

Humanity 911

Chapter 911 Another Price Increase

For Lu Ye, branding Explosion Spirit Runes on the fire spirit stones wasn't really difficult, so he held a fire spirit stone in each hand; the one in his left hand was for branding the Explosion Spirit Runes, and the one in his right was to be absorbed by the Talent Tree.

Not only that, but there was also a vortex of spirit force before him, and the many small spirit energy gathering funnels on his body were in full effect.

To be able to do these two things simultaneously with cultivation, only he could achieve this under the heavens.

As for his righteous claim in front of Qian Wudang about sacrificing his future for the sake of the provincial guard... it was completely nonexistent!

For cultivators, cultivation has always been the priority; Lu Ye had long understood this principle that anything that could delay the progress of cultivation, no matter how beneficial it seemed, should not be pursued.

Time passed by.

In just half a day's work, he had refined all 7,000 pieces of Explosive Fire Spirit Stones, and Lu Ye refined 200 more before he stopped.

The numbers shouldn't be so exact, or it would look too obvious.

With 10,000 pieces of raw materials, yielding 7,200 pieces of Explosive Fire Spirit Stones, this was a result that was entirely presentable.

Qian Wudang gave him seven days, and he didn't feel comfortable leaving just yet, so he continued with his cultivation.

Instead of refining the Origin of the Soaring Dragon World, he took out the Breath Fruit Core, planning to hone his skills in the Mirage Scene for a while.

Ever since advancing to the True Lake Realm, he hadn't entered the Mirage Scene nor had many chances to test his own strength. Additionally, he had obtained many new spirit runes recently, and Lu Ye wanted to familiarize himself with how effective these spirit runes would be in actual combat while honing his skills in the Mirage Scene.

He was particularly excited about the Split Shadow spirit rune; among the seven new spirit runes he acquired last time, only this one could be exceptionally effective in solo duels.

He infused spirit force into the Breath Fruit Core, and his vision blurred as he found himself in the familiar small space.

On both sides were large doors; one led to a place for self-training, and the other entered Xianyuan City.

Opening the door to Xianyuan City required consuming 10,000 points of merit, and naturally, Lu Ye wouldn't open it easily. Moreover, when he last returned from Xianyuan City, the City Lord had already told him that he was considered a member of the Butcher Squad of Xianyuan City. If there were any battles, special means would be used to alert him, and he would enter Xianyuan City to join the fight directly.

So far, Lu Ye hadn't received any notification from Xianyuan City, which he assumed meant that things were stable there since the last major battle was just a few months ago.

Lu Ye turned his gaze to the other door, raised his hand to push it open, and words immediately appeared as light flowed on the door.

Upon a closer look, Lu Ye thought, as expected.

The price had increased again!

When he was in the Spirit Stream Realm and obtained the Breath Fruit Core, each use cost 50 points of merit. When he reached the Cloud River Realm, it required 100 points, doubling the cost.

Now, in the True Lake Realm, the merit cost to enter the Mirage Scene had indeed increased again.

Just like the price increase during the Cloud River Realm, the cost doubled based on the original.

200 points of merit!

Naturally, Lu Ye wouldn't be bothered by a mere 200 points of merit, so without hesitation, he pushed open the door and stepped into the rolling mist.

The honing process was monotonous and boring, as enemies continually emerged from the mist to attack, only to be slain by Lu Ye or himself killed.

What surprised Lu Ye was that this time, his opponents were no longer limited to human race cultivators and the Insect Race.

The opponents even included two peculiar races, the Blood Race and the Corpse Race.

The Blood Race was the enemies he encountered in the Soaring Dragon World, and the Corpse Race was the enemies from the Unparalleled Continent. There was no reason for them not to appear before, but now they suddenly did.

Lu Ye speculated that the enemies appearing within the Breath Fruit Core were likely related to the cultivator's previous experiences who entered here.

Because he had encountered the Blood Race and Corpse Race before, these enemies also appeared here.

If he encountered some chaotic and bizarre races in the future, the Mirage within the Breath Fruit Core should be able to reflect them as well.

With his cultivation advanced to the True Lake Realm and significant progress in his saber skills, along with mastering new spirit runes and comprehending the second form of Tyrannical Saber Technique, this honing session was quite fruitful.

Except for the unbearable pain felt every time he was slain or exhausted.

That was a genuine feeling of death, a sensation Lu Ye imprinted in his heart, for only in that way could he maintain enough vigilance in the real world.

Within the Mirage Scene, no matter how many times he died, it only resulted in mental exhaustion. In reality, life was ultimately singular.

Time flew by, and seven days had passed.

The cultivator who had delivered the fire spirit stones arrived on schedule, taking away the Explosive Fire Spirit Stones Lu Ye had provided.

Momentarily, Lu Ye felt some movement in the battlefield marking, and he looked down to investigate.

His name, identity, and cultivation hadn't changed.

The change in location, needless to say, was simply from Cangyan Mountain Pass to Bingzhou's Haotian City.

The merit column had dropped by more than 100,000 points, leaving just over 35,000; after all, when cultivating like this daily and entering the Mirage Scene repeatedly, the consumption wasn't trivial.

The most significant was the battle merit column: 274,762 points!

Originally, after replenishing the power of the Mental Consciousness Destruction Sword, his battle merit had only just over 100,000. But just a few days ago, it increased by a whole 130,000 points.

Needless to say, this was earned from the recent mission carried out with the A-3 squad.

A normal mission couldn't possibly yield such great gains, but this time, many problems and troubles arose during the mission. Ultimately, a cultivator at Divine Sea Level 2 was captured and killed through the combined efforts of the A-3 squad, naturally earning a significant reward boost.

Moreover, Warlord Geng mentioned on the return journey that he would report to the Department Chief, requesting him to petition Heaven's Augury. All battle merits obtained from this mission were to be halved and allocated to Lu Ye.

All these factors combined allowed Lu Ye to receive such substantial rewards.

According to the initial mission, if the A-3 squad went out to capture a True Lake Level 9 cultivator, each person could earn ten to twenty thousand points of battle merit at best.

But even with the merits halved and allocated to Lu Ye this time, the battle merits earned surpassed the expectations, with a minimum of twenty to thirty thousand.

And the excess battle merits were naturally gained from crafting the Explosive Fire Spirit Stones, totaling 36,000 points.

Considering all these, Lu Ye's battle merits now totaled over 270,000.

Throughout the Nine Provinces, no one else could obtain large amounts of battle merits as frequently and continuously as Lu Ye, otherwise he wouldn't have been promoted to the rank of Colonel while still at the True Lake Realm.

As Lu Ye was checking his battle merits, the guard token suddenly showed movement.

Lu Ye investigated and discovered it was an order from Qian Wudang via the guard token, commanding him to proceed to the Justice Department immediately.

The guard token was inviolable; Lu Ye might have bargained with Qian Wudang over the Explosive Fire Spirit Stones issue, but he dared not be slack at this moment and immediately soared into the sky, heading to the Justice Department.

Soon, he met Qian Wudang in the Annex Hall where they last met.

Compared to last time, Qian Wudang's attitude was undeniably warmer. Upon Lu Ye's arrival, he kindly patted his shoulder, "Well done!"

Despite having previously signed the Heaven's Augury Pact and having an agreement, it was only when the results were presented that Qian Wudang confirmed Lu Ye's ability to craft a thousand Explosive Fire Spirit Stones daily!

With these, the law enforcement squad of the Justice Department could have an additional means of dealing with adversaries while on missions, effectively reducing many casualties.

The minor discomfort from Lu Ye bargaining had long vanished.

"As long as you are satisfied," Lu Ye replied.

"I grant you a day's leave, continue crafting tomorrow. But let me remind you, you mustn't slack on your cultivation progress. The higher your cultivation, the more efficient your crafting becomes."

Lu Ye mused that crafting these things didn't seem to have much connection with his cultivation level, but it was unnecessary to voice this thought.

Soon, he realized something was amiss, "Sir, am I to stay in Haotian City to craft the Explosive Fire Spirit Stones from now on?"

"Is there a problem?" Qian Wudang looked at him in puzzlement.

Lu Ye said, "Sir, perhaps you've forgotten, I belong to Cangyan Mountain Pass. I was granted just one day's leave for military rank promotion, but it's nearly ten days now. Although the Mountain Pass Chief hasn't pressed, I can't possibly not return. That would be neglecting my duty."

He still held the positions of Base Lieutenant Colonel and Roving Lieutenant Colonel at Big Moon Checkpoint's Cangyan Mountain Pass.

Of course, with his rank promotion, he was now a Base Colonel and Roving Colonel.

If he stayed here for long, the monthly salaries from these positions would surely evaporate, something Lu Ye could not accept.

The monthly salary from these two positions alone was 60,000 battle merits.

Qian Wudang looked at him in astonishment, momentarily speechless.

In his joy, he had completely forgotten this!

Suddenly, he felt a stab to his heart!

Such talent, yet not part of my Justice Department!

How hateful! Why wasn't this kid at the True Lake Realm when he came to Haotian City? If Lu Ye had been at the True Lake Realm, he would likely have been recruited into the Justice Department.

Lu Ye didn't notice the change in his expression and continued, "Sir, how about this, you give me the fire spirit stones, and I'll take them back to Cangyan Mountain Pass for crafting. Periodically, you can send someone to collect them. It's a bit of a hassle, but it's the only solution I can think of."

Qian Wudang raised his hand to stop him, "Hold on a moment."

He said this while tapping his battlefield marking, sending out a message, though it was unclear to whom.

Lu Ye stood quietly aside.

Qian Wudang paced back and forth with his hands behind his back, appearing somewhat anxious, and sent several more messages in succession, but they seemed to sink into the ocean.

With no option left, Qian Wudang finally looked at Lu Ye, "Use your guard token to contact your Mountain Pass Chief, tell her I need to speak to her!"

Last time, when Warlord Geng ordered him to bring Lu Ye back from the frontlines to join the A-3 squad, he feared Nian Yuexian would rip off his scalp and didn't dare agree. But upon realizing Lu Ye's ability to craft large quantities of Explosive Fire Spirit Stones, his desire for talent finally outweighed his fear.

He had to take the risk and try!

How embarrassing it was when Nian Yuexian didn't respond!

Chapter 912 The Talent Tree Transformation is Complete

Hearing Qian Wudang say this, Lu Ye finally understood that he had been messaging Nian Yuexian earlier.

Although they hadn't been together for very long, Lu Ye had some understanding of his own Mountain Pass Chief's temperament. If she didn't want to engage with someone, no matter how they tried to message her, she wouldn't respond.

Qian Wudang was clearly unable to contact Nian Yuexian, so he asked Lu Ye to relay the message.

With no other choice, Lu Ye had to use the guard token to contact Nian Yuexian.

Soon there was a response, and seeing this, Qian Wudang was rendered quite helpless.

"Sir, how should I reply?" Lu Ye looked up at Qian Wudang.

"Just tell her I have urgent matters and ask her to contact me," Qian Wudang instructed.

Lu Ye did as instructed, then raised his head with a peculiar expression to look at Qian Wudang.

"What is it?"

"Sir, my Mountain Pass Chief tells you to scram!" Lu Ye reported truthfully.

Qian Wudang was instantly troubled.

Lu Ye was also troubled; two Divine Sea Realm strong cultivators were using him as a relay, and one of them was even speaking unpleasantly—what sort of situation was this?

"Also, sir, the Mountain Pass Chief ordered me to return to Cangyan Mountain Pass within two days and not to stay for any reason!" Lu Ye continued.

Qian Wudang sighed, the guard token was issued, and he couldn't reach Nian Yuexian, so he couldn't keep Lu Ye, which he regretted. Thinking it over, he could only agree with the proposal Lu Ye had just made: "Let's go with what you said earlier; I'll send someone to Cangyan Mountain Pass every seven days to collect goods. If you go out, let me know in advance."

"Understood." Lu Ye accepted the order.

"Here's the material needed for the next seven days." Qian Wudang tossed a storage sack to Lu Ye.

Lu Ye took it and checked, finding another ten thousand Fire Spirit Stones inside.

After leaving the Justice Department, Lu Ye didn't immediately set off for Cangyan Mountain Pass. Instead, he sent a message to Warlord Geng and the others to arrange a small gathering.

A few days ago, when the A-3 squad members were recovering from their injuries, they had mentioned this to Lu Ye.

After all, having survived together and completed their task in excess, it was naturally deserving of celebration. But at that time, Lu Ye was under orders to refine Explosive Fire Spirit Stones and couldn't leave casually, so he postponed it.

Now, as he was about to return to Cangyan Mountain Pass, he naturally had to fulfill his promise to others.

