

Humanity 661

Chapter 661 - Immortal and Indestructible

Butcher was shocked, but after a quick thought, he said, "Could it be that the exchange rate is very low?"

He wouldn't take the blame for this!

The City Lord looked displeased, unable to say more.

The authority Lu Ye had to exchange battle merits for soul water had been granted by Heaven's Augury. Now, there was nothing he could change about the outcome. He could only pray that Lu Ye had limited battle merits to exchange for not too much soul water, or it would truly affect the essence of the soul pool.

After a moment, at the bottom of the soul pool, Lu Ye who was joyously collecting soul water, found the spirit energy gathering funnel in front of him suddenly collapse amidst a warp.

Instinctively, he constructed another spirit energy gathering funnel, but as soon as the second funnel took shape, it seemed as if an inexplicable force jumbled it up, rendering it utterly useless.

He soon realized something, and quickly checked his battlefield marking, discovering that the battle merit count recorded in it had shockingly dropped to eight hundred thirty-six.

It took a thousand battle merits to collect a drop of soul water, and the remaining eight hundred thirty-six were clearly not enough for a drop.

The rapid depletion of over three hundred thousand battle merits pained him, even though it was battle merits and not merits. However, considering the benefits, the price he paid was absolutely worth it.

The water bag wasn't full, but it contained over three hundred drops of soul water, a tremendous resource capable of elevating the psyche of him and his close friends and family to an exaggerated level.

As his battle merits were gone, it was time to leave.

Lu Ye carefully stored the water bag and propelled his power upward.

He had thought he was far below the soul pool, but it only took two more breaths to break through the dense soul mist. The brightness all around forced him to squint his eyes.

The next moment, he felt sharp gazes fastening onto him.

Looking toward the source of the gaze, Lu Ye instantly recognized the City Lord of Xianyuan City whom he had met before!

But at this moment, the City Lord's expression was a bit strange, as if gritting his teeth in frustration...

He gave Lu Ye the feeling that he had committed a crime against both man and god, almost desiring to beat him up.

Could it be... that his actions in the soul pool had been noticed by the City Lord? Lu Ye couldn't help feeling a bit uneasy.

But after a thought, he reassured himself, what fear should he have, those soul waters were exchanged for his battle merits, sanctioned by Heaven's Augury! Even if the City Lord was powerful, could he be mightier than Heaven's Augury?

With that in mind, Lu Ye suddenly looked surprised and turned his gaze toward a hefty figure behind the City Lord.

"Senior?"

Almost thinking his eyes were deceiving him, Lu Ye flashed and landed in front of Butcher, taking a good look to confirm that this was indeed the supposed dead Butcher.

He was somewhat bewildered: "Senior, how come you..."

Butcher chuckled and said, "Inside Xianyuan City, as long as the soul pool is intact, we Spiritual Bodies won't die, just a brief silence, that's all."

Lu Ye didn't understand why Butcher could resurrect, but from his words, it seemed the soul pool gave them, the Spiritual Bodies, some special abilities.

No wonder they always said the soul pool was the foundation of Xianyuan City.

So, the scenes he saw before he fainted weren't hallucinations?

"Then Senior Liu Datong and Senior Yooi Qing..."

"They are also alive, currently doing some wrap-up tasks outside. They should be back soon."

Lu Ye heaved a sigh of relief: "That's really great!"

Butcher patted Lu Ye's shoulder and praised, "Kid, well done!" He referred naturally to the mission Lu Ye completed alone after their squad had been wiped out. Though not perfectly executed, he had done his utmost.

If that hadn't been the case, Butcher wouldn't have brought Lu Ye back to the City Lord's Residence or even decided to include him in his own squad, giving him the privilege to recuperate in the soul pool.

Of course, all this was still unknown to Lu Ye.

"Oh, senior, your saber." Lu Ye said and quickly took out the bone-stripping saber from his storage space, handing it back to him.

Butcher took it, casually slipping it into his sheath at his waist, and then bowed towards the front saying, "My Lord, I will be busy now; I leave this youth in your care."

An impatient voice responded, "Just go!"

Butcher then pulled Lu Ye aside and whispered, "I know you have many questions, but there are things I shouldn't say, and I don't know either. If you have anything to ask, just ask the City Lord, he will surely tell you what he can. No matter what, you are now half a person of Xianyuan City."

Being included in Butcher's squad wasn't just for show, so even though Lu Ye wasn't a cultivator from Xianyuan City, in Butcher's eyes, he was now half a person of Xianyuan City.

"Do you need any help from me?" Lu Ye asked. Having recuperated in the soul pool, he felt extremely vigorous, and his Psyche Force seemed to have strengthened.

Butcher shook his head: "No need, the Insect Race's attack on the city is almost over, what's left are just some minor wrap-up tasks. You should also leave this place early; being alive and coming to Xianyuan City in this state, staying here too long isn't good for you."

Lu Ye nodded: "Yes."

Even if Butcher hadn't mentioned it, Lu Ye could feel it himself that he had come to Xianyuan City on the basis of projection with his psyche out of his body, and staying separated from his flesh for too long indeed posed some risks.

Butcher patted Lu Ye's shoulder again and dashed away.

Lu Ye watched as his figure disappeared before turning around to bow respectfully towards the figure in front of him, "Lu Ye has seen the City Lord!"

A cold snort sounded, "So you can see me, huh?"

The City Lord... why the cryptic tone?

"Just now, seeing Elder Butcher resurrected, I was so overjoyed that I lost my manners. I hope the City Lord will not take offense!"

Hearing Lu Ye's explanation, Ji Yuan's expression eased slightly, but upon remembering the soul pool and the soul water, his cheek twitched again, "Boy, you've gained quite a lot this time!"

Over three hundred drops of soul water!

Since the existence of Xianyuan City, so much soul water had never been lost.

Although cultivators had taken soul water from Xianyuan City before, it was only a drop or two at most, and those were intentionally placed by Ji Yuan around Xianyuan City for outsiders to find.

And last time, this kid had already taken dozens of drops...

In two instances, Xianyuan City had suffered heavy losses because of this kid.

The loss of over three hundred drops of soul water was enough to support Xianyuan City through two or three wars!

But he couldn't really blame him, as last time it was his own carelessness, not expecting the kid to have that kind of peculiar ability, and this time there was Heaven's Augury at play, so even though his heart was nearly bleeding, he could only resign himself to his bad luck.

Thankfully, although the amount of over three hundred drops of soul water was substantial, it wasn't enough to affect the foundation of the soul pool.

What does the City Lord mean by this?

Lu Ye looked up at him, reading between the lines, it seemed there was an implied meaning.

He must know that I collected soul water from the soul pool, right? Considering that Butcher and the others didn't have soul water equipped for their missions, Lu Ye suspected that this City Lord might not be able to condense soul water?

As if possessed, Lu Ye took out a jade vial and handed it to Ji Yuan, saying solemnly, "I don't have much either."

Ji Yuan looked at the jade vial, and upon realizing, burst into laughter, "Boy, who do you think your City Lord is?"

That jade vial was clearly the first one Lu Ye filled when collecting soul water, after which he realized that the condensation rate of the soul water was too fast and switched to using a water bag instead.

Lu Ye quickly took the jade vial back, sighed deeply, and gave up, "I misunderstood then; I thought..."

"You thought what? You think it's loot, share it half and half upon meeting?"

Don't even think about it!

As thoughts passed through his mind, Lu Ye said earnestly, "The City Lord is mistaken, that is not some loot, it was exchanged for battle merits by me."

Ji Yuan waved his hand weakly, "Say what you will, if you have the capability to take it, then it's yours."

"Thank you, City Lord!" Lu Ye immediately relaxed.

"But kid... how much battle merit did you get this time?" Ji Yuan was still very curious about this.

Lu Ye then stated a number.

Ji Yuan's brow twitched, recalling how Butcher had confidently claimed that Lu Ye only had a few tens of thousands of battle merits, bullshit tens of thousands, it was more than three hundred thousand!

He even suspected that Butcher did it on purpose, otherwise, he wouldn't have run away so quickly.

But now dwelling on this had no meaning, the items had already ended up in Lu Ye's hands, he couldn't very well ask him to spit them out, especially since those soul waters were indeed exchanged for by Lu Ye's battle merits.

As many thoughts flickered through, Ji Yuan chuckled softly.

Feeling the atmosphere relax considerably, Lu Ye spoke up, "My lord, why do you laugh?"

Ji Yuan shook his head, "It's nothing, I just haven't had such a conversation with anyone in a long time." His tone changed, "Kid, your growth rate is very fast."

The last time Ji Yuan had seen Lu Ye, he was only at Spirit Stream Level 8, but now he had already reached the True Lake Realm, an astoundingly rapid pace of growth.

In thousands of years, many cultivators from the Nine Provinces had entered Xianyuan City, including some with exceptional talents, Ji Yuan didn't know their growth rates, but it certainly couldn't have been faster than this kid's.

Lu Ye shook his head, "The City Lord is mistaken, my current situation is a bit special, I actually am only at Cloud River Level 5, but my psyche force is stronger than my physical body, so only after coming here did I demonstrate the essence of the True Lake Realm."

Ji Yuan suddenly understood, "That's how it is."

It made sense, as it was his psyche that manifested here, naturally, it showed the strength of the psyche.

But Cloud River Level 5... your growth rate is still not slow.

"City Lord, I have some questions I wish to ask, may I seek your guidance?"

"Ask away, I will tell you whatever I can."

"This Xianyuan City... what's going on? Isn't this a secret realm within the Spirit Stream battlefield? How come I could come here through the merged Breath Fruit Core?"

"A secret realm..." Ji Yuan murmured softly, not directly answering Lu Ye's question, but asked instead, "What do you think a secret realm is?"

Chapter 662 - The Secrets of Xianyuan City

Lu Ye had never truly considered what a secret realm was.

In the understanding of Nine Provinces cultivators, a so-called secret realm is nothing more than a special space independent of the Nine Provinces World or an ancient site, or perhaps a legacy left by a powerful figure. Moreover, such existences as secret realms are present in both the Spirit Stream battlefield and the Cloud River battlefield, and even within the mainland of Nine Provinces, there are many secret realms.

Aren't the Spirit Stream battlefield and the Cloud River battlefield themselves secret realms?

However, compared to typical secret realms, these two battlefields are immensely vast in scale.

Each secret realm has its own rules, concealing many risks but also offering many opportunities.

Lu Ye hasn't experienced many secret realms. Strictly speaking, he has only encountered two—the Xianyuan City and the Ten Thousand Beasts Domain secret realm.

Xianyuan City was shrouded in thick fog, and Lu Ye found it somewhat impenetrable. He recalled the Ten Thousand Beasts Domain secret realm and said, "I once visited a secret realm that was said to be a

world that had been destroyed, but was later reconstructed by Heaven's Augury with great power. Inside that secret realm, the experiences of the cultivators were all events that had once occurred in that world. The cultivators either followed the historical trajectory, participated in some significant events that had occurred in that world, or tried in various ways to change the original development path of that world, thereby honing themselves and then obtaining various benefits bestowed by Heaven's Augury."

In the Cloud River battlefield, there are many such types of secret realms, and Xia Qianqian had told Lu Ye about these in the Ten Thousand Beasts Domain secret realm.

This is also why the various factions in the Nine Provinces cultivation world thrive, because many smaller factions have spread from one secret realm to another.

Just as Lu Ye brought out a secret technique from the Ten Thousand Beasts Domain secret realm that could change the landscape of the beast-taming faction, perhaps many years ago, there was neither the beast-taming faction nor the cover armorer faction in Nine Provinces. It was only because cultivators had entered secret realms containing these two factions and had acquired the secret techniques of these factions that they were able to spread and flourish within Nine Provinces.

Ji Yuan asked, "Then, in your view, what kind of secret realm is Xianyuan City?"

