

# SAGE OF HUMANITY

## Chapter 11 9: Identification

The fat cultivator sitting behind the desk took out a palm-sized jade slip from his storage sack and glanced at Lu Ye before speaking, "Name, origin, level of cultivation?"

Lu Ye answered each question in turn.

The fat cultivator pondered, "Xuantian Sect's Lu Ye... Ah, found him, he does exist!"

Only then did Lu Ye realize that the jade slip in the fat cultivator's hand must contain some data about the mine, including the origins and identities of the mining slaves, thus ensuring that no remnants of Evil Moon Valley could infiltrate them.

"But... that's not right!" the fat cultivator squinted slightly, "The Jade Dishware states that Lu Ye was just an ordinary person without an opened orifice, but you have already opened one, which doesn't match the information. This could be a bit troublesome."

While speaking, he kept glancing at the storage sack at Lu Ye's waist.

Lu Ye chuckled inwardly, his previous concerns were indeed valid; a mining slave with a storage sack could easily attract some unnecessary coveting.

If it were according to his previous plan, offering up this storage sack wouldn't matter, a small price to pay for avoiding disaster—especially now that he had regained his freedom. The sky was the limit, was there any doubt he could find better things in the future?

But with the offhand remark earlier from Veteran Thang, Lu Ye didn't have to fear anything anymore, he couldn't let the old man's good intentions go to waste.

Facing the fat cultivator's doubts, Lu Ye said, "In the mining tunnel, I encountered a wounded cultivator from Evil Moon Valley. I killed him, and in the brink of life and death, I opened my spiritual orifice."

The fat cultivator's brow raised at these words. If what Lu Ye said was true, that was quite remarkable. A tiger was always a tiger, even when injured, and not something a goat could challenge, let alone kill.

He started to understand where that storage sack at Lu Ye's waist came from...

At this moment, the young cultivator who had been leading Lu Ye over leaned in and whispered something into the fat cultivator's ear, causing the fat cultivator's face to register surprise, "Which Veteran Thang?"

The young cultivator remained silent, just looking at him.

Realizing, the fat cultivator coughed lightly and his expression towards Lu Ye became much more amiable, "I see, you do have some courage! Well, although your identity is largely confirmed without a doubt, we still have to follow the necessary procedures. Come with me."

With that, he stood up.

"Senior Brother Pang, I'll go tend to my other duties now," said the young cultivator, bowing his fists.

"Go on, go on," Senior Brother Pang waved his hand.

Following the fat cultivator, Lu Ye walked towards the direction where many mining slaves gathered.

Upon arriving nearby, the fat cultivator placed his hands on his hips and caught his breath before speaking, "Is there anyone from the Xuantian Sect here? Step forward so I can see you."

No one responded.

Lu Ye scanned around, but didn't see any disciples from the Xuantian Sect.

Considering Xuantian Sect was a minor sect with not many disciples, many had died when Evil Moon Valley overran them a year ago, leaving only about twenty young people still alive.

Over the past year, many more had died, but Lu Ye remembered that there should still be three to five people alive.

Yet at this moment, he didn't see any of those three to five people present, presumably, they too had met with misfortune.

He couldn't help feeling a bit melancholy; although he didn't feel a strong sense of belonging to the Xuantian Sect, being the last remnant of a sect made him feel the cruelty of the world even more.

The fat cultivator then asked, "Then, does anyone here recognize him?"

Still, no one responded. Among the mining slaves, Lu Ye wasn't particularly well-liked. Everyone was gaunt and struggling to survive, yet Lu Ye lived comfortably and even had surplus contributions to exchange for blood Qi pills—naturally, this did not endear him to the other mining slaves.

The same misfortune did not foster unity against a common enemy, but rather, it tended to breed divisions and exclusions.

In the crowd, Lu Ye spotted the Liu brothers. Amazingly, these two had not died—it was a stroke of luck—but the Liu brothers had no intention of stepping forward to confirm Lu Ye's identity. They just looked at him with schadenfreude.

The fat cultivator couldn't help but glance at Lu Ye, somewhat doubtful whether this man was the Lu Ye from Xuantian Sect. Being a mining slave, there should be someone who could confirm his identity.

Previously, many had their identities verified in this manner, by pointing each other out and confirming their identities.

"I recognize him, he is Lu Ye from Xuantian Sect." Just as the fat cultivator was doubting, a weak voice rang out.

"Who is speaking?" the fat cultivator's gaze shifted back, following the source of the voice.

The crowd parted spontaneously, revealing the speaker.

