

SAGE OF HUMANITY

Chapter 16 14: Realm

Various signs indicated that although his talent was not very high, it certainly wasn't as low as Yiye's level.

Was it related to the Talent Tree? The leaves of the Talent Tree only bore spirit runes, but how could they help him in his cultivation?

Apart from the Talent Tree, Lu Ye could find no other explanation.

He faintly felt that if that was indeed the case, the Talent Tree might not be as simple as it appeared on the surface.

"Miss Yu, I have some matters I would like to consult you about." Lu Ye decided to change the subject, to make himself less sorrowful.

"Please speak, Big Brother Lu." Yu Xiaodie looked at him formally.

Lu Ye slightly contemplated his wording before speaking, "It's like this, my first orifice is fully saturated and I want to open the second orifice, but I can't seem to find its exact location. How should I resolve this?"

This problem had troubled him for several days now. Normally, once the first orifice was fully saturated, he would be able to open the second orifice, but Lu Ye's repeated attempts had failed to locate the exact position of the second orifice, resulting in a considerable waste of spirit force.

Yu Xiaodie's knowledge was undoubtedly greater than his, and since Lu Ye could only consult with her, he naturally sought her advice.

"For us novice cultivators, this is indeed a difficult problem. It has nothing to do with our cultivation aptitude. The main issue is that our spirit force isn't strong enough, making it hard to precisely locate the orifices. To resolve this, you can either explore on your own slowly or find a more experienced person to help.

When I was opening my second orifice, it was a cultivator from Evil Moon Valley who helped guide my spirit force into the second orifice, but to do something like that, one needs to be at least in the Cloud River Realm."

On hearing this, Lu Ye immediately gave a wry smile, "Then I might as well figure it out on my own."

He had no one else to turn to for help.

"Big Brother Lu, although the Root Spiritual Orifice of cultivators are largely similar, because of the different cultivation techniques, the position of the second orifice also differs, so if Big Brother Lu doesn't have an appropriate technique, it's very risky to rashly open the second orifice as it might lead to severe problems."

"Speaking of techniques, I do have one."

The Golden Cicada Carefree Method probably wasn't a very good technique, but Lu Ye had no other options.

"Right, you just mentioned something about the Cloud River Realm... Is that a cultivator's realm?" He recalled his third older martial brother mentioning something about the True Lake Realm and Divine Sea Realm earlier in the tent, realms he had never heard of before.

Spending a year on the mine vein, he rarely communicated with others and had few friends. All the information about cultivation he received was hearsay and fragmented.

"Yes," Yu Xiaodie nodded, "The realms for cultivators are divided into four major realms: Spirit Stream Realm, Cloud River Realm, True Lake Realm, and Divine Sea Realm, each of these major realms is further divided into nine smaller levels."

The division into stream, river, lake, and sea was quite interesting and straightforward.

"Do we count as Spirit Stream Realm?" Lu Ye asked.

Yu Xiaodie laughed and shook her head, "Not yet, we have only opened our spiritual orifices. Only when we open enough spiritual orifices and allow our spirit force to traverse these orifices, forming a circulatory cycle inside our bodies like a flowing stream, can we be considered to be in the Spirit Stream Realm. Only then can we be truly called cultivators."

Lu Ye was surprised, "We aren't cultivators yet? Then what are we considered?"

"Reserve cultivators?" Yu Xiaodie cocked her head, looking somewhat adorable.

"Alright," Lu Ye accepted the title, having thought that opening his spiritual orifice meant he had become a cultivator. Now, it seemed, he was still naive due to his youth.

Yu Xiaodie probably realized that Lu Ye was completely unfamiliar with the common knowledge of the cultivation world, so she deliberately spoke more about it, "The Nine Provinces continent is full of sects and clans. Not to mention others, just in Bingzhou alone, there are at least a thousand big and small sects and families.

The strength between the sects varies, and it rests on the realm of the cultivators within them. The higher the cultivators' realms, the stronger the sect. Furthermore, sects are also graded."

"Oh? How are they graded?" Lu Ye became interested, noticing that Yu Xiaodie was feeding him knowledge of the cultivation world, and he would not miss this opportunity.

"Each major realm of a cultivator is divided into nine levels. The sects are also divided into nine grades, with Ninth Grade being the lowest and First Grade the highest! I'm not very clear about the specifics, but First Grade to Third Grade sects definitely have cultivators in the Divine Sea Realm. It seems there is also a requirement for the number of such powerful cultivators.

For the Fourth Grade to Sixth Grade, there must be a sufficient number of True Lake Realm cultivators. For the Seventh to Ninth Grades, having some Cloud River Realm cultivators is enough."

