

Humanity 101

Chapter 101 The Heart of a Doctor Is Like That of a Parent

The battle with Dong Shuye had left him feeling powerless, as a low-level cultivator, it was very difficult to survive when crushed by a high-level one.

But if he had had a defensive spirit artifact at that time, he might not have ended up so miserable, the defense spirit runes were good, but they consumed too much spirit force.

Without a doubt, the tiny bell spirit artifact was a decent defensive spirit artifact, so Lu Ye wanted to claim it for himself. However, after acquiring the tiny bell, he had tried to stimulate its power but unfortunately, this thing was very resistant to the infusion of external spirit force. When Lu Ye tried to channel his spirit force into it, he was clearly repelled by some force.

It felt like trying to open a storage sack that didn't belong to him.

So, Lu Ye guessed that this object might also have a restriction lock.

He didn't dare to continue trying blindly because previously on Qingyun Mountain, he had tried to open a storage sack, only to trigger its restriction, and the storage sack was completely destroyed.

The destruction of a low-level cultivator's storage sack wasn't a pity, but if this tiny bell spirit artifact was damaged, it would be a great loss.

The senior cultivator looked at Lu Ye with a peculiar expression, took the tiny bell spirit artifact, examined it briefly, and then handed it back.

Lu Ye looked at him, puzzled.

The senior cultivator took a sip from the teapot and then slowly said, "You're an independent cultivator, aren't you?"

How could he tell?

Following his line of thinking, he replied, "Yes."

The senior cultivator nodded, "It's not easy being an independent cultivator, well then, seeing as you're quite forthright, I'll teach you something good." He pointed at the tiny bell spirit artifact in Lu Ye's hands, "Spiritual artifacts are different from storage sacks. Every restriction within a spiritual artifact is extremely important, as it relates to the quality of the artifact.

Generally, there won't be any self-destructive restrictions inside a spiritual artifact since that would reduce the artifact's power, especially when the quality of the spiritual artifact is not high. Although your artifact hasn't reached the mid-grade, it is the top among low-grade artifacts. The restrictions in it are mostly protective. With that said, do you understand now?"

Lu Ye thought carefully about his words, slowly coming to a realization, "Sir, are you saying that this spirit artifact doesn't have a restriction lock?"

The senior cultivator chuckled, "The so-called restriction lock is just a term. Restrictions themselves are an invisible lock, but some restrictions, if not unlocked with skillful methods, can lead to unpredictable outcomes such as shattering or self-combustion. However, most restrictions don't have this characteristic.

Just like the spirit artifact in your hand, you just need to slowly infuse your spirit force into those restrictions and nourish them, eventually, they will respond to you as naturally as your limbs. You can't use it right now because the artifact still retains traces of its previous owner."

Lu Ye was astounded, now understanding his mistake.

After obtaining the tiny bell spiritual artifact, he had only briefly attempted to use it and then gave up, mainly for fear of repeating past mistakes, but now it seemed he had given up too soon.

This spirit artifact originally belonged to the Young Sect Master of the Nine Stars Sect, and having been nurtured by his spirit force, the various restrictions within retained his traces, which naturally Lu Ye could not stimulate.

But if he erased those traces and then nourished it with his own spirit force, he could make this artifact his own.

If the restrictions inside a spirit artifact were to be likened to a lock, then a cultivator's spirit force would be the key. The Young Sect Master of the Nine Stars Sect was dead, and the key lost. Lu Ye would have to fit a new key to the artifact with his own spirit force.

It suddenly all made sense...

"Thank you, sir," Lu Ye said, rising to his feet in gratitude.

The senior cultivator just waved his hand and picked up his tea, sipping it slowly again.

Stepping out of the Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union, Lu Ye held the Young Master's storage sack, rifling through it to find more than thirty Spirit-Nurturing Pills, over twenty Spirit Stones, as well as several bottles of pills that Lu Ye couldn't recognize, and a mishmash of other items, such as women's clothing...

The clothes were all incredibly thin and scanty. Lu Ye could only sigh and think to himself that this Young Master really knew how to have fun.

The loot wasn't much, but he didn't feel shortchanged either.

Now he had over three hundred and fifty Spirit-Nurturing Pills on him, but sadly, only the six largest pieces of the origin magnetic ore remained. Lu Ye couldn't help but feel a bit melancholic; he had initially thought that the amount of ore he had would be enough for him to cultivate to Spirit Stream Level 9. Now, it seemed he had been too optimistic.

After passing through several chaotic streets, he arrived at a corner of the marketplace.

Immediately, a scream reached his ears. Lu Ye looked over to see a rudimentary tent set up with a few beds inside. On one of them, the burly Kong Niu was holding down a struggling male cultivator, while

Hua Ci, with a headscarf wrapped around her head, hit the male cultivator's abdomen with dazzling speed.

With each strike, the man would let out a scream, and occasionally, a stream of blood would shoot out from a wound on his abdomen, a blood that wasn't the normal bright red, but rather a bit blackish.

It seemed this guy had been poisoned...

This was Hua Ci's regular treatment spot in Liusu Place. Many severely injured Haotian Alliance cultivators would come here to seek her aid. Today, business appeared to be good, as there were several disabled people lying on the beds waiting for treatment, each one looking patently miserable, making one wonder what they had each been through.

With each scream from the male cultivator being treated, he would cry out, "Momma..."

Hua Ci's medical skills were undoubtedly exquisite, but it was undeniable that her treatment methods were somewhat rough. Lu Ye reaffirmed to himself that she was the kind of woman who would utter the most tender words while delivering the most ruthlessly efficient treatment.

And as he listened to the male cultivator's wails, Lu Ye couldn't help but recall Hua Ci's previous jokes about healing cultivators—apparently, she wasn't just spouting nonsense; some people really did call out to her as 'Mom'.

"I told you not to move around, stop moving!" Kong Niu exerted pressure to keep the man from breaking free.

The male cultivator cried with tears and snot running down his face, shouting, "Just kill me, end it already!" His screams were so horrifying that anyone uninformed might fear some inhuman torture was occurring here.

A good while later, Hua Ci finally stopped her treatment and immediately noticed Lu Ye standing off to the side, watching the excitement. She called out unceremoniously, "Hey you there, come over and help."

Lu Ye pointed at himself with his finger.

"Yes, you!" Hua Ci said, wiping off the blood from her hands with a piece of cotton cloth.

Lu Ye approached reluctantly, and Hua Ci held up a bowl of green medicinal solution, gesturing to the side, "Feed it to him."

Taking the medicinal solution, Lu Ye was suddenly flooded with many unpleasant memories. The corners of his mouth curled into a smile as he stepped toward the cultivator being treated.

At that moment, Kong Niu was still restraining the male cultivator, who, upon seeing Lu Ye step by step, somehow felt an especially bad premonition and struggled even more fiercely, "Let me go, let me go now!"

Lu Ye stepped forward, standing in front of the man with an innocuous smile, "Brother, it's time to take your medicine..."

"I don't want to!" The male cultivator's sense of crisis grew even more intense, his head shaking left and right.

Lu Ye gave Kong Niu a look, and Kong Niu immediately grabbed the man's mouth while Lu Ye lifted the bowl and began pouring it in.

"I... gulp gulp... need to gulp gulp..."

Chapter 102

"What a joyful and fulfilling day..." In the carriage, Lu Ye fiddled with the tiny bell spirit artifact in his hands, sighing with emotion.

Liusu Place was almost thirty miles away from the Independent Wanderers Society in Mount Ying, so they used a carriage for commuting back and forth; this saved time and spirit force.

When cultivators were weak, they could not travel through air, and even a Level 7 cultivator like Dong Shuye could only glide briefly in the air.

Thus, low-level cultivators, when traveling, usually rode horses or used carriages. Of course, if they had the capability, they could also tame demon beasts. Riding a demon beast was undoubtedly more prestigious than riding a horse, and more befitting of a cultivator's status. Tamed demon beasts could also join cultivators in battle, which was undoubtedly more useful than horses.

In the Spirit Stream battlefield, there were plenty of wild demon beasts and ferocious animals. When Lu Ye had first arrived, he encountered a pack of wolves, while Amber was also a wild creature from the Spirit Stream battlefield, and naturally, there were also horses.

Today, Lu Ye had helped Hua Ci for a day, and it could be considered that he had seen how she helped people treat diseases and injuries. Her methods were extremely rough, but undeniably, they were highly effective, which was why so many cultivators sought her out when injured.

Lu Ye had initially thought this woman was a greedy mercenary, but what he saw today somewhat overturned his understanding.

Hua Ci charged quite a lot to treat those cultivators, but for some who were really too poor to pay, she would grant them some time to defer the payment, asking only that they supplement the follow-up fees within the agreed time.

Such verbal agreements naturally held no actual commitment; independent cultivators lived days filled with uncertainty, never knowing if they might lose their lives the next day, and indeed, some might not even come back to fulfill the agreement...