Lu Ye pondered for a moment and said, "Xianyuan City doesn't feel like that type of secret realm to me."

"Indeed, it is not," Ji Yuan nodded slightly. "The type of secret realm you mentioned is not inherently part of Nine Provinces but becomes accessible to Nine Provinces cultivators due to some special reasons."

As for what reasons, Ji Yuan did not say, but Lu Ye had some guesses; only the mysterious and unpredictable Heaven's Augury could achieve such things.

"Xianyuan City... is essentially a city of Nine Provinces."

A city that stood proud atop Nine Provinces thousands of years ago, even more powerful than the current 1st grade sects.

"So how did Xianyuan City become what it is now? And there's the Insect Race attacking the city... Butcher, the powerful figure, said that this kind of war had been ongoing for thousands of years."

"Indeed, for thousands of years!" Ji Yuan's eyes flickered with a reflective look, "This is the choice of Xianyuan City, the choice of all cultivators of Xianyuan City. It is precisely because of this choice that we have coexisted with Xianyuan City for thousands of years. As for why it has become this way... you can think of Xianyuan City as a wedge that plugs a leak."

Lu Ye listened, confused about what this leak and wedge meant. While he did not quite understand, he could feel that Xianyuan City was vitally important. If this wedge did not exist, the leak would appear, potentially leading to some very dire consequences.

"Your cultivation is still low, so you cannot see much, but as it gradually increases, you will slowly develop many different feelings. However, one thing you must remember is that the Nine Provinces continent is not as you see it now. Only when your cultivation is high enough will you be able to slowly discern the true nature of this world."

The true nature of the world...

Lu Ye had vaguely heard these words somewhere before and couldn't help but fall into deep thought.

If it were any other Nine Provinces cultivator here, Ji Yuan would never mention these things to someone at the Cloud River Realm. But since he had confirmed that Lu Ye was the chosen one, it wouldn't hurt to say a bit more. After all, Lu Ye would gradually come to understand these things in the future, and having a mental preparation in advance was certainly not a bad thing.

"In any case, Xianyuan City is very important. Thus, in those years, the cultivators of the entire Xianyuan City abandoned their physical bodies and turned into Spiritual Bodies, leaving the imprint of their psyches in the soul pool. As long as the soul pool is indestructible, even if the Spiritual Bodies shatter, the cultivators of Xianyuan City can be resurrected from the dead."

This was also why Lu Ye could meet Butcher and the others again. He had thought the Butcher squad had been completely annihilated, yet they crawled out of the soul pool in no time at all.

However, the deaths of Xianyuan City's cultivators ultimately consumed the power of the soul pool. Over thousands of years, the essence of the soul pool had greatly diminished. Therefore, Ji Yuan would say things like he didn't have much time left.

Lu Ye's expression was indescribable as he slowly spoke, "Thousands of years... Must be very hard to endure, isn't it?"

Ji Yuan looked at Lu Ye with some surprise. Ordinary people, upon learning of the characteristics of Xianyuan City's cultivators, would first feel envy.

Because of the soul pool, the cultivators of Xianyuan City are almost immortal, a temptation that external cultivators hardly dare long for.

Who doesn't want to live forever? But even for those strong cultivators at the Divine Sea Realm, there are lifespans to consider.

The cultivators of Xianyuan City, whether in the Divine Sea or Cloud River Realm, can live forever, of course, provided that the soul pool does not break.

"Why do you say that?" Ji Yuan asked.

"Repeating such things for thousands of years, constantly participating in battles against the Insect Race, even if there's no need to worry about dying, would always feel monotonous and hard to endure... If it were me, I definitely wouldn't want such immortality. I would rather live more brilliantly, maintaining enough respect for death, because that's what adds meaning to life, right?"

Ji Yuan smiled, "Look at you, you're not that old yet you have such insights."

Lu Ye said, "Just speaking off the cuff. Perhaps if I really faced death, I might choose that kind of immortality."

Ji Yuan nodded, "Human nature is always complex. But what you said is right, it is indeed hard to endure. Even though everyone was fully aware when they made that decision initially, only through real experience do they realize that awareness alone is not enough. We, as Spiritual Bodies, are immortal because of the soul pool, but we are also greatly restricted. We are completely tied to Xianyuan City, and we can never leave it in this lifetime. Normally, everyone would sleep in the soul pool, they only awake to resist when the Insect Race wages war, over and over, year after year, like an unbreakable cycle."

Lu Ye looked up at the sky, only to find that the huge rift that had been there before had disappeared, puzzled, he said, "Wasn't the insect hive supposed to be within the rift that appeared before? Haven't you thought about counter-attacking and destroying the insect hive?"

Chapter 663 Human Nature is Complex

The Insect Race ultimately has a source, which is the insect hive.

As long as the insect hive is destroyed, the hidden danger of the Insect Race could be eliminated without a fight. Of course, for the insect hive to plunge Xianyuan City into such a state, its scale must be absolutely enormous, perhaps even more than one; otherwise, it could not possibly breed members comparably strong as cultivators from the Divine Sea Realm.

Lu Ye had experienced the Insect Plague at the Spirit Stream battlefield, but those insects were all from the Spirit Stream Realm, and the defense inside their hives was not substantial.

There are also insect hives in the secret realm of the Ten Thousand Beasts Domain, but those can be dealt with by the combined efforts of Cloud River Realm cultivators.

The power of Xianyuan City is definitely not weak. The current city lord is only from the spirit ground, showing no overt power, but he is definitely among the strongest in the Divine Sea Realm.

Given the power of Xianyuan City and the immortal nature of their spiritual bodies, it should not be difficult to deal with the insect hives if they truly intended to.

Ji Yuan smiled faintly, "You forgot what I just told you. Although we have immortal bodies thanks to the soul pool, we are completely bound to Xianyuan City. We spiritual bodies cannot easily leave this

environment. You might have noticed an opening in the sky earlier. That indeed is where the insect hive is located, but we... we can't go in!"

Lu Ye suddenly realized, "So that's how it is."

Therefore, the entire Xianyuan City was surrounded by a Great Sky Prohibition Array, because the spiritual bodies of Xianyuan City couldn't penetrate deep into the insect hive, so they directly set up the Great Sky Prohibition Array to prevent both the insect race and cultivators from flying too high, thereby making it easier for the cultivators to slay the insects.

Indeed, the existence of the Great Sky Prohibition Array is somewhat detrimental to the cultivators, but compared to the convenience it brings, those disadvantages are negligible.

"Thousands of years of endless cycles, the spiritual bodies of Xianyuan City remain immortal, but human nature is ultimately complex..."

This statement had been made by Ji Yuan once before, and now he repeated it.

"During this process, some people harbored many negative emotions: regret, annoyance, irritability, frustration, etc. Do not underestimate these negative emotions; for bodiless spiritual bodies, these emotions can often cause great harm, and some even attempted self-destruction, though it was bound to be unsuccessful."

Lu Ye listened quietly, his expression complex.

As an outsider, he indeed found it difficult to personally relate to the consequences of these negative emotions the city lord spoke of, and it was hard to imagine to what extent a spiritual body must be in despair and frustration to attempt self-destruction.

But he knew, the casual remark he made earlier had been validated by the spiritual bodies of Xianyuan City.

Thousands of years... indeed a difficult period to endure.

"How did you get through it?" Lu Ye asked. This time inside, he had encountered only a few spiritual bodies, but it seemed that those Xianyuan Guards, besides being unafraid of death, did not exhibit particularly abnormal emotions.

Last time he was here, he encountered many Xianyuan Guards, but the spiritual intelligence of most of those guards seemed not very high, even those who were team leaders acted in a very rigid manner.

"So Xianyuan City became a secret realm!" Ji Yuan suddenly made a statement that Lu Ye completely couldn't understand.

Fortunately, he quickly explained, "The presence of living beings can greatly disperse the negative emotions of spiritual bodies, so a long time ago, every once in a while when the insect race would not attack the city, an entrance to Xianyuan City would open somewhere, allowing cultivators from the Nine Provinces to enter."

The topic circled back.

Ji Yuan initially asked Lu Ye what a secret realm was, and after getting an answer, he then asked what kind of secret realm Xianyuan City was.

By now, the answer had surfaced.

The secret realm of Xianyuan City exists solely because the presence of living beings is needed to disperse the various anxious emotions within the city, hence the entrance opens periodically to allow cultivators from the Nine Provinces to enter.

Lu Ye didn't expect the truth to be like this.

Actually, when he entered last time, he had already felt very strange because no matter the type of secret realm, cultivators entering it ultimately gain some opportunities or benefits.

But what about Xianyuan City? It seemed not to offer many benefits; he himself had managed to carry some soul water out, but that was an exception.

The impression of Xianyuan City as a secret realm does not seem very good among the cultivators of the Nine Provinces; when those cultivators initially entered and realized they were in Xianyuan City, their faces changed dramatically, and there were even some who cursed loudly.

It can be said that the cultivators who entered Xianyuan City last time, except for Lu Ye who garnered some benefits, left with very little else, while the cultivators from Ten Thousand Demons Ridge and the Haotian Alliance were nearly wiped out.

If the purpose of this secret realm were not for the cultivators to gain benefits, but instead to stabilize Xianyuan City itself, then that would explain it.

"So the Xianyuan Guards were capturing people everywhere and throwing them into the dungeon?" Lu Ye recalled another matter. Initially, when he held the token given by the lady in red, he had entered the dungeon, where there were many Nine Provinces cultivators captured, including those from Ten Thousand Demons Ridge and the Haotian Alliance, but the life force of those locked up seemed to be rapidly draining away.

If it weren't for his timely arrival, Gu Canyang from the Surreptitious Palace would likely have been dead.

The so-called breath of the living is nothing more than a tangible vitality.

Ji Yuan nodded, "In the dungeon, there is an array that extracts vitality, connected to where the soul pool is located, which can to a certain extent dispel the negative emotions of the spiritual bodies. Therefore, when the secret realm is opened, the Xianyuan Guards, unless absolutely necessary, generally do not kill but capture instead."

Lu Ye thought about it carefully and realized that it was indeed the case.

Of course, heavens do not seal all exits; based on the true caliber of cultivators from Xianyuan City, cultivators from the Spirit Stream Realm entering here can hardly stir up any troubles.

Thus, during the opening of the secret realm in Xianyuan City, the strength of Xianyuan Guards entirely depends on the overall level of the cultivators entering here. Strong cultivators coming in make the guards strong, and vice versa, which also gives the Nine Provinces cultivators some room to fight back.

Another point is that the entrance to the secret realm of Xianyuan City opens in the Spirit Stream battlefield mainly because the group of cultivators in the Spirit Stream Realm is large enough that even some losses are easily replenished.

Over countless years, many cultivators from the two major factions have died within Xianyuan City, from both Ten Thousand Demons Ridge and Haotian Alliance. It's futile to judge Xianyuan City merely by notions of good and evil; the entire cultivation world of the Nine Provinces does not adhere to simple notions of good and evil.

Moreover, in the Spirit Stream battlefield, cultivators from both factions are always in a state of confrontation, and the secret realm of Xianyuan City at most provides a stage for their battles.

"Lord, you mentioned earlier that the opening of the secret realm somewhat alleviates the negative emotions of the spiritual bodies. Could there be other methods besides the vitality brought about by the opening of the secret realm?" Lu Ye inquired.

Ji Yuan was surprised, "Did I say so?"

Lu Ye nodded.

Ji Yuan, secretly amazed by Lu Ye's insight, paused slightly and asked, "Do you still remember why I appeared before you the first time you came here?"

Lu Ye thought hard for a moment—back then he was about to do something, and then the City Lord suddenly appeared in front of him, startling him because he had no awareness of him before that moment.

But what was he about to do at that time?

It seemed that he had been stopped...

"Breath Fruit Core?" Lu Ye suddenly remembered.