"What if there are only Spirit Stream Realm cultivators?" Lu Ye shamelessly asked.

Yu Xiaodie smiled and said, "Spirit Stream Realm doesn't qualify to start a sect."

Lu Ye blushed slightly, feeling truly ignorant.

Yu Xiaodie continued, "In Bingzhou, there's a saying, 'One Palace, Two Halls, Three Gates, Four Sects,' which refers to the ten top First Grade sects of Bingzhou.

'One Palace' refers to the Jade Cloud Palace, 'Two Halls' refers to Senluo Hall and Yuanhong Hall, 'Three Gates' are the Righteousness Sect, Qingyu Sect, and Luo Sheng Gate, and 'Four Sects' are the Infinite Sect, Red Moon Sect, Beixuan Sword Sect, and Tianyuan Sect. The Haotian Alliance and Ten Thousand Demons Ridge each hold half of them, and each sect has many Divine Sea Realm cultivators."

Lu Ye recalled what his third senior brother had told him, that Qingyu Sect was ranked among the top five in overall strength in Bingzhou. At that time, he felt that the ranking was not low, but he hadn't realized how significant it was.

Considering there are thousands of sects in Bingzhou, to stand out among so many and be ranked among the top ten First Grade sects, it is evident Qingyu Sect is truly remarkable.

"This time attacking Evil Moon Valley, one of the Vice Alliance Hierarchs who came is from the Righteousness Sect," she said.

"Is the Vice Alliance Hierarch's surname Pang?" Lu Ye casually asked.

"I'm not sure about that. How did you hear about it, Big Brother Lu?" she asked.

"I overheard it before," Lu Ye didn't elaborate, "From this, Evil Moon Valley seems quite formidable. This time, not only is Righteousness Sect involved in the attack but also Qingyu Sect, with two of the top ten First Grade sects participating."

Yu Xiaodie laughed, "You can't say that. Although Evil Moon Valley is strong, it still has a considerable gap compared to a First Grade sect. I guess it's around Fifth to Sixth Grade at most. Although two First Grade powers have come, not everyone among them is a high-level cultivator."

"That makes sense," Lu Ye agreed with the explanation.

Yu Xiaodie said, "Apart from the two First Grade sects, there are a few others. Now that the inspection is almost complete, those who have jade tablets will have the opportunity to join those sects. Big Brother Lu, you must not miss this chance."

The checking of aptitude and talent was just a precursor, but truly, the opportunity lay in obtaining the chance to study and train in the sects that had come.

This didn't mean that these sects lacked disciples. For First Grade powers like the Righteousness Sect and Qingyu Sect, there would never be a shortage of disciples.

However, this method of recruitment had become the established custom. For people like Lu Ye and Yu Xiaodie who had been rescued, although the world was vast, they had nowhere else to go. The Haotian Alliance needed to settle them, and taking in some of those with cultivation aptitude was simply convenient, as it wouldn't cost anything and might even find a few good talents.

Lu Ye laughed, "With my Yiye's talent, I'm afraid no sect would see me as worthy."

"Always think on the bright side," Yu Xiaodie reassured. "Having opened your spiritual orifice is an advantage, and with nearly ten sects, Big Brother Lu, you're bound to find one to belong to."

"Then I'll take your blessing," Lu Ye responded.

Chapter 17 15: Pang Dahai and Sincerity

"One must be careful when choosing a sect; if chosen well, you might just fulfill your desires." A voice suddenly came from the side.

Lu Ye and Yu Xiaodie turned their heads in surprise, only to discover that at some point a plump man had appeared beside them, smiling amiably at them with his tiny eyes nearly squished shut by the flesh on his face.

It was none other than the fat man who had previously been registering the slaves and checking their identities.

Lu Ye didn't even notice when he had come over.

"Greetings, senior!" Yu Xiaodie hastily paid her respects, her expression tense. Although she had opened several orifices, a fat cultivator of this stature was still a lofty figure to her, and she couldn't help feeling nervous.

Lu Ye followed suit and paid his respects as well.

"I couldn't help but come over after hearing your enthusiastic conversation; you don't mind, do you?" The fat cultivator patted his large belly with one hand, his demeanor warm and friendly.

"Not at all." Yu Xiaodie quickly waved her hands. Despite her nerves, her thoughts were clear, and realising this was an opportunity, she sought advice, "May I ask what senior meant by that statement just now?"

She knew more about the cultivation world than Lu Ye, but her knowledge was limited compared to a bona fide Haotian Alliance cultivator like the fat cultivator.