The gathering location was chosen by Warlord Geng, and it was at a restaurant in Haotian City. Cultivators' gatherings had nothing novel, mostly drinking, chatting about the wider world, and sometimes sparring if the mood struck, which made it lively.

The bonds between them deepened a bit.

After eating and drinking their fill, they each went their separate ways, and Lu Ye made a visit to the Heaven's Augury Hall.

The Boulder Mountain Saber had been repaired!

Retrieving the Boulder Mountain Saber, Lu Ye felt a sense of peace. The days without the Boulder Mountain Saber by his side felt like something was missing. Now that the long saber was back with him, he finally felt complete.

Without lingering, he activated his spirit force, instantly dissipating the slight intoxication and soared into the sky, heading straight in the direction of Cangyan Mountain Pass.

On the way there, he encountered those mysterious organization's cultivators. But on the return journey, the road was smooth and uneventful.

By evening, he finally reached Cangyan Mountain Pass, heading straight for the spirit mountaintop where Nian Yuexian's bamboo tower was located.

From afar, he saw Nian Yuexian seemingly idly sitting by the window on the second floor, propping her cheek with one hand and gazing in his direction.

When their eyes met, Nian Yuexian immediately withdrew her gaze, turning to fiddle with her fingers instead.

Lu Ye arrived below the bamboo tower, cupped his fists, and called out loudly, "Sir, this subordinate requests to return from leave and report back!"

"Hmm," Nian Yuexian responded softly, continuing to look at her long, fair fingers as if there was a flower on them.

Lu Ye maintained his salute posture, waited for a moment, and seeing she had no other instructions, he said, "This subordinate takes his leave."

He turned and headed towards his own bamboo tower.

Behind him, Nian Yuexian opened her mouth, wanting to ask how he felt about carrying out tasks with the Justice Department's team this time and whether he encountered any dangers, but in the end, she didn't speak.

Years of solitary living had long made her forget how to engage with others properly.

She hadn't even realized that during this mission, Lu Ye had actually slain a Divine Sea Realm.

Since returning from Haotian City, life was uneventful.

Every day, besides cultivating, Lu Ye had the Talent Tree devour Fire Spirit Stones, and then he would patrol outside with Yiyi and Amber for one shichen.

Though he knew patrolling near Cangyan Mountain Pass wouldn't yield much, he felt he needed to justify his monthly salary as Roving Colonel.

If he didn't patrol, he felt unworthy of that thirty thousand battle merit monthly salary.

Nian Yuexian was still the same, elusive, and Lu Ye often wouldn't see her for days. Occasionally, when they did meet, they would merely exchange greetings and pass by each other.

Nothing happened on Cangyan Mountain Pass's side, but a major event occurred in Nine Provinces.

The Cloud River battlefield had reopened!

Calculating the time, the domain fusion had been going on for almost two months and indeed should have ended.

The reopening of the Cloud River battlefield meant a significant loss of Cloud River Realm cultivators from the frontline checkpoints since, for the Cloud River Realm, the Cloud River battlefield was their main destination.

Of course, not every Cloud River Realm would go to the Cloud River battlefield. The checkpoints never lacked cultivators eager to earn battle merit. Not to mention the Cloud River Realm, even Spirit Stream Realm cultivators were present.

After all, regardless of cultivation level, as long as they joined the Bingzhou guard, had their own military rank and position, there was a monthly salary. Each pass also had tasks that Cloud River Realm and Spirit Stream Realm cultivators could perform, exchanging monthly salaries for spirit sticks, cultivation doesn't fall too far behind.

In comparison to this major event in the Nine Provinces, something is also happening on the side of Bingzhou.

The Ziwei Dao Palace has been founded!

On that day, it was proclaimed to Bingzhou, bowing to the Righteous Blood Sect as the superior sect, selecting thirty peaks within Mount Ao as the foundation of their sect, and to aid each other with the Righteous Blood Sect.

The news sparked some attention.

But that was all.

Not to mention that Ziwei Dao Palace is a sect from the Unparalleled Continent with no formidable cultivators, even the Righteous Blood Sect no longer has its past glory.

The combination of these two sects is like a newborn baby seeking refuge with a senile old man, not much noticed by the powerful forces.

Fortunately, the old man's connections are widespread, so on the day of Ziwei Dao Palace's founding, many big sects' Divine Sea Realm cultivators came to congratulate, creating a bustling scene.

It also allowed this group of cultivators from the Unparalleled Continent at Ziwei Dao Palace to truly feel the might of the Divine Sea Realm!

Inside the bamboo loft, Lu Ye sat cross-legged, with a fire spirit stone in each hand, harnessing the power of the Talent Tree to constantly absorb, his expression remained calm on the surface, but his heart was full of anticipation.

Nothing else, it seems the Talent Tree is about to complete its transformation!

Finally, it's going to be completed.

Since perceiving the Talent Tree's sign of transformation at the volcano mouth of Cangyan Mountain until now, more than a month has passed, during which Lu Ye didn't know how many fire spirit stones he had consumed.

Most of his gains from the underground cave were fed to the Talent Tree, and the consumption was immense.

He initially thought that with the gains from the underground cave, he would never again worry about the Talent Tree's fuel problem, but now it seems, he was too naïve.

The consumption was so large that it made him even more expectant of the Talent Tree's transformation, eager to know what changes would occur after its transformation.

Now that the transformation is imminent, he devoted himself fully to this matter, even setting aside his cultivation.

After more than half a day, not knowing how many fire spirit stones consumed, as his mind immersed, the Talent Tree hidden in the location of his Root Spiritual Orifice suddenly burst with brilliance, its roots swaying.

In an instant, for the first time, Lu Ye clearly sensed the existence of the Talent Tree!

He couldn't sense it before.

Although the Talent Tree had always been hidden in his Root Spiritual Orifice, and he could "see" it each time he immersed his mind, Lu Ye had no feeling of its existence.

Until this moment!

Lu Ye acutely perceived that, at the location of his Root Spiritual Orifice, there was something miraculous living in symbiosis with him!

Has the transformation been completed?

As this thought passed, Lu Ye was dumbfounded, for the Talent Tree suddenly contracted violently, and in the blink of an eye turned into a flame...

To call it a flame is more fitting to say it's a fire seed because its shape is like a seed.

The transformation wasn't over yet, the seed blazed, suddenly the fire light expanded, and with the rolling flames, the seed sprouted, grew, and then a large tree appeared in the field of vision.

Lu Ye concentrated and observed, only at this moment did he finally confirm that the Talent Tree's transformation was completed!

But... it seems not much changed?

The unignited leaves on the Talent Tree were still shrouded in darkness, and the lit leaves seemed to be slightly more vivid in color.

Beyond that, there wasn't anything particularly different.

The roots appeared somewhat more luxuriant...

Just this?

Lu Ye's heart sank to the bottom; he spent a vast amount of fire spirit stones, with more than half of the underground cave gains invested in the Talent Tree's transformation, tirelessly for over a month, and the result... just this?

No, it shouldn't be this way!

He immediately calmed his senses, and sure enough, soon he felt some subtle differences.

Previously he couldn't sense the existence of the Talent Tree, naturally, he couldn't sense the interior intricacies of the Talent Tree.

Now it's different. He detected the existence of this divine object itself and could sense the internal intricacies of the Talent Tree through perception.

For instance... the storage of fuel!

The Talent Tree just completed its transformation, so there's naturally no stored fuel internally, though there was some before, but it was all consumed during the transformation process.

At this moment, as the spirit force from the fire spirit stones in his hands continually depleted, fuel began to accumulate within the Talent Tree.

Continuing to calmly sense, Lu Ye soon had a facial expression change.

Even though he couldn't put it into words, he seemed to detect some changes in the Talent Tree, and these changes manifested outwardly...

Thoughts surging, he immediately took out a mid-grade spirit stone, held it in his palm, then urged the Talent Tree's power, concentrating and observing.

The next moment, what appeared was a scene that left him both delighted and shocked.

An invisible root that only he could see extended from his palm, enveloping the mid-grade spirit stone, and as thoughts surged, a powerful suction and devouring force came from within the tiny roots.

The spirit force within the mid-grade spirit stone vanished at a terrifying speed, pouring into Lu Ye's body along with the roots!

Chapter 913 I Have Acquired a New Skill

A mid-grade Spirit Stone's spirit force was quickly devoured and turned into powder, sprinkling down from Lu Ye's fingertips, and he hurriedly took out another one.

Still the same!

The transformed Talent Tree now has the ability to devour and draw out spirit force from Spirit Stones!

This was previously absent; the Talent Tree could only absorb fire type energy, like the Earth's Core Fire or fire spirit stones, without reacting to non-fire type energy.

But now, with its transformation, the Talent Tree's ability has clearly undergone a fundamental change and is no longer limited to fire type energy.

A single mid-grade Spirit Stone, if used by a True Lake Realm cultivator, could last at least half a day.

But in Lu Ye's hands, it's depleted in just a moment.

This means Lu Ye absorbs the stone's power at an astonishing speed for his own use, whether in cultivation or restoration, drastically reducing the time required.

In other words, with this method, the efficiency of Lu Ye's cultivation recovery is unmatched by cultivators of the same realm, far exceeding them by dozens of times!

Due to the existence of the small spirit energy gathering funnel, his cultivation speed was already much faster than other cultivators of the same realm, and now with this ability, his cultivation efficiency increases even further.

Fast cultivation speed and high efficiency mean he can achieve higher realms in a shorter time!

This is simply a dream-come-true for any cultivator.

However, while absorbing the Spirit Stone's spirit force, Lu Ye also noticed one thing: the fuel stored in the Talent Tree was rapidly being consumed.

This implies that the fire spirit force stored in the Talent Tree is not only used as fuel for burning impurities but also serves as an energy source to sustain and activate the Talent Tree's power!

After all, the spirit force drawn from the Spirit Stones is extremely pure, with almost no impurities requiring the Talent Tree's burning purification, yet the stored fuel is still rapidly consuming, which undoubtedly indicates the problem.

Previously, Lu Ye hadn't noticed this issue because he couldn't perceive the amount of fuel stored, nor did he possess such cultivation means.

This leads to the conclusion that in the future, when using Spirit Stones to enhance his cultivation speed, he will also need to consume fire spirit stones...

Lu Ye couldn't help but feel fortunate about the transaction made with Qian Wudang in Haotian City; otherwise, relying solely on his current fire spirit stones, he wouldn't be able to sustain this for long.

He originally needed fire spirit stones only to activate the spirit runes on the Talent Tree, pursuing them not in small amounts but just enough to be useful.

But now, needing them for cultivation means it will be an endless demand.

In such a situation, having a stable source for acquiring fire spirit stones becomes crucially important.

One mid-grade Spirit Stone after another was continuously consumed, leaving Yiyi and Amber watching in dumbfounded silence, unable to understand what method Lu Ye was using to consume the Spirit Stones so rapidly.

Lu Ye didn't bother to explain, but in a flash, he saw Amber munching on a demonic pill with a crisp, crunchy sound...

A bold idea suddenly emerged in his mind.

Under Amber's puzzled gaze, he reached out into the storage sack hanging around Amber's neck and retrieved a demonic pill, holding it in his hand as he activated the Talent Tree's power, its roots spreading and enveloping the pill.

The next instant, rich power was drawn from the demonic pill and infused into Lu Ye's body, where spirit force circulated and, through the Talent Tree's burning purification, transformed into pure power.

It really works!

Lu Ye was astonished; he had only conceived a sudden idea that the Talent Tree now wasn't restricted to absorbing fire type energy—if Spirit Stones worked, why might demonic pills also work?

Unexpectedly, it did work!

Noticing the change in the demonic pill within Lu Ye's hand, Yiyi raised her hand to cover her red lips, and Amber's tiger eyes widened even further.

The energy stored within a demonic pill is undoubtedly far more substantial than that of a mid-grade Spirit Stone, as it's essentially the essence of a demon beast's lifelong cultivation, incomparable to a mid-grade Spirit Stone.

Yet even so, it lasted less than a tea-cup's time before completely drying up, leaving merely a dry, date-pit-sized mass of impurities in Lu Ye's palm.

Lu Ye felt exhilarated.

The transformed Talent Tree wasn't limited anymore to absorbing only fire type energy; Spirit Stones worked, and demonic pills worked, so elixir pills would definitely work too.

As for the spirit force within a cultivator's body... could it work?

This frightening thought emerged, and Lu Ye immediately extinguished it.

Although there's a high likelihood of certainty, that the Talent Tree could draw the spirit force from a cultivator's body for its own use, doing so would be akin to "devouring people," which presented significant psychological barriers.

