerable One's previous actions, combined with the implications in Zhou Yuntian's words, it seemed the Venerable One had indeed planted some secret technique on them...

He probably understood the means by which the Venerable One controlled these cultivators; it was precisely by utilizing that unique secret technique.

Recalling his previous sensation, Lu Ye was startled because from what he had felt just now, the secret technique deployed by the Venerable One was likely related to the psyche, and while the Venerable One deployed the secret technique, he felt his mind suffer some impact, and many inexplicable things had appeared in his mind.

However, because the Talent Tree could burn any harmful substances that had invaded his body, he was not affected by that secret technique, which also made it difficult for him to perceive the specific function of the technique.

But... Psyche Secret Technique?

Was that possible?

It was a method only strong cultivators of the Divine Sea Realm could execute, and only those whose cultivation had reached the Divine Sea Realm were qualified to touch upon matters of the psyche.

Everyone had a psyche, and as one's cultivation strength grew, so would the psyche, but before reaching the Divine Sea Realm, cultivators could not actively stimulate the power of the psyche, let alone Psyche Secret Techniques.

Take Lu Ye for example, because he had refined a lot of Soul Cleansing Water, his psyche was much stronger than that of other cultivators of the same level, making his mind more stable. When facing situations that impacted the mind or psyche, he would have more of a natural advantage.

For instance, whenever he was expelled from the Mirage Realm, a typical Cloud River Realm cultivator would suffer a headache for a day or two after dying once in the Mirage Realm, but Lu Ye would recover quickly.

That was the benefit of having a strong psyche, but even so, he was not capable of actively stimulating his own Soul Power.

His Cultivation Realm level was far from that extent.

But that Venerable One could execute the Psyche Secret Technique! It was also because of that Psyche Secret Technique that the Venerable One was able to control the many cultivators under her command, causing those cultivators to respect her greatly and even worship her.

Lu Ye became increasingly curious about the Venerable One's identity.

This couldn't be some strong cultivator of the Divine Sea Realm who forcibly entered the Cloud River battlefield, could it?

But that wasn't right either. On the Spirit Stream battlefield, strong cultivators can force their way in by consuming merit, but no such thing had been heard of regarding the Cloud River battlefield.

The cultivators who could enter and exit the Cloud River battlefield were always at the Cloud River Realm.

Moreover, even if some strong cultivator of the Divine Sea Realm had forcibly broken into the Cloud River battlefield, they would be subject to the balancing repression of Heaven's Augury, which meant they couldn't possibly stimulate the Psyche Secret Technique.

Furthermore, why would a powerful Divine Sea Realm cultivator come here to control a group of Cloud River Realm cultivators with the Psyche Secret Technique? It surely wasn't for playing house like little children.

Thinking like this, Lu Ye felt it was highly unlikely that the Venerable One was a cultivator of the Divine Sea Realm.

The more he thought about the things he didn't understand, the more there were; so Lu Ye decided not to think about it anymore.

The situation at hand was awkward. With the Talent Tree, he could resolve the influence of the Psyche Secret Technique on himself, but his fourth senior brother couldn't. Now trapped here, although there was no immediate danger, with so many cultivators gathered under the Venerable One, surely the intentions were not small, and danger could descend at any time.

He made up his mind, absolutely not to reveal that he had resolved the Psyche Secret Technique, otherwise he would undoubtedly die!

Waiting quietly.

About more than two hours later, the people beside him gradually woke up and sat up one after another.

Lu Ye also opened his eyes and sat up straight. Just as he was about to observe his fourth senior brother's reaction and then mimic him, a surge of spirit force came out, followed by the sounds of sword cries, accompanied by the shouts of Tan Sheng and Xia Liang, and the scene instantly turned chaotic.

It was Li Baxian who, seeing Tan Sheng and Xia Liang beside him, boldly made his move.

Lu Ye also hurriedly drew the Boulder Mountain Saber, with spirit force surging around him and fire entwining the blade.

"Stop!" Zhou Yuntian, who had been guarding here all this time, changed his expression, rushed over, his spirit force wildly sweeping under him, his strong cultivation of Level 9 was unmistakably exhibited, and the four tense figures were all pushed away at once.

Zhou Yuntian, with a face full of anger, looked around at the four people who were facing off against each other and said coldly, "I don't care what deep grudges or which factions you come from before; if you've come here, then from now on, you are one family, and all grudges should not be brought up again."

He had said something similar when he first appeared, but at that time no one took his words to heart; now that he was saying it again, Lu Ye naturally would not care, but after careful observation, he found that both Xia Liang and Tan Sheng showed difficult expressions on their pale faces.

Turning to look, even Li Baxian's brows were furrowed.

Zhou Yuntian said coldly again, "The last thing the Venerable One likes to see is his own people fighting each other. This is the first time, and you are not aware of the rules, so there is room for forgiveness. Next time, if you commit the same offense, there will be no leniency!" He paused and then barked, "These are the rules set by the Venerable One, and everyone must follow them!"

With these words, Tan Sheng and Xia Liang both showed fearful expressions, restrained their aura, and slightly bowed their heads, "Yes."

Li Baxian also withdrew his flying sword and nodded, "Understood."

The words 'Venerable One' seemed to have a magical power at this moment, making them obedient and compliant.

Zhou Yuntian continued with a stern face, "Now that you know, make peace. I hope that in the future you can truly live together like brothers!"



Xia Liang was silent for a moment, then cupped his fist towards Lu Ye and Li Baxian, "I have offended you previously, please forgive me."

Li Baxian returned the gesture courteously, "Brother Xia is too serious, let's not dwell on the past. In the future, we'll both be under the Venerable One's command, and I'll need to rely on Brother Xia and Brother Tan's care."

"No problem at all."

Lu Ye stood aside, watching coldly, feeling heavy-hearted, now truly sensing the terror of the Psyche Secret Technique. Regardless of what the Psyche Secret Technique was, it had already twisted a person's nature.

Zhou Yuntian smiled satisfactorily and nodded, "That's more like it. Now that you are here, you're one family, a family! All of you come with me, the Venerable One wants to see you. But before that, you must cleanse your bodies and change your clothes."

Saying this, he turned and left.

The four people including Lu Ye hurried to follow.

Stepping out of the house, Lu Ye looked around and saw that this place must be a valley. Although the scenery was not as beautiful as Great Reversal Valley, nor was it large, there were various buildings standing within the valley, and there were many signs of cultivators coming and going in a hurry.

The climate inside the valley was pleasant, and many peach trees had been planted. It was just the season for peach blossoms to bloom; pink flower blossoms were open everywhere, and the air was full of the fragrance of peaches.

Following Zhou Yuntian, they encountered cultivators from time to time who greeted each other; some also curiously observed Lu Ye and the others.

After not too long, they came to a pond with clear, bubbling water.

Under Zhou Yuntian's instruction, they took off their clothes and entered the pond to wash themselves.

Lu Ye would have never imagined that the four of them, who had previously been fighting to the death, would now happily share a pond, and Li Baxian along with Tan Sheng and Xia Liang were even chatting and laughing as if all past incidents were just misunderstandings.

The injuries of Tan Sheng and Xia Liang were severe as they had been previously attacked by a whole pack of wolves. They were lucky to be alive due to their substantial strength, and had they not escaped in time, they would have died in the spirit ground.

Before long, the four finished washing, got dressed again, and both Lu Ye and Li Baxian looked refreshed, while Xia Liang and Tan Sheng's faces were still pale.

The injuries the two had suffered could not be healed without a period of convalescence.

Once everything was ready, they followed Zhou Yuntian deeper into the valley.

They stopped before a grand hall where a woman stood quietly at the entrance, tall and with beautiful features, her bright eyes shining like stars.

Her gaze swept over the four men and quickly settled on Li Baxian, her lips curling into a smile, "Is this Li Baxian?"