He had been staying bored in the small courtyard where he was settled, preparing to stimulate the power of the Breath Fruit Core to enter the Mirage Scene for training, but just as he took out the Breath Fruit Core, the City Lord appeared.

He vaguely remembered the City Lord telling him, "This object must not be used within Xianyuan City."

When Lu Ye asked why, the City Lord only mentioned that it would lead to some adverse consequences, though he did not specify what they were at the time.

Last time he entered, Lu Ye felt that there might be some connection between the Mirage Realm he entered using the Breath Fruit Core and Xianyuan City, but he couldn't find any concrete evidence at the time.

Now it appeared that there was indeed a connection, at the very least, he had entered Xianyuan City again through two merged Breath Fruit Cores in a very special state.

"Let's just call it Breath Fruit Core," Ji Yuan said with a slight smile, revealing a charming expression befitting the city lord; alive, he must have certainly attracted the affections of many women, "The creatures you killed in the Mirage Realm through the power of the Breath Fruit Core are actually manifestations of the negative emotions of the spiritual bodies from Xianyuan City."

Lu Ye was astonished, having never expected the Mirage Realm connected by the Breath Fruit Core to have such a link with Xianyuan City.

But soon he felt something was amiss, "Those clawing and snapping insects, are they also crystallizations of the spiritual bodies' negative emotions?" It seemed unlikely that any Xianyuan Guard's negative emotions would manifest as creatures of the Insect Race.

"You encountered the Insect Race?" Ji Yuan seemed surprised, "The Insect Race is not, they must be... a method to enrich your training process."

Lu Ye raised an eyebrow, sensing something significant, and pointed upwards.

Ji Yuan nodded almost imperceptibly, showing an expression that said, 'A pupil worth teaching.'

"That's why I did not allow you to utilize the Breath Fruit Core within Xianyuan City. Using it outside has no impact since the spiritual bodies are all in deep sleep, but using it within the city could very likely awaken them, thereby increasing the consumption of the soul pool."

"I see," Lu Ye nodded, then another thought came to him, "So the connection of the two Breath Fruit Cores to Xianyuan City is also a... method?" He pointed upwards again.

"It's good that you understand, no need to dig too deeply," Ji Yuan said, "The number of Breath Fruit Cores in the world must not be too small, and those that can connect to the Mirage Realm are certainly not limited to just the two you obtained. Their training in the Mirage Scene can also help relieve some of Xianyuan City's burdens."

"As the City Lord said, it's also likely that others have obtained more than two Breath Fruit Cores and merged them. Before this, no one has entered Xianyuan City in the same manner as I did?"

Ji Yuan shook his head, "Unless during the opening of the secret realm, as an outsider, you are the first one."

Unless chosen, even if someone acquired many more Breath Fruit Cores, they could not possibly enter here inexplicably. However, Ji Yuan naturally wouldn't discuss such matters with Lu Ye—there were things he might speculate about, but he could only keep to himself and feign ignorance.

Chapter 664 - Return

After a long conversation with Ji Yuan, Lu Ye understood many things, but it seemed he was also burdened with even more doubts, yet he couldn't quite grasp what exactly those doubts were.

While the two of them talked, Xianyuan Guards kept returning from outside, saluting Ji Yuan, then dived into the soul pool and disappeared from sight.

The Insect Race assault on the city had ended, and as Spiritual Bodies of Xianyuan City, they needed to enter the soul pool to hibernate and reduce their consumption.

Lu Ye saw several familiar faces, including Liu Sanbao, the Scholar and the Fortune Telling Blind Man.

As expected, these three were strong cultivators of the Divine Sea Realm, each commanding a Xianyuan Guard squad. When they saw Lu Ye, none of them showed much surprise because they already knew that, during this phase of the Insect Race attack on the city, there had been an outsider who performed quite well and whom Butcher had included in his squad.

Their gazes met briefly, and with a slight nod, they exchanged greetings.

Soon, another familiar face appeared, surprisingly it was Xi Wanying, holding her pipa.

The look in this woman's eyes toward Lu Ye was full of deep resentment, as if Lu Ye had committed an unspeakable atrocity against her. However, she always had that kind of mournful, pitiable expression, akin to an abandoned, homeless kitten. Yet anyone who underestimated her because of this would likely meet an unpleasant end.

Butcher had admitted himself that Xi Wanying's strength was greater than his, and his words implied that this woman was not very kind-hearted.

Therefore, upon seeing her, Lu Ye couldn't help but feel a bit apprehensive, fearing she held a grudge over their last encounter and would seek retribution...

Fortunately, nothing of the sort happened. Xi Wanying merely glanced at Lu Ye before pulling her gaze away, and after leading her squad of Xianyuan Guards in saluting Ji Yuan, she walked into the soul pool.

Squads of Xianyuan Guards returned from outside and proceeded into the soul pool.

Butcher also returned with his team intact, Liu Datong, Yooi Qing, and other Spiritual Bodies who had fought shoulder to shoulder before, all were unharmed.

"Kid, you did well," Liu Datong said, patting Lu Ye's shoulder as the other Xianyuan Guards smiled at Lu Ye, their expressions filled with recognition and approval.

Lu Ye felt a sense of relief. Although he knew Spiritual Bodies of Xianyuan City would not die after seeing Butcher resurrected, it wasn't until he saw them with his own eyes that he was truly at ease.

Yooi Qing winked at Lu Ye and said sweetly, "Come back next time, little brother!"

Lu Ye chuckled, feeling as if her words carried a double meaning...

The Xianyuan Guards entered the soul pool one after another, submerging themselves.

Butcher turned to Lu Ye and said, "Kid, cultivate well. Perhaps the future of Xianyuan City..."

But before he could finish, Ji Yuan interrupted, "Butcher!"

Butcher changed his tune, patting Lu Ye's shoulder, "Regardless, striving to become stronger is the right way!"

Lu Ye nodded.

Butcher looked at the City Lord, "Lord, I will go in as well."

"Go," Ji Yuan said with a wave of his hand.

Butcher gave Lu Ye another look before he walked into the soul pool.

Lu Ye stared in the direction of the soul pool for a long time before suddenly asking, "City Lord, I should be able to enter Xianyuan City at any time now, but I can't perceive what's happening inside the city when I'm in the outside world. How can I find out the exact time when the Insect Race attacks again?"

Now, activating the power of the Breath Fruit Core, two doors appear in that special space. One is where Lu Ye used to hone himself, and the other leads to Xianyuan City, although the merit cost to open the two doors is vastly different.

In principle, Lu Ye could enter Xianyuan City at any time as long as he had enough merits.

This time, he had earned more than three hundred thousand battle merits, exchanged for over three hundred drops of soul water—his gains were substantial.

Lu Ye didn't know if he could obtain soul water again, as it was the foundation of Xianyuan City, but battle merits were definitely something he could gain more of.

He just needed to time his entry for the next Insect Race siege.

Moreover, when he returned next time, he would be stronger, making it easier to earn battle merits.

To him, Xianyuan City was like a secret realm tailor-made for grinding battle merits.

Ji Yuan shook his head, "We cannot predict when the Insect Race will siege the city. It could be once every year or two, or it might be several years. There's no pattern; it all depends on whether the insect hive has gathered enough strength. As for how to know the situation inside Xianyuan City... I have no way, unless you periodically come in to check."

Clearly, that was not feasible. Entering Xianyuan City cost ten thousand merit points each time; once or twice was manageable for Lu Ye but not sustainable over the long term.

Moreover, each Insect Race siege only lasted around ten days to half a month; if Lu Ye did not enter during that time, then all previous and subsequent checks would be futile.

To follow this method, Lu Ye might burn through a million merit points before coincidentally catching an Insect Race siege.

This was a frustrating thought.

During the Insect Race siege, Xianyuan City was an excellent battlefield for accruing battle merits. After this experience, Lu Ye also wanted to help alleviate some pressure on Xianyuan City during their sieges. Although he was alone and couldn't contribute much, Xianyuan City itself was made up of the combined strength of all its Xianyuan Guards.

"However..." Ji Yuan's voice took a turn, "as you are now half a member of Xianyuan City, having been included in Butcher's squad, you might have some perception when the Insect Race sieges the city next time."

Lu Ye was surprised, "I was included in Senior Butcher's squad?"

City Lord said, "Butcher brought you back earlier, and he said you were a member of his squad. I didn't refuse, so you are now a member of Butcher's squad." This was not simply a verbal recognition; in a way, Ji Yuan's will represented the will of the entire Xianyuan City. His recognition of Lu Ye's identity meant the entire Xianyuan City acknowledged it.

Apart from not having left his own psyche imprint in the soul pool and being unable to rely on the soul pool for immortality, Lu Ye was no different from the other Xianyuan Guards.

"Then why could I sense the Insect Race attacking the city?" Lu Ye asked, puzzled.

"You'll know when the time comes, and it's possible I could be wrong too," the City Lord replied.

Lu Ye then knew that this matter probably involved some indescribable secrets.

"So, my lord, how can I leave this place now?"

It was time to leave, now that the matters of Xianyuan City were resolved.

During his last visit to Xianyuan City, Lu Ye didn't have to worry about being trapped because, once the time limit expired, Xianyuan City would generate a repelling force to expel all cultivators who entered. However, this was not the opening of a secret realm, and he probably would not be treated the same way.

"Are you ready?" Ji Yuan suddenly asked.

"What?" Lu Ye turned his head just in time to see Ji Yuan slowly push out a palm towards him.

This palm held no power, but under its influence, Lu Ye felt as if the entire Xianyuan City was becoming incompatible with him.

The scenery around him rapidly receded, and Ji Yuan too distanced himself from him in an instant. He even saw the entire landscape of Xianyuan City in his field of view.

It was as though he was high in the sky, looking down on Xianyuan City.

Furthermore, the city below was shrinking at an incredibly fast rate, turning into dust in the blink of an eye.

Lu Ye immediately realized that as the City Lord of Xianyuan City, Ji Yuan had the ability to send him out of the city!

Ji Yuan's voice rang in his ear: "Your cultivation has not reached the Divine Sea Realm, and prolonged astral projection might lead to the incompatibility between your psyche and your flesh. When you return, remember to stabilize your psyche with soul water and rest for a few days."

The voice trailed off, fading away gradually.

Inside the city lord's estate, Lu Ye had disappeared, leaving only Ji Yuan alone.

The usually bustling Xianyuan City once again lapsed into silence. The next time it would become lively would probably be when the secret realm opened or when the Insect Race attacked.

In another direction, within a small courtyard, a red-dressed woman sat on a swing, gently swaying back and forth, with a white cat curled up at her feet, sleeping peacefully.

...

The sound of a somewhat familiar shouting voice reached his ears. The voice was tinged with a hint of panic and surprise.

Whose voice was that?

Lu Ye's mind was in chaos, and he couldn't immediately remember to whom this familiar voice belonged.

But subconsciously, he felt that the owner of this voice was extremely important to him—it was definitely an irreplaceable presence in his life!

He wanted to open his eyes, but he found that his eyelids were incredibly heavy and he just couldn't open them. He felt as if he was trapped in a nightmare.

Suddenly, he remembered who the voice belonged to.

Yiyi!

It was as though a door to sealed memories had been opened, and numerous thoughts surged through his mind. Gradually, Lu Ye understood his situation.

That's right, he had previously activated the power of the Breath Fruit Core, intending to enter the Mirage Scene to hone his skills, but ended up in Xianyuan City instead, and then the City Lord had sent him back.

But what was this feeling of disharmony?

He felt as though his entire being was covered by a thick layer of dust, making it difficult for his consciousness to transmit and to control the actions of his flesh.

Just like now, even the simple act of opening his eyes was beyond his reach.

In a daze, he recalled the last words spoken by the City Lord.

His cultivation had not reached the Divine Sea Realm, and prolonged separation of the psyche from the body could lead to incompatibility between the two. So, this was what it was like...