Lu Ye silently warned himself of the dangers of this potential avenue, realizing opening this door could potentially lead to extremely adverse consequences.

Under Amber's vigilant gaze, Lu Ye took another demonic pill from its storage sack, examined it closely for a moment, and promptly tossed it into his mouth.

Having always observed Amber eating them so eagerly, Lu Ye had long wanted to taste what the demonic pill offered.

"Lu Ye!" Yiyi exclaimed in surprise, unable to contain herself any longer.

Amber's eyes were about to pop out.

Master, how can you eat the demonic pill? That's my snack!

Crunching sounds echoed, and Lu Ye was surprised to find that the demonic pill actually tasted pretty good, without any peculiar smell.

Swallowed whole into the stomach, he quietly activated the power of the Talent Tree, with roots entwining in his belly, quickly absorbing the energy from the demonic pill, and the Bestial Gluttony Feast was also activated, buzzing sounds emitted.

In just a moment, the energy from a single demonic pill was completely digested.

This was much more efficient than holding it in his hand and letting the Talent Tree absorb and devour it.

"Lu Ye, are you alright?" Yiyi asked with concern, unable to understand why Lu Ye suddenly made such a reckless move.

The demonic pill is generally used for alchemy and array setup, demon beasts also consume demonic pills of the same element sign, but it's never been heard that people can eat it.

"No problem," Lu Ye reassured with a smile, "I've gained a new ability, I can digest it, don't worry."

Upon hearing this, Yiyi relaxed, but still closely watched Lu Ye's changes, worried about any adverse symptoms.

Lu Ye reached out again towards Amber's storage sack, Amber held it tightly with two paws, looking at Lu Ye pleadingly.

The meaning was clear: I don't have much left!

Lu Ye glared at it, and only then did Amber reluctantly release its paws.

Although the transformation of the Talent Tree hadn't enhanced Lu Ye's cultivation strength, the Talent Tree's newfound abilities provided him with more cultivation methods and greatly increased his cultivation efficiency.

As a result, his growth speed would far exceed his peers, the benefits were unimaginable. Compared to simple power enhancement, such a transformation would truly impact Lu Ye's entire life, something he greatly desired.

However, it would also come with considerable future expenses.

Let's not think about that for now.

The transformation of the Talent Tree was complete, Lu Ye was in a great mood, deciding to reward himself by cultivating diligently. After all, he had been in True Lake Level 1 for quite some time now, and with such a stable cultivation environment and more techniques, he should definitely raise his cultivation to True Lake Level 2.

Connecting with Heaven's Augury with his mind, a spirit force vortex appeared before him, from which pure nature's spiritual energy flowed continuously, enveloping the figures of one person, one spirit, and one tiger.

Adjusting it to the most suitable level for himself, Lu Ye continued to absorb the power of the fire spirit stone to replenish the energy reserves of the Talent Tree while constructing a small spirit energy gathering funnel.

Yiyi gazed at the spirit force vortex filled with nature's spiritual energy, her eyes slightly dazed, "Lu Ye, where do you think this vortex leads to?"

"Who knows?" Lu Ye replied casually, "But I've heard that this spirit force vortex likely connects to Earth Veins or Spirit Veins of varying quality, allowing uninterrupted flow of nature's spiritual energy to cultivators for refining and cultivation."

This is considered common knowledge, but to date, no one has been able to verify it, because even a Divine Sea Realm's mental consciousness cannot probe into the other side of the spirit force vortex.

Yet in this world, there is no water without a source, no wood without roots; such rich nature's spiritual energy cannot be born from nothing, there must be an origin.

Therefore, the theory that the spirit force vortex connects to Earth Veins or Spirit Veins of different qualities has gained acceptance among most cultivators in the Nine Provinces.

"If we could pass through this vortex, wouldn't we be able to cultivate within the Earth Vein or Spirit Vein?" Yiyi suddenly fancied.

Lu Ye chuckled, "Nice idea, but you'd need the capability to do it."

Even the Divine Sea Realm's mental consciousness cannot investigate the situation on the other side of the vortex, so how could one pass through it?

While laughing, Lu Ye's expression suddenly changed.

Another bold idea churned within his mind.

A Divine Sea Realm's mental consciousness indeed cannot pass through this spirit force vortex, but the roots of the Talent Tree... could they?

If it works, doesn't that mean...

With this thought, Lu Ye could hardly contain himself, hastily raising a hand to press against the spirit force vortex.

Yiyi didn't know what he was up to, just watched curiously, while Amber was spilling the demonic pills from its storage sack, sorting and counting them, feeling disconsolate.

Paws weren't quite enough, a bit hard to count...

Elsewhere, Lu Ye slightly moved his mind, extending a root from his palm, invisible to others, probing into the spirit force vortex before him.

This transformation of the Talent Tree allowed Lu Ye to sense the existence of this divine object. He naturally could clearly perceive the extension of the roots, which for him, acted as his touch.

The roots hadn't breached to the other side of the spirit force vortex, which meant the roots had successfully penetrated into the vortex!

Lu Ye's expression suddenly became startled.

His perception detected an extremely abundant and dense nature's spiritual energy on the other side of the vortex.

The tactile sensation of the roots was exceptionally sharp; Lu Ye felt surrounded by spirit mist so dense it nearly liquefied. The cultivation environment he crafted using True Lake Realm-exclusive methods paled in comparison!

Chapter 914 Theft of Heaven's Augury

If we set the concentration of nature's spiritual energy in his current cultivation environment as a standard, then the environment the roots are currently in is at least three times that standard.

A threefold difference!

Moreover, the deeper the roots extend inwards, the greater the difference.

Until the roots reach a certain extreme, the difference in the cultivation environment has reached a fivefold level!

The extension of the roots is not endless, and Lu Ye just realized it seems related to the strength of his mental consciousness. Now, when he activates the power of the Talent Tree, the roots can extend about three feet at most.

Even so, a fivefold difference is quite an exaggeration, meaning one thing; if Lu Ye uses the roots of the Talent Tree to absorb the Heaven and Earth spirit force from the other side of the spiritual vortex for cultivation, it will certainly be faster than the normal cultivation state.

Perhaps reaching a fivefold increase, perhaps less, or perhaps... even more!

After all, in a normal state, he relies on many small spirit energy gathering funnels for cultivation. The difference in cultivation methods between this and using the roots of the Talent Tree to absorb and draw can't be accurately compared by Lu Ye himself.

But undeniably, he unintentionally found another method to quickly enhance his own cultivation, and this method is based on the transformation of the Talent Tree.

Suppressing the excitement in his heart, a new question emerged in Lu Ye's mind.

Are the different levels of spiritual vortices different inside?

In his current "Borrowing Heaven's Augury" created cultivation environment, the spiritual vortex is at the third level, consuming about ten thousand merits a day and night.

Above, there are higher levels suitable for strong cultivators in the True Lake Realm Late Stage and even in the Divine Sea Realm, while below, two slightly lower levels are suitable for Nine Provinces cultivators newly entering the True Lake Realm.

He is somewhat of an exception, so when he previously tried borrowing Heaven's Augury as a cultivation method, he chose the third level.

Exploring isn't difficult; the level of the spiritual vortex changes according to one's will. A simple adjustment of the vortex level can reveal the truth.

With this in mind, Lu Ye immediately changed the level of the spiritual vortex.

A moment later, he arrived at an astonishing conclusion—regardless of the level of the spiritual vortex, the world inside is the same!

Thus, the rumors he heard before aren't true; the saying that different levels of spiritual vortices connect with different qualities of Earth Veins or Spirit Veins is baseless.

They may indeed connect to a specific Earth Vein or Spirit Vein; otherwise, where does that rich spiritual energy come from? But the location is the same.

The reason for differences in cultivation environments created by Borrowing Heaven's Augury lies in the varying levels of spiritual vortices.

If the world inside the spiritual vortex is likened to a bottle and the spiritual energy to water in the bottle, then the vortex is the bottle's mouth.

The size of the bottle's mouth determines the speed at which water flows out, thus creating different cultivation environments.

The lower the level of the spiritual vortex, the smaller the bottle's mouth...

If that's the case, then Lu Ye doesn't need a large bottle mouth at all. He only needs a basic opening to let the roots of his Talent Tree probe inside...

He can totally use the lowest level spiritual vortex for cultivation; this way, the merits consumed by cultivation will be significantly reduced.

And his cultivation efficiency will not be affected at all.

This is no longer borrowing Heaven's Augury for cultivation but stealing Heaven's Augury!

Lu Ye felt that his actions were no different from a thief and wondered what Heaven's Augury would think of this.

Cautiously maintaining this state for a while, discovering nothing unusual, he then relaxed.

Heaven's Augury is everywhere, omniscient. Such blatant "theft" cannot go unnoticed, and since it wasn't stopped, it means it was tacitly approved.

On reflection, whether or not I'm "stealing," this is still my own ability. Why should Heaven's Augury stop me?

One cannot say it's wrong simply because I have a Talent Tree...

Understanding this, Lu Ye felt completely at ease.

The transformation of the Talent Tree incited various subsequent events, completely altering Lu Ye's cultivation method of several years. Numerous thoughts burst forth in his mind.

Suddenly, Lu Ye stood up.

"What happened?" Yiyi asked, puzzled, not understanding why Lu Ye suddenly stood up when his cultivation was going well.

"Wait!"

Lu Ye said, flying out through the window directly, quickly arriving at the Heaven's Augury Hall in the ruined Cangyan Mountain City, linking up with Heaven's Augury, he entered the Hall of Battle Merits, not in the mood to chat with the gold and silver flood dragons, and went straight to the spot where gold-hued spirit fortune sticks were exchanged, waving his hand to exchange for ten gold-hued spirit fortune sticks.

He left the Hall of Battle Merits hurriedly and returned to his bamboo building.

Seeing Lu Ye holding a handful of spirit fortune sticks in his hand, Yiyi then realized what he had done.

Lu Ye sat down again, crushing one of the gold-hued spirit fortune sticks, its powder converging and twisting to form a golden vortex.

Immediately, extremely pure and dense spiritual energy began flowing out from it!

Yiyi and Amber quickly sat upright, inhaling and exhaling spirit force for cultivation. This spirit force could almost be transformed into their powerful foundation without much refinement, so using spirit

fortune sticks for cultivation has always been a way for Nine Provinces cultivators to swiftly become stronger.

Lu Ye didn't rush into cultivating, instead gazing at the golden vortex in front of him, feeling both excited and anxious.

If things were truly as he imagined, then the transformation of the Talent Tree would be an immense boon for him!

He gently inhaled, raised his hand, and pressed into the space in front of the golden vortex, activating the power of the Talent Tree. Invisible roots extended and, in Lu Ye's perception, probed into the vortex.

The next moment, Lu Ye's expression brightened!

The cultivation environment created by the spirit fortune sticks was already the best that Nine Provinces cultivators could have, but beyond the vortex, there existed an even better, unknown environment!

Lu Ye could clearly perceive the Talent Tree's roots touching upon a water-like substance.

It wasn't real water but a condensation of pure spirit force, a power that anyone could freely absorb!

In an instant, he felt as if he were floating on a cloud, his whole body feeling dizzy.

Forcing himself to steady his mind, he continued to invoke the Talent Tree's power, pushing the roots deeper in.

But unexpectedly, this situation was a bit different from his previous exploration of a spirit force vortex; within the spirit force vortex, the deeper he went, the better the environment.

However, inside this vortex created by the spirit fortune stick, there didn't seem to be much difference.

It made sense—this pure spirit force had already condensed into something akin to water, what more could it offer?

The difference between the environment within and outside the vortex was at least threefold!

Unable to hold back, Lu Ye let out a hearty laugh, pulling Yiyi over and planting a firm kiss on her cheek: "Yiyi, I've struck it rich!"

Yiyi was dumbfounded!

She was cultivating so well when Lu Ye suddenly did this, making her flustered. Having spent years with Lu Ye, they were as close as real family, and Lu Ye had never shown her such affection, aside from occasional pats on her little head or pinching her cheeks.

This was the first time she had been directly kissed like that...

"I've struck it rich, Yiyi!" Lu Ye repeated excitedly, grabbing Amber and giving it a strong kiss too!

"Meow..." Amber wore a look of disdain, struggling mightily.

Steadying herself, Yiyi sensed Lu Ye's excitement and couldn't help but ask, "What happened?"

Lu Ye didn't mention the Talent Tree, finding it complex to explain, simply saying, "I have a special method that allows me to delve inside this vortex and cultivate using its environment!"

