

Humanity 81

Chapter 81 - Endless Island Luo Ji

In the corridor, "very poor" Lu Ye was counting his possessions, with just over two hundred Spirit Stones. He wasn't sure if that would be enough to buy a Cultivation Technique. If it wasn't enough...

He took out the tiny bell Spiritual Artifact from his storage sack. This was a relic of the Young Master of the Nine Stars Sect and should be worth quite a bit of money. If push came to shove, he might have to use this to settle his debts. If that still wasn't enough, what about the origin magnetic ore?

He also had the Young Master's storage sack, which should contain many valuable items, but unfortunately, he couldn't open it.

However, considering the benefits some Xuanmen disciples had gotten from him in the past few days, it would only make sense for Xuanmen to offer him a discount, shouldn't it?

Chu Tian sent another message, inquiring about his element sign.

Lu Ye truthfully informed him. There was no need to conceal it, as a Cultivation Technique that matched his own element sign was very important.

A moment later, Chu Tian messaged again, informing him that he would have a definite answer by tomorrow at the earliest, or the day after at the latest, because the Cultivation Technique needed time to be sent from their base.

Lu Ye said that was fine.

Ending the communication with Chu Tian, Lu Ye stood up, preparing to practice with his saber. Although he had been fighting continuously for the past few days, he had never stopped his saber practice because he felt that this basic exercise was greatly beneficial to himself, and the key was to be persistent.

Yet before Lu Ye could draw his saber, a tiger's roar suddenly rang out. He sharply turned around to see Amber bounding towards him in disarray.

Yiyi, who had been monitoring the situation from the other end of the corridor, also ran over and exchanged a glance with Lu Ye before vanishing into the rock wall.

Amber ran to the front of Lu Ye, turned around, and lowered its body. It had a wound that wasn't too serious and growled lowly in front of them.

A figure leisurely appeared from the other end. Lu Ye activated his spirit force to inspect the newcomer's spirit light and made up his mind—if the person was Level 5, he would immediately retreat; if they were below Level 5, he would leave no piece of them behind.

But upon seeing the spirit light, Lu Ye slightly furrowed his brows. Judging by the luster of the spirit light, the person was unexpectedly just a Spirit Stream Level 2 cultivator...

What puzzled him, though, was that the spirit light on this person was very different from that of an ordinary Level 2. It was not only extremely pure but also gave an impression of being exceptionally solid.

"Finding you really wasn't easy." The person came to a stop about ten paces away from Lu Ye and smiled slightly, showing off starkly white teeth in the dark night.

The individual appeared young, younger than Lu Ye by a year or two, and although his stature wasn't very imposing, his relaxed presence there nonetheless made Lu Ye tense up involuntarily.

Having fought with the Nine Stars Sect cultivators many times these past days, he couldn't precisely judge whether a cultivator could pose a threat, but he did have a vague feeling about it.

The fact that his mind was on edge indicated that this Level 2 cultivator must have something extraordinary about him.

"Mountain tiger?" The person asked, not waiting for Lu Ye to respond before voluntarily introducing himself: "Endless Island, Luo Ji!"

Lu Ye immediately remembered Chu Tian mentioning this person during the day. He hadn't inquired what Endless Island was exactly, but from Chu Tian's tone, it seemed to be a very powerful force. And a cultivator born from such a force was bound to have an extraordinary foundation.

Therefore, after the other party introduced himself, Lu Ye immediately stomped his foot, drew his long saber, and charged towards him.

Just slash first and talk later!

If he as a Level 2 could kill a Level 4, why would he now, at Level 3, fear another Level 2?

Lu Ye's legs, infused with spirit force, exploded with swift speed, closing the ten-zhang distance in an instant. The spiritual orifice in Lu Ye emitted a booming sound, indicative of the previous Spirit Energy Gathering Spirit Runes shattering under the intense fluctuation of spirit force.

"You brute!" Luo Ji uttered with a light snort, lifting his hand unhurriedly and pointing at Lu Ye, "Scorching White!"

As his words fell, a speck of luminescence appeared at the tip of his finger, which abruptly expanded into a bright burst of white light, illuminating the dark corridor with stark clarity.

Lu Ye was instantaneously blinded by the intense light, as if he were staring directly at the sun. Even though he closed his eyes immediately, he couldn't avoid the pain in his eyeballs and the tears that streamed down.

This Luo Ji was a truly despicable dog; Lu Ye hastily retreated backwards.

"Earth Spike!" Luo Ji shouted again while stomping his foot on the ground.

The next moment, a spike of earth burst from the ground behind Lu Ye, slamming harshly into his waist. As Lu Ye stumbled backwards, his spine ached painfully. Had he not activated his protective spirit force, he might have been seriously injured.

"Ice Spike!" A chill suddenly arose as Luo Ji pointed at Lu Ye, and a sharp ice spike, the length of a chopstick, flew toward Lu Ye's face like an arrow released from a bow.

Lu Ye's eyes were still shut, as the sudden blinding light had been quite severe. Without any consideration, he activated a Defense Spirit Rune to shield himself as he sensed the oncoming chill.

There was a booming impact, as if what hit the Defense Spirit Runes wasn't an ice spike but a massive boulder. Lu Ye was forced back even further, his cheeks throbbing with pain as the shattered ice spikes left a series of fine cuts on his face.

"Golden Arc!"

In the corridor, a golden crescent-like slash flew toward Lu Ye, who was now stumbling backward. Compared to the previous magic and spells, the killing power of this Dao technique was particularly formidable.

The Golden Wheel Talisman that Lu Ye had once activated was derived from this same Golden Arc Slash; the attacks that emerged from the talisman were weakened versions of the Golden Arc Slash.

In terms of power, the Golden Arc Slash released by Luo Ji was far more formidable than the attacks that came from Lu Ye's Golden Wheel Talisman. If one were to be struck without any defense, they might well be cleaved in two.

The Golden Arc Slash approached Lu Ye with lightning speed, and the corners of Luo Ji's mouth curled up.

With a clanging sound, the Golden Arc Slash was cleaved apart by Lu Ye's saber, and behind the long saber, Lu Ye squinted, his expression exceedingly solemn.

The opponent was only at the Spirit Stream Level 2, and Lu Ye had thought that even if Luo Ji had some tricks, he himself would be able to handle him. Yet after the exchange, he realized he was wrong.

This Level 2 cultivator was different from all the others Lu Ye had ever seen!

In the past few days, he had killed many disciples from the Nine Stars Sect, and he had seen how the disciples of Xuanmen fought one another. While it was true that they occasionally employed Dao techniques, those required preparation time, and none had been capable of unleashing magic and spells to the extent Luo Ji demonstrated.

The opponent's mastery over each spell was incredibly advanced, clearly indicating that he had taken the path of a magic cultivator...

What surprised Lu Ye even more was that this Level 2 cultivator seemed to have a thicker concentration of spirit force than himself. Previously, the aura of spirit light was not enough to give it away, but now that they were engaged in combat, the fluctuations in the opponent's spirit force were laid bare.

This was not the fluctuation a Level 2 cultivator should possess; it was even stronger than some of the Level 4 cultivators he had killed.

Combining all these factors, Lu Ye immediately thought of a possibility.

This guy, he must be cultivating a Heaven Rank technique!

Chapter 82 All Different

Cultivation Techniques are classified into Heaven, Earth, Profound, and Yellow. Yellow Rank Techniques can only advance a cultivator to Spirit Stream Level 3, Profound Rank to Level 6, and Earth Rank to Level 9.

There are only nine levels within the Spirit Stream Realm. Logically speaking, an Earth Rank Technique should suffice to cultivate to Great Perfection within it.

In reality, this is not the case. An Earth Rank Technique can only enable a cultivator to open up to the 180th orifice, but there are as many as 360 orifices within the human body.

After opening the 180th orifice, if one wants to unlock more spiritual orifices, they must switch to cultivating a Heaven Rank Technique.

A cultivator who had opened the 180th orifice with an Earth Rank Technique and reached Spirit Stream Level 9, after switching to a Heaven Rank Technique, would be able to open the 181st orifice. However, switching techniques would cause their realm to slip by several levels, as within the divisions of Heaven Rank Techniques, 180 orifices are only considered to be at Spirit Stream Level 6.

In summary, the number of spiritual orifices a cultivator has opened is not the standard for judging the level of their cultivation. The number of Minor Circumambulation cycles within the body is what matters.

Just because cultivators have opened the same number of orifices does not mean they possess the same cultivation level.

In the sole transmission of teachings he received, the sect master once mentioned the differences in Cultivation Techniques to Lu Ye, which is why he remembers these things.

This Luo Ji, who appears to be only at the Spirit Stream Level 2, must have at least opened over fifty orifices! This is because the spirit force fluctuations when he casts spells are much stronger than those of Lu Ye.

With Heaven Rank Techniques, opening eighteen orifices constitutes Level 1, and only upon opening forty-five orifices does one reach Level 2!

Upon realizing this, Lu Ye immediately understood that Luo Ji was the strongest opponent he had encountered so far.