Upon seeing the appearance of the person, Lu Ye was slightly surprised because he had met this person only once and had not seen her again for a long time.

The speaker was a woman. Compared to the soot-covered faces of the mining slaves around her, her clothing, although not bright, was at least neat and clean.

The fat cultivator looked at the woman and asked in a stern voice, "Are you sure he is Lu Ye from Xuantian Sect? Think carefully before you speak, as lying in front of me does not bode well for you."

The woman shrank her neck but still said firmly, "I am sure."

The fat cultivator nodded, waved his hand at Lu Ye, "Alright, identity verified. Go back and stay put, don't wander around." After finishing his speech, he winked at Lu Ye, "Tomorrow there is an opportunity waiting for you guys."

With that, he turned and walked away.

After he left, the oppressive atmosphere finally eased. It was clear that these lowest-level slaves still feared the fat cultivator greatly.

Lu Ye thought for a moment, then walked towards the woman who had spoken up. As he approached, he started, "Miss, thank you for your righteous words."

The woman shook her head, "No need, you once saved me, and back then I didn't even get a chance to thank you."

She was referring to an incident that happened almost half a year ago. At that time, Lu Ye had stumbled upon this woman deep in the mining tunnels being chased by another mining slave. Unwilling to stand by, he had stepped in and taught the aggressor a lesson.

However, since that incident, he had not seen this woman again.

Lu Ye smiled, "Then are we even now?"

The woman also smiled, finding a semblance of life returning to her somber face, "We're even."

"Let's reintroduce ourselves. Lu Ye from Xuantian Sect!"

The woman curtsied gracefully, embodying the poise of a refined lady, "Yu Xiaodie of Yu Clan."

Lu Ye asked curiously, "Miss Yu, do you know why we are gathered here? What opportunity was that fat man talking about?"

Yu Xiaodie brushed her hair beside her ear and explained, "All of us here are people with clear histories and verified identities. Mostly none have opened their spiritual orifices, and even if some have, their cultivation levels are very low. Evil Moon Valley didn't treat us as humans, nor would they nurture us. But among this batch of people, there definitely are some suitable for cultivation.

The Haotian Alliance has taken over this place and will naturally make some arrangements. Those among us who are suitable and have cultivation aptitude will be taken away by the sects of the Haotian Alliance."

"Is that the opportunity the fat man was talking about?" Lu Ye suddenly understood.

## Chapter 12 10 Opportunities

"Big Brother Lu, have you opened your spiritual orifice?" Yu Xiaodie asked.

"Why do you ask?" Lu Ye didn't answer but asked in return.

Yu Xiaodie pointed at the storage sack on Lu Ye's waist.

Lu Ye understood and nodded, "Indeed." Then he asked back, "What about you?"

Yu Xiaodie raised one hand, a faint brilliant light blossoming in her palm.

She had obviously also opened her spiritual orifice; however, Lu Ye was not sure how many orifices she had opened as a cultivator—it wasn't appropriate to ask about such things, as they were not very familiar with each other.

As cultivators who had both opened their spiritual orifices, there were now many common topics between the two of them. Nearly a thousand people were gathered here, but among them, very few had opened their orifices, and those who had were of very low cultivation levels.

The ones with some cultivation to their names had already been absorbed by Evil Moon Valley and become disciples long ago; their situation now could be imagined.

Yu Xiaodie lowered her voice, "Tomorrow's opportunity is extremely important. You must not miss it. If you have any special talents, Brother Lu, feel free to display them. This relates to your future."

She seemed to know something.

Lu Ye replied, "Understood."

Speaking of which, he didn't have any special talents, except for a Talent Tree that others couldn't see. But of course, he definitely couldn't show that to others.

It was ultimately not too good to stay amidst a group of women, so after a few more words with Yu Xiaodie, Lu Ye took his leave.

There were quite a few enslaved people gathered here, with limited room for movement. Lu Ye looked left and right, then headed straight for a corner.

There, the Liu Brothers were cowering behind the crowd, their faces pale as they saw Lu Ye approaching.

By the time Lu Ye stood before them, the expressions on both men's faces grew even more frightened.

"What... what do you want?" Leader Liu shouted, his ferocity belying inner timidity; as he spoke, he kept glancing in the direction of the fat cultivator, seeming to seek help.

The response he got was a fist that kept enlarging in his view. With just one punch, Leader Liu's nose was broken, and he fell to the ground. Lu Ye then kicked Second Liu in the stomach, grabbed his hair before he fell, and said, "It seems like you do not recognize me?"