Yiyi was curious, "And what's the environment inside the vortex like?"

"It's hard to describe, but the cultivation environment in there is three times better than what we have here."

"Three times!" Yiyi was amazed; the fact that Lu Ye suddenly kissed her was distant from her mind, her little head immediately realizing the advantage this could bring to Lu Ye, "Doesn't that mean you could grow at three times the speed of others?"

"Not just!" Lu Ye smiled slightly, "It's three times my previous speed!"

His previous cultivation speed was already much faster than the average cultivator, granting him invisible advantages when using the spirit fortune sticks for cultivation, so it was naturally not a standard measure of cultivation speed.

"Lu Ye, you're amazing!" Yiyi sincerely praised, genuinely happy for Lu Ye.

Her little head seemed to hit upon another idea, tilting, she said, "Lu Ye, if that's the case, I suggest you trade for white spirit fortune sticks for cultivation in the future!"

"Why is that?" Lu Ye asked.

"You see, a white spirit fortune stick only requires two hundred meritorious points, right? But a gold-hued spirit fortune stick requires fourteen thousand five hundred and eighty points—a huge difference. If you cultivate using a white spirit fortune stick and it's the same as using a gold one, wouldn't that save a lot of merit points? With so many good things in the Hall of Battle Merits, you can buy whatever you want later."

"Hmm?" Lu Ye was taken aback by her words, thinking there seemed to be some truth, but upon deeper thought, something felt amiss.

"Ah..." Amber lowered its eyes, somewhat unable to comprehend its two owners' spirited discussion.

Even I, a tiger, understand it, but how are these two having such an earnest debate?

Lu Ye finally realized where it went wrong, chuckling, "The cultivation environment created by gold-hued and white spirit fortune sticks is, in fact, the same. The difference lies only in the duration of

maintenance. A white spirit fortune stick lasts for one incense stick's time, while a gold one lasts for an entire day and night."

Having heard Yiyi's words, he suddenly found them reasonable, but he was too excited at the moment to think it through. Now that he understood, he realized Yiyi's suggestion wouldn't work.

Yiyi also realized her mistake, a blush spreading across her face.

Lu Ye ruffled her hair, "My Lu Yiyi is the best!"

Yiyi gave a sweet smile.

"To cultivation, then!" Lu Ye waved his hand grandly. The Talent Tree's transformation had granted him such a unique cultivation method, so naturally, it couldn't go to waste.

Currently at True Lake Level 1, he was eager to know how long it would take him to reach True Lake Level 2.

Chapter 915 True Lake 3rd Layer Realm

The duration of a single gold-hued spirit fortune stick lasts for a little over a day and a night, so since he began cultivation, Lu Ye has not been able to conduct his daily patrols.

He can only patrol once every other day.

Fortunately, there hasn't been any sign of enemy activity at Cangyan Mountain Pass. As long as Nian Yuexian is stationed here for a day, the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge wouldn't dare to make a move. The deterrent power of a top-tier Divine Sea Realm ghost cultivator is too great; no one knows where she might be hiding. If anyone dares to try to infiltrate, they're bound to be exposed eventually and easily slain by her.

The transaction with the Justice Department is proceeding as scheduled, with the Explosive Fire Spirit Stones that Lu Ye casually refines during his cultivation more than sufficient to meet the task's needs.

Time flies, and nearly half a month has passed.

The last of his ten gold-hued spirit fortune sticks has been completely consumed, and the golden swirl in front of him gradually dissipates, signaling the end of his cultivation.

Lu Ye opened his eyes, examining his own cultivation and feeling the rapid advancement he achieved over the past half month.

The transformation of the Talent Tree brought him benefits even greater than he anticipated because when the roots of the Talent Tree burrowed into the golden swirl, drawing and devouring the pure and concentrated spirit force within, the efficiency was incomparable to that of the small spirit energy gathering funnel he had.

Initially, he thought the environmental difference was threefold, making the cultivation efficiency threefold as well.

But once he truly started cultivating, he realized that this was not the case.

If constructing a small spirit energy gathering funnel could be called absorption, then the way the Talent Tree's roots delved into the swirl's opposite world was outright plundering!

One method passively receives the spirit force that leaks out from the golden swirl, while the other actively acquires it — they are completely incomparable.

Lu Ye felt that using a single gold-hued spirit fortune stick increased his cultivation efficiency more than tenfold compared to the normal speed.

Of course, the environmental differences between outside and inside the swirl were also a reason for this result.

Outside the swirl, the spirit force was pure enough for direct absorption, but inside the swirl, it had already liquefied into Spiritual Liquid.

In half a month's time, his cultivation underwent an earth-shattering change; he had never experienced such terrifying advancement speed since he began his cultivation journey, not even in the Cloud River Realm.

Such rapid advancement isn't necessarily all good. During this time, apart from cultivating, he occasionally entered the Mirage Realm to hone himself, wanting to quickly familiarize himself with his cultivation growth.

The ten-gold-hued spirit fortune sticks he exchanged were already used up. Lu Ye wasn't planning on exchanging for more gold-hued spirit fortune sticks for cultivation in the short term; though the rapid advancement was tempting, he wouldn't allow himself to indulge.

His realm needed to be stabilized for a while before he could continue cultivating.

Leading Amber and Yiyi out of the bamboo house, just as he was about to inspect the surroundings, a fragrance suddenly wafted to his nose.

By the time Lu Ye came to his senses, Nian Yuexian was already standing in front of him.

Less than a foot apart!

Startled, Lu Ye quickly stepped back a few paces and cupped his fists in salute, "Your Excellency!"

The Mountain Pass Chief was always this elusive; he hadn't seen her shadow for half a month, and today she suddenly appeared.

At that moment, Nian Yuexian was looking at Lu Ye with uncertainty and suspicion, her Mental Consciousness permeating as she carefully examined him; even though she had reached a conclusion, she still couldn't be certain: "True Lake Level 3?"

Half a month ago, when Lu Ye returned from Haotian City, he was at True Lake Level 1.

Half a month later, he had already reached True Lake Level 3?

Even someone as well-traveled as Nian Yuexian had never seen such an absurd occurrence.

Moreover, how could such a thing be possible? Cultivation in the True Lake Realm requires spirit force to undergo nine transformations. Every phase of cultivation enhancement requires an immense amount of spirit force, and the further he advances, the harder it becomes. Even if Lu Ye had enough battle merit and could consistently cultivate with gold-hued spirit fortune sticks, it shouldn't be possible to jump two small realms in just half a month.

Yet such an absurd phenomenon happened right under her nose!

Nian Yuexian always seemed cold as ice, but now her face was full of amazement and shock, creating an amusing visual contrast.

Lu Ye did not dare to laugh and solemnly replied, "Your Excellency has an eye like a torch."

Lu Ye was not surprised that Nian Yuexian could see through his cultivation; the gap between their levels was evident, and a sweep of her Mental Consciousness naturally left nothing hidden about his cultivation.

Nian Yuexian paused for a moment.

After waiting for a while with no words from her, Lu Ye could only speak, "If Your Excellency has no orders, this humble subordinate will proceed with the patrol."

"Go ahead," Nian Yuexian nodded.

As she watched Lu Ye's figure depart, she still hadn't come back to her senses.

In her mind, a familiar figure appeared once again.

The last time she was gravely injured and near death, Lu Ye used some unknown means, allowing her to come back from the brink. In her daze, she saw that person's figure on Lu Ye.

Back then, she nearly faced the same peril, and that person had also descended like a divine weapon to rescue her. From then on, she followed and served him wholeheartedly until he died in battle.

Today was no different!

Back then, that person's cultivation advanced at a speed that was equally incredible!

She had no interest in probing Lu Ye's secrets. Not only was Lu Ye her subordinate, but also given her life-saving debt to him last time, Nian Yuexian could never harbor ill intentions toward Lu Ye.

A wave of doubt washed over her heart. Could the Righteous Blood Sect always produce such prodigies?

Earlier, when she heard that the major sects from Ten Thousand Demons Ridge regarded him as a thorn in their side, she felt that Ten Thousand Demons Ridge was making a mountain out of a molehill. No matter how outstanding Lu Ye's performance was on the Spirit Stream battlefield or Cloud River battlefield, he was merely a small cultivator of Spirit Stream Realm and Cloud River Realm, not enough to influence the two camps' situation.

But now it seemed that there were sensible people on Ten Thousand Demons Ridge. Coupled with previous events, there's a sense of once bitten twice shy.

Such potential threats must be nipped in the bud.

True Lake Level 3 Realm already...

If that's the case, perhaps that matter can be prioritized.

Originally, she had long given up on that matter, but ever since Lu Ye saved her life with his miraculous techniques, she couldn't help but reconsider. With such skills to aid her, perhaps she might stand a chance of succeeding.

And should she succeed in that endeavor, her strength would undoubtedly grow significantly. Then, given the opportunity, she would surely be able to slay Wan Zhanggang!

With thoughts swirling in her mind, Nian Yuexian made her decision.

Several miles outside the Cangyan Mountain Pass, Lu Ye stood firm, gazing in the direction of the volcano's crater.

At the end of Gushan City's defense and attack battle, he raced out, worried about Nian Yuexian's safety. He wasn't too clear on the subsequent battle developments.

However, considering the situation back then, it didn't seem like Ten Thousand Demons Ridge cultivators would have any issues defending Gushan City. Just there'd likely be quite a few casualties.

He wasn't concerned about the happenings in Gushan City but was focused on the volcanic crater.

There were many unmined fire spirit stones in the underground caves...

Even though he now had a stable channel to acquire fire spirit stones, and the ones he had scavenged last time weren't yet used up, every time he cultivated, triggering the Talent Tree's power required consuming reserve fuel.

His current cultivation mostly involved simultaneously activating the Talent Tree's power while absorbing the energy from fire spirit stones, consuming quite a bit.

There were still many leaves on the Talent Tree waiting to be ignited, which needed fire spirit stones the most.

Without efforts to increase income, sooner or later, he'd face the day of exhausting his resources.

Should he go check it out?

Despite feeling that the chances were slim, who knew what gains he might find? A look wouldn't hurt.

Previously, he was too busy cultivating to think about this matter. With the notion arising today, he couldn't restrain himself.

He rushed all the way, and before reaching the volcanic crater, he saw many figures flying and bustling around from afar.

With just a glance, Lu Ye knew his plan was a no-go.

Clearly, Ten Thousand Demons Ridge was busy excavating the fire spirit stones in the underground caves, sweeping everything valuable clean.

Though Lu Ye could use Ten Thousand Demons Ridge's battlefield marking to infiltrate, last time he managed to do so smoothly only because the enemy loomed large over Gushan City, leaving no time to verify his identity.

This time, if he tried the same trick again, success wasn't guaranteed. If someone attempted to check his identity, he couldn't convincingly explain it.

Moreover, even if he infiltrated, what could he achieve? He couldn't solely rely on himself to stealthily mine fire spirit stones; how many could he gather?

Unless he's capable of breaking into Gushan City's treasure vault and raiding the entire place!

This thought crossed his mind, which he promptly dismissed as too dangerous.

Just as he was about to retreat, a familiar-looking figure flew out of the volcanic crater.

Upon closer inspection, it was indeed someone he recognized, and the spirit force emanating from her body clearly wasn't something the Cloud River Realm level could possess.

She too had advanced to the True Lake Realm!

Observing her direction, it seemed she was heading towards Gushan City Pass.

Lu Ye contemplated a bit and refrained from disturbing her. Although they had spent time together day and night for a period, and collaborated briefly once, their camp stances differed ultimately, making them battlefield enemies necessitating sword-crossing.

That said, back when Lu Ye was at the Great Reversal Valley Spirit Ground, there was a time when numerous Ten Thousand Demons Ridge cultivators planned to besiege him, and it was her who discreetly tipped him off to flee.

Although Lu Ye ended up not escaping, he still owed her a favor.

So, in the future, if they truly clashed in battle, he might consider showing some mercy.

Upon returning from patrol, he happened to see a cultivator from Haotian City standing outside his bamboo building awaiting his return.

This person was under Qian Wudang, responsible for retrieving refined Explosive Fire Spirit Stones from Lu Ye. His name was Cheng Xiu, and after several encounters now knew him superficially.

At this moment, though, something seemed amiss with this combat cultivator of True Lake Level 5 Realm.

He stood rigidly in front of the bamboo building, not daring to move a muscle, face ashen pale like paper, sweat beads as big as beans rolled down his cheeks, drenching his clothes.

One hand clung tightly to the sword at his waist, gripping without drawing, the knuckles turning pale from pressure.