Keep in mind that under an Earth-class technique, opening forty-five orifices is the standard for Spirit Stream Level 4. In other words, Luo Ji, with only Level 2 cultivation from a Heaven Rank Technique, is actually between Level 4 and Level 5 of ordinary cultivators. Moreover, with his expertise in magic and spells, facing a regular Level 5 cultivator would not put him at a disadvantage.

This is the profound background of a top sect's disciple.

From a young age, they determine their future path, and then continue to delve into and explore this path, tempering their bodies. When they reach the appropriate age, they begin their cultivation without rushing to increase their cultivation level, for each level they ascend requires opening two to three times more orifices than ordinary cultivators.

Such individuals can often fight across two or three minor levels when their own cultivation level is not high. Even when their cultivation level increases, defeating enemies above their level is par for the course.

Such individuals, once they grow up, are all Overlord-level powerhouses!

Lu Ye had the honor of encountering a future Overlord...

The instant exchange ended with his complete defeat. The moment Luo Ji appeared, he had charged forward, but after several spells from the opponent, he was forced back to his original position.

As a combat cultivator like him facing a magic cultivator, closing the distance for close combat is the key. However, it was clear that getting close to Luo Ji was not an easy task.

"Which sect's brute are you from?" Luo Ji did not pursue his advantage because he was confident of winning. It's not that he underestimated Lu Ye, but the environment here did not suit a combat cultivator like Lu Ye and instead would enhance the threat of his magic and spells. In the early stage of cultivation, the ability to cast spells can offer a significant advantage.

The narrowness of this passage left Lu Ye with no room to maneuver.

Lu Ye had clearly realized this. Retreating through the exit behind him would be the right move, but he did not plan to do so.

He had a faint feeling that if he retreated now, the next time he saw Luo Ji, he probably wouldn't have the courage to confront him directly. From this guy's first sentence, one could infer that he came specifically for Lu Ye.

There was no escaping!

Thus, there was only one option left—fight!

...

...

The opponent's foundation was impressive, but didn't he have one too? At the end of the day, the small-scale magic and spells that Luo Ji was currently using could be blocked by his Defense Spirit Runes.

His right hand gripping the knife tightened, and Lu Ye's body leaned slightly forward, his center of gravity lowered, adopting the stance of a cheetah ready to pounce on its prey.

He took a deep breath, and the spirit force within the three Minor Circumambulation systems in his body started to surge and roar. In the next instant, he fiercely sprung forward, and the rocks beneath his feet scattered in all directions.

"Scorching White!" Luo Ji bellowed.

Having been tricked by it once before, and with his eyes still stinging from the experience, Lu Ye immediately squinted his eyes and raised his left hand to block his face upon hearing Luo Ji's shout.

However, no blinding light erupted; instead, an ice spike filled with chill attacked him, accompanied by Luo Ji's mocking laughter: "Fooled you!"

Damn it! Lu Ye flew into a rage, finally understanding why that guy always shouted before releasing a spell: it was all to set the stage for this moment of deceit.

Raising his knife, he slashed, shattering the ice spike, but right after that, more and more ice spikes came flying at him, the whooshing sound incessant.

The opponent seemed to be releasing magic and spells without any need for rest, and had Lu Ye not seen it with his own eyes, he would have almost suspected that the guy had secretly activated an ice-type Spirit Talisman.

Amidst the clinking and clattering sounds, Lu Ye's sword danced in his hand, smashing each ice spike to pieces. Those he couldn't shatter in time, he could only defend against with the Protection Runes, advancing arduously. Due to the large amount of ice fragments being created, even the tunnel began to grow cold.

It took more than a dozen breaths of time for Lu Ye to move forward just three steps! One ice spike after another zoomed over, each carrying tremendous impact and hindering his advance.

From behind Luo Ji, against the cave wall, Yiyi's little head suddenly popped out, but before she could act, Luo Ji, as if he had eyes on the back of his head, suddenly turned around, at the same time pointing a finger, a Golden Arc Slash flying straight towards Yiyi.

Yiyi screamed, quickly retracting her head.

"Roar!" Amber roared, thinking that Yiyi had been hurt.

This roar was clearly different from others. When it sounded, Lu Ye felt as if his head had been hit by a small hammer. Luo Ji, on the other hand, staggered a step, muttering in surprise, "An exotic beast?"

He had seen Amber before but hadn't paid much attention to it until now, realizing that this majestic White Tiger seemed to have some special capabilities.

He couldn't afford to ponder on it any longer because while he was distracted by Amber's roar, Lu Ye had already seized the opportunity to rush forward.

Luo Ji roared, "Scorching White!"

Having been tricked once, would Lu Ye fall for it again? He barely squinted, disregarding everything as he charged forward.

Crackling...

The shattered ice around him suddenly enveloped where Lu Ye stood, rapidly solidifying, as if intending to freeze him within it.

In this critical moment, Lu Ye had no choice but to retreat. Only after regaining his footing had a massive block of ice formed between him and Luo Ji. Had he not retreated quickly enough, this ice block would have surely enveloped him, and with Luo Ji's methods, Lu Ye would have been done for.

"Phew..." Seeing that Lu Ye was obstructed by the ice block, Luo Ji breathed a sigh of relief.

This battle had been more intense than he had anticipated. Originally, when the Nine Stars Sect had asked him to deal with Lu Ye, he thought it would be an easy task. Even if the opponent came from a top-notch power, his strength was there for all to see—a cultivator at the Spirit Stream Level 3, cultivating a common technique, who Luo Ji didn't think much of.

But after actually clashing with him, he realized that this Level 3 cultivator was... somewhat different from the Level 3 cultivators he had encountered in the past.

Chapter 83 - Attack and Defense

With Luo Ji's current strength, killing those ordinary Level 3 cultivators took at most two or three Dao techniques, but after the exchange with Lu Ye, he had deployed countless techniques.

What especially surprised him was that this mountain tiger could fight using spirit runes!

Studying spirit runes was several times harder than delving into magic and spells, because constructing spirit runes was a very delicate task. A slight mistake could lead to failure, let alone invoking spirit runes in battle.

Generally, only quite seasoned spirit runes masters had such capability.

But how old was Lu Ye?

Through observation, he confirmed that Lu Ye mastered a Defense Spirit Rune, which could block his Icicle Technique attacks and could be activated at will...

This realization made Luo Ji put away his contempt. The senior brothers were right before he left; one mustn't be careless or underestimate any enemy outside. Others might not have as many spiritual orifices as he did, or methods as plentiful as his, but just that one spirit rune technique was not something ordinary people possessed.

However, Luo Ji didn't shrink back but instead his fighting spirit soared. During these days of experience in the outer circle, he had met many that couldn't arouse his fighting spirit. How could he miss out on a fight with such a worthy opponent?

While his thoughts were turning, suddenly a bright slash of light appeared in front of him, accompanied by a cracking sound, a huge block of ice burst apart, and through the gap, a figure charged like the wind.

The Ice Prison Technique was broken just like that? Luo Ji wore a face of surprise, knowing that it was not ordinary ice, but a Dao technique based on the Ice Spike Technique. Although it did not trap Lu Ye, it should not have been broken so easily.

This made him realize one problem: the Spiritual Artifact longsword in Lu Ye's hands was extraordinary, and he definitely couldn't withstand such a slash!

Spirit force surged and magic and spells rose again, one after another, striking towards Lu Ye.

Lu Ye charged forward boldly, this time not slashing through the spells with his sword or dodging them but forcefully pushing through, blocking all incoming spells with his Defense Spirit Runes.

In the dark tunnel, light constantly burst forth, rapidly closing the distance between them.

Luo Ji's eyelids twitched, cursing Lu Ye as a reckless fool under his breath.

But undeniably, this fool's approach made him a bit panicky.

In the confrontation between a combat cultivator and a magic cultivator, keeping distance was the realm of the magic cultivator, but once it came to close-quarters, magic cultivators generally met a grim fate.

In just three breaths, Lu Ye had closed to within two zhang of Luo Ji, his longsword glowing with a flash, and with his figure nearing, he swung it down in a slash.

Luo Ji hastily retreated, but just then, Yiyi emerged once more from behind him, her form swiftly solidifying as she raised her palm and struck Luo Ji's shoulder.

Luo Ji was scared out of his wits, but he quickly realized that this palm strike was not very harmful, as his protective spirit force easily blocked it.

Suddenly, intense spirit light illuminated from behind him, sharp as spikes, as if stabbing into his back. Yiyi, upon delivering another palm strike, immediately cried out in pain and retreated with a flash.

However, her intervention meant that Luo Ji had no escape!

If it were an attack from another Level 3 cultivator, Luo Ji would still be confident in blocking it with his protective spirit force, but having witnessed Lu Ye's ferocity in breaking the Ice Prison Technique, how could he dare to take it lightly?

"Mist Shield!" he shouted lowly, spirit force swirling, immediately enveloping him in a foggy layer of protective force.

Lu Ye's slash came down, even the Sharpness-enhanced slash couldn't break through the Mist Shield's protection. It felt to him as if he were chopping into rubber — the longsword slashed in but got stuck.

Luo Ji retreated while lifting his hand to point at Lu Ye, gritting his teeth, "Golden Arc!"