So although he was busy all day, the Spirit Stones he earned did not exceed twenty pieces, and if one considered the cost of the medicinal materials and Hua Ci's own efforts, the earnings were not substantial.

With that... Hua Ci finally gave Lu Ye two Spirit Stones, saying it was his compensation for helping out today.

Such a contradictory woman...

Feeling a slight weight on his shoulder, Lu Ye turned his head to see that Hua Ci had fallen asleep, leaning over towards him.

Lu Ye kept his original posture without moving and gently stimulated his spirit force, nurturing the tiny bell spirit artifact in his hands.

At night, after Lu Ye finished practicing with his knife and had bathed, he sat cross-legged on the bed, ready to cultivate, when he suddenly remembered something and got up to go outside.

He went to the neighboring bamboo building and knocked on the door.

After a moment, Hua Ci opened the door. She seemed to have just bathed as well; the room was steaming, and her hair was still slightly wet. Seeing it was Lu Ye, she looked a bit puzzled, "What's up?"

"I have a few elixir pills I can't identify and was hoping you could verify them for me," Lu Ye said.

He had not only obtained Spirit-Nurturing Pills and Spirit Stones from that Young Master of the Nine Stars Sect's storage sack, but also several bottles of elixir pills he hadn't seen before.

Being a healing cultivator, Hua Ci should be well-versed in pharmacology.

Hearing Lu Ye's words, she moved aside, "Come in."

Lu Ye then walked in, giving the room a quick look; its arrangement was just as simple as his, indicating that Hua Ci was not a very particular person.

"What kind of pills?" Hua Ci casually tied up her long hair and gestured for Lu Ye to sit down.

Lu Ye then took out the several bottles of pills.

Hua Ci picked up a bottle, poured out a pill, looked at it intently, and then sniffed it at the tip of her nose, frowning, "This is the Five Poisons Pill. If someone below the Spirit Stream Level 5 takes it, they might die or, at the very least, become delirious."

She put the pill down with a look of disgust, picked up another bottle, and after a moment, said, "This is an orifice burning pill, a poison pill targeted at the spiritual orifice, extremely malicious. If anyone in the Spirit Stream realm takes it, their spiritual orifice will definitely be damaged."

One by one, they were either poison pills or those kinds of unorthodox pills... Lu Ye felt disdain; that Young Master from the Nine Stars Sect really was not a good person.

Hua Ci picked up the last bottle and couldn't help glancing at Lu Ye, "Where did you get these things from?"

"Spoils of war!" Lu Ye replied.

Hua Ci understood.

The last elixir was a strange pink color and emitted a sweet fragrance as soon as it was taken out. Hua Ci couldn't help but pause, "This is..."

Seeming unsure, she brought the pill close to her nose and sniffed.

"Ding dong..." Suddenly, the pill in her hand dropped. Hua Ci placed her hand on her forehead, her body swaying slightly, and she quickly supported herself on the desk with her elbow.

Lu Ye was startled, "What's wrong with you?"

"You... you drugged me?" Hua Ci stared at Lu Ye, her face turning visibly red at a rapid pace. Her beautiful eyes became watery and hazy. Though she was accusing him, the soft tone of her voice combined with her current expression had a distinctly enticing allure.

Lu Ye jumped, vaguely realizing the effect of that final elixir, and quickly waved his hands, "I didn't, don't talk nonsense!"

The situation had escalated; he had only intended for Hua Ci to identify these unknown elixir pills. He had not expected that the Young Master of the Nine Stars Sect would possess such a powerful aphrodisiac.

Hua Ci had already collapsed on the desk, motionless.

Lu Ye quickly went over to check on her and found that she had just fainted.

Looking at Hua Ci lying on the desk, Lu Ye felt a wave of headache. Although it was an unintentional mistake, he absolutely couldn't let this incident be exposed, otherwise the members of the Independent Wanderers Society would surely chop him into pieces.

After thinking it over, he went forward, lifted Hua Ci by the waist, and placed her on the bed, tucking her in before guiltily slipping out the door.

However, he soon returned, took the few vials of elixir pills from the table, and left again.

With the door closed again, Lu Ye hurried back to his own residence.

Hearing the retreating footsteps, Hua Ci, who was lying on the bed, suddenly opened her eyes, covered her mouth with the quilt, and laughed silently.

Although that pink elixir pill was nothing good, as a Level 5 healing cultivator, she was not so easily overpowered by it. Her actions were just a spontaneous tease to toy with Lu Ye for a bit.

However, Lu Ye's reaction had surprised her, this guy's character was unexpectedly strong...

What a pity. If he had been an independent cultivator, he might have been accepted into the Independent Wanderers Society, but he clearly came from a big sect, making him not one of them.

At daybreak, Ruan Lingyu came knocking on the door in a flurry.

Hua Ci opened the door, and Ruan Lingyu handed over a jade vial, "Senior Brother Yiye left at some point and even took a horse with him, leaving this behind."

Hua Ci took the jade vial, opened it, and found ten Spirit-Nurturing Pills, probably as payment for the horse.

She nodded, "Let him go then." Although these days had been pleasant, since they weren't from the same path, parting ways was inevitable eventually.

She had already sensed Lu Ye's intention to leave yesterday; his injuries were no longer serious, and there was no reason for him to continue staying in the Independent Wanderers Society.

So this outcome did not surprise Hua Ci.

Ruan Lingyu sounded somewhat disappointed; there were not many in the Independent Wanderers Society, as Hua Ci's criteria for taking people in were very strict, and not just anyone could join.

She had thought that Lu Ye had a chance to join the Independent Wanderers Society and strengthen its power, but now he had run away without a word...

This left her feeling listless all day.

Chapter 103 Seeking and Searching

...

The steed galloped while Lu Ye sat on horseback as steady as a post.

He had never ridden a horse before, but he had ridden a tiger, and Amber moved much more bumpily than this, so the current situation had no effect on him whatsoever.

After a half-month's healing, his injuries had almost fully recovered. Lu Ye had intended to bid farewell to Hua Ci today, but after last night's misunderstanding, he felt unsure about how to explain it to the sober Hua Ci, so he simply took his leave directly.

He was going to look for Yiyi and Amber.

Half a month earlier, Dong Shuye had pursued him to kill him; in the end, Lu Ye had managed to escape unscathed largely thanks to Amber. Had it not been for Amber carrying Lu Ye and running swiftly, Lu Ye would have had no chance to cross that flat plain.

When they separated, Amber was already injured. Lu Ye didn't know how badly it was hurt or even if it was alive or dead at this moment, but he had to confirm its condition in person, no matter what.

Traveling upstream along the river, sitting on horseback, Lu Ye continued to refine elixir pills and practice his cultivation, while also stimulating his spirit force to nourish the tiny bell spiritual artifact.

A day later, he looked at the waterfall flowing down below and dismounted. He slapped the horse with the scabbard, and, startled, the horse took off running and quickly disappeared from sight.

In the mountains, horses were of no use; they had to be set free.

Below the waterfall lay a huge pool, into which the roaring cascade of water fell, splashing up waves. It was here that Lu Ye had jumped from above the waterfall into this very pool, and if he wanted to find traces of Amber, he had to go back to the top of the waterfall.

As he was surveying the terrain, there suddenly came a splash, and when he turned to look, he saw a person emerging from under the pool.

The person also noticed Lu Ye and immediately looked alert.

In the Spirit Stream battlefield, when cultivators who didn't know each other met, it was mostly this kind of reaction, because no one knew which camp the other belonged to. With equal strength, they wouldn't easily reveal their affiliation.

Looking at the person, Lu Ye remembered that when he had jumped into the pool, there was someone below who appeared to be collecting something. However, that person was unlucky and was sliced into pieces by several Golden Arc Slashes from Dong Shuye, which also enabled Lu Ye to narrowly escape disaster.

Arriving here today and seeing another person, it seemed that indeed there were things underwater useful to cultivators; otherwise, it wouldn't make sense for so many people to come here.

The person slowly climbed out of the water, eyes still fixed on Lu Ye.

The other was a Level 3 cultivator, and Lu Ye didn't take him too seriously.

He looked again at the top of the waterfall and asked, "Fellow Daoist, if I want to climb up, which way should I go?" The cliffs on both sides of the waterfall were sheer and didn't seem to have any climbable spots.

The man looked intently at Lu Ye for a while and pointed in a direction, "Ten miles away, there's a place to go up the mountain."

Lu Ye nodded, "Thank you!" and went in the direction pointed out by the man.

As they brushed past each other, the man's expression was tense until Lu Ye's figure disappeared from view; only then did he slowly relax.

Half a day later, Lu Ye returned to the top of the waterfall.

He retraced his steps in the direction he came, scouting all the way.

The magic and spells cast by Dong Shuye, a Level 7 magic cultivator, were immensely powerful, so traces of the battle during the pursuit still remained along the path.

Soon, Lu Ye squatted down in front of a crater. It had been blown out by a huge Fireball, and the surrounding trees were reduced to ashes.