Zhou Yuntian replied with a smile, "Indeed, this is Li Baxian."

The woman looked Li Baxian up and down and then nodded slightly, "Just as the rumors say, dignified and handsome."

Li Baxian responded with a smile, "Fellow Daoist flatters me with your praise."

The woman covered her mouth with a laugh, "I thought Li Baxian was a proud and aloof person. It turns out that I was mistaken. Fellow Daoist Li, I am also a sword cultivator. When free, I hope for your guidance."

Li Baxian said, "I dare not offer guidance. Your cultivation is far superior to mine, it should be you who gives me guidance."

The woman was about to say more when Zhou Yuntian coughed lightly, "Junior Sister Yu, the Venerable One is waiting for them."

The woman named Yu immediately turned serious, stepped aside, "Take them in, then."

Zhou Yuntian nodded slightly and led Lu Ye and the others to the front of the grand hall, shouting loudly, "Zhou Yuntian requests an audience with the Venerable One, bringing the newcomers."

"Enter!" A lazy voice unique to the Venerable One sounded from inside the grand hall.

Only then did Zhou Yuntian step forward to push open the doors, leading Lu Ye and the others into the grand hall.

As soon as they entered the hall, they smelled an intoxicating fragrance, and the entire hall had a pink hue. Even the air inside the hall had a dusky, pinkish tinge, giving an impression of dimness and ambiguity.

At the uppermost part of the grand hall, a low couch was placed. On it reclined a graceful figure, surrounded by several women who were either fanning her gently, massaging her legs and shoulders, or feeding her peeled berries. This languidly reclining figure was undoubtedly the Venerable One.

Chapter 576 Venerable One

In the great hall, Zhou Yuntian led Lu Ye and the other three forward, stopping five zhang away from the low couch, bowed their heads, and respectfully said, "Zhou Yuntian pays respects to the Venerable One, the newcomers have been brought here."

As he spoke, he turned his head to give Lu Ye and the others a meaningful look.

Li Baxian and the other two hurriedly performed a salute with a fist in palm, while Lu Ye, following suit, joined them in unison, "We pay respects to the Venerable One!"

"Hmm," a lazy voice responded again.

Lu Ye sneaked a look and was momentarily stunned by what he saw.

Previously, even though the Venerable One had appeared in the forest, there had been a veil separating them, so Lu Ye had no idea what she looked like aside from knowing she was a woman.

Now, without the veil in between, her features were clearly visible.

To be honest, Lu Ye had seen many women since he started his cultivation, many of whom were outstanding in appearance... There were no particularly unattractive female cultivators, most of them were fine-featured, at the very least passably good-looking, and there were also quite a few of stunning beauty.

The main reason, of course, was that cultivators possessed spirit force, which allowed them to preserve their youthful beauty.

But Lu Ye had never seen a face as exquisitely beautiful as this one before, her visage was almost flawless, so perfect it seemed unearthly.

What was even more striking was not just this perfect beauty, but an indescribable enchanting allure! Especially the small teardrop mole beneath the corner of her eye, which added an additional charm.

This face was undoubtedly a great visual impact to the men of this world, and the fact that the Venerable One wore very revealing attire, exposing large expanses of fair skin, could be considered improper, further arousing unrestrained passions.

With such looks and figure, even without the use of her astounding psyche secret technique, she was qualified to reign over most men in this world, compelling them to willingly risk their lives for her.

What concerned Lu Ye more was not her appearance, but the aura emanating from her.

He had already felt something peculiar about the Venerable One's aura before, but now it became even clearer.

The power that flowed through her was somewhat different from the normal spirit force... It seemed more like demonic power.

Lu Ye, who had spent day and night with Amber, was particularly sensitive to demonic power.

So, could it be that the Venerable One was not a human, but a demon? Moreover, she must be a demon with some special abilities, otherwise, it made no sense that she could employ a psyche secret technique to control cultivators with just the strength of the Cloud River Realm.

That explained it, traditional cultivators did not possess the ability to use psyche secret techniques in the Cloud River Realm, but it was different for demons, some powerful demons naturally had special abilities beyond the reach of ordinary people.

Seeming to sense Lu Ye's gaze, the Venerable One's soul-capturing beautiful eyes swept over him, meeting his, her lips slightly curving into an amused smile.

She had seen such gazes plenty of times and did not find them strange, yet Lu Ye's boldness took her by surprise since due to the psyche secret technique, most people seeing her for the first time were utterly frightened.

Even Zhou Yuntian, a cultivator who had followed her for many years, only dared to steal glances at her occasionally and never dared to look at her so openly.

Lu Ye was the first to stare at her so intently upon first meeting.

During their eye contact, Lu Ye's expression suddenly changed, as her eyes seemed to transform into bottomless abysses, pulling his consciousness irresistibly inwards, sending a tremor through his psyche, and he quickly lowered his head.

"Oh?" The Venerable One uttered a sound of surprise, somewhat amazed that Lu Ye could break away from her gaze. She had intended to teach Lu Ye a small lesson, but she did not expect to discover his strong mental fortitude instead.

But this was good news for her, the stronger the cultivator under her command, the more power she could utilize. She took a deep look at Lu Ye and then paid him no more mind.

"Introduce yourselves," the Venerable One said languidly.

Zhou Yuntian murmured from the side, "The Venerable One wants to understand your strengths, so if you have any special abilities, you must disclose them fully, without hiding anything. Brother Xia, you start."

Xia Liang immediately clasped his fists and declared, "Mad Saber Sect's Xia Liang, Cloud River Level 9, combat cultivator... As for special abilities, Xia is wholly dedicated to the saber and possesses no other."

Zhou Yuntian explained, "Venerable One, the Mad Saber Sect is a 1st grade sect, and Brother Xia was once ranked in the top ten on the Spirit Stream Ranking. His Level 9 of the Cloud River Realm is not one to be taken lightly."

"Not bad," the Venerable One commented flatly.

Zhou Yuntian prompted, "Brother Tan!"

Tan Sheng promptly said, "New Moon Sect's Tan Sheng, Cloud River Level 9, also a combat cultivator."

Zhou Yuntian continued, "Brother Tan also once made it onto the Spirit Stream Ranking. The New Moon Sect is a 3rd grade sect and considered a big sect throughout the Nine Provinces."

The Venerable One remained silent, apparently less interested in Tan Sheng than in Xia Liang.

When it came to Li Baxian, he said, "Loyal Heart Sect's Li Baxian, Cloud River Level 5 realm, sword cultivator."

Zhou Yuntian spoke, "Li Baxian was a legendary figure in the Spirit Stream battlefield and the only one to occupy the top ten rankings of the Spirit Stream Ranking for more than a decade with an 8th Heaven cultivation. Is it true, Fellow Daoist Li, that your spiritual orifice, which was damaged during a battle back then, has now been restored since your promotion to the Cloud River Realm?"

"Yes. Thanks to our junior brother Lu Ye's enormous expense to purchase the orifice repair pill, his damaged spiritual orifice has been repaired."

"That's cause for celebration! Venerable One, although Fellow Daoist Li's cultivation is not high at present, if we talk about potential, none of us can match him. Moreover, he's a sword cultivator. Should he one day reach Level 9 of the Cloud River Realm, he would surely be a top-tier expert!"

"Excellent!" the Venerable One's voice was filled with joy, "Later on, bestow upon him some cultivation items, let him cultivate well and strive to enhance his cultivation."

Zhou Yuntian immediately turned his head towards Li Baxian, "Have you not quickly thanked the Venerable One for the reward!"

Li Baxian promptly said, "Thank you, Venerable One."

Zhou Yuntian looked towards Lu Ye.

Lu Ye also clasped his fists and said, "Righteous Blood Sect's Lu Ye, Cloud River Level 4, combat cultivator." He paused for a moment before continuing, "This subordinate is proficient in the Path of Spirit Runes, Array Path, and has a slight understanding of the Rune Tattoo Path as well."