Now it was Lu Ye's turn to have no escape. A golden crescent-shaped slash struck right at Lu Ye's chest, but before that, he had already activated a Defense Spirit Rune in front of him.

Lu Ye struck again, chopping fiercely.

"Ice Spike!"

"Wind Saber!"

"Thunder Halberd!"

In the corridor, Luo Ji's angry shouts echoed continuously. With his repeated cries, different element sign magic and spells were constantly stimulated, striking Lu Ye's chest with a thudding sound.

He seemed full of momentum, yet he was forced to step back, all because Lu Ye was pressing forward with each slash, and the Mist Shield on his body began showing signs of collapsing.

"I refuse to believe you can maintain those spirit runes indefinitely!" Luo Ji roared as he clashed with Lu Ye, although he was shocked that Lu Ye could fight using spirit runes, the depletion from activating spirit runes was significant, and as long as Lu Ye's spirit force was exhausted, he could win!

His opponent, like a mute, didn't speak a word, slashing even more fiercely.

A moment later, Luo Ji's eyes twitched involuntarily; he felt that the situation was not good.

While Lu Ye had depletion from activating spirit runes, Luo Ji also had depletion from employing magic and spells. Indeed, his spirit force reserve was greater than Lu Ye's, but he used more spells, and because he had to be wary of Yiyi, he maintained the Mist Shield Technique, which even further increased his depletion.

Continuing to attack like this, it was honestly hard to say who would falter first.

As his thoughts raced, Luo Ji bellowed, "Scorching White!"

When he raised his hand, a Spirit Talisman appeared on his fingertips, into which spirit force was poured...

Lu Ye felt he was about to falter, his engagement with Luo Ji hadn't been long, at most the time it took for half a cup of tea, yet in such a short time, eighty percent of his spirit force was gone...

This was the most intense battle he had encountered so far, and the opponent was just a Level 2 cultivator.

So when Luo Ji cried out "Scorching White," Lu Ye knew there was trickery involved and immediately leaped backward while reaching into his storage sack, pinching a Spirit Talisman between his fingers.

As their eyes met, both were momentarily stunned, and as spirit force surged, two Spirit Talismans simultaneously burst into light.

Water spears appeared abruptly, three water spears moving in a '品' formation towards Lu Ye, while a fire serpent surged and darted towards Luo Ji.

There was a huge explosion, and the corridor shook violently, with small stones falling down.

The collision of water and fire created a vast amount of high-temperature gas instantaneously within the corridor, causing both Lu Ye and Luo Ji, as a forceful impact flung them both flying.

Both cursed silently and got up, covered in dirt and grime.

By the time Lu Ye chased down the corridor with his saber, Luo Ji had already escaped it and turned back to throw a Spirit Talisman at Lu Ye.

Lu Ye ducked his head, and the Spirit Talisman exploded into a sky full of golden light, cratering the ground around it.

Looking again, Luo Ji was far off. Lu Ye hastened his pursuit, and Amber also caught up from behind; Lu Ye leapt onto the tiger's back, and his speed increased sharply.

Seeing this, the fleeing Luo Ji felt his nose twist with rage. Seeing that escape was futile, he stopped running, turned to face Lu Ye, clasping a Spirit Talisman in each hand, and slapped one onto himself, immediately enveloping himself in a solid layer of golden light.

This was a Golden Body Talisman, and its quality was quite good. He then launched the other Spirit Talisman at Lu Ye.

Lu Ye leaped off the tiger's back, chopping at the incoming attack, and cautioned Amber, "Stay back."

The huge impact forced him to the ground, his body sore, and as he was getting up, he saw Luo Ji boldly standing there, provocatively curling his finger at him, "Come!"

Lu Ye, without uttering a word, took a Golden Body Talisman from his storage sack and slapped it onto himself...

Luo Ji couldn't help but sigh. The opponent's financial resources... seemed to rival his own.

Chapter 84 - The Wheel of Karma

In the gorge, both sides, with their spirit force nearly depleted, began to clash with their Spirit Talismans, constantly activating various kinds, with colorful lights soaring and flickering.

The noise of the commotion spread in all directions, attracting the attention of cultivators from nearby two big sects, but after looking over the situation from a distance, no one dared to approach lightly.

The intensity of the fight had reached a point where there was no room for them to intervene, and anyone who carelessly got involved would undoubtedly die.

Cultivators in the Level 5 realm might have been able to intervene in such a battle, but the two big sects could muster only a few at this level, and since the fighting had begun, cultivators of Level 5 from both sides were restraining each other in the center of the Sky-Splitting Gorge, leaving them unable to move; this was also why Lu Ye had not encountered a Level 5 realm cultivator in the past few days.

Now, as the daylight grew strong, Lu Ye gasped for air, the battle having turned out far more intense than he had expected, but the dawn of victory was in sight, for he realized that his opponent seemed to have run out of offensive Spirit Talismans!

This was to be expected. Luo Ji was a magic cultivator who was proficient in a variety of low-level magic and spells. The power of the magic he wielded far surpassed that of ordinary Spirit Talismans, thus he only had less than ten attack Spirit Talismans for backup, with most being defensive in nature.

Throughout the fierce battle with Lu Ye, he had used up almost all of his offensive Spirit Talismans, which left him feeling deeply ashamed.

In his mind, a true magic cultivator should disdain the use of Spirit Talismans, considering it a sign of incompetence!

But now... being incompetent was better than being killed by that brute with a single slash.

Seeing Lu Ye charging at him with a sword, Luo Ji sensed trouble and turned tail to run.

However, the sound of pursuit was getting closer from behind, and turning his head, he saw Lu Ye once again mounted on the back of the big white tiger.

Shameless! Luo Ji cursed inwardly, yelling angrily at the same time, "Stop chasing, or you'll regret it!"

With such a childish threat, Lu Ye paid it no heed, urging the big tiger to chase even more fiercely.

"You're forcing my hand," Luo Ji gritted his teeth, turned around to face Lu Ye, and reached into his storage sack to pull something out.

Lu Ye didn't know what the opponent had taken out, but Luo Ji's posture made him feel uneasy!

As he had this thought, Luo Ji had already thrown the object in his hand, and Lu Ye took a closer look to find that it was just a square seal, about the size of a palm, lustrous and white, though he didn't know what material it was made of.

But the next moment, he felt a chill run down his spine.

For that small seal suddenly grew larger, quickly becoming the size of a tabletop before viciously pressing towards Amber.

Amber herself was agile, forcefully changing direction, carrying Lu Ye to dodge to the side.

With a boom, the spot where the big seal landed became a two-feet-deep pit...

The ground shook!

Seeing this, Lu Ye's eyelids twitched; this thing was definitely an extremely powerful Spiritual Artifact. If they had been stamped just now, he and Amber might have been turned into mush.

Amber tried to make a charge at Luo Ji with Lu Ye on her back, but the big seal, though seemingly clumsy, was actually extremely agile, stamping down from the sky time and again, with the big tiger dodging in a sorry state, barely managing to avoid it several times.

"Escape!" Lu Ye shouted lowly from Amber's back.

The big tiger also knew the situation was grim and turned around to flee into the distance with Lu Ye.

"Where do you think you're running?" Luo Ji, seizing the advantage, showed a crazed smile, "Weren't you chasing me so eagerly just now? Come, let's have a fight to the death, brute!"

The tables had turned, not long ago it was Lu Ye who was chasing down Luo Ji. Now, Luo Ji was the one in pursuit, a testament to the whims of fate, sparing no one.

Boom, boom, boom...

Every time the big seal struck the ground, it shook the earth and sent rocks flying. It must have been Luo Ji's Spiritual Artifact kept for saving his own life. He hadn't used it before because he was confident in his power and his arrogance played a part. However, cornered by Lu Ye, he had completely unleashed the shackles binding his spirit and body.

If he had used the Spirit Talisman, why would he not use the Spiritual Artifact?

The big seal struck faster and faster, the massive impacts making Amber's fleeing form more and more disheveled. In the end, Amber stumbled and fell, and as the big seal came down, darkness loomed over her.

Amber tried to get up in a rush, but it was too late. At the brink of life and death, Lu Ye spurred the last of his spirit force, quickly forming a Defense Spirit Rune to block above.

As the big seal came down, the Defense Spirit Rune barely lasted a moment before shattering. But immediately after, a second Defense Rune took shape, then shattered, followed by a third...

Eventually, the big seal was halted, the two forces only in a stalemate for an instant before the light on the big seal began to dim and blur, swiftly shrinking back to its original size, withdrawing its luster.

Lu Ye reached out to grab the big seal, but his hand, trembling severely from exhaustion, grasped at nothing. The big seal fell on his head, forming a lump on his forehead, but it had lost its previous might.

With a loud laugh coming from a distance, the big seal zipped back, returning to Luo Ji's hand.

At this moment, the two were about ninety feet apart, with Luo Ji leaning ungracefully against a rock and laughing while looking over at Lu Ye, as if he had already won.

Between them, the canyon path was peppered with huge craters, the aftermath of their fierce battle had settled, but the fight was far from over.

