

Humanity 141

Chapter 141 I want to stay!

This is not Lu Ye being blindly confident, believing he could defeat enemies several levels higher than himself. From the moment he left Qingyun Mountain, on his journey, Lu Ye had killed many cultivators with higher cultivation than his. Just during the Dragon Spring Meet, there were five or six Level 5 realm cultivators who died at his hand.

The two spirit runes, Defense and Sharpness, could greatly enhance his offensive and defensive capabilities, narrowing the gap between his cultivation and that of his enemies.

So, defeating an enemy one level higher was still no problem for Lu Ye.

Although he didn't know what exactly had happened to Dong Shuye, this confrontation made Lu Ye realize an interesting fact: Dong Shuye only had Level 6 cultivation now!

Compared to two months ago when he pursued him, his strength had clearly declined a bit. If Lu Ye had faced the Dong Shuye of two months prior during the daytime, then he would have thought that even with some growth, he certainly wouldn't be a match.

A cultivator's cultivation cannot drop without a reason. Lu Ye secretly guessed, could it be that this guy had a spiritual orifice shattered?

The classification of a Spirit Stream Realm cultivator's cultivation is simple and clear—the number of Minor Circumambulation systems in the body defines one's level of cultivation. But if a spiritual orifice is shattered, then one of the Minor Circumambulation systems naturally can't form properly.

A broken orifice does not greatly enhance a cultivator; at most, it increases the cultivator's storage of spirit force.

Was it done by the Xuanmen side?

Unable to delve into Dong Shuye's recent experiences, Lu Ye was sure that his damaged spiritual orifice was definitely related to the Xuanmen attacking the Nine Stars Sect base. The root of the issue rested on himself. He finally understood why Dong Shuye was so relentless in his pursuit.

For anyone experiencing such a thing, it would be difficult to let go. It wouldn't be too much to say their relationship was one where neither would stop until the other was dead.

For him, this was a good thing. A Level 7 Dong Shuye was someone Lu Ye didn't even consider facing.

But if the opponent was only in the Level 6 realm... maybe he could afford to battle.

The prerequisite was that he had to advance to the Level 5 realm.

He now had 54 orifices open, just nine shy of the 63 needed for the Level 5 realm. With full focus on cultivation, it would take less than twenty days!

But it was not easy to implement this plan in the wilderness. If Dong Shuye came in pursuit, he would have to run again. Now unencumbered, Dong Shuye could chase quickly, and without the Move-Like-The-Wind Talisman enhancing Amber, Lu Ye might not actually be able to outrun him.

So, he needed a stable place where he could cultivate in peace.

With a plan in mind, Lu Ye took out the ten-part map to seek an appropriate location.

Swallowing an elixir pill, he initiated the breakthrough to the 55th orifice.

By midnight, Dong Shuye came killing his way to him again, and Lu Ye, with no other choice, had to continue fleeing on Amber. Fortunately, Dong Shuye hadn't recovered for long and wasn't very fast, giving Lu Ye space to continue escaping.

In this way, they pursued and fled, occasionally stopping to recuperate. Two days later, Lu Ye dashed into Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union within a marketplace on Amber. He had barely entered when Dong Shuye arrived hot on his heels.

Many cultivators inside the hall turned to look, their hearts secretly alarmed, mainly because Dong Shuye's murderous aura was too intense, his eyes both red.

A manager with only Level 3 cultivation approached, tremblingly saying, "Fighting is forbidden within the mercantile union. If you two have any grievances, please resolve them outside."

"Accommodation!" Lu Ye spoke up.

"Uh..." The manager was momentarily at a loss as to how to proceed.

Dong Shuye glared fiercely at the manager, as if to say if you dare agree, you won't see tomorrow's sun.

The manager was even more terrified.

Just then, a powerful fluctuation of spirit force appeared. An elderly man, supporting himself with a walking stick, slowly descended from the staircase, occasionally coughing softly.

The old man hunched over, looking like he might pass away on the spot, but the spirit light emanating from his body was decisively stronger than Dong Shuye at his peak.

This was at least a cultivator of the Spirit Stream Level 8!

Seeing the elder, Lu Ye felt reassured.

He had conducted many deals with the Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union and was aware of its powerful backing. What caught his attention most was the union's name—able to bear the words "Heaven's Augury," which was thought-provoking.

In the union, maids and managers handling reception and transactions indeed had low cultivation. At least Lu Ye had never seen any highly-cultivated cultivators there, but he always felt that there must be a strong cultivator governing the place; otherwise, how could all those valuable goods be safeguarded? This world was not short of those bold enough to take reckless risks.

Just as every sect's base needed a powerful governor, mercantile unions needed them even more.

This was why he had chosen Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union as his target—it was a place of business where, as long as he could rush in, he would be temporarily safe, for the union would not allow any fighting to occur.

It turned out, he was right. There indeed was a formidable cultivator in place, who normally would not reveal himself easily.

With Dong Shuye pursuing Lu Ye and running inside, the ordinary managers couldn't maintain order; hence, the place's powerful cultivator naturally stepped in.

Looking at the old man who was approaching step by step, Dong Shuye's eyes showed wariness. He knew more than the naïve Lu Ye, aware of what a behemoth Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union was. If he had not held any reservations, he would have acted upon entering instead of just glaring at Lu Ye with his eyes.

"My two friends, it is best to resolve everything in peace," the old man shakily approached, smiling amiably, his face the picture of friendliness.

He stopped not far in front of Lu Ye and Dong Shuye, his walking stick lightly tapping the ground. A point of spirit light centered where the stick touched, booming outward all around.

Lu Ye's eyes twitched; he had underestimated the old man. This person was likely on the same level as Tang Wu.

This demonstration was extraordinarily effective, and Dong Shuye quickly restrained his murderous intent, giving the old man a bow with his fist: "My apologies for the disturbance, I hope for your forgiveness." He backed down quite quickly.

Lu Ye watched from the side with a touch of schadenfreude.

"And this young friend here?" the elder looked at Lu Ye.

"I'm here to lodge!"

"Visitors are always welcome!" The elder smiled, while Dong Shuye wore a displeased expression.

The elder turned to the manager and said, "Arrange accommodation for this young friend. The cost of lodging is ten Spirit Stones per night!"

"Wait a minute!" Lu Ye frowned, "Ten Spirit Stones per night?"

He wasn't sure if he had heard wrong or if the old man had misspoken.

The elder still smiled, "Ten Spirit Stones."

"Other mercantile unions only charge one Spirit Stone per night!" Lu Ye felt like he was being targeted, and now it was Dong Shuye's turn to enjoy the moment in silence.

The elder's smile gradually faded, and his voice grew sharper, "While it's true that all visitors are guests, the mercantile union is merely a place of business, not a refuge. Anyone who dares to take advantage of the union will surely need to pay the price!" He looked coldly at Lu Ye, "Do you understand what I'm saying, young friend?"

The elder was right; he had no familial or friendly ties with Lu Ye, and would not go out of his way to assist him. He intimidated Dong Shuye while also wanting Lu Ye to back off. Had it not been for the union's policy of staying neutral, not engaging in confrontations between the two camps, he would have probably kicked both of them out himself.

"I understand." Lu Ye didn't fuss about it. Having a stable environment for cultivation was the most important thing at the moment. He took out a storage sack and, after some fiddling, tossed it to the manager, "I'll stay for ten days first."

The elder was taken aback, as was Dong Shuye.

Ten days' lodging paid in one go amounted to a hundred Spirit Stones, a sum not befitting a Level 4 cultivator.

The manager held the storage sack and looked to the elder.

The elder's smile returned to his face, "Find our guest the biggest and best room."

"Yes!" The manager replied and gestured with his hand, "Please follow me this way, guest."

Lu Ye followed the manager upstairs with Amber.

The elder then looked at Dong Shuye, "How about you, young friend? Do you also require lodging?"

"Ten Spirit Stones a night?" asked Dong Shuye.

"Of course, the mercantile union treats all guests equally."

"Then I won't stay!" Dong Shuye thought to himself that he wasn't crazy; who would stay in a room that costs ten Spirit Stones a night. Now that he had Lu Ye cornered here, he wasn't worried about him escaping. After a brief contemplation, he simply walked out of the mercantile union, and went to a shop opposite the union, where he stood and watched the union's entrance.

He took out two Spirit Stones and held them in his palm, slowly recovering.

He didn't believe that Lu Ye could keep up with a cost of ten Spirit Stones per night!

The room was very spacious, larger than any other room Lu Ye had stayed in before, and the arrangement gave off a warm and comfortable feeling. To Lu Ye's surprise, the spiritual energy in this room was denser than the outside world.

He guessed that there must be something like a spirit energy gathering array set up here, which certainly facilitated his cultivation.

The room also had a bath, which was delightful.

Weary in both body and mind from the constant travel, Lu Ye first had a full meal with Amber, cleaned up, and then began his cultivation.

He needed to raise his cultivation quickly as the cost of ten Spirit Stones a night was too high. Even with a little wealth in hand, he couldn't afford to splurge.

All his spiritual orifices were fortified with Spirit Energy Gathering Spirit Runes, and immediately Lu Ye felt a difference. The denser spiritual energy in the room meant that with the runes in place, his cultivation was now more efficient.

He cultivated incessantly, opening one orifice after another within him.

56th orifice, 57th orifice, 58th orifice...

Utterly exhausted, he would rest for a while, and when sitting for too long caused a stagnation of his blood Qi, he would stand up, exercise with his sword, and stretch his muscles and bones.

Since entering the Spirit Stream battlefield, Lu Ye had been tirelessly cultivating, but never had he yearned to boost his strength as swiftly as he did now.

It wasn't about Dong Shuye; it was simply that every extra night here cost ten Spirit Stones, a true testament that time was money!

On the fourth night of Lu Ye's stay in the mercantile union, a shapely manager was reporting to the elder about the recent profits of the union, while the elder listened almost dozing off.

The manager, accustomed to such reactions, wrapped up the routine report and then said, "There's another matter I'd like to report, sir."

"Speak!"

"Recently, the consumption of Spirit Stones in the Spirit Gathering Array has increased significantly. Every day it almost requires three to four more Spirit Stones than before."

The elder finally opened his eyes, "Where's the problem?"

"It's from the 'Sky 3' Room."

Chapter 142 - Whose Burial Ground

"Sky 3" Room was precisely where Lu Ye was staying.

The elder pondered for a moment, "Such talent is indeed rare."

The higher the talent, the more spiritual energy one can inhale and exhale. And the reason why spiritual energy was denser in the "Sky" rooms was as Lu Ye had surmised—the room had been discreetly fitted with a spirit energy gathering array, which concentrated nature's spiritual energy while also consuming Spirit Stones.

The more pronounced the Array's operation, the greater the consumption of Spirit Stones.

Though the elder had seen many cultivators with outstanding talent, there were plenty who consumed even more than Lu Ye. However, for someone in Level 4 realm to require three to four more Spirit Stones daily was quite extraordinary.

"Shall we ask him to leave?" the Manager inquired.

"He doesn't owe us any Spirit Stones, how can we drive him out? Remember, we are running a business here. No matter who comes, we must treat everyone fairly and justly, not acting according to our personal preferences."

"Yes."

"Go now." The elder waved his hand dismissively.

The Manager respectfully took his leave.

The elder sat stupefied in his chair for a while before slowly shaking his head.

He was probably a Disciple from some big sect, venturing into the outer circle to temper himself. Alas, a cultivator in the Level 4 realm being targeted by someone in Level 6, his chances of survival weren't too high.

On the sixth day of his stay with the mercantile union, while Lu Ye was resting, Amber came up to him for a rub.

Lu Ye looked at Yiyi, "What does Amber want?"

After a brief communication with him, Yiyi said, "Amber would like that scale you took out last time."

Lu Ye suddenly realized and hurriedly took out the Scale Armor again. Amber approached and took a ferocious inhale at the scale, a line of blood surged into Amber's nostrils. Just like the time before, it staggered backward a few steps, shook its head a bit, and then collapsed on the ground, falling unconscious. A pale red glow roamed its body's surface, tempering its physique.

Lu Ye had no intention to follow Amber's example—the bloodline within the Scale Armor seemed intoxicating. Even a demon beast like Amber barely withstood it, and Lu Ye estimated if he tried inhaling it, he would likely meet a grim end.

However, the item did have miraculous effects on Body Refining. Amber had vastly improved its physique after the last tempering. Now undergoing it a second time, who knew how much growth it would experience.

He continued to maintain his cultivation frequency.

One spiritual orifice after another was continuously opened.