"It's exactly as it sounds. Do you want to know?" The fat cultivator's smile grew even warmer. While he answered Yu Xiaodie, his gaze was fixed on Lu Ye.

Lu Ye didn't understand why the man was staring at him but had a feeling he meant no good. Still, as it related to his future, he politely said, "Please enlighten me, senior."

"If you want to know..." The fat cultivator affectionately patted Lu Ye's shoulder, "then it depends on whether you have enough sincerity."

Sincerity?

Lu Ye raised his eyebrows, recalling the first time he met the fat cultivator and how the latter had eyed the storage sack at his waist.

Could it really be? That wouldn't be right, would it?

After all, he was a powerful figure with high cultivation. Would he bother with someone like him, a nobody?

But the meaning hinted at by the fat cultivator's words was very clear, obvious to anyone but a fool.

After a moment of silence, Lu Ye tentatively raised his hand and reached into the storage sack at his waist. He noticed the fat cultivator's eyes, squinted to slits, slowly widening a bit, his smile becoming even more pleasant.

When he lowered his hand, the fat cultivator returned to his previous demeanor.

When he raised his hand again, the fat cultivator's eyes opened a bit wider...

After several such exchanges, Lu Ye finally confirmed that things were just as he had suspected.

The fat cultivator couldn't take it anymore. He had never seen anyone dare to tease someone so blatantly and swept his sleeve in displeasure, "It seems you don't want to know."

He was about to turn around when he felt a weight in his hand. Looking down, he saw a bottle of blood Qi pills and Lu Ye standing in front of him with an expression like he'd lost several pounds of flesh.

The fat cultivator couldn't help but twitch the corner of his mouth: "Is this your sincerity?"

What a worthless trinket. He had come over here on purpose, not for such garbage!

"Then what would senior like?" Lu Ye asked.

The fat cultivator couldn't stand him anymore and laid it out clearly: "Ore!"

Lu Ye asked curiously, "Big Brother, being such a lofty figure, how can you take interest in those minerals?"

The plump cultivator replied, "Then you're unaware. The minerals produced by the veins in Evil Moon Valley are all fine products, very rare indeed. Besides, if you want information, you naturally need to pay a price, it's not like I can just give you whatever you want for free, especially since we have no ties."

"That makes sense." Lu Ye nodded in agreement, casually took out a piece of ore from his storage sack, and passed it to the plump cultivator.

The plump cultivator didn't take it immediately, squinting his eyes and shaking his head faintly, "I can't see your sincerity."

"Such a big piece!" Lu Ye held up the basin-sized ore, the largest piece in his storage sack around his waist.

The plump cultivator hummed a little tune, ignoring him.

Unable to hold back, Lu Ye clicked his tongue, his face twisted in a pained expression, placed the ore on the ground, and took out another piece from his storage sack.

Having mined for over a year, he had some understanding of these ores. Though he wasn't sure of their exact value, the easily found ones were definitely of lower value. The two pieces he took out looked sizeable, but they were actually not rare during his mining, belonging to the type that was relatively easy to find.

Zhou Cheng's storage sack didn't have many ores, only five or six pieces, mostly those common types, while Manager Yang's storage sack not only had a larger quantity but also many more rare items.

As the second piece of ore was taken out, the plump cultivator's face showed a bit more of a smile, "Kid, don't think I'm taking advantage of you. I see that we get along, so I specifically came to give you a few pointers. I, Pang Dahai from the Righteousness Sect, do have some reputation in the cultivation world of Bingzhou, others wanting my guidance, I wouldn't even bother."

Yu Xiaodie, who was nearby, watched the two conduct such transactions brazenly under broad daylight, especially since the plump cultivator kept claiming he was from the Righteousness Sect. She felt something shatter inside her heart.

Lu Ye found it hard to deal with as well, "You're from the Righteousness Sect?"

Where is your awe-inspiring righteousness?

In the midst of speaking, he had already taken out a third piece of ore.

Pang Dahai's eyes were still narrowed, obviously still unable to see any sincerity.

Lu Ye's eyelid twitched, wishing he could pry open that man's eyelids to make him see clearly.

Helpless, since he definitely wasn't Pang's match, he took out a fourth piece, and this time, he chose a precious piece of origin magnetic ore.

Pang Dahai's eyebrows twitched, his smile remaining on his face.

Lu Ye clapped his hands and pointed at the four ores on the ground, "Isn't that enough sincerity?"

Pang Dahai smiled without a word.

"Alright then, there's nothing more I can do." Lu Ye sighed, and under the stunned gaze of Pang Dahai and Yu Xiaodie, he crouched down, put the first piece of ore back into his storage sack, and then looked up at Pang Dahai, "Is that enough?"

