

Humanity 791

Chapter 791 Yuan Xiang

After waiting for a moment, there was no response.

Ying Wuji asked again.

Still no response.

Several times over, Ying Wuji even couldn't help but doubt whether the audio transmission stone was still useful.

Just as he was about to put it away, as if possessed by a sudden whim, he looked around with a guilty expression, held the audio transmission stone, and whispered softly, "Righteous Blood Flows Forever?"

Silently waited for ten breaths...

"Liar!"

Ying Wuji's nose was almost crooked with anger.

They had said that in danger, one only needed to cry out "Righteous Blood Flows Forever," yet now there was no danger and he couldn't even find that fellow. If real danger arose, waiting for him to come to the rescue, one would probably be a cold corpse.

Indeed, others are unreliable.

Just as he was about to put away the audio transmission stone, suddenly a vibration emanated from it.

Ying Wuji quickly activated the audio transmission stone, and Lu Ye's voice transmitted from it: "Southeast!"

Ying Wuji looked up to determine his bearings, and only after a good moment did he confirm where the southeast was, then he quickly hurried in that direction.

Soon, he saw Lu Ye's figure, and to his surprise, there was a young girl with Lu Ye!

A local cultivator? Ying Wuji's eyes lit up at the sight.

Lu Ye had wanted to seek information through finding local cultivators, and he had the same idea. Unfortunately, the two hadn't seen a single person all day. Unexpectedly, they had actually encountered one here.

He couldn't help looking at the girl once more.

The girl looked timid and involuntarily shrank back behind Lu Ye: "Senior Brother, who is he..."

In comparison, although Lu Ye was cold, his recent actions had shown he was not a bad person. Ying Wuji was different; perhaps accustomed to the ways of ghostly cultivators, the girl always felt this fellow was somewhat sneaky, not seeming like a good person.

"This is one of my junior brothers," Lu Ye explained casually, "He comes from the same place as I do."

Ying Wuji couldn't help rolling his eyes, but he didn't argue.

It was a small advantage in terms of identity, Lu Yiye had taken it, and it didn't cost him any flesh. What was crucial now was to first obtain some useful information.

"Oh." The girl then felt relieved.

"I haven't asked yet, how should I address you?" Lu Ye asked.

The girl said, "I'm called Yuan Xiang. How should I address you, Senior Brother?"

Lu Ye was almost instinctively about to give the name Ye Liu, but on second thought, if he met other people from the Nine Provinces later, being recognized might cause misunderstandings.

"Lu Yiye, my junior brother Ying Wuji!"

Ying Wuji performed a polite bow: "Pleased to meet you, Junior Sister Yuan Xiang!"

Yuan Xiang returned the bow.

"Is there anything else you need to pack?" Lu Ye asked Yuan Xiang.

Yuan Xiang shook her head, everything that needed to be packed had been packed, and things like old bones couldn't possibly be taken back.

"Then let's go," Lu Ye called out.

Yuan Xiang led the way, and the three of them set out together.

Gradually, Ying Wuji figured out what had happened before, and couldn't help but inwardly admire how lucky Lu Yiye was; he himself had taken risks to scout that ruined city and found nothing, while Lu Yiye, waiting outside the city, had encountered several local cultivators who had suffered great misfortunes, even performing a heroic rescue!

Seeing Yuan Xiang's attitude towards Lu Yiye wasn't exactly trusting, but at the very least, she wasn't repulsive or wary. He didn't know what this fellow had done.

And now, he and Lu Yiye, were supposedly escorting Yuan Xiang to a so-called stronghold!

"Junior Sister Yuan Xiang," along the way, Lu Ye spoke, "If it's convenient, could you tell us about the current situation in the Unparalleled Continent?"

Ying Wuji immediately perked up his ears.

"What would you like to know, Senior Brother Lu?" Yuan Xiang had yet to recover from the grief of losing her relatives and friends, but she forced some spirit into her response upon hearing his question.

"Anything will do, both my junior brother and I are novices to the outside world, having hardly ever seen even the Corpse Race before," said Lu Ye.

Ying Wuji nodded continuously on the side: "That's true, that's true. My brothers and I have always lived in a rarely visited place, never having contact with the outside world. Under the meticulous guidance of our master, it was only a month ago, when our master passed away, that he allowed us to go out."

Lu Ye turned his head and gave him a leisurely glance.

This guy... really knows how to steal the spotlight.

Ying Wuji fearlessly met his gaze.

Yuan Xiang fell silent for a moment before she softly began, "I don't know much, I'll just speak offhand. If you have any questions, feel free to ask."

"It is said that Unparalleled Continent was once a flourishing land, where the cultivation world constantly saw the emergence of powerful figures and strong cultivators in abundance."

As soon as she spoke, Lu Ye couldn't help but be reminded of the Soaring Dragon World.

Was this situation similar to what happened in the Soaring Dragon World?

The Soaring Dragon World had also housed cultivators from the Divine Sea Realm. However, due to the absorption and devouring by the Blood World, and the flow of Heaven-Earth Origin, the cultivators' cultivation had declined generation after generation.

However, Lu Ye soon realized that the situations in the two domains were different.

"But over a thousand years ago, after the cataclysm, everything changed. A thousand years ago, Unparalleled Continent suddenly shattered, breaking into countless pieces. Some say it was a natural calamity, while others claim it was the aftermath of a battle between powerful figures in the stellar space that shattered Unparalleled Continent."

"I'm not sure how big the original Unparalleled Continent was, but what we currently inhabit is merely a fragment of it."

"When the cataclysm occurred, numerous strong cultivators perished explosively or suffered degradation in their realms for unknown reasons. Since then, no cultivators above the Cloud River Realm have appeared."

Ying Wuji's expression turned solemn, and Lu Ye also furrowed his brows.

At this moment, he finally understood what the shattered Unparalleled Continent truly meant.

It was literally as stated, this land was a fragment of the actual Unparalleled Continent!

As for why this fragment broke apart, too much time had passed to investigate. Thus, Yuan Xiang's words were merely speculations of later generations.

Heaven's Augury had chosen them, strong cultivators from the Cloud River Realm rankings, to come here because this place's matters could only be dealt with by the Cloud River Realm.

Each world has its limits of tolerance.

Thus, even if Heaven's Augury recruited some from the Divine Sea Realm or True Lake Realm, the strength they could exhibit would still be at the Cloud River level.

It was better to directly bring those of the Cloud River Realm; at the very least, in this realm, cultivators of the Cloud River Realm could utilize their full strength without being suppressed.

Furthermore, the transmission here by Heaven's Augury must have come at a certain cost.

The cost of transporting a few from the Cloud River Realm couldn't be too great, but transmitting those from True Lake or Divine Sea, that was a different story.

"The ground shattered, countless died, even cultivators caught in the middle were like candles in the wind, unable to save themselves. Fortunately, not many years passed before the effects of the cataclysm gradually faded, and Unparalleled Continent stabilized once again. However, another crisis erupted soon after, and up to this day, due to this crisis, the human race has almost no foothold outside."

"Corpse Race?" Lu Ye naturally knew what crisis Yuan Xiang was referring to.

Yuan Xiang nodded, "Before the cataclysm, there was no such bizarre race as the Corpse Race on Unparalleled Continent. But a few years after the cataclysm, the first of the Corpse Race appeared. At that time, the cultivators on Unparalleled Continent thought he had some mishap during his cultivation or contracted some strange illness and didn't cause much stir. That period must have been when every big sect and family were busy with survival."

"But gradually, the Corpse Race increased in number, and all of them transformed from the human race. Despite retaining their previous bodies, they lost all prior memories, as if their bodies had birthed another unfamiliar spiritual intelligence."

"The Corpse Race is strong and peculiar, and our side completely lacks experience in dealing with them. Many sects were exterminated overnight, many cities were massacred, and over the thousand years, Unparalleled Continent was nearly dominated by the Corpse Race. We, the human race, could only hide and scrape by in various strongholds! Although there is still a bit of space for humans to survive, if this

continues..." Yuan Xiang's eyes darkened as she thought of the deceased Uncle Yooi and Aunt Shen, and sorrow welled up within her.

Lu Ye remained silent for a moment, then spoke, "Are there different types of the Corpse Race? The Corpse Race I encountered before seems to have two kinds, one that is your enemy, and another that can control hordes of corpses."

"Are you talking about the rotting corpses?"

"Yes."

"Indeed, there are two types of the Corpse Race. One is the rotting corpse that can control hordes, whose own strength isn't very strong, but the horde can combine forces. And the controlling Corpse Race hiding among them is difficult to locate. The other type is the zombies you saw before, individually stronger than the rotting corpses, but still manageable if one has enough strength. So if you encounter rotting corpses and their hordes, run as far as you can, never think of standing against them."

Another rule of survival in the apocalypse, never casually engage with rotting corpses and their hordes; it's completely an unnecessary hardship.

On the other hand, cultivators who encounter zombies, if capable, will try to eliminate them!

Ying Wuji had a deep understanding of this and continuously nodded in agreement. However, remembering how Lu Yiye single-handedly beheaded enemies amidst thousands of troops, he couldn't help feeling deeply sorrowful.

Is the gap in strength really that big?

"So now in Unparalleled Continent, do most humans live within strongholds?"

Lu Ye asked again.

Yuan Xiang nodded, "Most do. The place where you previously survived, strictly speaking, could also be considered a stronghold, perhaps your Master protects you too well, not allowing you to encounter outside matters."

For the human race living in strongholds, surviving is not easy, with troubles in food, clothing, and shelter, especially since cultivators need various resources for cultivation.

They had left the stronghold this time to seek resources outside, and squads like theirs typically needed to venture out monthly to barely maintain the necessities of life. As for resources for cultivation, that depended purely on luck.

Good luck might bring some finds, bad luck might yield nothing.

Chapter 792 Secret Realm

Going out to find supplies was accompanied by great risk, once they encountered the Corpse Race, a conflict was bound to erupt. Take this time for instance, a team of six people came out from the stronghold, and in the end, only Yuan Xiang was left alive.

After some explanation, Lu Ye had a rough understanding of the current situation in the Unparalleled Continent.

The human race was in dire straits, struggling to survive, while the Corpse Race was powerful and formidable, not to be provoked.

"Tell me about your stronghold," Lu Ye said.

"The stronghold..." Yuan Xiang fell into reminiscence, "Our stronghold is not big, and we don't have many people, just over two hundred. The strongest among us is Elder Zui Shan, and the stronghold is also controlled by him..."

As Yuan Xiang eloquently described, the situation at the stronghold became clear to both Lu Ye and Ying Wuji.

In the apocalypse, many people chose to band together for warmth, which led to the formation of strongholds, big and small. Some strongholds might have only a few or even a dozen people, some a few hundred, but they never exceeded a thousand people.

That's why Yuan Xiang said, the place where Lu Ye and the others had been before was also a stronghold, of course, assuming that Lu Ye was telling the truth.

Moreover, due to various sudden crises, the location of the stronghold was not fixed. If the location of the stronghold was exposed and discovered by the Corpse Race, they would need to move quickly, otherwise a massacre was unavoidable.

Ying Wuji didn't understand, "Life is so difficult, why don't the people of these strongholds join together in one place? Why do they choose to scatter in all directions?"

Lu Ye looked at him as if he were looking at an idiot.

Ying Wuji bristled, "What? Isn't what I said correct?"

Yuan Xiang gave a bitter smile and said, "I've actually thought about this too and asked Uncle Yooi about it before. Uncle Yooi said, although joining together could increase our strength, it would also make us a bigger target, and easy to expose. If that happened, it would certainly attract a large number of the Corpse Race to encircle and suppress us. This is why it's better to be scattered. Although it means being weak and isolated, it's easier to hide, and also..."

She paused, then continued, "Uncle Yooi said, in this chaotic world, people's hearts are unfathomable. Even among the human race, when encountering good things in the wild, people would fight and scramble. So, no one can guarantee that others will have the same heart as their own. Perhaps some people from different strongholds have the same view and will join together, but getting all the strongholds on the Unparalleled Continent to unite is completely impossible."

Ying Wuji frowned and pondered without retorting.