On the fifteenth day at the mercantile union, as spiritual energy constantly bombarded him, the barriers of his 63rd orifice gradually loosened. Just before the barrier was about to break, Lu Ye halted his cultivation.

He stood up to inspect his condition—full of energy, blood Qi abound, the 63rd orifice on the verge of breaking. It was time to start enacting his plan.

He took Amber and went to the first floor of the mercantile union, found a Manager, and bought a few Spirit Talismans for a hundred Spirit Stones.

With that, he was left with a mere two hundred and thirty-something Spirit Stones. The half-month stay had cost him a hundred and fifty Spirit Stones, but it was worth the payout. Cultivating in that room had greatly increased his efficiency. A schedule intended to last around twenty days took only fifteen, saving him several days.

With less than a hundred elixir pills in hand, he thought for a moment and then converted another two hundred Spirit Stones into elixir pills, leaving over thirty Spirit Stones in reserve.

All set, Lu Ye mounted Amber and left the mercantile union.

A pair of sharp eyes immediately focused on him, belonging to Dong Shuye, who had been waiting outside the union for half a month.

As their gaze met, Lu Ye's expression soured as if mourning a great loss, whereas Dong Shuye's lips curved slightly, chewing the jerky in his mouth a couple of times before swallowing it whole.

Finally, the moment had arrived!

Without hesitating, Lu Ye slapped a Move-Like-The-Wind Talisman on Amber, picked a direction, and dashed away.

Dong Shuye took flight, in hot pursuit.

The shop owner behind him was in tears... Life is so hard; he hadn't had any business in half a month. Ever since Dong Shuye, radiating a fierce aura, took his stand there, no customer had dared to visit.

He didn't dare drive the man away—with Dong Shuye's Level 6 cultivation, he had no right to offend him as a mere Level 3.

Now, at last, that plague-like presence had left! The shop owner, reminded of the half-month's hardships, couldn't help but burst into tears.

Amber's speed had increased slightly, likely due to the earlier Bloodline Body Tempering, and with the Move-Like-The-Wind effect, even if Dong Shuye could glide in pursuit, he couldn't catch up immediately, which irritated him.

Luckily, he had learned. While chasing, he would pop an elixir pill into his mouth to replenish his energy, and in both hands, he held a Spirit Stone, absorbing the spirit force within.

The situation reverted to that of half a month earlier. Amidst the chase into the wilderness, after a good half-day, Amber began to slow down from exhaustion. Fortunately, Dong Shuye was similarly strained. Even with elixir pills and Spirit Stones for recovery, they could not offset the loss of spiritual force.

It was as if they had a telepathic understanding. They each stopped to recuperate, but this time Lu Ye didn't rest for long before he started fleeing again, and Dong Shuye, unwilling to let him escape, immediately got up to chase.

A day later, Dong Shuye stopped in front of a mountain cave, his eyebrows tightly furrowed!

He had just been midair when he saw Lu Ye riding that white big tiger rush into this cave, a sight that aroused some doubts in him.

Logically, the party being pursued wouldn't easily trap themselves in a dead end, and the fact that the other party had done so clearly wasn't normal.

But he quickly thought of a possibility: the cave might be connected to another exit. If the other party fled through here, his sliding advantage would be lost.

With this thought, Dong Shuye hesitated no longer, plunged into the cave, and quickly made his way deeper inside. Of course, he wasn't foolish—the moment he did this, in case Lu Ye had set an ambush, he slapped a Golden Body Talisman onto himself. That way, even if the enemy launched a surprise attack from the shadows, he would have time to react.

The cave was dark and damp, contrary to Dong Shuye's expectations, the other party hadn't set any traps in this cramped environment.

The further he went, the more spacious the cave became.

Until, at a certain moment, he charged into a wide cavity within the belly of the mountain. The cavity was about two acres in size and more than ten zhang high, with stalactites hanging from the ceiling, dripping water continuously, making sounds.

Even though it was dark, he spotted Lu Ye, who was hidden in the deepest part of the cave, now sitting cross-legged with spirit force roiling and surging around him.

Dong Shuye could confirm that the other party had some kind of plot or scheme, but this was a semi-enclosed space. Other than the entrance he had used to come in, there were no other exits, which meant that as long as he blocked the entrance, the other party had no means to escape!

Reassured, he thought: Finally, I've got you, you bastard! Even if the other party has any cunning tricks, they're nothing in the face of absolute strength.

He took a light breath and revealed a mocking smile on his face, "Is this the burial place you've chosen for yourself?"

No sooner had he spoken than the qi at Lu Ye's side fluctuated violently, the spirit force rippling and surging, creating waves of aura that rolled outwards, and the spirit light on his body flared up sharply.

Spirit Stream Level 5!

Dong Shuye was shocked; when he had been chasing Lu Ye before, the latter was clearly at Level 4, yet now, after just a little while out of sight, he had reached Spirit Stream Level 5, which only meant one thing—Lu Ye had been on the verge of the Level 5 realm and had deliberately chosen this time to advance!

Such a rapid cultivation speed!

Two and a half months ago, Lu Ye had been only at Level 3 realm. Dong Shuye had already been inwardly astonished to see Lu Ye reach Level 4, but considering that the other party might have stayed at Level 3 for a long time, an improvement of one level seemed normal.

But the current advancement was not normal!

Advancing from Level 3 to Level 5 in just two and a half months was a shocking cultivation speed.

Dong Shuye felt more and more convinced that his decision was right; missing this chance, he might not be the match for Lu Ye the next time he encounters him, by which time who would be the hunter and who the prey was uncertain.

Just as he was astonished, a ripple of spirit force suddenly emanated from behind him. Dong Shuye, without thinking, raised his hand and cast a magic and spells toward that direction.

A shadow flickered and vanished, and at the same time, a Spirit Talisman exploded by the entrance. Complemented by the magic and spells he had cast, rocks at the entrance crumbled to pieces with a rumble and fell, sealing the entrance tight.

Dong Shuye was slightly startled, only then realizing that the Spirit Talisman just now was not attacking him, but intended to blockade the exit. Now he couldn't retreat even if he wanted to!

As the intense fluctuations of spirit force rapidly approached, Dong Shuye hurriedly turned his head, just in time to see Lu Ye coming at him with the speed of thunder.

By this point, Lu Ye no longer looked as dispirited as when he had left the mercantile union; his expression was calm, his demeanor steady. Facing Dong Shuye's Golden Arc Slash, he twisted his body and evaded it nimbly.

This was indeed a place for burial, but it was the one he had chosen for Dong Shuye!

On his escape route, he had already asked Yiyi to find a suitable terrain, considering Dong Shuye's advantage in sliding. If Dong Shuye decided to flee at the sight of trouble, there was little Lu Ye could do. To kill Dong Shuye, he needed a favorable geographical location.

Yiyi found this cavern, which was not too big but not too small either, just meeting Lu Ye's requirements.

Having Yiyi activate the power of the Spirit Talisman to seal the entrance was also due to the fear that Dong Shuye might escape.

Now that the cavern was completely sealed, today only one of them would walk out alive!

Having advanced to Level 5, he had added a Minor Circumambulation system within his body, enhancing both his speed and explosive power. Lu Ye was confident that if he could get close to Dong Shuye, he would be able to kill him!

Magic cultivators are indeed formidable, mastering various magic and spells with ferocious might, but they also have another name.

He had heard it from Hua Ci during a chat before, she had mentioned that in the cultivation world, cultivators call physique cultivators beefy savage brutes, combat cultivators a group of hot-headed brawlers, and as for magic cultivators, they are a bunch of frail skins!

Relative to physique cultivators and combat cultivators of the same level, magic cultivators undoubtedly have the weakest physical condition, as they spend years studying magic and spells, leaving no time to temper their bodies.

Even the spectral cultivators with their ghostly and elusive ways have stronger bodies than magic cultivators.

Low-level cultivators, when in conflict, dominate from a distance, but once close combat is achieved, the combat capability of magic cultivators greatly diminishes.

Half a month ago in the skirmish, Lu Ye had only been at Level 4 and could only charge to within eight zhang of Dong Shuye, but now that he was at Level 5, he was confident he could break through Dong Shuye's magical barriers and close in on him.

As he charged, Lu Ye maneuvered his body, dodging the onslaught of magic and spells coming his way; the distance between them rapidly closed in. Under the illumination of the magical light, Dong Shuye's expression became slightly panicked.

Chapter 143 - Growth in Battle

In an instant, the distance between them had closed to just thirty feet!

Dong Shuye had barely released a couple of Dao techniques before they were all dodged by Lu Ye.

Spirit force surged as a fiery red round disc appeared in front of Dong Shuye, and from the disc, countless fist-sized fireballs spewed out, densely covering the area ahead.

The dark cave immediately brightened with light.

This particular magic spell had been used by him two and a half months ago when he pursued Lu Ye. Compared to the Golden Arc Slash, each fireball's destructive power was much less, but their number and coverage area were greater, and Dong Shuye was somewhat more adept at utilizing fire-type spells than those of the metal type.

Lu Ye, who was charging straight at him, frowned and immediately backed away, his footsteps shifting as he tried to move around the side. However, Dong Shuye adjusted his direction at the same time, continuously pouring spirit force into the red disc in front of him.

Boom, boom, boom...

The fireballs flew out, hitting the walls of the cave and creating a dense noise. Behind a thick stalagmite column, the exhausted Amber huddled without moving. Having expended too much energy, it couldn't be of any help to Lu Ye. Before the battle started, Lu Ye had told it to hide here to avoid accidental injury.

Moreover, even if Amber had the energy to spare, it would be difficult for it to intervene in such a battle. Its growth had indeed been significant, but it still fell short compared to the enemies that Lu Ye was facing.

With his plan to launch a surprise attack thwarted, Lu Ye could only keep circling, using the stalagmites that rose from the ground to block Dong Shuye's attacks.

But he was not in a rush because this situation was to his advantage; maintaining the magic spell consumed Dong Shuye's spirit force, so it should be Dong Shuye who was anxious.

And indeed, just moments later, Dong Shuye switched spells, pointing his finger and sending a writhing fire serpent towards the stalagmite where Lu Ye was hiding. This serpent, conjured without the use of a

Spirit Talisman, appeared even more lifelike than those that had been, with scales faintly visible on the burning body of the snake.

As the fire serpent wrapped around the stalagmite, Lu Ye had already moved to avoid it. Dong Shuye turned his head and saw Lu Ye once again rushing at him furiously from the side.

He hastily urged his spirit force, repeating the old trick, and another fiery red disc appeared, spewing out fist-sized fireballs.

At this moment, Lu Ye's movements began to seem unpredictable as he dodged one fireball after another, constantly narrowing the distance between them.

Dong Shuye frowned slightly; he noticed that Lu Ye's reactions seemed to have quickened a bit since earlier.

It wasn't an illusion; Lu Ye's movements had indeed sped up a little.

Although an increase in realm could enhance a cultivator's power, in reality, someone who had just advanced would need some time to adapt. To lure Dong Shuye into the trap, Lu Ye had deliberately held back the opening of his 63rd orifice, and when he made his breakthrough, Dong Shuye had already attacked, leaving him with no time to adapt to the changes in his body.

He could only get used to it while exchanging blows with Dong Shuye, and thankfully, the immense pressure of the intense combat accelerated his adaptation.

Once again pushed back, Lu Ye felt that in a few moments, he would have complete control over his newly gained power.

Continuing to hide behind the stalagmites, he avoided Dong Shuye's magical strikes, bursting out to attack whenever Dong Shuye adjusted his position.

His reactions and speed quickened yet again.

Lu Ye had a strong intuition that this time, he could succeed!

Dodging the fireballs one after another, Lu Ye countered those he couldn't evade with Defense Spirit Runes, thirty feet, twenty-five feet, fifteen feet...

Lu Ye drew his sword, and the moment the long blade left its sheath, fiery red spirit force clung to the edge. In the dark space, the entire sword seemed to catch on fire.

A flash of the blade, augmented by Sharpness Spirit Runes, and Lu Ye swung his sword down at Dong Shuye.

A look of bewilderment crossed Dong Shuye's face, seemingly at a loss as to how Lu Ye had managed to get so close so quickly. Almost instinctively, he raised his arms in front of him as if he planned to block the fierce strike with his own body.

With a clattering sound, golden spirit light shattered; it was the Golden Body Talisman Dong Shuye had slapped onto himself before entering the cave. A single slash at Lu Ye's current Level 5 realm was too much for a common Golden Body Talisman to withstand; it broke the golden light in just one strike.