Second Liu's face was full of pain, seeing stars in front of his eyes, unable to answer.

Lu Ye snorted coldly, grabbed Second Liu with a strong hand, and flung him behind, making him face-plant the ground, losing two teeth in the process.

Taking the place originally occupied by the Liu Brothers, Lu Ye sat down cross-legged, closing his eyes to refresh his spirit.

Right now, his first orifice was full, but he couldn't find the location to open the second one, so it was not good to continue with cultivation, lest he wasted his blood Qi pills.

By evening, people from Haotian Alliance came to distribute food and bedding. After everyone received some, Lu Ye, who had not had his fill, was fortunate that Zhou Cheng's storage sack also contained food, so he took it out and ate heartily.

The others nearby watched him eat, swallowing their saliva, but no one dared to come forward and disturb him.

Ever since Lu Ye had taught the Liu Brothers a lesson, he occupied a large space for himself, which saved him a lot of trouble.

After Essence Refinement-Qi Conversion, his appetite grew larger by the day, and he was able to enjoy the dried beast meat with relish.

A night passed without words, and on the next day, Lu Ye was full of energy, awaiting that so-called opportunity.

Not until after breakfast did a dozen or so cultivators with various attires come before the crowd. The leader, a middle-aged man with his hands clasped behind his back, stood in the front, swept his eyes over the crowd, and spoke with a slight smile, "You young people come from various sects and families and have been enslaved here, suffering for many days. However, those days are over.

The sects of Haotian Alliance are widely recruiting talented individuals. Those among you who have opened orifices and possess cultivation aptitude all have the chance to be accepted into the sects. Be sure to seize this opportunity well, as you may stand side by side in battle in the future, eliminating demons and eradicating evils."

After finishing his speech, he lightly waved his hand.

The cultivators behind him, dressed variously, stepped forward. The first one stretched out his hand and swept it across, "You people, come with me."

With that sweep, a surge of spirit force wrapped around almost a hundred people.

Once the crowd had left, the cultivator led them aside.

The second person did the same...

There were about a thousand slaves, just enough for the ten cultivators to divide up.

Because Lu Ye was at the very back, he ended up with the last cultivator.

He hadn't walked far with him when they reached a place where cultivators dressed like him came to maintain order, prompting everyone to form a line.

Lu Ye, standing in the middle of the line, looked around and saw that the slaves who had been led away before him were all in the same situation.

He realized they were probably going to be tested to see if any of the slaves had opened their spiritual orifices and were suitable for cultivation.

From what the middle-aged cultivator had said before, those who had opened their spiritual orifices probably had a great advantage.

As for those who hadn't opened their orifices and had no talent for cultivation, they would likely be overlooked.

After the line was formed, the cultivator who had brought them over took out a desk from his storage sack and sat behind it, then lifted his head and said, "Begin."

The first slave, following his gesture, walked up to him.

The cultivator asked, "Have you opened your orifice?"

The slave shook his head, "I have not!"

"Hmm." The questioning cultivator pushed the previously fetched Crystal Ball towards him, instructing, "Cover it with both hands."

The slave did as he was told, but the Crystal Ball showed no response.

The cultivator behind the desk shook his head, "No cultivation aptitude, next!"

The slave suddenly looked dispirited and hurriedly said, "I wasn't ready. Let me try again."

"Next!" The cultivator waved his sleeve, and the incessantly talking slave was swept aside, tumbling to the ground.

This scene struck a chord with all the slaves still in line, knowing that the Crystal Ball would determine whether their fates could change, and immediately they all steeled their resolve.

One by one, the slaves stepped forward, all without the aptitude for cultivation.

It wasn't until the thirteenth person covered the Crystal Ball with his hands that the previously unresponsive Crystal Ball suddenly lit up with a pale cyan light.

"Finally, we have one!" The cultivator behind the desk smiled and looked at the slave, "Name."

The slave, flushed with excitement, answered truthfully.

The cultivator behind the desk took out a piece resembling a jade tablet. With spirit force activated in his hand, the name of the slave soon appeared on one side of the tablet.

He handed the jade tablet to him, instructing, "Keep it safe. You'll need it later. Now go to that tent over there and find my third senior brother to check your talent."

"Yes, yes, thank you, sir." Holding the jade tablet as though it were the most precious treasure, the slave trotted towards the back, where a simple tent stood.

## Chapter 13 11 Introduction to Enrollment in the Cultivation World

Upon seeing this scene, Lu Ye immediately understood that the test was divided into two stages: one was to check whether one had cultivation aptitude, and the other was to assess the level of talent.