Pang Dahai's eyes finally widened, looking at Lu Ye with a shocked expression, his mind in disarray.

Yu Xiaodie was equally stunned by Lu Ye's slick move, not understanding what Big Brother Lu meant.

Lu Ye put back the second piece of ore he had taken out and looked up to ask Pang Dahai again, "Is that enough?"

"I..." Pang Dahai seemed wanting to curse but held it back, struggling to maintain the composure of a powerful figure, though his face was starting to look frantic.

Lu Ye's hands were already reaching for the third piece of ore when a hand pressed on his arm. Lu Ye looked up to see Pang Dahai looking at him through gritted teeth, "Enough, it's enough!"

Chapter 18 16 Guidance from Pang Dahai

A moment later.

"You're quite interesting, kid." Pang Dahai had already put away the two pieces of ore.

Yu Xiaodie stood by, terrified. Seeing that he was not only not angry, but even looked very happy, she really couldn't figure out what Senior Brother was thinking.

Having seen enough sincerity, Pang Dahai spoke up directly, "Cultivation is a lifelong affair, so it is best for a cultivator in the early stages of their cultivation to determine the direction of their cultivation based on their own element sign or talent. Of course, the talent I'm talking about is not the cultivation talent you just tested, but the compatibility with a certain faction."

"Faction?" Lu Ye grasped the crucial point sharply, somewhat confused—wasn't he supposed to advise on choosing a sect? Why mention factions?

"Yes, faction!" Pang Dahai nodded. "The Nine Provinces cultivation world once had many peculiar factions, but not many have been preserved to this day."

There are mainly six major factions: physique cultivators who specialize in their bodily cultivation, combat cultivators who focus on close combat, magic cultivators who study magic and spells, healing cultivators who heal the world, Netherworld cultivators who communicate with spirits, and extrinsic cultivators who excel at alchemy, talisman drawing, array setup, and artifact crafting.

Of course, there are also other minor factions that have survived, though they are not common. You'll know about them if you ever come across them in the future."

"It can be said that these six major factions encompass 99 percent of the cultivators in the Nine Provinces cultivation world and determine the directions of the cultivators' cultivation. If the right direction is chosen, the future cultivation will naturally be much more effective.

For instance, someone born with divine strength and a robust physique would naturally choose the path of a physique cultivator. Similarly, someone with an exceptional innate talent in magic and spells would naturally take the path of a magic cultivator. And some who dislike fighting might go into alchemy or healing, both are suitable choices.

So, choosing a faction is very important, otherwise, someone who wishes to practice sword control and joins Hundred Flowers Valley would find no one to teach them."

Pang Dahai went on about it ceaselessly, and both Lu Ye and Yu Xiaodie nodded repeatedly. These pieces of information were new even to Yu Xiaodie.

"According to Senior Brother, different sects focus on different factions?" Lu Ye vaguely understood his meaning now.

"Did I say that?" Pang Dahai was surprised.

"Senior Brother just said that people from Hundred Flowers Valley don't teach swordsmanship."

"You are indeed astute." Pang Dahai looked at Lu Ye approvingly, not expecting him to deduce some things just from his own words, "Generally speaking, it's not possible for a sect to have only one faction. There are at least two or three, and as many as four to five, or even more. For instance, the ten major 1st grade sects basically have all factions, although there are exceptions.

The Beixuan Sword Sect, for instance, has only one combat cultivation faction, and it's the most extreme of its kind." Mentioning the Beixuan Sword Sect, Pang Dahai's face twitched involuntarily as if recalling some unpleasant memory.

He paused, then continued, "Although a sect is comprised of several factions, there's always a different emphasis. This is more evident in the lower-grade sects because they do not have enough energy and resources to allow all factions to progress equally.

Take Burning Moon Mountain, which joined us this time; their focus is mainly on the magic cultivators and alchemy cultivators among the extrinsic cultivators. The elixir pills refined by the alchemy cultivators of Burning Moon Mountain are highly reputable throughout Bingzhou.

People with a fire element sign undoubtedly have a great advantage if they wish to join Burning Moon Mountain, because fire element spirit force is needed during alchemy and artifact refining."

While uttering the last sentence, he glanced at Lu Ye, the implication was very clear.

Lu Ye suddenly realized, "Is this what Senior Brother mentioned earlier about determining factions based on one's own element sign?"

