

Humanity 171

Chapter 171 Loyal Heart Sect

The fierce battle at Golden Light Peak came to a close, witnessed by thousands of cultivators from both camps. Lu Yiye, a disciple of the Righteous Blood Sect, combated opponents from Ten Thousand Demons Ridge in forty-three battles with his Spirit Stream Level 5 cultivation, not losing a single one.

In his final battle, he even slew a saintess of the Sacred Fire Order who had crippled her own spiritual orifice, plummeting from Level 7.

The news spread rapidly across the entire Spirit Stream battlefield and toward the Nine Provinces.

The world was shocked!

Merely a Spirit Stream Level 5 in cultivation, he was hardly regarded by the grand figures, but the deeds he accomplished at this level forced them to take notice.

The good news, however, was that although Lu Yiye had triumphed in the end, he was also gravely injured and on the brink of death, and it was unknown if he could survive this ordeal.

In Cangming Mountain, Veteran Thang, who had been waiting at the sect headquarters the whole time, was stunned upon hearing the news. He recalled the unimpressive youth, filthy and dusty with only one opened orifice, whom he had taken under his wing half a year ago. Comparing that boy to the staggering feats he had now achieved, he almost doubted they were the same person.

Half a year to reach Level 5 was already extraordinary, though certain fortuitous encounters could explain it.

Indeed, the Spirit Stream battlefield was full of such encounters.

But to kill so many at Level 6 with a mere Level 5 was inconceivable.

He had never seen such great potential in the lad when he first brought him into the fold.

However, it couldn't be denied that the battle at Golden Light Peak had thrust the long-dormant Righteous Blood Sect of Bingzhou into the limelight again. Ten Thousand Demons Ridge had assumed this flag would soon collapse, but now, it seemed there was a resurgence.

How could this be allowed to happen?

Therefore, less than two hours after the news of the battle at Golden Light Peak broke, many sects from Ten Thousand Demons Ridge relayed an order to their disciples; if Lu Yiye did not survive, it was moot, and the Righteous Blood Sect would still be abolished.

However, if he survived this ordeal, then whenever they encountered him on the Spirit Stream battlefield, under permissible battle rules, they must use every means to eliminate him.

Such individuals must be dealt with early, or it would become problematic once they matured.

Having suffered a similar humiliation decades ago, Ten Thousand Demons Ridge was determined not to make the same mistake.

Bingzhou, Loyal Heart Sect headquarters.

As a prominent 2nd grade sect, Loyal Heart Sect's foundations were undeniably strong; it even had the potential to aim for 1st grade decades ago, but suffered heavy casualties in a significant battle, causing its status to fall. It had only managed to just regain some of its former power in recent years.

At that moment, in the council hall of the Loyal Heart Sect, many high-ranking members gathered, most of them silently meditating, except for a middle-aged man speaking of the events at the Golden Light Peak battle. This speaker was Yooi Guanjia, a vice sect leader of high standing and a Divine Sea cultivator. He spoke evenly, describing the situation objectively in short, succinct statements.

Everyone present had their own sources, so even though they couldn't enter the Spirit Stream battlefield on a whim, they were well-informed about the uproar caused by the battle at Golden Light Peak.

After Yooi Guanjia finished speaking, he continued, "In this battle at Golden Light Peak, our sect also had two disciples participate: Li Baxian and Feng Yuechan! These disciples were the Governor and Deputy Governor at our sect's station in the Spirit Stream battlefield. They left their posts without orders, disregarding the sect's foundation and breaching our regulations.

The Sect Leader is currently in seclusion, so we need to discuss and establish how to handle this situation."

An elder frowned and said, "The Governor and Deputy Governor leaving their posts together is a serious transgression. If rival sects took advantage of this, wouldn't our Loyal Heart Sect's centuries of accumulation be jeopardized? If other disciples followed their example, what future would our Loyal Heart Sect have? We must strictly punish them!"

Several people quickly agreed.

Another person added, "Concerning Righteous Blood Sect, Li Baxian has shown he cannot stay calm. It appears he can never truly be trusted. As for Feng Yuechan..." He paused to look up at a dignified woman across from him, "Yuechan has been brought up before our eyes.

She's always been an obedient and sensible girl, unlikely to err under normal circumstances—probably influenced by Li Baxian's instigation!"

"Indeed, Yuechan has always been obedient, and with her endeavours, our sect's station has been safe from invasions for over a decade. It's only natural for children to occasionally make minor errors."

"Still, she did violate the sect rules. Let's have her enter seclusion immediately to advance to the Cloud River Realm sooner—she has already stayed too long in the Spirit Stream Realm. It benefits neither her future prospects nor our sect to keep a potential pillar of the community held back."

"That would be wise!"

"Regarding Li Baxian... have him return to the sect headquarters to account for his actions without delay. We will decide on his punishment based on his attitude."

The discussion continued with each person contributing their thoughts, effectively determining the disciplinary actions for the two rule-breaking disciples, though there was a marked difference in how each was treated; Feng Yuechan was protected, whereas Li Baxian was treated as the black sheep.

Yooi Guanjia turned to the dignified woman, "What do you think, Junior Sister Qiu?"

The woman stood up, her hands clasped in front of her, and walked towards the exit of the hall without uttering a word.

Rushing, Yooi Guanjia said to the others, "Please continue the discussion." He quickly followed her out.

A moment later, in midair, he walked alongside Junior Sister Qiu, his expression troubled. "Sister, don't be upset. The Sect Leader is in seclusion, and as the Seal Envoy and co-manager of the Spirit Stream battlefield affairs, I couldn't overlook the breach of discipline by Li Baxian and Yuechan. One is your own child, and both are equivalent to our kin.

We've both seen the affection Yuechan has for Li Baxian, and given their generation gap, it wouldn't be proper for them to be together. Let's take this chance to separate them. You, as Yuechan's mother, could persuade her to ascend to the Cloud River Realm sooner. It does her no good to remain in the Spirit Stream Realm for so long, and our Loyal Heart Sect would also lose a future powerhouse."

Junior Sister Qiu halted, turned her head to glance at Yooi Guanjia, and said indifferently, "Seniority? I recall half a year ago when Brother took a new concubine. If we consider the hierarchy, that young girl could even call you 'grandfather,' couldn't she?"

Yooi Guanjia's face turned red, "How can these be equated?"

The woman's expression chilled, "With the Sect Leader absent, you have the final say on matters within the sect. I don't care what you intend to do, but if I find anyone daring to harm Li Baxian behind the scenes, don't blame me for disregarding our fellow disciples' camaraderie!"

With those words, she swept away.

Yooi Guanxia watched her departing figure with a calm look, his hands under the large sleeves clenched tightly, his expression gradually turning stern.

One hour later, the Loyal Heart Sect headquarters issued an order demanding the immediate return of the Deputy Governor Li Baxian to the sect without error.

However, news quickly spread that Li Baxian was currently embroiled in an intense battle with Yanh Xing, who ranked second on the Spirit Stream Ranking, and could not extricate himself.

Elsewhere, at the Righteousness Sect headquarters, a group of cultivators from the Cloud River Realm, with nothing better to do, were engaged in gambling.

The plump Pang Dahai was the dealer, with a group of brothers keen on gambling placing bets on all sides, the table piled high with sparkling Spirit Stones.

Especially in front of Pang Dahai, where the largest pile was, his expression one of delightful pleasure, clearly showing he had won quite a bit.

He suddenly turned his head to look at a small-mustache cultivator, "Fellow Daoist Yue Shan, something big happened at the Spirit Stream battlefield these past days, have you heard?"

The small-mustache Yue Shan, focused solely on the cards in his hands, hardly cared for anything else and casually responded, "What big event could possibly happen at the Spirit Stream battlefield?"

Pang Dahai then spoke about the battle at Golden Light Peak; the cultivators from Cloud River Realm, who had been gambling here for days, listened in stunned amazement, exclaiming in awe.

Pang Dahai chuckled, "It's quite interesting, actually. That Level 5 cultivator, you should know him, Brother Yue Shan."

Yue Shan's eyebrows raised, "I know him? Who is he?"

"Half a year ago, in Evil Moon Valley, taken in by the Righteous Blood Sect's Veteran Thang."

The small-mustache Yue Shan recalled briefly, greatly surprised, "Lu Yiye?"

"Exactly that person."

"Impossible, right?" Yue Shan frowned, "Are you sure you're not mistaken?"

He still had some impression of that young fellow Lu Yiye, especially since he was taken in by Veteran Thang, and also because of Yiye's talent. The title of Yiye originated from him; but how could this be? Yiye's talent, a Level 5 cultivation in half a year, and managed on Golden Light Peak to slaughter competitors from forty-three sects of Ten Thousand Demons Ridge without breaking a sweat...

"The man has been taken back to the Righteous Blood Sect. Whether he is alive or not, I don't know, but as long as he's breathing, with Sister Shui Yuan's skills, he's surely savable."

Pang Dahai looked meaningfully at Yue Shan, "And that kid seems to really care about the title 'Yiye.' I heard some guy from Ten Thousand Demons Ridge called him 'Fellow Daoist Yiye,' and he chopped him clean off! With the potential this young man is showing now, once he advances to the Cloud River Realm... hehe, Brother Yue Shan, you better take care!"

Yue Shan's face turned slightly unsightly, yet he scoffed, "A joke, am I afraid of him? Let him survive first, deal the cards...come on..."

Pang Dahai said no more, just about to deal the cards, when suddenly, a powerful surge of spirit force attacked from outside, the cards were not yet dealt, the roof was blown off.

A group of Cloud River Realm cultivators stared agape, looking up to see more than a dozen figures encircling them from midair, led by a True Lake Realm Master Uncle, his gaze fiery as he looked at them.

"Discipline Bureau!" someone yelled, and the people scattered in all directions.

The True Lake Realm elite ground his teeth, "Open gambling, the moral fabric of our Righteousness Sect is being ruined by you guys, arrest them all!"

A massive net fell from the sky, sealing off heaven and earth. Every gambler gathered there was caught, not a single one escaped, all tightly ensnared by the net.

One hour later, inside the Discipline Bureau, one after another, screams echoed, unbearably sorrowful. Righteousness Sect cultivators passing by shivered in fear upon hearing them.

Newly joined disciples turned pale while more senior brothers advised, "If you encounter someone plump like that in the sect in the future, make sure to keep your distance. He is the cancer of our Righteousness Sect, don't let him corrupt you."

A group of new disciples nodded vigorously.

Chapter 172 - Awakening

In the boundless darkness, a ripple arose and with its spread, the dormant consciousness began to awaken.

Time was indiscernible before the darkness tore apart and an indescribable pain coupled with a tingling sensation struck; Lu Ye abruptly opened his eyes.

He vaguely saw two figures standing beside the bed, with one of them immediately sitting down, taking his hand, and channeling a gentle spirit force through his palm to examine his condition.

The vision was blurry, rendering the person's appearance unclear, yet it was certain she was a woman.

There was another figure standing by the bed, and after a moment, Lu Ye felt that it might be the sect master...

He opened his mouth, intending to call out, yet as the gentle spirit force entered, his consciousness again began to drift into haziness, faintly hearing the sect master's query, "How is the situation?"

An ethereal voice promptly responded, "He's done for!"

The sect master's voice sounded, "You girl, don't scare the old man; it wasn't easy for the old man to..."

The rest was inaudible as the entire world rapidly receded from him, plunging him once more into sleep.

Time was again lost to him, and Lu Ye awoke once more.

Someone was sitting by his side, channeling spirit force to heal his injuries; compared to the last awakening, Lu Ye felt much better, at least his consciousness wasn't as blurred.

His vision gradually cleared, revealing the person by his side to be a young-looking woman with an attractive appearance, her clear, pure eyes devoid of any impurities, which surprisingly reminded Lu Ye of his eldest senior sister, Weh Ying.

If compared, this woman seemed like a younger version of his eldest senior sister, albeit more innocent than his mature senior sister.

"Awake?"

"You are..." Lu Ye spoke, his voice hoarse, his throat burning.

The woman smiled gently, "I am your Second Senior Sister, Shui Yuan!"

So it turned out he didn't have a second senior brother, but a second senior sister... Lu Ye thought to himself.

"Where is this?" Lu Ye tried to turn his head to look around but was shocked to find he couldn't move his neck.

"This is the Righteous Blood Sect," the second senior sister replied, "Little junior brother, you are home now."