However, before Lu Ye could rejoice, the light in front of him flickered and two crossing Golden Arc Slashes sped towards him in the shape of a cross.

The distance was too close, there was no way to avoid it.

He had been duped!

After all, Dong Shuye was a Level 6-7 magic cultivator. The fact that Lu Ye could so easily approach him made it unlikely that he would make such a foolish move as to block with his arms.

It wasn't a defense against the attack; it was Dong Shuye using the motion to conceal his use of a spell, deceiving Lu Ye with such a convincingly real expression on his face.

Such a fine performance!

Actually, Lu Ye was mistaken. Dong Shuye's bewildered expression was genuine; he completely did not expect Lu Ye to close in on him so effortlessly. Raising his arms was premeditated; he had always given Lu Ye the impression that he could only unleash one spell at a time, but in reality, that wasn't his limit.

As Lu Ye's sword came slashing down, he took advantage of the momentum to release two crossing Golden Arc Slashes because he believed that with the Golden Body Talisman and his own spirit force for protection, Lu Ye couldn't possibly defeat him with one strike.

But if Lu Ye were to take two Golden Arc Slashes from him, he wouldn't die but would be in a terrible state!

This time, Dong Shuye's calculation had succeeded; his two Golden Arc Slashes struck Lu Ye's chest.

Lu Ye's body was sent flying, and in midair, he felt a stuffiness in his chest and coughed out a mist of blood.

But Dong Shuye also made a mistake.

In the instant of their exchange, Dong Shuye screamed in pain and retreated helplessly, looking down to see a deep bone-deep wound on his arms, with flesh turned inside out.

He couldn't help but widen his eyes...

Was this a slash that a Level 5 realm cultivator could make? What a joke!

That mere slash had first broken through his Golden Body Talisman, then his protective spirit force, and wounded both his arms!

Secretly feeling lucky that he was maintaining protective spirit force at all times, otherwise that slash could have chopped off both of his arms.

A newly promoted Level 5 cultivator, how could he have such a sharp attack, what quality of Spiritual Artifact was in the opponent's hand?

The last time he pursued Lu Ye, he had only seen Lu Ye using Defense Spirit Runes in combat, aware that his spirit runes had strong protective power. Only now, for the first time, had he experienced Lu Ye's offensive power and was genuinely scared out of his wits!

Feeling a secret dread, he had almost botched it.

"Cough, cough..." Over there, the blasted Lu Ye propped himself up with his sword, his mouth full of a rusty taste.

Dong Shuye concentrated and looked toward his chest, quickly disappointed. There was no sign of a slash wound on Lu Ye's chest. In that last instant, he had timely activated his Defense Spirit Runes for defense. Although he had blocked the slash, he couldn't block the force of the impact, which had caused Lu Ye an internal injury.

He sensed it slightly and felt stuffiness in his chest, but there were no signs of fractures, which was a good thing. After the Dragon Spring Body Tempering, his physique had greatly enhanced, and his ability to take hits had become much stronger.

Dong Shuye wouldn't give him time to catch his breath. Just as Lu Ye managed to stand up, he endured the pain in his arms and began casting magic and spells.

Golden, red, white spells, various magic and spells came one after another, incessantly. Lu Ye could only dodge in an embarrassed manner.

It took a while before he could gather his strength again, turn around, and charge towards Dong Shuye again, his long sword blazing like fire once more.

Having had the experience of rushing toward Dong Shuye once before, this time it became much easier, especially after Dong Shuye's arms were injured, the frequency he displayed magic and spells significantly reduced.

And as Lu Ye launched his assault, Dong Shuye was constantly retreating backward. At this time, the importance of choosing the battlefield in advance was evident. If it was outdoors, Dong Shuye could have easily slipped away from Lu Ye with a glide. But in this sealed space, he had no way to exploit his advantage.

The distance was once again rapidly closed, and Dong Shuye's expression gradually turned fierce and ferocious.

In the blink of an eye, Lu Ye had rushed to within three yards of Dong Shuye and, while ducking under a spell, swung his long sword upwards.

The determined slash, however, missed, and a powerful impact came from above. Lu Ye quickly raised his hand to activate the Defense Spirit Runes to block it, the force making him stoop slightly and slide backwards uncontrollably.

Looking up, Dong Shuye was floating in mid-air, looking down at Lu Ye with a mocking face, "Kid, you underestimate the magic cultivators too much!"

He really couldn't fly, but he had the Travel Through Air Skill. With this skill, short-term hovering was possible.

A Level 5 combat cultivator, unless he grew wings, what could he use to compete with him? One could say that the outcome of this battle was determined from the start.

He hadn't revealed this ability earlier because he thought he could kill Lu Ye, but after fighting back and forth, he realized that even if his opponent had just been promoted to Level 5, he was not so easy to kill. Now that his arm was injured, he should no longer delay and must end the battle quickly.

Raising his hand and pointing at Lu Ye, Dong Shuye's face was cold and his fingertips began to surge with spirit force. A round disc the size of a table top began to take shape.

With Lu Ye's speed being too fast, and the protection of those spirit runes, single-target spells were very difficult to kill him with, so Dong Shuye was preparing to use a large area-of-effect spell. He wanted to set the entire cave ablaze with fire to ensure the death of his opponent.

As the spirit force gathered disc began to take shape, spirit force started surging from below, accompanied by the sounds of pfft pfft, a fat firebird, moving with lightning speed, dove straight into Dong Shuye's embrace!

With a boom, the fat bird exploded, and a baffled Dong Shuye fell from the air; the disc that had just formed dissipated into smoke. In that instant, the fluctuation of spirit force in his body became extremely chaotic.

Magic? This guy could use magic? Dong Shuye, falling from the sky, had almost lost his ability to think. He had calculated every possibility but really did not expect that Lu Ye, this newly promoted Level 5 cultivator, would know magic and spells.

Moreover, the way the opponent cast that spell was as easy as reaching into a bag, even faster than him, catching him entirely off guard.

Was this guy also a magic cultivator?

Catching a glimpse of Lu Ye rapidly closing in from the corner of his eye, Dong Shuye quickly adjusted his posture. However, he was interrupted during the casting of that large spell and then took a direct hit from the opponent's spell. Even with his protective spirit force, the consequence was severe.

His spirit force was now running wild within his body, careening erratically through his spiritual orifice, leaving his body stiff and immobile.

Chapter 144 - I Haven't Used My Full Strength Yet

Seeing the perfect opportunity, Lu Ye rushed to Dong Shuye within a few steps, his long saber, augmented with spirit force, chopped down fiercely.

As the long saber descended, a strong pushing force came from Dong Shuye's direction. It was unclear what magic and spells Dong Shuye had used, but in the face of that repelling force, Lu Ye was pushed back more than ten meters before he could finally stabilize his stance.

Looking up again, Dong Shuye had already climbed up, holding his chest with his hand. A huge wound on his right chest was clearly visible, from which blood gushed out, instantly staining his clothes red.

His face was filled with terror, for Lu Ye had nearly killed him with a single strike. During the moment his spirit force was in disarray, he had no power to resist. Fortunately, in the nick of time, he managed to regain control of himself.

Although he had narrowly avoided death, such an injury was already extremely severe.

"Ha..." Dong Shuye staggered a bit. By now, he finally understood the reason Lu Ye had lured him to this place first and then immediately sealed off the exit. This was not the burial ground that Lu Ye had chosen for himself; it was clearly chosen for him.

It was laughable that he always thought he could kill the other party with his own strength, not realizing that arrogance was the root of failure.

The enemy charged at him again, not intending to give him any time to breathe, just as he had done earlier. Moreover, by comparison, this enemy was more decisive and aggressive in combat. Since the beginning until now, he hadn't said a single word, simply continually seeking opportunities to advance and then swing his blade.

That's what a life-and-death struggle should look like, right?

Watching Lu Ye rapidly approaching, Dong Shuye took out another Golden Body Talisman from his storage sack and slapped it onto himself, knowing that this time it was more likely to be perilous, but he was unwilling to just wait for death.

Protected by the Golden Body, he raised both hands, completely disregarding the frantic consumption of his spirit force, as one after another, magic and spells were cast in quick succession.

But he had injuries on both arms, and his right chest was almost cleaved open. The massive blood loss in a short period of time made him dizzy and even breathing became difficult. In such a state, the speed of casting spells was far slower compared to the very beginning.

Amidst those magic and spells attacks, Lu Ye advanced and slashed down with his blade.

The golden light shattered. Even though Dong Shuye activated a spirit force barrier at the same time the golden light broke, it still couldn't completely block the fierce strike.

This slash started from the right shoulder and extended to the lower left abdomen, nearly gutting him open.

Before Dong Shuye had a chance to cast any more spells, Lu Ye's second blow was already on its way, and a strong resistance once again swept through, pushing him several meters away.

As he steadied himself, Dong Shuye was now floating in mid-air, his spirit force boiling and burning. However, with the lesson learned, he wouldn't foolishly remain stationary. Under Lu Ye's watch, he was floating uncertainly through the air at a jogging pace.

Lu Ye raised his hand, releasing a plump bird that fluttered its wings and flew up. It didn't hit the target, which had always been a problem for Lu Ye and the reason why he didn't often use magic and spells against enemies.

The first time he had managed to hit was mainly because Dong Shuye hadn't expected Lu Ye to use spells, and the casting was fast enough that he was hit before he could react.

That moment was Dong Shuye's biggest mistake. The injury wasn't too severe, but the subsequent disarray in his spirit force brought consequences that he couldn't bear.

Their eyes met, and Dong Shuye cracked a hideous smile, pressing on his battlefield marking. The marking immediately emitted red light. Lu Ye thought something was wrong; this man might be calling for help. Immediately, he cast spells even more frequently.

Shortly after, the light from the marking on Dong Shuye's hand receded, and at the same time, the spirit light around his body suddenly dimmed and he plummeted towards the ground.

Lu Ye was somewhat confused by this situation, but quickly realized that the man had exhausted his spirit force!

In his prime, Dong Shuye obviously wouldn't run out of spirit force so soon, especially since he was a cultivator who had opened more than 108 orifices, with a reserve of spirit force twice as much as Lu Ye.

But his previous pursuit of Lu Ye consumed too much, and once inside the cave, to stop Lu Ye from approaching, he kept using persistent magic, depleting even the largest reserve of spirit force.

In contrast, Lu Ye was different. With Amber carrying him, he had always maintained a perfect state, and even managed to achieve a breakthrough to Level 1 here.

With a thud, Dong Shuye fell to the ground, feeling almost shattered.

Footsteps approached from the side; Lu Ye walked slowly with his blade in hand. He didn't believe Dong Shuye was putting on an act; falling from such a high place was no small ordeal, especially since Dong Shuye was already severely injured.

In other words, the man had truly exhausted his spirit force.

Standing in front of Dong Shuye, Lu Ye looked down at him. Blood poured from Dong Shuye's mouth and nose, and there was a rattling sound in his throat. Looking at Lu Ye, he seemed to want to say something.

Lu Ye raised his blade, gripped the hilt in reverse, and aimed at his heart. With a stab, the blade went down.

Dong Shuye's body suddenly stiffened.

"I will be waiting for you... on the road to Huang Quan!" At his last moment, Dong Shuye almost bit out these words through gritted teeth. His stiff body then relaxed, and he was silenced, his eyes wide open.

A wisp of red light drifted out and fell into Lu Ye's hand.

He looked at Dong Shuye's corpse, suddenly feeling a surreal sensation.

Two and a half months ago, he was nearly at his wit's end, being chased by this man. If not for a stroke of luck, he would have never escaped that ordeal. Yet just two and a half months later, the powerful figure that he had once looked up to had died by his blade.

It turned out that he had grown so much stronger than he had been two and a half months ago.

And furthermore...

"I haven't even used my full strength yet," Lu Ye muttered softly to himself.

Indeed, he had not given it his all—he still had the Move-Like-The-Wind Talisman unused. If that could be used to enhance Amber's speed, it could naturally do the same for him. With his current strength, if he were to use the Move-Like-The-Wind, his speed would increase by at least thirty percent.

Lu Ye had planned to wait until he had adapted to the increase in strength brought about by his advancement in cultivation before considering the use of the Move-Like-The-Wind Talisman. Otherwise, using such a talisman rashly could result in him losing control over his body, possibly ending up like he did after the Dragon Spring Body Tempering, where he crashed into a wall.

Sometimes, a sudden increase in speed is not necessarily a good thing, especially when facing a magic cultivator like Dong Shuye. In full control of himself, Lu Ye could dodge his opponent's magic and spells, but if his speed exceeded his own control, he might run smack into an incoming spell.