Aptitude and talent are different; the former determines whether a person can engage in cultivation and whether they possess the qualifications for cultivation, while the latter determines how high one's future achievements can be. Theoretically, the better the talent, the higher the future accomplishments will be.

Of course, due to limitations, the talent test here was just a general test, not guaranteed to be completely accurate, but it was usually quite close to the mark, with not too large a deviation.

As for aptitude, Lu Ye was not worried, for he had already opened his spiritual orifice and was definitely capable of cultivation.

As for the level of talent, this was uncertain. He did not know his own talent and still had to undergo the testing in the tent behind to find out.

The first person with cultivation aptitude had already appeared, bringing a trace of vitality to the originally dull and heavy queue, instantly giving everyone a feeling of possibility.

However, reality was ultimately cruel.

In the following tests, more than ten people were eliminated before finally another person with cultivation aptitude appeared.

As in the previous scene, it replayed itself.

The long queue continuously shortened, one after another dropped from hope to disappointment...

Overall, among every dozen or so people, there would be one with cultivation aptitude, a ratio that matched what Lu Ye knew.

He stood in the latter half of the queue, but since the testing was swift, in less than the time it took one incense stick to burn, he was standing in front of the desk.

"Have you opened your orifice?" the cultivator behind the desk asked in a routine manner.

"I have opened an orifice," Lu Ye replied honestly.

The cultivator immediately lifted his head to size up Lu Ye and smiled widely, "Good, finally someone who has opened an orifice."

Although seven or eight people had passed the aptitude test earlier, none of them had opened their spiritual orifice. Among those in this queue, Lu Ye was the first one who had actually done so!

"Come, place your hands over this." the cultivator pointed to the Crystal Ball on the desk.

Lu Ye was puzzled, wasn't this device for testing aptitude? Since he had opened his spiritual orifice, what else needed testing?

The cultivator, seeing the confusion in Lu Ye's mind, explained, "Here, I not only test for aptitude but also check for element sign."

"Element sign?" Lu Ye was even more confused; he had never heard of this before.

Perhaps because Lu Ye had opened his spiritual orifice, the cultivator patiently explained, "Metal, wood, water, fire, earth—among the Five Elements, everyone's spirit force tends to lean toward one type, which is the element sign, and each element sign has different focal points."

"I see!" Lu Ye suddenly realized, then wondered, "But before..."

The cultivator smiled, "They hadn't even opened their spiritual orifices, had no spirit force, and thus couldn't have their element signs detected."

"I see," Lu Ye nodded, raising his hands to cover the Crystal Ball.

"Activate your spirit force and channel it into it," the cultivator instructed.

Lu Ye did as he was told, his eyes fixed on the changes in the Crystal Ball, curious about what his element sign was.

The Crystal Ball first lit up, indicating that Lu Ye had cultivation aptitude, but for someone who had opened his orifice like him, this result was meaningless.

The change that followed was the actual test for the element sign.

Under Lu Ye's watchful eye, a yellow-orange flame suddenly sprung to life within the Crystal Ball and burst into intense flames!

This scene made his pupils involuntarily constrict because the yellow-orange flames looked... familiar.

"Oh?" the cultivator behind the desk raised an eyebrow, brimming with interest, "Primarily the fire of the Five Elements, hmm, with a bit of the metal element, not bad, not bad, alright, you may withdraw your hand now."

His own Five Elements' fire, Lu Ye could understand, as it was thanks to the Talent Tree that he had been able to open his spiritual orifice. It was because the Talent Tree had engulfed a cluster of yellow-orange flames that he had suddenly activated his spiritual orifice.

The leaves on the Talent Tree that bore the Sharpness spirit runes were also burning intensely.

But the inclusion of the metal element confused him; he vaguely felt that this might be his original element sign.

"Keep this item close, and go find my Third Senior Brother in the tent behind this one." The cultivator handed Lu Ye a jade tablet, which Lu Ye accepted with thanks. On one side, it was engraved with his name and beneath it, a character likely indicating the opening of one orifice; on the other side was engraved his element sign.

Lu Ye headed towards the back beyond the desk.

Not far away was a makeshift tent that those who had previously passed the aptitude test had entered to have their talents assessed.

Standing in front of the tent, Lu Ye first apologized before lifting the door curtain and stepping inside.

The tent was surprisingly spacious, with a cultivator sitting cross-legged on a cushion, his demeanor stern and his expression cold, presumably the Third Senior Brother he was meant to find.