Lu Ye pushed himself to stand and began walking step by step towards Luo Ji. Luo Ji could no longer laugh...

However, Lu Ye hadn't taken many steps before he collapsed to the ground, kicking up a cloud of dust.

Yiyi floated out from the side, helping Lu Ye up. Their eyes met, filled with inquiry. Lu Ye slowly shook his head.

Yiyi wanted to coordinate with Amber, taking advantage of Luo Ji's weakened state to kill him and end the threat once and for all.

But Lu Ye felt that although Luo Ji seemed to be running on fumes, he could still perform one or two magic and spells; and that big seal Spiritual Artifact was also troublesome. He had barely managed to hold off with three Defense Spirit Runes, let alone Yiyi and Amber.

Being hit by that thing would mean certain death, no matter how many lives one had.

Without a doubt, Luo Ji was a sly character. His various actions during their previous encounters were clear evidence of this. How could such a person, knowing full well that Lu Ye had two helpers, truly exhaust himself?

Lu Ye even doubted that even if he could reach Luo Ji, he wouldn't be able to kill him. It was he who was truly spent.

From a distance, Luo Ji watched coldly for a while, and seeing that Yiyi and Amber did not seize the opportunity to kill him, a subtle disappointment flashed in his eyes, which was quickly followed by relief.

Just as Lu Ye had surmised, although he appeared to be out of fighting strength, should Yiyi and Amber dare approach him, he wouldn't mind showing them what the foundation of a disciple from a big sect really meant!

The situation was undoubtedly the best it could be; he didn't need to waste his last bit of strength on insignificant helpers. Looking up, he called out towards Lu Ye, "I'll recover a bit, and in a while, I'm going to kill you!"

Chapter 85 - The Goodwill of Xuanmen

At the Nine Stars Sect base, Cao Ye and Dong Shuye were anxiously waiting together. They had already received news last night that Luo Ji had clashed with the mountain tiger, and although one was a Level 2 and the other a Level 3 cultivator, the commotion of their battle was comparable to that of a usual Level 5...

Subsequently, the news that came back surprised them: Luo Ji, in whom they had placed high expectations, had not been able to quickly dispatch his opponent; instead, he had fought to a standstill.

Truly befitting of a disciple from a top sect, indeed not so easy to kill.

If it were a common grudge, the Nine Stars Sect would not hold onto it so tightly, but they could not leave the Young Master's vengeance unavenged; they could only continue to wait.

Just then, Dong Shuye's expression suddenly changed.

"Has the result come out?" Cao Ye asked nervously.

"No, it's that slut from Wang Yeang's side! She's left the Xuanmen base."

"She wouldn't be thinking of dealing with Luo Ji, would she?" Cao Ye was taken aback.

"I don't know. I can't rule out that possibility. You'll need to make a trip," Dong Shuye responded.

Cao Ye's face twitched; although both were Level 6 cultivators, he really was no match for that slut. Every time he crossed hands with that woman, he couldn't escape a brutal beating.

There was no helping it. He followed the path of a physique cultivator, while that woman was a magic cultivator, naturally having an advantage. Over the past two years, they had faced off many times, and every time he was left battered and bruised.

So, he truly did not want to face that maidservant named Xiaozhu, but since Dong Shuye had spoken, he could only grimace and accept the task.

It was just another beating, after all! With that mentality, Cao Ye strode out with a resolute expression that said though a million others might falter, he would go forth.

Dong Shuye watched him go, unable to help but sigh...

...

Chu Tian was leading a group of junior brothers and sisters in a hidden spot to recuperate when a young woman with a pair of buns on her head suddenly approached from not too far away.

"Sister Xiaozhu," Chu Tian spotted her and promptly greeted.

Xiaozhu stepped forward and asked, "How's the situation?" She wasn't asking about Chu Tian and the others, but about Lu Ye.

Since the Nine Stars Sect had received news of the fierce battle between Lu Ye and Luo Ji, Xuanmen was naturally also informed. So now, everyone knew that these two disciples from powerful backgrounds had met and were engaged in an endless battle.

Chu Tian said with a wistful expression, "They're fighting so hard they're nearly spilling their brains out! Sister Xiaozhu, those two guys are simply not human!"

"Who has the upper hand?" Xiaozhu inquired.

Chu Tian shook his head: "It's neck and neck. For a while, one chases the other to hack, and then it's the other chasing back to hammer."

"Have they been fighting since last night?" Xiaozhu's brows knitted slightly.

"Not in a continuous fight, they occasionally stop for a while to recover, but then start fighting again quickly," Chu Tian evidently gathered quite some information.

"This recovery ability..." Xiaozhu couldn't help but marvel. For cultivators at Level 2 or 3, such a recovery ability was almost monstrous. An ordinary person simply couldn't endure such prolonged combat.

"Where are they?" Xiaozhu asked.

Chu Tian immediately pointed out the direction, and Xiaozhu started walking that way.

Moments later, in the midst of their fierce battle, Lu Ye and Luo Ji simultaneously turned their heads, looking warily in one direction.

This great battle had been intense to the extreme. Just before, both sides had nearly run out of steam, then they each had a brief recovery, not for long, barely more than two hours. Luo Ji took the initiative to attack Lu Ye, sparking the second round of fighting.

However, this time neither of them activated any offensive Spirit Talismans, mainly because they had used up all their attack talismans; what remained were only some defensive ones.

Luo Ji did not activate that big seal Spiritual Artifact again either, as its consumption was too great, and his barely recovered spirit force could not support it for long. If he could not resolve Lu Ye quickly, he could only wait for death.

To be cautious, he even refrained from using other magic and spells, relying solely on the Icicle Technique to fight against Lu Ye, for it was not only his best skill but also the one that consumed the least spirit force.

Their conflict had nothing to do with personal feuds; they had not even met before, but in the Spirit Stream battlefield, it was not personal enmities but rather positions and affiliations that mattered.

Belonging to different camps was reason enough for battle!

Under the gaze of both parties, a delicate figure walked out from the opposite side, causing Luo Ji to instantly tense up because he could see that the person was not from the Nine Stars Sect.

But soon, he relaxed, as right after this woman appeared, another robust figure emerged: it was Cao Ye from the Nine Stars Sect.

The sudden appearance of these two Level 6 cultivators here left him somewhat confused, and he looked at Cao Ye quizzically. Cao Ye shook his head, gesturing for him not to act rashly, and then stood beside him.

Luo Ji immediately understood; Cao Ye was there to restrain the other side. Seizing this opportunity, he quickly sat down cross-legged, took out an elixir pill, and started to refine it.

On the other side, while Lu Ye did not understand exactly what was happening, seeing Luo Ji's actions, he too began to consume elixir pills, and he also took out a large piece of beast meat, stuffing it into his mouth, and threw another large piece to the big tiger beside him.

Xiaozhu walked up with some speechlessness and stopped not far in front of Lu Ye. Amidst his wariness, she introduced herself, "I am Chu Tian's senior sister."

Naturally, Lu Ye wouldn't easily trust her and immediately sent a message to Chu Tian to confirm. After receiving confirmation, he slightly nodded his head, his mouth full as he mumbled, "What is it?"

He took her in from top to bottom, his gaze sweeping over her full chest... he couldn't help but find it odd. Why was this woman dressed like a maid?

"Give me two Spirit Stones," Xiaozhu said.

"What?" Lu Ye suspected he had heard wrong.

"Two Spirit Stones!" Xiaozhu reiterated.

Lu Ye was befuddled by her request; this woman had come over to ask him for two Spirit Stones—what did she mean by that? A robbery? It didn't make sense...

After a moment of contemplation, Lu Ye fished out two Spirit Stones from his storage sack and threw them to her. Xiaozhu caught them and tossed a jade slip back to Lu Ye, "Sold to you!"

Frowning, Lu Ye held the jade slip, and after a brief inspection, he instantly understood what the woman meant.

It was indeed a Cultivation Technique, and furthermore, it was an Earth-class technique!

Two Spirit Stones were naturally not enough to buy an Earth-class technique; this was clearly a gesture of goodwill from the Xuanmen side. No matter what, he had saved the lives of some Xuanmen disciples these past days.

This was an unexpected pleasant surprise; he had previously only intended to buy a Profound Level skill from Chu Tian, but now that he had an Earth-class one, it was even better. It would allow him to open up to the 180th orifice without having to look for another technique after reaching Spirit Stream Level 6.

"Thank you!" Lu Ye said in thanks.

Xiaozhu seemed indifferent and turned around, looking at Cao Ye who was not far away, with a smile on her face.

Cao Ye's scalp tingled, and some rather unpleasant memories surfaced in his mind, but with Luo Ji right by his side, he couldn't show any weakness. He stepped forward and said, "Shall we change locations?"

The smile on Xiaozhu's face grew wider, "That's exactly what I was thinking!"

The next moment, Cao Ye turned and dashed away, his speed incredible, and Xiaozhu followed suit.

Soon, the two of them disappeared from sight. Lu Ye gulped down the food in his mouth, shook his long knife, and charged towards Luo Ji.

At the same time, across the Sky-Splitting Gorge, battles far more intense than before erupted, with cultivators from the two big sects fighting to the death as the breath of life was extinguished one after another.