Zhou Yuntian had previously said to speak of all special talents without holding back any secrets.

Although Lu Ye did not want to disclose these, as these things were well known, and Xia Liang and Tan Sheng were also aware, he had no choice but to speak, to avoid revealing any clues.

Zhou Yuntian was astoundingly surprised, "Fellow Daoist Lu has studied many schools of thought?"

"I have dabbled a bit," Lu Ye replied modestly.

"Impressive, truly impressive," Zhou Yuntian said with a pleased expression, "Venerable One, our sect is currently lacking such talents, especially in the Array Path. Fellow Daoist Xie has always been complaining about not having enough capable people on his side. I think we can assign Fellow Daoist Lu to assist Fellow Daoist Xie."

"You can decide on this matter yourself, no need to ask me," the Venerable One indifferently replied.

"Yes."

"I am weary, you may all take your leave," the Venerable One waved his hand dismissively.

Zhou Yuntian immediately responded respectfully, "Your subordinate will take his leave."

Having said this, he gestured to Lu Ye and the others with his eyes, leading them to bow and take their leave.

Once out of the great hall and following closely behind Zhou Yuntian, they soon reached one side of the valley, where many pavilion-like buildings stood tall, each separated by about a dozen meters or so, totaling nearly a hundred in all.

Zhou Yuntian said, "Fellow Daoists, choose a dwelling for yourselves. From now on, we will all be living in Fox Fairy Valley for a long time, we are all family here, no need to be too formal. There is just one thing that you all must remember!"



At this point, his expression became extremely serious, and his voice lowered, "Once in Fox Fairy Valley, you all must sever ties with your past. From today onward, you are people of Fox Fairy Valley. Do not contact your fellow sect members or friends anymore, and you must not reveal the existence of Fox Fairy Valley to outsiders. Anyone who disobeys the order will be killed without mercy!"

"Yes," all four, including Lu Ye, nodded, showing they understood.

"Outside of this, Fox Fairy Valley has no strict rules. On ordinary days, apart from going out to recruit various talents, there's basically nothing else to do. You are free to cultivate as you wish," he added, pointing to the buildings, "Those with closed doors on the second floor are occupied, and those with open doors are unoccupied. You may choose as you like."

After finishing, he exchanged battlefield imprints with Lu Ye and the others and told them to contact him if they had any issues, before leisurely leaving.

Once Zhou Yuntian left, Tan Sheng and Xia Liang went together to find their own places to stay.

Lu Ye and Li Baxian also headed in one direction together.

Along the way, Lu Ye observantly found that Li Baxian's expression was as usual, with no sign of anything inappropriate.

He tentatively spoke out, "Fourth Senior Brother."

"Hmm?"

"What about Senior Sister Feng?"

Zhou Yuntian said before that upon entering this Fox Fairy Valley, one must cut off all ties with the past and not reveal its existence to anyone. Li Baxian and Feng Yuechan have been childhood sweethearts, inseparable for many years, living together through cultivation. Suddenly being brought here and forced to sever all past connections, Lu Ye was curious about the choice Li Baxian would make.

With a sigh, Li Baxian responded, "Since the Venerable One has given the order, I can only obey. Yuechan... she will be heartbroken, but as time passes, all will be well."

Lu Ye felt a coldness in his heart but said aloud nonetheless, "That makes sense," and pointed towards two pavilions ahead, "Senior Brother, let's pick those two; if we live close to each other, we can look after one another."

Li Baxian nodded happily, "Good."

Thereupon, the two of them chose one building each.

Lu Ye selected a pavilion on the right side and surveyed the inside, discovering traces of someone having lived there recently, with some used items remaining. However, it seemed that the original owner hadn't returned for a long time, as dust covered everything.

He did not know the current situation of the pavilion's former occupant. From the looks of it, the place's original inhabitant was probably more unfortunate than fortunate, otherwise, they would not have stayed away for so long.

This so-called Fox Fairy Valley, in its apparent tranquillity where everyone seemingly got along harmoniously under the guidance of the Venerable One's Psyche Secret Technique, with people more united as a whole, appeared to be not so safe after all.

Chapter 577 Plan

Moreover, the name Fox Fairy Valley particularly caught Lu Ye's attention.

He took out the ten-part map and compared it to his current location. On the map, this valley was not specially marked, meaning the existence of this valley was not recorded on the ten-part map.

So it seemed that the title of Fox Fairy Valley was unique to the cultivators of this area.

He had previously speculated that the Venerable One was a demon, but what specific race was hard to determine unless she revealed her true form.

Undoubtedly, Fox Fairy Valley was an excellent clue.

A Fox Demon?

It would make sense—the legends said Fox Demons transformed into humans, with males handsome and females enchanting, which matched perfectly.

But for the Venerable One, with her strength at the Cloud River Realm level, to be capable of casting Psyche Secret Techniques that controlled people's minds, she clearly was no ordinary Fox Demon; it was highly probable that she possessed some extremely special bloodline.

Just like Amber, there are countless tiger-type demon beasts in this world, but apart from Amber, there has never been another tiger-type demon beast known to transform minion spirits.

And Amber has the bloodline of the White Tiger, one of the Four Auspicious Sacred Beasts, and transforming minion spirits is an innate divine ability of its kind.

Regardless, that Venerable One was not going to be easy to deal with. Now stranded in Fox Fairy Valley, having the Talent Tree by his side meant Lu Ye wasn't affected by the Venerable One's secret technique, but Li Baxian had been mind-controlled, so devotedly loyal that it would definitely be impossible for Lu Ye to take him away.

She had even decided to leave Yuechan behind, who she had lived with for many years, showing the domineering nature of the Psyche Secret Technique. If Lu Ye tried to forcibly take Li Baxian away, he would only reveal his secret of being uncontrollable, and then all the cultivators in Fox Fairy Valley would probably come after him.

With powerhouses aplenty here, Cloud River Level 8-9 cultivators were everywhere; if it really came down to that, the consequences were unpredictable.

He felt fortunate that Giant Armor had been injured earlier and that Yuechan stayed behind to care for him—if they had come along, they would definitely have been captured as well.

Now with Yuechan and Giant Armor still at the spirit ground, at the very least, Lu Ye had a backup plan and wouldn't be completely without support.

That such a place as the Fox Fairy Valley existed within Cloud River battlefield and had never been discovered before by anyone could be attributed to two main reasons. First, was its deep location within the Great Wilderness Mountain, which was difficult for ordinary cultivators to reach, and second, was due to Fox Fairy Valley's rules: any cultivator who entered had to sever their past. Under the Venerable One's Psyche Secret Technique, no one would spread the news of this place outside.

As a result, even if a cultivator went missing for a long time and couldn't be contacted, their sect or their relatives would be unable to find them, at best only able to use battlefield markings to determine if they were alive or dead.

If Lu Ye wanted to take Li Baxian away from here, he'd need to break the Venerable One's implanted Psyche Secret Technique. Otherwise, Li Baxian would never comply willingly. But Psyche Secret Techniques involved Psyche Force, something Lu Ye, still at the Cloud River Realm, couldn't break.

Unless the Venerable One lifted the secret technique herself, which was obviously not possible.

Or else kill her!

In comparison, killing her seemed the only viable option.

No matter how strong she was, she was still only equivalent to the Cloud River Realm. From what he saw of her today, she didn't seem to be an Overlord-level being. In other words, her strength was most likely equivalent to the peak of Cloud River Realm, so while it would be difficult to kill her, there might be a chance for success.

The challenge was how to deal with the cultivators of Fox Fairy Valley.

Lu Ye wasn't sure how many cultivators were gathered here, but starting from the time he encountered Zhou Yuntian, he had seen more than thirty different individuals, and those were just the ones he had come across—there were certainly many more he hadn't seen.