A mistake like that in a life-and-death battle would be terrifying.

Unfortunately, he never got the chance to use that talisman in the end.

He did not make a mistake; Dong Shuye made a significant one and was brought down by his Fire Phoenix Technique.

Yiyi poked her head out from the side, holding a Spirit Talisman and asked cautiously, "Did we win?"

Lu Ye lay sprawled on the ground, forming the shape of a spread-eagled figure, "We won!"

Yiyi had only appeared initially to block the exit with a Spirit Talisman and had not shown herself since because Lu Ye had instructed her not to act rashly. She should only use the Spirit Talisman when there was a perfect opportunity or if he was in danger. However, the battle went much more smoothly than Lu Ye had anticipated, and Yiyi never got the chance to act.

"Lu Ye, you are really amazing," Yiyi expressed her admiration sincerely.

Lu Ye forced a smile, "We can't stay here long. Feed Amber some stuff, let's rest for a bit, and we must leave quickly."

Before his death, Dong Shuye had managed to send out some information using his battlefield marking. Although Lu Ye did not know what exactly he said or to whom, it was likely that he was calling for reinforcements.

That's why they needed to leave as quickly as possible.

What Lu Ye didn't know was that, as a sect betrayer, Dong Shuye could not possibly call his former friends for help. Moreover, by that time, he had realized his doom was inevitable, and it was too late to summon anyone even if he wanted to.

He just sent out a message, and that message—went out to many people!

After feeding Amber, Yiyi went to clean up the battlefield and soon came back gleefully carrying a storage sack, "Lu Ye, Lu Ye, we've struck it rich."

Seeing her excitement, Lu Ye knew they had made a good haul.

Dong Shuye's storage sack was open, as he had been retrieving items from it during the fight and hadn't had the chance to secure it with a restriction lock.

Lu Ye was now sitting cross-legged on the ground, refining elixir pills to recover and eating, while also checking his battlefield marking.

Name: Lu Ye.

Identity: Disciple of the Righteous Blood Sect.

Cultivation: Opened the 63rd orifice.

Location: Spirit Stream battlefield.

Merit: Three hundred and ninety-seven.

When he left Hundred Peaks Mountain, his merit was three hundred and sixty-eight points; now it had increased by twenty-nine points.

After some thought, he recalled that he had killed two cultivators of Level 4 in that swamp, which accounted for eight points of merit; Dong Shuye alone had contributed a full twenty-one points of merit!

It seems that although Dong Shuye's cultivation had dropped to Level 6 for some reason, the merit gained from slaying him was still calculated based on his Level 7 cultivator status.

One thing that Lu Ye had never figured out was exactly how Dong Shuye's cultivation had fallen.

Now, it seemed unlikely he would ever find out.

In Dong Shuye's storage sack, there were quite a few Spirit Stones and elixir pills; after a count, there were one hundred and thirty-four Spirit Stones and fifty-seven elixir pills.

This was the largest haul Lu Ye had obtained from any storage sack, sufficient to compensate for the damage sustained by the Mystic Spirit Bell.

However, compared to Dong Shuye's status as a Level 7 cultivator, this wealth still seemed rather meager.

But this was Lu Ye's misconception, as he had always had plenty of resources for cultivation at hand, which was due to him constantly selling origin magnetic ore. Other cultivators did not have this foundation.

Compared to others, Dong Shuye could be considered wealthy since he had once been the governor for the Nine Stars Sect and was responsible for distributing the resources for his junior fellow disciples' cultivation. Occasionally, he could skim off the top, lining his own pockets, hence accumulating such wealth.

If it were an average Level 7 cultivator, they wouldn't possess such assets because cultivation consumes resources, and what the sects distribute monthly couldn't be saved up.

Having sorted out the spoils of war and made some repairs, Lu Ye and Yiyi moved the stones blocking the exit and followed the path they had come by to head outside.

Chapter 145 - You Might Not Believe It

In the inner circle of the battlefield, within a perilous land, the aftermath of a great battle left a man drenched in blood, meditating to regulate his breath, while a worn yet bright-eyed young girl with twin buns stood nearby on guard.

As the young master rested, weary as she was, she would not let anyone disturb him.

This master-servant duo was none other than Wang Yeang and Xiaozhu from Xuanmen. After conquering the Nine Stars Sect's territory, Wang Yeang led Xiaozhu away from the outer circle and ventured into the inner circle, because with their level of cultivation, only in the inner circle could they refine themselves and gain substantial benefits.

In the outer circle, they could indeed dominate, but that would only stagnate their cultivation. Any cultivator with a bit of ambition, upon reaching a certain level of power, would move toward the inner circle and core circle, mainly because that was where they could earn ample merits.

While meditating, Wang suddenly opened his eyes and checked his battlefield marking.

"Hmm?" His expression suddenly turned very strange.

Xiaozhu, hearing the noise, turned to look: "What's the matter, young master?"

Wang Yeang glanced at her, "You might not believe this, but Dong Shuye just sent me a message."

"Dong Shuye?" Xiaozhu was astonished.

The Nine Stars Sect's base had been taken, and in his rushed return, the young master had broken three of Dong's spiritual orifices, since then there had been no word from him. Later, news came from the Nine Stars Sect that Dong Shuye had betrayed the sect, and although they issued a warrant for him, they had not managed to apprehend him.

The Spirit Stream battlefield was vast, and unless the Nine Stars Sect dispatched several high-level cultivators to trace Dong Shuye's whereabouts, he would be hard to locate.

The reason Dong Shuye could send Wang a message was, naturally, because they had added each other as "friends"...

This was not because they were friendly, but because as governors of their respective sects' territories, who were mutual enemies, skirmishes often broke out among their junior brothers and sisters, necessitating occasional negotiations between the parties.

Leaving each other's imprints in their battlefield markings also facilitated communication across distances, sparing many inconveniences.

It was initially Dong Shuye who added Wang Yeang.

But he deeply regretted this decision because, since they could contact each other via the battlefield markings, Wang Yeang would occasionally send greetings like "I'll chop off your head" or "come out and die," which greatly annoyed Dong Shuye, who several times considered erasing Wang's imprint.

Since the three spiritual orifices of Dong Shuye were destroyed, Wang Yeang had not sought him out again. His future prospects were doomed, and Dong Shuye posed no threat to Wang. Moreover, being wanted by the Nine Stars Sect, he held little interest for Wang.

Unexpectedly, today he took the initiative to send a message.

"What did he say?" Xiaozhu asked, curious.

"You might not believe it again, but he sent news about that mountain tiger."

"Mountain tiger Lu Yiye?"

Xiaozhu remembered this person clearly. Though not a disciple of Xuanmen, he played a significant role in their conquest of the Nine Stars Sect territory. She had even sold him an Earth-class technique on the young master's orders. Nearly three months had passed, and Xiaozhu did not expect to hear from him again, especially not from Dong Shuye.

The whole matter had an air of eeriness about it, no wonder the young master's expression was so peculiar.

"You should see it for yourself." Wang Yeang said and transmitted the message to Xiaozhu.

Upon reading it, Xiaozhu's brow furrowed deeply.

"Lu Yiye, riding a snow-white tiger, disciple of the Righteous Blood Sect in Bingzhou, a peerless genius, his cultivation increased from Level 3 in the Spirit Stream to Level 5 in just two with two half months, now located at Fengyun Mountain on what appears to be a return to his sect."

Such an abrupt piece of news.

If Lu Ye saw this message, he would probably be stunned. The title of a peerless genius was something he utterly couldn't afford, as his talent was only rated a single leaf back in Evil Moon Valley, something Yue Shan the mustachioed man had teased him about extensively.

"Righteous Blood Sect in Bingzhou?" Xiaozhu said, surprised yet amused: "Young master, seems we guessed wrong. That mountain tiger doesn't seem to be a disciple of some big sect."

"Yes, we guessed wrong." Wang Yeang said, a slight smile at the corner of his mouth, "But his origins aren't less significant than those top sect disciples."

"Righteous Blood Sect in Bingzhou..." Xiaozhu muttered, vaguely remembering having heard of that sect's name before, but it hadn't really registered until just then when the young master mentioned it: "Is it that sect?"

"Exactly that sect!"

Xiaozhu startled, suddenly realizing something was amiss, "Why would Dong Shuye send young master this message?"

"He wasn't just sending it to me. At the brink of death, he transmitted it to everyone in the imprints of the marking."

"Is he about to die?"

"He is already dead!" Wang Yeang had tried to contact Dong Shuye when he received the message, but the seal belonging to Dong Shuye in the battlefield marking was slowly dissipating, a sign that the other party had died.

In an instant, Wang Yeang understood Dong Shuye's intentions. This simple message could very likely cause a huge stir in the Spirit Stream battlefield, and even across the entire Nine Provinces.

Wang Yeang did not know how many people Dong Shuye had passed the message to, but judging by his choice to indiscriminately broadcast the message, he must have been close to death before sending it, so there was simply no time to discern who was marked in the seals.

Was it the mountain tiger who killed Dong Shuye? It was highly likely, according to the message, that Lu Yiye had reached the Spirit Stream Level 5, while Dong Shuye, having broken his 3rd orifice, had his cultivation fall to Level 6. For some monstrous figures, killing someone a step higher was not difficult.

What a terrifying rate of cultivation. If the message from Dong Shuye was correct, then he had truly underestimated that mountain tiger. Despite not coming from a top-tier powerhouse, that rival might very well be stronger than disciples born into such forces.

Suddenly, a rush of blood surged to Wang Yeang's chest, and he abruptly stood up.

"Young Master?" Xiaozhu did not understand why her young master suddenly seemed ready for battle.

"A grand gathering is about to begin. Let us go and meet the heroes of the world!" Wang Yeang declared, striding towards the door as he ordered, "Spread the news outwards!"

"Oh." Xiaozhu followed Wang Yeang, tapping her own battlefield marking.

At that moment, many people in the Spirit Stream battlefield received Dong Shuye's message. Some were indifferent, having no clue what Dong Shuye intended with this news, but others looked grave and hurriedly reported it higher up.

From one to ten, ten to a hundred, the news had spread across the entire Spirit Stream battlefield in less than half a day, alerting those who were concerned that the righteous Blood Sect of Bingzhou had a genius disciple whose cultivation speed was incredibly fast, having grown from Spirit Stream Level 3 to Level 5 in just over two months.

The world never lacks geniuses in cultivation. Advancing two levels in a little over two months may seem significant, but in the early stages of a cultivator's development, such speed is achievable given sufficient resources and a good cultivation environment, especially for disciples from top-tier big sects.

Or perhaps some serendipity occurred on the battlefield...

What exactly the Spirit Stream battlefield is, where it is located in the Nine Provinces, remains a mystery to this day. Some speculate that the Spirit Stream battlefield has no connection to the Nine Provinces and originates from a world beyond; others believe that this battlefield was a space segregated by powerful beings in ancient times.

Both theories have their reasons, as many relics that do not match the style of the Nine Provinces have appeared in the battlefield, along with some extremely ancient ruins. These sites are usually hidden deeply and unnoticed, but occasionally, some incredibly fortunate individuals encounter serendipity in these places and ascend to great heights thereafter.

If that disciple from the Righteous Blood Sect had some fortuitous encounters in the battlefield, his advancement of two levels in a bit over two months would be explainable.

However, soon, news about Lu Yiye came from within the Nine Provinces.

Less than six months ago, the Haotian Alliance of Bingzhou attacked Evil Moon Valley. After its conquest, ten sects took in disciples. At that time, Lu Yiye was taken in by the Righteous Blood Sect.

His real name is Lu Ye, but "Yiye" was just a nickname someone gave him at the time because when his talent was tested, he was found to have only opened one orifice.

At that time, he had only opened his first orifice!

In other words, in less than half a year, Lu Yiye had grown from a cultivator with one opened orifice to a Level 5 realm—an average of more than one level advancement per month. Compared to advancing two levels in two and a half months, increasing from one to five levels in less than six months was undoubtedly even more astounding!

Yiye's talent was not considered genius-level, and such rapid growth could only be explained by some fortuitous encounter.

Moreover, he did not have a very good cultivation environment, because, on the way back to the sect with Thang Yifeng, the sect master, they encountered an attack.

Afterward, it was reported that although Thang Yifeng had managed to kill the attackers, he himself was severely injured and had been resting and healing in Mount Ao, not leaving for the past six months. As for Lu Ye, he was said to have tragically died in the aftermath of the battle.