The cause being Nian Yuexian sitting on a tree trunk nearby, hands braced on either side as she dangled her long legs, an expression seemingly relaxed yet exuding an overbearing aura pervading the surroundings, affecting Cheng Xiu's will.

Chapter 916 Nian Yuexian's Request

Nian Yuexian's actions directly made Cheng Xiu feel like a fully drawn bow with a taut string, but the arrow on the string couldn't be released, leaving him extremely uncomfortable.

Seeing Lu Ye return, Cheng Xiu felt as if he had been granted amnesty and quickly signaled to Lu Ye with pleading eyes.

Lu Ye observed the situation with a mix of amusement and helplessness, unsure how Cheng Xiu had offended Nian Yuexian to be tormented like this.

He stepped forward a few paces, cupped his fists, and said, "My Lord, I have returned from my patrol. There is nothing unusual within a thirty-mile radius. Please give further instructions!"

Nian Yuexian softly acknowledged him and then said, "Come find me later; I have something to discuss with you."

"Yes!" Lu Ye responded, and when he looked up again, Nian Yuexian had already disappeared.

Beside him, Cheng Xiu was nearly faint from exhaustion, his legs trembling, "Brother Lu... please, help me up!"

A moment later, inside the bamboo building, some color had finally returned to Cheng Xiu's pale face, and he looked at Lu Ye with a face full of emotion.

To be able to serve under such a person and remain unharmed was a skill in itself.

Although he had grievances in his heart, he dared not voice any complaints. The Mental Consciousness perception of a Divine Sea Realm strong cultivator was not something to be trifled with; he would not dare utter a word of disrespect.

He spoke only of important matters, dealing with Lu Ye regarding the Explosive Fire Spirit Stones.

After counting the items, Lu Ye said, "Brother Cheng, please relay to your lord that the delivery schedule should be changed to once a month. Once every seven days is too frequent. Not only does it tire you with constant travel, but I also need time to go into seclusion for cultivation."

This suggestion was reasonable, and Cheng Xiu immediately agreed, "I will report to my lord once I return, but how to decide is not up to me."

"Just convey my message, that's all."

Cheng Xiu did not linger long and left shortly.

After he left, Lu Ye went to the bamboo building where Nian Yuexian resided. Before he could speak, Nian Yuexian's voice came from inside, "Come in."

Lu Ye walked straight in.

Nian Yuexian was waiting.

"What instructions do you have, my Lord?" Lu Ye asked.

Since arriving at this Cangyan Mountain Pass, aside from giving him a few tasks in the initial days, Nian Yuexian had not interfered with him, so Lu Ye was unsure what she wanted him for.

"I want to know, the last time you saved me, what was that spirit rune called?"

This matter had been lingering in Nian Yuexian's mind for a long time. Although, as someone who experienced its effects firsthand, she understood the power of that spirit rune, she needed to comprehend its nature before taking action. After all, while this journey was not supposed to be too dangerous, she still needed a way to respond in case of any unforeseen threats.

This wasn't something Lu Ye couldn't speak of; he might conceal it from others, but when Nian Yuexian asked, he had to answer truthfully.

After all, he had previously used this spirit rune on both of them.

Immediately, Lu Ye explained the intricacies of the Twin Flying Phoenixes.

Upon hearing the name of the spirit rune, Nian Yuexian was momentarily taken aback, not expecting such an evocative name for the spirit rune.

Lu Ye explained in detail, and Nian Yuexian listened quietly.

A moment later, Lu Ye asked, "What does my Lord need me to assist with?"

Nian Yuexian asking specifically about the Twin Flying Phoenixes clearly indicated she needed his assistance, but Lu Ye couldn't figure out what kind of task would require Nian Yuexian to rely on the Twin Flying Phoenixes.

The only thing he could lend to Nian Yuexian was the immense vitality within him...

His own strength was negligible in the presence of Nian Yuexian.

"Let's not discuss the matter for now. I need you to use that spirit rune once more."

The last time, the situation was urgent, and Nian Yuexian hadn't had the chance to fully experience it. To truly understand the Twin Flying Phoenixes, she needed to feel it firsthand once more, so she could decide whether to take Lu Ye along.

"Of course." As Lu Ye nodded, he unsheathed his long knife, drew it across his palm, letting blood flow, and then extended his hand toward Nian Yuexian.

Nian Yuexian understood instantly, using her fingernail to cut her palm, from which blood also flowed.

She then gently placed her hand onto Lu Ye's palm.

In the brief moment of their hands clasping, Lu Ye slightly raised an eyebrow.

He couldn't deny that this hand was very soft, almost boneless.

In the life-and-death scenario previously, he had acted without thinking, without realizing how holding such a hand resembled gripping a smooth, warm jade.

With a subtly significant gaze directed at him, Lu Ye hastily focused his mind, channeling his spirit force. In the next moment, the blood at the center of their palms shifted and formed into two beams of blood light, descending onto the backs of their hands, taking the shape of a single wing, blood-red and lifelike.

When the Twin Flying Phoenixes spirit rune was successfully formed, Lu Ye distinctly felt the massive and deep reserves within Nian Yuexian, and similarly, Nian Yuexian sensed the astounding vitality within Lu Ye.

"Can't let go of our hands?" Nian Yuexian asked.

Lu Ye shook his head, "Only through this intimate physical contact can we share the underlying strength of our bodies."

This explanation was quite reasonable.

Nian Yuexian then asked, "What about the vitality within you?"

Such immense vitality wasn't something a mere True Lake Realm cultivator could possess. Even those physique cultivators in the Divine Sea Realm might not have a foundation like Lu Ye's.

"Just some fortuitous encounters," Lu Ye replied offhandedly, not going into details.

Nian Yuexian did not press further, instead asking, "Are there any other methods by which I can borrow your strength?"

Lu Ye thought for a moment and said, "A touch of telepathy! If the Twin Flying Phoenixes targets the physical body, then a touch of telepathy targets the psyche. However, if truly utilized, there would be no secrets between us. Compared to the Lord's psyche, my psyche strength is negligible, so there's no need to borrow it."

Nian Yuexian nodded and withdrew her jade-like hand from Lu Ye's palm, calmly saying, "I'll give you a mission."

"Please tell me, my lord!"

Nian Yuexian took out her guard token and performed some gestures.

Lu Ye's expression turned serious; tasks issued through the guard token are extremely formal and recognized by Heaven's Augury, meaning they can earn battle merits.

He immediately checked the guard token with a mixture of apprehension and anticipation.

When he saw the content of the mission, he was at a loss whether to laugh or cry.

The task was very simple: offer three drops of Soul Cleansing Water to his own Mountain Pass Chief!

What kind of task is this...

If you wanted it, you could have simply asked, and I would naturally give it to you. There was no need to make it so complicated.

Lu Ye then took out a bottle from his storage sack and handed it to Nian Yuexian. The bottle clearly contained more than three drops of Soul Cleansing Water, possibly as many as ten.

"This is too much, beyond my authority," Nian Yuexian frowned.

"Three drops are for the task, the rest are my humble offering to you, my lord."

Nian Yuexian's expression turned somewhat peculiar, the word 'offering' made her feel as if she were very old.

But this was, after all, Lu Ye's sentiment, so she accepted it readily.

The next moment, Lu Ye noticed some activity in his battlefield marking, looked down and found many more battle merits had been added.

Counting the rewards from previously crafting the Explosive Fire Spirit Stone, his current battle merits had reached almost 230,000.

In a few days, his bi-monthly salary would be issued again, adding another 60,000 battle merits.

Lu Ye didn't know how other True Lake Realm cultivators acquired battle merits, but ever since he arrived at Cangyan Mountain Pass, acquiring battle merits had always been an easy task, with large amounts of merits being credited at a time.

"You are granted a three-day break; in three days, come with me to a place."

"Where to?"

Lu Ye asked casually, not expecting Nian Yuexian to withhold any information, "Liyuan."

Lu Ye hadn't heard of Liyuan, so he quickly took out his ten-part map to check. After confirming Liyuan's location, he couldn't help but look up at Nian Yuexian, "Liyuan at the border of Bingzhou and Wuzhou?"

"Yes!" Nian Yuexian nodded.

Lu Ye was taken aback, "What are we going there for?"

To get there entails crossing through Ten Thousand Demons Ridge into Bingzhou territory, deep into the heartland of Ten Thousand Demons Ridge.

What a perilous place!

Of course, a detour could be taken, but it would undoubtedly consume a lot of time. With Nian Yuexian's temperament and personality, it was unlikely she would take a detour.

Chances were she would cross through Bingzhou directly!

"If I must go, then there must be a reason. This is not a task; consider it a... request, so you do not have to go. The three days are both a break and time for you to think about it. Go, just give me your answer in three days."

"I take my leave!" Lu Ye cupped his hands and withdrew.

It finally dawned on him that Nian Yuexian was investigating the details of the Twin Flying Phoenixes and asking for Soul Cleansing Water as preparations for the trip in three days.

He didn't know what secret Liyuan held, but it was clearly of great benefit if it attracted a strong cultivator like Nian Yuexian.

Nian Yuexian gave him three days to consider, but for Lu Ye, there was nothing to consider at all.

His own Mountain Pass Chief needed his assistance, and he certainly would not refuse. He hadn't forgotten, back in Gushan City, when he was in crisis, Nian Yuexian had risked exposure to rescue him.

While he had later saved Nian Yuexian's life as well, making it even between them, personal bonds are not transactions or bargaining chips.

His own Mountain Pass Chief was going, so he must accompany her.

However, before that, he needed to prepare a bit more.

At the very least, he needed to augment his life-saving capital.

It seemed like some of the battle merits he just received would be spent very soon!

Upon leaving Nian Yuexian's bamboo tower, Lu Ye headed straight to Heaven's Augury Hall.

He quickly connected with Heaven's Augury, entered the Hall of Battle Merits, and followed his memory to a stone platform.

Displayed on the stone platform was a treasure garment, and it was a top-grade magic-artifact class treasure garment!

Protection-type treasures like treasure garments and treasure armor were more sought after by the magic cultivator faction. Since their physical bodies were not as strong as those of other factions' cultivators, having a treasure garment or treasure armor increased their life-saving measures.

Combat cultivators typically didn't use such items, especially ones like Lu Ye who pursued personal combat skills. For them, treasure garments and treasure armor were burdens.

Because, for combat cultivators, excessive protection could dull their drive and prove to be an obstacle to advancement. Wearing them over long periods could lead to a miscalculation of their abilities, and it would decrease their vigilance and grasp of combat opportunities.

Hence, from the start of his cultivation, Lu Ye had never purchased any treasure garments or treasure armor.

Chapter 917 Crimson Dragon Battle Suit

Moreover, Lu Ye himself has Defense Spirit Runes as a means of protection, so he basically does not need treasure garments or treasure armor.

But this time, he had no choice but to buy one. With Nian Yuexian going out, who knows what dangers they might encounter or what kind of enemies they might face. Having a treasure garment for protection offers a bit more survival capital.

The Hall of Battle Merits is not without better treasure garments. Not to mention the magic-artifact class, even the spirit-treasure class ones are available.

But considering Lu Ye's cultivation level, a top-grade magic-artifact class garment is already his limit. Higher-grade treasure garments would be difficult for him to activate.

However, the price of this treasure garment named Crimson Dragon Battle Suit is still quite steep.

No less than ninety thousand battle merits.

Compared to the over one hundred eighty thousand of the Soul Suppressing Pagoda, its price is indeed just a fraction. But the Soul Suppressing Pagoda is a Soul Device that even strong cultivators in the Divine Sea Realm might not possess, so its rarity cannot be compared to a treasure garment.

But compared to other magic artifacts of the same quality, the price of ninety thousand battle merits is outrageously high.

Of course, you get what you pay for.

The inherently expensive nature of treasure garments and armor is one thing, but their quality is indisputable, especially at the level of supreme-grade magic artifacts.

Lu Ye pondered briefly before decisively exchanging his battle merits for this Crimson Dragon Battle Suit. His battle merits dwindled by ninety thousand in an instant, truly earned quickly and spent quickly.

The garment was quite heavy in hand, but its texture was smooth as silk—it was unclear what material was used to make it.

In the Nine Provinces, cultivators capable of sewing treasure armor and garments are extremely rare. If Pill Masters, array cultivators, and Artifact Refiners are special talents that big sects invest heavily to cultivate, those who can sew treasure garments are the special talents among special talents.

Although the Crimson Dragon Battle Suit bears the name of a dragon, it is obviously unlikely to be sewn from dragon scales, more likely from materials such as flood dragon skin.

Removing his original clothing and changing into the Crimson Dragon Battle Suit, Lu Ye instantly felt invigorated.