It was here that he had separated from Amber.

He recalled the scene at the time, and slowly walked to a position about a dozen yards away.

...

He didn't see any bones, which eased Lu Ye's mind somewhat; it seemed Amber wasn't dead.

There were large swathes of dried bloodstains on the ground, which extended in one direction, and that direction surprisingly pointed to the location of the waterfall.

Lu Ye felt a heavy weight in his heart as if he was witnessing the scene from that time.

Back then, he was sent flying off the tiger's back by Dong Shuye's magic and spells, while Amber had also passed out.

He didn't have time to check on Amber's injuries before fleeing because he believed Dong Shuye was after him specifically, and staying together meant death for both. If they separated, Amber might have a chance to survive.

But after Amber came to, it had actually followed the traces on the road to pursue him, obviously trying to find him.

Following the faint blood trail on the ground, he indeed arrived at the waterfall...

There was a large pool of darkened blood on the ground; Amber had clearly lingered here for a while.

Although he had glanced at the bloodstains over here when he had come earlier, he thought they were from his own wounds and didn't pay much attention to them; now he knew they were Amber's.

Lu Ye continued to follow the bloodstains forward, lacking experience in this area. Thankfully, he had become a cultivator, and his visual acuity and insight were much stronger than a normal person's, which allowed him to barely continue.

At dusk, Lu Ye followed the broken trail to the mouth of a cave, where the last bloodstain disappeared.

With an anxious heart, he called lightly into the darkness, "Yiyi, Amber!"

"Roar!" A beastly roar and a fetid draft assaulted him as a black panther sprang out. Lu Ye drew his long knife, and with a flash of the blade, the panther's head flew off, its muscular body collapsing on the ground with fresh blood trickling everywhere.

Lu Ye's face darkened, for he had followed the trail here, yet there was no sign of Amber or Yiyi—only a black panther had emerged...

This gave him a bad feeling.

If Amber hadn't come here on its own, then it was possible it had been dragged here by some other fierce beast.

He sheathed his long knife and stepped into the cave, his spirit force gathering in his eyes, allowing him to see a pile of white bones at the bottom of the cave almost immediately—it only intensified his already unsettling feeling.

Taking heavy steps forward, he crouched before the white bones to closely inspect them.

A moment later, Lu Ye sighed in relief; these were not Amber's bones, Amber's skull would be bigger.

As evening approached, it was impossible to continue the search. Lu Ye had no choice but to rest here for the night.

What could be confirmed now was that Amber wasn't dead at the time and had been to this cave, the bloodshed along the way being the best evidence.

But it must have left quickly. As for where it went, that would have to wait until tomorrow's detailed search.

After nightfall, Lu Ye ate and drank his fill, then continued his cultivation. His spiritual orifice had opened to the 36th orifice. He'd been too exhausted from the day's journey to break through to the 37th orifice's barrier and had to wait until night.

Now, opening orifices was much simpler and easier than when he first started cultivating because he had plenty of spirit force in his body to squander, and his spirit force was very pure, which gave him a natural advantage in opening orifices, enhancing the efficiency.

In just the time it took an incense stick to burn, the barrier of the 37th orifice shattered, and the spirit force flowed into it...

What followed was simple. He only needed to continuously refine elixir pills, assisted by Spirit Energy Gathering Spirit Runes, to fill this spiritual orifice with spirit force, then he could proceed to break through to the next spiritual orifice.

Bestial Gluttony Feast autonomously refined and absorbed the pill energy, and the Spirit Energy Gathering Spirit Runes didn't require his distraction either; so Lu Ye took out the tiny bell spirit artifact and continuously channeled his own spirit force to nurture it.

Chapter 104

The old cultivator from Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union said, "This tiny bell spirit artifact is top of the low grade, which shows its exceptional quality."

Lu Ye was not clear on how the quality of spirit artifacts should be classified, but a comparison revealed that the tiny bell spirit artifact had more than one restriction.

The long sword in his hand could also be barely considered a spirit artifact, but it had only one restriction, which seemed to be able to fortify the blade, allowing the long sword not to break easily during combat with an enemy.

The restriction in the sword was actually a spirit rune, which someone had branded into the blade with a mysterious technique during its forging.

When Lu Ye faced his enemies, he only needed to channel his spirit force into the long sword to activate this spirit rune, sparing him the effort of constructing it himself.

This principle was somewhat similar to his use of the Sharpness spirit rune to enhance the long sword, the difference being that Sharpness was only a temporary enhancement, while the spirit rune that fortified the blade was permanent and could be activated just by consuming some of Lu Ye's spirit force.

The tiny bell spirit artifact contained more than one spirit rune. When Lu Ye's spirit force soaked into it, he could feel this. The runes were combined together by some magical means to form what were known as restrictions.

In Lu Ye's understanding, spirit runes were the foundation of restrictions, and each spirit rune could be considered a restriction. However, different spirit runes seemed to have some magical combination that could produce a more cohesive effect...

His exposure to cultivation was still recent, and all the spirit runes he got were from the Talent Tree. Thus, his understanding was not comprehensive, and he did not know if his perceptions were correct.

These were things he could only research slowly in the future. For now, he just had to gradually channel his spirit force into the restrictions of the tiny bell, nurture it while erasing the traces left by its previous owner, and then he could make use of it.

By day, he searched for Amber and Yiyi's traces. By night, he diligently practiced cultivation.

Time quickly passed, and seven or eight days went by without any clue.

In his thoughts, Amber had previously followed him to the waterfall edge under Yiyi's instructions. Hence, they must have known that he jumped down.

If they still wanted to find him, they would definitely follow the river downstream to look for him.

However, Amber had been seriously injured and might have hidden somewhere to heal first.

Yet, over these days, Lu Ye had searched the nearby area of about 30 miles thoroughly without discovering any valuable clue, leaving him unsure of where to search next.

Another two days passed, still without any results.

Lu Ye felt dejected. Although he had not been with Yiyi and Amber for a long time, their company had been very pleasant, especially since riding Amber had saved him a lot of energy. He had even been able to practice cultivation while traveling, which helped him greatly.

If it had not been for Amber during the time he was chased by Dong Shuye, he would have been caught long ago. It was not an exaggeration to say that Amber had saved his life.

Therefore, no matter what, he wanted to find these two companions.

This journey was started together; thus, it should end together. Lu Ye did not want to abandon companions on whom one might depend for life midway.

Under the night sky, Lu Ye brandished his sword, sweating profusely, while also pondering which direction to search next. He had the ten-part map, so he knew clearly where he had searched and where he hadn't.

While he was planning, a beast's roar suddenly came from deep inside the jungle. Lu Ye abruptly paused his sword-swinging action and listened attentively...

After a moment, another roar was heard, sounding incredibly familiar.

It was Amber!

Lu Ye hurriedly sheathed his sword and dashed in the direction of the sound, startling countless birds along the way.

The tiger's roars became more frequent, suggesting that Amber was engaged in combat with some enemy. As he got closer, Lu Ye faintly sensed the fluctuations of spirit force coming from that direction.

The one fighting Amber was a cultivator!

Lu Ye felt a sinking sensation in his heart, somewhat unable to understand what was happening.

Although Amber was not very powerful, with Yiyi by its side, low-level cultivators wouldn't dare provoke it. Previously, at Qingyun Mountain, Lu Ye had witnessed firsthand how Yiyi and Amber coordinated to intimidate those low-level cultivators.

To low-level cultivators, a demon beast that could speak human language was simply not something they could afford to provoke.

But now there were cultivators attacking Amber—could their cultivation be very high?

Thinking of this, Lu Ye felt increasingly anxious; had he not run out of Move-Like-The-Wind Talismans, he would have immediately taken one out and slapped it onto his leg.

Halfway through his journey, the tiger's roar suddenly stopped, and there was no more noise at the site of the struggle, which made Lu Ye incredibly anxious, not knowing what the situation was like on the other side.

After crossing over a mountain, Lu Ye paused, trying to control his breathing, and then took out a Breath-Concealing Talisman from his storage sack and slapped it onto his body.

In an instant, all his breaths were concealed.

He had never used a Breath-Concealing Talisman before and did not know how long the talisman would last, but he estimated it wouldn't be very long.

Thus, after concealing his breath, he immediately started moving, silently creeping forward.

A moment later, at the edge of a chaotic battlefield, Lu Ye stealthily appeared under the cover of night.

At a glance, he saw the entirely white Amber.

Under the moonlight, Amber staggered like a drunk, its robust body swaying and constantly shaking its head. It emitted threatening growls from its throat, but the sound was somewhat off, as if something was stuck in its throat, making its growls hoarse.

Indeed, there was something around its neck—an item resembling a collar, emitting a faint spirit light, evidently a Spiritual Artifact.

Lu Ye narrowed his eyes slightly, rapidly surveying his surroundings.