Why did this Fox Demon gather so many cultivators under her? What was she trying to do?

After a long thought, Lu Ye had a vague plan in mind. No matter what, it was right to first figure out the strength of Fox Fairy Valley; only by understanding everything about Fox Fairy Valley could he more effectively deal with the current situation.

He needed to make contact with Yuechan and Giant Armor first.

Since he and Li Baxian had been chasing Xia Liang and Tan Sheng for so long without any news, Yuechan must be getting anxious by now.

Li Baxian couldn't respond to messages, so it was up to Lu Ye to make contact.

Moreover, he had already received messages while he was pretending to be unconscious. He hadn't been able to check them conveniently, but if he wasn't mistaken, they should be from Yuechan.

He touched his battlefield marking and stilled his mind to check, and as expected, it was Yuechan who had sent messages, and there were several, asking about his and Li Baxian's situation.

"Senior Sister Feng."

Barely had the message been sent when Yuechan responded, clearly having been waiting.

"Junior Brother Lu, you finally responded. How are things on your end? Are you hurt, and what about my senior brother? Why isn't he responding to my messages?"

Through the battlefield marking, Yuechan could tell that both Lu Ye and Li Baxian were alive, but their lack of response made her unavoidably suspect something was wrong.

"Senior brother and I are unharmed, so you don't need to worry. However, we've encountered some issues here and I'm afraid we won't be able to return to the spirit ground anytime soon."

"Where are you? I'll come find you."

"You can't come here!" Lu Ye quickly refused, then proceeded to recount the events that had befallen him and Li Baxian, informing Yuechan of their current predicament.

Feng Yuechan was clearly greatly shaken, "You're saying that Senior Brother was bewitched by a Fox Demon?"

"The Fox Demon is my guess, I can't be certain without seeing her true form, but the fact that the mind is controlled is indeed true. Senior Brother is now behaving as usual, with only one exception: he is completely obedient to the Fox Demon due to the influence of the Psyche Secret Technique, and I couldn't forcibly take him away."

"Despicable beast!" Feng Yuechan cursed furiously, although she was curious about how Lu Ye was unaffected by the secret technique, she did not ask further.

After all, if Lu Ye really was influenced, he wouldn't be discussing these matters with her.

"There's a rule here with the Fox Demon; once you've entered Fox Fairy Valley, you must sever all past connections, so Senior Sister Feng, if you try to communicate with Senior Brother, he will not respond to you. However, to avoid revealing anything, please continue to contact Senior Brother as if unaware of the situation."

"I understand," Feng Yuechan replied and soon sent another message, "Now that you mention it, I recall an event from a few years ago. A Cloud River Realm cultivator from the Loyal Heart Sect went missing in the Great Wilderness Mountain. Although the battlefield marking confirmed he was still alive, no replies came no matter who from the sect tried to contact him. The sect presumed he met with some mishap. Although we've organized several searches in the Great Wilderness Mountain, we've never found anything. Now it seems likely that the missing person might have also ended up in Fox Fairy Valley."

"What's his name?" Lu Ye asked immediately. If it was as she said, that person must still be in Fox Fairy Valley.

"He's already dead. One year after he went missing, the battlefield marking disappeared."

A chill went through Lu Ye's heart, becoming more certain that Fox Fairy Valley was not a place of peace.

Moreover, considering the situation here in Fox Fairy Valley, there have always been cultivators going missing, not just from the Loyal Heart Sect. However, since no one has been able to contact those lost cultivators, the situation in Fox Fairy Valley has never been exposed.

Lu Ye didn't know exactly how many cultivators had ended up in Fox Fairy Valley, but the number was certainly not small.

There were only a hundred or so buildings in this place adequate for residence. Even if there was one person per building, that would only be a little over a hundred people. Where had all the other cultivators gone?

There must be some dangers here that he had not yet seen.

"Junior Brother Lu, you must be extremely careful over there, take good care of your Senior Brother and if there is any anomaly, make sure to let me know immediately."

"I'm aware, Senior Sister Feng, rest assured, by the way, how is Junior Brother Giant Armor?"

"Junior Brother Giant Armor has a strong physique, his injuries are not serious, they just looked somewhat frightening, he is now out of danger."

"That's good to hear."

After speaking a few more words with Feng Yuechan, Lu Ye concluded the communication.

Sitting on the bed, Lu Ye's gaze flickered.

Thinking of killing the Fox Demon, he knew his power alone was insufficient; perhaps he could let Feng Yuechan assemble some people on standby near the spirit ground?

However, he quickly dismissed the idea.

There were not a few cultivators in Fox Fairy Valley; if he really needed to summon aid, he didn't know how many would be sufficient.

Furthermore, there was a wolf pack at the spirit ground. When the opportunity was right, all he needed was for Feng Yuechan and Giant Armor to draw out the wolf pack, so there was no need to go to the trouble of finding additional help.

Hence, what he needed to do was to integrate himself into Fox Fairy Valley as much as possible, learn about the power structure here, especially the strength of that Fox Demon. To kill someone, he needed to at least understand how capable they were.

Having made up his mind, Lu Ye stood up and began tidying up his house, cleaning up the remnants left by the previous owner.

After finishing quickly, Lu Ye went outside to arrange some simple Formations, and took the opportunity to visit the dwelling of Li Baxian next door to set up some Formations for him as well.

The night passed quietly in cultivation.

With the dawn of the new day, as Lu Ye was cultivating, he heard the voices of Li Baxian and Zhou Yuntian conversing from the adjacent building.

Zhou Yuntian had come to deliver rewards. The Fox Demon placed great value on Li Baxian's talent during the audience the day before, so she had specifically instructed Zhou Yuntian to provide him with some cultivation resources. Zhou Yuntian naturally dared not disobey the Fox Demon's orders.

Lu Ye didn't know exactly what had been delivered, but since it was for cultivation, it was likely either Spirit Stones or elixir pills.



Soon after, Zhou Yuntian left Li Baxian's place and came directly to Lu Ye, calling out, "Fellow Daoist Lu, are you here?"

Lu Ye got up, opened the door, and came out to greet him, saluting with a fist, "Fellow Daoist Zhou."

Zhou Yuntian laughed heartily and asked with concern, "How is it, are you getting accustomed to living here?"

Lu Ye replied, "The valley is quiet and secluded, very much to my liking."

"That's great," Zhou Yuntian nodded, not beating around the bush, and directly said, "You mentioned yesterday that you have some skill with the Array Path?"

"Indeed, is there a Formation that needs setting up?"

"Not exactly, it's just that despite the quantity of Daoist brothers and sisters in the valley, there's only Fellow Daoist Xie who practices the Array Path, so he is responsible for all the Formations in the valley. Since Fellow Daoist Lu is skilled with the Array Path, the Venerable One wishes you to lend Fellow Daoist Xie a hand in maintaining the Formations."

Lu Ye naturally would not refuse such a task; it was a good opportunity to become familiar with the situation in Fox Fairy Valley. He nodded without hesitation, "I can do that."

Chapter 578 Xie Yunhan

Fellow Daoist Zhou referred to is named Xie Yunhan, a middle-aged man who appeared to be about forty years old, not very tall, with a thin frame, and possessed Level 7 Cloud River Realm cultivation.

Such cultivation and age clearly indicated one thing: Xie Yunhan's talent for cultivation was not high, it could even be said to be quite poor.

On the Spirit Stream battlefield, there was a special group of people known as old Level 9 cultivators. Limited by their aptitude, after opening 180 orifices, their cultivation would find it very difficult to progress further. To advance to Cloud River Realm, a cultivator had to open at least 240 orifices and convert to cultivating a Heaven Rank technique. For this reason, these old Level 9 cultivators were never able to ascend to the Cloud River Realm and could only waste away at this level of cultivation.

Lu Ye had encountered some white-haired elders, who were also cultivators unable to open more spiritual orifice due to insufficient talent.