Chapter 86 - Win

Three days later, on the disordered battlefield, Lu Ye and Luo Ji were about thirty yards apart, each recovering.

During these three days, they had fought over a dozen battles, clashing several times each day, yet until now, they had been unable to determine a victor.

Three days of fierce combat had brought Lu Ye to the brink of both physical and mental exhaustion; he had barely slept over these days. He couldn't understand how that guy across from him, Luo Ji, could recover so quickly!

In the current battle of swords, both sides had laid all their cards on the table. In a head-to-head clash, neither could gain the upper hand over the other. Now it was all a matter of endurance, making the speed of recovery particularly important.

In the same span of time, whichever side could restore more spirit force would gradually accumulate an advantage.

With the assistance of the Bestial Gluttony Feast, Lu Ye could refine elixir pills twice as fast as normal, and during rest periods, he would construct Spirit Energy Gathering Spirit Runes at his spiritual orifice, absorbing the nature's spiritual energy from his surroundings.

With these two strategies, Lu Ye's recovery speed had reached an infuriating level; even a Level 6 cultivator might not recover as quickly as he did.

Harboring the same doubts, Luo Ji cursed inwardly – how could this brute's recovery speed be so fast?

Although Luo Ji was at the Spirit Stream Level 2, he had opened up fifty-five orifices—almost twice as many as Lu Ye—and the elixir pills he was taking were not ordinary Spirit-Nurturing Pills but special small recovery pills made by Endless Island.

These elixir pills didn't differ much from Spirit-Nurturing Pills when used for cultivation, but for recovery, their effects were about thirty percent more effective.

While he was recovering, he also used Spirit Stones, clutching one in each hand, desperately absorbing the spirit force within them.

Despite these three-pronged efforts, he somehow couldn't gain any advantage.

He truly couldn't comprehend what was going on.

Compared to Lu Ye, he had even less rest over the three days, hardly ever closing his eyes because he would be harassed by Amber and Yiyi.

In direct combat, Amber and Yiyi could not offer much help, but for mere harassment, it was no problem at all.

After roughly four hours of recovery, Lu Ye opened his eyes. As was the custom, it was time to begin another round of battle.

As expected, Luo Ji also opened his eyes, stood up, and started walking towards Lu Ye, step by step.

He wasn't approaching to fight Lu Ye in close quarters, but simply because they were too far apart, and he needed to close the distance to a range suitable for casting his spells.

Lu Ye mounted Amber and rushed toward Luo Ji, his long knife sloped towards the ground, ready to strike.

Luo Ji came to a halt, the spirit light in his hands flickering as he prepared his magic and spells...

Just at that moment, he suddenly furrowed his brow. After a brief sense, he raised his hand and said, "Wait a moment!"

Lu Ye frowned but still stopped Amber.

Luo Ji dissipated the spirit light in his hands and said breathlessly, "No more fighting, you win!"

Lu Ye watched him intently, uncertain about what trick this guy was up to.

Seemingly to put Lu Ye at ease, Luo Ji took the initiative to explain, "The war announcement from Xuanmen against the Nine Stars Sect has ended. The Nine Stars Sect was no match and has already retreated to their station, so I have to leave."

He had been brought in by the Nine Stars Sect specifically to deal with Lu Ye; now that the Nine Stars Sect had met with defeat, his continued presence here had lost its reason.

Lu Ye naturally wouldn't easily believe his bullshit. After several days of clashes, he was increasingly sure that Luo Ji was a sneaky bastard, so he immediately used the battlefield marking to communicate with Chu Tian, inquiring about the situation.

Chu Tian responded quickly, his tone brimming with joy, confirming Luo Ji's words, that was, in this battle, Xuanmen had claimed the final victory.

This wasn't surprising. Although there was a one-grade difference between the two big sects, at the Spirit Stream Realm level, Xuanmen was a bit stronger. The Nine Stars Sect was originally not a match. Previously, Lu Ye had also killed many cultivators from the Nine Stars Sect, further expanding Xuanmen's advantage.

Over these past few days, Xuanmen gained advantages in small-scale battles, eventually securing a decisive victory that forced the cultivators of the Nine Stars Sect to retreat back to their base.

Thus, the battle between the two big sects came to an end.

"How did it go?"

After Lu Ye finished contacting, Luo Ji finally spoke up and asked.

Lu Ye nodded slightly, and with a slight exertion of his legs, Amber sprang forward, quickly pressing towards Luo Ji.

"You..." Luo Ji reacted with shock, not understanding what Lu Ye was thinking. With the battle between the two big sects already over, continuing to fight here made no sense. He didn't know why Lu Ye still charged towards him.

But at this moment, there was no time to dwell on these questions. Seeing Big Tiger carrying Lu Ye closing in swiftly, Luo Ji had no choice but to activate the Ice Spike Technique in response.

Lu Ye tilted his head to dodge the incoming ice spikes, leapt from Tiger's back, and his sword came down with a rare and fierce smile, "You decide when to start a fight, but I decide when it ends!"

Luo Ji had suddenly come asking for a fierce fight that lasted three days, leaving Lu Ye very annoyed and also significantly drained. A few days ago, he had accumulated quite a few elixir pills, but after these few days, he was left with only about thirty.

During these three days, he didn't even have the chance to cultivate, wasting a lot of time. This loss was not something Luo Ji could simply compensate for by saying "you win."

How could he let Luo Ji leave without venting this pent-up anger?

Three days of clashes had made them familiar with each other's tactics. Normally, Luo Ji wouldn't have allowed Lu Ye to get close so easily, but he hadn't expected Lu Ye to be so persistent. It was already too late to retreat by the time he noticed.

When the long sword came down, Luo Ji had already slapped a Golden Body Talisman on himself. The long sword, enhanced with Sharpness Spirit Runes, struck that layer of golden light but couldn't break through it completely.

Instead, a big seal suddenly appeared, transforming into the size of a table top, and struck down towards Lu Ye.

Lu Ye withdrew swiftly, and where he had stood, a large pit immediately appeared. The ground trembled, and by the time he steadied himself, Luo Ji had already created a ten-zhang distance between them, even managing to repel the joint sneak attack of Amber and Yiyi...

Luo Ji didn't dare to invoke the power of the big seal a second time, as the consumption was too great.

Seizing the opportunity, Lu Ye stepped forward and charged at Luo Ji again, his figure flickering to dodge the ice spikes, with occasional flashes of Defense Spirit Runes' light on his body.

He could win!

Just a few more fights, and he could kill Luo Ji.

Although Luo Ji's recovery rate was about the same as his, even slightly superior, Luo Ji had consumed too many elixir pills these past few days...

If a cultivator ingested a large number of elixir pills in a short period, the only consequence was that their spirit force would become murky and impure. Especially for a magic cultivator like Luo Ji, having impure spirit force was fatal, as the power of the magic and spells he cast would decrease, and the time to execute them would increase...

Lu Ye had already noticed this, and that was why he insisted on continuing to fight!

He didn't need to kill Luo Ji this time—he just needed to force him to continuously deplete his spirit force, replenishing it with elixir pills. Luo Ji would become weaker and weaker, and eventually, there would be a time when he could cut down this man.

Chapter 87 - Trading Wealth for Life

However, the battle did not continue, and halfway through, Luo Ji bellowed, "Buy my life with wealth!"

He had clearly realized his own predicament. Continuing the fight was no solution. Although Lu Ye couldn't kill him in a short time, if he kept dragging it out, his situation would only worsen, and eventually, he would be no match for Lu Ye.

This forceful shout made Lu Ye pause. Pointing his long saber forward, he said, "I want that big seal!" That big seal was definitely a fine Spiritual Artifact, probably even more valuable than the tiny bell he had obtained from the Young Sect Master of the Nine Stars Sect.

Luo Ji chuckled, magic and spells brewing in his hands, "Let's settle this with a fight to the death, right now! Immediately!"

"What can you offer in return?" Lu Ye asked gravely. He didn't necessarily want to kill Luo Ji, but he felt that the three-day long battle had cost him too much. If Luo Ji could compensate for these losses, he would cease fighting.

Of course, the main reason was that if a real fight to the death ensued, even if he managed to kill Luo Ji, he would have to pay a huge price. Luo Ji wouldn't foolishly keep fighting under these circumstances, and he would certainly fight desperately before the situation became irretrievable!

Luo Ji took the big seal out of his storage sack and then held up the bag, "It's all yours."

Such sincerity? Lu Ye was somewhat surprised, but considering Luo Ji's expenditure over these days, there probably wasn't much of value left in that storage sack, at most some Spirit Stones and elixir pills.

Luo Ji being so straightforward, Lu Ye didn't feel right to press further. Continuing would only lead to mutual destruction, so after a brief moment of contemplation, he nodded, "Alright!"

Luo Ji threw the storage sack forward, not even requiring Lu Ye to swear an oath by Heaven's Augury, because in his view, although they came from opposing factions, they were both disciples of top forces and had some credibility.

"I've always wondered, what's your name?"

"Yiye!"