The actual situation was much more severe than he had imagined.

The current Lu Ye felt as though his psyche had entered an unfamiliar shell, fraught with discomfort.

Even with just a few days spent in Xianyuan City, such a condition had manifested. If too much time had passed, he even doubted that his returning psyche could blend back into its body.

Yiyi's voice resonated in his ears, calling out his name incessantly, her tone laced with sobs.

Amber's anxious footsteps could also be heard pacing restlessly nearby.

He had made them worried... Lu Ye didn't know how anxious Yiyi and Amber had been during his days in Xianyuan City, but from the current situation, it seemed that some issues arose with his body just as he entered the city.

Chapter 665 - Hidden Danger

Indeed, that was the case. When Lu Ye pushed open the second grand door and entered Xianyuan City, Amber immediately sensed something unusual.

Lu Ye seemed like nothing more than an empty shell.

At first, she thought that something terrible had happened to Lu Ye and wailed bitterly, but she soon realized that the situation was not as severe as she had thought.

Because she and Amber were still alive, this meant that Lu Ye wasn't dead.

However, the situation was not optimistic. Lu Ye's aura was extremely weak, so weak that it was almost undetectable unless one concentrated hard.

Over the past few days, Yiyi had tried every possible method to awaken Lu Ye, but with little success.

Until now, she distinctly felt it... Lu Ye had come back!

The weak aura that seemed likely to extinguish at any moment was visibly growing stronger, and the shell-like body also now had a soul.

She kept calling Lu Ye's name, her pleading voice piercing through the invisible barrier, reaching the lake in his heart, and creating ripples in Lu Ye's sea of consciousness. As the ripples spread, Lu Ye's consciousness rapidly revived, gradually figuring out his situation.

It was unknown how much time had passed before he finally regained a sliver of control over his body and struggled to open his eyes, immediately seeing Yiyi's face kneeling in front of him, full of anxiety and concern. Her eyes were red, and if not for being a spiritual body, tears would have surely streaked down her face.

"Lu Ye!" their eyes met, and Yiyi exclaimed joyfully, "How are you? What happened?"

Lu Ye's lips moved, and after trying for a long time, he finally managed to produce a hoarse voice, "Don't worry..."

He had wanted to reassure Yiyi with a few more words, but at this moment, his control over his physical body was unprecedentedly weak, making it difficult for him to say more.

Fortunately, they were inside a guest room of Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union, where there was no danger. If this had happened in the wilderness, the prospects would have been grim.

He closed his eyes and continued to adjust and recuperate.

As time passed, the incompatibility between his psyche and body eased significantly. At this moment, Lu Ye couldn't help but feel the illusion of having been bedridden for a long time and finally regaining control over his body.

Remembering Ji Yuan's previous words, he quickly took out a jade vial filled with soul water from his storage space and swallowed a drop.

Originally tired after his psyche had returned, Lu Ye felt the fatigue dissipate rapidly once the soul water took effect.

He took a deep breath, having finally passed through the most difficult moment.

Yiyi had remained by his side all along, and Amber too, looking at him with eyes full of concern.

Lu Ye reached out and stroked Amber's head, looking at Yiyi and saying, "I'm alright now."

"What on earth happened? Did you encounter some mishap in your cultivation... Did you become possessed?" Yiyi wildly guessed.

Becoming possessed was a rare occurrence for Nine Provinces cultivators because their cultivation was ultimately a systematic process, and very few would become possessed if they did not recklessly attempt any special cultivation methods.

"It's a long story." Lu Ye sighed. Who could have imagined that he had just impulsively decided to temper himself in the Mirage Realm, only to end up in Xianyuan City and participate in a war against an Insect Race invasion?

In front of Yiyi, there was no need for any secrets.

So, Lu Ye briefly recounted his recent experiences. Yiyi was quite shocked to hear that Lu Ye had entered Xianyuan City again and that the situation in the city was completely different from their last visit, with the entire city harboring huge secrets.

Especially when she heard that Liu Datong, Yooi Qing, and others had fought selflessly to escort Lu Ye back to the base, sacrificing themselves, the young girl couldn't help but redden her eyes again.

Upon learning that the spiritual bodies in Xianyuan City were immortal and the seemingly annihilated Butcher squad had come back to life, the young girl finally wore a smile.

"In short, the City Lord of Xianyuan City said that my cultivation hasn't reached the Divine Sea Realm, so a prolonged disembodiment of my psyche could lead to incompatibility between my psyche and body. He suggested that I stabilize my psyche with soul water for a while, so there's nothing major to worry about."

Yiyi nodded, "Then you should rest well for a while."

"Hmm," Lu Ye nodded and then patted his stomach, "I'm a bit hungry."

Yiyi quickly got up, "I'll have someone bring in some food."

Saying this, she left the guest room.

The service at Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union was still impeccable; the cultivators staying here almost got any service they could desire.

In just a short time, delicious food was brought in, also including fresh demon beast meat for Amber.

A man and a tiger devoured their meal like a whirlwind.

Lu Ye then took out several jade vials filled with soul water and handed them to Yiyi.

Yiyi was a spiritual body and, although her strength increased with Amber's, with the help of soul water, her psyche could continuously grow stronger.

It could be said that soul water was even more beneficial to her than to Lu Ye.

With soul water to strengthen the Psyche Force and dragon scales to enhance the body, these two were essential foundations for any cultivator, allowing Lu Ye to keep overcoming enemies above his level.

And with a strong foundation, cultivation became much easier, thus creating a positive cycle.

Having eaten his fill, Lu Ye sat at ease and closed his eyes to rest his spirit.

He was not cultivating nor reading.

After an unknown period of time, Yiyi's voice suddenly rang out, "Lu Ye!"

Startled, Lu Ye quickly opened his eyes, only to find his perspective oddly high, as if he had unknowingly taken flight and was now several feet above the ground.

Below him, Yiyi looked up worriedly, and Amber also stared with wide eyes, glancing back and forth between him and the surroundings.

Following Amber's gaze, Lu Ye was shocked to see a very familiar figure.

Upon closer inspection, Lu Ye jumped — the figure was none other than himself!

What was going on?

Lu Ye was at a loss when suddenly, his field of view twisted, and an irresistible pulling force emerged, plunging him back down into his own body.

Slowly opening his eyes, Lu Ye gradually realized what had happened.

His psyche had left his body again, and he hadn't noticed it happening.

Ji Yuan was right. His cultivation had not reached the Divine Sea, and prolonged separation of body and psyche indeed caused disharmony between them.

If Yiyi hadn't called out just now, he wouldn't have noticed at all.

However, this ultimately wasn't a serious problem.

Over the next few days, Lu Ye experienced his psyche involuntarily leaving his body several times, sometimes while meditating, and sometimes while walking. As he walked, there would suddenly come a thump from behind, and turning his head, he'd find his body collapsed on the ground.

More often, he experienced a sudden loss of control over his body, his movements becoming uncoordinated.

These incidents over the last few days were somewhat bizarre, and it's safe to say that not even cultivators in the Cloud River Realm or even in the True Lake or Divine Sea Realms might have undergone such experiences.

This kind of change had a significant impact on a cultivator.

Cultivators often found themselves in conflicts, and if such a thing happened during a fight, all the lives in the world would not suffice.

Lu Ye took a drop of soul water daily to stabilize his psyche, and after several days, such incidents became less frequent until they stopped occurring altogether.

Not feeling reassured, Lu Ye stayed a few more days within the Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union before he was sure the sudden separation of his psyche from his body would not reoccur.

He could feel his psyche had reintegrated with his body and sensed that his psyche had strengthened after his experiences in Xianyuan City.

After all, in Xianyuan City, he had soaked in the soul pool once again.

For other cultivators, a stronger psyche was undoubtedly beneficial.

Initially, Lu Ye was also delighted. Throughout his journey of cultivation, with his strong psyche, he had advantages other cultivators did not, such as perceiving sudden attacks with greater acuity and faster reaction times.

Another example was the Mental Eye Secret Technique that Xia Liang had taught him; without sufficient Psyche Force, he would not have been able to learn it so swiftly.

But Lu Ye gradually noticed something was amiss!

His Psyche Force was becoming too strong, to the point it almost surpassed his own cultivation level by a major realm.

This might not necessarily be a good thing.

If one considered the body as a container and the psyche as the water it holds, the normal growth of cultivators involves the container and the water increasing in sync. As cultivators grow, the body, this container, will always be able to hold the psyche.

However, his case was different. His Psyche Force grew faster than his body improved. In simple terms, the body as a container was trying to hold more than it should and was under more stress than it should endure.

The most severe consequence might be that the container shatters, which means either the container breaks, or the water overflows.

The reason this had not happened yet was mainly because of Lu Ye's sufficiently strong physique. He had long used the blood Qi energy in dragon scales to enhance his physicality, making his physique comparable to that of a physique cultivator at the same level.

He also often consumed demon beast meat, using the Bestial Gluttony Feast to supplement his blood Qi.

In the Nine Provinces cultivation world, there had never been a case like Lu Ye's, where someone's psyche was stronger than their body by an entire major realm!

So, after body and psyche were realigned successfully, Lu Ye faintly sensed the hidden dangers in his condition.

There was a simple solution to this dilemma — increase his cultivation and expand the container's capacity.

Originally, he had the opportunity, with over three hundred thousand battle merits to exchange for more than twenty gold-hued spirit fortune sticks, which could have elevated his cultivation to the Cloud River Level 8-9 range in one stroke.

However, the battle merits he had gained in Xianyuan City were all exchanged for soul water.

In the long run, the value of soul water was much greater than that of gold-hued spirit fortune sticks, but it unfortunately could not alleviate the immediate thirst...

Luckily, Lu Ye knew of a place where he could quickly elevate his cultivation.

Chapter 666 All Ready

That place was somewhere Lu Ye had intended to visit ever since he entered the Cloud River battlefield. However, in the beginning, he was not familiar with the situation of the Cloud River battlefield and his cultivation was not high, so he did not act rashly.

Of course, the main reason was that he was not fully prepared and could not maximize the benefits he would gain from that place.

In that place, elixir pills and Spirit Stones and the like were not very useful. What really mattered were things that could restore the power of the psyche.

He had originally thought to prepare for a while longer before going, but now he could no longer wait.

The main reason was that he didn't need to prepare anything else; he had already obtained what he needed most!

The Hundred Arrays Pagoda!

This was the Sacred Land for the array cultivators of the Nine Provinces and a place for them to advance their own Array Path.

It was said in the Nine Provinces that the Hundred Arrays Pagoda was a relic left over from a previous cultivation era, with a total of one hundred levels. Each level presented a different challenge, each more difficult than the last. If one could pass the challenges, they would be rewarded by Heaven's Augury, and all of these rewards were related to the Array Path.

This also attracted countless cultivators from the Nine Provinces to enter the Hundred Arrays Pagoda to temper and hone their Array Path.

However, the complete Hundred Arrays Pagoda no longer existed, and no one knew what had happened to it. Now, the Hundred Arrays Pagoda was divided into three parts.

One part, which was the bottom part, was located within the Tianyan Sect in Wuzhou.

Lu Ye had once been invited by a cultivator named Zhao Li from the Tianyan Sect to be a guest at their sect's headquarters and subsequently enter the core part of the sect. He managed to pass through thirty-three levels in one go, causing a huge commotion within the entire Tianyan Sect.

Before attempting the Hundred Arrays Pagoda, Lu Ye had some accomplishments in the Array Path, but it was not to an exaggerated extent. However, after surmounting the Hundred Arrays Pagoda of the Tianyan Sect, Lu Ye's accomplishments in the Array Path could be said to have improved by leaps and bounds.