On the Spirit Stream battlefield, it was rare to see older cultivators because Cloud River Realm cultivators could use items like spirit fortune sticks to quickly enhance their cultivation. As long as a cultivator wasn't extremely unlucky or too lazy, their cultivation would always be able to improve bit by bit.

However, rarity didn't mean nonexistence. Individual aptitudes varied, and naturally, so did the speed of cultivation.

Overall, although it was unlikely to find cultivators with stagnant cultivation like the old Level 9 cultivators on the Spirit Stream battlefield, one could still see some middle-aged faces, albeit in small numbers.

Xie Yunhan was undoubtedly one of them; amongst all the people in Fox Fairy Valley, he was the oldest, but not the one with the highest cultivation.

Under Zhou Yuntian's lead, Lu Ye met Xie Yunhan, and after getting to know each other and learning that Lu Ye practiced Array Path, Xie Yunhan was undoubtedly very happy to arrange Lu Ye to assist him. In Fox Fairy Valley, he was the only array cultivator; having to set up and maintain all formations by himself, he was incredibly busy every day, truly exhausted. If it hadn't been for this, his cultivation wouldn't have stagnated at Level 7 in the Cloud River Realm, mainly due to the lack of time for cultivation on regular days.

"Fellow Daoist Xie, Fellow Daoist Lu is now in your care. He is new here, and there is much he doesn't understand, you should look after him," Zhou Yuntian said.

Xie Yunhan replied, "Rest assured, Fellow Daoist Zhou."

After Zhou Yuntian left, Xie Yunhan sized up Lu Ye, his eyes brimming with barely concealed delight. He clearly welcomed Lu Ye's arrival, saying, "Fellow Daoist Lu, I would like to test your proficiency in the Array Path. You wouldn't mind, right?"

Lu Ye nodded: "Of course."

Xie Yunhan gestured, "Follow me." Saying so, he led the way.

Within a short time, they arrived at a corner of Fox Fairy Valley. Xie Yunhan pointed ahead, "Here is a trap array, although it's been set up for some time now, I plan to move it. Fellow Daoist Lu, I'll trouble you to dismantle this trap array."

"Alright!" Lu Ye nodded and stepped forward, his eyes enhanced by Insight Spirit Runes as he examined the formation before him.

Breaking formations was all too familiar to him, simpler even than setting them up.

A few breaths later, he had a plan.

The setup of this trap array was not sophisticated, and the overall strength of the formation was not high. Even if he accidentally became trapped inside, he could break out with brute force within the time it takes to drink a cup of tea.

With his current proficiency in the Array Path, dissolving this particular formation would be a piece of cake.

After a brief contemplation, he wondered whether he should display his true capabilities or continue to play dumb.

If he showed his true abilities, that might easily incite resentment and jealousy from Xie Yunhan; after all, he was the only array cultivator in Fox Fairy Valley and greatly valued by the Fox Demon. Once he

demonstrated a higher proficiency in the Array Path than Xie Yunhan, the latter's treatment was sure to decline.

However, by doing so, Lu Ye could take advantage of the situation and become more highly regarded by the Fox Demon, who might entrust him with more important tasks, thus facilitating his actions in the future.

When he met the Fox Fairy yesterday, she was clearly most interested in Li Baxian, whose formidable reputation and great potential stood out. Next was Xia Liang, due to his superior strength.

As a mere Cloud River Level 4 cultivator, had he not possessed some special abilities, the Fox Fairy might not have given him a second glance.

To kill the Fox Fairy, he first needed to gain her favor and trust! Compared to that, possibly provoking the jealousy of Xie Yunhan was trivial.

Having made up his mind, Lu Ye immediately got to work.

In just a short twenty breaths, the trap array was perfectly resolved, and the array banners were retrieved.

Xie Yunhan watched in astonishment, his surprise palpable: "Fellow Daoist Lu, your proficiency in the Array Path seems to be very high?"

Although he had set the formation himself, to be frank, even if he had undertaken the task, he might not have been as efficient as Lu Ye.

By this small glimpse, Xie Yunhan had a vague realization that Lu Ye's proficiency in the Array Path was rather extraordinary. However, dissolving just one formation didn't reveal too much, and so Xie Yunhan began to lead Lu Ye around various places within the Fox Fairy Valley.

Some formations needed to be dismantled, some required reinforcement and maintenance, and in some places, new formations needed to be set up.

Under Xie Yunhan's guidance, Lu Ye completed each task meticulously and with extreme swiftness.

The work scheduled for a day was finished by midday.

The astonishment in Xie Yunhan's eyes grew more intense. Initially, when Lu Ye was assigned to assist him, he had only thought his own tasks would become a bit easier. Now he realized that Lu Ye's proficiency in the Array Path far exceeded his own.

It was not merely a relief; it was like finding a treasure.

Unlike what Lu Ye expected, Xie Yunhan showed no jealousy or dislike, but instead he was happy, grabbing Lu Ye's arm and saying, "Stealing half a day of leisure, Fellow Daoist Lu, come, join me for a drink."

Lu Ye would not refuse such a proposal, especially as it was an excellent opportunity to improve their relationship and learn more about Fox Fairy Valley from Xie Yunhan.

Following Xie Yunhan to his loft, Xie Yunhan cooked a few small dishes himself and dug out a jar of buried wine from the open space behind the loft.

On the second floor of the loft, Xie Yunhan and Lu Ye sat opposite each other, drinking and chatting merrily.

Because of Second Senior Sister, Lu Ye seldom drank, but with his cultivation at this level, as long as he didn't drink too much, it would have no effect on him.

Not in a hurry to probe about Fox Fairy Valley, he casually chatted with Xie Yunhan.

As the wine flowed, three rounds in, the atmosphere grew much warmer, and Xie Yunhan's address for Lu Ye changed from Fellow Daoist Lu to Brother Lu. Although it was their first encounter, because of the secret technique planted by the Fox Demon, Xie Yunhan did not harbour much caution against Lu Ye.

Essentially, just as Zhou Yuntian had said earlier, once one joins the Fox Fairy Valley, they become one big family.

The jar of fine wine was quickly emptied, and Xie Yunhan stood up, "Brother Lu, wait a moment, I'll go fetch another jar."

Lu Ye hurriedly said, "Brother Xie, I have some here, there's no need to trouble yourself."

As he spoke, he took out several jars of different fine wines from his storage space.

He himself did not drink, but having killed so many Ten Thousand Demons Ridge cultivators, many of whom were fond of wine, their storage sacks always contained some from the different reaches of the Nine Provinces, which had become his spoils of war.

Most of them had been gifted to Li Baxian, and only a very small portion was kept for himself since he had little use for them.

He unsealed a jar and poured some for Xie Yunhan, filling his bowl, and poured a half bowl for himself.

Xie Yunhan held the bowl to his nose and took a sniff, showing an intoxicated look, then he drank it down and closed his eyes to savor it for a while before shaking his head and saying, "The wine from Yunzhou, the Qionghua Brew, is still so lingering and endless."

"If Brother Xie enjoys it, drink more," Lu Ye said, filling up his bowl again, and casually asked, "Is Brother Xie from Yunzhou?"

"Yes, I am indeed from Yunzhou," Xie Yunhan said, his eyes revealing a nostalgic expression, "Back in the day, what I loved the most was this Qionghua Brew. Is Brother Lu also from Yunzhou?"

Lu Ye replied, "I am from Bingzhou."

Xie Yunhan laughed, "No matter Bingzhou or Yunzhou, once we are here, we are all one family."

"Indeed, I toast to Brother Xie."

Another large bowl was emptied.

As Lu Ye poured the wine, he casually said, "Brother Xie, as I am new here, there are many matters about the valley I am not familiar with. It seems like Brother Xie has been here for quite some time. If I make any mistakes in the future, I hope Brother Xie will give me guidance."