There's a saying that clothes make the man and saddles make the horse. Due to Lu Ye's experiences and personality over the years, he inevitably gives off an aura of killing intent when dealing with strangers. But after putting on this Crimson Dragon Battle Suit, much of his initial murderous aura dissipated, replaced by a bit of elegance and gentleness, as if he were a noble scion from a big family or sect.

Activating his spirit force and quietly sensing for a while, Lu Ye gained some understanding of this treasure garment's various features.

This treasure garment has a strong elasticity, which is beneficial for Lu Ye, because after he activates the Beast Transformation Secret Technique, his body will undergo some changes.

Twice before, when he activated the Beast Transformation Secret Technique, his clothes were torn to shreds, but wearing this Crimson Dragon Battle Suit would save him from such worries in the future.

Moreover, it seems this treasure garment can change its color...

When Lu Ye got it, the battle suit's color was a water blue, but upon activating his spirit force, the color of the suit rapidly changed...

After trying several colors, Lu Ye leaned towards a mix between dark red and black, and in the end, after some hesitation, he settled on black.

The elegant and gentle water blue ultimately did not suit his temperament; black appeared more profound.

With that, any image of being a noble scion from a big family or sect vanished into thin air, and Lu Ye nodded in satisfaction.

As for the pure white without imperfections... it was not even worth considering, as Lu Ye the Sect Destroyer did not match the purity of white at all.

Many sword cultivators liked to wear white clothes, like his Fourth Senior Brother, Li Baxian, whose clothes were white with flowing red cloud patterns. When his figure maneuvered, it resembled the magnificent sunset, giving an impression of unrestrained boldness, completely different from pure white.

That was how the outward appearance of the battle suit was.

As for its specific features and how much protective power it can provide, that needs to be tested in combat.

Lu Ye believed that his ninety thousand battle merits would not be spent in vain, for this is a product of the Hall of Battle Merits!

Leaving the Hall of Battle Merits, Lu Ye returned to his bamboo house.

Yiyi and Amber, who were staying there, immediately noticed the newly dressed Lu Ye and gathered around him, clicking their tongues in wonder as they circled him to inspect.

Lu Ye stood tall, making his figure appear mighty: "Looks good, right?"

Yiyi nodded repeatedly: "Looks good, really good. It would be even better if it were white."

"What taste!" Lu Ye glared at her, losing the thought of showing off, and sat down cross-legged, taking out the Breath Fruit Core, preparing to test the protective power of his new treasure garment in the Mirage Realm.

After a little more than half a day, Lu Ye opened his eyes, his brow furrowed.

It was not that the result was disappointing; rather, it exceeded his expectations. In the Mirage Realm, even the attacks from enemies with True Lake Level 4-5 cultivation could not break through the protection of the treasure garment.

A single treasure garment brought a significant boost to Lu Ye's strength, enhancing his survival capacity by at least thirty percent.

For others, such formidable protection from a treasure garment would naturally bring joy.

But Lu Ye did not lose his head over it.

External force is ultimately external. It can be used but cannot be relied upon... this can easily lead a combat cultivator to misjudge their true strength.

In the long run, it could incite blind confidence. The consequences would be unimaginable if, one day, a strong opponent shatters the protection of the treasure garment.

Nevertheless, this was not a reason to forgo the treasure garment altogether.

The ninety thousand battle merits spent can't just be shelved, so Lu Ye could only keep reflecting on himself silently at all times.

However, compared to the protection provided by the treasure garment, the consumption of spirit force in battle had obviously increased significantly. This was the price to pay when wearing the treasure garment to confront enemies.

In the midst of a fierce battle, attack is the best defense. Rather than consuming spirit force on defense, it's better to strike a few more blows.

The matter of the treasure garment was thus temporarily settled. After all, this trip was meant to handle official matters with Nian Yuexian, and having one more means of protection was beneficial.

Nian Yuexian gave him three days. In these three days for cultivation, his strength could no longer be enhanced.

Lu Ye pondered for a moment and suddenly came up with an idea.

If that's the case, it seems feasible, doesn't it?

He quickly searched through his storage sack, looking for a communication stone, and infused it with spirit force.

Soon, he frowned because the communication stone showed no signs of resonance; in other words, the corresponding communication stone was not in the same realm as the one in his hand.

It was very likely that it had been put away in a storage sack.

After all, among the Nine Provinces, cultivators communicate mostly through battlefield markings, and provincial guards can also rely on guard tokens. Who would still use something as primitive as a communication stone?

But if the communication stone doesn't work, how should he find the other party? He can't just openly run into Gushan City again.

Last time he got away without incident and wasn't questioned, but this time might not be the same.

After thinking it over, Lu Ye quickly devised a plan, immersing his mind in his battlefield marking, searching for a brand he hadn't contacted in a long time, and sent out a message.

After a moment, the other party replied with a simple word: "Okay!"

Lu Ye stood up, walked out of the bamboo lodge, and soared into the sky.

In another bamboo lodge, Nian Yuexian felt something, opened her eyes to look in the direction where Lu Ye had disappeared, but didn't pay further attention.

The Cangyan Mountain Pass and the Gushan City Pass are separated by over a thousand miles. This thousand-mile stretch serves as a buffer zone between the two opposing camps and doesn't belong to either side.

In this area, close to the position of the Gushan City Pass, there is a small hill.

Upon arriving there, Lu Ye looked around but did not hide himself and casually found a spot to wait.

About an hour later, he suddenly sensed something unusual nearby and quietly used his mental consciousness to perceive.

He easily detected a familiar aura silently approaching, but since she was not a ghost cultivator, her stealth methods were not very sophisticated. To the current Lu Ye, it seemed somewhat sneaky.

Without revealing this, he continued to wait patiently.

After a while, accompanied by rustling sounds, a figure appeared in Lu Ye's sight.

Who came was undoubtedly a beauty, with a tall figure, delicate features, and a playful smile on her face, appearing meaningful.

She brazenly walked up and stopped three feet in front of Lu Ye, huffed, "Ye Liu? Or should I call you... Lu Yiye!"

The name Ye Liu was not one that Lu Ye had mentioned in front of many people. The number of people who knew this name did not exceed the fingers of one hand, and only one belonged to the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge.

At the time Lu Ye first arrived at the Cloud River battlefield, it was with Shen Xiaomao that he teamed up to guard a Class C Spirit Ground!

This clearly wasn't the real name of the other party, just like how she knew from the start that Ye Liu wasn't Lu Ye's real name either.

The difference was, Shen Xiaomao later found out about Lu Ye's details, but Lu Ye remained clueless about hers.

The familiar silhouette he saw before near the Cangyan Mountain volcano was indeed Shen Xiaomao. The two met because of a spirit ground at the Cloud River battlefield and experienced the secret realm of the Ten Thousand Beasts Domain together. Upon returning, the spring spirits in the spirit ground were plundered, and they parted ways, never meeting again.

Back then, both were at Cloud River, and Shen Xiaomao's cultivation was several layers higher than Lu Ye's.

Now both have reached the True Lake, yet Lu Ye's cultivation has surpassed hers.

"It's pointless to reveal the truth. Here, I'm just Ye Liu to you," Lu Ye responded indifferently, without much enthusiasm for meeting an old acquaintance.

Shen Xiaomao did not mind; in her impression, Lu Ye was exactly this way.

"You've got quite the guts to contact me. Are you not afraid I'll bring a group to surround and capture you? You might not know how big a bounty you're carrying on the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge side."

"That's old news. I've been behaving very well recently, and haven't troubled anyone from the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge. Is that bounty still up?" Recently, indeed nothing major was done, just led the Fire Spirit Race to Gushan City with Ying Wuji...

But Ying Wuji was involved in that too.

"Once a Bounty Order is issued, it's not easily retracted. Your head is valuable," she replied.

"Did you bring people then?" Lu Ye asked.

Shen Xiaomao pursed her lips and said, "You know exactly why you're asking."

Chapter 918 Lu Ye Gave Too Much

Lu Ye now has Mental Consciousness as his anchor. Although the range he can perceive is not very large, if he focuses on exploring, he can't miss any movement within a mile.

Shen Xiaomao indeed came alone this time and did not notify anyone.

"Speak, what do you want from me?" Shen Xiaomao began.

"First, I want to thank you for last time..."

"Stop!" Shen Xiaomao backed away a few steps as if her tail had been stepped on, looking at Lu Ye with vigilance, "What last time? There was no last time, nothing happened last time!"

Their faction stances were opposing. Last time, when a large group from Ten Thousand Demons Ridge gathered, prepared to besiege the Great Reversal Valley Spirit Ground, she couldn't bear it and tipped off Lu Ye, which already went against her stance.

Though Lu Ye did not leave early due to her tip-off and instead made a fool out of Ten Thousand Demons Ridge, Shen Xiaomao definitely didn't want to mention it again. If others found out, she would be undeniably guilty of colluding with the enemy.

Understanding, Lu Ye fell silent.

"Did you call me out just to say that?" Shen Xiaomao looked at Lu Ye speechlessly.

"Of course... not!"

"Then what do you want to do? Let me make it clear, I won't do anything that harms Ten Thousand Demons Ridge, and you better not think of forcing me. Public is public, and private is private; we need to distinguish this."

"Don't worry, I won't make you do anything difficult. I just want you to deliver an item to someone."

Shen Xiaomao was puzzled: "What do you want me to deliver, and to whom?"

Lu Ye took out an audio transmission stone and tossed it to Shen Xiaomao.

Shen Xiaomao caught it, curious, but since audio transmission stones were not available in Nine Provinces, she couldn't determine the specific use of the item in her hand.

"There's someone called Ying Wuji at your Gushan City Pass; deliver this to him."

"Ying Wuji?" Shen Xiaomao was a bit surprised, "Do you know him?"

From Lu Ye's tone, it sounded like not only did they know each other, but there seemed to be some unspeakable secrets; otherwise, why would he ask her to deliver an item?

Her curiosity burned fiercely as she looked at Lu Ye, inquiringly: "What's between you two? Ying Wuji isn't a spy for your Haotian Alliance, is he?"

Lu Ye said lightly, "He is the most core disciple of this generation in Senluo Hall. Do you think someone like that would be a spy for the Haotian Alliance?"

"True enough..."

"As for our relationship... if he wishes to tell you, you can ask him."

Shen Xiaomao laughed: "Are you so sure that I'll help you with this?"

"I wasn't sure, but since you came, I am sure now."

Shen Xiaomao snorted, but before she could continue speaking, an object flew towards her.

She quickly caught it and discovered it was a jade vial in her hand. Not knowing what's inside, she couldn't help but snort coldly: "After all, I'm from Ten Thousand Demons Ridge, and you're from the Haotian Alliance. We shouldn't meet in private. I can't possibly help you with this favor; I have my own principles, and you can't bribe me."

"Soul Cleansing Water." Lu Ye casually uttered three words.

"What?"

"The vial contains three drops of Soul Cleansing Water as your reward for helping me this time. All you need to do is deliver the item to Ying Wuji; nothing else is required of you."

Shen Xiaomao looked at Lu Ye in shock, wearing an expression that said, "My experience is limited, don't deceive me."

Soul Cleansing Water. That's a treasure even Divine Sea Realm strong cultivators would envy, and it's extremely rare. Someone at the True Lake Realm like her has no means to obtain it.

She is currently in the True Lake Realm, and the next step is Divine Sea. However, she knows her own aptitude well, and achieving Divine Sea in this lifetime is bound to be very difficult. But if she has three drops of Soul Cleansing Water...

Forcing down her inner excitement, she opened the bottle cap, and a refreshing fragrance immediately surrounded her nose.

Feeling refreshed!

Shen Xiaomao had never seen Soul Cleansing Water and didn't know if the vial contained it, but even if it wasn't Soul Cleansing Water, it was surely a treasure beneficial to the psyche!

She grabbed it and tucked it into her ample bosom.

"Principles are meant to be broken; I'll certainly help you with this favor!" She assumed an air of righteous dignity.

Internally, she sighed. It wasn't that her stance was weak; it was that Lu Ye offered too much.

"Very well!" Lu Ye nodded with satisfaction.

"But there's still one problem..." Shen Xiaomao had a troubled expression.

"Go ahead."

"You also know that Ying Wuji, being from Senluo Hall, is an inherently arrogant person. He was okay before, but recently, I don't know what's been bothering him; he's been sullen all the time. I met him the other day, and when I greeted him, he ignored me. I have no problem delivering the item to him, but what if he refuses it?"

"If he dares to refuse, just say one thing to him."

"What?"

"Righteous Blood Flows Forever!"