Although he had come to the Unparalleled Continent, he was not a native cultivator and had not experienced the hardships of life here, so it was difficult for him to comprehend the complex feelings of the cultivators in this world.

He felt that this world was more perilous than any secret realm he had experienced before.

However, speaking of which, from the lineup that Heaven's Augury provided them, it was evident, the top six of the Cloud River rankings were all there, plus him, who ranked sixteenth in ghost cultivation, and also a tremendously talented physique cultivator and healing cultivator.

Nine people in total, such a team, if they could cooperate sincerely, would sweep the entire Cloud River battlefield without any problem.

With such a lineup, the troubles to be solved definitely wouldn't be minor.

"So... what's the deal with the secret realms?" Lu Ye asked.

Previously, after he had rescued the man surnamed Yu, that individual seemed to mistakenly assume he originated from some secret realm.

At that time, Lu Ye didn't inquire in detail, but now, of course, he wanted to understand it thoroughly.

"The secret realms..." Yuan Xiang's eyes suddenly showed a hint of longing, "Those are the sacred lands that all of the human race yearn for! It's said that the people inside live a life completely different from ours, just like a thousand years ago, they can live safely, and the resources for cultivation are also abundant and never run out."

As she spoke these words, Yuan Xiang's expression took on that of a poor child from a destitute family describing the extravagant wealth of a rich merchant.

Through her narrative, Lu Ye finally understood what the term "secret realm" represented in the Unparalleled Continent.

In fact, these secret realms were not fundamentally different from the secret realms he was familiar with.

In a strict sense, they were all miniature worlds independent of the local domain.

Within Nine Provinces, many secret realms exist, whether it was Xianyuan City, which Lu Ye had experienced, or the Ten Thousand Beasts Domain, Soaring Dragon World, all were types of secret realms, vast inside, relying on the large environment of Nine Provinces, yet also able to exist independently, usually hidden from the outside.

The Unparalleled Continent also once had very prominent big sects, these sects naturally had their own secret realms, these kinds of secret realms, whether used for grazing spirit beasts, cultivating spirit plants and medicines, or for disciples to enter and temper themselves.

But after the heavenly changes, even those big sects had been wiped out. Although their gates were destroyed, the secret realms were preserved. Lucky disciples hid within them, and as time passed, more and more of the human race came to these secret realms by reputation, gathering within them to evade the pursuit of the Corpse Race.

In the beginning, there were quite a number of secret realms occupied by the human race in the Unparalleled Continent, but as time went on, more and more secret realms were discovered and breached by the Corpse Race. Today, only three secret realms are controlled by the human race.

They are Mount Sumeru Secret Realm, Ziwei Dao Palace Secret Realm, and Silver Snake Valley Secret Realm.

Compared to the chaos and hardships outside, the secret realm can indeed be considered the last pure land of the Unparalleled Continent, also preserving the most quintessential strength of the human race in this domain.

Cultivators within the secret realm would often venture out to hunt the Corpse Race, but over many years, there had been no substantial progress. The Corpse Race still firmly controlled this part of the world, leaving minor strongholds like where Yuan Xiang was located to merely scuttle and hide.

Thus, after seeing Lu Ye cleanly execute that zombie, it was the man surnamed Yu who mistakenly thought he hailed from one of the three great secret realms.

Because for someone of his age to possess such strength, he couldn't have been raised from a stronghold where even survival was a struggle; only those born in a secret realm would have such a foundation.

And when Lu Ye casually handed him a Detoxification Pill of excellent quality, he grew more certain of his guess, sadly Lu Ye did not confirm it.

"If the secret realm is so wonderful, why don't you go to one of those secret realms?" Ying Wuji couldn't help but ask again, carefully glancing at Lu Ye.

Fortunately, this time, Lu Ye did not look at him as if he were an idiot.

"Who wouldn't want to go?" Yuan Xiang smiled wryly, "Now, the human race residing in the Unparalleled Continent all dream of entering a secret realm, but who can actually go? Not to mention the lack of guidance, even if one were to go, finding the portal to a secret realm is no simple task. Even if one manages to find it, there's no guarantee of gaining entry. One might even get killed for trying."

Ying Wuji frowned, "Why is that?"

"Initially, the human race of the Unparalleled Continent controlled many secret realms and all great secret realms opened their doors wide to accept humans. But a secret realm is only a miniature world, with limited capacity. If too many people live there, it inevitably won't have enough resources. Gradually, the secret realms started refusing outsiders. I heard that there was one secret realm where clans from different sects fought fiercely over control, leading to both sides suffering and giving the Corpse Race an opportunity to massacre everyone. So, now entering a secret realm is extremely difficult."

"Isn't there any other way to join a secret realm?" Lu Ye asked.

From the last moment he was transported from the Nine Provinces, a flurry of information exploded in Lu Ye's mind, bestowed by Heaven's Augury.

Save the shattered Unparalleled Continent!

To achieve that, he would inevitably need the power of the secret realms, making it beneficial if he could join one.

Yuan Xiang seemed to be a girl without much guile, answering questions honestly even when facing people she just met like Lu Ye and Ying Wuji. Naturally, Lu Ye wanted to gather more intelligence from her.

"Of course, there is," Yuan Xiang nodded, "This is the only hope for the human race in various strongholds to survive. It's said that every once in a while, Guiding Envoys from the three great secret realms go out to look for suitable candidates to bring into the secret realms. Three years ago, a few people from our stronghold were chosen and taken away, but such opportunities cannot be actively sought; one can only passively wait, and even then, being chosen is not guaranteed."

Ying Wuji nodded upon hearing this, "It seems the people of the three great secret realms haven't been utterly ruthless; they've still left a glimmer of hope for others."

"It's not necessarily because they want to be like this!" Lu Ye pondered thoughtfully.

Yuan Xiang looked at Lu Ye in surprise, "Elder Zui Shan used to say this."

Zui Shan...

That was the leader of Yuan Xiang's stronghold, likely the strongest there, and evidently, Yuan Xiang held him in high regard.

"What exactly did Elder Zui Shan say?" Lu Ye asked.

He had some guesses, but after all, they were just speculations.

"Elder Zui Shan said that if the three great secret realms didn't act this way, every year there would be many humans searching for their portals, potentially drawing the attention of the Corpse Race, hence leading to trouble for the three great secret realms. It's better to channel than to block, so by doing this, the three great secret realms give all surviving humans a ray of hope," replied Yuan Xiang.

Lu Ye nodded slightly; it seemed that Zui Shan's thinking coincided with his own.

But looking at it from another angle, this wasn't necessarily the fault of the people from the three great secret realms.

As Yuan Xiang mentioned, a secret realm is ultimately a small world. Even if it exists independently from the Unparalleled Continent, it has limited capacity and cannot accommodate all humans. Sending out Guiding Envoys to find a few suitable candidates to bring back provides hope for the surviving human race, preventing them from engaging in self-destructive actions, while also bolstering the power of the secret realms—an approach that kills two birds with one stone.

"Is there anything noteworthy about the Corpse Race?"

Having roughly understood the situation of the human race, the next step for Lu Ye was naturally to learn about the Corpse Race.

Know yourself, know your enemy, a hundred battles will not be perilous!

"The Corpse Race... Nowadays, the Corpse Race is everywhere in the Unparalleled Continent. If there's anything noteworthy, it would be the Huntian Holy Temple Secret Realm. That place has the highest concentration of the Corpse Race. It's said the very first of the Corpse Race, the Golden Corpse King Corpse Fiend, was originally a disciple of the Huntian Holy Temple and now squats there."

Lu Ye's heart stirred, "Are you saying that there is a secret realm in the Huntian Holy Temple?"

Chapter 793 Unpredictable Human Nature

"Yes," Yuan Xiang nodded. "It is said that Huntian Holy Temple was once the strongest sect in the world, and that secret realm was also the largest of all secret realms. It's a pity that now it has become the

Corpse Race's corpse breeding ground. It is said that even the Golden Corpse King Corpse Fiend has renamed the Huntian Holy Temple to the Corpse King Palace."

Upon hearing this, Lu Ye's face showed a contemplative expression, and a faint idea began to emerge in his mind.

As they traveled, Yuan Xiang, who was untouched by worldly affairs, poured out all the information she knew like beans in a bamboo tube, one by one.

Lu Ye and Ying Wuji occasionally asked questions but spent more time listening quietly.

On the second day in the Unparalleled Continent, Lu Ye finally began to understand some of the situation in this world.

"We're almost at our base." Yuan Xiang, who was leading the way, suddenly reduced her fleeing light and descended towards the ground below.

Lu Ye and Ying Wuji followed closely behind her.

Once they landed, Yuan Xiang stepped forward and continued walking.

Lu Ye looked around. They were in a secluded location deep in the mountains, a place hidden and remote. Almost all of the human race's bases nowadays were chosen in areas that were not easy to find to avoid the ever-present scrutiny of the Corpse Race.

And once a base's location was exposed, one had to either completely eliminate the Corpses that found it or immediately relocate; else, disaster would surely fall upon them.

Yuan Xiang's base was evidently well-located. A group of people had settled here for over a decade without ever being discovered by the Corpse Race.

According to the information previously revealed by Yuan Xiang, there are two types of Corpse Race. Under normal circumstances, rotting corpses hardly ever moved. They would choose a suitable place for themselves and then fall into a deathlike slumber to nurture their hordes of corpses.

This was exactly the situation Ying Wuji had encountered before.

For the Corpse Race, this method was known as corpse breeding. The hordes under a rotting corpse were diverse in origin and varied in strength. This was the only way to slowly strengthen them.

The zombies that wandered around, hunting the human race, were quite different; they were individually much more powerful than the rotting corpses and their bodies were incredibly tough and sturdy, making it difficult for ordinary methods to inflict significant harm on them.

In today's Unparalleled Continent, there were thousands upon thousands of human race bases that could basically rest easy as long as they avoided the detection of these zombies. Of course, should they be unlucky enough to be targeted by a rotting corpse, there was little they could do but wait for death.

After a millennium of survival in the cracks, the surviving human race had summed up many effective methods against the Corpse Race.

Walking behind Yuan Xiang, Lu Ye suddenly came to a stop.

The next instant, Ying Wuji also halted, surveying their surroundings.

Yuan Xiang looked back at the two men, "The base is just ahead..." Her expression was very unnatural, her cheeks slightly flushed, and her gaze shifty, as if she had done something guilty. Even her voice was as weak as a mosquito's hum.

Lu Ye and Ying Wuji seemed to pay her no heed.

Ying Wuji suddenly burst into laughter, "I thought you were naive and kind-hearted, but it turns out you also had malicious intentions. Unexpected indeed. Is it that the human heart is no longer pure in this

world?" He shook his head continuously, then mockingly glanced at Lu Ye, "In vain they call you a master of Array Path, unrivaled among your peers, didn't you notice anything?"

Lu Ye remained silent, gently rubbing his thumb against the sheath of the Boulder Mountain Saber, his gaze calmly fixed on Yuan Xiang not far ahead.

Yuan Xiang's expression grew even more awkward.

"Yuan Xiang, retreat quickly!"

Suddenly, a stern shout came from nearby, followed by an invisible force pulling Yuan Xiang from behind. Amidst her alarmed cry, she was yanked away.

In the next moment, ripples appeared in the void as the surroundings twisted and changed, and thick fog emerged from nowhere, covering a wide area.

In an instant, Lu Ye and Ying Wuji found themselves in a place where they couldn't see their own hands.

Formation!

And it was a combination of an Illusion Array and a Delusion Array.

Yuan Xiang had shown no defensiveness against Lu Ye and Ying Wuji along the way, answering every question in a seemingly innocent and naive manner. Even Lu Ye hadn't expected that she would lead them into a formation.

Such a formation couldn't have been set up hastily; it must have been prepared in advance. It was probably not specifically for Lu Ye and Ying Wuji but more likely a protective measure for the cultivators in the base.

Although Lu Ye didn't detect it beforehand, his knowledge in Array Path was profound, so the moment he stepped into the range of the formation, he was aware of it.

Ying Wuji realized it a little later; it was only after Lu Ye stopped abruptly that he became alert.

For the sect of ghost cultivators, knowledge in Array Path was almost an essential discipline, for when they grew powerful, they might need to infiltrate formations to assassinate their targets. A qualified ghost cultivator would necessarily have a good mastery of Array Path.