"Exactly," Pang Dahai nodded. "Gold represents Sharpness and can follow the paths of combat, magic, or physique cultivation. Wood signifies vitality and can choose physique, healing, magic, alchemy, or array cultivation. The water element is gentle and inclusive, suitable for all factions. The fire element is fierce, suitable for all factions except healing and Netherworld cultivation.

The earth element is robust, most suitable for becoming a physique cultivator. So, what path you decide to follow in the future should not only depend on your interests but also your element sign, as in the cultivation world, as in the mundane world, 'men fear entering the wrong profession.'"

"Now that everyone has been tested, you will soon be given some items that are key to your stay. Make sure to choose carefully, and decide which sect you want to join, it's best to identify which factions that sect focuses on and whether those factions conflict with your element sign."

"Understood." Lu Ye nodded seriously, bowing with a clenched fist, "Thank you, Senior Brother."

Although Pang Dahai seemed somewhat greedy, taking his two pieces of ore, the information he shared was truly precious and not commonly heard, enough to outweigh the value of those two ores.

Pang Dahai waved his hand, "It's all basic knowledge; it's just that you have less contact with the outside world, so you don't know."

"I still have to ask Senior Brother, my attributes are mainly fire with secondary gold; which sect would be better for me this time?"

"Well, you..." Pang Dahai looked him up and down, then chuckled, "I feel like whatever you choose, you won't have a chance."

Lu Ye's face instantly darkened like the bottom of a pot, "Then why did Senior Brother bother telling me so much?"

Pang Dahai could not suppress his laughter, "I heard about a guy with Yiye talent, so I came to see something rare! Did you know, I haven't encountered a Yiye talent in so many years... Hahaha!"

His whole body shook with laughter, and Lu Ye had a mind to rush up and beat him to death!

He didn't know which bastard had leaked his talent, as it turned out, bad news really does travel a thousand miles.

Just when Lu Ye could hardly take it anymore, Pang Dahai suddenly stopped laughing, lowered his voice, and said to Lu Ye, "If I were you, I'd set my expectations as low as possible and not let my heart waver. Only then... you might get what you wish for!"

After saying this, he turned his head toward Yu Xiaodie and asked with a smile, "Little girl, is there anything you'd like Senior Brother to advise on?"

Yu Xiaodie was eager, quickly asking, "Which sect does Senior Brother think I should join?"

"Do you like fighting and killing?" asked Pang Dahai.

Yu Xiaodie shook her head vigorously like a rattle-drum; what girl likes fighting and killing?

"Then go to Hundred Flowers Valley," Pang Dahai said. "Most of the cultivators in the Hundred Flowers Valley are healing cultivators, so you don't have to fight on the battlefield, and even if you are captured, you won't be treated too harshly."

"Hundred Flowers Valley..." Yu Xiaodie mused, then bowed and said, "Thank you, Senior Brother."

Her primary element sign was wood, which was well-suited to the Hundred Flowers Valley. Clearly, Pang Dahai knew this when he gave his advice.

Pang Dahai left, leaving Lu Ye standing there in a foul mood.

Yu Xiaodie wanted to comfort him but didn't know how to start, so she simply changed the subject, "Senior Brother, there's something I don't understand."

"What is it?"

"Just now, when you offered Senior Brother Pang four ore stones, he didn't take them, but when you took two stones instead, why did he want them?"

Lu Ye casually explained, "In his eyes, those four stones were all his, and he didn't appreciate what he owned. One only realizes the value of something after losing it."

Yu Xiaodie sank into thought upon hearing this, finding the idea quite profound.

Of course, this was also because the two ore stones Lu Ye took were of low value. The real value lay in the remaining two stones.

Chapter 19 17 Filling in Aspirations

Pang Dahai said that someone would soon come to distribute some things to Lu Ye and the others, allowing them to make some choices. As a cultivator of the Righteousness Sect, he undoubtedly knew the subsequent rules.

Sure enough, not long after he left, all those who had passed the test and possessed a jade tablet were gathered in one place.

Of the thousands of slaves that had been rescued before, only a little over a hundred remained here now, a mere tenth or so of the original number.

The crowd stood there quietly as a cultivator came over and handed each of them a piece of paper. Lu Ye took it, looked down, and saw the names of ten sects listed from top to bottom.

The Righteousness Sect was at the top, followed by the Qingyu Sect, with some other sects that Lu Ye had never heard of. However, he did see Burning Moon Mountain and Hundred Flowers Valley, which Pang Dahai had mentioned before.

These must be the sects that had come to attack Evil Moon Valley this time.

Each sect's name was followed by its grade.

The Righteousness Sect and the Qingyu Sect were undoubtedly 1st grade, while the grades of the remaining sects varied quite a bit, mostly ranging from 4th to 7th grade.