Was he home now? Had he achieved the goal he set upon entering the Spirit Stream battlefield? Lu Ye's heart relaxed, then he quickly remembered Yiyi and Amber, "Where are my mounts?"

He could be certain that Yiyi and Amber were not beside him, otherwise, they would definitely be guarding him.

"They are temporarily staying at the Cangming Mountain premises; you haven't formed a pact with it, so it couldn't return to the Nine Provinces with you, but I've arranged for them to be sent to the sect headquarters. Once your injuries heal, you can go find them."

Lu Ye didn't know what pact he had to form with Amber, but it seemed that travel between the Spirit Stream battlefield and the Nine Provinces required some conditions, which wasn't urgent at the moment. With Yiyi there and being at the Righteous Blood Sect's premises, they should be safe.

Only then did Lu Ye have the clarity to inspect his own condition; the spirit force within was completely depleted, something he had experienced before, so he was not panicked. As long as his body recovered, the spirit force would naturally replenish.

The injuries must have been severe, as he found himself wrapped up like a dumpling, quite literally, his entire body, except for his eyes, nose, and mouth, was covered without a single gap.

With Second Senior Sister Shui Yuan's treatment, he was enveloped by a gentle, water-like spirit force, the sensations of pain and tingling spreading throughout his body.

Similar to when Hua Ci had treated him, though Hua Ci had used the wood element spirit force while his second sister employed the water element spirit force.

Both types of spirit forces harbored vast life energy, greatly beneficial for healing.

Lu Ye realized that his Second Senior Sister, like Hua Ci, was a healing cultivator.

He hadn't seen his eldest senior sister or the fourth senior brother, nor had he met that never-before-seen third senior brother; even the sect master was nowhere to be seen.

Two hours later, the Second Senior Sister withdrew her spirit force, cautioning Lu Ye, "Don't move carelessly, and call me if you need anything. I'll be just outside."

"Yes," Lu Ye responded softly.

Shui Yuan got up, walked outside, closed the door, thought for a moment, then touched the battlefield marking and transmitted a message, "Brought back!"

Meanwhile, on the border of Bingzhou, in the region of Yunzhou which belonged to Ten Thousand Demons Ridge, Thang Yifeng's figure hovered mid-air, the violent fluctuations of spirit force slowly subsiding. Below him, a Ten Thousand Demons Ridge sect had been leveled. This power, known as White Wolf City, had narrowly escaped complete annihilation.

Amidst the rubble and ruins, countless bodies of Ten Thousand Demons Ridge cultivators lay scattered.

White Wolf City, merely a 6th grade force with only a few cultivators in the True Lake Realm as their strongest, stood no chance against a sect master of the Divine Sea Realm. Their survival was due to those in the Spirit Stream and Cloud River Realms who had wisely hidden within the battlefield.

However, after this battle, the sect's standing was likely to decline significantly during the next evaluation.

Suddenly, from a distance, a streak of Liu Guang swept over, not yet close when a stern shout was emitted, "Thang Yifeng, are you seeking death!"

The sect master, without uttering a word, transformed into a streak of Liu Guang and rushed toward the newcomer. In an instant, the two figures were locked in fierce combat. The more the newcomer fought, the more terrified he became because the strength displayed by Thang Yifeng far exceeded the understanding of those from Ten Thousand Demons Ridge.

After just a short exchange, he knew he was no match and hastily fled.

Watching the direction in which the man fled, the sect master chose not to pursue. Although he could kill the man, it would undoubtedly take a significant amount of time. Yunzhou was under the control of Ten Thousand Demons Ridge and aside from that man, other Divine Sea Realm experts were surely already on their way.

He immediately flew in a certain direction.

That day, the three Cultivation sects of Yunzhou under Ten Thousand Demons Ridge suffered a devastating attack by Thang Yifeng, the sect master of Righteous Blood Sect, especially White Wolf City, where the entire sect's True Lake Realm was slaughtered, and the Cloud River Realm suffered heavy casualties.

The disaster brought about by a furious magic cultivator was extremely terrifying, especially when the cultivator was a strong Divine Sea Realm practitioner.

More than ten Divine Sea Realm experts from Ten Thousand Demons Ridge's side mobilized to encircle and intercept Thang Yifeng. After half a day of fighting, Thang Yifeng, severely injured, managed to escape.

However, before leaving, he issued a warning.

If anyone dares to disregard the rules and target the disciples of Righteous Blood Sect, then do not blame him for showing no mercy, using his superiority to suppress the weak.

It had been just a few days since the battle at Golden Light Peak, and such an event had occurred, indicating that Thang Yifeng was defending his disciples.

The three Yunzhou sects he attacked had all had disciples participate in the battle at Golden Light Peak.

The dormant beast had revealed its ferocious teeth, causing numerous sects of Ten Thousand Demons Ridge to be fearful.

In the room, Lu Ye sat cross-legged.

It had to be said, the medical skills of his Second Senior Sister were truly exceptional. He had been severely injured before; yet, after being treated by Second Senior Sister for two days, he felt much better. Although he was still bandaged like a rice dumpling, he was clearly healing quickly.

Second Senior Sister also fed him some odd medicinal solutions, but compared to those bitter medicines concocted by the unscrupulous Hua Ci, the taste of Second Senior Sister's concoctions was much better.

At the moment, he was recovering his spirit force, having swallowed an elixir pill, refined its medicinal effects, and after letting his Cultivation Technique operate, he added Spirit Energy Gathering Spirit Runes to his spiritual orifice.

Then he discovered a somewhat troublesome issue—his spirit force was very impure, and even the newly recovered spirit force was just as mixed, and the situation seemed more severe than before.

It was an unavoidable problem. During the battle at Golden Light Peak, he had consumed too many elixir pills to recover, and despite their fine quality, they inevitably caused an accumulation of pill poison in his body.

To solve this, it was necessary to restore the burning effect of the Talent Tree against the pill poison. Lu Ye had some clues on how to restore this ability to the Talent Tree, but it wasn't urgent at the moment. Healing was more important.

Moreover, he needed to visit his place of residence once, to bring Amber out; Yiyi must be very worried about him.

Bam...

The door was kicked open, causing Lu Ye to jump. He looked up, only to see a large bed entering vertically, followed by the petite figure of his Second Senior Sister.

After a few days of interaction, Lu Ye understood that his Second Senior Sister was a genuinely gentle woman, not like Hua Ci who was seemingly gentle but actually scheming. In the past few days, her meticulous care for him was almost to the extent of treating him like a child, which somewhat amused and baffled Lu Ye.

Therefore, he didn't know what Second Senior Sister had encountered to look somewhat angry, even moving a bed over.

"Second Senior Sister, what is this..." It couldn't be that she was planning to take care of him personally, could it?

Second Senior Sister then flashed a sweet smile at Lu Ye, her tone gentle, "It's not about you, rest well."

"Oh."

Second Senior Sister tossed the bed aside, and from somewhere gathered bedding to make it up neatly. Once everything was arranged, she turned and looked toward the door, her tone ice-cold, "Why are you still hiding and not coming in? What's there to be embarrassed about?"

Only then did Lu Ye realize someone else was outside the door. He looked up but could see nothing and glanced puzzledly at Shui Yuan.

Shui Yuan huffed, "If you don't come in, I will have to invite you!"

"Cough!" A light cough came from outside, "You impudent student, to speak to your master like this in the presence of your junior brother?"

As the voice spoke, the figure of a middle-aged man entered, his demeanor authoritative, his hand stroking his beard.

If it was not the sect master, who else could it be?

Lu Ye's eyes lit up with excitement, and he quickly tried to rise, but had barely managed when he nearly fell. The sect master stepped forward briskly to support him, and their eyes met. Lu Ye clearly saw the guilt in the sect master's eyes. The old man's mouth twitched twice, and a thousand words were condensed into one sentence, "You have suffered!"

He had truly not expected that taking Lu Ye as a disciple would trigger so many events. After all, it was the poison left by Righteous Blood Sect. It was unreasonable to expect a disciple who had never even entered the sect gates to bear this burden, almost costing him his life.

During this half year, although he was certain Lu Ye was still alive, lacking suitable manpower, he couldn't conduct a large-scale search for Lu Ye's whereabouts. He had Shui Yuan ask some trusted independent cultivators for help, but their strength wasn't high, and looking for someone in the vast Spirit Stream battlefield was akin to searching for a needle in a haystack.

Chapter 173 - Three Down

The sect master had no clue what Lu Ye had gone through in the Spirit Stream battlefield over the past six months, but Shui Yuan had seen it all while helping him dress his wounds. The boy's body, at the tender age of sixteen or seventeen, was covered with interlacing new and old scars, several of which were extremely fatal.

One could only imagine what kind of tribulations he had suffered on the Spirit Stream battlefield.

To let an innocent and naive youth suffer such hardships was his negligence, the responsibility of the Righteous Blood Sect, so after bringing Lu Ye back to the sect headquarters, he had charged into Yunzhou.

He had to ensure that there would never again be an unfair battle like at Golden Light Peak. He needed those old immortals at Ten Thousand Demons Ridge to understand that as long as he stood, that barrier of the Righteous Blood Sect was still there, and the sect's disciples were not to be insulted without consequence!

For this, he even went so far as to reveal the cultivation he had hidden for decades.

In the room, the sect master gently patted Lu Ye's shoulder, smiling, "It's rare for you to find your way back on your own. Now rest and recover from your injuries."

Lu Ye replied respectfully, "Yes!"

His curiosity surged as he thought to himself, why did the sect master look like he had been hammered, bruised and bloodied?

Suddenly, he began to understand why his Second Senior Sister had moved another bed in.

"Did you come by yourself, or should I help you over?" Shui Yuan suddenly asked.

The sect master stood up straight and smiled casually as if nothing was wrong, "These are just minor scratches, no need for such fuss... Oh..."

"Sect Master!" Lu Ye cried out in alarm, watching as the sect master spewed a mouthful of fresh blood while speaking and turned pale.

With a smile still on his face, the sect master looked at him, "Don't worry, it's just some congested blood, once I vomit it out... Oh..."

Shui Yuan quickly rushed over, propped the sect master up, and laid him on the adjacent bed. After much bustling, she finally stabilized his condition, her eyes reddened with blame, "You old man, always so stubborn with your old limbs. You'll die out there sooner or later, and there will be no one to even retrieve your body."

The sect master was so scolded that he didn't have a comeback, only able to lament in his heart about the lack of propriety and filial piety among his disciples.

Lu Ye watched from the side, heart racing with fear, and suddenly realized that his Second Senior Sister was perhaps not as gentle as he thought...

No sooner had Second Senior Sister finished her flurry of activities, not having a moment to wipe the sweat from her forehead, than a voice shouted from outside, "Old man, Second Senior Sister, I'm back!"

Hearing the voice, Lu Ye responded, "Fourth Senior Brother?"

A moment later, a figure as straight as a sword appeared at the door—it was Li Baxian.

Their eyes met, and Li Baxian grinned at Lu Ye, but swiftly collapsed to the ground, kicking up a cloud of dust.

"Fourth Senior Brother!" Lu Ye exclaimed.

Li Baxian, lying on the ground, raised one hand and gave Lu Ye a thumbs-up, "Don't panic, I'm still good!"

Shui Yuan, who had just settled the sect master, appeared before Li Baxian in a flash, grabbed his collar, and hoisted him up. As she eyed his injuries, her expression changed slightly, "Such severe wounds."

Li Baxian flashed Shui Yuan a brilliant, sunny smile, "Yanh Xing got it worse, I didn't disgrace the Righteous Blood Sect!"

After he spoke, his head tilted to the side, and he passed out.

Shui Yuan then got busy once again...

Two hours later, Shui Yuan, wiping the sweat from her forehead, eyed the three sickbeds in front of her, feeling utterly exhausted.

A moment later, she showed a smile again. The Righteous Blood Sect hadn't been this lively in many years.

That day, Lu Ye spent his time in that strange atmosphere, with three sickbeds arranged in the room, his in the middle, the sect master on the right, and Li Baxian on the left.

In the entire sect, four people were left—three lying down, leaving only Shui Yuan bustling about alone...

Two days later, three large tubs appeared in the room. Steam rose from within the wooden tubs filled with a green medicinal solution, with the sect master, Li Baxian, and Lu Ye each soaking in one, absorbing the medicine's effects while sitting in meditation.