While Ying Wuji's expertise in Array Path was naturally not on par with Lu Ye's, it wasn't far behind.

Now shrouded by an Illusion Array and Delusion Array, Ying Wuji could even sense the presence of various killing arrays hidden around, ready to unleash their power at any sudden movement.

"Lu Yiye, our situation isn't looking good," Ying Wuji had already summoned his two machetes, feeling a deep sense of shame inside.

He considered himself a veteran in the cultivation world, yet he never thought that one day he would be duped by a young girl, and moreover, he hadn't realized it beforehand.

"Do you want to do it, or should I?" he asked.

To leave this place, they would definitely need to break through the formation. An array cultivator from a broken world wouldn't have too high of skills; Ying Wuji was confident he could break through the formation here. But once he took action, the other party would surely trigger the killing array's might, at which point Lu Yiye would need to assist and guard him.

If Lu Yiye was to break the formation, then he would be the one to assist and guard.

At that moment, Lu Ye had already activated the Insight Spirit Runes to enhance his eyes, which were deep and profound, seemingly able to penetrate the Void and see beyond the many obstructions of the formation outside.

Outside the big array, there were four more figures in addition to Yuan Xiang.

The leader was a sword-wielding cultivator, though it wasn't clear if he was a sword cultivator.

"Where are Yooi Zhen and the rest? Who are these people you've brought back?" the cultivator who seemed to be a sword cultivator asked.

Yuan Xiang's eyes turned red instantly: "They're all dead!"

"What?" The faces of several people changed drastically.

"Your team had six people, Yooi Zhen and the rest were all strong; how could they all be dead?"

Yuan Xiang said, "We encountered a very powerful zombie; Uncle Yooi and the others were no match for it and three died on the spot. Uncle Yooi was also afflicted with Primordial Corpse Poison, and his injuries were too severe, he didn't survive. Aunt Shen didn't want to live alone, so she followed Uncle Yooi in death."

Recalling the things that had pained her, Yuan Xiang couldn't help but cry again. However, she managed to suppress her emotions enough to recount what had happened.

The expressions of the others were somber. In this apocalyptic world, life and death were common, but even if they were prepared in their hearts, it was inevitable to feel sorrowful when it actually occurred.

"How did you manage to survive?"

"It was the man with the saber who saved me." Yuan Xiang pointed in the direction of the formation, "When he rescued us, Uncle Yooi and Aunt Shen weren't yet dead..."

Hearing this, the faces of the people lightened slightly. The sword-wielding cultivator looked thoughtfully towards the location of the formation and said, "Do you know who they are?"

Yuan Xiang sobbed for a bit, then, struggling with her sadness, replied, "The one with the saber is called Lu Yiye, and the other one who looks sneaky is called Ying Wuji. They are two cultivator brothers who claim to have come from a small stronghold and have never left it before, so they know nothing about the outside world."

"Know nothing?" the sword-wielding cultivator frowned.

In this chaotic world, is there still someone who knows nothing about the outside world?

Seeing his confusion, Yuan Xiang explained, "They must have had a very powerful master who protected them well until one month ago when their master passed away. Only then did they leave the stronghold." She paused before adding, "Big Brother Wu, they saved my life, and they don't seem like bad people, could you please not be too harsh on them?"

Just as Lu Ye had thought earlier, the formation outside of the stronghold was not specifically aimed at them; rather, the stronghold had always been wary of preventing potential invasions from the Corpse Race or some other ill-intentioned human race members.

Even if Yuan Xiang was pure-hearted and kind, she knew not to casually bring strangers into the stronghold. But having seen Lu Ye's strength for herself, she knew she was no match for him, so she behaved very submissively along the way.

By bringing Lu Ye and Ying Wuji into the formation, others inside the stronghold could thoroughly investigate their origins and judge their intentions. If Lu Ye and Ying Wuji indeed bore no malice, then there would be nothing to discuss. But if they came with sinister motives, the stronghold could seize the initiative.

In today's Unparalleled Continent, survival was not easy for the human race. Enemies included not only the Corpse Race but also many humans who had cast aside their conscience to commit evil deeds!

Compared to that, the evil of the Corpse Race was apparent at a glance, while the wickedness within the human race was often concealed very deeply.

For a thousand years, there have been numerous occasions where wrongdoings by their own kind led to strongholds being massacred to the point of obliteration.

In these chaotic times, anything could be a resource—food, clothing, tools, even the cultivators themselves...

What were most common and mundane in the flourishing era might now provoke two humans into fighting furiously, striving for life or death.

Wu Jun said, "Since they saved your life, we naturally won't make things too difficult for them. But we still have to wait for Senior Zui Shan to question them and make a decision."

He comforted Yuan Xiang while a stern look flashed in his eyes.

The excuses of these two uninvited guests could fool Yuan Xiang, but they wouldn't fool him.

No matter how small a stronghold, no matter how well protected, it was impossible to be ignorant about the current state of the Unparalleled Continent.

These two... there must be something wrong with them!

So, no matter what, they had to be taken down first. As for their origins and motives, those could be carefully probed later.

Chapter 794 Stronghold

These two were able to rescue Yuan Xiang from the hands of zombies that almost wiped out Yooi Zhen's squad, so their strength must be extraordinary.

But once involved in a formation, mere strength no longer holds significance.

Therefore, capturing them should not be a difficult task.

Wu Jun thought this when suddenly he heard a low exclamation and quickly turned to look at the gaunt old man beside him, "Veteran Xu, what's the matter?"

The reason their base had managed to survive safely in this place for over ten years was not only due to Zui Shan's wise leadership but also the old man known as Xu Wang, who played an indispensable role!

Because he was an array cultivator.

The various formations inside and outside the base were all arranged by him.

What's most precious in this apocalypse?

Naturally, it's all kinds of talented individuals from outside the mainstream.

Array cultivator, alchemy cultivator, Artifact Refiner...

Streams that were once common in prosperous times have now become exceedingly rare, and those who have achieved success in these alternate paths are few.

Yet, these external paths are indispensable for cultivators.

Cultivation requires the use of elixir pills, defending the base needs formations, and cultivators rely on Spiritual Artifacts to kill enemies—omitting any of these would not work.

The base under Zui Shan's control, though small, had all kinds of talents; it was, as they say, small but complete, with some renown within tens of thousands of miles. Occasionally, several nearby bases would bring some materials to trade with them, exchanging things like elixir pills and Spiritual Artifacts.

In this way, the living environment of the base was slightly better than other bases.

Xu Wang was quite senior in age and held in high regard within the base, having long passed the age of easily getting startled. Yet at this moment, he exclaimed in surprise as if he saw something unbelievable.

"They... they... them..." Xu Wang pointed towards the area enveloped by the big formation, stumbling over his words for quite a while without completing his sentence.

But in the next instant, Wu Jun knew what had shocked Xu Wang.

For in the midst of the swirling fog within the big formation, two figures were seen walking one after the other, leisurely as if they were strolling in their courtyard!

The big formation that had protected the base for over ten years did nothing to block or trap the enemies.

Those two were unmistakably the uninvited guests who should have been trapped within the big formation!

Wu Jun's eyes narrowed, and everyone else's expression changed as they all stimulated their spirit force in preparation.

Following behind Lu Ye, Ying Wuji remained silent until now when he finally realized the gap between himself and Lu Yi in the Array Path.

The formation that trapped them was not incredibly advanced; Ying Wuji could see some flaws and felt that breaking it wouldn't be hard, but it would likely require some effort.

Yet, as he followed Lu Ye, with mere steps east and west, just after a dozen or so steps, they had safely walked out of the big formation!

No killing array was triggered during this period.

Such a skill definitely demonstrated a profound mastery in the Array Path, with Lu Yiye leaving him far behind.

The sudden change left Wu Jun and others somewhat at a loss, as until now, they hadn't considered that there could exist someone who could walk out of an activated big formation like this; for a moment, they wondered if the big formation was broken.

But observing the big formation where fog still swirled, it was clearly still operational.

This was bad news.

With the newcomers' intentions unknown and considering their previous assumptions, Wu Jun always felt these two harbored ill intentions—could it be they were ready for a hard fight?

If a fight broke out and if there were any Corpse Race nearby, they would surely be attracted to the scene.

Observing the two in front of him, the one holding the knife was only a year or two older than Yuan Xiang but carried a tranquil demeanor and a posture as profound and imposing as a mountain, his aura concealed yet still emitting a faint oppressive feeling from his calm body, as if an extremely terrifying power was hidden beneath.

The other one appeared sneaky and looked not to be trifled with.

The only option was to send a warning and ask the people in the base for help!

Just as Wu Jun made up his mind, Xu Wang regained his composure and stepped forward, bowing with a polite gesture: "Old Xu Wang here, has the honor to meet the two young friends".

"Veteran Xu..." Wu Jun and the other two had stunned expressions.

Because of Xu Wang's identity as an array cultivator, under only Zui Shan in the base, he was easygoing and fair in his dealings, yet Wu Jun had never seen him be so courteous before.

They were naturally astonished.

Xu Wang, knowing what they were thinking, waved his hand and, looking intently at Lu Ye, said, "This young friend, being able to spot the flaws of the big formation silently and walk out unscathed without disturbing it, has a higher mastery in the Array Path than myself."

Deducing the profound from the trivial, one who could so easily break his proud formation must have a much higher mastery in the Array Path than him.

"Such a person, even when visiting those secret realms, would surely be treated as a distinguished guest—how could he target our small base."

Xu Wang's words were clearly intended for the others.

Wu Jun and the others looked dazed, never expecting Xu Wang to rate the newcomers so highly, which was somewhat unbelievable.

But upon reflection, they realized Xu Wang was right.

Secret realms have strict criteria for selecting individuals, but if indeed a highly accomplished array cultivator existed, the secret realms would surely not refuse them, and there was no need to target their small base.

Could it be... they had been wrong before, and these two were genuinely unaware of the external situation?

"The old gentleman flatters me too much," Lu Ye replied lightly. "It seems our misunderstanding has been resolved?"

He did not take Yuan Xiang's previous actions too seriously. From her perspective, her actions were justifiable—it was not right to simply bring a stranger back to their base.

Moreover, these people did not make a move to kill immediately after the big array was activated, which clearly indicated they had intended to capture but not kill.

A minor squall hardly counted as a grudge.

"We were too sensitive," Xu Wang apologized, then gestured with his hand, "Since you have come from afar, how about coming in for a chat?"

However, he harbored a small scheme in his heart; he was old and would not live much longer. Although he had been searching for someone to inherit his mantle among the base's residents for years, none had the talent for the Array Path. Despite teaching them, a few youths couldn't even reach minimal standards.

If he could enlist this Lu Yiye into their base, even after his death, the security of the base would be somewhat assured.

But the idea just emerged—he would need to consult Zui Shan before making any decisions.

Moreover, they must first ascertain the characters of these two newcomers. As for their origins... that wasn't so important. In such chaotic times, just surviving was tough enough; no one would delve too deeply into someone's background.

As long as their character was good, they could be recruited.

"Sure!" Lu Ye agreed, and then stepped forward.

Ying Wuji followed him nonchalantly.

If he had been alone, his mindset would certainly not have been so relaxed; entering someone else's base was, after all, somewhat dangerous.

But following Lu Yiye, he didn't need to think too much.

It could not be denied that Lu Yiye always managed to provide a great sense of security, making him subconsciously feel that even if there were dragons and tigers ahead, Lu Yiye could turn the world upside down.

Suddenly, he was shocked by his own mindset—how did it become like this?

Not good, not good. Lu Yiye was ultimately a member of the Haotian Alliance, an enemy, not a Fellow Daoist one could rely on!

He silently warned himself, and Ying Wuji's mood suddenly became inexplicably heavy.

Xu Wang personally led Lu Ye and Ying Wuji toward the base. Yuan Xiang accompanied them, her expression filled with guilt as if she wanted to say something but ultimately didn't speak.

Along the way, Xu Wang casually inquired about the backgrounds of Lu Ye and Ying Wuji, and Lu Ye repeated the explanation he had given to Yuan Xiang.

Xu Wang did not comment, clearly not easily convinced.