Not far in front of Third Senior Brother was a round disc, seemingly crafted from some type of wood. The disk was as large as a tabletop, with eight indentations along its edge, beside which some barren saplings sprouted.

Lu Ye approached with a fist-and-palm salute, "Lu Ye greets Senior Brother. This is my jade tablet, please inspect it."

The Third Senior Brother opened his eyes, took the jade tablet, and examined both sides; his eyebrow lifting, he gestured with his hand, "Have you opened an orifice? Sit down."

It seemed that this round disc was the device used to assess one's level of talent. Lu Ye approached, sat cross-legged at the center, and inadvertently glanced at the disc's surface, noticing many intricate, complex patterns and symbols.

Spirit runes? Lu Ye became intrigued and scrutinized them carefully, though with his current level of vision, he couldn't determine what these spirit runes were used for.

The only spirit runes he knew of were those of Sharpness.

The quantity of spirit runes engraved on the disc was extensive and densely packed, interlinked closely together, forming a unified whole.

This was not just spirit runes, Lu Ye realized, recalling something he had heard about before.

This was a Formation!

Was a Formation constructed from spirit runes?

"Ahem!" Third Senior Brother coughed lightly, breaking Lu Ye's train of thought, and Lu Ye quickly straightened his posture.

After a brief moment of eye contact and silence, Third Senior Brother spoke, "My Qingyu Sect is located in the heart of Bingzhou at Mount Cangluan, with three hundred spirit mountaintops and ranks among the top five in Bingzhou in terms of combined strength. The Sect Leader and all the Vice Sect Leaders are of the Divine Sea Realm.

Below the Sect Leader, there are hundreds of cultivators in the True Lake Realm..."

Lu Ye had assumed Third Senior Brother was a man of few words, but he was mistaken.

Once he started talking, Third Senior Brother spoke continuously, providing an overwhelming amount of details about Qingyu Sect, leaving Lu Ye confused and impressed.

Moreover, somehow, Third Senior Brother's discourse gave him a strong sense of déjà vu.

When Third Senior Brother began to enthusiastically describe "how the sword sect and the magic sect within our sect do this and that..." Lu Ye's long-sealed memories surged forth.

The corners of Lu Ye's mouth twitched as he wondered silently if this was some sort of recruiting brochure for the cultivation world.

## Chapter 14 12 Just Pretend You Didn't Hear That

The third senior brother with a stern expression talked incessantly for a while, introducing the situation within the Qingyu Sect. After a good moment, he shifted the topic, "Your Five Elements are mainly fire, I remember our sect has a set of the Great Flames Devastating Wilderness Method, which should be very suitable for you.

Of course, if you want to develop towards the metal direction, that's fine too; our sect has many metal Cultivation Techniques. Moreover, if you join our Qingyu Sect, even as a probationary disciple, you receive a share of two Spirit-Nurturing Pills every month. If you pass the assessment and become an official disciple, your share will double. Have you got that?"

Lu Ye nodded quickly, "I've got it."

Feeling puzzled, he thought, what does this mean, it sounds like he's trying to recruit me? With that said, it seems a cultivator who has opened one orifice indeed has a significant advantage.

He felt a secret sense of pride in his heart.

The third senior brother continued, "It's good that you remember. Now sit properly, quiet your mind and concentrate. You may feel some pain later, but don't worry. It's just the process of assessing your talent. And remember not to activate your spirit force to resist."

"Yes!" Lu Ye responded, placing his hands on his knees, palms up, and closed his eyes.

The next moment, he felt the flow of spirit force, though he was curious about what the third senior brother was doing. He didn't dare to open his eyes to peek. When the spirit force began to move, a slight vibration came from beneath him, leading Lu Ye to guess that the array on the round disc was taking effect.

Indeed, as he had assumed, the eight indentations along the edge of the disc were now occupied by crystal bodies about the size of silkworm cocoons, placed there by the third senior brother. These were Spirit Stones commonly used for array setup by cultivators, something Lu Ye had never seen before.

When the third senior brother activated the array on the disc, a faint mist began to emerge from the Spirit Stones embedded in the indentations. The mist was the spirit force stored in the Spirit Stones, which, through the array's conversion, turned into pure Spiritual Energy.

Rich Spiritual Energy quickly filled the space encompassed by the disc, but it seemed there was an invisible barrier around the disc, confining the Spiritual Energy within it.

Lu Ye, sitting cross-legged, felt a stir in his heart. Although his eyes were closed, he felt the presence of many wondrous things around him, entering his body and giving him an extremely comfortable sensation.