This was a concoction mixed by the Second Senior Sister, very beneficial for healing injuries.

The bandages that had been wrapped around Lu Ye the previous day were taken off, and he noticed that his hair had been significantly shortened. Recalling the last battle, it must have been burnt off by that female cultivator from the Sacred Fire Order. Luckily, he wasn't left bald, otherwise, it would have been embarrassing to meet anyone.

Under the care of Second Senior Sister, his external injuries had mostly healed.

Sharing a room and spending several days together, Lu Ye had come to understand the basic situation of the Righteous Blood Sect through casual conversations with the fourth junior brother and the sect master.

The entire Righteous Blood Sect consisted of only the sect master and Second Senior Sister, young and old, before he arrived; now with him, there were a total of three people.

This was more than just a decline in talent or waning of the sect--no wonder people said that the Righteous Blood Sect was on the brink of obsolescence.

As for his fourth junior brother Li Baxian, although he was once considered a disciple of the Righteous Blood Sect in his youth, he had since transferred to the Loyal Heart Sect. The situation with his third senior brother was similar; he was in another sect, officially no longer a disciple of the Righteous Blood Sect but merely bearing the sect's background.

As for First Senior Sister Weh Ying, Lu Ye had not seen her since waking up. When he asked the fourth junior brother, he replied mysteriously, "First Senior Sister, she's like a divine dragon that shows its head but hides its tail. You'll hardly see her in the future, so don't pay too much attention."

He didn't explain the First Senior Sister's situation in detail to Lu Ye, leaving him confused. He had wanted to personally thank her, after all, it was she who arrived first in the nick of time at Golden Light Peak and protected him.

Why he, as a disciple of the Righteous Blood Sect, was targeted had also been clarified by his fourth junior brother.

Only then did Lu Ye learn that decades ago, the Righteous Blood Sect had an extraordinary individual, their senior brother of this generation, Feng Wujiang!

Under this senior brother's leadership, the Righteous Blood Sect rose rapidly and became a flagship and a banner of the Haotian Alliance. At that time, with the Righteous Blood Sect's call, countless followers emerged, and many Ten Thousand Demons Ridge sects were suppressed by them. Several 1st grade sects even fell several grades, with the Sacred Fire Order being one of them.

Hence, to kill Lu Ye this time, even the Saintess of the Sacred Fire Order was willing to cripple her spiritual orifice.

The limitless glory and praise seemed to have gradually caused that senior brother to lose himself; he became increasingly stubborn and willful. Thirty years ago, in a great battle between two camps, he disregarded advice and led a group of strong fighters to attack a 1st grade sect from Ten Thousand Demons Ridge.

The result was an ambush and, in that battle, Feng Wujiang perished, and the Haotian Alliance suffered heavy losses.

In that battle, nearly all of the Righteous Blood Sect disciples who fought were wiped out.

It was also because of that battle that the Righteous Blood Sect gradually began to decline, and to this day, the once proud banner of the Haotian Alliance was on the verge of being removed. Naturally, the enemies who had been suppressed by the Righteous Blood Sect did not wish to see their lineage continue, which is why such tumult ensued after Lu Ye's identity was revealed.

"So you see, this trouble was caused by that senior brother, and you little junior brother are just bearing the brunt of a feud you shouldn't have to," Li Baxian, with a wine gourd in his mouth, said as he sat in his barrel, bare-chested and leaning back against the edge. "The old man is useless, after senior brother died, he couldn't hold the fort anymore."

"You were only how old at that time? What did you understand?" The voice of the sect master came from the other side. "The Righteous Blood Sect wasn't considered a strong sect to begin with. It was your senior brother who pulled the sect up with his own strength. He was the reason the sect became 1st grade. When he fell, the sect naturally lost its foundation."

Your senior brother... indeed, he was exceptionally talented, just died too young, leaving behind a mess."

"Exceptionally talented?" Li Baxian laughed, "How does he compare to our little junior brother?"

The sect master remained silent. It was difficult to compare; though Feng Wujiang was exceptionally talented, he hadn't achieved something globally shocking at the Level 5 realm. That disciple was a late bloomer, unremarkable before reaching the Cloud River Realm, and then suddenly exhibiting extraordinary talent.

Eventually, he became uncontrollable and at his peak, even earned the honor of Haotian Alliance Hierarchy.

Moments later, the sect master suddenly said, "Yiye, when you walk the Spirit Stream battlefield in the future, be very careful. Although the battle at Golden Light Peak made you famous, it will also make the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge even more wary of you. They won't want to see a second Feng Wujiang rise. If there's a chance, they'll definitely try to eliminate you."

Half a year ago, the sect master had intended to send Lu Ye to another sect for cultivation, but that was definitely no longer possible now. After the battle at Golden Light Peak, Lu Ye had been branded with the Righteous Blood Sect's label, and everyone now knew there was a Lu Yiye in the Righteous Blood Sect.

Lu Ye opened his mouth, wanting to tell the sect master that he wasn't called Yiye, but eventually he didn't bother to correct it and simply responded, "Yes!"

He swore inwardly, Righteousness Sect's Yue Shan, you and I are irreconcilable!

Li Baxian reassured, "But little junior brother, you don't need to worry too much. The old man... um, with the old man around, something like this time won't happen again. Even if Ten Thousand Demons Ridge targets you, it will only be within the rules."

"Within the rules?"

"In short, in the Spirit Stream battlefield, people from the outer circle handle outer circle matters, and people from the inner circle handle inner circle matters. No strong fighter from the Core Circle will come out to kill you again. Otherwise, if everyone does this, not only will the Spirit Stream battlefield be chaotic, but the Nine Provinces will be as well.

Although the Haotian Alliance and Ten Thousand Demons Ridge are at odds, they still operate according to rules. This time, it was mainly because some in Ten Thousand Demons Ridge were desperate and wronged you."

Lu Ye nodded, indicating he understood. This was good news for him. He was currently at Level 5 cultivation and could still mix in the outer circle for a while. Once he reached Level 6-7, he would have to move to the inner circle.

Thump...!

The door was kicked open, and the mist in the room surged.

Second Senior Sister Shui Yuan's icy voice rang out: "Who is drinking wine?"

Li Baxian's movement stiffened as he turned his head to look at Shui Yuan: "It's not... I didn't..."

"Still drinking wine even with such serious injuries, didn't I warn you not to drink during this time? If you like drinking so much, go ahead and drink to your heart's content!" Second Senior Sister quickly approached Li Baxian, rolled up her sleeves, and reached for his head, pushing him directly into the water.

Bubble bubble, bubble bubble...

Lu Ye and the sect master, separated by a barrel, exchanged glances and slowly slipped into the water, leaving only their eyes above the surface.

Shivering with fear!

Chapter 174 Governor

Seven days after returning to the sect, Lu Ye's injuries had healed significantly, which was testament to the second senior sister's excellent medical skills.

Even the condition of his spirit force had improved; the medicinal solutions he had soaked in and consumed daily seemed to have detoxifying effects on the pill poison. Clearly, second senior sister had identified the issue with his spirit force and was treating him accordingly.

What impressed Lu Ye most was that second senior sister could also prepare delicious medicinal meals. Each dish was not only tasty but also seemed to have some body refining effects. During the days of healing, Lu Ye distinctly felt his blood Qi energy growing stronger.

Presently, Righteous Blood Sect only had Lu Ye as a new disciple. Furthermore, due to the residual poison from a grudge of the previous generation, he had suffered greatly. Thus, second senior sister lavished all her love and care on Lu Ye.

Li Baxian, who came to Righteous Blood Sect for free meals and healing, was not so fortunate; he always felt somewhat targeted when it was time to eat.

Although Righteous Blood Sect was now in decline, it had been a 1st grade sect decades ago; a lean camel is bigger than a horse, and there were always some valuable items left in the sect. These items might not be of much use to cultivators with accomplished cultivation but were of great benefit to someone like Lu Ye, whose cultivation was not high.

It was well after dawn at Righteous Peak, inside Soul Pacifying Hall.

Righteous Blood Sect covered a vast territory with over a hundred spirit mountaintops, and Righteous Peak was just one of them. At its peak, every spirit mountaintop was bustling with disciples.

But today, those spirit mountaintops had been abandoned, leaving only the core Righteous Peak.

The sect master and second senior sister usually lived on Righteous Peak.

Soul Pacifying Hall was also located within Righteous Peak. Originally, there was a Soul Pacifying Summit, which housed the soul tablets of disciples who had died since the founding of Righteous Blood Sect.

At this moment, in Soul Pacifying Hall, in front of tens of thousands of soul tablets, Lu Ye was kneeling solemnly with second senior sister Shui Yuan and fourth senior brother Li Baxian standing by, both with solemn expressions.

The sect master placed three sticks of incense in the front incense burner and respectfully bowed before speaking, "Righteous Blood Sect's tenth-generation sect master Thang Yifeng, hereby informs all the ancestors that we have a man from Bingzhou, Lu Ye, whose nature is simple and sincere, resilient in character, warm-hearted, and gifted...

He went on to praise Lu Ye extensively, causing Lu Ye's expression to become somewhat uneasy.

"Today, I accept Lu Ye into our sect and hope that our ancestors will protect his safety and ensure his health."

Turning around to face Lu Ye, the sect master continued with a solemn expression, "Lu Ye, now that I accept you into the sect, from this day forth you are an official disciple of Righteous Blood Sect, sharing in the sect's glory and disgrace. Henceforth, when acting outside, you must not do anything that disgraces our sect. Stay tuned to empire

I hope you..." Here, the sect master paused, gently patted Lu Ye's head, and said, "Grow up safely!"

There would have surely been more general remarks, but now Righteous Blood Sect totalled only three people. Speaking grandly was pointless. Moreover, after the battle at Golden Light Peak, Lu Ye's future situation wouldn't be easy. The sect master had only one wish now.

That Lu Ye could live safely...

"Yes!" Lu Ye respectfully kowtowed.

Although the sect master had already formally accepted Lu Ye as an official disciple of Righteous Blood Sect half a year ago on the journey back to the sect, following a sneak attack and seeking Heaven's Augury's witness, that was just a temporary arrangement. Now that this formal process was complete, Lu Ye truly became an official disciple of Righteous Blood Sect.

His gaze swept over the tens of thousands of soul plaques, as if seeing all the sect's ancestors watching over him.

Slowly rising, Lu Ye finally felt a sense of belonging after having been alone since arriving in this world.

From now on, I am also a disciple of a sect!

"Congratulations, junior brother," Li Baxian said with a smile by the side.

"Fourth senior brother!" Lu Ye respectfully bowed, a gesture of gratitude for Li Baxian's previous desperate protection and a mark of respect to a fellow sect brother.

"Second senior sister!" Lu Ye bowed to Shui Yuan.

Shui Yuan's eyes were slightly red. Unlike Li Baxian, who was just a child and understood little when Righteous Blood Sect fell, Shui Yuan had witnessed how this once massive sect collapsed. This moment made her reminisce about those vibrant youths stepping into the sect for the first time decades ago.

Righteous Blood Sect back then was truly glorious!

She slowly walked up to Lu Ye, grasped his right hand, and took out a luminous big seal. Taking a deep breath in a gentle voice, she said, "Righteous Blood Sect's eleventh-generation disciple, Seal Envoy Shui Yuan, respectfully requests Heaven's Augury to witness, hereby appointing the eleventh-generation disciple Lu Ye as the Governor of Spirit Stream Battlefield, with this seal as proof!"

Having said that, she stamped the big seal on the back of Lu Ye's hand.

In an inexplicable way, Heaven's Augury descended.

Lu Ye's form staggered slightly but soon stabilized; he looked doubtfully at Shui Yuan.

Li Baxian explained from the side, "Each sect's headquarters has its own governor and deputy governor, like me, the Deputy Governor of Loyal Heart Sect. Governors and deputy governors are responsible for maintaining their respective headquarters, and accordingly, they have many privileges.

This isn't easy to explain quickly; I'll make a jade slip for you to go through carefully later, and you'll understand.

He grinned, "Right now, Righteous Blood Sect's eleventh-generation disciples are just you and second senior sister. Second senior sister, a True Lake Realm cultivator, cannot easily enter the Spirit Stream Battlefield, so junior brother... it's up to you to take care of the garrison there."

Shui Yuan said, "There's no need to worry about any residence, this identity is merely to facilitate your entry and exit from the battlefield. After all, cultivation is better carried out in the Spirit Stream battlefield."