There were five cultivators, four men and one woman, spaced out about thirty feet apart, surrounding Amber in a semi-encircled formation.

Lu Ye quietly channeled spirit force into his eyes to observe the spirit light of the five individuals.

He quickly assessed their cultivation levels.

One at Level 5 realm, one at Level 4, and three at Level 3. The woman was at Level 4, currently forming a magic spell with one hand, her body surging with spirit force.

The Level 5 realm cultivator, a young man dressed in black, suddenly spoke, "Loosen the Beast-Taming Collar a bit, don't strangle it to death. It's useless if it dies."

"Got it!" the woman replied, changing the magic spell in her hand, and immediately, the collar around Amber's neck emitted spirit light and loosened slightly.

Deep panting sounds came forth; Amber leaped suddenly towards the nearest Level 3 cultivator, but only halfway through, the collar around its neck emitted spirit light again, and Amber fell to the ground uncontrollably, clearly under strong suppression by the Beast-Taming Collar.

"This creature isn't very powerful but has quite the temper," remarked the Level 3 cultivator with a light laugh.

The woman hummed, "Not very powerful, yet you three were still scared into obediently handing over your storage sacks?"

The previous Level 3 cultivator, embarrassed, said, "Senior Sister Yooi, don't make fun of us. Who knew such a demon beast would have a minion spirit accompanying it? The two of them together are quite terrifying!"

Another Level 3 cultivator nodded vigorously: "Yeah, yeah, Junior Brother Siong was almost scared enough to wet his pants."

"Nonsense!" the last Level 3 cultivator retorted, "I certainly did not."

Senior Sister Yooi lightly laughed: "It's still Senior Brother Zhou who has the insightful eye. Hearing about this, he realized something was amiss. Otherwise, we might have truly missed out on such an

exotic beast. With such weak strength yet accompanied by a minion spirit, imagine how it might grow if properly nurtured."

Chapter 105 - The Brutal Beating in the Cultivation World

Listening to the conversation of those cultivators, Lu Ye gradually understood the circumstances of the situation.

As he had guessed, after he fell into the water and went missing, Yiyi and Amber sought a place to heal their wounds. They were discovered by three Level 3 cultivators, but both the spirit and the tiger had experience dealing with such situations, so they were not panicked at all.

They cooperated with each other to scare away the cultivators, who even offered their storage sacks as a token of their fear.

However, after these three returned, they shared their encounter with Senior Brother Zhou, who sensed something was amiss. He took them back to find Amber. As for the Level 4 female cultivator, she was likely specially invited by Senior Brother Zhou. With the ability to wield the beast-taming collar, she was incredibly useful against demon beasts.

Thus, a squad of five people once again located Amber's trail. Perhaps after some testing, Senior Brother Zhou confirmed Amber was not as formidable as it seemed and made a decisive move.

Fortunately, they wanted to capture Amber alive and did not intend to kill it; otherwise, Amber would have been long dead.

In these past days, Lu Ye had fed Amber many Spirit-Nurturing Pills and made sure it was well-fed and hydrated. Amber's strength had increased significantly from before, but it was still roughly between Level 2 and Level 3. Even with Yiyi's help, they were no match for these cultivators—Senior Brother Zhou alone could easily subdue them.

Amber fell to the ground, struggling to get up, but the beast-taming collar was as heavy as a thousand catties. Even though Amber managed to stand, its head hung low to the ground and it couldn't move, letting out more hoarse roars from its throat.

A flash of spirit light, and Yiyi's figure leapt out from on top of Amber, furiously rushing towards the female cultivator while shouting, "Let go of Amber!"

Seeing Amber in pain, she couldn't help herself even if it meant like a moth to a flame.

However, she had only charged a few steps when her expression suddenly froze, her eyes lighting up with surprise as if she had seen something. The next moment, she hurriedly turned back and darted into Amber, disappearing from sight.

Senior Brother Zhou had quickly approached, ready to drive off this accompanying minion spirit, but to his confusion, she had returned to her companion instead.

But with Yiyi's shout, the light from the beast-taming collar on Amber's neck gradually began to retract. Without the suppression from the collar, it slowly lifted its head. Its amber-colored tiger eyes shone with a demonic glow, and pale golden demonic power swirled around its body, making it seem fierce and menacing, undoubtedly provoked by the series of events it had suffered.

"Senior Sister Yooi, quickly activate the beast-taming collar!" a Level 3 shouted urgently.

Yet Senior Sister Yooi did not react at all.

Senior Brother Zhou looked puzzledly in her direction, and the sight he witnessed caused his expression to darken.

Unbeknownst to them, there was a person standing barely two feet behind Senior Sister Yooi, holding what appeared to be a sharp weapon against her back, near her heart. Senior Sister Yooi stood deathly pale, not daring to move an inch.

As their eyes met, Senior Sister Yooi softly called out to Senior Brother Zhou, "Brother, save me..."

It was only at that moment that a faint scent of blood wafted through the air.

The three Level 3 cultivators finally realized something was wrong and turned to see Lu Ye standing behind Senior Sister Yooi. One of them bellowed, "Who are you? Release Senior Sister Yooi at once, or we from Cloudy Mountain will not let this slide!" As he questioned, he energized his spirit force to probe the spirit light around Lu Ye, only to find nothing.

The other had no spirit light on him at all, leaving him uncertain whether Lu Ye possessed a Spiritual Artifact that concealed his aura or had used some Spirit Talisman.

If it was the latter, it wouldn't be much of an issue, but if it was the former, this person might have a noteworthy background.

While he was filled with doubts, Senior Brother Zhou had already cursed through clenched teeth, "Fool, shut up!"

The cultivator at Level 3 realm had not yet figured out why Senior Brother Zhou was scolding him, when Lu Ye, standing behind Senior Sister Yooi, already revealed a look of realization: "Cloudy Mountain, huh..."

He had seen this power on the ten-part map; it was a 9th grade sect affiliated with the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge faction. Initially, he couldn't confirm which faction these people belonged to, but they made a big mistake trying to intimidate him using their sect's name.

The reason why Senior Brother Zhou swore was precisely because of this; it was very unwise for unfamiliar cultivators to reveal their origins before figuring out which faction the others belonged to when meeting face to face.

This Level 3 realm cultivator clearly had too little experience in battlefield encounters and had not suffered enough from the harsh lessons of the cultivation world.

Lu Ye was originally somewhat concerned about how to deal with them if these few were from the Haotian Alliance, but even if they belonged to the same faction, if he brazenly stepped forward and told them that Amber was his, they would most likely ignore him.

So, no matter which faction they were from, Lu Ye needed to take control of one person first; only then would he have the leverage to talk to them. The reason he chose Senior Sister Yooi was because she was concentrating on operating the beast-taming collar, which gave him the highest chance of a successful sneak attack.

As for that Senior Brother Zhou, with a cultivation at the Level 5 realm, Lu Ye wasn't too confident, as they were two levels apart in cultivation.

Lu Ye didn't put the knife to someone's throat because doing so involved too many uncertainties; the opponent, being at the Level 4 realm, might have some means to break free.

So after quietly sneaking up behind Senior Sister Yooi, Lu Ye decisively struck with his knife, piercing through her back. With one hand on her shoulder, the tip of his blade was only two inches from her heart.

If they wished to survive, they would not dare make any rash moves in response.

It could be said that the moment Lu Ye struck with his knife, no matter which faction the opponent belonged to, enmity had already been established.

But he had no choice. To save Amber, relying on mere words and reasoning was useless; the weapon in his hand was the ultimate argument.

Now that he knew they were from Cloudy Mountain, Lu Ye had no more reservations.

With a light hiss, the long blade that was thrust into Senior Sister Yooi's chest emerged from the other side. The blade was stained with blood, and drops of blood fell from its tip.

Senior Sister Yooi's pupils abruptly contracted, then dilated. She reached out her hand towards Senior Brother Zhou and uttered her last words, "Senior Brother, save..."

Lu Ye kicked her on the back, and as he pulled out the knife, he pushed her toward Senior Brother Zhou.

Senior Brother Zhou, being the highest in cultivation, reacted extremely quickly. Almost at the instant Lu Ye made his move, he drew his sword from his waist, dirt flew under his feet, and he charged at Lu Ye ferociously. A bright spirit light emanated all around him, his eyes were blood-red, and gritting his teeth, he bellowed, "You're courting death!"

He truly hadn't expected the attacker to directly strike down Senior Sister Yooi; such decisive and swift action chilled him to the bone.

His forward rush was interrupted as Senior Sister Yooi, whom he had thrown his way, ran into him. He caught her in a hurry and before he could check whether she was alive or dead, a shadow had already descended upon him.

Senior Brother Zhou looked up and the last thing he saw was a huge, spinning bell. The surface of the bell shimmered with spiritual charm, forming bands of light that twirled around it as it descended from the sky, enveloping him securely.