And after the grade, there was another line that indicated the factions covered by each sect, which were all pieces of information previously mentioned by Pang Dahai.

At this moment, Lu Ye was somewhat grateful to Pang Dahai; otherwise, he probably wouldn't understand the content on this paper.

While he was carefully examining it, a cultivator at the front of the crowd spoke up, "Whichever sect you wish to join, come forward and draw a circle next to the name of that sect with a pen. You may choose up to three, but in the end, which sect you can join will depend on your luck and the decision of the managers of each sect.

If you're lucky, you might even be admitted to two top-tier 1st-grade sects."

After he finished speaking, there was silence for a moment, and soon someone asked, "Does the senior mean that while we choose a sect, the sects are also choosing us?"

"That's the idea!" the cultivator responded indifferently, "So don't expect to ascend to the heavens in a single step. If you don't have enough talent and aptitude, even choosing a 1st-grade sect will be futile."

Another person asked, "What if none of the three sects I choose selects me?"

"Then you'll have no fate with the path of cultivation and will be settled along with those who don't have the aptitude for cultivation!"

Upon hearing this, many who harbored thoughts of taking a chance sobered up.

Just now, many had the idea of choosing both of the top 1st-grade sects, but actually doing so definitely wouldn't lead to any good outcome. Since neither the Righteousness Sect nor the Qingyu Sect would have low requirements for accepting disciples, being eliminated by both would only leave them with one last chance.

If they failed to seize that last chance as well, they would miss out on this opportunity.

For Lu Ye and his group, being admitted into a sect for cultivation was undoubtedly the best path out, and no one wanted to miss it.

This made everyone's expression become much more serious.

On the other hand, holding the paper in his hand and listening to the words of the cultivator, Lu Ye's expression became extremely odd.

How was this like filling out college applications?

During the talent testing, the third senior brother of the Qingyu Sect had recited an introduction to recruitment, the jade tablet obtained after the testing was akin to exam results, and each sect seemed like a university with the factions representing different majors. Now everyone was filling out their college applications.

There were even first choices, second choices, and third choices...

Looking again at the various sects listed on the paper, those ranking in the top two outright were akin to the top-tier academic institutions, while the 4th-5th grades below were comparable to ordinary first-tier universities? And the 6th and 7th grades towards the back were second and third-tier universities?

Lu Ye's gaze then dropped to the very end, and he was startled.

Was there even a diploma mill included?

The Righteous Blood Sect, which ranked last, was a 9th grade sect—he had somehow missed that earlier.

The situation now was clear - the hundred or so people who had passed the test needed to choose three sects from among these, and while the task was not difficult, there was a silent competition happening.

If too many people choose the same sect, there will definitely be a batch eliminated.

Clutching his jade tablet, Lu Ye sighed in his heart. His talent, merely Yiye, had no competitive edge in this matter.

But he still had to try.

Taking into account his primary element fire and secondary element metal, Lu Ye gradually formed a plan in his mind.

The cultivator who had been speaking had set up a desk in front, with several pens and an inkstone on it.

People came forward one after another, took a pen and sketched on their sheets of paper, and handed them in with their jade tablets to the cultivator.

Soon, the crowd of over a hundred people dwindled to around half.

Yu Xiaodie came over, "Big Brother Lu, have you made up your mind?"

"Um... Yes, I have."

Yu Xiaodie said, "Shall we go together?"

"You go ahead, I'll think it over some more," Lu Ye replied. Although he had already made a decision, the thought of his Yiye talent still left him uncertain.

With ten sects and over a hundred people, the average would allow for each sect to take in over ten people, but this was just the ideal distribution. Lu Ye was sure that Righteousness Sect and Qingyu Sect would at most take two or three people as a token gesture, certainly not more.

This meant the other sects would need to take in more people.

Lu Ye didn't expect to be admitted into the two grand 1st grade sects. However, if the competition was too fierce, even opting for those 6th or 7th grade sects would likely result in his elimination.

After arriving in the Nine Provinces over a year ago and being a mining slave in Evil Moon Valley for a year, although he had succeeded in opening his spiritual orifice, he couldn't find his 2nd Spiritual Orifice—how could he speak of cultivation?

But entering a sect would be different. He could then seek guidance from the powerful figures within the sect. So, no matter what, he didn't want to miss this opportunity, even if he had to start from a lower point.

Thinking this, he stepped forward toward the desk, took a pen, and first drew a circle around Righteous Blood Sect. As the lowest grade sect, Lu Ye guessed that nobody else would choose it aside from himself, making it a safety choice to ensure he could enter a sect.