Luo Ji nodded, deeply looking at Lu Ye, as if he wanted to imprint Lu Ye's figure deep in his psyche, then, dragging his weary body, he turned and walked towards the valley's exit.

Lu Ye did not take the opportunity to launch a surprise attack. The opponent appeared completely defenseless, but the big seal in his hand was emitting a faint exhausting light. At this moment, forcing a confrontation would compel Luo Ji to fight him to the death.

Walking a distance, Luo Ji looked up at the sky, his face full of sorrow...

He had suffered a great loss. The contents of the lost storage sack weren't important; as a disciple of Endless Island, he didn't care about those. The key issue was that swallowing too many elixir pills these past days had muddled his spirit force, and without a month of recovery, he wouldn't be able to recuperate.

In other words, he wouldn't be able to cultivate for a month. For a low-level cultivator like him, especially one of his background, this was undoubtedly a significant impact.

But a loss was a loss. He wouldn't blame heaven or others. They were still early in their cultivation journey, and there was always a possibility of encountering each other in the future. Next time, he would regain his ground!

Only when Luo Ji's figure vanished from sight did Lu Ye finally let out a sigh of relief and called out to Amber. He mounted his back and, led by Amber, he found a tunnel to settle in.

It was finally over!

This battle had left him mentally and physically exhausted. Though Lu Ye's cultivation journey was short, he had faced quite a few battles, yet he had never encountered such an evenly matched and tough opponent.

At the end, Luo Ji readily conceded defeat when he suggested stopping the battle, but in reality, it was Lu Ye who had lost.

Because he had Amber and Yiyi as helpers, while Luo Ji had always been fighting alone.

In direct confrontations, because he feared the power of the big seal, neither Amber nor Yiyi could play a significant role, but the occasional sneak attack was still possible. Furthermore, with Amber and Yiyi as distractions, Luo Ji hadn't had any sleep over these three days.

Ironically, it was Lu Ye who secretly slept a few times.

It could be said that if Lu Ye were also alone, he would definitely not have had any advantage in this battle.

The cultivators from the big sects were indeed extraordinary, and this confrontation with Luo Ji taught him a lesson—never judge a cultivator's strength by the level of their cultivation alone.

He didn't even have the heart to check Luo Ji's storage sack, Lu Ye just ate some dried meat and fell asleep.

Amber and Yiyi exchanged glances and went to either end of the corridor. Although the battle between the Nine Stars Sect and Xuanmen was over and Luo Ji had retreated, making danger unlikely, it was still necessary to remain alert.

Lu Ye was awakened by the noise in the battlefield marking. He opened his eyes, his brow furrowed in confusion for a moment, feeling unreasonably irritable, the kind that made everything annoying...

After feeling dizzy for a while, he checked the battlefield marking. As expected, it was a message from Chu Tian.

This guy had sent over a dozen messages, asking if he was there...

"Not here!" Lu Ye replied.

At the Xuanmen base, Chu Tian looked baffled, feeling that Lu Ye seemed somewhat upset. After hesitating for a moment, he replied, "Brother Yiye must be joking."

He had previously called him Junior Brother Yiye, but now he changed his address, which undoubtedly was because some news had reached Xuanmen. Knowing for certain that Lu Ye was a disciple from a top sect and had defeated someone like Luo Ji was already a testament to Lu Ye's potential for the future.

"What's it about!" Lu Ye fumbled around figuring out how to block this guy. A moment later, he understood that he just had to erase the mark belonging to Chu Tian in the seal.

Considering this guy was his first and only friend... he decided to give him a break for now.

"Well, it's like this..." Chu Tian explained, and Lu Ye then learned that Xuanmen had won the battle previously, so they were preparing to hold a celebration banquet to reward those disciples who had performed well. That's why Chu Tian wanted to invite Lu Ye to attend.

After all, in the earlier stage of the battle, Lu Ye had been a great help to Xuanmen.

"No time!" Lu Ye immediately declined. Because of the previous admonishments from the sect master, he didn't want to get too involved with too many people, let alone attend a celebration banquet at Xuanmen.

Moreover, Chu Tian's invitation was probably just out of courtesy...

"Uh..." Back at the Xuanmen base, Chu Tian checked the blunt response from Lu Ye, realizing this person truly was a man of character. He replied, "Since Brother Yiye is busy, I won't disturb you further. Initially, many junior brothers and sisters wanted to thank you in person. Whenever you're leaving, just let me know, and I'll see you off!"

Lu Ye didn't bother with Chu Tian's message anymore and took out Luo Ji's storage sack to check.

As expected, the restriction lock on Luo Ji's storage sack had been opened. After inspecting it, Lu Ye was somewhat surprised.

He had thought that there wouldn't be much good stuff in Luo Ji's storage sack, but it turned out the guy was richer than he expected.

There weren't many valuable items, the rest were elixir pills, Spirit Stones, and a few defensive Spirit Talismans, but these were exactly what Lu Ye needed most.

There were only about thirty or so Spirit Stones, which low-level cultivators didn't consume much of; Luo Ji had them just in case. There were quite a few elixir pills, about ten bottles of Spirit-Nurturing Pills and another three bottles of a different type of elixir pill, totaling nearly a hundred pills altogether.

These items, although not enough to make up for his losses over the past three days, were still better than nothing.

Chapter 88 - Red Lotus Soaring to Sky Technique

Name: Lu Ye

Identity: Disciple of the Righteous Blood Sect.

Cultivation: Opened 29 orifices.

Location: Spirit Stream battlefield.

Merit: 142.

Lu Ye checked the information on the battlefield marking, and if he remembered correctly, his merit was 34 points before coming to the Sky-Splitting Gorge, but now it had increased to 142, an increase of 108 points.

This was all due to Lu Ye slaying the cultivators of the Nine Stars Sect. If it hadn't been for Luo Ji tying him up in the last few days, he could have earned even more.

He didn't know what exact use merit had yet. Although he could ask Chu Tian, doing so could easily expose certain things, so Lu Ye didn't plan on asking anyone. Regardless of its use, he would figure it out once he returned to the Righteous Blood Sect's encampment.

In terms of assets, ten pieces of origin magnetic ore, one ten-part map, one hundred thirty-five Spirit-Nurturing Pills, two hundred fifty-one Spirit Stones, thirty-one healing pills, twenty-two small recovery pills, nine Spirit Talismans, one tiny bell spiritual artifact, and four unopened storage sacks.

Those small recovery pills were found in Luo Ji's storage sack, with the name written on the bottle. Lu Ye had seen Luo Ji taking them while resting from a distance, so he was certain these elixir pills were beneficial for cultivators. The Spirit Talismans were all defensive and supportive in nature.

The four storage sacks belonged to the group of the Young Master of the Nine Stars Sect, but Lu Ye guessed that aside from the Young Master's storage sack, which might have some value, the rest probably weren't worth much.

The specifics would have to wait until he found someone to open the storage sacks.

The resources in his hands seemed plentiful but were actually not very affluent. Lu Ye was currently at Spirit Stream Level 3, and about fifteen elixir pills were needed to open one orifice. Now, with the aid of the Bestial Gluttony Feast and the Spirit Energy Gathering Spirit Runes, the consumption would be a bit less, and the efficiency somewhat higher.

What he needed to do now was to recover quickly. After waking up from a rest, his strength and spirit had quite recovered, but the depleted spirit force had not.

Curious about the effects of the small recovery pill, Lu Ye took out one and swallowed it, converting his Cultivation Technique to the Bestial Gluttony Feast while refining the pill energy and constructing the Spirit Energy Gathering Spirit Runes in his spiritual orifice to accelerate the recovery rate.

Once all his orifices were augmented with the small funnel-shaped spirit runes, there was a clear, intangible force of attraction emanating from his chest and abdomen, gathering the nature's spiritual energy around him. This was the effect of the twenty-nine Spirit Energy Gathering Spirit Runes stacked together.

He had also verified the effectiveness of the small recovery pills. They were much more efficient in restoration than the Spirit-Nurturing Pills. No wonder Luo Ji took these elixir pills every time he rested. Lu Ye cursed inwardly; the disciples born in big sects indeed had rich foundations, consuming elixir pills different from others.

In just over a day, after consuming six small recovery pills, Lu Ye's spirit force was refilled.

Only then did he take out the jade slip that the double-bun-haired woman from Xuanmen had given him to study.

Red Lotus Soaring to Sky Technique—it was the name of this Earth-class technique. By practicing this technique, one could open up to 180 orifices. To Lu Ye's surprise, this technique also came with several magic and spells, although he couldn't practice them at the moment since they required a certain foundation in spirit force.

This item should not have been cheap, yet Xuanmen had only charged him two Spirit Stones for it, which turned out to be quite a bargain for him.

Lu Ye currently had 29 orifices open and was at Spirit Stream Level 3 cultivation. To advance to Level 4, he would need to open at least 45 orifices, which meant he had to open at least sixteen more.

But it wasn't that simple because he had to take into account the parts that didn't overlap between his current and the new Cultivation Technique, so the number of orifices Lu Ye needed to open was actually more than sixteen.