Is this spirit force?

Lu Ye immediately realized that breathing in nature's spiritual energy is one of the primary methods of cultivation for cultivators. When he was in the mine, Lu Ye had tried this method. Perhaps due to the location, he did not feel the presence of Spiritual Energy in the mine and had to resort to the Essence Refinement-Qi Conversion technique.

After being brought out of the mine by the elder with the surname Tang, he forgot to sense the spiritual energy between heaven and earth.

Not until this moment had he directly sensed the existence of Spiritual Energy.

However, remembering the instructions of the third senior brother, he resisted the temptation and did not breathe it in at will.

In front of him, the third senior brother currently had a magic spell in his hand, continuously driving the power of the array while his gaze never wavered from the small saplings at the edge of the disc.

The array on the disc was specifically designed to measure the level of talent. When the third senior brother exerted the power of the array, the eight Spirit Stones embedded on the disc would release their stored spirit force, transforming it into rich Spiritual Energy.

Through his actions, this Spiritual Energy would be channeled into the body of the person being tested, then into the array of the disc, causing some changes in the saplings at the edge of the array.

In short, Lu Ye, currently sitting on the disc, served as a conduit; the Spiritual Energy would pass through his body into the array, which would cause the corresponding changes in the eight saplings.

The greater the number of saplings that changed, the higher the tested cultivator's aptitude. Conversely, the fewer the changes, the lower the aptitude.

Essentially, this test was to see if the spiritual energy introduced into the body flowed smoothly; the smoother the flow, the more suited for cultivation, and thus, the higher the talent.

Since the root of a cultivator's cultivation is to strengthen their own spirit force, what point was there in cultivating if even the flow of spiritual energy within the body was not smooth?

Next to the disc array, the third senior brother continued his actions. None of the eight small saplings moved. He slightly furrowed his brow and increased the power of the array.

Lu Ye's brows drew together as he began to feel a tingling pain in his body. It was as if lots of external spiritual energy were forcefully drilling into him, giving him the sensation of being pricked by countless needles. Moreover, as time passed, the pain became more and more intense.

Just when he felt like he couldn't bear it any longer, the all-encompassing prickling sensation suddenly vanished, and at the same time, he heard the third senior brother say, "It's done."

Lu Ye quickly opened his eyes and exhaled deeply, meeting the third senior brother's gaze. He noticed the senior brother was looking at him with an extremely complex expression.

That made him tense up, feeling that something was amiss.

"May I ask senior brother, how is my talent?" Lu Ye inquired.

The third senior brother was silent, glanced at the disc, then brushed a hand over Lu Ye's jade tablet and returned it to him.

Lu Ye took it and saw on the back side, where his element sign was inscribed, an additional character had been added—an "one."

What does this mean?

Lu Ye wanted to ask for a clearer explanation, but the third senior brother clearly didn't want to speak anymore. Not wanting to be overly persistent, Lu Ye stood up from the disc and bowed to the third senior brother, "Thank you, senior brother!"

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As he turned to walk outside, he saw on that round disc, out of the eight bald saplings, one had sprouted a delicate, tender leaf...

Could the character on the back, the one, signify the meaning of a sapling? He guessed secretly.

"Young friend!" The Third Senior Brother suddenly spoke.

Lu Ye, who had reached the doorway, turned around: "Does Senior Brother have any instructions?"

The Third Senior Brother said, "About what I told you just now, please consider you never heard it."

Lu Ye: ...

Stepping out of the tent, he took several deep breaths, a strong sense of crisis welling up in his heart.

Although uncertain of whether his talent was high or low, by looking at the Third Senior Brother's previous and later words and attitude, Lu Ye felt greatly ill at ease.

It seems my talent may be somewhat... extraordinary.

Still, he had to find someone to confirm it.

Lu Ye looked around and suddenly saw a figure standing quietly in a corner, to whom he walked straight over.

Halfway there, the figure also noticed Lu Ye and smiled, waving him over.

Drawing near, Lu Ye greeted her, "Miss Yu."

Yu Xiaodie responded with a graceful salute, "Big Brother Lu."

It was evident that her mood was much better now than yesterday.

She had completed the testing, and the results were not bad.

Lu Ye handed over the jade tablet he was holding: "Could you help me look at this, see what's going on with my talent?"

Yu Xiaodie, while accepting it, said with a smiling tone, "Big Brother Lu, since you could open your spiritual orifice, your talent must certainly not be... poor!"