After picking Righteous Blood Sect, he lifted his pen towards Burning Moon Mountain.

As the pen touched the paper, he suddenly recalled the last words Pang Dahai had said to him.

He had advised him to set his expectations at the lowest, to not be distracted by other choices, so that he might achieve his wish.

At the time, Lu Ye didn't quite understand, thinking it was just advice. But now, it seemed clearly suggestive.

Moreover, Pang Dahai wasn't optimistic about him; when Lu Ye asked him which sect to choose, he bluntly said that none would likely take him.

As a cultivator from Righteousness Sect, although a bit greedy, he had no reason to mock him; meaning, if he chose any other sect, the chances were he would not be accepted.

Lu Ye closed his eyes. Every choice at the crossroads of life was incredibly important, especially the one at hand.

He suddenly looked up at the cultivator in front of him and asked, "Excuse me, senior brother, what would happen if I only choose this one sect?"

The cultivator was eyeing him with interest since before Lu Ye, no one had chosen Righteous Blood Sect. Predictably, no one would choose it after him either, due to its low grade.

But to the cultivator's surprise, not only had Lu Ye chosen Righteous Blood Sect, but he had also posed such a question.

The cultivator, stroking his pencil mustache and flashing a grin, said, "You'll know once you choose it."

Chapter 20 18 Veteran Thang's Predicament

Set your expectations to the lowest, which means choosing the sect with the lowest grade, and don't be indecisive, meaning make only one choice.

If Lu Ye's understanding was correct, then this was what Pang Dahai was trying to tell him at the end.

The key issue now was whether he should believe him!

After a moment of thought, Lu Ye had made a decision. He put down the brush in his hand and handed it over along with his jade tablet to the cultivator with the pencil mustache across from him, "Senior brother, I have made my choice."

The cultivator with the pencil mustache raised his eyebrows, "Won't you consider it a bit more?"

Lu Ye looked down and then back up, "No need."

With his terrifyingly low talent, even if he chose another sect, it would likely be futile. Rather than that, it was better to place his hopes on the last sect, Righteous Blood Sect. Pang Dahai had no reason to deliberately make fun of him since he had also given him two pieces of ore.

"Alright." The cultivator with the pencil mustache nodded, took Lu Ye's "application" and jade tablet, looked down, and said, "So you're that Lu Yiye."

"My name is Lu Ye, senior brother!" Lu Ye's eyes twitched.

"I know, Lu Yiye!" The cultivator with the pencil mustache looked at him with a smirk, emphasizing the "Yiye" part particularly heavily.

Lu Ye wanted to curse. He hadn't even set out into the world, and he already had a nickname. How was he supposed to get by in the future?

And who on earth was it that had spread the word about his terrible talent, Yiye?

Moments later, the cultivator with the pencil mustache had collected everyone's applications and took off into the sky, transforming into a streak of light as he headed toward the mountainside to the east.

There was a palace complex at that location, which used to be inhabited by cultivators from Evil Moon Valley. It had now become the temporary headquarters of the Haotian Alliance. Cultivators were constantly coming and going, and a large quantity of confiscated materials was piling up there, awaiting distribution.

He didn't stop along the way and went straight to the innermost palace. A female cultivator was standing guard at the entrance of the grand hall.

Seeing his arrival, the woman asked, "Is everything taken care of?"

The cultivator with the pencil mustache replied, "It's all here."

"Give it to me. The Lords are discussing the retreat. After they're done, I'll present it to them."

"We're retreating already?" The cultivator with the pencil mustache was clearly surprised.

The female cultivator said, "Ten Thousand Demons Ridge's response was faster than anticipated. Several sects are already gathering forces, so we need to leave here quickly."

Understanding, the cultivator with the pencil mustache nodded. Although the Haotian Alliance had brought many people, this was, after all, Ten Thousand Demons Ridge's territory. If a fight broke out again, the enemy could continuously send reinforcements, which would put them at a disadvantage.

Evil Moon Valley had already been taken down, and they had reaped a lot of benefits. It was naturally time to quit while they were ahead.

After handing over the stack of papers to the woman, the cultivator with the pencil mustache left quickly.

The female cultivator waited outside for a while longer before a strong and forceful voice came from inside, "Bring them in."

Upon hearing this, she immediately pushed open the doors of the grand hall.

Inside the hall were only ten people, representing the ten big sects that had come to attack Evil Moon Valley. Seated at the head was a commanding figure, none other than Pang Zhen, a member of the Righteousness Sect and also the Vice Alliance Hierarch of the Haotian Alliance. Among all those present, his cultivation level was the highest, at Divine Sea Realm.