It was also the foundation that allowed him to act unbridled in the Spirit Stream battlefield. No other Spirit Stream Realm cultivator had ever possessed such high Array Path accomplishments—penetrating others' protective arrays as easily as eating and drinking. Coupled with Lu Ye's strength that surpassed that of fellow cultivators at the same level, his existence was like an unending nightmare for the big sects of Ten Thousand Demons Ridge on the Spirit Stream battlefield.

The only consolation for the side of Ten Thousand Demons Ridge was that Lu Ye had advanced to Cloud River early and left the Spirit Stream battlefield, otherwise the vast Spirit Stream battlefield might have been tormented by him beyond recognition.

Lu Ye's current accomplishments in the Array Path could partly be attributed to his foundation as a spirit runes master. Many spirit runes were used in formations, and being able to easily construct numerous spirit runes gave him an advantage in array setup and array destruction that was difficult for ordinary people to match.

But the more significant reason came from the gifts of the Hundred Arrays Pagoda!

Having passed through thirty-three levels of the Hundred Arrays Pagoda in one attempt, and given that his cultivation level at that time had only been at Spirit Stream Level 8—just after the incident in the secret realm of Xianyuan City—the gifts Lu Ye received from the Hundred Arrays Pagoda far surpassed

those of any other array cultivator before him, elevating his accomplishments in the Array Path to a level difficult for peers to reach.

The foundation as a spirit runes master gave him some advantage in array setup and array destruction, but the gifts from the Hundred Arrays Pagoda were fundamental in enhancing his Array Path skills. Moreover, for a long time afterward, these gifts continued to have an afterglow effect, further enhancing Lu Ye's insights into the Array Path.

Zhao Li of the Tianyan Sect once told Lu Ye that managing to pass through the first ten levels of the Hundred Arrays Pagoda meant one had a basic understanding of the Array Path and could be considered a qualified array cultivator. Passing through twenty levels meant mastering the Array Path, and passing through thirty-three levels warranted being called a master...

A master of the Array Path in the Spirit Stream Realm—what a tremendously prestigious honor.

Previously, in the mines at the outskirts of Great Wilderness Mountain, that fellow named Si Nan desperately thought he could obstruct Lu Ye with a protective array. The outcome proved that what Si Nan considered an impregnable protective array was no match for Lu Ye.

He never imagined the gap between their Array Path skills would be so vast.

A part of the Hundred Arrays Pagoda was in the Tianyan Sect in Wuzhou, while the second part was in the Cloud River battlefield!

Having experienced passing through the Hundred Arrays Pagoda and reaping unimaginable benefits from it, Lu Ye planned to challenge the Hundred Arrays Pagoda again one day after advancing to Cloud River and arriving at the Cloud River battlefield.

Previously his cultivation had been too low and he was not prepared, making it difficult to proceed.

Based on his previous experience, Lu Ye knew that the biggest issue array cultivators faced in the Hundred Arrays Pagoda was the consumption of mental power. He had relied on Soul Cleansing Water to get through the challenges each time, which is why he always received a large number of gifts.

He didn't have much Soul Cleansing Water before, so he was reluctant to rashly venture into the Hundred Arrays Pagoda. These days, every time he entered the Heaven's Augury treasure vault to look for resources, he had also looked for items or miracle cures that could restore the force of the psyche.

But he had never found anything, as items or miracle cures that could restore the force of the psyche were also very useful to those in the Divine Sea Realm. Even if they occasionally appeared in the Heaven's Augury treasure vault, they would be quickly bought by others—how could it be Lu Ye's turn?

An unforeseen trip to Xianyuan City resulted in him having a large quantity of soul water, far more than he had obtained before.

This resolved his greatest concern.

Now everything was ready, and Lu Ye was eager to improve his cultivation. The trip to the Hundred Arrays Pagoda was inevitable.

For every level of the Hundred Arrays Pagoda he managed to pass through, the gifts he received were not only related to the Array Path. The nature's spiritual energy inside the Hundred Arrays Pagoda was also exceedingly rich and pure, and Lu Ye had previously opened dozens of orifices while in the Tianyan Sect.

That was still the lowest part of the Hundred Arrays Pagoda, the Hundred Arrays Pagoda in the Cloud River battlefield should have an even better effect.

If nothing went wrong, his cultivation might be able to improve somewhat.

Lu Ye knew the location of the Hundred Arrays Pagoda. It wasn't close to the Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union where he currently resided; even if he traveled at full speed, it would still take about ten days.

Furthermore... there were probably still quite a few powerful individuals from the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge keeping an eye on him outside. The moment he showed his face, he would inevitably attract a chase to the death.

Lu Ye sighed in his heart, realizing that peaceful days could never last. He was about to embark on a life of fleeing once again.

However, before that, he needed a large number of array banners.

The difficulty of braving the Hundred Arrays Pagoda lay in two aspects. One was the test of mental power; each level would place a tremendous burden on the cultivator's psyche. Without strong mental power, it would be hard to successfully pass through too many levels at once. The second aspect was the need for array banners since both array destruction and array setup consumed them.

Lu Ye chose not to refine them himself. Although doing it himself would be the most cost-effective, he currently had a large amount of merit at hand, and even if he spent some, it wouldn't matter much.

He left the guest room and lined up in the Heaven's Augury Hall, connecting his mind to the Heaven's Augury treasure vault and purchasing a large number of array banners from it.

Outside the Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union, in the teahouse that had a direct view of the union's entrance, both the owner and the waiters were overjoyed.

The teahouse's business had always been lukewarm, with cultivators coming and going in a hurry. Unless they had business to discuss or were reuniting after a long time, few would patronize places like teahouses; they would more frequently visit taverns and the like.

But in recent days, the teahouse's business... had boomed!

Every day, some cultivators would come in to drink tea, and they were the kind that would occupy a table and sit for many days.

The teahouse only had two floors, and at this moment both levels were packed to the brim.

At first, the workers at the teahouse didn't know what was happening, but as time passed, word started to spread, and they began to understand what these people were up to.

The incident of two million Ten Thousand Demons Ridge cultivators being poisoned to death outside the mines of the Great Wilderness Mountain had caused an uproar, and the name of the instigator, Lu Yiye of the Righteous Blood Sect, began to circulate widely within the Cloud River battlefield.

The madman Lu Yiye was now hiding in this Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union, and many cultivators from the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge who had received the news from various sources gathered here, hoping to get a piece of the action.

Previously, some cultivators from Ten Thousand Demons Ridge couldn't hold back and barged into the Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union to assassinate Lu Yiye. The result was that those few fellows were killed on the spot by the people from the mercantile union, dying a terrible death. Not only that, but their respective sects were also implicated; they couldn't do any business with the mercantile union for three years.

After such deterrence, no one dared to cause trouble in the Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union. Even those who went in to investigate Lu Ye's whereabouts were just feigning business transactions.

As for whether Lu Yiye was really hiding in this Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union... no one knew.

Because from beginning to end, no one had actually seen him enter; it was only suspected.

However, according to the widespread rumors, after the mine incident, an individual wearing a mask, carrying a huge bundle, had entered the union. That person's figure matched Lu Ye's exactly.

Wearing a mask was undoubtedly a way to avoid showing one's true face. As for the huge bundle, it was very likely the spoils of the massacre of two thousand people.

So even though it was mere suspicion, many Ten Thousand Demons Ridge cultivators were convinced that Lu Ye was hiding here.

Among them, Chu Yun and Zhou Pey from the Sacred Fire Order were the most certain of this.

The two of them were among the earliest to arrive here. In the meantime, quite a few Ten Thousand Demons Ridge cultivators had lost patience and left, but these two had been sitting here for many days, unmoved.

On another part of the second floor of the teahouse, there were two silhouettes with whom Lu Ye was familiar.

It was none other than Xia Liang and Tan Sheng, who refused to give up.

When a large number of Ten Thousand Demons Ridge cultivators had gathered outside the Great Reversal Valley, the two of them had miscalculated Lu Ye's response, thinking he would certainly return to the Nine Provinces, so they departed early.

As a result, the subsequent developments had been completely different from what they had anticipated. By the time they received the news and rushed to the mines, what they saw was a hellish scene with the corpses of more than two thousand Ten Thousand Demons Ridge cultivators strewn about, which was hair-raising.

They couldn't help but feel lucky that they hadn't arrived too early; otherwise, they would likely have just become one of those two thousand.

Besides these four, the other cultivators were mostly related to those who had been poisoned to death by Lu Ye. Some had lost childhood friends, while others grieved the deaths of fellow sect sisters. With such enmity, how could they not seek revenge?

Driven by hatred, people came from all directions.

Chapter 667 - Taking the Lead

The tea house was filled with a significant number of Ten Thousand Demons Ridge cultivators, among whom there were many strong figures, but in actuality, few had the confidence to kill Lu Ye.

As long as Lu Ye hid within the Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union, they were at a loss, and within the Mercantile Union there was a Heaven's Augury Pillar, which meant Lu Ye could escape back to the Nine Provinces at any moment.

It could be said that Lu Ye's current situation, compared to when he was in the Great Reversal Valley, had become a myriad times safer.

The gathering of these cultivators from Ten Thousand Demons Ridge here was more out of unwillingness to give up; others also harbored a stroke of luck... what if that Lu Yiye recklessly ran out from the Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union? He probably didn't even know how many eyes were watching him outside.

After waiting so many days, many had lost patience, but thinking that they had already waited for so long, they might as well wait a few more days to see if there would be any turn of events.

If another ten days to half a month passed, the cultivators gathered here from Ten Thousand Demons Ridge would likely diminish by over eighty percent, as nobody would keep up surveillance without any solid information.

However, at noon on this particular day, there was a turn of events.

Since there were quite a few cultivators in the tea house, it had always been rather noisy; but at a certain moment, the boisterous noise suddenly quieted down as if someone had activated an invisible soundproof barrier over the entire tea house.

At a window-adjacent seat in the tea house, one after another, cultivators from Ten Thousand Demons Ridge looked unbelievably in the direction of the Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union, where a figure had unexpectedly appeared.

The person was wearing a face mask and suddenly appeared at the entrance to the Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union, looking as though they had just walked out from there.

In the Nine Provinces, there were not a few cultivators who liked to wear face masks as they moved about, especially those ghost cultivators who act sneakily, so a simple face mask didn't explain much.

While one's features could be hidden behind a mask, their physique could not be changed.

What moved the many cultivators of Ten Thousand Demons Ridge was that the person's physique was strikingly similar to Lu Ye's.

It seemed as if the person standing at the entrance to the Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union noticed their gazes and looked up towards the second floor of the tea house.

As gazes collided, many cultivators from Ten Thousand Demons Ridge flashed expressions of nervousness and excitement.

The excitement stemmed from the possibility that this person might indeed be Lu Yiye, who had really been hiding within the Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union.

The nervousness came from the realization that the person had noticed the situation inside the tea house and might not dare to actually come out. If he turned around and went back to the Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union, there would be little anyone could do.

In a moment, a silent standoff played out under the watchful eyes of all; the person suspected to be Lu Yiye took a step forward, moving beyond the range enveloped by the Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union.

A group of Ten Thousand Demons Ridge cultivators nearly let out an exultant cheer.

Under the mask, Lu Ye looked helpless.

He had been warned by a manager of the Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union earlier and knew that many cultivators from Ten Thousand Demons Ridge were surveilling him outside, but he hadn't expected to find so many people still there after all this time.

These fellows really had patience.

Of course, he still had an even safer and more reliable option, which was to retreat back to the Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union and escape back to the Nine Provinces, then come back after a month. By

then, nobody would know where he was. However, if that had been what he wanted, he would have made that choice while in the Great Reversal Valley, and never waited until today.

Moreover, even if he came back after a month, how would that change anything? With countless cultivators from Ten Thousand Demons Ridge watching over him, wherever he might be, as soon as he dared to show his face in public, he would inevitably invite numerous troubles.

Unless he hid away in the Nine Provinces sect headquarters forever.