Xie Yunhan picked up a chopstick full of food, eating while proudly saying, "Brother, rest assured, since we work together and our temperaments match, I will certainly take care of you in the future. I wouldn't dare to claim much else, but as for the taboos and formalities of Fox Fairy Valley, no one understands them better than I do, after all, I have been here for twelve years."

Twelve years... Lu Ye's eyes twitched.

He really wanted to ask what he had been busy with all these years to have only reached Cloud River Level 7 cultivation.

Xie Yunhan seemed to remember something and couldn't help but sigh, "Twelve years have passed, seeing people come and go in the valley, one generation replacing the previous, alas!"

"In this valley, is there anyone who has been here longer than Brother Xie?" Lu Ye asked.

Xie Yunhan snorted and shook his head, "Where would they be? Most people who come here stay at most for a year or two..." As he spoke, he suddenly sobered up significantly, stopped talking, lowered his voice and said, "Regardless, as array cultivators, you and I are indispensable talents under the Venerable One's command, so there is security. In addition, Brother Lu, do not advance your cultivation too fast, remember this well!"

"Why is that?" Lu Ye faintly felt that he might have touched upon some secret, it seemed from Xie Yunhan's words that advancing one's cultivation too rapidly might lead to danger.

Xie Yunhan didn't explain, but just said, "Listen to me, over the years, many geniuses have come to the valley, their cultivation advancing incredibly fast, but so what? They are all now turned to a handful of yellow soil. Unlike Xie, who has lived until today."

Hearing him say so, Lu Ye did not press any further to avoid arousing suspicion, and immediately raised his large bowl, "Brother Xie, I toast to you again."

Xie Yunhan said, "You are too polite, Brother. Let's drink together, drink together!"

The drinking session lasted from noon until evening, and although Lu Ye didn't discover much from Xie Yunhan, what he did find out confirmed his previous speculations that there were invisible crises hidden within the seemingly peaceful Fox Fairy Valley. These crises seemed to cause those with higher cultivation to die more quickly.

Chapter 579 Found a Treasure

Lu Ye was very skeptical that Xie Yunhan claiming to only be at Level 7 was deliberate.

Otherwise, how could someone who stayed in Fox Fairy Valley for twelve years only have such a low level of cultivation?

Days slipped by, and life in Fox Fairy Valley was extremely peaceful. Apart from patrolling around with Xie Yunhan and maintaining the Formation, Lu Ye had nothing else to do.

After the initial days of busyness, the following time became exceedingly leisurely.

Almost every day, Lu Ye would contact Yuechan to inform her of Li Baxian's current situation, so she wouldn't worry.

Over these days, Lu Ye also learned much news from Xie Yunhan.



The number of cultivators in Fox Fairy Valley was not small, with over eighty individuals, among whom fifteen were Cloud River Level 9 cultivators.

Such a formidable force was comparable to the number of cultivators in a large Class A Spirit Ground. Lu Ye once tried to feel out Xie Yunhan about why the Fox Demon had gathered so many cultivators. It couldn't possibly be just for playing house like little children.

However, since it involved the Fox Demon, Xie Yunhan didn't dare to say much, only that Lu Ye would understand in time.

The cultivators of Fox Fairy Valley would send out groups daily to scout for talent. To "scout for talent" simply meant searching for cultivators, and then having the Fox Demon bewitch and bring them back to implant them with the Psyche Secret Technique, to be used by the Fox Demon.

But this was the deep reaches of Great Wilderness Mountain, with few signs of cultivator activity on typical days, so no new members had joined Fox Fairy Valley for some time.

One day, after returning from drinking with Xie Yunhan, Lu Ye saw from afar two figures crisscrossing, with flying swords darting through the Void.

Moving closer, he saw that it was Li Baxian and a woman sparring and exchanging swordsmanship.

The woman was the same one named Yu who had previously been guarding the entrance to the Fox Demon's sleeping quarters, presumably called Yu Daiwei, also a Cloud River Level 9 cultivator. She had said before that as a fellow sword cultivator, she would find time to spar with Li Baxian.

These past few days, Lu Ye had been mingling with Xie Yunhan and had no idea when his Senior Brother Li had become acquainted with this woman.

One at Cloud River Level 5 and the other at Cloud River Level 9, if they were truly fighting, Li Baxian certainly wouldn't stand a chance, but since they were only sparring, the fight was lively and animated, attracting many passing cultivators to stop and watch, commenting amongst themselves.

The atmosphere in Fox Fairy Valley was harmonious, with cultivators from all over the Nine Provinces and from both major factions, bound by the Psyche Secret Technique, becoming like family. Such sparring among peers was naturally not forbidden.

Lu Ye also joined the crowd to watch for a while, but since he knew little about swordsmanship, all he saw was the two of them weaving between their flying swords in a dazzling display, which was quite a sight to behold.

Suddenly, an idea struck him.

He practiced saber skills, but had never had someone instruct him in this art because no one in the Righteous Blood Sect cultivated saber skills. Although he had learned quite a few saber skills from the Mad Saber Sect, what the Mad Saber Sect provided were all very basic things.

Xia Liang was from the Mad Saber Sect, and the saber skills he cultivated undoubtedly contained the essence of the Mad Saber Sect. During their previous fight, Lu Ye had already felt tremendous pressure from the unusual angles Xia's saber strikes came from, which showcased the saber's fierce sharpness even with his grievous injuries.

If he were to seek out Xia Liang for a spar now... Xia probably wouldn't refuse, right? Perhaps he could even impart some of his experience in the saber art?

Under normal circumstances, such a thing could never happen, but since he was affected by the Fox Fairy's Psyche Secret Technique, it might be possible.

With this thought, Lu Ye immediately headed in the direction of Xia Liang's residence. In no time, he arrived in front of a building and called out loudly, "Is Fellow Daoist Xia there?"

As his voice fell, after three breaths, the second-floor window opened and Xia Liang's face appeared, their gazes meeting. Frowning, Xia Liang asked, "What do you want?"

The only impact of the Psyche Secret Technique planted by the Fox Demon was loyalty towards the Fox Fairy, without damaging the cultivator's own nature.

There had been much enmity between the two previously, and even though they had both joined Fox Fairy Valley, this had not changed Xia Liang's view of Lu Ye. However, due to the Fox Demon's orders, he would no longer attack Lu Ye.

Lu Ye clasped his fists and said, "I've come to seek advice from Fellow Daoist Xia on saber skills!"

Xia Liang's eyebrows raised in utmost surprise, "You're seeking advice on saber skills from me?"

"Yes, I hope Fellow Daoist Xia would be generous in teaching me."

Xia Liang looked intently at him for a long while, his knitted brows eventually relaxing as he curved the corners of his mouth into a meaningful smile. "Fine!"

Leaping down from the building, he flew ahead and said, "This isn't a good place to spar, come with me."

Lu Ye followed him, observing Xia Liang's aura, it seemed that his previous injuries had mostly healed.

Shortly, they arrived at an open space where Xia Liang turned around to face Lu Ye, summoned his long saber, and with a burgeoning aura, he said concisely, "Come, show me what you've got!"

Lu Ye clasped his fists, "Please instruct!"

As the words fell, the Move-Like-The-Wind technique was empowered. With a stomp on the ground, Lu Ye charged toward Xia Liang like a bolt of lightning. As he closed in, the Boulder Mountain Saber burst forth from its sheath, and a fiery red blade light slashed down from above.

Confronted with this formidable strike, Xia Liang merely raised his saber to meet it.

With a booming sound, Lu Ye felt an overwhelming force sweep forward from in front of him, causing his right hand holding the saber to go numb and his grip to nearly break.

Xia Liang, however, stood unshaken. His long saber continued with its momentum, chopping down and immediately sending Lu Ye tumbling away.