The woman approached Pang Zhen and placed the stack of papers respectfully before him, saying, "Disciple takes her leave!"

After she left, Pang Zhen flipped through the stack of papers, pulled out one, and then pushed the rest to the representative of the Qingyu Sect.

For Lu Ye and the others, each of these papers carried their future and dreams, but to people like Pang Zhen, these were not worth looking at closely.

Every time a piece of land occupied by Ten Thousand Demons Ridge was conquered, some people would be rescued, and it was a customary practice to recruit from among these people those with the aptitude and talent for cultivation.

Each family had tens of thousands of disciples; unless someone had exceptionally outstanding talent and aptitude, who would take a second look?

In Lu Ye's batch of people, there clearly wasn't anyone worthy of their special attention.

A stack of more than a hundred sheets of paper passed from one sect's speaker to another, gradually diminishing in number until, when it reached the speaker from Hundred Flowers Valley, he selected more than ten people, getting ready to pass it on to the next one, when he suddenly seemed to discover something curious, raising his head to look towards an elder seated at the end of the table, "Veteran Thang, someone has chosen Righteous Blood Sect."

At these words, Pang Zhen, who was instructing the Qingyu Sect speaker about something, couldn't help but raise his head, "Really?"

He had just casually drawn one person out of those hundred or so without looking at the others in detail.

The others also showed expressions of surprise, with someone even joking, "There are still those among this batch of youngsters who can see a gem for what it is..."

It seemed as if choosing Righteous Blood Sect was something extremely remarkable.

That elder seated at the end, referred to as Veteran Thang, was indeed the one who had led Lu Ye out of the mine.

Veteran Thang's face bore an expression of surprise upon hearing this, for although Righteous Blood Sect had participated in many such operations, never before had anyone chosen them, even though those rescued were granted three opportunities to make a selection.

The grade of Righteous Blood Sect was too low; anyone with even a slight ambition and aspiration wouldn't make that choice.

Surprised as he was, Veteran Thang still waved his hand, "Righteous Blood Sect is not accepting disciples, as you all know." If it weren't for the alliance regulations, Righteous Blood Sect's name wouldn't even appear on that sheet of paper.

The speaker from Hundred Flowers Valley responded, "I'm afraid that won't do, Veteran Thang. He only chose Righteous Blood Sect, and moreover, no one else has chosen Righteous Blood Sect."

Veteran Thang looked astonished and extended his hand, "Let me see."

Receiving the remaining sheets of paper from the speaker of Hundred Flowers Valley, Veteran Thang carefully flipped through them page by page, finding that, indeed, as he had said, the person who chose Righteous Blood Sect had only made one selection.

"Lu Ye..." Seeing the name on the jade tablet, Veteran Thang immediately recalled the young man he had encountered in the mine; he was even more surprised that it was him.

The speaker from Hundred Flowers Valley said, "According to the alliance regulations, in such cases, Righteous Blood Sect must accept this person."

Indeed, such a rule existed within the Haotian Alliance, granting those who were rescued three opportunities to choose. However, if they only used one, then the sect they had selected must accept the person, provided no one else had made the same choice. This rule was intended to give some of those dedicated to the way of cultivation a chance.

Among the big sects, only a handful of speakers knew of this rule, which of course, was something the rescued slaves would definitely not know.

"This youngster..." Veteran Thang was somewhat helpless; it seemed that Lu Ye's choice of Righteous Blood Sect was quite a dilemma for him.

"Veteran Thang, Righteous Blood Sect should also take in a disciple," persuaded the speaker from Hundred Flowers Valley, before changing tack, "Though this youngster has opened one orifice, it seems his aptitude is somewhat unsatisfactory."

"What does it matter if his aptitude is poor? Aptitude does not represent everything; have you not seen the truth in this after so many years of cultivation?"

"Have you seen Yiye's aptitude?"

"This is too poor; how did he manage to open an orifice?"

"Since he has made this choice, Righteous Blood Sect has no choice but to accept him."

"Just worried about the Loyal Heart Sect..."

As soon as Loyal Heart Sect was mentioned, all became silent, as if touching upon an unspeakable matter.

"Rules are rules! If Loyal Heart Sect has any objections, let them come to me!" Pang Zhen, who had remained silent, declared decisively, "Veteran Thang, take him in. Although Yiye's aptitude isn't worth cultivating, at least keep Righteous Blood Sect safe for now; this could be an opportunity."

Clutching Lu Ye's jade tablet in his hand, Veteran Thang hesitated before saying, "I'll think about it."