Lu Ye became curious, "Hasn't the Righteous Blood Sect's residence in the Spirit Stream battlefield been occupied by the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge people?"

Once his identity as a disciple of the Righteous Blood Sect was exposed, it would surely attract a siege from numerous Ten Thousand Demons Ridge cultivators, rendering the residence untenable.

Li Baxian shook his head and said, "It used to be attacked, but not anymore, because there's no advantage in attacking the Righteous Blood Sect's residence. Who would do something that brings no benefits? Besides, although there are no Righteous Blood Sect disciples in charge there, there's still a fierce creature present, and the external forces generally can't conquer it."

Shui Yuan also said, "The situation at our Righteous Blood Sect's residence is rather complicated. Now, it is a gathering place for many independent cultivators. When you, Little Junior Brother, were lost in the Spirit Stream battlefield, I had entrusted a few people to inquire about your whereabouts, but to no avail.

Those independent cultivators... except for a few trustworthy ones who can be allowed to stay, the rest are up to you to manage, you can even expel them if you want."

Lu Ye nodded. He was currently unaware of both the situation at that residence and his role as the Governor there, so he was not in a hurry to make any decisions. It would not be too late to decide once he had become familiar with everything. Moreover, his Fourth Senior Brother was the Deputy Governor, and he could consult with him if there was anything he did not understand.

"By the way, that beast pet of yours has been sent to the residence by the people of Cangming Mountain, you can go to find it now if you want," he said.

"I will go now." Lu Ye quickly said.

"Come with me," Shui Yuan said, leading the way.

Soon, he brought Lu Ye to the Heaven's Augury Hall.

Every sect has its own Heaven's Augury Hall, one at the sect headquarters and one at the Spirit Stream battlefield, housing the Heaven's Augury Pillar. This is one of the most core places of each sect, concerning whether the sect disciples can safely enter and exit the Spirit Stream battlefield. If the Heaven's Augury Hall was captured, the consequences would be unimaginable.

Guided by Shui Yuan, Lu Ye reached out and pressed his hand on the Heaven's Augury Pillar.

Just like the first time he entered the Spirit Stream battlefield, when the battlefield marking on the back of his hand resonated with the Heaven's Augury Pillar, the whole world quickly retreated from him, and everything around him became blurry.

"Remember to ask for a pet contract from the other side of the Heaven's Augury Pillar," Shui Yuan's reminder reached his ears.

In the blink of an eye, the surrounding blur and distortion solidified again.

When he regained his senses, he was standing in a vast and desolate hall, entirely empty of people.

Looking at the Heaven's Augury Pillar before him, Lu Ye felt a close connection between it and his battlefield marking. This connection was partly due to his role as a disciple of the Righteous Blood Sect and partly because he was the Governor here.

He also felt that there were some marvelous things hidden inside the Heaven's Augury Pillar, he could sense those marvels, and even adjust them to some extent through his role as Governor!

As for how to adjust it, he was not quite sure; that would require exploration.

He did not act rashly. Right now, he understood too little about this area of knowledge; it would be better to learn more from his Fourth Senior Brother first.

The pressing matter was to bring Amber over. Yiyi must be very worried about him.

He stepped out of the hall. The bright sunshine shone down, and Lu Ye looked up and realized an interesting fact: the time in the Spirit Stream battlefield seemed to be the same as in the outside world, which also showed the same time.

Withdrawing his gaze, he suddenly noticed several eyes looking towards him. Lu Ye immediately reached towards his waist, but touched nothing.

He then remembered that his longsword had completely shattered.

Looking around, he saw several cultivators, some with expressions of surprise or astonishment; their cultivation levels were not high, only around Level 3-4.

It seemed these must be the independent cultivators mentioned by Second Senior Sister.

Though no Righteous Blood Sect disciples had lived at the residence in the Spirit Stream battlefield for decades, while the residence still existed, it had become a gathering place for many independent cultivators, effectively forming a sizable marketplace.

These independent cultivators, however, had some self-awareness and did not use the Heaven's Augury Hall as their gathering point, choosing instead to stay towards the outskirts of the residence.

That way, even if Righteous Blood Sect disciples entered this place one day, they would not offend the Righteous Blood Sect.

The independent cultivators, being unsupported and leading meager lives, had developed a tactful and versatile nature due to their own frailties.

Usually, independent cultivators seek only survival and would not casually offend cultivators from established sects.

The Righteous Blood Sect's Heaven's Augury Hall had been abandoned and unused for decades. The sudden emergence of Lu Ye from inside naturally astonished those independent cultivators.

A familiar tiger's roar sounded from one direction; Lu Ye immediately turned and rushed in that direction, quickly finding himself in a plaza where he saw the snow-white Amber.

Chapter 175 - Pet Contract

However, at this moment, Amber seemed to be in a bit of a pickle; a giant grey eagle stood before it, looking down as if scrutinizing its prey, seemingly contemplating whether this little trinket... could be eaten!

Although Amber's figure was quite robust, compared to the grey eagle in front of it, it was practically a dwarf; in comparison to these two ferocious beasts, Amber was barely the size of the other's talon.

This gave an idea of the size of the grey eagle.

Lu Ye remembered something Li Baxian had mentioned earlier: although there were no disciples overseeing the general affairs of the Righteous Blood Sect, there was still a ferocious creature that the outer circle of sects generally could not defeat.

It seemed that this grey eagle was the ferocious creature that Fourth Senior Brother spoke of!

Before coming in, neither Second Senior Sister nor Fourth Senior Brother had particularly mentioned the details about this creature, so it seemed that this grey eagle should not pose too much of a threat to him.

Thinking this, Lu Ye hurriedly walked forward.

The grey eagle seemed to notice, turning its head to look at Lu Ye, its gaze even more scrutinizing.

Amber also saw Lu Ye and immediately positioned itself between Lu Ye and the grey eagle, while beside it stood a cultivator with a headache, watching this scene unfold.

"Is it a brother from Cangming Mountain?" Lu Ye asked as he approached, noting that the newcomer was not weak, and had to be at least a Level 9 cultivator who had practiced an Earth-class technique to have brought Amber all the way here.

"Precisely," the man nodded slightly.

"I have seen Brother!" Lu Ye greeted with a bow, "Thank you for escorting us all the way, I am deeply grateful."

The man smiled and said, "It was on my way." He sized up Lu Ye and exclaimed, "Junior Brother Yiye indeed has an exceptional air, the battle at Golden Light Peak has made many of us long to witness it."

Lu Ye responded modestly, "Brother is too kind."

Now, it seemed he would indeed have to travel the Nine Provinces bearing the moniker of Yiye.

The two exchanged a few more pleasantries before the Cangming Mountain cultivator, who had urgent matters to attend to, took his leave, and Lu Ye expressed his gratitude once again.

After watching him leave, Lu Ye looked up at the grey eagle that had remained by his side; the eagle too looked down at him, then bent down and gently tapped Lu Ye's head with its beak twice. Its intentions unclear, it spread its wings and flew away, landing soon after on a peak not far away.

Only after the grey eagle left did Amber relax, coming up to Lu Ye's side and rubbing its big head against him.

"Let's go, I'll take you to the Righteous Blood Sect!" Lu Ye patted Amber's head, speaking to both Amber and Yiyi.

Ignoring the astonished gazes of the independent cultivators along the way, Lu Ye headed straight back to Heaven's Augury Hall and fiddled around in front of the Heaven's Augury Pillar for a while.

Before coming here, Second Senior Sister had told him to request a pet contract from this place, but he didn't know how to get one.

After thinking for a moment, he said, "Disciple Lu Ye of the Righteous Blood Sect respectfully requests a pet contract."

A warm sensation came from the battlefield marking, and new information he had never contacted before entered his mind. It seemed as if a primitive piece of beast hide had been added to his consciousness.

He quickly understood that this was the pet contract, which could form an inseparable link between a cultivator and their beast pet. With this, the beast pet could follow the cultivator in and out of the Spirit Stream battlefield.

Taking Amber as an example, it was a demon beast born within the Spirit Stream battlefield, and without this pet contract, it would not be capable of leaving the Spirit Stream battlefield to travel to the Nine Provinces.

This was somewhat miraculous, reminding Lu Ye of the Heaven's Augury Pact that Li Baxian had requested earlier.

Whether it was the Heaven's Augury Pact or the pet contract, such things couldn't just appear out of thin air. Where did these things come from? Why could they be obtained simply by respectfully requesting from Heaven's Augury? And what exactly was Heaven's Augury?

Lu Ye had some questions in his mind, but he didn't delve deeper. He felt that these matters certainly contained great secrets, still too far out of his reach.

Requesting a pet contract came with a cost, which was a hundred points of merit, as the information he just received had explained.

He checked the information in his battlefield marking.

Name: Lu Ye.

Identity: Disciple of the Righteous Blood Sect.

Cultivation: 64th orifice.

Location: Spirit Stream battlefield.

Merit: 943 points.

His cultivation hadn't changed much; he had opened up to the 63rd orifice after the battle with Dong Shuye, and in the days that followed, he had only opened up one more orifice. The main reason was that he had been constantly on the run and fighting during this period, leaving no spare spirit force for orifice-opening.

The change in merit was significant, though; he remembered that after killing Dong Shuye, his merit was not even four hundred points, but now it was close to a thousand.

The majority of it came from the battle at Golden Light Peak, where he had fought forty-three battles in a row, killing at least thirty-something enemies. Except for the first one who was at Level 5, the others were all Level 6, each adding twelve merit points to his count, and the last battle awarded twenty-one points.

Just from the Golden Light Peak alone, the merits he had obtained were almost around three hundred and sixty or seventy, with the excess coming from killing enemies along the way.

A hundred points of merit was not a small amount, and though Lu Ye's merits were fast approaching a thousand, earning these merits had not been easy; they represented the battle achievements he had made along the way.

However, Yiyi and Amber had known him since they were insignificant and had accompanied him all along. Lu Ye owed many of his escapes from death to Amber's swift pace, so no matter what, he was intent on securing this beast pet contract. Even if it took all his merits, Lu Ye wouldn't frown upon the decision.

As his thoughts stirred, a milky white vortex appeared in front of the Heaven's Augury Pillar, slowly rotating, and at the same time, Lu Ye's merits decreased by a hundred points.

He reached into the vortex and took out an ancient-looking piece of beast hide.

Based on the information he had obtained before, he bit his fingertip, pressed a fingerprint onto the beast hide, activated his spirit force, and sent the beast hide flying towards a befuddled Amber.

The beast hide burst into flames, transforming into a stream of light that enveloped Amber and merged into its body. Although Amber did not understand the reason, it remained still, as the light did not harm it in any way.

After a moment, the light extinguished, and Lu Ye could distinctly feel an added layer of connection between himself and Amber. This connection not only allowed them to sense each other's presence within a not too distant range, but Lu Ye also seemed to have a clearer perception of Amber's thoughts.

This pet contract did possess some mysteries.

Without delay, Lu Ye returned to the Righteous Blood Sect headquarters with Amber.

After he left, several heads peeked out from the entrance of the Heaven's Augury Hall, looking around. Seeing that there was no one inside, they confirmed that the one from the Righteous Blood Sect, Lu Yiye, had actually arrived at the stronghold!

The news spread rapidly, worrying many independent cultivators...

Inside the Heaven's Augury Hall of the sect headquarters, the Second Senior Sister and the fourth brother were still waiting. Seeing Lu Ye and Amber appear, Li Baxian said with a smile, "Did you meet Little Gray?"

"Little Gray?" Lu Ye was taken aback and quickly realized that Li Baxian was referring to the giant grey hawk, causing the corner of his eye to twitch, "Who named it?"

Such a majestic and impressive ferocious beast had been given such a casual name...

"That beast pet was tamed by the eldest senior brother," Li Baxian explained with a smile. "After the eldest senior brother left the Spirit Stream battlefield, it has been staying in the stronghold all this time. That's why the Second Senior Sister told you not to worry about the stronghold."

Right now, there's not much worth in the Righteous Blood Sect's stronghold, and with Little Gray as the governor, the sects from the outer circle wouldn't dare to offend casually."

As he spoke, he tossed a jade slip to Lu Ye, "I've written everything about the stronghold inside. Take a look when you have time. Being the governor does have great benefits for cultivation, especially since your current cultivation level is still low."