Chapter 106 - The Exemplary Sword Technique of Senior Brother Zhou

Enveloping Senior Brother Zhou was the tiny bell spirit artifact that Lu Ye had obtained from the Young Master of the Nine Stars Sect. For the past days, he had been nurturing it with his own spirit force, which proved quite effective. Although he hadn't fully refined the restrictions within it, he could at least unleash some of its power.

By channeling the power of the spirit bell, it could trap the enemy. That was exactly how Yiyi had been trapped before. As for other powers, Lu Ye was still unable to utilize them for the time being.

The sudden turn of events had occurred in the blink of an eye. Among the five cultivators from Cloudy Mountain, Senior Sister Yooi was killed, and Senior Brother Zhou was trapped, leaving only the last three at Level 3.

Before they could even grasp what had happened, Lu Ye had already charged at the one nearest to him with his knife drawn.

The man retreated frantically, hastily drawing his weapon to meet the enemy, yet Lu Ye had already brushed past him.

This Level 3 cultivator instantly froze in place, his body shook slightly and then he plunged to the ground, quickly staining the earth red with blood water.

Although both were at Level 3, how could a prepared, sharp blade be blocked by one who was caught off guard? At the moment of contact, life and death were determined.

Lu Ye was already pouncing on the second Level 3 cultivator. It seemed to be Junior Brother Siong, the one who had almost wet his pants due to fright caused by Amber and Yiyi. He had slightly more time to react, but facing a ferocious assailant like Lu Ye, he had lost all courage to resist. He waved his weapon around wildly, retreating in panic, and even screamed, "Don't come any closer!"

That did nothing to delay his inevitable death. Lu Ye dashed up to him, swinging his knife down. In terror, Junior Brother Siong instinctively lifted his weapon to block, and a faint spirit light emerged from it.

This was also a low-grade Spiritual Artifact.

Such low-grade Spiritual Artifacts typically have reinforcement spirit runes imprinted within, since low-level cultivators fought in close-quarter combat. Having sturdier weapons meant that they could last longer in battle; otherwise, if the weapon broke mid-fight, they could only await death.

Just as the two Spiritual Artifacts were about to collide, Lu Ye flicked his wrist, and the Longsword missed the opponent's block, slashing down at an angle.

Had this been right after he left Qingyun Mountain, the slash would've been relentless, shattering the opponent's weapon first, but after surviving numerous life-and-death battles in the Sky-Splitting Gorge, Lu Ye's combat experience had significantly enhanced.

The slash nearly split the opponent's chest open, the beating heart faintly visible inside the ribcage.

"Ah!" The man screamed as he fell to the ground, not yet dead.

Lu Ye flipped his Longsword and stabbed down.

Junior Brother Siong convulsed violently for a moment before stiffening, then lay lifeless.

Lu Ye pulled out his Longsword, splattering hot blood, and without hesitation, turned to kill the third Level 3 cultivator.

This person was entangled by Amber, and Yiyi had also sprung into action, continuously causing distractions. As a Spiritual Body, she was extremely agile and elusive. The combination of the tiger and the spirit might not be able to harm him seriously, but they were more than capable of holding him off.

Seeing Lu Ye successively slay his two fellow sect members, the man realized he stood no chance. As he parried Amber with one hand, he scrambled through his storage sack with the other, hurriedly pulling out a Spirit Talisman.

Just as he was about to release the Spirit Talisman, Lu Ye was upon him, and his knife came swinging down!

The hand clutching the Spirit Talisman was severed at the wrist.

The severed hand dropped to the ground, blood sprayed, and a scream rang out, followed abruptly by silence. Lu Ye's Longsword had accurately pierced his mouth, penetrating the skull, and with a vigorous stir, crushed the man's vitality.

Amber was panting heavily on the side, and Yiyi ran up excitedly, "Lu Ye!"

Lu Ye flashed her a smile, but before he could speak, a loud boom sounded from not far away.

Lu Ye turned his head to look and saw the surface of the spirit bell flickering with spirit light, the tiny bell that was originally only the size of a water jar had swollen significantly.

After all, he had not completely refined the spirit bell and could only bring out some of its ability to trap the enemy. Moreover, the time it could hold the enemy was short. Senior Brother Zhou, with his Spirit Stream Level 5 cultivation, would certainly not sit still while trapped. His vigorous efforts to break out shortened the confinement time even more.

If Lu Ye didn't retrieve the spirit bell soon, the Spiritual Artifact would quickly be destroyed. The external defense of this bell was stronger, as it was, after all, a lifesaving Spiritual Artifact. Relatively speaking, it was easier to break from the inside.

"Take Amber further away!" Lu Ye hastily instructed as Amber was still recovering from injuries, and after being besieged by the group from Cloudy Mountain, it had been injured again. Its snow-white fur was now dyed red, and with its strength, it could hardly contribute to the upcoming battle.

Yiyi, without any fuss, merely admonished Lu Ye with concern, "Be careful!"

She took Amber a little further away but kept her eyes fixed on Lu Ye without blinking, ready to rush over with Amber at the first sign of trouble, ready to contribute whatever they could.

Lu Ye nodded and quickly ran toward Senior Brother Zhou. Midway, he tapped his hand and the spirit bell immediately flew up, shrank rapidly, and fell back into his hand.

As he retrieved the spirit bell, he had already leaped high, swinging down hard with his sword.

Senior Brother Zhou had just escaped from confinement when he saw a bright flash of the blade near his eyes. He lightly tapped forward with his Longsword, hitting right in the middle of Lu Ye's blade.

Lu Ye's form became unstable for a moment, not only was his attack broken, but he also staggered backwards.

Senior Brother Zhou immediately took advantage of the situation, his Longsword flickering with thrusts, sending out clusters of sword flowers in an attack that wasn't ferocious but persistent, forcing Lu Ye to retreat step by step.

This was the first time Lu Ye had encountered such an opponent. When he killed people, it was always with one fast, accurate, and ruthless slash, either severing the enemy's weapon or their body, cleanly and neatly. Even the Level 4 cultivators from Nine Stars Sect couldn't withstand his blade imbued with Sharpness.

But this Senior Brother Zhou's swordsmanship was exceptionally skilled, leaving Lu Ye at a loss for how to strike. The few hasty slashes he made not only were neutralized by the opponent, failing to injure him, but also allowed the opponent to inflict several wounds on him in return.

Lu Ye also activated the Defense Spirit Runes for protection, but the opponent's Longsword was like a snake, elusive and unpredictable, always avoiding the defense to strike at his body, causing him to waste some spirit force in vain.

Unless he activated a set of spirit runes that could be completely placed in front of him, he couldn't defend himself at all.

But to truly activate such spirit runes, not to mention the enormous consumption, Lu Ye wouldn't be able to attack either.

This kind of intense struggle was completely different from his initial battle with Luo Ji. Luo Ji was a magic cultivator; the magic and spells he deployed were always traceable, and Lu Ye's spirit runes could block them.

Senior Brother Zhou was a combat cultivator specializing in close combat; his sword strikes were difficult to predict.

So even though Luo Ji was equivalent to an average Level 5 cultivator, the feeling of combat with him was entirely different for Lu Ye. He could defeat Luo Ji, but he was certainly no match for Senior Brother Zhou.

After retreating over a dozen meters, the opponent's offense became even more intensive. Lu Ye immediately understood that in terms of combat skill, he was streets behind!

He had only truly begun his cultivation a few months ago, whereas this Senior Brother Zhou, at the Spirit Stream Level 5, who knew how long he had been cultivating, had his own mastery of swordsmanship.

If this continued, defeat was certain!

Lu Ye's heart hardened, and he spurred the protective spirit force to its full extent. Without care, he unleashed a ferocious slash. The Longsword in his hand flashed with spirit light, the Sharpness enhanced!

Chapter 107 - Tit for Tat

Blood splattered, and Lu Ye and Senior Brother Zhou each took three steps back.

Lu Ye's right chest was bleeding profusely as if pierced by Senior Brother Zhou's sword, yet Senior Brother Zhou was not in much better condition, a slash mark ran diagonally from his chest to his abdomen, if it were not for him stepping back at the last moment, that single strike would have gutted him.

Senior Brother Zhou naturally saw Lu Ye's strike coming, the reason he did not completely dodge was because he had absolute confidence in his protective spirit force.

Previously, Lu Ye had the Breath-Concealing Talisman concealing his shape and the spirit light on his body, the few from Cloudy Mountain could not gauge his depth, but once they began to fight, the fluctuations of spirit force could not be hidden whatsoever.

Spirit Stream Level 3! The moment Senior Brother Zhou broke free from the spirit bell, he had determined Lu Ye's cultivation level.

He, being at Spirit Stream Level 5, was two minor levels higher than the opponent, his protective spirit force naturally more powerful, so he was confident that even if Lu Ye's blade struck him, it would cause no major harm, at most a minor injury. Conversely, his own thrust at Lu Ye would not be so bearable.

If it were not for his usual cautiousness, he wouldn't have stepped back when Lu Ye's blade descended.