After comparing the orifices he had opened with those recorded in the Red Lotus Soaring to Sky Technique, Lu Ye concluded that he needed to open eighteen more orifices to advance to Spirit Stream Level 4.

Only then could he fully transition from the Golden Cicada Carefree Method to the Red Lotus Soaring to Sky Technique.

To open eighteen orifices, by a conservative estimate, he would need about two hundred fifty elixir pills. Judging by the number of elixir pills he had, it was far from enough, but fortunately, he still had Spirit Stones.

After some thought, Lu Ye sent a message.

As for whom to find... the only person he could turn to now was one.

"Two hundred and fifty-one Spirit Stones for some of your Spirit-Nurturing Pills and food!"

He had no intention of delaying any further here. The journey to the Righteous Blood Sect's base was long and time-consuming; setting off earlier would also mean arriving earlier.

The sect master there must be quite worried about his safety.

When he left Qingyun Mountain, he had only unlocked his 21st orifice, but now he had unlocked 29. Amber and Yiyi had both grown as well; he had been delayed nearly ten days at the Sky-Splitting Gorge, and it was time to continue on his way.

At Level 3 of Spirit Stream, he already had enough power to protect himself in the outer circle of the battlefield.

As for cultivation, he could cultivate while on the move without any hindrance, especially since he had now mastered the correct way of using Spirit Energy Gathering Spirit Runes. Even without consuming elixir pills, his spirit force was steadily increasing.

However, before he departed, he needed to transform the useless items in his possession into useful ones.

He had little use for Spirit Stones; trading them for elixir pills was best. As for food... both he and Amber had astonishing appetites, so naturally, he had to store plenty.

Chu Tian responded quickly: "No problem, Brother Yiye, are you leaving?"

He obviously realized something.

"Mhm." Lu Ye replied with a message.

"Be ready by morning; I'll come to find you."

After ending the transmission with Chu Tian, Lu Ye continued to delve into the Red Lotus Soaring to Sky Technique, identifying the next spiritual orifice he needed to open.

With repeated assaults by his spirit force, the barrier of the 30th orifice was breached.

Lu Ye did not continue his cultivation but instead began to practice with his blade. These past few days he had been fighting relentlessly with Luo Ji, leaving him no time for this task.

However, today after he started practicing with the blade, Lu Ye felt distinctly different; his swings and strikes were more natural and smooth...

He faintly felt that this was a benefit from the life-and-death battles of the past few days.

Amber and Yiyi had both returned; now that the two nearby sects had ceased their declarations of war, the interior of the Sky-Splitting Gorge was peaceful, making a surprise attack unlikely.

Amber lay on the ground, having finished its jerky, waiting for Lu Ye to give it food.

When he initially set out with Amber, it only needed to consume two Spirit-Nurturing Pills a day, but as the big tiger's strength increased, so did its consumption—now it needed about four pills a day.

As for Yiyi, there was no consumption at all—she could be considered a minion spirit that accompanied big tiger. When the tiger became stronger, so did she!

Four hours later, Lu Ye sheathed his sword, sat by the campfire to eat some roasted meat, and casually threw two Spirit-Nurturing Pills to Amber. Suddenly, he remembered something and spoke up: "Yiyi, can Amber perform magic and spells?"

When he was confronting Luo Ji in that tunnel, Yiyi had gone up to cause a distraction but was forced back by a Golden Arc Slash from Luo Ji. At that time, Yiyi screamed, and Amber, thinking she was hurt, roared toward Luo Ji's direction.

That roar not only caused some interference for Luo Ji, but even Lu Ye felt as if someone was hammering his head with a tiny hammer...

This was clearly not normal.

Chapter 89 - Xuanmen Sets Out

Lu Ye still remembered the first time he ran into Amber, when he met those amber-colored pupils, his mind went blank for a moment.

Afterward, Amber didn't show many abnormalities, not until this time.

Yiyi thought for a moment and then said, "I don't think so." She turned her head and asked, "Amber, do you know any magic and spells?"

Amber responded with a whine.

Yiyi then said, "It says it doesn't."

The corners of Lu Ye's mouth twitched. To this day, he had not figured out how Yiyi was able to communicate with Amber, able to judge what it wanted to convey just by its voice, which was quite magical.

It could only be said that this was a unique skill that Yiyi had as a minion spirit.

Lu Ye did not continue to ask. He was just bringing it up casually.

After eating his fill, Lu Ye began cultivating, with Amber sprawling beside him, sleeping soundly.

The night passed without any conversation.

At the Xuanmen base, Chu Tian, following Lu Ye's requests, was collecting elixir pills and food from his fellow disciples, hence the news of Yiyi's imminent departure spread quickly.

The day had not yet fully dawned when Chu Tian began to contact Lu Ye, confirmed his location, then brought two disciples with him to meet with Lu Ye. After exchanging pleasantries, Lu Ye received a large amount of food and more than two hundred Spirit-Nurturing Pills.

By now, it was broad daylight. Lu Ye mounted the tiger's back, and Chu Tian cupped his fist, saying, "We will meet again, stay in touch when you have the time."

Lu Ye nodded slightly, and Amber darted out, heading deeper into the Sky-Splitting Gorge.

Watching Lu Ye's departing figure, Chu Tian suddenly felt a bit envious. Such a carefree journey of cultivation must be truly liberating. However, only someone from a big sect with such confidence and resources could afford this lifestyle. If he tried to do the same, he probably wouldn't survive a few months.

Leading the two disciples back to the Xuanmen base, Chu Tian was promptly summoned by Wang Yeang and hurried over.

Only when he got there did he realize something was amiss—all the hands at the base had been summoned, including not just disciples of his own sect but also the independent cultivators affiliated with it. Hundreds of people gathered in an open square. Wang Yeang stood there, straight as a pin, his hand on the hilt of his sword, seemingly waiting for something.

The atmosphere was somewhat stern...

Chu Tian stepped forward, cupped his fist, and greeted, "Senior Brother!"

"Has that mountain tiger left?" Wang Yeang asked.

"He has," Chu Tian replied.

Wang Yeang nodded slightly, seemingly pleased, "Good that he's gone. Fall in." He appeared to be eager for Lu Ye to leave as soon as possible.

"Yes!" Chu Tian moved into his own formation, confused by the turn of events, yet Wang Yeang's sudden gathering of everyone clearly indicated that something big was afoot.

Chu Tian felt a vague premonition—if it was as he suspected, a great battle awaited them today.

As time slowly passed, after the duration of one incense stick's time, only then did Wang Yeang, who had been standing there all along, suddenly raise his eyebrows and proclaim loudly, "Xuanmen and Nine Stars Sect have been neighbors in the Sky-Splitting Gorge for thirty years. In those thirty years, incessant fights between disciples have led to many casualties and insurmountable blood feuds.

Although Xuanmen was victorious in the recent battle at Sky-Splitting Gorge, as long as the Nine Stars Sect base remains, the disciples of Xuanmen will never know peace! Therefore, I intend to conquer the Nine Stars Sect base. I ask my fellow brothers and sisters to lend me their strength!"

Upon these words, the crowd was abuzz.

It had only been a day since the declaration of war ended, and Wang Yeang was already planning to attack the Nine Stars Sect base, which shocked all the disciples of Xuanmen. They should be enjoying the fruits of their victory now, not complicating matters further.

To attack and seize a base was no simple matter, for a base was protected by a big array, and without breaking the array, it was impossible to conquer it.

But when everyone thought about Wang Yeang's actions over the years, they knew he must have made arrangements long ago.

Chu Tian was the first to raise his arm and shout, "Willing to follow Brother's lead, to elevate the might of our Xuanmen!"

The crowd shouted in unison, "Willing to follow Brother's lead, to elevate the might of our Xuanmen!"

At the front of the crowd, Wang Yeang's lips curled into a smile, "Very good!"

He turned to Chu Tian, "Send a message to that mountain tiger, tell him that one incense stick's time ago, Dong Shuye had already personally set out to kill him."

Chu Tian was startled upon hearing this, shocked by Dong Shuye's audacity, but even more so by Wang Yeang's well-informed sources.

Dong Shuye was the cultivator with the highest cultivation at the Nine Stars Sect base, and with him there, the base was as solid as a rock. But if he were to leave, the defenses of the Nine Stars Sect base would surely be compromised.

It looked like the Young Sect Master of the Nine Stars Sect being killed had indeed caused them to lose face. It was acceptable to lose the war with Xuanmen, but that mountain tiger must die. Otherwise, Dong Shuye wouldn't have risked leaving the base to personally pursue and kill him.

He wouldn't leave with great fanfare, as that would give Xuanmen an opportunity; even so, Wang Yeang's side had received exact information. Clearly, there were arrangements outside the Nine Stars Sect base long ago; as soon as Dong Shuye left, Wang Yeang would immediately get the news.

He then remembered that several fellow disciples hadn't shown up at last night's victory banquet...

But how did Dong Shuye find out that the mountain tiger had already left?

Chu Tian was no fool and in an instant, he figured out the sequence of events.

The news had leaked from Xuanmen's own ranks.

No wonder last night, when he reported to Senior Brother Wang about the mountain tiger's trading demands, he was told to collect from fellow disciples—an arrangement that would have been simpler to coordinate internally within the sect.