Lu Ye caught the jade slip and nodded slightly. Then he remembered something and patted Amber's head, "Come and greet my Second Senior Sister and fourth brother."

Shui Yuan and Li Baxian looked at Amber curiously, wondering how it would greet them.

Soon, their expressions turned to one of surprise.

Yiyi's figure slowly floated out, somewhat shy, and spoke softly, "I've seen the Second Senior Sister, seen the fourth brother!" She didn't know how to address Shui Yuan and Li Baxian, so she followed Lu Ye's lead.

During the battle at the Golden Light Peak, Yiyi had not shown herself, mainly because her appearance wouldn't have been of much use, and as a Spiritual Body, it wasn't convenient for her to be seen by others.

But here, it didn't matter, since both the Second Senior Sister and fourth brother were their own people.

Li Baxian stared at her for a while before turning to Lu Ye, raising an eyebrow and saying, "Not bad, Junior Brother!" with an expression that said all men understood.

Lu Ye explained, "Yiyi is Amber's accompanying minion spirit. Along the way, she and Amber have helped me a lot."

"Minion spirit?" Shui Yuan asked curiously. Even with her experience, she hadn't seen an existence like Yiyi. She stepped forward, curiously pinched Yiyi's arm, and was surprised to find it felt no different from pinching a real body. However, she could tell that Yiyi indeed was a Spiritual Body capable of shifting between corporeal and incorporeal forms.

Shui Yuan and Li Baxian's scrutiny made Yiyi uneasy, and she looked at them for help.

Shui Yuan patted her head, "Since you're Junior Brother Ye's companion, you're a member of the Righteous Blood Sect. From now on, consider this place your home."

Her words seemed to carry immense comforting power; Yiyi looked at her intently, her eyes slowly reddened, and then she nodded vigorously.

I also have a home from now on! She thought back to when she decided to follow Lu Ye out of Qingyun Mountain and felt full of gratitude.

Li Baxian winked at Lu Ye, indicating that he was about to walk away.

Lu Ye stepped forward to follow him.

As they exited the Heaven's Augury Hall, Li Baxian spoke, "Originally, after you joined the sect, an instructor would have been assigned to guide your cultivation, especially since your current Level 5 realm cultivation should determine your future faction choice. But as you've seen, the state of the Righteous Blood Sect is such that I fear no one can teach you much.

The old man is certainly strong, but he hasn't taught anyone for many years, and his rigid personality doesn't suit this role."

Suddenly, a stone flew out of nowhere, striking Li Baxian's forehead with lightning speed.

Visibly, a large bump swelled up on Li Baxian's head. As if nothing had happened, he turned around, his forehead sporting the bump, and looked at Lu Ye, "Fortunately, your self-cultivation along the way has been quite good. However, the most urgent priority now is to determine your faction. Have you given it careful thought?"

"Combat cultivator!" Lu Ye stared at the prominent bump on Li Baxian's head and decisively gave his answer.

Chapter 176 - Heaven's Augury Treasure Vault

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On his journey here, he had fought every step of the way with his blade; his own combat style was enough to define his future faction.

Li Baxian nodded, "Combat cultivators form a large faction, among which sword cultivators are held in the highest esteem. It is said that the sword is the king of all weapons and the killing power of sword cultivators is the strongest among combat cultivators. Since you want to become a combat cultivator, have you considered practicing the sword?"

"My senior brother uses a blade."

"I know, but the blade you used before, I've seen it; it's almost like a sword. If you're willing to practice the sword, I can teach you and save you from taking many detours."

After a moment of serious thought, Lu Ye slowly shook his head: "I don't quite get along with swords; I've used one before, but no matter what, it didn't feel right in my hand."

Li Baxian persisted earnestly, "These things can be gradually adapted to. You'll get used to it as you practice."

Lu Ye insisted, "There's no need, Fourth Senior Brother, I'm still more comfortable with a blade."

Li Baxian's eye twitched, his persuasion failed... He sighed and said, "In that case, go and prepare a suitable weapon for yourself. Starting tomorrow, I will teach you some things, some very practical things!"

The corner of his mouth slowly curled up, and Lu Ye suddenly had a feeling that things were not going to be good.

The long blade he had originally was completely shattered on Golden Light Peak, but fortunately, it was just a low-grade spirit artifact, so its breaking was not too heart-rending.

Finding a suitable weapon now wasn't easy. He had killed many people on Golden Light Peak, collecting quite a number of storage sacks. In the beginning, he would claim these storage sacks for himself, and no one from Ten Thousand Demons Ridge stopped him.

Later, when Second Senior Sister saw he was too exhausted, she would take care of them after each battle, and no one dared to stop her.

A few days ago, Second Senior Sister gave him the spoils of war; the restrictions on those storage sacks had been opened. However, those guys didn't have much that was good, and Lu Ye got mostly Spirit Stones, elixir pills, and Spirit Talismans from them.

Seeing Lu Ye's dilemma, Li Baxian gave him advice: "Take a look at the jade slip I gave you. You'll know what to do."

"Oh."

Lu Ye then returned to his residence, took out the jade slip, and examined it carefully. The jade slip contained a lot of information, most suitable for someone like Lu Ye who only had a superficial understanding of the cultivation world. It seemed that Fourth Senior Brother had already taken this into account.

The more Lu Ye examined it, the more he felt the mystical wonders of what was called Heaven's Augury.

One could say that although he had been mixing in the Spirit Stream battlefield for half a year, his understanding of the world was only the tip of an iceberg.

Two hours later, he put down the jade slip, slowly digesting the various information in his mind.

After a while, he got up and went to the Heaven's Augury Hall, and entered the Spirit Stream battlefield through the Heaven's Augury Pillar.

When he reappeared, he was inside the Righteous Blood Sect's Heaven's Augury Hall.

Activating his battlefield marking to connect with the Heaven's Augury Pillar in front of him, as taught by his Fourth Senior Brother's jade slip, he silently mouthed, "Low-grade spirit artifact!"

As he spoke, a vortex immediately appeared before him, emitting an irresistible force. Before Lu Ye could react, he was sucked into it.

When he regained his senses, he was standing in an immensely spacious hall, one lined with row upon row of weapon racks that seemed endless; any kind of weapon one could think of was there, and each one was a spirit artifact.

This was Lu Ye's first experience of such an event, and it intrigued him. He sensed quietly for a moment and discovered that his body was still in the Righteous Blood Sect's Heaven's Augury Hall, but his consciousness had entered this place.

The Heaven's Augury treasure vault was a mystical place mentioned in the jade slip by Fourth Senior Brother.

In the Nine Provinces, in the Spirit Stream battlefield, any cultivator with merit could trade with Heaven's Augury. The deal Li Baxian struck to get the Heaven's Augury Pact was a trade, and the pet contract Lu Ye got before was also a trade.

So, if one wanted to buy something, trading with Heaven's Augury was the most convenient, because it had everything one could need. The only downside was that trading with Heaven's Augury could only be done with merit.

This was different from trading with the Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union, where one could use Spirit Stones. However, trading directly with Heaven's Augury itself was the quickest because as long as there was enough merit, one could buy any unclaimed treasure in the world.

Lu Ye wanted to find a suitable long blade in the short term; no doubt, trading here with Heaven's Augury was the best choice.

What exactly the Heaven's Augury treasure vault is, nobody knows. Just like how cultivators from the Nine Provinces have never found the exact location of the Spirit Stream battlefield, even if someone wanted to target the treasures within the vault, they would not be able to carry it out.

What is known, however, is that there are some connections between the Heaven's Augury treasure vault and the Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union, as there have been instances where treasures appearing in the treasure vault have been sold by the mercantile union, and items purchased by the mercantile union have appeared within the treasure vault.

Lu Ye was here just for a long blade and had no interest in exploring these secrets.

But facing the seemingly endless rows of weapon racks, he started to feel a headache; sometimes having too many options could be overwhelming.

So he said aloud, "Long blade!"

The surroundings slightly distorted for a moment, and the entire treasure vault abruptly shrunk. Though it still looked vast, at least now he could see the end.

The spirit artifacts displayed on the racks were, as Lu Ye had requested, all long blades in style.

...

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There were many long knives similar to the one he had before.

He casually picked one up and activated his spirit force to inspect it, only to find that this item was not much better than the long knife he had previously used; he put it down and picked up another to inspect, yet the result was the same.

He thought for a moment and then said, "7th Dao restrictions..." and immediately added, "Focus on reinforcing the blade!"

The quality of a Spiritual Artifact is judged firstly by the materials used in its creation and secondly by the number of restrictions branded within it. 7th Dao restrictions was the limit for a low-grade spirit artifact; any more than that would qualify it as a mid-grade spirit artifact. This was also the information his Fourth Senior Brother had told him through the jade slip.

Spiritual Artifacts are not necessarily better for being of higher quality since it also depends on who uses them. Restrictions need to be activated by spirit force, and the more there are, the greater the consumption when activated. If one's cultivation is too low, even holding a top-grade spirit artifact, they would not be able to activate its restrictions.

With Lu Ye's current Level 5 realm cultivation, a low-grade spirit artifact with 7th Dao restrictions was already sufficient for him to use for a very long time.

As for the focus on reinforcing the blade, it was naturally because he did not need the Spiritual Artifact to be overly sharp; the Sharpness spirit runes could address that need.

The array of Spiritual Artifacts in the Heaven's Augury treasure vault changed again, this time with far fewer appearing, leaving only about ten rows.

Lu Ye began to move among them, inspecting each one.

Soon, he found a suitable long knife. This Spiritual Artifact long knife was almost the same as the one he used before, but it was much heavier. However, for Lu Ye, this was undoubtedly more to his liking since his strength was now much greater than when he first left Qingyun Mountain.

Upon inspecting the interior of the long knife, there were 7th Dao spirit runes branded within it, interconnected in a marvelous way, and of those, seven were for reinforcing the blade while two were for enhancing the lethality of the Spiritual Artifact. These two spirit runes had a high degree of similarity to his Sharpness.

Spirit runes can be connected like this? Lu Ye was puzzled.

After all, his understanding of spirit runes was limited to those he had received from the Talent Tree; he could freely deploy those three runes, but he was clueless about all others.

Suppressing the impulse to investigate further, Lu Ye was undoubtedly very satisfied with this long knife.

To other cultivators, the lethality of this Spiritual Artifact might not be strong enough, but for Lu Ye, this was not a concern. With the enhancement of a Sharpness spirit rune, he could cut through anything.

The price was also marked, glowing faintly on the blade with a few numbers.

One hundred and thirty-eight!

In other words, if Lu Ye chose to take this long knife out of the Heaven's Augury treasure vault, then one hundred and thirty-eight points of merit would be deducted.

He did not know if this price was expensive or cheap, but it was certainly not cheap compared to the cost of a pet contract.

Without looking any further, the gap between low-grade spirit artifacts was not significant, and finding such a knife was already quite good. Lu Ye's surroundings suddenly collapsed.

When he came to his senses, he was already standing within the Heaven's Augury Hall.

He felt a slight weariness of the mind...

This was the price to pay for communicating with the Heaven's Augury treasure vault; the longer one stayed inside searching for items, the more fatigued their mind would become.

He had originally wanted to find another item in the Heaven's Augury treasure vault, but now he had no choice but to give up.

Looking down, his hand held the long knife he had purchased for one hundred and thirty-eight merit points. Drawing the knife from its sheath, the blade light did not feel particularly sharp; instead, it felt substantial.

Only then did he notice the two small characters engraved on the handle; after scrutinizing them, he recognized the words "Boulder Mountain."

In other words, this was a named blade, although he did not know who had crafted it.

He swung it casually a few times and found it handled the same as when he had tried it in the Heaven's Augury treasure vault, even more comfortably, in fact.

After sheathing the knife, he walked towards the outside of the Heaven's Augury Hall. According to his Fourth Senior Brother's instructions in the jade slip, he had to go to another place within his sect's territory.

Not long after he left, a young-looking cultivator hurried over. He straightened his appearance outside of the Heaven's Augury Hall before stepping inside, and upon looking around, Lu Ye was nowhere to be seen, leaving him puzzled. He turned to another cultivator that had followed him and asked, "Didn't they say Lu Ye came here?"

"I had just seen him here." The follower explained.

"Did he go back again?" The young man was somewhat annoyed. He had rushed over upon receiving the news of Lu Ye's appearance, only to find he was still a step late.

After a moment's thought, he instructed the follower, "You stay here and watch. When he comes again, notify me immediately and, if possible, ask him to wait here for a while."