This step, let him brush past death.

The long blade struck against his protective spirit force, just slightly hindered for a moment, then broke through the protective spirit force, wounding him in its course.

Senior Brother Zhou widened the distance between him and Lu Ye, looking down at his own injuries with disbelief at how fragile his protective spirit force had been.

The spiritual artifact in the other's hand seemed to be unimaginably sharp!

Only by then did he have the chance to look around, shocked to find that all his junior brothers and sisters lay lifeless in pools of blood; only he and Lu Ye remained alive, along with the big tiger pacing and growling not far away.

Senior Brother Zhou's eyes twitched violently.

He had been trapped in that spiritual artifact for merely ten breaths. It was one thing that Sister Yu was attacked before, but the remaining three junior brothers were all at Level 3 of the Spirit Stream, and the opponent, alone, had killed those three brothers in ten breaths?

Even he himself had been slashed!

What kind of monster had emerged from where?

Anger and sorrow surged in his heart, his eyes reddened as he gritted his teeth and growled, "Level 3, just a mere Level 3..."

It was unclear what he specifically wanted to say next, but Lu Ye was in no mood to listen further, the sword piercing through his chest made breathing difficult, and this battle could not be dragged on for too long.

Thus, while Senior Brother Zhou was still enveloped in his grieving emotions, Lu Ye had already lunged forward to attack.

Senior Brother Zhou could only respond with a string of curses through gritted teeth.

As their figures crossed past each other, Lu Ye suffered three new sword cuts, but he managed to leave another cut on Senior Brother Zhou, his blade angled cunningly, striking the thigh and slicing the flesh open, blood spurting wildly.

Since he couldn't outmatch the opponent in skill, he decided not to compete, opting instead for an injury-for-injury approach!

If it were truly down to skill, others would simply play him to death live.

Lu Ye turned around, his eyelids lowered, covering two vital areas at his chest and neck with Defense Spirit Runes, the spirit light flickering.

His spirit force surged and burned, fueling fresh power into the two spirit runes, ensuring their stability and persistence.

Lu Ye's idea was simple, protect his vital points with two Defense Spirit Runes, and as for other areas, they could be hit randomly... to see who would fail to endure first!

It must be said, such a defensive method was indeed somewhat unscrupulous, yet it was extremely effective. Just now, Senior Brother Zhou indeed launched a stab at his chest, but that lethal stab was blocked by the Defense Spirit Runes, leading to the exposure in his defense, and Lu Ye managed to chop his thigh.

It wasn't that Lu Ye did not want to activate more and larger spirit runes; it was rather that the consumption of the Defense Spirit Runes was significant, and he couldn't sustain them for a long time.

He had to ensure that he killed this Senior Brother Zhou before his own spirit force was exhausted, otherwise both he and Amber would die.

Two Defense Spirit Runes protecting the vital spots were barely enough.

"You son of a bitch..." Senior Brother Zhou cursed, visibly flustered and exasperated, and during his speech, he took out a Spirit Talisman from his storage sack and slapped it onto his body, which turned out to be a Golden Body Talisman.

In an instant, he was enveloped in a thick layer of golden light.

That wasn't all. He took out another Spirit Talisman and threw it at Lu Ye.

As a cultivator of the Spirit Stream Level 5 realm, he naturally had several life-saving Spirit Talismans that he was reluctant to use on normal days, but now he had no choice.

The two exchanges of injuries made Senior Brother Zhou realize that this Level 3 realm cultivator, who had appeared out of nowhere, was not easy to mess with, especially the Spiritual Artifact long saber in his opponent's hand, which was too sharp and could not be resisted by his protective spirit force alone.

Lu Ye was already charging forward, but when Senior Brother Zhou threw the Spirit Talisman, Lu Ye had to abruptly stop his motion; a tiny bell spun dizzily, growing to the height of a person and positioning itself between him and Senior Brother Zhou.

The power unleashed by the Spirit Talisman crackled on the spirit bell, making loud clanging sounds.

Lu Ye took advantage of the momentary cover provided by the spirit bell to break out from the side. By the time Senior Brother Zhou saw Lu Ye's figure again, they were already no more than fifteen meters apart.

Senior Brother Zhou wanted to retreat, but the injury on his thigh caused him to stagger, and gritting his teeth, he faced the fiercely attacking Lu Ye and thrust his sword.

Lu Ye closed the distance, swinging his saber to chop!

Blood continuously splattered, and the sound of sharp blades entering flesh was cringe-inducing. Spirit force collided and burst forth, making the battlefield a messy scene.

Another round of mutual attacks resulted in injuries on both sides.

Although Senior Brother Zhou's cultivation level was two levels higher than Lu Ye's, the sharpness and Defense Spirit Runes sufficiently bridged the gap in the cultivation realms. In terms of offense and defense, Lu Ye was in no way inferior to him, and was even stronger.

The only advantage Senior Brother Zhou had over Lu Ye was the reserve of his spirit force. A Level 5 realm cultivator had at least opened 63 orifices, whereas Lu Ye, who had been searching the mountains for Amber during these days, had only managed to open up to the 41st orifice.

A difference of more than twenty orifices naturally gave Senior Brother Zhou the upper hand in spirit force reserves.

However, this did not give him any advantage in the battle. Such brutal and bloody combat even induced a sense of despair in him, as the opponent could combat using spirit runes. Those two defensive spirit runes protected the crucial spots, and with his Level 5 realm cultivation, he was completely unable to break through them.

He also tried to shatter those spirit runes, but every time he weakened the power of the runes with a sword strike, the opponent would activate spirit force to fully repair them.

Unless he could break the spirit runes in a single strike, it was meaningless.

Feeling the increasing severity of his own injuries, Senior Brother Zhou gradually lost the intent to avenge his fellow disciples and sisters, because he felt that if the battle continued this way, he might die here. Discover hidden tales at empire

Moreover, under the opponent's relentless assault, he didn't even have time to send a message for help.

Chapter 108 - Master Killed by Random Punches

The blade flickered, and Lu Ye hacked down with another slash, Senior Brother Zhou raised his sword to block. Previously, he would have definitely stabbed at the opponent's sword-wielding hand, confident he could injure him before the slash came down.

But now he dared not, for he knew it would be futile, the opponent would not retreat even slightly, even if stabbed, that slash would still come down.

The slash was blocked by his longsword but the immense force also caused his figure to stagger. Lu Ye kicked up his foot, striking directly at Senior Brother Zhou's blood-drenched thigh.

It was one of the initial wounds Lu Ye had inflicted, and it was extremely deep.

Senior Brother Zhou screamed in pain, his figure unstable, half-kneeling on the ground from the kick, but he managed to slash Lu Ye's calf with his sword, creating a long wound.

Lu Ye, as if he felt no pain, pounced forward again. His longsword swept up a wave of light, mercilessly aiming for Senior Brother Zhou's head.

Clang, clang, clang...

The sound of weapons clashing rang out, Lu Ye's strikes were blocked by Senior Brother Zhou one by one until, at a certain moment, with a crisp crack, Senior Brother Zhou's longsword broke, leaving less than half a foot of the blade...

Longswords are not suited for slashing, that's why Lu Ye had switched to a saber. Despite Senior Brother Zhou's sword being of higher quality, it could not withstand such rough handling.

With his weapon broken, it was undoubtedly bad news for Senior Brother Zhou.

Looking up, he saw Lu Ye's saber slashing down, he no longer had any means of defense.

Moments later, Lu Ye stood blood-soaked, his knife-wielding right hand trembling violently, significant blood loss making his complexion pale.

In front of him, Senior Brother Zhou lay in a pool of blood, his body twitching, blood oozing from his mouth, occasionally coughing lightly. The golden light that had covered him was already shattered by Lu Ye's several slashes, his body covered with deep, bone-revealing wounds, the most severe one at his neck, which nearly decapitated him.

He was not dead yet. Spirit Stream Level 5 cultivators are robust, but he was also powerless to resist. Lu Ye raised his longsword, piercing straight through.

The sound of the blade piercing flesh resounded, Senior Brother Zhou convulsed violently, then fell silent.

Seeing a slight red glow emerge from the back of the opponent's hand, Lu Ye finally let down his guard.

He had won!

Truth be told, Lu Ye's victory in this battle was entirely due to a chaotically executed flurry of blows that killed a more skilled master. Senior Brother Zhou's cultivation and skills were far superior to Lu Ye's, but he had likely never engaged in such a frantic combat before.

His opponent unprotected except for two vital areas, and the exceedingly sharp saber kept slashing relentlessly, presenting a do-or-die attitude that left no room for Senior Brother Zhou to utilize his superior skill and cultivation.

The longsword clattered to the ground, and his body staggered backwards and fell.

"Lu Ye!" Yiyi's crying voice rang out. She rushed to his back, bracing him with her petite body, allowing Lu Ye to slowly slide down and sit on the ground.

Amber staggered over too, nudging his head close to Lu Ye.