As she spoke the last two words, she saw the character one on the back of the jade tablet, her eyelids involuntarily twitched, and her voice hesitated.

Seeing her reaction, Lu Ye immediately understood.

Could my aptitude indeed be somewhat lackluster?

"How is your talent, Miss Yu?" asked Lu Ye.

Yu Xiaodie said, "It's about the same as yours, Big Brother Lu."

Lu Ye waved his hand dismissively, "No need to comfort me, I understand the general situation. Is it that the smaller the number, the lower the talent?"

Yu Xiaodie pursed her lips, wanting to comfort Lu Ye but not knowing how to start, and finally, she could only nod: "Yes."

"No wonder," Lu Ye remembered what the Third Senior Brother had said last, thinking to himself that cultivators are indeed very realistic.

Yu Xiaodie said, "Big Brother Lu, there's no need to be discouraged. The tests of the day are not entirely accurate, and the Array used is not of high quality, occasionally there are errors."

Lu Ye laughed, "Although I know nothing of that Array's name, since there is a result, I can only face it calmly."

Yu Xiaodie looked at him curiously, "Do you really think it doesn't matter?" Lu Ye's open-mindedness seemed genuine. Normally, people receiving such results would feel somewhat disheartened.

Lu Ye's gaze drifted towards the distance, and he said with a slight smile, "Compared to those people, the fact that I could open an orifice means I am already very fortunate."

Following his gaze, one could see a large group of people who seemed to have lost their souls; these were all those without cultivation aptitude, the ones who had been eliminated.

The Liu brothers were among them.

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## Sage of Humanity 15

"By the way, how is your talent?" Lu Ye turned his head and asked.

Although Lu Ye could tell from Yu Xiaodie's demeanor that her talent couldn't be bad, he couldn't help but want to compare. He needed to know just how lacking his own talent was to cause such a drastic change in the words of that third senior brother before and after.

Yu Xiaodie was originally holding her jade tablet. Hearing Lu Ye's question, she instinctively shrank back, not because she wanted to hide anything, but because she didn't want to discourage Lu Ye too much.

Lu Ye teased, "What, you look down on me? The more a man gets hit, the more his fighting spirit grows!"

Yu Xiaodie said helplessly, "Does Big Brother Lu really want to see it?"

Lu Ye laughed, "Anyway, the result is already there. It can't get much worse."

Yu Xiaodie thought about it and said, "That's true. Big Brother Lu is really open-minded." She looked at him with admiration.

Having said that much, how could she refuse? The information recorded on the jade tablet was not something private.

She extended her hand and handed over her jade tablet to Lu Ye.

Lu Ye took it, fixed his eyes on it, and saw that one side was engraved with Yu Xiaodie's name. He turned it over to the other side, where her element sign was, a character for 'wood.' It looked like Yu Xiaodie's primary element was wood, and underneath the character wood, there was a number.

"Thirty-eight?"

Lu Ye was somewhat dumbfounded. This wasn't quite what he had in mind... was it different?

He then asked, "Isn't that wrong, Miss Yu? How can it be thirty-eight? Isn't the highest eight?"

He remembered clearly, there were only eight little saplings on that round disc. How could there be such an absurd number as thirty-eight.

"The highest is sixty-four," Yu Xiaodie said, confused by Lu Ye's words. She counted with her fingers and murmured, "Eight trees, eight leaves, that's sixty-four, no mistake. Theoretically, the highest talent is sixty-four leaves."

Lu Ye looked up at her, his eyes slowly losing their luster...

Yu Xiaodie was startled and called out gently, "Big Brother Lu? Are you alright?"

Just a moment ago, he said something about how the more a man gets hit, the more his fighting spirit grows, but now he seemed to be struck down so quickly?

She really shouldn't have shown him her jade tablet, Yu Xiaodie blamed herself inwardly.

"Cheer up, Big Brother Lu."

"Let me be alone for a bit!" Lu Ye waved her off and lifted his head to look at the sky with a vacant gaze.

He had probably realized by now that the single character engraved on the back of his own jade tablet represented not one sapling, but one leaf on a sapling!

In the talent test, each sapling could produce up to eight leaves, eight saplings in total, making the limit sixty-four leaves.

The thirty-eight on Yu Xiaodie's jade tablet represented the total number of leaves she made the saplings produce during the talent test, while he had only one leaf, not one sapling!

Now, Lu Ye was really hit hard.

He had tried hard to lower his expectations, but in the end, he found out that what he thought was the baseline was nothing at all.