As he collected elixir pills and food, many people asked the reason for it, and he did not conceal it, sharing that Lu Ye was preparing to leave.

Sect Disciples couldn't possibly be the ones to send messages to the Nine Stars Sect, so the leak must have come from those independent cultivators who had come seeking refuge!

Just as he was pondering this, Wang Yeang suddenly looked toward a cultivator in the crowd and spoke up, "Shi Jun, do you have anything to say?"

The independent cultivator named Shi Jun, sweating profusely from his forehead, nervously responded, "No... nothing..."

Wang Yeang just looked at him.

Shi Jun grew more tense and blurted out, "Senior Brother Wang, have mercy!"

"It appears you truly have nothing you wish to say."

With a flick of his thumb, the longsword at his waist sang out. The sword turned into a streak of sword light that in an instant, wrapped around Shi Jun's neck, causing his body to instantly stiffen.

As the sword light returned to its sheath, Shi Jun's head fell to the ground, blood spurting from his neck like a fountain, his headless body collapsing to the earth.

This sudden turn of events made all the independent cultivators break out in a cold sweat, looking at Wang Yeang with uncertainty and fear.

Wang Yeang's expression was icy, "Shi Jun here outwardly claimed allegiance to our Xuanmen, but in reality, he was a spy for the Nine Stars Sect. Today, I executed him as a warning to others, I hope everyone present will take heed."

As these words were spoken, no one dared to believe it, yet recalling Shi Jun's last plea for mercy, they realized this must be the truth; his plea was the clear sign of a guilty conscience.

"Let's move out, to annihilate the Nine Stars!" Wang Yeang commanded with a wave of his hand.

Moments later, hundreds of Xuanmen cultivators filed out from the base, leaving the entire base eerily deserted.

Chapter 90 Settle Up

On Amber's back, Lu Ye was relaxed, undoubtedly more composed than when he had first set out from Qingyun Mountain.

Already accustomed to the bumpy journey, Amber's running couldn't even affect his cultivation—even though, compared to the normal state, the efficiency was a bit slower; fortunately, the Gathering Spirit Spirit Runes compensated for this.

All thirty spiritual orifices were enhanced by the Gathering Spirit Spirit Runes, continually gathering the natural spiritual energy around. With the pill energy in his belly resolving and the influx of spiritual energy, the spirit force in the newly opened thirtieth orifice kept increasing.

He didn't use the Bestial Gluttony Feast mainly because switching techniques required some time. It wasn't like before when he was battling Luo Ji and resting, where they could see each other, and any abnormality from Luo Ji would be immediately noticeable, allowing for a timely switch of techniques.

Traveling didn't allow for that; there could always be unexpected events—perhaps a crisis might strike during those short few moments it took to switch techniques.

Constantly maintaining the operation of the Golden Cicada Carefree Method also gave him better adaptability. The only sacrifice was the speed of cultivation, which wasn't a big deal.

He silently calculated the elixir pills in his possession and found he had more than enough to advance to the Spirit Stream Level 4 realm, and then some—of course, that was assuming no extra expenditure. If another battle broke out, the consumption of elixir pills would increase; furthermore, Amber consumed elixir pills daily.

About one incense stick's time ago, he had left Sky-Splitting Gorge. Amber's speed was quite fast. Matching the ten-part map and the guide of the battlefield marking, Lu Ye directed Amber towards a direction and let it gallop freely.

While relaxing, Lu Ye suddenly furrowed his brows and checked the battlefield marking.

Chu Tian had, for some unknown reason, reached out to contact him again...

However, when Lu Ye had fully perused the message from Chu Tian, his face immediately darkened, and he slapped the tiger's back and shouted lowly, "Amber, run! Someone is coming to hunt us down!"

On hearing this, Amber's speed surged, nearly throwing Lu Ye off its back.

Yiyi's little head popped up from the tiger's back and said gravely, "The message from that Chu Tian of Xuanmen? Who is coming, and what is their cultivation?"

"A guy named Dong Shuye at the Spirit Stream Level 7 realm!" Lu Ye replied.

Several days before he had killed a disciple of the Nine Stars Sect in Sky-Splitting Gorge, he hadn't even encountered anyone at Spirit Stream Level 5. He had thought that being on the outer circle of the battlefield, he wouldn't see higher-level cultivators—until he met that woman with twin buns and another, a beefy guy from the Nine Stars Sect.

He wasn't quite sure of their exact cultivation levels, but they were definitely higher than Level 5.

It was then he realized that the outer circle of the battlefield wasn't devoid of cultivators above Level 5; the reason he hadn't encountered any was because the two sects were restraining each other...

And a cultivation of Spirit Stream Level 7 was undoubtedly a stabilizing force for a sect's base. Such individuals specifically coming to hunt him down showed how deep the Nine Stars Sect's hatred for him was.

Lu Ye felt somber. Though he had exchanged blows with Luo Ji and felt confident that he could face anyone at the Spirit Stream Level 5, facing an opponent at Spirit Stream Level 7 was more than he could withstand.

Yiyi, knowing the dire situation, turned her head and urged Amber to run faster. Amber exerted all its strength, tearing through the wind, with a continuous whistling noise by their sides and scenery rapidly receding in the background.

Another message came through the battlefield marking, so Lu Ye quickly checked it.

"Brother Yiye, hold on as long as you can. Dong Shuye won't linger where you are for too long!"

"What do you mean?" Lu Ye hurriedly responded.

In the Xuanmen camp, Chu Tian, who was following Wang Yeang on a surprise raid towards the Nine Stars Sect base, felt conflicted and unsure how to explain the situation.

This matter involved using Lu Ye. The news of Lu Ye leaving Sky-Splitting Gorge was leaked by their side, which then led to Dong Shuye's pursuit. But such a matter was indeed not easy to explain outright, as divulging it would only antagonize the mountain tiger.

Given the opponent's origins from a top-tier, powerful faction, as long as he survived, he was bound to make a significant impact in the future. Antagonizing such a person now would not be wise.

"Speak freely," Wang Yeang's voice suddenly entered his ears at that moment, "Once actions are taken, there's no fear of others knowing. If he is wise, he naturally knows what to do."

With Wang Yeang's directive, Chu Tian felt somewhat reassured and transmitted the message, "At this moment, my fellow brothers from Xuanmen are rushing toward the Nine Stars Sect base. As soon as Dong Shuye receives the message, he will certainly rush back. So, Brother Yiye, you must hold on!"

Looking at the message from Chu Tian, Lu Ye couldn't help feeling puzzled.

Dong Shuye, the stabilizing force of the Nine Stars Sect base, had just come out to pursue him, and Xuanmen was all out attacking the Nine Stars Sect base — the timing seemed too coincidental.

It was as if Xuanmen had been waiting for this opportunity, and last night, they had even invited him to a celebration banquet...

Lu Ye didn't know if Xuanmen had a chance to occupy the Nine Stars Sect base, but since they had already made their move, they must have some assurance.

Back in the Sky-Splitting Gorge, Dong Shuye didn't make a move because it was too close to the Xuanmen base, which could likely draw Xuanmen's intervention... So, Dong Shuye had to wait until he left the Sky-Splitting Gorge to try to kill him.

But leaving the Sky-Splitting Gorge was only known to Chu Tian, so how did Dong Shuye come chasing after him?

Had he been used?

Lu Ye considered a possibility.

After a moment of thought, he replied to Chu Tian, "We're even!"

Then resolutely blocked him...

Although he was fairly certain that he had been used, Lu Ye did not blame heaven and earth. After all, the conflict at the Sky-Splitting Gorge was initiated by him; he had killed a group from the Nine Stars Sect, including the Young Master, which then sparked the conflict between the two big sects.

If Xuanmen hadn't intervened, given the Nine Stars Sect's resources, Lu Ye might not have been able to withstand them. At the very least, he would have to face the pursuit of many cultivators, including those in the Level 5 Realm.

Xuanmen's involvement saved Lu Ye from having to fight against an entire sect by himself. During the declaration of war, he also saved many Xuanmen disciples, claiming none of the spoils of war, only asking for some useful elixir pills and Spirit Stones from the rescued Xuanmen disciples.

The entire process was mutually beneficial between Lu Ye and the Xuanmen disciples.

So even if Xuanmen had ultimately used him, Lu Ye wouldn't blame others; it was a trouble he had brought upon himself.

His interaction with Xuanmen ended there. In summary, Xuanmen had helped him, and he had helped many Xuanmen disciples in return. In the end, he obtained an Earth-class technique from Xuanmen, resolving an urgent need. Now that he had been used, they owed each other nothing, and henceforth, both could live their separate lives in peace.

Within the Xuanmen camp, Chu Tian wore a face as bitter as a gourd, heaving sighs of despair.

"What was his response?" Wang Yeang's voice entered his ears.

Chu Tian honestly replied, "We're even... then he erased my mark."

This left Chu Tian feeling somewhat disheartened; after all, that was a disciple from a top-tier power, a rare opportunity for him to interact with such individuals during normal times.

Wang Yeang's lips curled up, "He's a sensible man, quite interesting."