The man agreed promptly.

At this moment, Lu Ye had already arrived at another location, an array of small houses that made up a complex. This place was considered a training room for Righteous Blood Sect disciples, where idle disciples could engage in closed-door cultivation. Every sect's territory had such facilities, all tucked away in secluded areas and not unique to the Righteous Blood Sect alone.

However, since the Righteous Blood Sect had not taken in any disciples for decades, the area was overgrown with weeds and lay in desolation.

Chapter 177 - 175 Garrison

Having spent some time cleaning up the weeds near the training room, Lu Ye found an acceptable room and pushed the door open to enter.

Despite this place being desolate and unattended, it was a spot that the Righteous Blood Sect had spent a great deal of money to construct back in the day, since it was critical to the disciples' cultivation and could not be neglected. Thus, every training room here was enveloped by a Formation that could only be accessed by disciples of the Righteous Blood Sect.

However, given that the Formations had not been used for a very long time, they had long stopped functioning.

Looking around, the room wasn't big and lacked any superfluous decorations, only a trace of an Array could be seen on the ground.

That was a Spirit Gathering Array designed to gather Spiritual Energy from all directions and increase efficiency in cultivation.

Furthermore, there were eight slots surrounding the Spirit Gathering Array where, if Spirit Stones were placed, the intensity of the Spiritual Energy within the room could be further enhanced.

The Spiritual Energy in every sect's territory was denser than in the wild, for instance, at the Righteous Blood Sect's territory, the Spiritual Energy was about ten percent richer than outside.

It wasn't a significant increase, as this was just the most fundamental enhancement. As long as the Heaven's Augury Pillar was functioning, its coverage area would benefit from this boost.

This was the reason why independent cultivators would gather at the territory of the Righteous Blood Sect, where the Spiritual Energy was more concentrated.

However, if a sect was destroyed, those unclaimed Heaven's Augury Pillars lost this effect, like the one at Mount Ying where Lu Ye had stayed before, where the Spiritual Energy was no different from the wilderness.

The ten percent boost was just the beginning. With enough merit, one could purchase enhancements from Heaven's Augury, which harnessed the power of Heaven's Augury to make the Spiritual Energy in the territory even denser.

The core circle's top powers all had territories where the Spiritual Energy was several times or even tens of times denser than the wilderness. Cultivating in such environments would undoubtedly be vastly more efficient.

The Heaven's Augury Pillar of the Righteous Blood Sect didn't have any enhancements applied and only performed its primary function.

Fortunately, there was also the Spirit Gathering Array in the training room.

This was precisely why Second Senior Sister had mentioned that it was better to cultivate within the territory.

The Spirit Gathering Array beneath Lu Ye's feet wasn't functioning since it had long lost its energy supply. He didn't hurry to activate the Formation but instead inspected the pattern of the Spirit Gathering Array.

Half a Shichen later, he concluded that the pattern of the Spirit Gathering Array had an eighty percent similarity to his own Spirit Energy Gathering Spirit Runes. They could be considered to come from the same source; in fact, his Spirit Energy Gathering Spirit Runes were like a miniature version of the Spirit Gathering Array.

Retrieving eight Spirit Stones, Lu Ye placed them into the eight slots of the Spirit Gathering Array. Moving to the center of the Formation, he pressed his hand down and stimulated his spirit force.

As his own spirit force continued to drain, the Array in the room began to operate, and Lu Ye could distinctly feel the Spiritual Energy surging towards him from all around.

In just a short moment, the Spiritual Energy inside the room became denser than outside.

It was not only due to the Spirit Gathering Array aggregating the Spiritual Energy of nature but also because of the energy from the Spirit Stones placed in the slots being activated.

There was a limit to this enhancement, however. Lu Ye sensed that the enrichment of the Spiritual Energy within the room peaked at around twenty percent and then stopped increasing. Even if the Spirit Gathering Array gathered more nature's Spiritual Energy, the excess would seep away if not absorbed.

After some thought, Lu Ye placed his hand against a wall and, with a significant consumption of his spirit force, he constructed a massive Spirit Energy Gathering Spirit Rune.

The flow of Spiritual Energy grew even stronger.

When he had first acquired the Spirit Energy Gathering Spirit Runes, he'd considered this possibility: if the runes were large enough, they should have a noticeable effect, which he now had the chance to verify.

Moreover, the Spirit Energy Gathering Spirit Runes would continuously absorb nature's Spiritual Energy to replenish themselves. As long as they weren't intentionally damaged, they could maintain this state indefinitely, unlike the Spirit Gathering Array which relied on the power of the Spirit Stones to function.

It would activate the spirit force within the stones during its consumption, allowing a cultivator to absorb the released spirit force.

Sensing his own condition, he found that his spirit force had greatly depleted since he had never constructed a Spirit Gathering Array so large before. However, he could still set up one more.

Shortly after, a second Spirit Energy Gathering Spirit Rune appeared on another wall. Instantly, Lu Ye felt almost emptied.

But the effort was worthwhile, as the current of Spiritual Energy intensified further.

Now, this small training room contained a functioning Spirit Gathering Array and two Spirit Energy Gathering Spirit Runes. Lu Ye was eager to discover what effects cultivating in such an environment would yield.

He took out a meditation cushion from his storage sack, dropped it on the ground, sat down cross-legged, and began to construct funnel-like structures within his spiritual orifice.

After the time it took for one stick of incense to burn, his sixty-four spiritual orifices had all been enhanced with the Spirit Energy Gathering Spirit Runes.

Suddenly, Lu Ye felt the surrounding spirit force madly rushing into his body, transforming into his own spirit force through the circulation of his Cultivation Technique.

His heavily depleted body began to recover swiftly.

Six hours later, Lu Ye stood up and constructed yet another large Spirit Energy Gathering Spirit Rune on the third wall of the training room.

The effect of Gathering Spirit increased once more!

He gauged the changes in his own spirit force.

He eventually arrived at an astonishing conclusion: cultivating in such an environment for one day and night was roughly equivalent to the effect of refining five elixir pills!

...

He discovered the wonderful use of Spirit Energy Gathering Spirit Runes at his 29th orifice. At that time, he had tried to embellish all his 29 orifices with those runes, and ultimately concluded that a day and a night of cultivation was nearly equivalent to refining a Spirit-Nurturing Pill.

Now that he had opened his 64th orifice, which was more than double the number of his 29, and the cultivation environment had drastically changed, these were the reasons for the significant improvement in the results of his cultivation.

After reaching the Spirit Stream Level 5 realm, each additional orifice required the consumption of roughly twenty or more elixir pills. In other words, even without consuming elixir pills, cultivating in this environment would only need four or five days to open an orifice.

If he could consume elixir pills, the efficiency would undoubtedly be even faster.

The spiritual energy at the Righteous Blood Sect's station was only ten percent denser than in the wilderness, with not a single blessing upon the Heaven's Augury Pillar. What if he could acquire more blessings for the pillar, to make the spiritual energy at the station one, two, or even five to ten times denser than the wilderness?

Just the thought of it filled Lu Ye with longing excitement!

He needed to quickly find a way to restore the Talent Tree's ability to burn away pill poison. Additionally, he had to find a way to put more blessings on the Heaven's Augury Pillar!

For the former, he planned to search the Heaven's Augury treasure vault, confident he would find something there. As for the latter, he had no clues, so he would have to consult his Fourth Senior Brother. The jade slip his Fourth Senior Brother had given him did not mention these things.

Having fully recovered the consumed spirit force, Lu Ye was currently attempting to break through to the 65th orifice.

But before he could break through the barrier of the 65th orifice, a message came through his battlefield marking. Looking down to check, it was from his Second Senior Sister.

"Your Fourth Senior Brother is looking for you!"

Under normal circumstances, there is no way to send messages between the Nine Provinces and the Spirit Stream battlefield, since they are not in the same space. However, since Lu Ye is the Governor of the Righteous Blood Sect and Second Senior Sister is the Seal Envoy of the sect, they are able to communicate with each other.

Only then did Lu Ye remember, he had been so immersed in his cultivation that he had completely forgotten the appointment with his Fourth Senior Brother.

He had no idea what his Fourth Senior Brother wanted to teach him.

After sending a message back, Lu Ye ended his cultivation.

The eight Spirit Stones had been almost completely consumed, but Lu Ye didn't bother with them. He walked out of the room, securely closed the door, and then used his authority as a Governor to activate the nearby Formation.

This place would be his exclusive cultivation spot from now on, off-limits to anyone else.

Strolling to the Heaven's Augury Hall, he saw someone sitting outside the entrance, passing the time in meditation.

The sound of footsteps startled the person, who hurriedly opened his eyes. Upon seeing Lu Ye, he showed a delighted expression, "Is this Fellow Daoist Lu Ye from the Righteous Blood Sect?"

"It is," Lu Ye responded, sizing up the stranger. He was a Level 3 cultivator. Frowning, he asked, "Is something the matter?"

The man hurriedly said, "Senior Brother Chen Yu is looking for Fellow Daoist Lu. He wishes to discuss matters regarding the marketplace with you."

"The marketplace?" Lu Ye was puzzled, wondering what business he had with the marketplace. But then it quickly dawned on him; the marketplace here had been maintained for many years and attracted a large number of independent cultivators. It only lacked the presence of the Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union.

Since his arrival, the situation for those cultivators had become somewhat awkward—they were reluctant to leave, but staying didn't seem right either. After all, this was the Righteous Blood Sect's territory. Previously, no one bothered them, but now they were under jurisdiction.

"Please wait a moment, Fellow Daoist Lu. I will have Senior Brother Chen come over," the man said, preparing to send a message.

"I have some other matters to attend to. We can discuss this later," Lu Ye said, anxious to return to the sect and not eager to wait around here. Moreover, he didn't know how to handle such matters and would rather seek advice from his seniors first.

"When will Fellow Daoist Lu return? I will inform Senior Brother Chen to wait for you here," the man asked diligently.

"Tomorrow," Lu Ye replied before using the Heaven's Augury Pillar to go back to the sect headquarters.

Exiting the Heaven's Augury Hall, following the aroma, he came to the dining hall, where the table was full of delicious food. The mere smell was enough to make one's mouth water.

These were not just ordinary dishes, they were medicinal cuisines specially prepared by Second Senior Sister, each with a specific effect.

Lu Ye was surprised to find that today's spread was exceptionally plentiful.

Li Baxian was already seated, gobbling down food one moment and guzzling wine the next. Seeing Lu Ye's return, he called out warmly, "Little Junior Brother, take a seat and try the fish I caught."

Lu Ye sat down and picked up a piece of fish with his chopsticks, tasting a bite. It was unexpectedly delicious.

Li Baxian laughed, "The Blood Red Trouts from Moon Lake were previously used for the disciples' Body Refining, with a fixed allocation for each. But now, well, you can eat as much as you like. I tell you, if one day we're short on Spirit Stones, just catch a few from Moon Lake, selling each for dozens or even hundreds of Spirit Stones is not a problem."

"Cough cough cough..." Lu Ye suddenly choked, not expecting the fish to be so valuable.

"Also, Little Gray loves these fish. When you go back to your station, bring a couple for it. After all these years without anyone caring, it's quite pitiable," Li Baxian continued.

"Understood," Lu Ye nodded.

"Do you drink, Little Junior Brother?" Li Baxian was halfway through his question when he felt a sharp gaze from across the table and quickly changed his tone, "You're still young, so best not drink. And be cautious when you're out and about. Don't get drunk by those licentious women and tricked into... various positions."

Lu Ye: ...

Chapter 178 - 176 Guidance from Li Baxian

In front of the main hall of Righteous Peak, under the blood-colored flame flag, Lu Ye's hand was on the hilt of his saber, his expression solemn as he looked ahead.

Opposite him, Li Baxian casually held a sword in his hand and smiled, "Half a year has passed and your cultivation has reached Level 5. Your strength has improved too quickly. Sometimes, advancing too quickly isn't a good thing, because others have more time to refine their combat skills, but you don't. This is especially true for combat cultivators; combat skills are very important.

At Golden Light Peak, you fought your enemies with more bravery than skill. That is your biggest weakness."

In half a year, he had grown from a junior cultivator who had just opened his orifices to a cultivator with Level 5 cultivation, and had even mastered a defense spirit rune that could be activated at will. This news had already spread and was no secret.