Lu Ye gasped for breath, the piercing wound on his right chest made his breathing difficult, his lungs already numb. He struggled to take out two healing pills from his storage sack and swallowed them, silently sensing his condition.

It was bad, various penetrating wounds, and no fewer than 20 others – minor and major. Although the healing pills were helpful, they were insufficient to recover from such severe injuries.

Barely about 10% spirit force remained in his body. The fight over the short span of a tea time had used up too much energy; he inwardly felt fortunate that he had only activated two Defense Spirit Runes to protect his vital areas. Had he activated one more, he probably wouldn't have lasted to see the victory.

Yiyi anxiously watched him from the side, eager to help but unsure where to start.

Lu Ye, shaking, took a set of new clothes from his storage sack, gasping for breath, "Dress the wounds..."

Yiyi quickly tore the set of clothes into strips and dressed Lu Ye's wounds one by one. She had obviously never done this before, creating a messy bandage, but it was at least somewhat effective in stopping the bleeding.

"Take me away, we can't stay here long," Lu Ye's voice was much weaker, and he seemed likely to faint at any moment. Although Senior Brother Zhou had died without being able to send any message, the previous fight had not been small and it could possibly attract nearby cultivators.

Moreover, there were many demon beasts in the jungle, and the smell of blood would draw them here.

Yiyi nodded and gave Amber a command. Amber immediately crouched down low, waiting for Yiyi to lift Lu Ye onto the tiger's back before rising.

Yiyi also picked up the longsword Lu Ye had dropped on the ground and then went out to collect the tiny bell spirit artifact and the storage sacks of Senior Brother Zhou and a few others.

Lying on the tiger's back, Lu Ye witnessed it all, his heart filled with satisfaction.

Not letting go of any spoils of war, what a tremendously good tradition...

"Lu Ye, where are we going?" Yiyi asked.

Lu Ye raised his hand and pointed in a direction, Amber dashed off immediately, while Yiyi also sat on the tiger's back, supporting Lu Ye's body to prevent him from falling off.

The scenery around them retreated continually, and Lu Ye's consciousness grew more and more blurry. He felt he was about to faint soon. Yiyi couldn't heal, and if he fainted, the two healing pills he had taken before might not have much effect, and he could die.

Therefore, the urgent priority was to find someone to heal him.

Instantly, a gentle-speaking beauty appeared in his mind. It was late at night, just more than two hours until sunrise. If Amber was fast enough, they might be able to make it in time.

"About 30 miles away, Mount Ying, find Hua Ci!" Lu Ye finally took out the ten-part map from his own storage sack, handed it to Yiyi, and after saying that, he completely fainted.

Yiyi didn't know who Hua Ci was, but since Lu Ye had instructed her so, she would simply follow his orders.

Supporting Lu Ye with one hand and examining the ten-part map with the other, she confirmed Mount Ying's location, directing Amber toward that direction.

...

Explore more stories at [empire](#)

A carriage was traveling on the road, heading to Liusu Place. Kong Niu was driving the carriage, which carried Hua Ci. This routine had lasted a long time. Unless something unexpected happened, Hua Ci went to Liusu Place every day to heal injured cultivators.

Inside the carriage, she seemed to be lost in thought, occasionally smiling as if recalling something amusing.

Suddenly, she looked down at the back of her right hand—someone was sending her a message, and the only ones who could contact her were a few members from the Independent Wanderers Society.

After checking, Hua Ci suddenly leapt out of the carriage.

Kong Niu, sensing the movement, quickly reined in the horses and turned his head to look back, only to see Hua Ci hurriedly returning the way they came. From afar, her voice reached him, "I'm not going out today, you come back too."

"Oh!" Kong Niu responded, turning the carriage around. He didn't ask what was going on; for him, Hua Ci's words were an order, which he simply obeyed, after all, his life was given by Hua Ci.

Chapter 109 - My surname is Lu, styled Yiye

When Hua Ci hurried back to Mount Ying, Ruan Lingyu came up to meet her.

"What's the situation?" she asked.

Ruan Lingyu said solemnly, "The injuries are very severe." Having never seen someone so badly injured in her life, she found it strange that Lu Ye was still alive. It could be said that there was almost no part of Lu Ye's body that was intact. Such injuries made living more painful than death.

"Are you Senior Sister Hua Ci? Please, I beg you to save Lu Ye." Yiyi came forward, looking up at Hua Ci with a face full of pleading.

Looking in the direction of her voice, Hua Ci was slightly startled. Lu Ye had come alone last time, but this time a sweet-looking girl had brought him.

There was also a huge big tiger lying on the ground beside them, the tiger originally should have been all-white, but the fresh blood had dyed half of its body red.

It just lay there, its chest and abdomen heaving...

Hua Ci didn't waste words but asked, "Where is the person?"

Ruan Lingyu said, "In the place where he stayed before."

"I'll go take a look."

Shortly after, in the bamboo building where Lu Ye had previously stayed, Hua Ci saw the youth who seemed to have been constructed from fresh blood. Even though she was accustomed to seeing injured cultivators, she couldn't help but frown.

These injuries... were excessively severe.

She approached to examine Lu Ye's condition, frowning even more deeply.

Just then, the unconscious Lu Ye gradually came to, opening his eyes and hazily staring at the woman sitting beside him.

As their eyes met, Hua Ci chuckled, "Who is this? It seems we're really fated to meet again so soon."

Lu Ye felt somewhat embarrassed... After all, leaving without saying goodbye last time was indeed quite improper.

"Such severe wounds, even gods would struggle to save you," Hua Ci slowly shook her head, using the softest voice to deliver the most heartfelt words, "If you have any last words, say them quickly, it will be too late later."

"Wow..." Standing by, Yiyi immediately burst into loud tears.

Ruan Lingyu also felt a twinge in her nose, her eyes reddened, unable to resist, she embraced Yiyi, allowing her to vent her emotions against her chest.

"Scaring... a child for what?" Lu Ye weakly said, "Don't listen to her... nonsense."

He tremblingly reached into his storage sack, pulling out a bottle of elixir pills.

Hua Ci said, "If I say you're beyond saving, then you really are beyond saving. Quickly drag him out and bury him."

Lu Ye took out another bottle of elixir pills...

Hua Ci hummed softly, discreetly pocketing the two bottles of elixir pills, and said indifferently, "It's not that we can't try to save him." Turning to Ruan Lingyu, she instructed, "Lingyu, go boil a pot of hot water." She then looked at Yiyi, "You stay and help."

Ruan Lingyu immediately responded and rushed out, leaving Yiyi standing there, at a loss.

She looked towards Lu Ye and noticed that he had passed out again at some point.

"He won't die!" Hua Ci kept pulling things out of her storage sack, preparing, "Help me take off his clothes!"

"Take... take off his clothes?" Yiyi was shocked.

"He is covered in injuries, how can we save him without taking off his clothes? If you want him to die, then we can leave them on."

"I'll do it!" Yiyi immediately responded, with a demeanor as if she were about to strip herself, she gritted her teeth and walked to the bed with a tragic stride.

The hot water was quickly ready, and Hua Ci had already started treating Lu Ye. The entire room was filled with a flowing emerald light, a light that brought warmth and fostered life.

Ruan Lingyu, with a flushed face, ran outside to stand by the door, ready to heed any instructions, while Yiyi, under Hua Ci's guidance, took the hot water and cleaned the dirt near Lu Ye's wounds.

The busy work continued until midday before ceasing.

Compared to his previous injuries, the ones Lu Ye had this time seemed more severe and frightening, but

actually, they were much better, as he had been cut by a sharp weapon, unlike last time when he was injured by magic and spells, the two situations were not the same.

The wounds were numerous, so treating them was rather troublesome.

Hua Ci wiped the sweat from her forehead, turned to Yiyi, and asked, "Should that big tiger outside be treated?"

Yiyi nodded eagerly like a pecking chicken, "Yes."

In just this half day, she had witnessed Hua Ci's medical skills firsthand. Under her treatment, Lu Ye's breathing had become much steadier, and although his face was still pale, it was better than before. She knew then that this beautiful senior sister before her was a healing cultivator.

Amber was also injured, but the injuries were not as severe as Lu Ye's. As the minion spirit born alongside Amber, she could clearly sense Amber's condition.

"Then we'll add the consultation fee to his account," said Hua Ci, stepping out the door. Moments later, sounds of Amber grunting could be heard outside.

A full day later, Lu Ye woke up again.

His body felt very weak, and pain was everywhere, especially in his right lung, but he knew this was a good sign. If his right lung had remained numb, that would have been far more troublesome.

"Lu Ye, you're awake!" Yiyi's voice came, her face quickly approached, looking at him joyously.

Lu Ye gave her a faint smile and tried to sit up, but lacked the strength. Yiyi took the initiative to help him sit up and lean against the bedhead.

Gazing around, he saw Hua Ci sitting beside him with a bowl of green medicinal solution in her hand.