Just after taking in a new sect disciple, the Righteous Blood Sect had again lost its legacy...

The Deputy Leader of the Haotian Alliance, Pang Zhen, confirmed this news and, furious, ordered a thorough investigation, catching several big fish secretly colluding with the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge camp. At the time, this incident caused a huge uproar in the entire Bingzhou cultivation world.

But now it seems, Pang Zhen was merely blowing hot air.

Lu Ye had not died; instead, he had been sent by Thang Yifeng into the Spirit Stream battlefield, and even whether Thang Yifeng had been severely injured was still uncertain.

After all, that old fox Thang Yifeng, despite seeming to be a saintly and venerable Daoist, was actually full of trickery... Back then, cultivators from the Ten Thousand Demons ridge camp in the Nine Provinces suffered greatly under his manipulation.

News travels fast in the cultivation world. In just one day, Lu Ye's origins and the incident of the attack en route to the sect with the sect master were uncovered, down to the minutest details.

Some facts simply cannot be hidden. Once there is a clue, those who are keen can connect all the dots.

Suddenly, many sects started taking things seriously. Bingzhou's Righteous Blood Sect, once a majorly renowned sect in the entire Nine Provinces and the nightmare of many opposing forces, was the entity under whose repression the cultivators of the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge had struggled to survive in that era.

Chapter 146 - Li Baxian, Feng Yuechan

The core circle of the battlefield, at the Loyal Heart Sect's station within the 2nd grade sect, atop a peak behind the mountain there was a rock formation soaring like the outstretched wings of an eagle, known as Eagle Flight Rock. Sitting on the rock was a figure, a person clad in a white robe embroidered with red clouds, outlining a tall and sturdy figure, with a head of snow-white hair.

By appearance, he looked about thirty, but his eyes were filled with vicissitudes.

He sat on Eagle Flight Rock, one leg bent, the other dangled in the air, with a wine gourd placed beside him.

Gazing at the setting sun in the west, the man squinted slightly and reached for the wine gourd next to him, tilting his head back to take a big gulp, only to find it empty, drinking nothing but loneliness.

The white-robed young man shook the gourd and heaved a long sigh.

Just then, a light brightened before his eyes as he saw a fleeing light flying up from below, and he chuckled with a "Heh, the wine is here!" and waved to the fleeing light.

Soon, the fleeing light landed beside him, revealing a cute and lovely girl.

The girl had a curvaceous figure and was dressed in a green dress, her beautiful hair tied into two ponytails. As soon as she appeared, she smiled at the young man, her dimpled smile exceedingly charming.

"Brother!" The girl called out crisply.

"What 'brother'!" the young man glared, "Call me 'Master Uncle'!"

"Oh?" The girl cocked her head and looked at him, a sly twinkle passing through her lovely eyes, "Are you sure?"

The young man spoke earnestly, "The order of seniority must not be confused. Your father is my senior brother, so naturally, you should call me Master Uncle."

The girl then stood with hands behind her back, one foot resting on thin air, pretending to walk away and glancing sidelong at the young man, "Well, you better think carefully. Brothers get to drink wine, but as for Master Uncle... go where it's cool and stay there."

"Chan'er, you're really mischievous!" the young man chided her seriously.

Chan'er, the girl in question, couldn't help but giggle, drew back her foot, and took out several jars of wine from her storage sack. The young man quickly opened one, sniffed its aroma and his eyebrows lifted, "Good wine!"

He took a few gulps from the jar, thoroughly satisfied, and burped casually before asking, "Where did this wine come from? It's quite aged."

The girl while pouring her wine into the young man's gourd, replied offhandedly, "It's from the stash my mother buried in the Emerald Bamboo Forest."

The young man froze, staring dumbfounded at Chan'er, "Isn't this your dowry? You're so bold, if your mother finds out..."

Chan'er giggled, "If you don't tell and I don't tell, how would my mother know?"

The young man then looked at Chan'er with a conflicted expression, glancing again at his wine gourd, tipped it back for several more mouthfuls, and thought, what the heck, he had been used to being slapped around since he was a child, as long as he didn't leave the Spirit Stream battlefield, that old witch of a mother couldn't do anything to him...

"Brother, when will you marry me?" Chan'er, having finished with the wine, sat in front of the young man and asked seriously.

"Cough cough cough..." The young man began to cough violently, wiping his mouth, he scolded the girl, "What are you talking about? I'm your Master Uncle!"

The girl tilted her head, her fingers touching her red lips, "That night thirty-two years ago, you ki..." She appeared young, but in reality, she possessed the art of maintaining her beauty, and her true age couldn't be discerned from her appearance.

"Silence!" The young man became flustered, guiltily looking around, "If your mother hears you, will I still be alive? Besides, I was young back then..."

He was just a few years old at the time, and it was impressive she could remember so clearly. The past was too painful to look back on!

"Let's not talk about it then." Chan'er smiled as she looked at him, even making a zipping motion across her lips, as if sewing her mouth shut.

The young man immediately felt a headache coming on. Having been around the girl for so many years, he knew her personality better than anyone else. The more she behaved like this, the more it indicated there was something important she wasn't saying.

He sighed, "Just say what you have to say."

With a smile, Chan'er said, "Well, since you asked, you have to marry me!"

"Would you just shut up!" The young man firmly turned away, leaving his back to the girl.

"You don't want to listen about Righteous Blood Sect's situation either?" Chan'er's voice came from behind him.

The young man turned back, his expression suddenly serious, moving his lips a few times and finally saying with difficulty, "Are they being demoted? It's about time I guess."

Chan'er shook her head, her bright eyes curving into crescents, "The Righteous Blood Sect might not need to be demoted."

"What do you mean?" The young man frowned. Without taking in disciples for thirty years, the Righteous Blood Sect had been on the verge of demotion. In two months, the sect's grade evaluation would begin, and such evaluations were beyond the influence of mortals. The old head and his sister had held out for thirty years, with the Righteous Blood Sect slowly descending from 1st to 9th grade.

This time, it was impossible to retain their status.

"I've heard - and it's just hearsay - that half a year ago, Veteran Thang took in a disciple, but on the way back, they were ambushed. Out of necessity, Thang had to send him to the Spirit Stream battlefield. Now, this kid named Lu Yiye has already reached the Level 5 realm and is rushing towards the Righteous Blood Sect's station."

Before Chan'er could finish, the young man had already stood up, his face full of shock and disbelief, "The old man has taken a disciple?"

"Seems so!"

"Where did you get this information? Can you confirm it?"

"I'm not very clear about the source, but the news has already spread, and many people are aware of it now."

"It has spread?" The young man frowned and said in a low voice, "Not good!"

As he said this, a layer of sword light wrapped around him, and he broke through the air and left.

"Remember to marry me!" Chan'er called out from behind, but there was no reply—she huffed, "He's in such a hurry, didn't even ask for the location."

Despite saying that, she still sent a message to the young man, detailing the intelligence she had gathered.

The next moment, a stern shout came from ahead, "Without the order to transfer, no one is permitted to leave the sect without authorization. What are you trying to do, Li Baxian? Ahhh!"

While shouting, the voice fell towards the ground, though what befell them was unknown.

On Eagle Flight Rock, the girl known as Chan'er also rose to her feet, pondered for a moment, and said to herself, "Sacred Fire Order, Golden Clouds Tower, Hundred Refinement Valley, which one should I go to? Never mind, I can't be bothered to think!"

Looking around and seeing no one, she took off one of her embroidered shoes and tossed it into the sky. When it landed, she looked at the tip of the shoe: "This direction, Hundred Refinement Valley? Then off to Hundred Refinement Valley it is."

As she said this, she threw a handkerchief into the air. It immediately swelled in the wind, transforming into a Spiritual Artifact a few zhang in size. Chan'er jumped onto the handkerchief and traveled through the air.

The voice that had sounded earlier quickly spoke up again, "Where are you going, Senior Sister Yuechan?"

"Move aside, move aside!" Chan'er unceremoniously waved her hand.

"Ahhh..." That voice fell toward the ground once more, still calling out.

After a good while, a figure emerged from the ground, dusty and disheveled, watching the handkerchief disappear into the distance with a crestfallen expression.

The Governor and Deputy Governor both ran off—such an incident had never happened in the many years since Loyal Heart Sect was established.

This was a major issue!

He hurriedly sent out messages, ordering his fellow sect disciples to guard various strategic locations. He also activated the protective array to prevent any external enemies from taking advantage of the situation and informed the Nine Provinces of the events that occurred here.

Two days later, within the inner circle of the battlefield, at the Hundred Refinement Valley's station, with the sect's protective array activated, the Governor on duty glared at the female figure in the sky with resentment and anger, "Feng Yuechan, what are you trying to do!"

But he could only hide within the protective array and shout—he didn't dare to go out and provoke her.

There was no other reason; that woman flying in the sky was the top of the Spirit Stream Ranking.

Moreover, she was an old hand who had been at the top for over a dozen years.

It wasn't that Feng Yuechan had an exceptional cultivation talent. Her talent was indeed not bad, but that alone was not enough for her to dominate the top spot for over a decade.

The main reason was this woman kept delaying her cultivation level promotion. Over a decade ago, she opened up 360 spiritual orifices, and everyone thought she was about to advance to the Cloud River Realm. However, after more than a decade, she stubbornly refused to advance.

More than ten years of accumulation in the Spirit Stream Realm gave her a more refined spirit force than ordinary people, and that would have been fine, but the key point was that this woman was also a magic cultivator...

Without advancing her cultivation level, she went on to research magic and spells. As a result, this woman's strength grew year after year. Since she took the top position more than a decade ago, she's never stepped down.

Rumor had it, she was proficient in over a hundred Dao techniques.

A typical Level 9 magic cultivator of the Spirit Stream Realm could master at most ten or twenty magic spells, with only a few being their forte. Compared to her, one could see just how terrifying this woman was.

Stagnating her own cultivation level like this wasn't necessarily a good thing, especially for a cultivator with high talent like Feng Yuechan. As her age increased, her potential would gradually decrease, and if she continued to refuse promotion, it would definitely affect her future achievements.

Those of the same generation as her were basically in the Cloud River Realm, and some of them were even in the True Lake Realm.

So even though she had been at the top of the Spirit Stream Ranking, no cultivator from any sect wished to push her down—the cost was too great.

The Spirit Stream Ranking was a very fair list, autonomously generated by the Spirit Stream battlefield, not arranged by humans. Thus, even if a woman from a 2nd grade sect occupied the top position for a long time, none of the cultivators from 1st grade sects questioned her strength.

Over the past decade, the genius cultivators from the big sects would usually opt to break through as soon as they reached the Spirit Stream Level 9, wishing to leave the Spirit Stream battlefield. After all, it was somewhat embarrassing to be helplessly dominated by a woman.

Just moments ago, the cultivators from Hundred Refinement Valley deeply experienced the strength of the person at the top of the ranking. A few spells struck down, and their station's protective array buzzed alarmingly. Although Hundred Refinement Valley was only a 4th grade sect, it had been 1st grade forty years ago.

It fell from 1st to 4th grade only because it took heavy losses at the hands of another sect. Nonetheless, Hundred Refinement Valley still had a strong foundation.

However, at that moment, the station of a sect was blocked by a single person, and all cultivators from Hundred Refinement Valley trembled within the protective array, demonstrating the powerful deterrence of the Spirit Stream Ranking leader.

In the face of the challenges from below, the girl Feng Yuechan responded with a Fireball the size of a house. The Fireball Technique cast by Dong Shuye paled in comparison to Feng Yuechan's—it was like the difference between a grandson and a grandfather.

Chapter 147 - The Game Between Two Big Camps

...

As if the sun had plummeted from the sky, when the fireball slammed into the protective array, the entire encampment shook violently. Spirit force exploded, and although the protective array blocked the magic and spells' power, the frenzied energy managed to seep through, causing the temperature inside the encampment to rise significantly in an instant.

"Call your people back, or this lady will start a massacre!" Feng Yuechan stood on her flying spirit artifact, shrilly declaring.

The governor stationed there dared not delay and quickly sent messages to his fellow sect brothers and sisters; he could see that Feng Yuechan was not joking.

For a time, in various parts of the inner circle of the battlefield, some Hundred Refinement Valley cultivators who were heading towards the outer circle cursed loudly and withdrew.

In recent days, the Spirit Stream battlefield had been bustling, far more than ever before, especially among the inner circle sects. Several sects of the Haotian Alliance had chosen to declare war on the forces of Ten Thousand Demons Ridge.