Being at the bottom of eight versus being at the bottom of sixty-four were entirely different matters.

"Big Brother Lu..." Yu Xiaodie looked at him with concern, feeling that his whole person was enveloped by a gray haze, and his vitality had vanished without a trace, "Although talent is important, it doesn't determine everything, Big Brother Lu. I once heard someone say a phrase, 'heaven rewards the diligent...'"

"Then you must not have heard people say that nature is indifferent and treats all beings as mere straw dogs..."

"Huh?" Yu Xiaodie felt something was odd.

Having taken a deep breath, Lu Ye had recovered, and although he still felt some discomfort inside, just as he had said before, the result was out, and all he could do was face it calmly.

Moreover, he had the Talent Tree!

Even if his natural talent wasn't high, this miraculous Talent Tree should be able to make up for it.

"Tell me about the basis for testing talent?" Lu Ye asked. He had taken the test in the tent just now, but he was not clear on the specifics of the testing process since he had his eyes closed the whole time.

Yu Xiaodie did not explain immediately but looked at him earnestly.

There was obvious concern in her eyes, and Lu Ye smiled, "I'm really fine."

Yu Xiaodie sighed and began to speak, "Since Big Brother Lu wants to know, I'll share what I understand with you."

She then explained the principle of the Array and the testing process in detail.

Lu Ye seemed to understand, "So you're saying that it's very hard for Spiritual Energy to be drawn into my body? That's why my talent is low?" He couldn't help but recall his own feelings during the test, the external Spiritual Energy desperately trying to drill into his body, but failing to do so, causing him pain all over.

Yu Xiaodie nodded, "Exactly so."

"I see!" Lu Ye roughly understood, and then became puzzled again, "But what does this explain? How can one determine a person's talent level from these superficial appearances? Miss Yu, don't misunderstand me, I'm not concerned about my own low talent, I just want to know the reason."

Seeing his earnest expression, Yu Xiaodie was a bit amused, but she explained patiently, "Does Big Brother Lu know what methods a cultivator depends on to become stronger?"

Lu Ye replied, "Taking elixir pills, inhaling and exhaling Spiritual Energy, Essence Refinement-Qi Conversion, relying on Spirit Stones?"

"Exactly." Yu Xiaodie nodded, "However, the most important methods are inhaling and exhaling Spiritual Energy and relying on Spirit Stones. The other two methods are just ancillary means. If external Spiritual Energy cannot be drawn into the body, the efficiency of cultivation will naturally be low, and so the talent will be low.

Given the same time and resources, cultivators with higher talent can open more spiritual orifices, and their future achievements will naturally be higher. Since Big Brother Lu has already opened a spiritual orifice, you must have felt the difficulties of cultivation."

Lu Ye remembered those days spent in the mine shrouded in darkness, consuming blood Qi pills daily, then practicing Essence Refinement-Qi Conversion, feeling himself becoming stronger bit by bit. It didn't seem very difficult; instead, it was somewhat... enjoyable?

Yu Xiaodie said cultivators mainly rely on inhaling and exhaling Spiritual Energy and Spirit Stones, while taking elixir pills and Essence Refinement-Qi Conversion are ancillary methods, but it seemed like he had done the opposite.

He vaguely felt that something wasn't quite right, and asked, "Miss Yu, how long did it take you to fill your first spiritual orifice after opening it?"

If there was a direct comparison, he could judge the efficiency of his own cultivation. He felt that his talent couldn't possibly be that low.

"About twenty days or so," Yu Xiaodie replied. She didn't ask about Lu Ye's situation because she thought it would be another blow to him.

With Yiye's talent, filling the first spiritual orifice—even with the aid of elixir pills—would probably take several months.

Owing to the gratitude for Lu Ye having saved her before, she still harbored feelings of gratefulness towards him. The more she looked at Lu Ye, the more she felt sorry for him...

Indeed, after she spoke those words, Lu Ye froze, muttering in repetition, "Twenty days?"

Yu Xiaodie quickly said, "Big Brother Lu, our situations are different. I was taken away by a disciple of Evil Moon Valley. She probably wanted to use me to practice some evil skill, so she helped me open my spiritual orifice and gave me a Spirit-Nurturing Pill to take. That's how I was able to fill my spiritual orifice in just over twenty days."

This was the speed of cultivation with the aid of elixir pills?

Lu Ye reflected on himself, having taken the most inexpensive blood Qi pills, from orifice-opening to filling the spiritual orifice, it only took him about ten days or so, which was even faster than Yu Xiaodie.

What was going on?