Masking one's appearance had become futile, so as Lu Ye stepped out of the Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union, he reached up and removed the mask from his face.

In an instant, the many eyes gazing through the void sharpened significantly.

Earlier it was mere suspicion, but now with the mask removed, Lu Ye's identity had become certain.

After walking a few steps, Lu Ye summoned his spirit ark, stepping onto it. With spirit force propelling it, the spirit ark shot into the sky, turning into a stream of light heading off in one direction.

"Chase!" someone in the tea house called out in a low voice.

The next instant, everyone sprang into action, flying out through the windows.

Not only from this tea house, but buildings all around the Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union also revealed tons of figures who suddenly showed themselves, rising into the air.

The tea house, once full of guests, emptied in a blink of an eye.

This grand disturbance left some cultivators who were unaware of the specifics dumbfounded, as none of them knew exactly what had happened.

In the sky above, Lu Ye led the way with a dense array of multicolored lights trailing behind him—a bare minimum of three hundred streams. At first glance, it almost looked as if Lu Ye was leading a group of cultivators on some mission, but in reality, each of the cultivators in pursuit wished to tear him limb from limb.

They had assumed that should Lu Ye dare to leave the Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union, he would have no way out. Yet after a brief moment of chasing, many cultivators from Ten Thousand Demons Ridge were shocked to realize that something was amiss.

"How is this kid so fast?" someone exclaimed in astonishment. With a Cloud River Level 8 cultivation, although not known for speed, they were above average. Logically, Lu Ye, a mere Cloud River Level 5 cultivator, shouldn't possibly escape their pursuit.

But in fact, the distance between him and Lu Ye showed no signs of closing.

In other words, Lu Ye, at the Level 5 realm, was nearly as fast in flight as he was at Level 8.

The flying speed of a cultivator is basically determined by the strength of their cultivation; generally speaking, the higher the cultivation, the faster the flight.

So, for cultivators with lower cultivation, it's very difficult to survive under the hands of cultivators with higher cultivation—unable to fight back, unable to escape, all that's left is to face death.

Of course, there's also the factor of Flying Spirit Artifacts. Different restrictions are branded in different artifacts, giving varying benefits to cultivators.

Some expensive Flying Spirit Artifacts could indeed allow a cultivator to fly faster; however, such artifacts are invariably exorbitantly priced.

The Level 8 cultivator soon realized that what was exorbitantly priced for others was nothing for dog tycoon Lu Yiye, whose name rang loud and clear.

This guy didn't lack anything, especially merit; casually inviting one or two Heaven's Augury Pillars or fishing out a top-notch Flying Spirit Artifact from the Heaven's Augury treasure vault was nothing out of the ordinary for him.

A mix of envy, jealousy, and hatred only strengthened his resolve to kill Lu Ye.

However, by this time, he also understood that taking down Lu Yiye was likely not within his reach. Cloud River Level 9 cultivators were faster than him and were closing the distance with Lu Yiye. Once they caught up, Lu Yiye's death was certain.

Feeling it was a pity, he cursed himself for being at Level 8 instead of Level 9.

As time passed, the group of more than three hundred people who had chased out of Heaven's Augury City gradually spread out with the cultivators of lower cultivation lagging behind, and those at the front having higher cultivation.

And at the very front, over a dozen figures were all from the Cloud River Level 9; each of them desperately urged their Flying Spirit Artifacts to the limit, their spirit force surging ceaselessly.

At this juncture, their goal was not simply to kill Lu Ye, but to be faster than the others. After all, there was only one Lu Ye's head, and whoever could make the first move had the chance to take his life.

There at the forefront, Lu Ye put several elixir pills into his mouth, slowly chewing them.

Despite being relentlessly pursued by a horde of Ten Thousand Demons Ridge cultivators, he showed no hint of panic and even had the leisure to evaluate his current foundation.

His confident departure in full view of so many Ten Thousand Demons Ridge cultivators from the Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union was not because of a rush of blood to the head, but due to a fair amount of certainty that he could resolve this crisis.

Indeed, he was alone and could not possibly stand against so many enemies. If caught, he would have no chance of survival.

But the premise was that he had to be caught first!

At this moment, he simply activated his spirit ark, which had Move-Like-The-Wind Spirit Runes added to it, essentially keeping pace with the average Level 8 cultivator's flight speed.

And this was not yet his ultimate speed. After a round of assessment, he felt confident that, giving his all, even those at Level 9 might not be able to catch up with him.

Being able to achieve such a feat in the Cloud River Level 5 realm, the opportunity he obtained in Fox Fairy Valley was indispensable.

The blessing from Heaven's Augury had not only elevated his formidable foundation to new heights but had also increased his cultivation by one realm. This not only gave him the power to kill enemies three ranks higher but also a faster flying speed.

Of course, this did not mean that he could rest easy while being chased by Cloud River Level 9 cultivators.

What he lacked, compared to Level 9 cultivators, was his spirit force reserve. Even with a profound foundation and stable base, the difference of four minor levels meant his spirit force reserve was not as abundant as theirs.

Maintaining Move-Like-The-Wind was not an insignificant drain on him; hence even though the chase had just begun, Lu Ye had already made preparations to replenish his spirit force.

Most cultivators didn't have this convenience. After all, how many effects of elixir pills can one refine while fleeing? However, he didn't have this problem.

He never had the chance to compete properly in flight speed against Cloud River Level 9 cultivators before. Now, after this trial, Lu Ye felt far more confident in himself.

A spiteful voice came from behind, "Lu Yiye, you cannot escape. Surrender yourself to death quickly!"

Lu Ye ignored it as if it were nothing. Honestly, he had heard similar words on various occasions, but the outcome was always that he lived well and those from Ten Thousand Demons Ridge who crossed him usually did not end up well.

Someone who had said such words to him before was a Yuanhong Hall cultivator named Song Zhui.

After racing for about 30 miles, the distance between those at Level 9 and Lu Ye was getting closer; they were almost within striking distance.

At the same time, Lu Ye acutely perceived the sharp presence from behind locking on to him.

Right when those Ten Thousand Demons Ridge cultivators were preparing to strike, Lu Ye's figure suddenly plummeted, his speed dropping so quickly it was astonishing.

This move made them extremely uncomfortable, forcing them to quickly disperse the spirit force they had been secretly accumulating.

Soon after, they saw Lu Ye change direction and speed past under them, quickly receding into the distance.

He actually flew back the way he had come!

Chapter 668 Pursuit

The cultivators of Cloud River Level 9, who were lagging behind Lu Yiye, the cultivators of Level 8 followed. Initially, they had almost given up the pursuit, believing that if the current trend continued, Lu Yiye would eventually die at the hands of those Level 9 cultivators. Catching up would be fruitless for them.

However, just at that moment, they saw Lu Ye descend lower and turn around to fly back.

Overjoyed, they each promptly descended, hoping to intercept him.

Before they could even prepare, they saw Lu Ye retract his spirit ark, a pair of fiery red wings unfolded behind him. His whole being turned into a red beam, sweeping under them in a blur.

The moment those wings appeared, Lu Ye's speed surged to an entirely new level!

Everyone's expression changed, none of them had expected Lu Ye to have such a trick up his sleeve. Some faintly realized something and could not help but look back with anxious eyes toward the way they had come, inwardly marvelling at Lu Yiye's audacity and reckless audacity.

Outside of Great Wilderness Mountain, the battle in the mines made Lu Ye understand a truth.

That was, vengeance should be sought as soon as possible, preferably overnight. Otherwise, once the opportunity is missed, even if one's strength increases in the future, there might not be another chance for revenge. After all, the Cloud River battlefield is vast, and finding someone's whereabouts is quite challenging.

His current strength indeed was no match for Level 9 cultivators, and even facing a Level 8 would require a hard battle. But killing those below Level 8 typically wouldn't be too troublesome.

The few hundred cultivators who had chased him out of Heaven's Augury City varied in cultivation levels, and after covering about 30 miles, the originally compact group was stretched into a long line, with the less powerful ones falling behind.

Lu Ye had already bypassed the attempts of Level 8-9 cultivators to stop him, and now he was facing the ones below Level 8.

These cultivators had almost lost sight of Lu Ye until, driven by interest and hatred, they persisted in the chase, only to suddenly encounter a figure with flame-flowing wings flying directly toward them.

Using their Ocular Power, someone cried out in delight, "It's Lu Yiye!"

As these words fell, many cultivators summoned their Spiritual Artifacts, covertly mobilizing their spirit force, waiting to give Lu Ye a harsh reception as he drew near.

In the next instant, a fiery red Liu Guang carrying an unstoppable force crashed into the midst of the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge cultivators.

The explosion of violent spirit force at that moment was unceasing, with thunderous noises filling the air, accompanied by cries and exclamations of horror.

In an instant, the red beam that Lu Ye had become pierced through the enemy's formation like an arrow, flinging a mist of blood and scattering severed limbs and flesh into the air behind him.

In that brief contact, at least seven or eight people were slain.

The remaining Ten Thousand Demons Ridge cultivators revealed terrified expressions, none expecting that Lu Ye, a Level 5 realm cultivator, could unleash such formidable power.

Indeed, in the mountain cave outside of Great Wilderness Mountain, over two million Ten Thousand Demons Ridge cultivators died at his hands, including several of Cloud River Level 9, but that was due to poison, not a reflection of his own power.

Very few knew of Lu Ye's true strength.

Only at this moment did everyone realize that Lu Ye's own strength was not to be underestimated; in that brief encounter, none of the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge cultivators was able to withstand even a single strike from him.

The red beam that had pierced through the formation turned around and charged once more, and several more unsuspecting Ten Thousand Demons Ridge cultivators perished.

"Lu Yiye, how dare you!" roared an angry voice, from the Level 8-9 cultivators who had caught up, their eyes nearly bursting with rage.

They had never imagined that under such circumstances, Lu Yiye would have the audacity to turn around for a counter-assault and slaughter over a dozen right under their watch.

Even though those who lay dead were neither kith nor kin, the onlookers still felt a burning sensation on their faces.

Lu Yiye's actions were as if he was slapping them directly in the face.

Sensing the approach of these powerful pursuers, Lu Ye did not linger. After piercing the enemy's formation for the second time, he immediately dashed off in a direction, each flap of his fiery red wings propelling him a vast distance.

The ten or so pursuing Level 9 cultivators were alarmed to discover that Lu Ye's flying speed, in this state, was not in the least bit inferior to theirs, even slightly faster!

When he had first left Heaven's Augury City, Lu Ye had already shown astonishing speed. With the cultivation of Level 5, his speed was comparable to Level 8, and everyone thought that was due to his Flying Spirit Artifact.

But now what?

He had put away his Flying Spirit Artifact, and everything relied on his own abilities, yet his speed was even faster than before.

This was almost incomprehensible.

At this point, the cultivators from Ten Thousand Demons Ridge finally understood why Lu Ye dared to escape from Heaven's Augury City; clearly, he was fearless.

"Everyone, that is the wings rune tattoo!" someone suddenly exclaimed, "Lu Yiye must have a highly skilled rune tattoo master behind him."

The one who spoke evidently had a certain understanding of the Path of Spirit Runes. Although he knew Lu Ye was also a spirit runes master, he did not believe that Lu Ye was capable of creating wings spirit runes stable enough for a cultivator's flight on his own. It was illogical; maintaining the stability of the spirit runes while crafting them and simultaneously utilizing their power to fly was something not even Divine Sea Realm cultivators could necessarily achieve.

Short-term might be possible, but over time, slip-ups are bound to occur.

Wings, the kind of spirit runes that need to be maintained over a long period, are generally used in the Rune Tattoo Path.

The person continued, "With him driving the power of the rune tattoo like this, the consumption on his own body is immensely large. Relying on his Level 5 realm cultivation, he can at most maintain it for half an hour. Therefore, Fellow Daoists, don't let him shake you off. Make sure to keep up with him, and half an hour later, he will surely be dead!"