The disparity in cultivation was too great; even though Xia Liang had let him attack first, Lu Ye still suffered a significant disadvantage.

Fortunately, Xia Liang had no intention of killing him. Otherwise, a few more follow-up strikes would have either left Lu Ye dead or crippled.

On the day that Lu Ye managed to drive Xia Liang to a desperate plight, nearly killing him, it was because Xia Liang had been severely wounded. As a disciple of the Mad Saber Sect and someone who had once ranked within the top ten of the Spirit Stream Ranking, Xia Liang was undoubtedly a cultivator of exceptional talent. A Cloud River Level 9 like him was not someone that the current Lu Ye could hope to contend with.

Landing in a disheveled heap, Lu Ye couldn't stop himself from retreating backward until he finally steadied his stance, then he charged forward once again.

Gaining experience in the Mirage Realm could indeed enhance his ability to kill enemies, but how could it compare to the benefits of sparring with a top-notch saber user like Xia Liang?

With every exchange, every time he was repelled, Lu Ye gained insights. The angle of Xia Liang's strikes, the timing of his attacks, the rallying of spirit force... All these aspects were incredibly beneficial to Lu Ye, even though Xia Liang was only aiming to teach him a lesson.

Lu Ye felt increasingly certain that coming to spar with Xia Liang had been the right choice.

If Xia Liang could just give him some guidance on the cultivation of saber skills, that would be even better.

However, despite Xia Liang's unwillingness to deal a killing blow due to the influence of the Fox Demon's Psyche Secret Technique, resentments towards Lu Ye still lingered in his heart. Asking him to instruct Lu Ye in the cultivation of saber skills was undoubtedly unrealistic. Their current sparring was only because Xia Liang wanted to vent his pent-up resentment.

While the two were exchanging blows, Zhou Yuntian showed up uninvited at Xie Yunhan's residence.

Among everyone in Fox Fairy Valley, Xie Yunhan had been there the longest—a full twelve years—without equal. Likewise, he was the oldest among them.

Yet when it came to who was most favored by the Fox Fairy, Zhou Yuntian undoubtedly held that distinction. He was essentially the steward of the entire Fox Fairy Valley, handling both significant and trivial matters. On regular days, the Fox Fairy secluded herself in her own sleeping quarters, rarely showing herself.

In the room, the two sat opposite each other, clinking their glasses and making merry.

Zhou Yuntian's visit to Xie Yunhan was mainly to inquire about Lu Ye. As one of only two array cultivators in the entire Fox Fairy Valley, Zhou Yuntian naturally took an increased interest.

"Brother Xie, how is Fellow Daoist Lu's achievement in the Array Path?" After a few cups of wine, Zhou Yuntian revealed the purpose of his visit.

"A peerless genius!" Xie Yunhan did not skimp on his praise.

Zhou Yuntian was momentarily taken aback, as there were several array cultivators previously recruited by Fox Fairy Valley whom Xie Yunhan had not regarded highly. Although Xie Yunhan's own cultivation wasn't particularly high, his accomplishment in the Array Path was significant, or else he would not have had the capability to maintain the formations of Fox Fairy Valley.

Thus, Zhou Yuntian was momentarily stunned upon hearing such a high evaluation of Lu Ye.

"Brother Zhou, Brother Lu's accomplishment in the Array Path far surpasses mine. Although my cultivation has not seen much advancement over the years, I've spent considerable time on the Array Path. I dare say that, at the Cloud River Realm level, there wouldn't be many who could outdo me unless they come from a big sect specializing in the Array Path. But Brother Lu's talents in this field are truly admirable. Let me put it this way—give me another ten years, and I still wouldn't match up to Brother Lu in this aspect."

Having become familiar with Lu Ye, Xie Yunhan had asked to learn about the Array Path from him. Lu Ye, without much reservation, shared his knowledge, bringing significant benefits to Xie Yunhan.

Zhou Yuntian's eyes lit up with cautious inquiry, "Brother Xie, aren't you exaggerating a bit? I know your accomplishment in the Array Path. Is Fellow Daoist Lu really as formidable as you say?"

Xie Yunhan shook his head, "You're not an array cultivator, so you wouldn't understand. But I can assure you I haven't exaggerated at all. In fact, I feel that Brother Lu hasn't fully demonstrated his abilities in the Array Path, probably because he doesn't want to dishearten me."

"If that's the case... have we not stumbled upon a treasure?" Zhou Yuntian asked, his expression animated.

Lu Ye's Level 4 cultivation didn't amount to much in the eyes of Fox Fairy Valley. However, if his proficiency in the Array Path was as prodigious as Xie Yunhan claimed, it would be a true asset to Fox Fairy Valley.

"Speaking of which, even if Brother Zhou didn't come to see me today, I was planning to look for you," Xie Yunhan added.

"Brother Xie means to say..."

"The next time we take action, let Brother Lu take charge of array setup, and I'll assist. Perhaps then we'll have a chance of success!"

"I will need to report this to the Venerable One for her decision. However, if that happens, Brother Xie, you..."

Xie Yunhan raised his hand, "As long as it can help the Venerable One succeed, it doesn't matter who leads and who assists. Having been in Fox Fairy Valley for so many years, would I, Xie Yunhan, not see the bigger picture?"

"Indeed, indeed, everything is for the sake of aiding the Venerable One's success." Saying so, he swiftly stood up, "This matter is of great importance. I'll go to the Venerable One now and inform her of this good news. She will surely be delighted."

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Having left Xie Yunhan's place, Zhou Yuntian hurried along, ready to report Lu Ye's matter.

However, he hadn't gone far before he felt the intense sounds of someone fighting, furrowing his brows, he followed the noise towards its source.

In Fox Fairy Valley, cultivators sparring with each other wasn't forbidden, as it benefited the improvement of their combat skills and fostered relationships among them, but such fierce sparring was rare.

As the chief steward of Fox Fairy Valley, how could Zhou Yuntian remain indifferent?

As he approached the scene, he was shocked to see that the combatants were Lu Ye and Xia Liang, both newcomers, and their strikes were ruthlessly fierce. However, with a great disparity in their cultivations, Lu Ye appeared to be in a rather dire situation. What troubled Zhou Yuntian even more was seeing fresh bloody wounds on Lu Ye, staining his clothes.

"Stop, stop right now!" Zhou Yuntian rushed forward and exclaimed.

In the midst of the battle, Lu Ye, his blood Qi roiling, stood holding his Boulder Mountain Saber, while Xia Liang seemed calm and composed.

Seeing Zhou Yuntian coming over suddenly, both hastily ceased fighting and greeted in unison, "Fellow Daoist Zhou."

Zhou Yuntian's expression was grim. He first glared at Xia Liang, puzzling him greatly, then turned to look at Lu Ye and asked with deep concern, "Fellow Daoist Lu, how are your injuries? Aren't they serious?"

His apparent eagerness somewhat startled Lu Ye, but considering Zhou Yuntian's position as the chief steward of Fox Fairy Valley, he didn't think much about it, simply replying, "It's nothing serious, just some flesh wounds. They will recover quickly after some rest."

Zhou Yuntian breathed a sigh of relief, "That's good, that's good." Then he turned to scold Xia Liang, "Fellow Daoist Xia, Fellow Daoist Lu's cultivation is far inferior to yours, how could you strike so heavily!"

Xia Liang stuttered, "It's not like that, Fellow Daoist Zhou, it was Lu Yiye who came to me, asking to spar with saber techniques..."

"Even if it was just for sparring, how could you cause injuries?" Zhou Yuntian's face sank. "We in Fox Fairy Valley are united, almost like brothers and sisters. When Fellow Daoist Lu came to you for sparring, you were supposed to guide him, not injure him!"

Xia Liang didn't know what to say at the moment.

Indeed, sparring among most cultivators can stop at just the right point, but for two combat cultivators using sabers, merely touching a point was of no use at all; they had to fight with all their might to achieve the desired effect.