The location of the base was less than ten miles from that big array, hidden by an extremely concealed entrance with cultivators guarding it, and further obscured by formations.

Seeing Xu Wang arriving with guests, one person emerged from the shadows, looking at Lu Ye and Ying Wuji with surprise, "Veteran Xu, are they...?"

"Our guests, no need to ask more," Xu Wang waved his hand.

"Yes!" the person replied, then hid back into the shadows, showing that Xu Wang's authority in the base was quite high.

With Xu Wang's actions, the concealed entrance to the base became apparent—a dark cave with faint, dim lights shining from within.

"Please," Xu Wang said and led the way first.

Entering the cave, they indeed saw the firelight. Every fixed distance, there were torches illuminating the surroundings.

As they spiraled deeper down the path, Lu Ye estimated they had descended about three hundred meters underground before a huge cavern suddenly appeared in front of them.

The cavern was spacious, with several figures moving around inside.

Along the sides of the cavern, there were stone chambers carved out.

Seeing Xu Wang's return, many people greeted him and also curiously sized up Lu Ye and Ying Wuji.

For them, the appearance of strangers in the base was a rarity; like theirs, most bases generally did not allow outsiders easy entry.

As Lu Ye walked by and observed, he roughly gauged the overall strength of this base.

The number of people was not large, and their overall strength was not strong; more than half of them were ordinary humans without any cultivation.

In today's Unparalleled Continent, it was already difficult for cultivators to survive, let alone ordinary people. However, ordinary people were essentially the foundation of the cultivators; without them bearing children, how could there be cultivators?

Children born between cultivators may not necessarily be suitable for cultivation themselves.

The remaining half, though cultivators, had mixed levels of cultivation, most only equivalent to the standard of the Spirit Stream Realm.

Such a base was even inferior to the weakest 9th grade sect in the Nine Provinces.

The scarcity of living resources left the ordinary people here mostly thin and pallid. Even the cultivators had weaker blood Qi compared to those in the Nine Provinces.

Lu Ye had noticed this the moment he met Yuan Xiang and the others.

Therefore, under the same level of cultivation, the Nine Provinces cultivators were able to beat the local cultivators here.

He wondered what the cultivators from the so-called resource-abundant secret realm were like.

Xu Wang led Lu Ye and Ying Wuji to an unoccupied stone chamber to rest, then said, "Please rest here for a moment; I will go find Zui Shan."

He instructed Yuan Xiang, "Take care of our guests," before turning to leave.

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Xu Wang left, leaving Yuan Xiang standing there with an embarrassed expression.

After a slight hesitation, she suddenly bowed deeply to Lu Ye and apologized with sincere eyes, "Senior Brother Lu, I'm sorry. You saved me, and yet I lied to you."

Actually, on the way back, she was filled with self-reproach, but for the safety of the stronghold, she had no choice but to act that way, which was related to the teachings she'd received since she was young.

Had they casually brought an outsider of unknown origin back with them, this stronghold would not have been able to exist peacefully for over a decade.

Before Lu Ye could speak, Ying Wuji intervened with a sardonic tone, "Just apologizing with words hardly shows any sincerity!"

"Sincerity..." Yuan Xiang seemed to understand and stood up, saying, "Please wait a moment, dear Senior Brothers."

With that, she turned around and ran out, leaving them to wonder what she was going to do.

Ying Wuji and Lu Ye were left sitting alone, the atmosphere suddenly becoming subtle.

When he had accompanied Lu Ye before, there was at least something to do, but now alone in the room, their relationship was essentially adversarial. As the weaker party, Ying Wuji naturally felt somewhat uneasy.

He regretted his words, wondering why he had brought up the topic of sincerity unnecessarily. If there had been another person around, he would at least not feel so awkward as he did now.

"Cough." Ying Wuji coughed lightly, trying to drum up conversation, "Lu Yiye, shouldn't we ask them about the location of the secret realm?"

Lu Ye knew that to solve the dilemma of this realm, they had to start with the secret realm, and Ying Wuji was no fool; he could certainly think of that too. Although Yuan Xiang mentioned that the gateway to the secret realm was hidden and difficult for outsiders to find, as long as they had a rough idea of its location, it would eventually be discoverable.

Unfortunately, Lu Ye had no intention of responding to him and simply turned his head to look at him indifferently.

After staring at each other for three breaths, Ying Wuji averted his gaze.

Pressure mountainous!

Why did I speak recklessly?

Turning his head, he happened to see a small head peeking into the stone chamber, those eyes filled with curiosity.

It was a boy of about seven or eight, his curiosity at its peak. He had lived here at the stronghold since birth, never seen the sunlight outside, nor any people from beyond the stronghold.

The arrival of Lu Ye and Ying Wuji had undoubtedly stirred his inquisitiveness.

With a naturally cautious nature, the boy only peered in from outside and had no intention of entering.

Yet to Ying Wuji, the boy seemed like a savior. He waved at the boy, saying, "Kid, come here!"

Startled, the boy quickly withdrew his head.

But after a moment, he couldn't resist peeking again, and this time, his gaze did not waver.

Mainly because Ying Wuji's hand had somehow produced a bright red fruit, filling the entire chamber with an odd, tantalizing scent.

"Come here!" Ying Wuji beckoned to the boy again, trying to look as harmless as possible.

The boy glanced at him and then at the spirit fruit in his hand, unable to resist the temptation any longer, he shyly stepped out and entered the chamber.

Arriving in front of Ying Wuji, the boy stood obediently and looked up at him. Just as Ying Wuji reached out to pat his head, the boy quickly snatched the spirit fruit from Ying Wuji's hand with lightning speed.

And then he ran away!

"That rascally kid!" Ying Wuji laughed in irritation.

With his Cloud River Level 9 cultivation, even if he was utterly off-guard, he should not have had something snatched away by a seven- or eight-year-old child. The only reason it was taken from him was that he allowed it to happen.

Thankfully, the boy's interruption had dissipated the pressure Lu Ye had put on him moments ago.

"Haven't you been told that it's unwise to show off your wealth?" Lu Ye suddenly remarked.

Ying Wuji snorted, "A single fruit, what of it..."

He had not finished speaking when he turned, with a twitch in the corner of his eye, to see several more little figures appear at the door; other children, seeing that there was something good here, had all swarmed over.

They didn't speak but looked at Ying Wuji with eyes full of longing.

Ying Wuji suddenly realized... What was quite ordinary for him, even just used to quench thirst, might be considered something extraordinary in the Unparalleled Continent!

He wanted to shoo the children away, but the yearning hidden within those nascent eyes made him sigh and raise his hand, conjuring several spirit fruits magically in his palms, and flaunting them at the children.

"Wow..." The children erupted with excitement, rushing in en masse, each grabbing a spirit fruit from Ying Wuji's hands before running off as if they were escaping.

As they dashed to the door, they ran into Yuan Xiang, who had just returned—the children all bustling against her.

"Slow down, slow down, what brought you here? Don't disturb the honored guests!" Yuan Xiang said as she straightened out the children, who were all over the place. Just as she was about to scold them further, she noticed the spirit fruits in their hands and the strange scent that whetted her appetite like she'd never smelled before.

Taking advantage of her distraction, the children vanished without a trace.

Yuan Xiang, however, quickly hid the object in her hand behind her back.

She was clutching dried fruit in her hand, which she had treasured for so long and hadn't been willing to eat...

With such spirit fruits in front of them, her gesture of apology no longer seemed sufficient to offer.

"Those spirit fruits..." Xu Wang, appearing unexpectedly, couldn't help but be moved as he watched the departing children with the spirit fruits in their hands.

In prosperous times, those spirit fruits might not have been anything special, but in the current climate, cultivators found it very difficult to locate spirit fruits of such quality.

Where did these two come from?

To give away such spirit fruits so freely, and to children at that...

But this made Xu Wang even more certain that the two bore no ill will toward their outpost. Such esteemed individuals would hardly covet a humble outpost like theirs.

"Veteran Xu." Yuan Xiang, her cheeks flushed, looked toward Xu Wang and then gave a respectful bow to a tall man beside him: "Senior Zui Shan."

Zui Shan nodded and ordered, "Go fetch some tea."

Yuan Xiang, as if granted amnesty, quickly left.

After Yuan Xiang departed, Zui Shan straightened his washed and whitened clothes and stepped into the stone room. He glanced at Lu Ye and Ying Wuji before cupping his hands in greeting: "Esteemed guests, my apologies for not greeting you sooner. I hope you'll forgive the oversight."

Lu Ye stood up and returned the gesture, as did Ying Wuji.

Seeing that Lu Ye didn't seem inclined to speak, Ying Wuji took up the conversation: "Fellow Daoist is too kind. It is us, brothers, who have imposed ourselves without invitation. For any inconvenience caused, we ask for your understanding."

Zui Shan relaxed slightly. Xu Wang had briefly informed him about Lu Ye and Ying Wuji, and he realized that their origins might not be simple, which was why he came personally to investigate.

Having encountered Ying Wuji distributing spirit fruits to the children of the base, and now hearing what Ying Wuji had said, Zui Shan quickly surmised that these two didn't appear to harbor any malicious intent.

He was particularly taken by Ying Wuji's demeanor. Someone who could show such kindness toward children was unlikely to be a bad person.

"Please have a seat!" Zui Shan gestured with his hand, and host and guests took their seats.

After some brief pleasantries, Zui Shan got straight to the point: "I have heard that you two previously saved Yuan Xiang. For such a great kindness, we have little with which to repay you. If there is anything you require, just say the word. We will not hesitate to fulfill your request if it is within our capacity."

As the leader of this outpost, Zui Shan naturally wanted to understand the purpose of their visit. It had been said that it was a chance encounter, their saving Yuan Xiang, but then escorting her all the way back to the outpost clearly meant they had their own agenda, not just fulfilling Yooi Zhen's dying wish.

However, he didn't state everything; the implication was that any overly excessive demands would certainly not be accommodated.

Ying Wuji turned his head toward Lu Ye: "Senior Brother, shall you speak with this Daoist?"

Though he had his own thoughts, he dared not take action without consultation. It was better to leave the matter in Lu Ye's hands.

Zui Shan looked at Lu Ye with surprise, now realizing that among the two, it was Lu Ye who was in charge.

"We seek the locations of the three great secret realms," said Lu Ye, direct and to the point.

Zui Shan's expression shifted: "Do you wish to join the secret realms?"

He was astonished. These two were not from the secret realms. Otherwise, they wouldn't come here seeking their locations. Moreover, it was very likely that both of them had lived in a small outpost all along, knowing nothing of the outside world, otherwise, they wouldn't have made such a request.

Shaking his head slightly, he said, "We might not be able to assist you with this matter. The positions of the three great secret realms have never been fixed; they drift within the Void. Perhaps they are here today, and somewhere else tomorrow. Without knowledge of divination, they are impossible to find."

If the secret realms had fixed locations, they would not have remained hidden up to this day, but would have been obliterated by the Corpse Race long ago.

Furthermore, even cultivators who emerge from the secret realms need to rely on the guidance of a specific Spiritual Artifact at a specific time and place to open the portal and gain entry.

The drifting locations of the secret realms do indeed have tracks and patterns to be followed, but as Zui Shan said, without the art of divination, they simply cannot be found.

Lu Ye and Ying Wuji both looked astonished upon hearing this. It had never occurred to them that the three great secret realms could be so elusive.

This was something Yuan Xiang hadn't mentioned before, likely because even she was unaware.

Prior to the cataclysmic change, the locations of the secret realms were indeed fixed, each belonging to a top tier sect as part of its assets. The names of the secret realms mirrored the identity of their owners.

For instance, the Mount Sumeru Secret Realm belonged to the Mount Sumeru sect, and the Ziwei Dao Palace Secret Realm was owned by the Ziwei Dao Palace.

But after the cataclysm, sensing impending doom, the top cultivators activated some wonderful technique, and the three secret realms began to lose their fixed positions and vanish into obscurity.

Other secret realms without this capability remained stationary and thus fell to the Corpse Race.

Now, the only realm with a fixed location is the Huntian Holy Temple Secret Realm controlled by the Corpse Race, also known under its new name, the Corpse King Palace.