The most outrageous was the Dading Palace of the Haotian Alliance, which crossed over the domains of several other sects to declare war on the Zhaotian Sect, thousands of miles away from them...

When declared upon, the low-level cultivators of the Zhaotian Sect were befuddled; with a thousand miles between them and no adjoining borders, while the factions were different, there was no enmity deep enough to justify the declaration, leaving them clueless as to why they had provoked Dading Palace.

Only a few higher-cultivation cultivators understood what was going on since they had received orders from the Nine Provinces sect headquarters. Those orders instructed them to immediately head to the outer circle of the battlefield to search for the trace of one individual.

They naturally did not want to concern themselves with such a declaration of war, but they could not ignore it, as Dading Palace's cultivators had actually traveled thousands of miles to their doorstep, barring the lower-level cultivators from leaving their homes. With no other choice, Zhaotian Sect's Spirit Stream Level 8-9 cultivators had to return to the encampment to stabilize the morale.

This kind of war declaration was initially rare, but with time, more and more emerged. According to Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union's statistics, in just five short days, conflicts involving declarations of war had swept through over a hundred big and small sects, which was unprecedented.

This was a massive outright confrontation between the Haotian Alliance and Ten Thousand Demons Ridge camps in the Spirit Stream battlefield, the first in decades. This involved too many sects, even those of the Core Circle paid close attention, as the outcome would determine whether the banner that once commanded the Nine Provinces under the Haotian Alliance could be retained!

Originally, this banner was set to fall in two months, but at this sensitive time, a minor figure emerged who could potentially sustain the banner's existence, and how could Ten Thousand Demons Ridge endure this?

After waiting for more than thirty years and seeing the fruit ripen, no one wanted any complications, so no matter what, the Level 5 junior cultivator had to die, and that banner must fall!

This concerned the face of Ten Thousand Demons Ridge's camp.

In a desolate wilderness at this time, Lu Ye shook the blood off his long saber and frowned, surrounded by several fallen Ten Thousand Demons Ridge cultivators.

He had a nagging feeling that something was not quite right!

A few days ago, after killing Dong Shuye, he had resumed his journey toward Righteous Blood Sect's encampment, feeling light-hearted again.

However, since a skirmish three days ago, it seemed as if something strange had happened.

Three days prior, he was leisurely on his way when suddenly a squad of cultivators approached. Meeting cultivators in the wilderness was normal, and Lu Ye had encountered many on his journey.

Normally, both parties would make way for each other to avoid any misunderstandings.

When he encountered this squad, Lu Ye intended to avoid them, but they directly charged at him, looking surprisingly excited as if they had found money.

With the other party being so rude, Lu Ye had no choice but to charge on Amber, causing a massacre.

Although the squad had a Level 5 governor, how could they withstand Lu Ye? In no time, they were wiped out to the last man.

After collecting the spoils of war, he was back on the road.

But, to Lu Ye's surprise, soon after, he encountered another squad of Ten Thousand Demons Ridge cultivators...

In just these three short days, he had already killed six groups of people, collected over twenty storage sacks, and accumulated more than a hundred merits.

Lu Ye was a bit unhappy because this was delaying his journey.

What made him even more uncomfortable was that there seemed to be some problems arising with his spirit force.

...

...

His spirit force seemed to have some impurities...

The reason he could cultivate with elixirs without any hidden dangers was all thanks to the Talent Tree. He had observed it carefully before, and every time he consumed an elixir pill for cultivation, the pill poison would be burnt away by the Talent Tree and expelled from his body.

As a result, his spirit force had always been extremely pure, and he never experienced the accumulation of pill poison that the sect master had mentioned before.

Even without Sharpness and Defense Spirit Runes, with the purity of his spirit force alone, he could outmatch any other cultivator at the same level because the purer the spirit force, the greater the destructive power the cultivator could unleash.

The same strike delivered with different levels of purity in the spirit force would result in varying degrees of power being unleashed by the cultivators.

But now, his spirit force actually had some impurities!

Last night while resting, he had thoroughly examined the Talent Tree and was shocked to find that it seemed to have lost the ability to burn away the pill poison, which was the root cause of the impurities in his spirit force.

His ability to grow from a cultivator who had just opened his orifices not long ago to the Level 5 realm in less than half a year could largely be attributed to the Talent Tree. If the Talent Tree lost the ability to burn pill poison, then his cultivation speed would inevitably be significantly reduced.

This discovery weighed heavily on Lu Ye's mind, and today, when he encountered cultivators from the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge blocking his way, he showed no mercy, swiftly killing them off.

However, he had considered many possibilities. Perhaps this situation was not unchangeable; the Talent Tree needed to absorb some fire attribute or scorching power, which not only could ignite the leaves of the Talent Tree but also serve as fuel for it to burn away the pill poison.

If the fuel absorbed before had been used up, then naturally it could not continue to perform the function of burning the pill poison.

Lu Ye didn't know if his speculation was correct. To verify it, he needed to find more energy for the Talent Tree to absorb.

The first time the Talent Tree had absorbed energy, it was from an orange flame sealed within a piece of ore; the second time, it was the scorching heat beneath the Barrier-Breaking Fruit Tree. The type of energy it absorbed was roughly around these standards, but Lu Ye had no idea where to find such energy again, as the previous two times had been coincidental.

Fortunately, his spirit force had been pure before, so a little bit of impurity would not affect him much. Now, he just couldn't consume elixir pills recklessly like before. At most, he could take one pill a day and then use the Spirit Energy Gathering Spirit Runes to enhance his strength.

He still had quite a few Spirit Stones in hand. He had originally planned to go to the Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union to inquire if he could buy something to use as fuel for the Talent Tree.

But now that was not possible; in the past few days, he had encountered several squads of cultivators from the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge camp, and each squad had a Level 5 governor. He felt as if he were being targeted.

Yiyi was cleaning the battlefield, and Lu Ye looked up to see an eagle circling in the sky, seemingly in search of prey.

At the same time, three miles away from Lu Ye, under a large tree, a group of cultivators gathered. Next to them lay several corpses, and in front of them was a Spiritual Artifact that resembled a scaled-down Shadow Moon Disc, reflecting the image of Lu Ye.

It was clearly a view from a high altitude.

The group was quietly observing the scene in the small Shadow Moon Disc.

A man swallowed, "Is this a Level 5 realm?"

They had witnessed how Lu Ye had slaughtered the squad of the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge cultivators like chopping vegetables; his methods were swift and decisive, clearly not his first time killing, and the speed of killing foes was even greater than that of an average Level 6 cultivator.

"Are you sure that's him?" Another person spoke, "Let's not make a mistake."

"Level 5 cultivation, riding a snow-white big tiger, departing from Fengyun Mountain and heading towards the Righteous Blood Sect, about sixteen or seventeen years old. Who else could it be if not him?" spoke a curvaceous female cultivator leading them.

She was the one maintaining the Spirit Force on the small Shadow Moon Disc, and judging by her cultivation, she was a Level 7 cultivator, accompanied by three Level 6 and several Level 5s.

Such a squad would typically not be seen outside the battlefield's outer circle under normal circumstances.

They were originally departing from their station to the border between the outer circle and inner circle of the battlefield, as their strength was just right for tempering in such a place. But they had received an order from their sect halfway through and hurriedly came here.

They were not very clear about the grudge from the previous generation but knew that the Righteous Blood Sect was indebted to their own sect. When that message began to spread uncontrollably, the

senior members of their sect had ordered them to meet and protect this youth riding the White Tiger, to ensure his safety.

It was not just their sect undertaking this action, the entire battlefield of the Spirit Stream was undergoing surges beneath the surface and billows above. Many sects wanted to protect the youth, while even more wanted to kill him. This was a contest between two major camps, and the survival of that youth would ultimately determine the victor.

Chapter 148 - Wasn't My Scream Tragic Enough?

"The person has been found, what should we do next? Should we make direct contact?" a Level 6 cultivator in the squad asked.

"That's not advisable," another person shook his head. "It's better to protect him in secret. Many sects from Ten Thousand Demons Ridge have taken action, and our proximity and early arrival give us an advantage. However, if we expose ourselves, it's easy to be targeted.

Moreover, this person probably isn't fully aware of his current situation; rashly making contact might backfire and make him develop misgivings."

"But secret protection might not fully safeguard him."

"I say we knock him out and take him away!" a beefy guy suggested.

The others turned to look at him with the beefy guy appearing confused: "Did I say something wrong?"

"It's possible," a Level 6 cultivator nodded. "You go knock him out!"

The beefy guy shrank back slightly: "I'm afraid he'll chop me!" Although he was at Level 6, facing that young man, he was not sure of victory; the youngster had been too fierce earlier.

In the end, it was the leading Level 7 female cultivator who decided: "I'll go make contact with him and protect him closely; you guys follow secretly."

With her saying this, no one disagreed.

However, very soon, everyone's expressions turned peculiar because the female cultivator started walking ahead while ripping at her own clothes, and even held her chest with both hands, vigorously squeezing them together...

A Level 6 cultivator put a hand to his forehead, unable to watch directly, thinking to himself how Senior Sister Lann was really going all out for the sect's mission.

Meanwhile, Lu Ye continued to ride Amber moving forward. Not far ahead, he faintly heard a cry for help. He listened carefully, confirming that a woman was indeed calling for help.

He didn't immediately rush forward, as he had encountered too many peculiar situations on this journey and being cautious was always wise.

In a short while, Yiyi, who was scouting ahead, returned and reported to Lu Ye that a woman was injured, seemingly having encountered some demon beast, and there were no signs of traps nearby.

Lu Ye nodded and directed Amber to slightly alter their course.

Senior Sister Lann, in tattered clothes, continued to cry desperately for help; then suddenly, there was activity on her battlefield marking. After checking, she was stunned: "He ran away?"

The young man actually ran away from nearby?

Under normal circumstances, encountering a woman crying for help in the wilderness, anyone would normally check the situation, but why did that young man run away?

Was she not loud enough or pitiful enough?

Senior Sister Lann stood up dumbfounded, a vein popping out on her forehead.

The little rascal, I really want to beat him up!

Shortly after, dressed in a clean set of clothes, Senior Sister Lann met up with the others, her expression so dark it could almost drip.

"What do we do now?"

Senior Sister Lann's expression changed uncertainly as she pondered for a moment: "Stick to the original plan, I will try to make contact with him again, and you guys follow secretly."

"That's possible, but this kid has a mount, and his speed is quite fast. We can follow him for a few days without an issue, but if it takes longer, we definitely won't be able to keep up," a Level 6 cultivator voiced.

Senior Sister Lann said, "Don't worry, we just need to escort him part of the way. Ahead, there will be people from other sects taking over."

Upon hearing this, the group felt somewhat reassured. If that was the case, then this mission was not too difficult.

At night, by the campfire, Lu Ye was eating roasted meat with Big Tiger when suddenly, fluctuations of spirit force came from nearby. He quickly stood up, warily watching the dense night in front of him.

Just moments later, a figure dashed from that direction. Lu Ye placed his hand on the hilt of his sword, his eyes coldly watching the approaching figure.

It was a disheveled woman, seductive in carriage, and her expression panicked. Upon seeing Lu Ye, she rushed towards him, crying loudly, "Fellow cultivator, save me, someone wants to kill me!"

Lu Ye slowly drew his sword, and Senior Sister Lann immediately sensed danger. She had a feeling that if she dared to come closer, the young man in front definitely would strike with his sword, his eyes conveying a very serious message!

This kid...

She promptly halted, tears swirling in her beautiful eyes: "Fellow cultivator, save me!" As she spoke, she also lifted her hand to show the battlefield marking on it.

And from behind her in the night, several figures chasing her stopped in their tracks. One of them took a good look at Lu Ye and immediately shouted, "He's Level 5, run!"

As soon as the words fell, the few cultivators chasing her scattered in all directions.

Lu Ye slightly frowned, taking another look at the woman, realizing she was only a Level 4 cultivator. He sheathed half of his long sword back into its scabbard.

Senior Sister Lann let out a long sigh of relief, looking pitifully at Lu Ye: "Fellow cultivator, which faction are you with?"

Lu Ye ignored her, continuing to eat his roasted meat. Amber lifted a paw and scratched him slightly, and he leaned back against Amber's belly.

A moment later, his gaze shifted slightly.

Interesting... No wonder he found the woman's voice somewhat familiar; it was the same woman seeking help during the day.

He had never seen this woman, but Yiyi had seen her from afar, and Amber's scratch was Yiyi's instruction.

The woman had sought help during the day without success, and now she had deliberately approached him at night. What was she really up to?

Moreover, she was from the Haotian Alliance...