Moreover, during the fight with Lu Ye, he had controlled his strength as much as possible, otherwise, Lu Ye's injuries would have been more than just superficial.

Zhou Yuntian's accusations without seeking clarity were really stifling for him and it felt wrong to retort, so he could only look towards Lu Ye.

Lu Ye then spoke, "Please, calm down, Fellow Daoist Zhou. It was indeed I who proposed the sparring, and Fellow Daoist Xia had already held back as much as possible. It was my lack of strength..."

Not to mention, this round of sparring with Xia Liang benefited him significantly, and he couldn't allow Zhou Yuntian's interference to deter Xia Liang from sparring with him again in the future; that would be a great loss.



"Knowing your strength is not high, you should be more cautious!" Zhou Yuntian said coldly.

Lu Ye couldn't understand what was going on with Zhou Yuntian—apart from his initial contact upon arriving at Fox Fairy Valley, he had barely seen him these past days, and this apparent favouritism puzzled Lu Ye greatly.

What he didn't know was that Zhou Yuntian had just come from Xie Yunhan, who had given him a very high evaluation, making Zhou Yuntian realize the value of Lu Ye's talents in Array Path.

Xia Liang sighed and said, "I understand, it will not happen again, please rest assured, Fellow Daoist Zhou."

Zhou Yuntian's expression finally eased a bit, he nodded and said, "Remember, everyone in Fox Fairy Valley is your brother or sister. Let any grievances be carried away by the wind!" He paused for a moment, then continued, "Both of you are saber practitioners, and Fellow Daoist Lu seeks you out for sparring to improve his saber skills. So, just instruct him directly, and if you must spar, you must restrain yourself and not injure him again!"

"Yes," responded Xia Liang.

"All right, let's leave today's matter here, I have other business, and I am leaving now. I hope not to see this kind of scene next time, or the Venerable One will certainly be displeased," Zhou Yuntian warned lightly.

Hearing him mention the Venerable One, Xia Liang's expression changed, and he quickly said, "Please rest assured, Fellow Daoist Zhou. If Lu Yiye wishes to cultivate saber skills, I will teach him everything I know, without reservation!"

"Very well."

"Safe travels, Fellow Daoist Zhou."

Zhou Yuntian nodded slightly, then turned to Lu Ye, advising, "If there's anything in the future, contact me anytime."

Lu Ye responded blankly, "Okay."

Watching Zhou Yuntian's figure disappear, Lu Ye wore a puzzled expression.

Despite Zhou Yuntian's words about everyone in Fox Fairy Valley being brothers and sisters, his evident favoritism towards him was unmistakable, but why?

In terms of cultivation, he was the weakest in the entire Fox Fairy Valley, apart from him, only Li Baxian was at Level 5. Beyond that, the weakest cultivator was at Level 6.

Was it his recent performance on Array Path? Considering the direction from which Zhou Yuntian had arrived, he likely came from Xie Yunhan's place. That might explain Zhou Yuntian's overt favoritism, even bringing up the Venerable One's name towards the end.

It seemed... not concealing his skills in Array Path was the right choice.

"Lu Yiye!"

At the edge of his ear, Xia Liang's voice rang out.

Lu Ye turned around and spoke, "Fellow Daoist Xia, please don't take to heart what Fellow Daoist Zhou just mentioned. Let's try again, and this time please don't hold back."

"No need!" Xia Liang's expression remained calm, showing neither happiness nor anger, "Since Fellow Daoist Zhou has already instructed, let's cease the sparring. However, as for saber skills, I can teach you wholeheartedly. Whenever you have any doubts, feel free to ask me. Your saber skills might be domineering and aggressive, but I can see the foundation is poor, likely because no one has systematically guided you. It's understandable, given that before you, there were but a few from the Righteous Blood Sect, and none of them were saber wielders, so there was likely no one to teach you."

Lu Ye's eyes lit up with excitement. "I can ask you about anything?"

"As long as it's about saber skills, you can ask anything. I won't keep any secrets!"

"Then let me thank you in advance, Fellow Daoist Xia!"

Before entering Fox Fairy Valley, Lu Ye had never imagined that he would one day be able to learn saber skills under the guidance of Xia Liang—an opportunity that was truly hard to come by.

Xia Liang, hailing from the Mad Saber Sect and bearing uncommon talent, practiced saber skills that represented the essence of years of accumulation by his sect. Being guided by him would undoubtedly save Lu Ye much time and effort.

Under his guidance, Lu Ye immediately started his cultivation with the most basic chopping technique. Even though the process was monotonous, Lu Ye was brimming with enthusiasm.

On one side, a teacher dedicated to instructing, and on the other, a student eager to learn; inside the Fox Demon's chamber, Zhou Yuntian had just reported the matter concerning Lu Ye.

After hearing this, the enchanting and seductive Fox Demon revealed a look of surprise and smiled gently, "Does this mean we have truly found a treasure this time? Since Xie Yunhan said so, there must be good reason. In that case, from now on, let Lu Ye take charge of the formations in Fox Fairy Valley, with Xie Yunhan assisting him."

That gentle laugh made Zhou Yuntian's bones turn soft, and even the few women attending the Fox Demon couldn't help but appear intoxicated.

Maintaining his mental clarity, Zhou Yuntian dared not show any disrespect and accepted the command. "I understand, Venerable One, but recently we haven't been able to find any new recruits."

The Fox Demon said, "After all, this place is deep within the Great Wilderness Mountain, and it's rare for cultivators to come by, so it's normal not to find anyone."

Zhou Yuntian tentatively suggested, "Should we send a message outside to lure some people here?"

Once people entered Fox Fairy Valley, they severed all contacts with the outside world. Cultivators from the outside could only use the existence of battlefield markings to confirm their life or death, but could not determine their current state or location.

However, if they were to actively send a message outside, it would surely attract a group of people. If the Fox Demon then acted, they could continue to expand the power of Fox Fairy Valley.

"Not possible!" The Fox Demon firmly rejected the idea, and her posture on the couch became upright, her expression solemn. "Remember, once in Fox Fairy Valley, you must never communicate with the outside. Whoever dares to send a message will die!"

Zhou Yuntian's face turned pale as he bowed. "Yes, I have understood!"

"Dismissed!"

"Yes."

Zhou Yuntian respectfully left.

After he had left, the Fox Demon's beautiful eyes flashed with changing expressions.

Indeed, if they used the method Zhou Yuntian suggested earlier, Fox Fairy Valley could quickly grow in power. Eventually, not just a hundred, but even two hundred or more people could gather there in a short time.

But... Fox Fairy Valley had existed for many years, enslaving too many human race cultivators. She already felt an inexplicable crisis.

It was as if a blade was hanging over her neck, ready to fall at any moment!

When she first sensed this crisis, she thought it was an illusion; but as time passed, the feeling grew ever clearer.

She understood then—it wasn't an illusion, but rather Heaven's Augury's attention on her.

Unintended powers had surfaced on the Cloud River battlefield, used to enslave the cultivators of Cloud River Realm. This undoubtedly infuriated Heaven's Augury, thus giving her an overwhelming sense of crisis.

She knew that one day, Heaven's Augury would punish her for her actions. But before that, she still had pressing matters that she couldn't handle alone and thus needed to enslave more cultivators.

Gathering newcomers was already at its limit. Using that method to lure people would only intensify Heaven's Augury's scrutiny and the crisis looming over her, a risk not worth taking.

"It's getting late. Let's continue the cultivation tomorrow," Xia Liang said, pulling out a jade slip from his storage sack and handing it to Lu Ye. "This is a compilation of saber cultivation insights from my sect's elders. I'm lending it to you for your study. Make sure not to lose it."

Lu Ye took the jade slip. "Many thanks, Brother Xia."

Fox Fairy Valley, truly a marvelous place!