Lu Ye's original plan was to inquire about the locations of the secret realms from this outpost, and then to search for the realms with Ying Wuji.

It wasn't just to use the power of the secret realms to resolve the crisis in this world, they also needed to regroup with others.

The several from the Nine Provinces, now scattered and whereabouts unknown, should they gain even a slight understanding of the situation on the Unparalleled Continent, would likely seek out the secret realms.

Chapter 796 Pure Land

Given the current situation, searching for the position of the secret realm has become rather difficult.

Despite its brokenness, the Unparalleled Continent is still vast; without a proper method, finding the secret realm is like looking for a needle in the ocean.

In the stone chamber, Lu Ye pondered silently, while Ying Wuji was filled with melancholy.

On the side, Xu Wang quietly signaled to Zui Shan, who imperceptibly shook his head.

Before, he had gone to Zui Shan and told him everything he knew about Lu Ye and Ying Wuji, especially about Lu Ye's accomplishments in Array Path.

Such a character, if they could be persuaded to join the base, would ensure great security for the stronghold in the future; hence he suggested to Zui Shan to try to woo the two, to see if they could be persuaded to stay.

However, once Zui Shan learned that Lu Ye and Ying Wuji's goal was the secret realm, he extinguished the thought in his heart.

They had aspirations as high as the sky and desired to join the secret realm, which was completely justifiable; how could they care for their small base? Even if he asked, it would hardly go as wished.

So, he simply chose not to embarrass himself.

"Do you have a geomancy map of this domain?" Lu Ye suddenly asked.

Zui Shan shook his head, "Over the past thousand years, the domains have been shattered, and many sect lineages have been severed. Most of the remaining human race just barely survive, hiding and living cautiously. Many people, from birth to death, have never left the base. Even us cultivators have a limited scope of activity. Young brother, if you want a terrain map of the nearby ten thousand li, I have it here, but as for the geomancy map of this domain, I'm afraid it can only be found within the secret realm."

This truly is a case of having nothing when needed.

Lu Ye nodded slightly, speculating in his heart without disappointment.

"In that case, the two of you should rest for now. If there is anything you need, feel free to come and find me."

Unable to persuade the two, and with no need to probe further into their origins, Zui Shan lost the interest to stay any longer.

In his view, these two were probably just passing through. With the favor of having saved Yuan Xiang's life, it was appropriate to treat them well at the base; who knew when they would leave.

As Zui Shan got up, a humming sound came from above, causing the stone chamber to tremble slightly.

It seemed like someone was fighting above.

His face abruptly changed, and Xu Wang also cried out in alarm, "Not good, the big array has been activated!"

Under normal circumstances, the big array he had set up outside should not activate, and even when it was in a triggered state like before, it would not easily be set off.

In times like these, setting up arrays is difficult; unless absolutely necessary, formations are only used as a deterrent.

Moreover, once activated, it would inevitably create a huge disturbance, risking exposure of the base's location.

Yet now the big array had been activated, undeniably meaning that those guarding the formation had encountered an extremely adverse situation.

The two almost simultaneously turned their gaze towards Lu Ye and Ying Wuji, their expressions a mix of shock and anger.

From their standpoint, the base had been safe and undisturbed for over a decade, but just after these two arrived, the big array activated, naturally leading to suspicion, wondering if they were spies from some power, luring enemies over.

Ying Wuji, sensing the mood, quickly said, "It has nothing to do with us!"

Zui Shan considered for a moment and nodded, "I was rash, my apologies to you both."

Regardless of whether the incident was related to the two, conflict could not break out within the base. There were many ordinary people living there who would not be able to withstand the aftermath of cultivators fighting.

The noise outside alarmed everyone in the base.

Many cultivators came out of their stone chambers, gathering at one place, the atmosphere was solemn and tense, yet not a single one retreated.

The ordinary people also quickly gathered at another location. Despite their panicked expressions, none of them were screaming.

It was clear that in these chaotic times, these people had developed some strategies for survival; at the very least, they knew not to panic in face of any situation.

"Veteran Xu will stay in charge here; I'll take people out to have a look," said Zui Shan, leaving the stone chamber with those words. But before he could gather enough people, a blood-covered young man with a sword rushed into the base. It was Wu Jun, whom Yuan Xiang addressed as Big Brother Wu.

At the moment, he had lost an arm, and blood gushed from where the limb had been severed. His face was also smeared with blood. Upon seeing Zui Shan, he said in a hurry, "Leader, it's the Pure Land!"

"Are you sure it's them?" Zui Shan's eyes narrowed.

The group of cultivators standing behind Zui Shan also suddenly became fearful.

Pure Land was not a sect. In today's world, apart from the complete legacies of many sects within the three great secret realms, the human race no longer had any sects, mostly existing in the form of bases, large and small.

Pure Land was the name of a large human race base.

Although the name sounded grand and righteous, in reality, it was infamous.

This was because they often robbed human race bases weaker than themselves, even abducting people to strengthen their own ranks.

In the current human race bases, there was a saying: better to encounter the Corpse Race than Pure Land.

At least the Corpse Race was an overt enemy, and if you couldn't beat them, you only had to face death.

But the people in Pure Land were all lunatics; once fallen into Pure Land's hands, you wouldn't know what kind of torment you would endure.

Moreover, they were all part of the human race, and if they disguised themselves a bit, basically no one could see through their identity.

Another point, the cultivators within Pure Land generally had very high cultivation because they seemed to practice a sort of wicked technique that allowed them to grow stronger by absorbing other people's spirit force. Hence, the people of Pure Land were very enthusiastic about attacking other human race bases.

Through such means, they could plunder the materials they needed and capture the human race cultivators in those bases for their cultivation.

Zui Shan originally planned to lead people out to check the situation, but when he heard that the people who came were from the Pure Land, he immediately extinguished the idea.

With the foundation of this stronghold, it was simply impossible to be an opponent for them.

Nowadays, the hatred of the human race for the Corpse Race is naturally continuous and unending, but the hatred for powers like the Pure Land is even greater than for the Corpse Race.

It is naturally unwelcome for anyone to fight amongst themselves at a time when a race's survival is at stake, no matter where or when.

"How did they find their way here?" Zui Shan was utterly baffled.

Wu Jun's expression was dull, "I saw Xiaowu among the people from the Pure Land..."

Zui Shan suddenly realized.

Xiaowu was also one of the people from the stronghold, who had gone out with others to look for supplies and had been missing for a month, neither seen alive nor found dead.

In today's world, such an occurrence was quite normal, and everyone thought they had encountered the Corpse Race, the only thing they could do was to cherish their memory in their hearts.

But now it seemed that Xiaowu and the others did not encounter the Corpse Race but the people from the Pure Land.

It was inevitable that there had been some inhumane torture and harsh interrogation during that period, and the exposure of the stronghold's location was unavoidable.

Zui Shan immediately understood that today's incident really had nothing to do with the two visitors who had arrived, it was merely a coincidence.

"Veteran Xu, tally the manpower and lead people to evacuate through the secret passage."

Zui Shan issued the orders.

Xu Wang did not fuss and nodded, "Alright!"

Zui Shan then pointed out a few cultivators, "You few, follow me, let's hold them off!"

The stronghold contained many ordinary people who would not be too slow even if they had a secret passage to retreat through, so it was necessary for some to stay behind and cover the rear, though there was great danger in doing so, even with the formations set up by Xu Wang within the cave.

Even with a clear understanding of the risk, the few individuals pointed out stepped forward without hesitation.

In the stone chamber, Lu Ye and Ying Wuji were quietly watching.

Ying Wuji couldn't help but remark, "The people of this stronghold are very united."

It must be because of Zui Shan's leadership on normal days that he was able to enforce discipline at this critical moment.

"You stay as well," Lu Ye instructed indifferently, stepping towards the outside.

"What?" Ying Wuji was stunned for a moment and, after coming to his senses, couldn't help but feel indignant, muttering, "Why do I have to do all the dirty and tiring work, really taking yourself for a big brother?"

Previously, when they came across the ruined city, Lu Yiye had sent him to scout for information, and now he had to take care of the rearguard, which was simply unjust!

Lu Yiye was really overbearing, issuing casual orders when he needed him, and not even willing to converse more when he didn't need him, just staring at him with his eyes, putting him under inexplicable pressure.

Although irritated in his heart, Ying Wuji was not willing to wash his hands of the matter.

From the reactions of Zui Shan and the others, the people of the so-called Pure Land were not easy to deal with, and as a ghost cultivator, he was indeed suited for covering the rear.

His figure rapidly faded and then disappeared from sight.

Meanwhile, Lu Ye had reached Veteran Xu, who was directing the people to retreat through the secret passage, and got straight to the point, "If you trust me, I can lead the way ahead."

Veteran Xu stared at him for a moment before gritting his teeth, "Then I'll have to trouble you, young friend!"

Lu Ye nodded slightly and proceeded forward, entering the secret passage.

Veteran Xu gave a meaningful look, and immediately, several cultivators with higher cultivation followed Lu Ye, their spirit force ready to surge and unleash their strongest strike at any moment.

No matter whether Lu Ye was related to the people from the Pure Land or not, he was going to lead the way, so let him lead; however, Veteran Xu also had his arrangements, just in case they were really being schemed against.

In the apocalypse, it is hard to predict human intentions, even a young girl like Yuan Xiang wouldn't easily trust others, let alone someone as cunning and shrewd as Veteran Xu.

It was a certainty that there would be secret passages within the stronghold, and not just one, but many leading in different directions and to different places, ensuring there was always a way out.

If there was no way out and the stronghold was attacked, wouldn't one have to fight to the death?

If you can win the fight, that's fine, but if not, then one might indeed end up dead.

This too is a law of survival.

The secret passage was not very spacious, allowing at most three people to walk side by side, with many twists and turns along the way and numerous branches.

With Veteran Xu guiding from behind, Lu Ye merely had to keep moving forward; he didn't walk very fast, mainly considering the many ordinary people following him.

Even so, those ordinary people had to run to keep up, children and the elderly were even in need of cultivator's spirit force to assist them, otherwise, they would certainly be left behind.

Meanwhile, within the stronghold's cavern, Zui Shan and others braced themselves for what was to come.

With a long laugh coming through, a figure stepped in, the aura around him sinister and chaotic, emitting a deeply uncomfortable sensation.

Upon seeing this person, Zui Shan's heart sank at first sight.

A formidable enemy!

Chapter 797 Speaking Well

Within this stronghold, the reason Zui Shan became the leader was related not only to his character but also to his cultivation.

He was the strongest person in the stronghold.

Yet the breath of the newcomer was faintly higher than his.

And right behind him, another seven or eight figures burst into the cave.

The people behind Zui Shan immediately showed a look of despair, realizing they were unlikely to escape this disaster.

The man who rushed in first had a hawk-like nose, a gloomy and unruly face, and eyes like a falcon scanning over Zui Shan and his companions as he said coldly, "Pure Land is handling this. I advise you to surrender without resistance; otherwise, you will wish you were dead!"

His followers lined up behind him, activating their spirit force and demonstrating their powerful cultivation.

The atmosphere instantly became charged and tense.

Zui Shan said in anguish, "We are all of the human race; instead of fighting the Corpse Race, you choose to prey on weaker kinsmen. Do you not have a shred of conscience?"

The gloomy cultivator coldly laughed, "Conscience? What is that? In such chaotic times, only one's own strength is the true path! You weaklings are destined to be food for the stronger. Rather than dying at the hands of the Corpse Race and becoming one of them, it's better for us to utilize you for our cultivation. With our growth, there might be a chance for the continuation of the human race. The purpose and earnest efforts of our Pure Land sect are beyond the understanding of you ignorant folks."

"Nonsense!" Zui Shan could not suppress his anger.

The gloomy cultivator was too lazy to waste any more words, raising his hand to give an order. However, at that moment, a figure appeared in the shadows without a sound.

Before he appeared, no one had noticed him.

He was almost right behind the gloomy man...

A look of disbelief flashed through Zui Shan's eyes. That person... wasn't he the guest named Ying Wuji?

He hadn't noticed when the other party had stayed behind, nor where he had hidden before.

Thump...