As Lu Ye pondered, Senior Sister Lann forced a smile: "Fellow cultivator, could I hide out here with you?"

"Whatever!"

This little thing, so arrogant? Senior Sister Lann was barely suppressing her rage but still managed a smile, "Then I won't be polite."

Speaking thus, she walked over familiarly, looking completely unguarded. Apparently due to being pursued, she looked somewhat disheveled, with some injuries on her body, and blood staining her clothes, slightly revealing some skin.

She approached the bonfire, sat down, and stretched out her hands to warm them, thanking him, "Thank you for earlier, if it weren't for you, I might have been dead already. I can't repay my brother for saving my life..."

Lu Ye tossed her a piece of roasted meat. Senior Sister Lann fumbled to catch it and paused for a moment.

This guy... cold on the outside but warm on the inside? With this thought, the resentment in Senior Sister Lann's heart slightly diminished. Looking at the beast meat in her hand, roasted crispy on the outside and tender inside, the delightful aroma wafted up, and her stomach growled. She was just hungry and started to eat big bites.

"What should I call you, brother?" Senior Sister Lann asked while eating the meat, "My name is Lann Yudie."

"Don't talk while eating."

"Oh."

"Does it taste good?"

"It's quite tasty."

"Hasn't anyone told you not to eat stuff given by strangers?" Lu Ye stood up, leaning on his long knife, and walked step by step toward Lann Yudie.

Lann Yudie's expression slightly changed, vaguely realizing something. She quickly threw the roasted meat on the ground and urged the spirit force inside her body, which was extremely sluggish, showing signs of the Minor Circumambulation cycle breaking.

Before she could stand up, a long knife was already at her neck, looking eye to eye. Lann Yudie was furiously indignant, "You little bastard, did you drug me?"

She couldn't hold back the anger anymore, overwhelmed with a sense of humiliation. To think that she, a Level 7 cultivator, was drugged unknowingly by someone from the Level 5 realm. If word got out, she would lose all her dignity.

She had not expected him to do this!

No one would do this!

"Relax, the drug just makes your spirit force slack temporarily. It's not hugely dangerous."

That thing was initially found out from the Nine Stars Sect Young Master's storage sack. Later he had Hua Ci identify its effects and had remembered the uses of each drug, keeping them ever since.

"Talk, why did you approach me!"

"What?" Lann Yudie looked puzzled.

"The one shouting for help during the day was you, and you also came asking for help at night. What a coincidence?"

"You..." Lann Yudie was truly confused now. During the day, this guy had clearly never seen her. How did he recognize her? Just by voice?

Looking down at Lann Yudie who was at his mercy, Lu Ye, Senior Sister Lann suddenly laughed, "Impressive!" The target of this mission seemed surprisingly astute.

"Admitted it?"

"Yes!" Lann Yudie bowed her head, her long hair hiding her facial expression.

Lu Ye immediately sensed something was off because the spirit light around this woman's body was intensifying at a visible rate. Without a moment's hesitation, he slashed with his knife.

As her hair flew about, the Lann Yudie who had been seated in front of Lu Ye was now head down, feet up, supporting herself on the ground with one hand, her foot kicking towards his face.

The kick was forceful and heavy. Lu Ye quickly leaned back, retreating several steps to stabilize himself. By the time he steadied himself, Lann Yudie was already five yards away from him.

She touched her slender, fair neck, finding it sticky, and couldn't help but twitch her eyes, "Did you really want to kill me?"

If she hadn't dodged quickly enough, her head might have been chopped off. This guy, how ruthless and merciless.

On the other side, Lu Ye's expression turned grave because he realized this woman was not a mere Level 4, she was actually a Level 7!

He didn't know what method she had used to hide her cultivation.

No wonder the stuff searched from the Nine Stars Sect Young Master's storage sack hadn't been very effective; her cultivation was a full three levels higher than expected, making it easy for her to suppress the drug.

Amber had disappeared into the night, lying in wait.

"I'm really in a bad mood right now, decided to beat you up first!" With that, Lann Yudie suddenly became a blur, lunging at Lu Ye.

Such incredible speed!

The only Level 7 cultivator he had encountered before was Dong Shuye, but Dong Shuye was a magic cultivator, different from this woman whose speed was alarmingly fast.

Lucky for him, he had undergone the Dragon Spring Body Tempering, otherwise, with his eyesight, he really wouldn't have been able to track her movements.

As Lann Yudie lunged straight at him, Lu Ye countered by swinging his knife sideways.

The long knife whisked past Lann Yudie's nose and she, swift as a swallow, drifted back a few steps, looking at Lu Ye with astonishment. Had he seen through her movements, or was that strike just a coincidence?

Without pausing, the shadow from her briefly visible figure blurred again.

Lu Ye continuously adjusted his position, his long knife swinging time after time.

Moments later, Lann Yudie was shocked, because she realized that Lu Ye had truly predicted her movement trajectory, every slash intercepting her line of attack.

Chapter 149 - How Did They Start Fighting?

Another slash fell, and with a clink, sparks flew in every direction. Surprisingly, Lann Yudie, who should have been forced back by this attack, didn't retreat and was instead holding a dagger in her hand, unknown when she had grasped it; it was that very dagger that parried Lu Ye's strike.

Lu Ye hastily drew back his blade and slashed again.

Lann Yudie scoffed, "Too many openings!"

Her small fist punched out. Even though Lu Ye saw the punch coming, he couldn't prepare for it. In a hurry, a layer of Defense Spirit Runes appeared in front of his abdomen.

With a booming sound, spirit force exploded outward, and the punch sent Lu Ye flying back seventy to eighty feet, his stomach churning so much he could hardly catch his breath.

Lann Yudie was astonished, "What is this?"

She felt something shatter under her punch, but in the heat of the battle, she hadn't seen it clearly.

She had no time for further contemplation as Lu Ye, who had just regained his stance, rushed at her like a swift wind, immediately filling her vision with the bright light of his blade.

Lann Yudie twisted her body to dodge, her aura becoming more elusive and unpredictable, her speed a notch faster than before.

The sounds of clashing metal, ding ding dang dang, wove a continuous melody in the night as the long sword collided with the dagger.

"Roar!" Amber suddenly pounced from behind Lann Yudie. This woman seemed to have eyes on her back, easily dodging the attack while simultaneously landing a kick that sent the robustly built Amber tumbling away.

But midair, Amber's long tail curled like a whip and lashed out at Lann Yudie, catching her off-guard. Grinding her teeth, she cursed, "What a ferocious beast!"

She quickly retreated.

Meanwhile, Lu Ye had already leapt onto Amber's back and was preparing to make a run for it. Although the exchange had been brief, he was certain that he was no match for this woman. If not now, when would he escape?

However, his expression quickly became grave, for several waves of spirit force from all around were rapidly converging on his location, arriving in the blink of an eye.

"How did this fight start?" A young man stared at the chaotic battlefield in amazement.

They were originally hidden not far away, protecting them according to the plan, but when they heard the sounds of battle here, they thought the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge's people were attacking and hurried to provide support. They hadn't expected to stumble upon this scene.

"Stop fighting, stop! Don't fight anymore." Someone yelled.

Another called out, "Junior Brother Lu, please, hold your anger. This is a misunderstanding!"

Riding on Amber's back, Lu Ye looked around coldly. There were six people approaching. Among them, three were at the Level 6 realm, and the other three were at Level 5. If he wasn't mistaken, among those who had just shouted were the ones who had previously been chasing after Lann Yudie.

These people were all together.

Surrounded by a squad of such caliber, Lu Ye would have to break through the Level 5's if he wanted to escape, and even then, success wasn't guaranteed!

What concerned Lu Ye, though, was that these people did not display any hostility toward him, and one of them had even addressed him as Junior Brother Lu!

Since entering the Spirit Stream battlefield, aside from those from the Independent Wanderers Society and Yiyi, no one else knew his surname. When interacting with strangers, he had always referred to himself as Yiye.

How did this person know his surname was Lu?

Then there were the strange encounters of the past few days... He couldn't help but feel that these events were connected.

The Level 6 cultivator who had spoken earlier approached Lann Yudie and asked in confusion, "Why did you start fighting him?"

Weren't they supposed to stick close and protect him? Was this how they protected?

Lann Yudie also regained her composure, her face a little embarrassed, "I couldn't hold back!" Mainly because it was too infuriating; this kid had actually drugged her, and to make matters worse, she had fallen for it.

However, their recent fight allowed her to realize how formidable Lu Ye, at his mere Level 5, was. This guy fought with aggressive ferocity and merciless attacks. She had never seen a Level 5 like him before.

Compared to him, her own Level 5 was gentle like a little white rabbit.

No wonder that squad from Ten Thousand Demons Ridge was flipped over like slicing melons and chopping vegetables during the daytime. His overwhelming aggressiveness and brutal attacks easily intimidated cultivators of the same level, leading them to fall under his blade.

"Who are you all?"

Lu Ye kept his guard up, his gaze flickering toward one of the Level 5s, assessing his chances of breaking through in that direction.

The young man who had spoken earlier inwardly winced. He recognized the wariness and distrust in Lu Ye's eyes, which was understandable. If the roles were reversed, he wouldn't easily trust a group of strangers either.

Instead of answering Lu Ye directly, to avoid further misunderstandings and to ensure smooth talking, he raised a hand and solemnly said, "Zixia Mountain's Qi Xin beseeches Heaven's Augury; the seven of us bear no ill will towards Junior Brother Lu, merely fulfilling our sect's mission. May Heaven's Augury bear witness!"

Some force seemed to settle from the beyond.

Qi Xin then said to Lu Ye, who was still atop Amber, "Junior Brother, please stay calm."

Lu Ye frowned slightly and slowly sheathed his longsword. A Heaven's Augury oath was not to be taken lightly, and if the other side dared to invoke it, it meant they truly bore him no malice.

Qi Xin's expression turned serious, "I know Junior Brother must have many questions, but this is not the place to discuss them. Could you please accompany us to find a quiet place? How does that sound?"

After a brief silence, Lu Ye nodded, "That would be acceptable."

He indeed had many questions.

"Please," Qi Xin gestured with his hand, leading the way, and the others followed suit.

"Wait a moment," Lann Yudie raised her hand.

"What is it, Senior Sister?" Qi Xin turned back and asked.

Lann Yudie looked somewhat embarrassed, "I've been poisoned. I can't get my spirit force to circulate and I can't walk!" Although she had managed to suppress the poison forcefully earlier, it had resulted in even more violent outbreaks. At this moment, her spirit force was as still as dead water, completely impossible to mobilize.

Everyone was shocked: "Who did this?"

Lann Yudie turned her head to look at Lu Ye, who looked away into the night.

A wave of strange expressions swept over the group. Some wanted to laugh but dared not, their shoulders shaking, struggling to hold it in. They finally understood why their Senior Sister, despite having gone to provide close protection, had ended up fighting instead.

This was something no one would be able to tolerate.

Qi Xin asked quietly, "Shall I carry you then?"

"Roll over, I definitely don't want you to carry me!" Lann Yudie refused outright, and then looking at Lu Ye, she said, "Whoever caused it is responsible for it; have your mount carry me!"

Lu Ye thought for a moment and then patted the tiger's back.

Lann Yudie stepped forward, climbed atop the tiger's back, and Amber seemed somewhat reluctant, but still endured.

"Let's go." Qi Xin continued to lead the way at the front, and the party moved forward in silence at a very rapid pace.

An hour later, everyone found a cave and hid inside.

Lu Ye waited for the others from Zixia Mountain to enter before he led Amber inside. His little ruse was obviously no secret, but everyone pretended not to see.

The cave was dry, and several people sat down cross-legged.

Lu Ye was the first to speak, "How did you know my name?"

Upon hearing this, Qi Xin couldn't help but laugh, "Junior Brother really has no idea of his own situation?"

"In what sense?"

"It seems Junior Brother truly doesn't understand his own situation," Qi Xin sighed and said, "Junior Brother's identity has already been exposed. Now, not only do we know you're a disciple of the Righteous Blood Sect, but many people in the Spirit Stream battlefield know as well."

Lu Ye's brow furrowed.

His identity had been exposed? How? And what did he mean by many people with intentions?

Ever since entering the Spirit Stream battlefield, he had always been extremely careful, cautious at every step, because before coming here, the sect master had warned him to never reveal his identity as a disciple of the Righteous Blood Sect.

Even though he didn't know why the sect master had given such a warning, he trusted that his master wouldn't harm him.