Lu Ye had originally thought that the sect master would inquire about this, and he had prepared to tell the truth if asked.

But in fact, since he had awoken, the sect master never asked about it. He just cautioned Lu Ye a few days ago when they were all recuperating in bed from their injuries. Now that many people knew he had encountered some fortune in the Spirit Stream battlefield, possibly some might target him for it, thus he should be more vigilant.

Of course, the likelihood of such a thing happening was not high, because, according to the sect master, there were many fortunes in the Spirit Stream battlefield. Lu Ye's rapid growth to Level 5 cultivation seemed fast, but there had been even faster individuals in history. One mortal had once encountered a fortune in the Spirit Stream battlefield and reached Level 9 in just one year.

The Spirit Stream battlefield was filled with wondrous places, containing all sorts of marvels rarely seen by ordinary people, yet easily obtained by those with destiny.

Almost every few years, there would be someone who encountered such a fortune, and the cultivation world had grown accustomed to it. Most were simply envious of others' luck.

For those who truly aspire to greatness, instead of envying others' good luck, it's better to work hard and strive for self-improvement.

"The old man is a magic cultivator, Second Senior Sister is a healing cultivator, and their strength is so great they haven't taught anyone in many years. They can't teach you much, but as your fourth senior brother, I will instruct you well." Li Baxian's smile was hearty. To him, teaching Lu Ye seemed a pleasant task, "With your Level 5 cultivation, I will suppress my cultivation to Level 5.

I won't take advantage of you, so come at me with all you've got!"

As he spoke, he took another swig from his wine gourd.

But in the moment that he raised his wine gourd, Lu Ye charged at him, drawing his saber mid-approach and slashing horizontally.

"Good, you know to launch a surprise attack," Li Baxian remained motionless, tilting his body slightly backward, allowing the edge of the Boulder Mountain Saber to miss his neck by a hair's breadth without injuring him at all. He even had the leisure to critique Lu Ye's slash, "Maintain this kind of relentless momentum when facing an enemy.

However, exerting too much force is not good; it makes it easy for someone to exploit your weaknesses."

Lu Ye's saber was slanting downward again when he was once more avoided by Li Baxian, who still did not move his feet, and continued, "You lack adaptability, and your change of moves is sluggish..."

On the square, Lu Ye kept slashing while Li Baxian dodged and incessantly commented, which frustrated Lu Ye and made his slashes even more ferocious.

Helplessly, he realized the gap between himself and this fourth senior brother was too vast. Even though his senior had suppressed his cultivation to Level 5, Lu Ye couldn't even touch a corner of his robe.

Every strike he made was deftly avoided by his senior, who, to this moment, had not even made a single sword move. His longsword was merely carried in hand, and in the intervals of speaking, he still had time to take a few sips of wine.

It was then that Lu Ye realized the true horror of his fourth senior brother. Had there been someone like him at Golden Light Peak, he would have been thoroughly beaten to the ground.

After another drink, Li Baxian's aura suddenly shifted. He raised his longsword, effortlessly neutralizing Lu Ye's attacks, and said leisurely, "Take care, Junior Brother, I'm about to strike with my sword!"

In the next instant, the sound of clashing filled the air, and Lu Ye's expression became suddenly grave. His senior's sword strikes were not powerful, nor were they swift, but each was timed so perfectly that it disrupted every slash, making it hard for Lu Ye to complete any move. In moments, he felt like a puppet on strings, forced to shift to a defensive stance against his senior's onslaught.

Li Baxian advanced step by step while Lu Ye retreated. As their blades crossed, Li Baxian said, "In a duel between combat cultivators, you must control your rhythm, making your opponent follow your lead. Once you can do that, you can lead them by the nose, just like this!"

As his words ended, he flicked his sword, causing Lu Ye to violently lean backward, wide open to an attack, with a glint of sword light thrusting directly at him. Lu Ye saw the thrust coming and was terrified, and at the thought, a Defense Spirit Rune formed on his chest.

But in the next moment, he froze. Looking down, he saw his senior brother's sword had already pierced his chest, three inches in, just an inch away from his heart.

His Defense Spirit Rune couldn't even block this strike!

And... was his fourth senior brother playing for real?

Lu Ye looked up to see Li Baxian with eyes half-closed: "Junior Brother, you're dead!"

He abruptly withdrew his sword, bringing out a spray of blood, and Lu Ye staggered backward.

Yiyi, who had been watching the fight excitedly from not far away, let out a startled cry and stood up to run towards Lu Ye.

A hand rested on her shoulder; turning her head, she saw Shui Yuan shaking her head at her, "In the future, on the battlefield and throughout the Nine Provinces, his enemies will not spare him any mercy. Suffering now will save him pain later."

Despite being worried, Yiyi understood that the Second Senior Sister would never harm Lu Ye, so she held back and continued to watch. She also realized why her senior had prepared a large basin of medicinal syrup before the fight...

"Again!" Lu Ye took a deep breath. Though his chest had almost been pierced, his senior brother had controlled his strike and avoided vital parts. Gripping his longsword, he launched himself at Li Baxian once more.

Moments later, blood sprayed, and Li Baxian's indifferent voice rang out, "Junior Brother, you're dead again!"

After a moment, "Junior Brother, you've died three times!"

Two hours later, Lu Ye lay on the ground, his complexion pale, his body covered in wounds. Though none were serious, he had lost a lot of blood and no longer had the strength to continue fighting.

In just those two hours, he had been "killed" over a hundred times by Fourth Senior Brother, and this was under the premise that Fourth Senior Brother had held back.

The sun was high, so bright that Lu Ye could hardly keep his eyes open.

A shadow fell over his eyelids, and Li Baxian squatted in front of him, asking with a smile, "How do you feel?"

Lu Ye didn't know how to answer. How could 'terrible' even begin to describe it?

He couldn't help asking, "Fourth Senior Brother, has our Righteous Blood Sect always trained disciples this way?" If that were the case, it was quite destructive for the disciples...

"How could that be?" Li Baxian chuckled, "It's just you right now, so we can only give you extra care and attention. Don't worry, the medicinal cuisine you have eaten is designed to replenish your blood Qi energy. You'll recover after one night's rest."

Only then did Lu Ye realize why there had been such a large table full of good dishes earlier.

"Then, Fourth Senior Brother, have you ever taught anyone before?"

"No."

"So you don't know how to teach people!"

Because he didn't know how to teach, he could only let Lu Ye remember the deadly crises time and again through the pain of his own injuries, and such bodily memories were undoubtedly the most deeply etched.

Li Baxian patted his shoulder and said earnestly, "Let's show a bit of understanding for each other. Also, this was Second Senior Sister's idea, it has nothing to do with me..."

Before he could finish, he was grabbed by the scruff of his neck by Second Senior Sister, who whisked him aside.

Then Shui Yuan helped Lu Ye up and walked him towards a nearby house, where a prepared medicinal syrup awaited him.

After a treatment by Second Senior Sister, Lu Ye was once again spirited, his flesh wounds healing quickly. The medicinal syrup prepared by Second Senior Sister was exceptionally effective, and with her accomplished healing skills, by evening, Lu Ye was soaking wet but got up.

His injuries hadn't fully healed yet, but they should be mostly better after another night.

Moreover, all the new and old scars on Lu Ye's body had disappeared, a testament to Second Senior Sister's miraculous methods.

After eating another table full of medicinal cuisine in the evening, Lu Ye entered the Spirit Stream battlefield using the Heaven's Augury Pillar.

He planned to cultivate on the battlefield during the night, as it was the most efficient place to do so.

No sooner had he appeared in the Heaven's Augury Hall than he sensed the presence of other people outside. Turning to look, he saw two heads peeking around curiously in his direction, one who he had encountered yesterday and another he didn't recognize. By their spirit light, the latter was clearly a Level 7 cultivator.

After thinking for a moment, Lu Ye stepped outside.

The Level 7 cultivator approached him enthusiastically, clasping his hands in greeting, "Is this Fellow Daoist Ye from the Righteous Blood Sect? My name is Chen Yu."

Lu Ye nodded, tossing a contract to Chen Yu, "If there's no problem, go ahead and sign it."

"Hmm?" Chen Yu looked puzzled, taking the contract and carefully scanning it.

When he returned in the day, Lu Ye had discussed with Second Senior Sister and Fourth Senior Brother at the dining table about how to handle the situation of independent cultivators residing in their territory. He also learned some basic information about the area from Second Senior Sister.

Although Second Senior Sister couldn't freely enter and leave the Spirit Stream battlefield, she trusted a few independent cultivators in the area. She had previously asked them to track down Lu Ye, but since they weren't very skilled, they hadn't managed to find out anything useful before news of Lu Ye spread. By the time they got the news, it was already too late.

Through those few independent cultivators, Second Senior Sister had some understanding of the situation within the territory.

Chen Yu was one of them, and the strongest among the independent cultivators here. After all, this was the outermost area, so a Level 7 cultivator was already considered to be quite powerful. Moreover, he had always been in charge of the marketplace here, which was why he wanted to discuss matters with Lu Ye.

The marketplace in the territory was different from those Lu Ye had previously passed by. There weren't any branches of the Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union here, because after all, this place was considered Righteous Blood Sect territory.

Independent cultivators could come here, but the Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union was not allowed to settle in; that would be seen as a provocation to the Righteous Blood Sect.

Even without branches of the Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union, the marketplace here still attracted a good crowd because the nature's spiritual energy within the territory was richer by ten percent compared to the wilderness, which was a huge draw for those independent cultivators.

Chapter 179 - Earth's Core Fire

Previously, when the Righteous Blood Sect had no disciples at the Spirit Stream Realm to manage the place, independent cultivators could run over here. Now, things have changed with the addition of Lu Ye to the sect. If Lu Ye insists on driving people away, those independent cultivators will have no choice but to leave.

After the news of Lu Ye's appearance at the site spread yesterday, many independent cultivators felt uneasy, fearing they would be driven away.

This was also why Chen Yu hastily came to find Lu Ye.

To his surprise, before he could even explain his intentions, Lu Ye had given him a contract.

As he looked down, Chen Yu's expression gradually relaxed.

The contract's content was simple—it maintained the current status of the marketplace for the time being, but the Righteous Blood Sect reserved the right to ask the independent cultivators to leave at any time.

At the same time, the Righteous Blood Sect appointed Chen Yu to manage the marketplace, and if the independent cultivators wanted to stay there, they would have to pay the sect a fee of two to five Spirit Stones per month, depending on their cultivation.

This was a contract drafted by Shui Yuan, and the fees charged were not high. The independent cultivators could afford the few Spirit Stones, which would provide Lu Ye with some income, and it would also let them know that this was the Righteous Blood Sect's territory, and staying here would come with a certain cost.

Chen Yu quickly finished reading and bit his finger to press a bloody fingerprint on the contract without any hesitation.

Exchanging token brands with Lu Ye, he happily hurried toward the marketplace to share the good news with the independent cultivators waiting for updates.

In comparison to the benefits the independent cultivators received, Chen Yu gained even more. Although he had been the nominal manager of the marketplace before, he had no real authority. Now, with the Righteous Blood Sect's commission, he had an official status, which would make his management more legitimate.

Lu Ye didn't need to worry about the independent cultivators for now. The site was so large that he couldn't use it all himself; rather than offend people now, it was better to maintain the status quo.

Standing before the Heaven's Augury Pillar, Lu Ye connected his mind with the Heaven's Augury Treasure Vault, searching for the treasures he needed.

A few minutes later, Lu Ye held a palm-sized box and hurried toward the training room.

The natural spiritual energy in the training room was obviously denser than other places, particularly the one he had stayed in the day before. Because it was equipped with 3rd Dao Spirit Energy Gathering Spirit Runes that he had arranged, which were constantly at work, the spiritual energy here was a lot denser than in ordinary places.

He opened the door, walked in, and sat down with the box in his arms.

Looking at the box in his hands, Lu Ye felt both pleased and pained.

Pleased because the Heaven's Augury Treasure Vault indeed had everything he could want—anything he desired could be found inside. Pained because such a small box had cost him two hundred merits, which was much more expensive than the Boulder Mountain Saber.

Gently opening the box, a fist-sized flame immediately caught his eye, and a hot aura permeated the air.

This was a tiny amount of Earth's Core Fire, the cheapest uncanny fire Lu Ye had found in the Heaven's Augury Treasure Vault.