With these words, a group of Level 9 cultivators suddenly became spirited.

Some had been considering whether to use some secret technique to increase speed, but after hearing this, they also dismissed the idea. Secret techniques of this level always have some degree of backlash on oneself... just like Ying Wuji, who had used a secret technique to escape outside the Great Reversal Valley and ended up extremely weak.

So, unless absolutely necessary, no cultivator is willing to activate a secret technique.

It must be said, this Level 9 cultivator had a considerable understanding of the Path of Spirit Runes, but he didn't understand Lu Ye.

If it were an ordinary Level 5 cultivator, indeed, they could not maintain such desperate activation of wings for a long time—this was not a spirit rune that Cloud River Realm cultivators could master.

But who would have thought that Lu Ye would have something like the Talent Tree? The wings spirit runes had been activated on the Talent Tree, so when he activated them, the consumption was much less than that of the pure wings rune tattoo.

Moreover, with Lu Ye's profound foundation and the fact that he had been consuming elixir pills from the very start to replenish his consumption, the outcome would certainly not be as the cultivator had predicted.

Time passed, and the distance between them gradually widened. Even if a group of Level 9 cultivators desperately pushed their power, after half an hour, they could only see a red dot in the distance...

This distance was very dangerous because if it widened a bit more, they would lose track of Lu Ye. By then, with the world so vast, where would they go to find him?

The Level 9 cultivator who had spoken earlier had an ashen face.

He had confidently declared that with Lu Ye's cultivation, he could only last at most half an hour, but now that the time had come, looking at Lu Ye from afar, he seemed full of vigor, showing no signs of exhaustion.

On the contrary, they had all been fully driving their power for half an hour and each of them had suffered significant consumption. Although not to the point of complete depletion, it had reached a level that could affect their strength.

Seemingly sensing the glances all around, the cultivator who had spoken earlier clenched his teeth and said, "He certainly can't last much longer. Fellow Daoists, victory is within sight. You absolutely can't give up now. At the very least, we can't let him shake us off, or else all will be lost."

With that, the spirit force swirling around him pulsed with an extremely peculiar rhythm a few times, and then his entire person suddenly radiated with a healthy glow, his speed, which was already very fast, increased by another level, instantly pulling away from the others.

He had clearly activated some secret technique capable of increasing speed.

Seeing his conviction, the others did likewise, each activating secret techniques they would normally not use easily.

With their cultivation at such a level, they basically all had some life-saving or desperate secret techniques, inherited from their sects or purchased from the Heaven's Augury treasure vault.

Lu Ye, in fact, had also cultivated secret techniques. The Mental Eye, taught to him by Xia Liang, was a secret technique from the Mad Saber Sect.

The Blood Moving Technique, passed on by his third senior brother, was also a secret technique.

However, the two secret techniques he had learned had hardly any significant backlash, especially the Mental Eye Secret Technique, which was merely an extension and expansion of perception.

The Blood Moving Technique did indeed have some backlash, but with a bit of caution, the effects were not too significant.

The secret techniques displayed by these Level 9 cultivators at this moment were different—each one was the kind that could be used to boost escaping speed in critical moments. It goes without saying that the backlash was evident, and the longer the duration, the greater the backlash.

But at this moment, in order not to be thrown off by Lu Ye, they could no longer care about that, particularly a sword cultivator among them. As the sound of the sword cried out, he immediately overtook everyone else, leading by a great distance.

The gap that Lu Ye had opened was steadily closing.

Lu Ye, who was fleeing ahead, was clearly aware of this, but at this moment, he was going at full speed, with both Move-Like-The-Wind and wings spirit runes constantly maintained and activated, leaving him no way to increase his speed further.

Moreover, the consumption of spirit force within his body was immense.

Despite constantly consuming elixir pills to replenish his powers, the spirit force consumed by maintaining the two spirit runes was unimaginable, and the spirit force supplied by refining elixir pills was simply not enough to keep up.

Luckily, he had the spirit energy-storing ring!

The spirit force stored in this Spiritual Artifact ring was either poured in by him on regular days or dissipated from his body, so he could access it at any time without any delay or hidden dangers.

As the pursuit continued, the scenery on the ground swept by rapidly.

Lu Ye took the opportunity to pull out the ten-part map, checking his current location and looking for suitable hiding spots in the vicinity.

He had to prepare for the possibility of being caught. If he really couldn't throw off those guys behind him, he would have to find some terrain he could use to hide.

Chapter 669 - Mysterious Woman

After scouting around, Lu Ye quickly changed direction and dashed toward a particular direction. There was a large river there that he might be able to use to his advantage in this critical moment.

The distance between him and his pursuers was closing rapidly, and the spirit force stored in his spirit energy-storing ring was running low, leaving his situation growing increasingly dire.

The roaring sound of the river reached his ears, and Lu Ye saw the large river on the ten-part map had arrived.

On the ten-part map, this river was marked as River Pi, stretching almost ten thousand miles from east to west, with muddy waters and raging currents, and it was also inhabited by some powerful demon beasts.

Just as Lu Ye was considering whether to dive into the river to use it to camouflage himself, the speed of the pursuers behind him suddenly slowed down.

After activating secret techniques for a long duration, even those at Level 9 realm were starting to feel the strain.

Each of them was seething with resentment, for where in the world could you find a Level 5 realm cultivator who could run this fast? They had been pushing themselves to the limit and still couldn't catch up to him.

Given the current circumstances, they too found themselves in a difficult position to back out.

To give up now was truly disheartening—they had been pursuing for so long, and maybe Lu Yiye was on the verge of running out of energy. However, if they continued the chase, who knew if they could catch up?

One by one, gazes, both real and probing, looked at the Level 9 cultivator who had spoken before. At this moment, his complexion was slightly pale, having been the first to activate the secret technique, thus he had expended the most energy. By now, his presence was somewhat erratic, clearly on the brink of collapsing.

Yet, he gritted his teeth and said, "He must not be able to hold on much longer. Fellow Daoists, you must not give up. If we miss this opportunity, there may not be another."

A group of Level 9 cultivators didn't know what to say.

But human endurance eventually has its limits. Suddenly, one of the Level 9 cultivators halted in midair and began to descend.

He couldn't bear it any longer. Continuing the chase like this would leave him completely drained, regardless of whether Lu Ye died or not. Having utilized the secret technique and suffering its backlash, if he didn't recover quickly, there might be lingering problems.

He certainly wanted to kill Lu Ye, but when faced with uncertain outcomes versus his future prospects, he chose the latter.

With one giving up, a second soon followed...

Within a mere one incense stick's time, four Level 9 cultivators had given up the chase.

Although those who remained were still persevering with clenched teeth, it was clear that they couldn't hold out much longer. Yet they relentlessly pursued, not because they were certain they could catch Lu Ye, but because they had already sent out messages for assistance during the pursuit. Right now, some reinforcement was en route from nearby.

What they needed to do now was keep Lu Ye within their sight, and once the reinforcements arrived, Lu Yiye would have nowhere to fly.

During the chase, they continued to report Lu Ye's current location to others.

Lu Ye had also noticed this, and he had a bad feeling about it, but there was nothing he could do to stop them.

As time passed, an incense stick's time later, Lu Ye suddenly turned his head to look in a certain direction, only to see several streaks of mystic light catching his eye as they rapidly approached from there.

Seeing the speed of these individuals, they were clearly all cultivators of Level 8-9 realm.

This was undoubtedly the backup called by the pursuers behind him.

He quickly changed direction, fleeing away from the approaching figures. However, he hadn't gone far before several more trails of mystic light entered his field of vision.

There were people heading over from this direction as well.

As expected, those chasing him from behind were all Level 9 cultivators with extensive connections, each calling for friends and transmitting messages. Naturally, those eager to take his life would come to interfere.

Lu Ye could sense that he might have been trapped within an encirclement, making it so that no matter which direction he fled, there would be Ten Thousand Demons Ridge cultivators intercepting him.

In the end, he still had to rely on River Pi to escape.

The turbulent and muddy waters could very well conceal his presence and movements. Once he plunged into River Pi, the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge cultivators would find it very difficult to track him down.

However, by doing so, the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge cultivators would only need to guard the nearby sections of the river where he went underwater, making it tough for him to resurface unless he held his breath and snuck away to a great distance.

Yiyi's Nine Arrays Diagram might be useful. If he had to hold his breath for too long, he could enter the Nine Arrays Diagram to breathe, and it was unlikely that the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge cultivators could imagine he possessed such an exotic treasure.

Therefore, although Lu Ye's situation was critical, it hadn't reached a point where he was completely out of options.

Moreover, he had exhausted too much strength and could no longer continue to flee like this. He ultimately needed to conserve some energy in case of unexpected events.

Just as he made up his mind to dive into River Pi, a sudden surge of spirit force fluctuations came from a certain direction, and Lu Ye quickly looked over.

In that direction, a streak of mystic light suddenly sprang up from somewhere on the ground and directly collided with the camp of Ten Thousand Demons Ridge cultivators there, immediately engaging in a fierce battle.

This unexpected event surprised everyone. What was even more shocking was that the mysterious figure who suddenly emerged was incredibly powerful. With a longsword in hand and Sword Qi sweeping in all directions, that figure swiftly brought several Ten Thousand Demons Ridge cultivators into a state of disarray within a very short time.

No one knew who this sudden intruder was, because the individual was wearing a white mask with a red and blue design painted on either cheek, the colors converging at the jawline, masking the true face. However, judging by the person's curvaceous silhouette, it was clearly a woman. Her broad sleeves and robe could not hide her impressive figure, and as she moved and shifted, her graceful form was fully accentuated.

The few Ten Thousand Demons Ridge cultivators she engaged with were all terrified because the strength this woman demonstrated far exceeded that of an ordinary Cloud River Level 9. Initially, they were heading to join others in encircling Lu Ye, but they were completely caught off guard and thrown into chaos by this mysterious woman's intervention.

Lu Ye did not know who this woman was. Since he began his cultivation, he had been pursued many times and had often received help and support from cultivators of the Haotian Alliance, but most of these instances occurred on the Spirit Stream battlefield.

On the Cloud River battlefield, only once at the hunting grounds had his fourth senior brother entrusted some friends to assist him.

Therefore, he had not expected that at this critical moment, someone would emerge to lend him a hand.

But there was no denying that the woman was powerful!

After a brief hesitation, Lu Ye flapped the fiery red wings on his back, abandoning the idea of diving into the River Pi and directly rushed towards the direction of the woman.

He did not join her in the fight but passed close by her side and shouted, "Hurry up!"

No matter how strong this woman was, she was ultimately alone, and since she had come to help him, Lu Ye had no reason to abandon her.

Clearly understanding that it was not advisable to entangle with the enemies at this point, the woman saw Lu Ye had broken through the encirclement and unleashed a heaven-shattering sword flash, forcing back several Ten Thousand Demons Ridge cultivators and quickly pursued Lu Ye.

Her strength was sufficient and her speed was swift, catching up with Lu Ye in just a few breaths' time.

Lu Ye silently rejoiced that among the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge cultivators who had been pursuing him, there was no such powerhouse, or he would never have been able to escape for so long.

However, returning to the topic, the woman was a sword cultivator, known for their prowess in slaughter and speed.

"Follow me!" the woman spoke and took the lead.

Lu Ye followed closely behind, with many Ten Thousand Demons Ridge cultivators who had received the news converging from the side.

As they dashed along, Lu Ye did not exchange any words with the mysterious woman, but he maintained a distance of about thirty yards from her at all times.

The mysterious woman seemed to be there to assist him, but Lu Ye did not dare to trust her blindly without confirming her identity, for who knew if she was from Ten Thousand Demons Ridge? If everything prior had been an act, his situation would be dire.

However, this possibility was not significant. If the mysterious woman really meant him harm, she could have made her move already.