As if something had been pierced, Zui Shan's pupils suddenly contracted to the size of pinpoints, as if he had seen something unbelievable.

The gloomy man who was about to give an order suddenly stiffened, feeling an inexplicable pain in his chest, followed by an overwhelming sense of weakness spreading throughout his body.

Realizing something, he looked down only to see a blade that had pierced through his chest without his knowledge!

"When... did this happen!" the gloomy man murmured to himself. He wanted to resist, but he couldn't muster any bit of his spirit force, and he could clearly sense the ebbing of his life force.

The sudden turn of events caused the Pure Land cultivators around him to change their expressions dramatically, instinctively scattering to both sides. As they refocused, they were all dumbstruck!

Their strongest member had been silently approached and assassinated!

"Thump..." Another light sound, Ying Wuji drew his curved blade and spoke indifferently, "Well said... but don't say it again in your next life!"

Thump...

The gloomy man fell to the ground, completely silenced, and a large area of blood stained the ground red.

All present were horrified, feeling a chill all over.

Zui Shan and the others had not expected that the guest who arrived that day would possess such mysterious and unpredictable skills. With such a miraculous ability, if it were used against them... would they defend with their heads? Perhaps they would die without knowing how, just like the gloomy man!

He quickly collected his wits and shouted loudly, "Kill!"

With the enemy in disarray due to the sudden turn, now was not the time to hesitate.

As he shouted, he was the first to pounce on the enemy, followed closely by several others who had finally reacted.

Ying Wuji was already whirling his dual-blades, slaughtering like a wolf among sheep.

Feeling extremely exhilarated. This was the strength a Cloud River Realm cultivator should have. Ever since the struggle for dominance in Cloud River began, he had been contending with the peak Cloud River Realm experts of the Nine Provinces, experiencing many defeats and much despondency, especially after encountering Lu Yiye, which made him doubt himself.

He wondered if he was too weak?

Coming to this world, he was chased to a dead end by a horde of zombies, yet Lu Yiye could easily resolve the trouble and even saved his life, deepening his self-doubt.

Until this moment!

He finally met a normal opponent.

And finally understood one thing.

It was not that he was weak.

It was that Lu Yiye... that guy...

Was simply! Too! Strong!

In the chaotic fight, Zui Shan and the others took down two, while Ying Wuji killed all the rest.

Feeling the pent-up frustration finally dissipate, Ying Wuji felt entirely relaxed and couldn't help but shout, "Awesome!"

Zui Shan and the others looked at him dumbfounded, momentarily regarding him as an extraordinary being.

"What are you dazing at? Let's go!" Ying Wuji, in high spirits, called out to the others and chased after the direction of the secret passage.

Zui Shan and his men finally snapped out of it. Leaving one person to tidy up the spoils, the rest hurried to keep up with Ying Wuji's pace.

In that secret passage, as Lu Ye moved forward, a figure suddenly appeared ahead of him.

Xu Wang behind him exclaimed in a low voice, "Not good, the Pure Land has found our secret passage location!"

The very thing he feared the most had still happened.

The location of the stronghold was revealed by Xiaowu, but the direction the secret passageway led to was known only to him and Zui Shan, no one else in the stronghold had that information, and it was certain Xiaowu didn't either.

However, each stronghold had its own secret passageway.

Those from Pure Land who intended to attack their stronghold would definitely search nearby for the exit of the secret passageway. Originally, Xu Wang still held a glimmer of hope, but now it seemed like it was nothing but wishful thinking.

"Where... are you going?" The newcomer was a woman whose appearance could not be seen clearly in the dim light, but her voice was soft and sweet, making one unable to resist wanting to hear her speak a few more words.

It seemed as though she had been waiting here for a long time. When she spoke, there was a hint of excitement in her voice, it was unclear what she was anticipating.

But if one person had shown up, then surely more would follow.

In such a narrow corridor, this situation was not in their favor; if they were to engage in a major battle, not to mention whether the cultivators in the stronghold were a match, the ordinary people would certainly suffer many casualties and deaths.

"And a little brother at that... It's rare to see a handsome young man like you. Come talk to your sister..." The woman had already seen Lu Ye's face clearly as he led the way, and her words were filled with seduction.

She stepped forward, reaching out to grab at Lu Ye.

Yet, on that pale, jade-like hand, there were sharp, slender fingernails, gleaming with a metallic luster.

Clang...

A long knife was drawn from its sheath. As the fiery red light of the blade flickered, those following closely behind Lu Ye could only catch a glimpse of the woman's shocked expression in their field of vision before they heard a scream abruptly cut short.

Lu Ye continued forward without stopping.

Behind him, the sound of a heavy object falling to the ground could be heard, and a strong scent of blood wafted out.

By the time the cultivators following Lu Ye arrived at the spot, they saw only a warm corpse lying on the ground.

"One strike..." Their eyes widened in disbelief.

When the woman had attacked, the spirit force she unleashed was not weak; they all knew they were no match for her.

To the cultivators in the stronghold, such a woman was already considered a strong adversary, and the only one who could surely defeat her was their leader, Zui Shan!

Yet, could it be that such a strong opponent was cut down by the young man with the knife in front?

They hadn't even been able to perceive how high that young man's cultivation was.

Xu Wang's eyelids twitched violently.

With such strength, it was terrifying to hear about; no wonder he could kill the zombie that caused Yooi Zhen's team to suffer heavy casualties and injuries and rescue Yuan Xiang.

And with such a person's presence, the stronghold, even if willing, was simply unable to guard against him.

They could finally be sure that this visitor who had come to the stronghold today harbored no ill will towards them.

Short bursts of combat followed ahead, each flicker of fiery blade light signified the death of an enemy.

As the group proceeded along the path, they occasionally encountered corpses strewn about.

Even the unrestrained cultivators of Pure Land were frightened by this display. They had been blocking the way, intending to trap their prey, but they hadn't expected to encounter a fierce shark that devoured people without leaving bones behind.

In just a short moment, several had fallen, and the remaining cultivators from Pure Land no longer dared to linger, retreating one after another.

Lu Ye continued on at his steady pace, followed by the cultivators and ordinary people from the stronghold, forming a long yet quiet and orderly procession.

After walking for more than half a Shichen, there finally appeared a faint light ahead.

Clearly, they were approaching the exit of the secret passageway.

About a hundred zhang from the exit, Lu Ye halted and instructed the people behind him, "Stay here and don't move. Don't come out until I call you."

"Yes!" The cultivators from the stronghold, who had initially been arranged by Xu Wang to monitor and guard Lu Ye, instinctively responded with a clanging affirmation.

On their way here, the people following behind might not have noticed what exactly had happened up front, but those few who had been closely following Lu Ye had discerned something.

Which is why they held the utmost respect in their hearts.

Stepping into the light, Lu Ye slowly emerged from the secret passageway.

In an instant, a multitude of auras surrounded him from all sides.

Narrowing his eyes slightly, Lu Ye saw more than a dozen figures encircling him, each as tense as if facing a great enemy.

One of the figures, a tiny cultivator about the size of a three-inch nail, squawked in a duck-like voice, "Hey, boy, was it you who killed our people?"

Although the deaths of their comrades had made them aware of Lu Ye's strength, they still showed no intention of backing down.

Combat in the passageway was inconvenient, so they simply waited outside, not believing that so many of them united could not take down their opponent.

Feeling puzzled, the intelligence they had gathered indicated that the only formidable person at this stronghold was someone called Zui Shan.

But the ages did not match; Zui Shan was a middle-aged man, while the person in front of them was a young man, neither too old nor too young.

Lu Ye remained silent. Amber, crouched on his shoulder, opened his mouth, ready to roar.

"Shh..." Lu Ye put a finger to his lips.

In this apocalyptic world, it was better not to make too much noise; for all they knew, a roar from Amber could attract some new trouble.

Amber yawned, complying out of laziness, and lay down again.

He couldn't help but feel that on this trip to the Unparalleled Continent, he had no opportunity to show his worth.

Never mind, he thought, I am a tiger, why worry about so much.

Chapter 798 You're Not Bad

The night was like a curtain, enshrouding the heavens.

In the past, the night sky over the Unparalleled Continent was also beautiful and enchanting, filled with a myriad of stars and a bright moon.

But ever since the cataclysm, these things had become sights of the past.

Though the day still had the hazy big sun shining everywhere, by night, it was truly pitch-black as one couldn't see their fingers in front of their faces.

Out in the wilderness, the flickering of campfires could be seen, as many of the common people huddled together for warmth while cultivators kept watch at the periphery against all threats.

Wu Jun, who was missing an arm, and several other cultivators were in charge of monitoring one direction.

Suddenly, something seemed to approach rapidly under the thick veil of night.

"Who goes there!" Wu Jun warned.

"It's me!" came the reply.

Recognizing the familiar voice, Wu Jun breathed a sigh of relief.

The leader had arrived!

These people, under Lu Ye's protection, had fled all the way from their stronghold to this place, which was also the rendezvous point previously agreed upon with Zui Shan and Xu Wang, prepared for instances where they might get separated from each other.

After waiting until now, they finally saw Zui Shan emerge, and instantly, they felt a sense of security.

Soon, the news of Zui Shan's return spread, and the oppressive and anxious atmosphere within the crowd dissipated.

Xu Wang greeted him and couldn't help but ask, "Are you injured?"

Zui Shan couldn't resist glancing at Ying Wuji, who had accompanied them here...

With him around, injured? Such a notion was nonexistent.

"It's a long story," Zui Shan shook his head. If Ying Wuji had not suddenly burst forth from the shadows previously, those left behind to cover the retreat wouldn't have been able to join up with the group, let alone entertain the hope of staying alive.

"How are things here? Have we suffered any great losses?" Zui Shan asked gravely.

After dealing with the people from the Pure Land, and as they retreated through the secret path, they saw many bodies along the way, clearly indicating that those Pure Land cultivators who had troubled them weren't limited to those they had encountered.

There were likely many more trapped within the secret path, something that unavoidably troubled Zui Shan.

"Losses? There were no losses..." Xu Wang said with a complex expression as he glanced in a certain direction, feeling he would never forget the scene he witnessed that day.

When they had emerged from the secret path, a solitary figure stood with a saber, surrounded by a ring of corpses, their blood painting the earth red. This figure grew ever more imposing in everyone's hearts...

And that battle, from the start to finish, seemed to last only around ten breaths.

Single-handedly, he killed more than ten Pure Land cultivators, not counting those who perished in the secret path.

If he hadn't seen it with his own eyes, Xu Wang would hardly believe such a powerful being existed in this world.

"It seems that his strength is beyond imagination?" Zui Shan had a hunch and followed Xu Wang's gaze, spotting Lu Ye seated nearby, carving a Crystal Stone with the Boulder Mountain Saber.

On the way, that guest called Ying Wuji seemed to notice his many worries and once reassured him with a phrase.

"With my senior brother escorting your people, you need not worry unnecessarily, no matter how many of that damned Pure Land come, he can kill them all. If you knew the location of the Pure Land's stronghold, he'd go alone and pick a fight. He's most adept at wiping out entire sects."

In his words, Ying Wuji seemed to have enormous confidence in his senior brother, and while speaking, it appeared as though he was recalling some unpleasant memories, even causing him to shudder involuntarily.

Back then, Zui Shan thought Ying Wuji might have been exaggerating. Considering Ying Wuji's own strength was already beyond his imagination, to have such admiration for another, that person's strength must be terrifying.

But now, it seemed to be true.

Yet... that man didn't seem like a bad person, only aloof and taciturn, with a somewhat chill demeanor. Could he have really been involved in wiping out entire sects?

After a brief conversation with Xu Wang, Zui Shan approached Lu Ye, bowing formally: "Fellow Daoist Lu, Fellow Daoist Ying, thank you for your righteous intervention. I shall never forget today's kindness."

At this moment, one thing could be confirmed.

These two men indeed had no malice towards their stronghold.

"It was just a coincidence, no need to dwell on it," Lu Ye replied indifferently.

Ying Wuji said, "Now that your stronghold over there is abandoned, do you have anywhere else to stay?"

"About 30 miles from here, there is another fallback position; that's where we plan to head to," Zui Shan replied.

"That's good," Ying Wuji nodded.