Lu Ye's expression soured.

"Now that you're awake, drink the medicine," Hua Ci leaned forward, passing the solution to him.

Lu Ye tried to lift his hand but couldn't, so he could only look helplessly at her.

Hua Ci sighed and stood up to come over. She fed Lu Ye the medicinal solution, muttering as she did, "The medicine is one elixir pill."

"Cough cough cough..." Lu Ye nearly choked to death. This woman's heart was truly set on money.

"Dare to spit it out, and I'll stuff the bowl in your mouth!" Hua Ci said with a smile, her tone gentle as water.

Yiyi looked at Hua Ci incredulously, as if seeing her in a new light.

After the medicine, Hua Ci checked Lu Ye's condition and nodded, "Having abundant blood Qi is good, your recovery is faster than others."

Hua Ci had said this before, Lu Ye's blood Qi was far stronger than that of other cultivators at the same level, which initially made her suspect that Lu Ye might choose the path of a physique cultivator.

"Then let's start today's treatment," Hua Ci clapped her hands. Discover more stories at [empire](#)

Yiyi immediately walked outside.

Lu Ye was confused until Hua Ci lifted the bedding, and he realized he was not wearing any clothes. Fortunately, he was thoroughly bandaged, indeed wrapped up like a true rice dumpling.

A green light began to flicker, as Lu Ye lay on the bed, feeling the pain and numbness at his wounds.

"Didn't you say your name was Yiye?" Hua Ci suddenly spoke up. "Why does that little girl call you Lu Ye?"

Lu Ye had spent half a month here previously and had naturally informed Hua Ci of his name.

"My surname is Lu, styled Yiye," Lu Ye explained earnestly.

"Is that so," responded Hua Ci casually.

"Hiss..." Suddenly Lu Ye felt a searing pain in his back.

"Oops, my hand slipped, sorry about that." Hua Ci chuckled.

"You cut that out!" Lu Ye felt pain in his lungs from anger.

"That's not the attitude a patient should have towards a healer," Hua Ci's tone turned soft.

Lu Ye's expression darkened, sensing something quite ominous.

Chapter 110 - Healing, Cultivation

Familiar surroundings, a familiar situation, but compared to last time, this time Lu Ye was able to get out of bed and walk around after only three days.

Injuries caused by sharp weapons undoubtedly recovered better, and with the daily care from Hua Ci, the healing cultivator, he felt that he would heal soon.

During these days, he had been busy. With Hua Ci's treatment, he took several healing pills to speed up the recovery of his wounds and refined some small recovery pills to replenish his spirit force.

A few more days passed, and his injuries improved significantly.

Under the moonlight, Lu Ye was practicing with his blade. Not far away, under a large tree, Amber was resting, occasionally yawning widely. Yiyi was sitting with her back against Amber's soft belly, hugging her knees, lost in thought.

After a long while, she sighed and whispered to Amber, "Amber, we're really useless, aren't we?"

The reason for such a sentiment was that she realized since they had followed Lu Ye out of Qingyun Mountain, they could play only a limited role. They found it hard to get involved in the battles Lu Ye faced.

Whether it was the previous pursuit by Dong Shuye or the fight to the death with Senior Brother Zhou, it was always the same.

In the end, it all came down to their lack of strength.

The biggest role Amber served was to carry Lu Ye on the road; her greatest use was keeping guard when Lu Ye rested.

This made Yiyi feel somewhat powerless. If she and Amber could have supported Lu Ye better, he wouldn't have been so severely injured.

"We need to become stronger." Yiyi said again to Amber, "Do you understand?"

Amber opened its mouth and yawned loudly.

"Then it's settled!" Yiyi nodded firmly. Explore new worlds at empire

When the moon was high in the sky, and Lu Ye sheathed his blade, Yiyi ran over to him, looking up and saying, "Lu Ye, Lu Ye."

"Hmm?"

"Can you give us some more elixir pills?" Yiyi asked, somewhat shyly.

"What do you want the elixir pills for?" Lu Ye asked, puzzled.

"To feed Amber, so you don't have to worry when you're busy. I can feed it," she said.

"That can be arranged." Lu Ye would not refuse such a small request, and immediately took out a storage sack, putting several bottles of elixir pills into it.

Yiyi joyfully ran back with the storage sack, even finding a sturdy rope to tie around Amber's neck so they could access the pills at any time.

She took out a Spirit-Nurturing Pill from the storage sack and stuffed it into the tiger's mouth: "Eat this, eat more, you need to get stronger!"

...

As the spirit force continuously surged and struck, the spiritual orifice barrier gradually loosened and finally broke, allowing the gushing spirit force to flow into the new spiritual orifice.

The 46th orifice opened!

When he had previously left Mount Ying to find Amber, he had already opened up to the 37th orifice. During those days of searching for Amber, he also cultivated at night. The dual boost from the Bestial Gluttony Feast and the Spirit Energy Gathering Spirit Runes allowed him to open orifices quickly, reaching the 41st orifice by the time he found Amber.

It had been twelve days since his return to Mount Ying. Except for the initial days when Lu Ye didn't cultivate, he hadn't wasted the rest of the time. Healing didn't affect orifice-opening, and he even had more time for cultivation.

By today, he had opened a total of 46 orifices.

Under normal circumstances, the minimum requirement to ascend to Spirit Stream Level 4 is 45 orifices, of course, this is under the premise of only cultivating one Cultivation Technique.

However, because Lu Ye had first cultivated the Yellow Level Golden Cicada Carefree Method and then the supplementary Cultivation Technique, Bestial Gluttony Feast, these two techniques had two spiritual orifices that did not overlap with the ones used in his current cultivation of the Red Lotus Soaring to Sky Technique.

Therefore, if he wanted to ascend to Spirit Stream Level 4, he would need to open two additional spiritual orifices.

In other words, as long as he opened one more orifice, Lu Ye would be able to advance to Spirit Stream Level 4, and at the same time, he could also convert the route for circulating the spirit force within his body to the pathway of the Red Lotus Soaring to Sky Technique.

The two non-overlapping orifices were not useless, as Lu Ye had studied the subsequent spiritual orifices required for the Red Lotus Soaring to Sky Technique and knew that these two orifices were included in the pathway for the Level 5 realm. Thus, when the time came for him to ascend to Level 5, he would need to open two fewer orifices.

Within Spirit Stream Level 9, Level 4 and Level 7 are each a divide; because for the first three levels, merely opening nine orifices each was sufficient for advancement, but reaching the fourth level required at least 18 orifices.

Fully twice the difference in spiritual orifices; once the spirit force managed to circulate through these orifices forming a Minor Circumambulation, the enhancement brought to a cultivator was significant.

Normally, a cultivator at Level 4 realm would not need to exert much effort to kill one from the Level 3 realm, and only someone like Lu Ye who could manipulate spirit runes in combat would be able to bridge the gap in strength brought about by different realms.

Just one orifice short, with Lu Ye's current pace of cultivation, it wouldn't take more than two days.

However, he had practiced for a rather long time today, and though consuming elixir pills posed not much risk, cultivation was ultimately a monotonous affair, and sitting in meditation for extended periods could lead to stagnation of blood Qi.

He opened his eyes and examined his own elixir pills, letting out a slight sigh.

The price of rapid strength increase was massive consumption of elixir pills; currently opening a single orifice would cost him almost fourteen to fifteen pills each, plus the fee for Hua Ci's diagnosis and what he needed to give Amber and Yiyi, his previously abundant stock of elixir pills had dwindled significantly.

After ascending to Level 4, he'd have to visit Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union again, and now he only had six pieces of Origin Magnetic Ore left to sell...

"Lu Ye, Lu Ye," Yiyi, who was standing by his side, came closer.

"What is it?" Lu Ye looked up at her.

Yiyi said, "Are we going to stay here?" These days, she had slowly gotten to know Ruan Lingyu, and the relationship between the two young women had grown stronger.

From Ruan Lingyu, she had learned about the various situations Lu Ye had encountered the last time he was here, and she also knew that Lu Ye had specifically gone back to find her and Amber, which touched her deeply. Having shared hardships and escaped death together, their relationship had undoubtedly become closer.

"Do you want to stay here?"

Yiyi tilted her head and thought for a while, "People here like Lingyu and Sister Hua Ci are very nice, everyone's very nice. It would be nice to stay here, but it's up to you."

"You don't need to consider me, you can stay if you want to, as these people are indeed all quite nice."

"Oh, then we won't stay." Yiyi looked up at him, smiling, "Since we started off together, let's go on together, we'll stick with you."

Lu Ye raised his hand and patted her on the head.

Yiyi was immediately a bit annoyed, "Why are you patting my head, treating me like a child?"

Lu Ye grabbed her head and rubbed it vigorously.

"I'm so annoyed!" Yiyi finally escaped the clutches and ran out stomping her feet.

Very soon, the neighboring room was filled with her and Ruan Lingyu's laughter and chatter.