In his interactions with others, he only called himself Yiye, and even people like Hua Ci, who knew his name, shouldn't have been able to find out about his background.

There was only one person who recognized him, a former mining slave from Evil Moon Valley, whom he had encountered at the gate of Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union in Yi'an City.

It was a coincidence, and Lu Ye didn't say much at the time. Once he was recognized, he quickly left the area.

However, after he left Yi'an City, he was pursued by Dong Shuye...

Suddenly, he remembered that Dong Shuye had sent out a message using the battlefield marking before dying. At the time, he thought Dong Shuye was calling for help, but since no one came after him, the matter was left unsettled.

Dong Shuye was undoubtedly going to die, so even if he had called for help, it would have been too late. But what if sending out a message wasn't for calling help?

Could it have been Dong Shuye? That disciple from Burning Moon Mountain whom he met in Yi'an City might have been seen by Dong Shuye, who could have used some means to learn about his background from that person...

Before his death, Dong Shuye said he would wait for him on the road to Hell, which seemed like the powerless barks of a dying man. But what if he truly believed that?

"Is there a problem with my identity?"

This was the point Lu Ye found most puzzling. The sect master had specifically warned him before he entered the Spirit Stream battlefield, letting him know that having his identity exposed would definitely not bode well for him.

He had speculated that the Righteous Blood Sect might have committed some unforgivable act, causing their disciples to be in a tough situation in the Spirit Stream battlefield.

"I'm not quite sure what the exact issue is, as it relates to some old secrets," Qi Xin replied, "but what I know is that the entire Spirit Stream battlefield is in turmoil because of you. Many sects from Ten Thousand Demons Ridge want you dead, while numerous sects in the Haotian Alliance are trying to protect you. We from Zixia Mountain are among them, and we were sent by our master to find you."

Lu Ye listened, completely bewildered, "The Spirit Stream battlefield is in turmoil because of me?"

As a Level 5 cultivator, he lacked the stature to shift the entire situation on the Spirit Stream battlefield.

The root cause must not have been due to him, but rather the identity of being a disciple of the Righteous Blood Sect.

If Qi Xin wasn't lying, then the sect he had reluctantly chosen as his last resort seemed to hide some considerable secrets.

"We young people don't know the specifics about the past, but as far as I'm aware, the Righteous Blood Sect was a 1st grade sect a few decades ago," Lann Yudie, who had been working on dispelling the pill poison, suddenly spoke up.

She had the highest cultivation and knew a bit more, "Later, for some unknown reason, its grade fell year by year, until it became a Ninth Grade, and now it's on the verge of being abolished. The Righteous Blood Sect hasn't taken in any disciples for thirty years, and if no disciples join the sect within the next two months, their name will be completely erased during the sect grade assessment."

Chapter 150 - The Situation

"Many sects from Ten Thousand Demons Ridge have been awaiting this day, and they were almost successful, but six months ago, the Righteous Blood Sect recruited a disciple, allowing it to continue existing. That disciple is you!" Lann Yudie quietly looked at Lu Ye.

"Everyone thought you were already dead because there were rumors that Veteran Thang, while escorting you back to the sect, was ambushed and severely wounded, and you died tragically in the aftermath of the battle.

However, just a few days ago, news about you suddenly spread throughout the Spirit Stream battlefield, so many forces from Ten Thousand Demons Ridge who don't wish for the Righteous Blood Sect's existence have already made their move in secret, trying to kill you midway because the Righteous Blood Sect will cease to exist two months after your death!"

Lu Ye remained silent, processing this information.

He never knew that his life and death were tied to the survival of the Righteous Blood Sect!

Thirty years without recruiting a disciple? Lu Ye remembered asking the sect master about the situations of disciples within the sect aboard the Flying Dragon Ship, but the sect master avoided answering. At that time, he only felt that his sect was declining and lacking talents, but now it seemed the situation was more serious than he had imagined.

This wasn't just a decline in talent or a weakening of the sect; it was almost about to be completely eradicated.

The encounters with many cultivators from the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge camp in the past few days also made sense now; those people were specifically there for him, no wonder they were so enthusiastic each time they saw him.

"Many forces from Ten Thousand Demons Ridge have already made their move, and many sects from the Haotian Alliance are also involved. One side wants to kill you, the other wants to protect you. The current situation at the Spirit Stream battlefield has become incredibly chaotic. Which side will prevail depends on whether you can survive and return to the Righteous Blood Sect's headquarters!"

"Our sect owed a favor to the Righteous Blood Sect in the past, so we were ordered by our sect to escort you here. Not revealing our identities immediately was because we feared you wouldn't trust us and also to guard against the movements from Ten Thousand Demons Ridge. Hiding in the shadows indeed makes it easier to act, having Senior Sister Lann protect you closely should suffice."

"This is all the information we currently hold. You may ask anything you wish."

Qi Xin finished speaking simply and looked at Lu Ye.

Lu Ye certainly had questions—many things he wanted to ask, such as the extent of the sect master's injuries and why the Righteous Blood Sect was being targeted this way, but these matters might not be known to others.

After pondering, he said, "Does this mean that someone with a high cultivation will come to kill me?"

"Certainly, even people from the Core Circle will make a move! But even if those people can fly through the air, it will take them some time to get here. Currently, the cultivators we need to deal with aren't that highly cultivated because they are coming from nearby. However, as time goes on, the enemies we encounter will become stronger.

But you don't need to worry too much, if people from the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge make a move, so will the Haotian Alliance. Anyway, that person has already left. As long as we can hold on until he arrives, keeping you safe shouldn't be a problem."

"Who is that person?" Lu Ye asked.

Lann Yudie shook her head, "You will naturally know when you meet him. That person is ill-tempered; I prefer not to speak ill of him behind his back."

This person must be very powerful and have a deep connection with the Righteous Blood Sect, Lu Ye thought to himself.

"I have no more questions for now," Lu Ye spoke.

"Then let's make a plan." Lann Yudie's gaze turned to Amber, crawling behind Lu Ye, "You now have two choices. One is to travel alone with us, which could allow us to avoid some prying eyes, as your riding a giant snow-white tiger has already become well-known; anyone from Ten Thousand Demons Ridge who sees this tiger can easily find you. It's the most conspicuous sign!"

"I choose the second option!"

If the cultivators from Ten Thousand Demons Ridge used Amber as the target to track him, the moment he separated from Amber, Amber would undoubtedly die.

"Hmph!" Lann Yudie snorted lightly, "Then take this big tiger on the road. This way, it would be easier for you to escape when faced with danger!"

She slowly stood up; her spirit force had returned to normal. With a serious expression, she looked at the others, "It's still the original plan. We split into two groups. I will protect Junior Brother Lu and try to avoid the cultivators from Ten Thousand Demons Ridge as much as possible. The rest is up to you."

The other six stood up and responded, "Yes!"

"Let's set off then."

This group was very decisive. Now that they had connected with Lu Ye and formulated a plan, they were ready to act. Staying here would only increase the risks.

Lu Ye felt mixed emotions. He had never thought that he, a mere Level 5 junior cultivator, would influence the whole situation at the Spirit Stream battlefield. He didn't know whether to feel honored or anxious.

"Thank you all," he bowed deeply.

Whether the situation was as Lann Yudie and the others had said still remained to be seen, but it was highly likely that they weren't deceiving him.

He wasn't prepared to refuse their kindness; partly he wanted to verify their statements, and partly because if the situation was indeed so severe, he definitely wouldn't be able to withstand it with his current Level 5 cultivation. To survive, he had to rely on the lingering influence left by the Righteous Blood Sect from years ago!

"Ha!" Lann Yudie chuckled lightly, "That's more like it. But if you really want to thank us, just make sure you stay alive. We don't know the grievances of the past generation, but if you die, then our mission also fails!"

As she spoke, she raised her hand and swiped across her battlefield marking, and a speck of blue light flew towards Lu Ye, who raised his hand to meet it. The blue light landed in the palm of his hand.

Lu Ye felt another mark added to his battlefield marking.

Just then, a message came from within the marking. Lu Ye investigated and found it was from Xie Jin from Mount Qingyu.

"Junior Brother Yiye, I've heard some rumors; I don't know if it's about you, but if it is, be very careful. It seems like a lot of people from Ten Thousand Demons Ridge are looking for you."

Lu Ye thought for a moment, then replied, "Thank you for letting me know."

Even Xie Jin had heard some of the recent rumors, indicating that the matter was boiling over in the entire Spirit Stream battlefield.

By the time the message was sent, the six from Zixia Mountain had already left under the leadership of Qi Xin.

Lann Yudie stayed behind.

The two silently waited in the cave, and after one hour, Lann Yudie suddenly spoke, "Let's go!"

She flipped onto the tiger's back while Lu Ye, looking stunned, watched her.

"What are you dawdling for? Get on. I can't just run alongside you, can I?" Lann Yudie urged.

Lu Ye had no choice but to clamber on, though he sat behind Lann Yudie.

Amber darted out of the cave, and under Lann Yudie's guidance, started running swiftly. It had heard the conversation between Lu Ye and the people from Zixia Mountain earlier and knew that the situation was not good. Therefore, it moved silently, doing its best to avoid making any noise.

"Your beast pet is quite fast!" Lann Yudie spoke, breaking the awkward mood. A hot breath pressed against her back, making her uncomfortable. But since she needed to protect Lu Ye closely, she had no choice but to ride together with him.

Her temperament might seem carefree, but she had never been so close to any man. The jostling was unavoidable, leading to physical contact that made her smooth back break out in goosebumps.

Four hours later, intense fluctuations of spirit force suddenly emanated from nearby. Someone was engaged in a fierce battle in that direction.

However, Lann Yudie had already directed Amber towards another direction before this, perfectly avoiding the area. For her, the most important thing at the moment was to avoid exposing Lu Ye. If there were cultivators from Ten Thousand Demons Ridge nearby, it was up to Qi Xin and the others to deal with them.

A flying eagle in the sky continued to follow Amber's progress, and its sharp eyes saw everything clearly on the ground below.

They kept moving forward, and every four to six hours, Lann Yudie would let Lu Ye stop to recuperate for a while.

Neither she nor Lu Ye needed to rest, but Amber needed to replenish its strength. In the shadows, Qi Xin and others who were hidden and cutting off hidden dangers also needed to rest.

After a day like this, while on the move, Lann Yudie suddenly spoke, "Junior Brother Lu, are you confident in holding off a Level 6 cultivator?"

"Mm," Lu Ye responded solemnly.

"That's good." Lann Yudie nodded. She had realized from their brief encounter earlier that Lu Ye's strength exceeded the normal Level 5 realm. A regular Level 5 cultivator couldn't withstand her attack even though she hadn't exerted her full strength, "Then let me witness your methods. There's a woman in red clothes coming up; hold her off, and don't be too merciful!"

"Is she beautiful?"

"I don't know if she's beautiful, but she has a great figure, hey, you're not really going to go easy on her, are you?" Lann Yudie's pretty face fell.

She almost wanted to change their course of action.

But if they didn't deal with the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge cultivators ahead, Qi Xin and the others would face some trouble since they were already clashing with another group of Ten Thousand Demons Ridge cultivators.

But now to change direction was too late; under Amber's sprint, the figures ahead were already visible in the distance.

Lann Yudie crouched on the tiger's back and drew a dagger in each hand, her sleek, curvaceous body seemingly filled with explosive strength in that moment, looking like a cheetah ready to pounce.

The group ahead now saw Amber as well; initially stunned, they soon rejoiced. One of them shouted, "It's that Lu Yiye!"

Lu Ye's forehead bulged with a vein and he silently swore that if he got the chance, he would definitely give Yue Shan from the Righteousness Sect a good beating.

As the distance between them rapidly decreased, twenty feet away, Lann Yudie shouted, "Big White, be careful!" She was advising Amber.

Amber growled back, "You're Big White, your whole family is Big White!"

Lann Yudie's figure suddenly blurred and she leapt the twenty feet distance to attack.

Lu Ye looked up only to see a shadow bravely charging into those cultivators. A spell came flying to scatter that shadow, but Lann Yudie's figure had already appeared behind the enemy; Lu Ye hadn't even seen how she managed it.

He immediately understood that she hadn't exerted her full strength during their previous encounter.

Flashes of blade light followed, accompanied by screams of agony. A Level 6 cultivator fell directly into a pool of blood.

Her move was a swift kill! Despite a one-level gap in strength, achieving this was far from easy.

The Ten Thousand Demons Ridge cultivators were clearly frightened, one of them exclaimed, "Level 7 ghost cultivator, be careful!"

The scene turned chaotic in an instant.