Zui Shan bowed again, "I must earnestly request that the two of you escort us for a while, if you would be willing?"

There were many ordinary people in the group, making travel cumbersome; both Lu Ye and Ying Wuji were powerful, so with their escort, their safety could be better assured.

But it was a chance encounter, and what could his side offer to entice them to help? Their stronghold had nothing that could catch their interest.

Therefore, Zui Shan could only sincerely plead.

"Not..." Ying Wuji almost agreed immediately but quickly glanced at Lu Ye: "This is for my senior brother to decide."

Although he saw that Lu Ye was inclined to help, he dared not rashly commit on his behalf.

"It's possible," Lu Ye nodded lightly.

Zui Shan was overjoyed, "In that case, many thanks to both of you!"

"The leader can go about his business; there's no need to worry about us."

Zui Shan left.

Ying Wuji looked around at Lu Yiye and couldn't help but let out a light laugh, whispering, "Lu Yiye, you... you're actually not that bad."

Lu Ye was too lazy to even lift his eyelids, "What makes you think I'm a bad person?"

Ying Wuji let out a snort, "A reputation like 'Lu Ye the Sect Destroyer' doesn't come from nowhere, does it?"

"In the grand scheme of Nine Provinces, with the two big factions constantly at odds, there are no truly good or bad people, just pitiful souls caught in the crossfire. From the perspective of Ten Thousand Demons Ridge, I, Lu Yiye, have killed countless people, my sins are heavy, and I truly deserve to be unforgivable. But that's just a matter of perspective. From the Haotian Alliance's point of view, would you, Ying Wuji, be considered a good person?"

Ying Wuji smacked his lips, "I was just speaking casually; you don't need to preach at length. I understand all that. Even though you're younger than me, you act so old and serious. It's really dull."

Lu Ye looked up at him, "Is it that you've become frivolous, or is it that I can't lift my saber anymore, or perhaps I've been too kind to you lately?"

Ying Wuji's expression changed immediately, "Lu Yiye, if we're chatting, let's just chat. There's no need for threats and intimidation. It's not fun."

He walked far away, as if avoiding a plague.

If I can't afford to provoke him, at least I can dodge him!

Lu Ye continued to hold the Boulder Mountain Saber, carving the Crystal Stone in his hand.

This meticulous carving was not only for crafting an audio transmission stone; for him, it was also a subtle form of cultivation in saber skills.

Before dawn, at the summons of the cultivators, the group began their journey.

During peaceful times, cultivators could simply activate their spirit force and transport the mortals through the air without such hardship.

But in these troubled times, cultivators walking outside would not casually use their spirit force unless absolutely necessary. Firstly, to conserve their own strength and, secondly, to avoid attracting unnecessary trouble due to fluctuations in spirit force.

Thus, the entire group advanced on foot.

A distance of about 30 miles was already considered far for mortals, but for the sake of survival, they had no choice but to proceed in this way.

Should the day come when the Unparalleled Continent is restored to normal, the future generations reflecting on the hardships of their ancestors would surely view it as a solemn and profound historical tapestry.

Along the way, they hid and dodged, fortunately without running into any setbacks. Destiny seemed to look after this group struggling to survive. Zui Shan and others who had been worried about encountering the Corpse Race or humans like those from the Pure Land were not met.

By the evening of the second day, the group finally arrived at the location of their backup stronghold.

Even a cunning rabbit has three burrows; much more so for the human race fighting for survival in this apocalyptic era.

Over ten years ago, when they settled at their original stronghold, Zui Shan had already led people to carve out this backup strongpoint as a contingency.

However, it had never been used in all those years.

But today, it had become a lifesaving haven.

The new strongpoint, compared to the original one, did not have much change in environment and was also located some two or three hundred feet underground.

Zui Shan led people to explore it first and, upon confirming there were no signs of the place being discovered by outsiders, led the group in to settle down.

At this point, their wandering and constant vigilance finally came to an end, and the anxious people could at last relax.

Zui Shan set about arranging for people inside the stronghold.

Lu Ye, invited by Xu Wang, began setting up Formation near the entrance of the stronghold.

From the moment Xu Wang first saw Lu Ye, he knew that he possessed a high level of expertise in Array Path. Now that they needed to set up new Formations, he naturally had some ideas.

Lu Ye did not refuse, leaving Xu Wang immensely grateful.

During their collaborative array setup, Xu Wang asked many questions, and Lu Ye responded generously, sharing his knowledge, much to Xu Wang's benefit.

When the big array was established, tears even shimmered in Xu Wang's eyes.

Such a big array was much more powerful than the Formations he had set up. Even without activating its full might, he could feel its strength—having such a Formation guarding them meant they no longer had to fear being targeted by those with evil intentions.

In the end, Lu Ye handed Xu Wang a jade slip, "It contains many of my insights and understandings about the Array Path."

When Xu Wang took it, his dry hands trembled uncontrollably.

In these times, such knowledge was infinitely more precious than resources for cultivation, yet Lu Ye had casually entrusted it to him, how could Xu Wang not be grateful?

"Fellow Daoist, are you planning to leave?"

Despite expecting it, when the moment came, Xu Wang couldn't help but feel regret. Such a talented individual, had he stayed at the stronghold, how good that would have been.

But he understood that ultimately, a pond can't hold a flood dragon.

The eagle was destined to soar above the Nine Heavens.

For those two, their stronghold was simply too small; they had no capital to retain them.

Chapter 799 No Need to Break Iron Shoes

In midair, Lu Ye and Ying Wuji whizzed along at high speed.

Normally, such ostentatious behavior would inevitably cause continuous disturbances, but in reality, as the two traveled along this path, it was calm and peaceful, without even half of a Corpse Race in sight.

The Corpse Race was not stupid; they knew that cultivators who dared to act in such a manner must have something to rely on. Without absolute confidence, they would not dare to come forward and provoke.

Half a day ago, the two said farewell to Zui Shan and others. They left under the regretful and reluctant gazes of the people at the stronghold.

It was not without gains.

Before departing, Zui Shan dismissed the others and spoke privately with Lu Ye and Ying Wuji, providing them with guidance for their journey ahead.

It turned out that when Zui Shan was young, because of his exceptional talent and good looks, he was favored by the Guiding Envoy of the secret realm who wanted to take him into the realm.

But when it came time to enter the secret realm, Zui Shan voluntarily gave it up.

He was unwilling to abandon his companions who had grown up together in the stronghold, nor did he wish to seek refuge alone in the secret realm to enjoy the glory and riches.

Under the incomprehending gazes of others who had been chosen in the same batch, Zui Shan bid farewell to the Guiding Envoy of the secret realm and resolutely set off on his return journey!

To this day, he had become the leader of the stronghold, leading everyone there in their difficult struggle for survival, bearing the weight of responsibility and remaining true to his original aspirations.

Although he had no means to calculate the current location of the secret realm's portal, he remembered clearly where the portal had opened all those years ago.

This was a secret in his heart, for it concerned the secret realm, and he could not and dared not speak of it lightly to others.

Today, recognizing the valor shown by Lu Ye and Ying Wuji, as they were about to leave, he revealed the truth.

However, according to Zui Shan, the secret realm was floating above the Unparalleled Continent, and its location was not fixed, so even if Lu Ye and Ying Wuji hurried to where the portal appeared back then, they might not find anything.

Yet, this was still a clue, and for Lu Ye and Ying Wuji, who were completely clueless, the trip was a must.

What if they found something there?

The landscapes continuously receded as they traveled, and the transition from day to night did not stop their advancement. They occasionally rested, but only briefly to replenish their spirit force before embarking on the journey again.

By the next day, they had arrived at the location pointed out by Zui Shan.

From afar, the three spirit mountaintops in front resembled three fingers standing erect between heaven and earth, the middle one the tallest and the others slightly shorter.

Two streaks of light, one after the other, landed on the central mountaintop, where, according to Zui Shan, the portal to the secret realm had once appeared.

Lu Ye looked around and spread his mental power, but found nothing noteworthy.

"Let's search separately."

Upon saying that, he stepped towards one side to begin his search.

Ying Wuji nodded and went off to explore in another direction.

An hour later, the two regrouped. Lu Ye looked at Ying Wuji, who shook his head and spread his hands, "Didn't find anything."

As expected.

Ying Wuji said, "Lu Yiye, this is like looking for a needle in a haystack. Isn't it better to think of a method to draw out the people from the secret realm?"

"Do you have a good strategy?"

Ying Wuji said, "I have some ideas."

"Let's hear them."

"Nowadays, resources in this realm are scarce, even for cultivators to survive is hard. If we use some items that do not exist in this world and spread them around, do you think it will catch the secret realm's attention? So that they come looking for us?"

Lu Ye pondered for a moment, then nodded slightly, "That's a method."

With the agreement, Ying Wuji immediately became more enthusiastic, "What we consider ordinary might be treasured by the people of this world, such as spirit fruits and elixir pills... But doing this will inevitably take a long time and there are too many uncertain factors."

"You go ahead and do it."

"Huh?"

"Since you have an idea, then go ahead and do it. I support you."

Ying Wuji's eye twitched incessantly. Just verbal support?

And this matter wasn't just for himself alone. Was Lu Yiye treating him like a laborer?

Thinking that he, after all, was the formidable sixteenth-ranked contender from the Cloud River battlefield, who walked the Cloud River battlefield as almost unbeatable, when had he ever been looked down upon like this?

Angered, he blurted out, "Lu Yiye, do not push people too far. I have been very patient with you these past few days!" Even a clay figure has a limit to his patience, and considering his frustrations of the past days, Ying Wuji felt he could no longer tolerate it.

Lu Ye looked at him puzzled, not understanding why he had suddenly exploded.

"If you don't want to go, then don't." He said offhandedly, since no one was forcing you, why such a big reaction?

Ying Wuji stared at Lu Ye, not sure why, but somehow felt the absurd notion that he was being unreasonable. His anger suddenly had nowhere to vent, nearly causing him internal injury.

At this moment, Lu Ye's expression suddenly changed, and he turned his head to look in a certain direction.

Ying Wuji, who had long known how powerful Lu Ye's mental power was, understood immediately from his reaction that he must have discovered something.

He couldn't afford to hold a grudge, and he hastily looked in the direction of his gaze.

What came into view was a large ship-shaped Spiritual Artifact, straddling the sky, hurtling through the air. Where it passed, clouds billowed and the momentum was magnificent.

Ying Wuji was overjoyed, "This is truly like finding a needle in a haystack without any effort, Lu Yiye, our luck has arrived!"

He had completely forgotten the small displeasure from before.

Looking back at Lu Ye's side, it was unknown when he had actually disappeared!

Ying Wuji was shocked and looked around blankly, "Lu Yiye?"

"Stealth!" Lu Ye's voice suddenly sounded beside his ear, clearly still in his original position, but he had obviously activated some stealth method.

Ying Wuji took a cold breath; this method of concealment... seemed to be much stronger than his own. Lu Ye was a combat cultivator, so how did he know the methods of a stealth cultivator?

Without time to think deeply, Ying Wuji also activated his own method, and his figure quickly vanished from the spot.

Raising his head to look at the Spirit Ship in the sky, Ying Wuji couldn't help but feel a bit emotional and sigh.

He and Lu Ye were originally here searching for the entrance to a secret realm, but found nothing upon arriving. He thought this trip would end in vain, but at the critical moment, this Spirit Ship appeared.

In this day and age, the only ones who dare to be so ostentatious outside were those from the forces of the secret realms.

Zui Shan had mentioned this to the two of them before, the secret realms were searching everywhere for the remnants of the human race, what they were using was a type of Spirit Ship. In his description,

the Spirit Ship was vast and luxurious, something those living in human settlements could never imagine.

This Spirit Ship had integrated offense and defense, with a hint of the Nine Provinces' Flying Dragon Ship style. Ordinary members of the Corpse Race dared not provoke it, and even if a powerful Corpse Race appeared, there were strong cultivators on the ship who could kill or expel them.

Now that they had seen this Spirit Ship, as long as they followed it, they would surely find the entrance to the secret realm.

Even if one had the ability to sneak inside, they could take this opportunity to directly enter the secret realm!