Shen Xiaomao looked at him with deep meaning: "And you say Ying Wuji is not a spy for your Haotian Alliance!"

There's even a code phrase!

Lu Ye was too lazy to explain anything.

A moment later, Shen Xiaomao left, and Lu Ye returned the way he came.

Gushan City Pass, Shen Xiaomao returned familiarly and, following the memories in her mind, walked toward the southeast corner of a cluster of buildings.

Ying Wuji's residence was over there.

Although she had long hair, she also had her own judgment. Whatever Lu Ye asked her to do this time, it would undoubtedly harm the interests of Ten Thousand Demons Ridge.

No matter the relationship between Lu Ye and Ying Wuji, she shouldn't pass this message. As she told Lu Ye, public matters are public, private matters are private. If she couldn't distinguish this much, then her years of cultivation would be in vain.

But the temptation of three drops of Soul Cleansing Water was too great... she could only agree.

As for taking the items without fulfilling the task and pocketing the Soul Cleansing Water, that was impossible.

Anyway, she had to ensure Ying Wuji wasn't an undercover agent for the Haotian Alliance. If the relationship between the two was merely simple acquaintance, then things were easier. As long as Ying Wuji didn't act against the interests of the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge faction, everything could be settled.

Having made up her mind, she hadn't reached her destination when she saw Ying Wuji's figure ahead.

Shen Xiaomao was delighted and hurriedly approached, gracefully saluting: "Senior Brother Ying."

Ying Wuji had a troubled expression, subconsciously responded with a word, and was about to pass by.

Not expecting Shen Xiaomao to turn and block his path.

"What is it?" Ying Wuji frowned and asked.

If it were before, he wouldn't be so impatient when such a beautiful junior sister blocked his way. But recently, there were too many bothersome matters, and he had no mood to chat with beautiful junior sisters.

Among other things, a lot of people died in the last Gushan City siege and defense battle. The Cloud River Realm cultivators he took out to collect Earth Fire didn't survive.

Others were unclear about how those Fire Spirit Race members came about, but he knew. It involved his matters and Lu Yiye's matters!

But these things couldn't be revealed to others, otherwise his future prospects would be bleak.

Moreover, once he knew Lu Ye was at the opposite Cangyan Mountain Pass, Ying Wuji realized it was a troublesome place unfit for long staying, lest he'd be harmed by that scourge sooner or later.

He initially wanted to find a chance to transfer away from this place, but due to a lot of casualties recently, Gushan City lacked manpower now, and the matter of transferring couldn't be discussed.

Silently deciding, he absolutely wouldn't leave Gushan City in the future!

I'd stay here and not show my face. No matter how capable Lu Yiye was, he couldn't affect me!

Recently, his mind was too jumbled, and even cultivation didn't interest him much. It was during this chaotic state that Shen Xiaomao blocked his path.

"Senior Brother Ying, I have something to tell you. Can we find a quieter place?" Shen Xiaomao spoke.

Ying Wuji glanced up and down at her, didn't know what he'd thought, but his gloomy mood slightly eased. No matter the reason, a beautiful junior sister seeking him out and wanting a quiet place to chat was always thought-provoking.

I, Ying Wuji... can still stand up!

But matters between men and women should be avoided; he must clarify matters with the junior sister in front.

After a brief hesitation, Ying Wuji nodded, "Follow me."

A moment later, he led Shen Xiaomao into his residence, triggering various formations.

While Ying Wuji was considering how to gently yet politely decline, Shen Xiaomao suddenly handed him something: "Someone entrusted me to pass this to you!"

Ying Wuji, out of instinct, glanced at it, and upon seeing the item in Shen Xiaomao's hand, he instantly retreated backward explosively, raising his hand to grasp the curved knife at his waist, showing a ready-to-fight stance.

Shen Xiaomao was dumbfounded, looking at Ying Wuji with spirit force activated around him, she gently called, "Senior Brother Ying?"

Ying Wuji's gaze flickered between her and the transmission stone, a nightmare-like name flashed through his mind, and his eyelids twitched violently: "This thing... where did you get it?"

Shen Xiaomao didn't recognize the transmission stone, but Ying Wuji surely did.

This was the tool he used to contact Lu Ye when the Unparalleled Continent was shattered. Only Lu Ye among those he contacted could refine this item.

So he couldn't understand how Shen Xiaomao had a transmission stone!

Suddenly recalling something, he became vigilant: "Who asked you to pass this to me?"

Shen Xiaomao meaningfully said, "Senior Brother Ying, who do you think it might be?"

Ying Wuji's eyes narrowed, "Are you from the Haotian Alliance?"

Shen Xiaomao was dumbfounded. Originally, she suspected Ying Wuji was a dark agent of the Haotian Alliance, but now she was being suspected, and quickly said, "Of course not, Senior Brother Ying. What are you talking about? I'm telling you, you can't say such things indiscriminately; it would be bad if someone heard."

"Then how do you have this item? And you even have contact with that person?"

As for who that person was, Ying Wuji truly didn't want to mention the name, it pained his heart...

"There are some unspeakable reasons. Anyway, he entrusted me to pass this item to you, Senior Brother Ying. I think you are from the Haotian Alliance."

"Nonsense!" Ying Wuji shouted angrily, "How could I be from the Haotian Alliance."

"Swear by Heaven's Augury and I'll believe you!" Shen Xiaomao stared at him, silently deciding that if Ying Wuji didn't swear by Heaven's Augury, she'd immediately spread the news.

But unexpectedly, as soon as she finished her sentence, Ying Wuji truly swore by Heaven's Augury...

Chapter 919 I Found a Guide

Under Heaven's Augury oath, Ying Wuji proved his innocence and then turned to glare at Shen Xiaomao: "Your turn."

Shen Xiaomao's head felt as big as a bucket, and he hurriedly made an oath under Heaven's Augury.

Moments later, the two looked at each other, both confirming that neither was a Haotian Alliance spy; they had only interacted with Lu Ye for some reasons.

Ying Wuji said with a cold face: "I don't care what dealings you have with that person, but since you call me Senior Brother, I ought to warn you, it's best not to have any contact with him in any form again. Getting involved with that person surely leads to no good!"

His demeanor showed he was someone experienced and deeply poisoned, igniting Shen Xiaomao's curiosity further: "What exactly happened between you and him?"

"Don't ask, I don't wish to talk about it. That's all I have to say. Take care, please leave!"

He was about to issue a dismissal.

Shen Xiaomao sighed, and could only speak slowly: "Righteous Blood Flows Forever!"

"Loyal Heart Illuminates Ten Thousand Years..." Ying Wuji instinctively responded.

In the room, their eyes met; the silence around was so quiet you could hear a pin drop.

"Senior Brother Ying, this thing..." Shen Xiaomao broke the awkward silence.

"Give it to me." Ying Wuji extended his hand as if resigned to fate.

That Lu Yiye fellow was clearly warning him!

The last siege battle at Gushan City weighed heavily on his mind, with many aspects he couldn't easily disclose to others. That fellow's stance was obvious; if he dared refuse, he'd surely leak matters to Ten Thousand Demons Ridge, making his future days difficult.

No matter how you see it, the casualties in that battle at Ten Thousand Demons Ridge were significant.

Taking the audio transmission stone, Ying Wuji's hand shook slightly, as if burned, before he solemnly looked at Shen Xiaomao: "You'd best forget today's happenings, and remember my advice—avoid further contact with that person, or else..."

"Or else what?" Shen Xiaomao curiously looked at him.

Ying Wuji, disheartened, waved a hand with no desire to speak.

What else? I'm the result!

Shen Xiaomao left, uncertain if he'd heeded the warning. Holding the audio transmission stone, Ying Wuji's expression changed.

He thought that hiding in Gushan City would prevent Lu Yiye from involving him again, yet who knew he had such means—to have someone deliver an audio transmission stone to him!

After sitting for long, an internal battle raged within; Ying Wuji finally gritted his teeth, infused spirit force into the audio transmission stone, and fiercely queried: "What do you want?"

Outside Cangyan Mountain Pass, Lu Ye, patrolling with Yiyi and Amber, felt a stirring, retrieved another paired audio transmission stone, and secretly marveled at Shen Xiaomao's efficiency—within half a day's separation, the item had been delivered to Ying Wuji.

He surely hadn't entrusted the wrong person.

"In two days at 7 am, three hundred miles northeast of Gushan City! Moreover, you'd best take leave."

In Gushan City, Ying Wuji dumbfoundedly received the reply, grumbled softly: "What are you up to, Lu Yiye? What's happening two days later at 7 am? What kind of leave do I need to take!"

"Don't be late!"

When Ying Wuji tried to contact Lu Ye again, he discovered the resonance of the audio transmission stone had vanished; in other words, Lu Ye had already stowed the stone in his storage sack.

"Go to hell!" Shouting at the audio transmission stone in frustration, Ying Wuji stood up with a darkened face.

That Lu Yiye fellow was outright bullying him, inexplicably giving him a time and place, as if Ying Wuji could be manipulated at will!

This time, I won't go, and what can you do to me?

After contacting Ying Wuji, Lu Ye headed directly to Nian Yuexian's bamboo house; regarding Ying Wuji's response, he didn't need to think much to guess.

He wasn't worried about him not showing up, as that guy had leverage held over him now. If he truly dared not come, Lu Ye would immediately wear his previous disguise and go to Gushan City, removing the mask before many Ten Thousand Demons Ridge cultivators. It would be enough to trouble Ying Wuji without needing to say much.

"Lord, I have an important matter to report!"

Below the bamboo house, Lu Ye saluted.

"What is it?" Nian Yuexian's voice came from behind.

Lu Ye turned and saw Nian Yuexian sitting on a trunk, looking down at him.

He twitched slightly at the corner of his eye; he noticed his Lord Mountain Pass Chief often didn't stay in the bamboo house. Perhaps, after so many years of enduring the elements, she was accustomed to perching on a sturdy tree trunk.

"Lord, for the trip to Liyuan, I found a guide who might be useful when needed."

"A guide?" Nian Yuexian was puzzled.

"The journey to Liyuan is not short. Even if you have stealth abilities, going deep into Ten Thousand Demons Ridge poses exposure risks. But what if a person from Ten Thousand Demons Ridge accompanies and escorts us? If checked, he can handle it for us, allowing you and me to pass easily."

Nian Yuexian immediately understood his implication.

Originally, she was supposed to take Lu Ye to Liyuan, and it was definitely not possible to fly there openly, because Liyuan was at the border between Bingzhou and Yunzhou, and as such a renowned Divine Sea Realm, if she really flew over, her whereabouts would easily be exposed.

So if she really wanted to go to Liyuan, she could only rely on the prowess of a Ghost Cultivator to stealthily sneak over.

But in doing so, the speed wouldn't be fast.

However, if they truly followed what Lu Ye said, finding a Ten Thousand Demons Ridge cultivator to accompany them along the way and allowing them to handle any interrogations, things would be much easier.

At the very least, they could fly over openly without worrying too much.

But...

"You can find such a person?"

"I've already chosen someone and made an agreement with them."

Nian Yuexian was surprised, not knowing that Lu Ye had such capabilities.

"Is it someone trustworthy?" Nian Yuexian asked, a bit uneasy.

"No! But I have leverage over him, so I doubt he dares to have any ill intentions."

"That's good, but be cautious nonetheless."

"At that time, I'll handle everything. You only need to lead the way and don't have to communicate with him at all." This way, it's easier for Nian Yuexian to remain concealed.

Nian Yuexian nodded: "Though that's the case, there's still a problem. I can indeed wear a mask to conceal my appearance, but my cultivation is hard to hide. The person you're seeking might perceive my identity because of it."

"You don't need to worry about that either. Please, my lord, step over here!" Lu Ye gestured with his hand.

Grasping the meaning, Nian Yuexian lightly floated down from the tree trunk.

Lu Ye raised his hand and stepped forward, saying, "Forgive me!"

Under Nian Yuexian's startled gaze, he pressed his hand against her lower abdomen. In the next moment, spirit force surged, and Nian Yuexian clearly felt a spirit rune instantly added to her body.

Having witnessed Lu Ye displaying the Twin Flying Phoenixes technique, she couldn't help but be curious about the function of this spirit rune.

"What's this?"

"Pseudo-Might," Lu Ye explained, "Do you remember when Yiyi and Amber escorted the powerful Divine Sea cultivator, scaring off Wan Zhanggang and others from afar? That's the effect of this spirit rune. This rune can simulate both the pressure of someone with higher cultivation and the spirit force fluctuations of someone with lower cultivation. Try it out, but take care when channeling your spirit force. Since it's a rune I bestowed upon you, too much spirit force fluctuation could render it ineffective, exposing your true cultivation."