Lu Ye was just puzzled by her way of hiding her identity.

Even though he himself often did the same...

But he would usually wear various masks, while the woman wore a simple white mask.

Perhaps sensing Lu Ye's wariness, the mysterious woman didn't say much more. She seemed to have a cold disposition, naturally exuding an aura of 'keep your distance from me.'

Soon, the two arrived in front of a smooth rock wall, which appeared unremarkable at first glance. However, Lu Ye immediately noticed something out of place upon reaching this location.

Formation!

Someone had deliberately laid out traces of a formation here.

Just as he was about to trigger the Insight Spirit Runes to examine it, he saw the mysterious woman take out a jade cluster and, with a flick of spirit force, lightly waved it towards the rock wall. A mystic light shot out, and an entrance quickly appeared on the smooth-as-glass wall.

The mysterious woman stepped inside and only took a few steps before turning to look back at Lu Ye.

Because Lu Ye remained still without moving.

Seemingly sensing Lu Ye's hesitation, the mysterious woman spoke, "If I wanted to kill you, you would be dead already!"

Regarding her words, Lu Ye remained noncommittal.

"They are going to catch up!" said the mysterious woman. From behind her mask, her eyes gazed past Lu Ye and clearly saw the sight of streaks of light approaching rapidly. In less than twenty breaths, those Ten Thousand Demons Ridge cultivators would catch up.

Lu Ye shook his head and said, "Fellow Daoist, I will always remember your great kindness. This is where we part ways!"

Even if he could almost ascertain that the mysterious woman bore him no ill intent, Lu Ye was unwilling to follow such a powerful individual into a cave, which was tantamount to placing his life in her hands.

You could call him ungrateful or stubborn, but being cautious is never wrong.

Visibly, the chest of the mysterious woman heaved abruptly, evidently surprised by Lu Ye's reaction, and quite angered.

But at this moment, there was clearly no time to waste on Lu Ye. Seeing that Lu Ye truly intended to leave, she quickly said, "I swear upon Heaven's Augury, I mean you no harm!"

Lu Ye felt somewhat embarrassed as the woman had come to rescue him, yet he suspected her, even after she took the initiative to make a vow by Heaven's Augury...

"My apologies," Lu Ye nodded slightly.

The mysterious woman ignored him and continued walking into the cave, as Lu Ye hurriedly followed.

Under the witness of Heaven's Augury, whatever her purpose might be, at least he could be sure she meant him no harm, and this freed Lu Ye from any worries about a hidden agenda.

Chapter 670 A Forced Melon Isn't Sweet

Following the woman, Lu Ye proceeded deeper inside, and after about 30 miles, there was no path left.

The spot they were now in must be within the belly of the mountain, not too spacious.

Although the light was dim, it didn't affect Lu Ye's ability to look around.

Having suddenly arrived at such a dead end, Lu Ye almost doubted whether the mysterious woman had made a fake Heaven's Augury oath earlier.

He had thought that by following her inside, they would enter some concealed place or come to somewhere they could hide, but it didn't seem to be the case now.

From behind him came the fluctuation of spirit force and some voices of conversation, clearly, Ten Thousand Demons Ridge cultivators had already caught up, but they didn't dare to rush in before they were certain there were no ambushes.

However, they would certainly charge in, and by then, with no way forward and the path blocked behind, Lu Ye would undoubtedly face certain death.

"Come here!" The mysterious woman in front saw Lu Ye standing in place, stunned, and waved him over with her hand.

Although suspicious, Lu Ye still approached, stopping not far from the woman.

"Closer!" The mysterious woman, somewhat impatient, felt uncomfortable with the vigilance Lu Ye maintained towards her.

In reality, it was just that the space wasn't wide, and Lu Ye didn't wish to stand too close to her.

Following her words, Lu Ye simply walked up and stood beside her.

A faint fragrance instantly enveloped his nose...

The mysterious woman's body suddenly surged with spirit force, and as her spirit force fluctuated, complex and intricate lines beneath their feet lit up, illuminating the dim space completely.

Lu Ye stared in surprise at the intricate patterns underfoot, and incredulously turned towards the woman next to him, but with a mask covering her face, he couldn't see her expression.

Before he could ask anything, the space within the encased light began to distort and the next instant, the two figures unexpectedly disappeared.

The commotion here alarmed the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge cultivators outside who, after probing and ascertaining there were no hidden traps or Formations, poured in following their pursuit.

The 30-mile-long passage was quickly traversed, but inside, it was empty, without a single person in sight.

"Where are they?" someone asked, puzzled—they had clearly watched Lu Ye and the mysterious woman enter this place, and there was no way forward, yet they had vanished without a trace.

How could two living people just disappear out of thin air?

"Teleportation array!" Someone crouched down, looking at some remnants of Formation marks on the ground, revealing the wonder within.

As the words were spoken, someone dawned realization, "I heard that Lu Yiye could set up teleportation arrays, and it seems it's true!"

In such a dead-end environment, two living people couldn't naturally vanish into thin air, but if they used the power of a teleportation array, then it would all make sense.

What puzzled people was...

"Lu Yiye actually left a teleportation array here? When did he do it?" Since he left Heaven's Augury City, he had been on the run, which obviously wasn't the time he left it—it must have been from before.

"Regardless of when he did it, his current cultivation isn't high, and even if he left a teleportation array, the distance it could transport wouldn't be too far; he must be within about 30 miles at this moment!"

Consequently, the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge cultivators who charged in quickly withdrew, and messages spread outward, with many Ten Thousand Demons Ridge cultivators mobilizing to look for Lu Ye's whereabouts within this approximate 30-mile radius.

Meanwhile, in another concealed location, Lu Ye had a complex expression.

Those Ten Thousand Demons Ridge cultivators thought the teleportation array in the mountain belly was left by him, but it actually wasn't.

This was also the reason why Lu Ye was shocked earlier.

He had always believed that, throughout the Nine Provinces World at the Cloud River Realm level, only he could set up something like a teleportation array.

Until today, he realized he had somewhat overestimated himself.

At the Cloud River Realm level, there was not only him who could set up a teleportation array, but there were others as well!

With the vastness of the Nine Provinces, there were many capable individuals; apparently, he had been like the proverbial frog in the well.

Without the sense of defeat from seeing his unique skill being showcased by another, Lu Ye was actually quite excited, and after easing the discomfort from the teleportation, he quickly turned to the mysterious woman next to him, "Fellow Daoist, that teleportation array..."

"I didn't set it up," the mysterious woman seemed to know what he wanted to ask, and answered before he could finish his question.

"Then..."

"I do not know who set it up, and you need not ask any more," she interrupted.

Lu Ye was quite taken aback; he had never encountered such a woman before.

Moreover, she didn't know who set up the teleportation array—what kind of statement was that? If she didn't know, why would she bring him there, using the teleportation array to escape their predicament?

Lu Ye subconsciously felt this mysterious woman didn't want to share too much with him.

This was very strange.

She had taken the initiative to save him and even risked exposing a highly secret location, but her attitude towards him was not exactly warm. What exactly was she after?

Additionally, the mysterious woman gave Lu Ye a sense of superiority, causing him to wonder whether he was not facing a peer cultivator but rather a senior from the True Lake Realm or even the Divine Sea Realm.

Suppressing some doubts in his heart, Lu Ye said, "Thank you, Fellow Daoist, for your assistance this time. May I ask for your esteemed name?"

"I am simply following orders; you need not know my name," the mysterious woman said, looking around at their surroundings.

Seeing her like this, she also seemed to be new to this place, which made Lu Ye somewhat believe the words she had previously spoken.

But her words undeniably filled Lu Ye with confusion and suspicion.

Following orders?

Whose orders was she following?

Since she had saved him, she must see something valuable in him or wish to befriend him. Why then hide so much? Not only did she not reveal her name, but she even concealed her face, leaving Lu Ye completely baffled.

Although saving a life does not necessarily require repayment with one's own, at the very least, Lu Ye wanted to know from whom this favor had come.

The woman had already turned and begun walking in a certain direction.

This place was a cave—dark but not damp, and its space was much wider than the mountain's belly they had just been in. In the silent environment, their footsteps, though light, were still clearly audible.

Lu Ye followed the woman, with many questions he wanted to ask, but the other's frosty demeanor made it clear that asking would be futile.

Soon, the two came to the bottom of the cave. The mysterious woman stood still and glanced sideways at Lu Ye, "You should return to the Nine Provinces. Many people in Ten Thousand Demons Ridge are searching for you. Once you show yourself, you will inevitably attract endless pursuit. Therefore, the safest place for you is back in the Nine Provinces."

Lu Ye naturally did not want to return to the Nine Provinces; if he wanted to, he would have already gone back.

The mysterious woman was not fully aware of his abilities and thought he was cornered by the pursuit. Although the situation was dangerous, it was still within Lu Ye's control.

Moreover, even if he really wanted to return to the Nine Provinces, it was impossible at this time and place.

But Lu Ye soon became stupefied.

Because not far in front of them stood a Heaven's Augury Pillar.

There was actually a Heaven's Augury Pillar here!

This place was neither Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union nor any spirit ground. A secretive place like this harbored a Heaven's Augury Pillar, apparently to deal with some crisis situations, just like now.

First, there was the teleportation array, and now a Heaven's Augury Pillar. Lu Ye really wanted to know who was aiding him from the shadows.

The woman said she was acting under orders, but who exactly was behind the scenes, and what were their intentions? The previous locations of the teleportation arrays could be considered exposed, and now the Heaven's Augury Pillar was revealed to him. The person behind this had made such great efforts but did not want to disclose their identity.

What exactly were they plotting?

"What are you staring at?" When the woman saw Lu Ye standing there in a daze, she could not help but urge him.

"I'm not!"

"What?"

"I said I'm not going back to the Nine Provinces."

Surprise flickered in the eyes beneath the woman's mask. She looked Lu Ye up and down and said with patience, "Perhaps you haven't fully grasped your current situation, or maybe I wasn't clear enough, but you just need to understand one thing—if you continue to stay on the Cloud River battlefield, it will be very dangerous."

"I am naturally aware of that."

You know and still don't leave! The woman could not help but criticize him in her thoughts, completely losing patience, and said indifferently, "That's not up to you!"

With that said, she reached out her hand toward Lu Ye.

It seemed as if she intended to take Lu Ye back to the Nine Provinces by force if necessary.

From the moment the woman fought alone against several Ten Thousand Demons Ridge cultivators of Level 8-9, Lu Ye knew she was very strong, but he did not have a clear idea of how strong.

Not until this moment!

When the fair hand reached out, Lu Ye found himself completely without the time to react.

A metallic clang sounded, and a fiery red light from the blade swept across as Lu Ye instinctively swung out his sword.

This was purely the power of the Mental Eye Secret Technique.

Facing this strike, the woman did not dare to meet it head-on; instead, the long sword in her other hand shot out, blocking the hit.

When sword and blade met, a crisp clash sounded along with sparks flying.

Lu Ye drifted backward, his face embarrassed, "Sorry, it was a bodily reflex..." He then thought for a moment; that's not right. The woman had just sworn by Heaven's Augury that she harbored no ill-intent toward him, but now she was attacking him.

What's going on!

"Do not hinder me from completing my mission!" The woman said coldly, sword in hand, her presence growing chillier, "You have two choices: either return to the Nine Provinces obediently or I knock you out and take you there."

Lu Ye stubbornly responded, "Fellow Daoist, a melon forced off its vine is not sweet."

This woman likely had some issues, insisting that he return to the Nine Provinces for no apparent reason; one moment she had saved him, and the next she was ready to force him.

However, one thing Lu Ye could be sure of was that the other party truly had no ill-intent toward him; after all, the oath to Heaven's Augury was there, and if there truly was ill-intent, punishment from Heaven's Augury would be inevitable.