The luxurious and vast Spirit Ship described by Zui Shan didn't seem like much in the eyes of Lu Ye and Ying Wuji.

But considering the current situation in the Unparalleled Continent, having such a large Flying Spirit Artifact indicated that the foundations of the secret realm were also not weak.

The Spirit Ship swept over their heads and quickly moved away.

"Follow it!" Lu Ye's voice rang out next to Ying Wuji's ear.

Ying Wuji immediately mobilized his movements, trailing the Spirit Ship from a distance.

As they followed, the Spirit Ship did not stop for a long time. Ying Wuji couldn't hold back any longer and whispered, "Lu Yiye, are you there?"

Lu Ye's actions had him feeling very insecure, and it also discouraged him; he was a proper ghost cultivator, yet his methods of concealment were actually not better than a combat cultivator's!

This was truly a ridiculous thing in the world.

Lu Ye, who had concealed himself, released a hint of his presence, and Ying Wuji's heart was somewhat settled.

By the evening, the Spirit Ship finally showed signs of descending.

A moment later, in a deserted wilderness, the Spirit Ship docked. From the ship, figures with either dense or strong auras appeared, led by a man and a woman, who were much more splendidly dressed compared to the cultivators from human settlements.

An apparent array cultivator came out and began to set up a formation around the Spirit Ship to conceal its tracks.

The leading man and woman stepped off the Spirit Ship, looking around.

Then, the woman holding a jade slip probed briefly before saying, "Brother Yuk Long, according to the information left by the previous Guiding Envoy, there is a settlement about fifty li to the east."

Nowadays, the human race was hidden away in settlements that usually couldn't be found, so the location of the settlements was very important. The Guiding Envoys of the three great secret realms usually had records, which were convenient for the following Envoys to search for people.

However, many times, the settlements were deserted, and some were even slaughtered by the Corpse Race.

Therefore, the information in the jade slip held by the Guiding Envoys was updated every time.

The two of them were taking on the role of Guiding Envoys for the first time. Although they were somewhat reluctant, they still had to do their job well.

"Let's go and take a look," said the man named Zhou Yulong, stepping forward towards the east, with the woman following closely behind.

The Spirit Ship didn't dock directly at the settlement's location, which was a rule passed down from the secret realm because the ship was too conspicuous a target and might be watched by some Corpse Race. If it stopped directly at the settlement, it would expose the location.

After the people from the secret realm left, the settlement would inevitably face the danger of a fierce attack by the Corpse Race.

So each generation of Guiding Envoys adhered to this rule.

The two Guiding Envoys had already left.

Cultivators were guarding near the Spirit Ship, and the array cultivator was still setting up the formation.

Ying Wuji was itching to move, and Lu Ye's voice sounded in his ear, "Sneak in."

"I was thinking the same!" Ying Wuji responded.

Invisible and intangible, two figures moved towards the Spirit Ship.

If the formation here was completely set up, even Lu Ye wouldn't find it easy to infiltrate silently, let alone Ying Wuji. There was a very good chance of alerting the cultivators on the ship.

But at this moment, the formation had not yet been completely set up, which gave Lu Ye and Ying Wuji much more room to maneuver.

Chapter 800 Hiding

Whether it was Lu Ye or Ying Wuji, both possessed extremely high attainments in the Path of Concealment and Array Path. The cultivators who came from the secret realm were not bad, but they fell far short in comparison to these two.

Until the two of them sneaked into the big array and boarded the spirit ark, those people were still completely oblivious, each busying themselves with their own matters.

Considering that Ying Wuji couldn't sense his own existence, Lu Ye could only release a slight trace of his own breath, allowing him to follow this trace and stay by his side.

There were three levels on the spirit ark. The very top layer was where the two Guiding Envoys resided; the man and woman had emerged from the compartments on the top earlier.

The middle level and the bottom level were living quarters for the other cultivators from the secret realm.

None of these three levels were suitable for long-term hiding.

Therefore, after boarding the spirit ark, Lu Ye led Ying Wuji straight to the bottom of the ship.

He originally wanted to find a hiding spot at the bottom of the ship, but it was only after arriving there that he realized there were quite a few living breaths present.

However, none of those breaths were particularly strong; they were mostly at the level of the Spirit Stream Realm, and there were even many ordinary people.

After a moment's contemplation, Lu Ye understood what was going on.

The people here must be the selected individuals the secret realm had gathered from various human race settlements!

Yuan Xiang had mentioned that people from their settlement had been taken away by the secret realm, and it seemed their luck wasn't actually too good. If it hadn't been for the attack by the people from the Pure Land, and they had stayed at that settlement, perhaps they could have encountered the cultivators from the secret realm coming to guide them.

Of course, the timing was uncertain; they might have had to wait a very long time.

With a plan in mind, Lu Ye put away the Boulder Mountain Saber and revealed his figure from his concealed state.

Seeing this, Ying Wuji also dispelled his concealment, and after exchanging a glance with Lu Ye, they both restrained their breath as much as possible and entered the door with grandeur.

The bottom of the ship was a large communal room. At this moment, it already had many people inside, all chosen from various settlements, excited beyond measure whether they were ordinary people or cultivators with cultivation.

Because in today's world, almost every living person had only one goal, and that was to join the secret realm.

To join the secret realm meant no longer having to live in fear.

To join the secret realm meant having an endless supply of good things and inexhaustible cultivation resources.

To join the secret realm also signified that they could escape their previously dire living conditions and rise to become a person of high status!

Yuan Xiang was right; to today's human race, the secret realm was indeed like a Sacred Land!

When the door was pushed open, the noise inside came to an abrupt halt, and pairs of eyes turned to look their way.

Lu Ye and Ying Wuji paid it no mind and simply walked in. Under the puzzled stares of everyone, they settled down in a corner, seemingly out of place with the surrounding environment.

However, the noise soon started up again. The people here originally thought that the two of them were cultivators from the secret realm, which was why they had been initially quiet. Once they realized that the two were also candidates for guidance, their concerns diminished.

"There are quite a number of people," Ying Wuji quietly surveyed the surroundings, "and many of them are youths."

Not only that, there were even many children.

It seemed that the secret realm's selection criteria were not based on cultivation or talent; the main factor was age, with younger individuals being more likely to be selected.

People like them, at their age, already appeared quite old here.

But it made sense; younger age meant more malleability and easier instruction — perhaps for this reason, the secret realm had such a selection criterion.

Lu Ye sat with his eyes closed, seemingly resting but actually listening to various conversations around him to gather information.

However, the discussions amongst these youngsters who had gathered from all corners were of no real substance; most of them fantasized about the wonderful life once they entered the secret realm, freely unleashing their imaginations on how marvelous life would be in the secret realm.

Some children also felt low due to missing their parents.

Yet even the youngest children did not cry or fuss about this, because even they knew that once they were away from home, no one would spoil or coddle them like their parents did. From now on, whether they would rise to great heights or fall into the dust, their future could only be grasped by themselves.

On those young and tender faces, many showed determination.

Ying Wuji stood up and walked out.

A short while later, he returned and surreptitiously handed Lu Ye a set of ragged clothes, "Change into these."

In the whole bottom of the ship, among two or three hundred people, only the two of them stood out. It wasn't just their slightly older age, but mainly their attire.

Their clothes weren't particularly bright or fresh; after all, one was a combat cultivator and the other a ghost cultivator, both pursuing cultivation without much concern for their appearance.

But compared to the other people's attire around them, even at its most plainly dressed, their own seemed somewhat distinctive.

Ying Wuji had noticed this and had exchanged their clothes with those of people of a similar build to him and Lu Ye.

Having learned from the previous experience at the Zui Shan settlement, this time he didn't dare to offer anything valuable and simply used two pieces of beast meat.

Lu Ye took the washed-out white clothes handed to him, casually changed into them, and then sat quietly with Ying Wuji, waiting.

About half an hour later, the big door at the bottom of the cabin was pushed open again, and this time five skinny figures walked in. The oldest was only about thirteen or fourteen years old, with the youngest appearing to be around five or six.

It looked like these were the individuals picked up by the two Guiding Envoys from the nearby bases.

After a while, the spirit ship vibrated slightly, and the talking from the bottom of the cabin stopped abruptly, followed by a burst of cheering as children big and small rushed towards the windows.

As the vibrations continued, the spirit ship ascended, heading for the next base.

The children occupying the windows gazed excitedly at the rapidly receding scenery below and the white clouds floating in front of the windows, unable to contain their excitement.

About one incense stick's time after the spirit ship took off, the big door at the bottom of the cabin was once again pushed open, and two figures appeared in everyone's field of vision. Without saying a word, they tossed a few items into the room and then turned and left.

Lu Ye saw clearly that they were several large chunks of beast meat which, judging by the color and the faint smell of blood, had not been cooked and were all raw.

Yet even so, at the moment the two persons left, the children at the bottom of the cabin boiled over with excitement.

Figures dove towards the chunks of raw meat; those who grabbed a piece immediately bit into it, but after just one bite, they were punched and knocked to the ground by someone nearby, who then snatched the food from their hands.

The already noisy bottom of the cabin descended into complete chaos.

Children from various bases, big and small, seemed to have turned into ferocious beasts, each one emitting a fierce aura.

Those with cultivation had a clear advantage, and those without it were out of luck.

Screams of agony and cries of distress filled the air.

"Ah, this..." Ying Wuji furrowed his brows as he watched.

He couldn't imagine that for a few large pieces of uncooked raw meat, these children could fight like this.

There was even a little girl lying on the ground, who for the moment couldn't get up and was trampled at will.

Just as he was about to step in, a figure beside him flashed forward, reached out a big hand, and fished the little girl from the ground amidst the crowd.

Clearly terrified, the little girl was pale and couldn't stop trembling, even after being rescued. She turned her head to glance at Lu Ye, her savior, and forgot to say thank you.

The pieces of raw meat were quickly consumed, and in the aftermath of the brawl, many children sported bruised noses and swollen faces, with some covered in blood.

Those who got their share were content, while those who didn't hung their heads dejectedly.

Because here, only one meal was provided each day, and those who didn't get any would have to go hungry for the day.

"Lu Yiye," Ying Wuji's tone was somewhat grave, "what on earth is this secret realm?"

Based on the ideas previously imparted by Yuan Xiang, he thought the secret realms of the Unparalleled Continent were sacred lands of the human race, where one wouldn't have to worry about food, clothing, or cultivation resources.

He also thought that the Guiding Envoys in the secret realms chose these people to cultivate them well and continue the legacy of the human race.

But judging from this one event alone, he sensed something was not quite right.

The people in the secret realm seemed to not care about those from the bases at all; even when providing food, they appeared to be feeding wild beasts.

Expecting the people from the secret realm to cultivate them was sheer folly.

He was asking Lu Ye, but he had a bad feeling in his heart.

"Big brother, thank you."

Only now did the little girl rescued by Lu Ye come back to her senses and thank him. It was evident that despite her impoverished birth, she'd been well-raised.

Lu Ye shook his head slowly, took out a piece of jerky and handed it to her, "Eat."

The little girl's eyes immediately lit up. She looked up at Lu Ye to confirm it was for her and then eagerly grabbed it and began to eat.

After a few bites, she stopped eating and stashed the remaining jerky in her bosom, clearly intending to save it for another time, lest she go hungry later if she gets nothing.

Ying Wuji turned his head, feeling a wave of sourness in his heart, wanting to tell the little girl to eat all the jerky, but the words didn't come out.

He and Lu Ye could protect this little girl for a moment, but not for a lifetime.

"Can I sleep here for a bit?" Although the little girl was naïve, she knew that Lu Ye and Ying Wuji were strong protectors.

She was ignorant about cultivation, but with Lu Ye and Ying Wuji's ages making them look the oldest on the boat, they were surely the strongest.

"Sleep," Ying Wuji agreed this time before Lu Ye could speak.

The little girl flashed a sweet smile, found a spot next to Lu Ye, lay down, curled up, and quietly fell asleep. Soon her breathing became even.

The spirit ship sometimes stopped, sometimes set sail, continually picking up people from the bases.

Several days passed before no new people appeared.

Lu Ye and Ying Wuji both looked forward to the end, both sensing that this round of guidance was about to close, which also meant that the cultivators from the secret realm would be returning.