Understanding, Nian Yuexian tried activating the Pseudo-Might's effect, and her aura began to change continuously.

As a Divine Sea Realm, she quickly grasped the various subtleties of Pseudo-Might. Moments later, her spirit force fluctuations stabilized at the True Lake Level 1, even lower than Lu Ye's current level.

This was already the limit; it could go no lower.

The spirit force moved, dispelling the Pseudo-Might spirit rune. Nian Yuexian smiled at Lu Ye: "You're thorough in your work, let's do it as you say."

This smile, even the heavens lost their color.

It was the first time Lu Ye saw Nian Yuexian's smile, and his gaze briefly lingered on her face before he shifted his eyes away: "As long as you're satisfied, my lord. If there are no other instructions, I'll take my leave."

"Go ahead."

Watching Lu Ye's departing figure, the long-missed silhouette resurfaced in Nian Yuexian's mind.

Ultimately, they're not quite the same. That person acted on whims, doing what came to mind on impulse. However, Lu Ye seemed to have a feel of strategizing before acting.

She touched her lower abdomen, the spot he had touched earlier... Nian Yuexian's expression was complex.

Speaking of which, over the years, no one had ever treated her so rudely. If someone else had touched her like that, she would have slapped them away long ago. A woman's lower abdomen is not something to be casually touched, not even through clothing.

But the two had already had some intimate actions before. In the battle against Wan Zhanggang, their ten fingers were intertwined, so touching the lower abdomen seemed like nothing.

Sooner or later, there will be more instances requiring cooperation...

Over two days, Lu Ye didn't cultivate but spent most of his time imprinting the Origin of the Soaring Dragon World, occasionally entering the Mirage Realm to refine his saber skills.

Two days later, just as Lu Ye emerged from the bamboo building, Nian Yuexian flashed in front of him.

They locked eyes briefly, and Nian Yuexian nodded slightly, using her spirit force to envelop Lu Ye as they soared skyward.

"My lord, leaving the mountain pass like this, with no one left at the post, is that alright?" Lu Ye asked.

"If the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge wants to take Cangyan Mountain Pass, they're welcome to. White Jade City and Clear Moon Cave would be glad for the action, as it would give them a reason to deploy troops."

Both White Jade City Pass and Clear Moon Cave Pass are neighbors to Cangyan Mountain Pass, the former being a part of the same Big Moon Checkpoint, and the latter belonging to the Small Moon Checkpoint.

Previously, Lu Ye had a quest to buy wine and visited White Jade City Pass, but his trip was so hurried that he didn't get a chance to experience the local customs.

Over the years, the front line at the three major passes has not seen intense battles, and the cultivators at White Jade City Pass and Clear Moon Cave Pass have lacked opportunities to earn battle merit, so if Gushan City dared to act, the cultivators at these two passes would be overjoyed.

Chapter 920 The Unique Treasure for Winning People's Hearts

Speaking of which, before Lu Ye came to Cangyan Mountain Pass, it often happened that there was no governor here.

Because Nian Yuexian couldn't stay here all the time.

She would go to Gushan City every now and then, and during those times, Cangyan Mountain Pass was equally deserted.

So no matter what, the likelihood of Cangyan Mountain Pass being overtaken is low, unless the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge gets ready to raise its troops.

Swift journey onward.

An hour later, Lu Ye strained his ocular power to gaze ahead: "Master, we are almost there. Soon, I will go and make contact with that person. You need not say anything."

"Alright."

Nian Yuexian replied, descending downward.

Lu Ye left a Pseudo-Might Spirit Rune on her once more, concealing her Divine Sea Realm aura.

"Master, do you have a mask?" Lu Ye asked.

The aura can be concealed by Pseudo-Might, but appearance can only be covered with a mask. Of course, if Nian Yuexian had any artifact that could disguise appearance, that would be even better.

"I do." Nian Yuexian nodded.

One never hits the road without a mask; it's a necessity for covert endeavors. In the Heaven's Augury treasure vault and House of Heaven's Augury, the hottest items are none other than elixir pills and spiritual artifacts, besides which, masks are consistently top sellers.

"Then act appropriately later." Lu Ye advised, turning to the agreed location.

After Lu Ye had left, Nian Yuexian turned over her palm, revealing a visibly aged mask.

Looking at this mask, her mind involuntarily conjured up some distant memories.

She had worn this mask before, done many things unknown to others...

Recalling some amusing matters, Nian Yuexian's lips slightly curled.

Northeast of Gushan City, about 30 miles away.

Lu Ye arrived at this spot with the mask on, without deliberately hiding his whereabouts.

However, in terms of cultivation, he only revealed True Lake Level 1, evidently using the Pseudo-Might Spirit Runes to enhance himself. Though this rune provides no aid in combat, it has one advantage: as long as one doesn't infuse spirit force within, maintaining it consumes little.

Lu Ye merely disguised his cultivation from Level 3 to Level 1, so maintaining the spirit rune was easy for him.

He mainly considered that uploading two small levels in such a short period might seem shocking, potentially startling Ying Wuji. A bit of restraint is safer.

The terrain here is a woodland, not densely packed. Lu Ye stood atop a large tree's crown, scanning with his gaze, yet didn't find Ying Wuji's figure.

Such a situation implies either Ying Wuji hasn't arrived or has hidden upon arrival.

Lu Ye felt the latter was more likely!

He quietly activated his Mental Consciousness to probe the surroundings but found nothing notable.

He wasn't rushed, simply standing there impatiently.

If Ying Wuji truly came, he would have definitely noticed him.

Indeed, after roughly a tea's time, upon probing with Mental Consciousness once more, Lu Ye saw a faint presence about 100 yards away.

Ying Wuji had suffered from Lu Ye previously, so he knew Lu Ye's sensing was far stronger than ordinary cultivators; hence, he dared not be too close.

A hundred-yard distance, as he thought, should be safely far, Lu Yiye wouldn't possibly spot him.

He didn't even dare glance towards Lu Ye's location, fearing his gaze would incite Lu Ye's alertness, quietly lying low.

He had considered ignoring Lu Ye entirely because he knew anything related to Lu Ye would mean trouble.

But he feared Lu Ye might stir chaos in Gushan City, making it hard to clear his name.

With such complex feelings, he arrived here at the agreed time...

Resolutely, he thought no matter what Lu Yiye wanted him to do, he'd refuse emphatically and sever ties completely, never crossing paths in this life.

With this decision made, Ying Wuji felt a sudden ease.

Then unexpectedly saw Lu Ye shift, flying towards him, and...

Directly landed three yards away, staring in his direction.

Exposed? Impossible!

Deep within Ying Wuji, waves of turmoil, though reluctant to admit, Lu Ye's sight was indeed where he hid.

How could he be exposed?

No exposure!

Just a coincidence!

While thinking this, Lu Ye suddenly spoke: "Let's go!"

Three breaths later, Ying Wuji released his cloaked state, revealing himself firmly: "Lu Yiye, I didn't come to agree with anything, just to tell you something..."

"You won't be required to do anything difficult on this trip. Here, you might need this in the future."

"What is it?" Ying Wuji asked instinctively after receiving but quickly realized: "Did you hear me talking?"

"Three drops of Soul Cleansing Water!"

Ying Wuji suddenly fell silent, almost doubting his ears. Looking into Lu Ye's serious eyes, he confirmed he hadn't misheard, quickly opening the jade vial Lu Ye had just given him, inspecting it carefully.

His face showed a look of shock!

It really was Soul Cleansing Water!

Although he had never seen the real Soul Cleansing Water, he had at least heard elders speak of such a divine object. All the rumors he'd heard perfectly matched the item in his hand.

"Consider it your reward for this trip," Lu Ye added.

Just as he told Qian Wudang, if you want a horse to run, you always have to let the horse eat its fill.

Ying Wuji's attitude toward him was something Lu Ye could easily guess, and if he wanted him to sincerely handle matters, mere threats were meaningless. A mix of stick and honey was the best strategy.

He could offer three drops of Soul Cleansing Water to Shen Xiaomao, so what was it for Ying Wuji?

After a moment of silence, Ying Wuji made a decision, carefully putting away the jade vial with the Soul Cleansing Water, and gestured to Lu Ye: "Let's go!"

With Shen Xiaomao in the past and now Ying Wuji, Soul Cleansing Water indeed seemed the perfect treasure to win people over.

But Lu Ye remained motionless.

"Is there something else?" Ying Wuji asked, puzzled.

"Don't you need to request leave?" Lu Ye asked.

Ying Wuji looked embarrassed: "I've already requested leave... But let me make it clear first, this time, no matter what you do, if anything crosses my bottom line, I will withdraw at any moment. Besides, I'm helping you this time not because of the Soul Cleansing Water. No matter what, you saved my life on the Unparalleled Continent, more than once. Although I'm a Ghost Cultivator, I repay kindness!"

He spoke with righteousness, leaving Lu Ye nodding continually, then pointing at his battlefield marking, flicking his finger, allowing a blue light to float towards Ying Wuji.

Ying Wuji immediately covered his battlefield marking in alarm: "What...what are you doing?"

"Add a marking imprint, making it easier for you to repay your debt in the future."

Ying Wuji's face turned bitter.

The two of them hadn't previously added marking imprints to each other's battlefield markings, so whenever Lu Ye needed to contact him, he had to let Shen Xiaomao act as the intermediary. But if a marking imprint was added, Lu Ye could contact him anytime, anywhere.

This kind of thing...

Ying Wuji was about to refuse but noticed Lu Ye's fingers gently rubbing the knife handle.

This guy wants to knife me again!

Given the disparity in power, Ying Wuji could only release his hand, letting the blue light fall into his battlefield marking.

Lu Ye tested sending a message to Ying Wuji, confirming the marking imprint had been successfully added, then called out: "Let's go."

Ying Wuji followed with heavy steps.

A short while later, following Lu Ye, Ying Wuji looked ahead and saw Nian Yuexian wearing a mask, and frowned: "Why is there another person? Who is she?"

Following Lu Ye was ultimately not a glorious thing, and if possible, he didn't want a third person to know.

Who would've thought that there's already someone waiting here, moreover, a female cultivator.

This put Lu Ye in a quandary; he hadn't thought about how to introduce Nian Yuexian or their relationship to Ying Wuji beforehand.

He was about to warn Ying Wuji not to ask unnecessary questions when Nian Yuexian proactively approached, enthusiastically calling out, "Senior Brother!"

Lu Ye stumbled, almost falling from the air.

Ying Wuji quickly supported him, entirely puzzled: "What are you doing?"

"Recently, my cultivation has hit a snag..." Lu Ye casually explained.

What kind of fellow is "Senior Brother"? He never expected Nian Yuexian would call him that, and with a tone... that Nian Yuexian shouldn't have.

Since arriving at the Cangyan Mountain Pass, his impression of Nian Yuexian was always cold and minimally worded, not someone who should be bubbly and sweetly addressing others as "Senior Brother."

When she came closer, a fragrant breeze greeted him, and Nian Yuexian glanced over Ying Wuji, saying: "Senior Brother, this is the friend with great Divine Skills you mentioned, truly remarkable in presence."

"Uh...yes, it's him." Lu Ye was extremely uneasy.

If he hadn't been sure Nian Yuexian would be waiting for him here, he would've doubted whether the person in front of him was really Nian Yuexian.

Not only had her voice changed to being crisp and sweet, but Lu Ye could also see Nian Yuexian's eyes curved beneath the mask.

She was even smiling while talking...

Ying Wuji was flattered, never expecting that Lu Yiye would view him so highly when speaking behind his back. He immediately straightened his chest, cupped his fists: "Ying Wuji!"

Though he couldn't see the woman's appearance clearly, just from her voice and figure, she was undoubtedly a rare beauty.

Being complimented by a beauty always lifts one's mood.

Some of his dissatisfaction with Lu Ye also dissipated significantly.

However... this woman seemed fairly intimate with Lu Yiye, probably quite close, possibly even Lu Ye's romantic partner!

The saying "a friend's wife..."

Bah, it seems he and Lu Yiye haven't reached the level of friends, but regardless, he had no inappropriate thoughts about the woman in front; she was part of the Haotian Alliance, after all.

"Greetings, Senior Brother Ying." Nian Yuexian elegantly bowed, "Senior Brother Ying can call me Water Fairy."

"Water Fairy Junior Sister indeed lives up to her name." He turned to Lu Ye: "Lu... Brother, you really are fortunate."

Lu Ye forced a smile that was harder than crying: "Hehe."