The Talent Tree's ability to burn away pill poison needed to be recovered as soon as possible, as this related to his cultivation progress. Lu Ye had speculated before that the Talent Tree required absorbing some fiery or heat energy for the leaves to ignite and thus provide him with more spirit runes.

However, this had always been mere speculation, without any way to be confirmed.

But after his trip to the Heaven's Augury Treasure Vault, this guess was confirmed, because when he was amidst the countless treasures and uncanny fires radiating with heat, the Talent Tree in his Root Spiritual Orifice clearly became more active—yet, because those treasures were all inside the treasure vault, the Talent Tree couldn't absorb any of their energy.

Now, as soon as Lu Ye opened the box, a strange sensation came from his Root Spiritual Orifice. Immersing his mind, he saw the roots of the Talent Tree sprout fine rootlets, which penetrated the Earth's Core Fire within the box.

In the blink of an eye, the heat dissipated, and the Earth's Core Fire in the box vanished without a trace.

On the Talent Tree, the 4th leaf burst into flames!

Since leaving Qingyun Mountain, after the battle where he acquired the Barrier-breaking Fruit, the 4th leaf had begun to glow—but without enough energy absorption, it couldn't undergo transformation.

Today it finally ignited, which meant that Lu Ye was going to have another spirit rune.

He suppressed the anticipation and joy in his heart and continued to observe, only to find... nothing more!

The 5th leaf showed no sign of igniting, not even a glow...

Lu Ye frowned; this was different from what he expected.

But soon, he noticed that the Talent Tree had recovered its ability to burn away pill poison. His spirit force circulated, and grey fumes were incinerated.

The pill poison inside him had peaked after the battle at Golden Light Peak, causing his spirit force to be murky and his spirit light dimmed, which greatly impacted his strength and cultivation.

Since the battle at Golden Light Peak, Lu Ye had been wary of swallowing elixir pills. His Second Senior Sister did have a method to help him expel the pill poison, which worked fairly well, but it couldn't completely clear it.

Such matters required prolonged recuperation and adjustment.

However, as soon as the Talent Tree regained its ability to burn pill poison, in just the time it took an incense stick to burn, Lu Ye's spiritual energy became pure once again.

The longstanding hidden danger was finally resolved, and Lu Ye's heart relaxed.

Combining all the previous signs, his guess was correct.

The Talent Tree could absorb the energy from the heat or some flames, and such energy could cause the leaves of the Talent Tree to burn, allowing Lu Ye to master various spirit runes. Additionally, that energy would act as a kind of fuel stored within the Talent Tree, burning away the pill poison.

This time only one leaf burned, likely because the Talent Tree was accumulating fuel; thus, it stored more energy and allowed only a small portion to burn on that fourth leaf.

There were many treasures in the Heaven's Augury treasure vault suitable for the Talent Tree to absorb, including many portions of Earth's Core Fire, of which Lu Ye had only purchased one.

It seemed that he must continue to strive for merit! The more merit he had, the greater the role the Talent Tree could play.

Looking at the remaining five hundred-plus merit points, Lu Ye sighed slightly. Just a few days ago, he was nearly at a thousand.

Merit, this thing, difficult to save up yet spent as quickly as a flowing stream.

Without haste to cultivate, Lu Ye gazed intensely at the burning fourth leaf on the Talent Tree, taking a deep breath with a tragic expression as his consciousness immersed within it.

The burning leaf rapidly magnified in his field of vision, obscuring all thoughts, as if his brain was being pried open by force, with what seemed like a red-hot iron rod thrusting in and stirring fiercely!

After a good while, Lu Ye came back to his senses, drenched in sweat, shaking his head to dispel the discomfort.

Even with his Level 5 realm cultivation, examining the spirit runes on the Talent Tree was still far from a pleasant experience, but thankfully, he didn't faint outright like the first time.

Bloodstain!

That was the name of the fourth spirit rune.

Upon investigating its mysteries, Lu Ye soon discovered that although it was an offensive-type spirit rune, it didn't directly enhance his killing power like Sharpness—it had a different effect.

But it was undeniable that, if used well, this spirit rune could potentially win against stronger opponents!

It was, after all, an additional method for fighting desperate battles against powerful foes.

Every spirit rune on the Talent Tree had significant uses, but to obtain those runes, he needed to first acquire some treasures suitable for the Talent Tree to absorb energy from.

In other words, he needed a large amount of merit!

Putting these thoughts aside for the moment, he still had over five hundred merit points but decided not to buy Earth's Core Fire again. It was better to save some merit for unforeseen needs that might arise.

He got up and started placing Spirit Stones at the eight positions of the Spirit Gathering Array. When placing the last one, Lu Ye hesitated, then took out the blood-red Scale Armor he had obtained from Dragon Spring and positioned it in a recess.

The Spirit Gathering Array could activate the power within the Spirit Stones, and perhaps it could also stimulate the power in the Scale Armor.

The Scale Armor, with its numerous bloodlines, had been absorbed by Amber several times, each time with an intoxicating effect. Lu Ye didn't dare to imitate Amber, knowing that the body of a demon beast was not something he could compare to.

However, if the Spirit Gathering Array could activate its power, then this might be a safe way to extract the power from the Scale Armor.

He also constructed Spirit Energy Gathering Spirit Runes in his own spiritual orifice.

With all preparations ready, he began to ingest elixir pills for cultivation. Soon, the room was filled with Spiritual Energy, among which streamed red mist, each stream resembling a Wandering Dragon...

Days went by, and during the day, he honed his skills under the care and love of Li Baxian, being 'killed' many times a day by his Fourth Senior Brother, ending up covered in blood after each training session, and then dragged off by Second Senior Sister for a bath and healing.

At night, he would enter the ground, first exploring the mysteries of the Heaven's Augury Pillar and the privileges of his position as Governor, or visiting the Heaven's Augury treasure vault for enlightenment, and then cultivating.

Li Baxian didn't teach him many fighting techniques or any particular sword or saber methods because, in Li Baxian's view, those routine things were worthless—only flashy to watch.

Good saber or sword techniques were the simplest means of killing!

What he did was to let Lu Ye's body remember every injury, such harsh teaching methods could only be termed brutal. Only the Righteous Blood Sect had the qualifications to educate in such a manner nowadays; if it had been any other sect, many disciples would have ended up crippled long ago.

At the dining table, Lu Ye, while gobbling down his food, asked Li Baxian in a muffled voice, "Fourth Senior Brother, how can I quickly earn a large amount of merit?"

"Kill enemies!" Li Baxian answered succinctly.

"I know about killing enemies, but didn't you say that it's not suitable for me to stir up trouble outside recently?"

It had been only a month since the battle at Golden Light Peak, and the chaos had only just subsided. Therefore, previously, Li Baxian had warned Lu Ye to keep a low profile for the time being, which was feasible since Lu Ye had been healing his injuries during this time, running back and forth within the sect's headquarters without the chance to cause any commotion outside.

"Other than killing enemies, that would be selling items to the Heaven's Augury treasure vault."

Chapter 180 - 178: A Quick Way to Gain Merit

The Heaven's Augury treasure vault is not only for purchasing but also for selling.

Anything of value can be sold to the Heaven's Augury treasure vault.

However, this is often an unfavorable transaction. Lu Ye once tried to sell the Boulder Mountain Saber to the Heaven's Augury treasure vault, and the offered price was a mere fifty merits.

It should be noted that he had bought that spirit saber for one hundred and thirty-eight merits. Wasn't the price difference more than double?

The most valuable thing he could sell was a piece of Scale Armor he had obtained from the Dragon Spring, which, he had found out days earlier, was worth more than eight thousand merits.

But Lu Ye would definitely not sell this item, as the power it contained greatly benefited Amber and himself. Nowadays, every time he cultivated, he would place the Scale Armor in the Spirit Gathering Array, slowly stimulating its energy.

Over these days, Lu Ye felt a significant increase in his physical strength.

After Amber had devoured the bloodlines within it several times, it had become increasingly imposing.

Valued slightly less than the Scale Armor were Barrier-breaking Fruits, each worth five hundred merits. These also couldn't be sold, as they were extremely useful for cultivators to open their orifices, and Lu Ye would need them later.

Plus, he had already given the two Barrier-breaking Fruits to Second Senior Sister, who was not only a healing cultivator but also an alchemy cultivator. She could use the Barrier-breaking Fruits along with other medicinal ingredients to refine barrier-breaking pills, maximizing their effects.

As for the value of the barrier-breaking pills, Lu Ye had checked in the Heaven's Augury treasure vault; each pill required three to four hundred merits, and a single Barrier-breaking Fruit in the hands of Second Senior Sister could produce at least four or five barrier-breaking pills.

"Is there no other way?" Lu Ye continued to ask, taking a big bite of the dish that Second Senior Sister had served him.

"Declare war!" Li Baxian smiled faintly, "Declare war on the forces of the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge faction, draft a large amount of merits in advance, and if you win, those merits are yours."

Lu Ye's face darkened. Currently, he was the only disciple at the Righteous Blood Sect's base. Who could he declare war on? There were indeed several sects from the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge nearby, but setting aside whether they would even accept his challenge, even if they did, he had no hope of victory. Moreover, he lacked the capital to declare war.

To win merits from others, he needed to have merits of his own in the early stage.

"Why don't you participate in the Spirit Stream Defense Battle?"

Li Baxian had barely finished his sentence when Shui Yuan glared at him fiercely.

"Junior Brother won't be able to stay cooped up in the base forever, Senior Sister and the old man shouldn't think to protect him all the time. You can help him for a moment, but can you help him for a lifetime? A disciple of the Righteous Blood Sect shouldn't be sheltered in a greenhouse forever. It would be good for him to go out and broaden his horizons sooner rather than later."

Shui Yuan fell silent and served another chopstick-full of vegetables to Lu Ye.

Lu Ye looked from one to the other, and seeing that Second Senior Sister said nothing, he asked, "What is the Spirit Stream Defense Battle?"

Li Baxian began to explain, "In about half a month, the sect ranking evaluation will be out. Usually, after every evaluation, there's the Spirit Stream Defense Battle..."

Through Li Baxian's explanation, Lu Ye slowly understood what the Spirit Stream Defense Battle was.

As has been customary over the years, the various sects, big and small, would remain calm before the sect ranking evaluation, since any inappropriate actions could lead to a decline in ranking—a responsibility no one could afford to bear.

But the Spirit Stream battlefield couldn't remain peaceful forever. The opposition between the two factions was bound to make the cultivators see each other as thorns in their sides. Therefore, after each sect ranking evaluation, things would get extremely lively.

The Spirit Stream Defense Battle arose in response to this dynamic. It was a turn of fate that no one could resist. It seemed as if fate was intensifying the confrontation between the two factions through this method.

After the sect evaluation, the Governors of the various sect base camps could register to fight. Using one augmentation from their base's Heaven's Augury Pillar as the stake, they would enter an unknown small space to fight. If a participant were killed, their augmentation would be taken by their killer.

The boost from the Heaven's Augury Pillar could make the Spiritual Energy at the base denser, with each boost enhancing it by ten percent. Lu Ye had previously tried to buy a boost using merits; the first

required five hundred merits, not much, but he had asked Li Baxian and learned that such boosts became more expensive further on.

Thus, the more powerful players in the Spirit Stream Defense Battle could seize many augmentations, and by bringing them back to their base, they could significantly enhance the Spiritual Energy there.

Moreover, in that unknown small space, there were many extraordinary treasures, such as Barrier-breaking Fruits, which are rarely seen outside; they were readily available there.

It could be said that the triennial Spirit Stream Defense Battle was a grand gathering for all sizes of sects, with virtually all the sects from the Nine Provinces participating.

After hearing this, Lu Ye couldn't help but be captivated. He had been considering how to increase the Spiritual Energy in his base. If not for the excessive cost of merits, he would have already bought a boost. Yet, here was such an opportunity.

However, since it was the Spirit Stream Defense Battle, naturally only the Governors and Deputy Governors of the bases could participate. Each sect could only send out two people, and considering how many sects there were in the Nine Provinces, the number of participants would also be extremely large.

"But Fourth Senior Brother, I'm only in the Level 5 realm, and at most I can kill someone in the Level 7 realm. Facing those guardians from the core circle of major sects, how could I possibly be a match?" Lu Ye slowly shook his head. Although he was quite interested in the Spirit Stream Defense Battle, he was aware of his own limitations.

Fourth Senior Brother Li Baxian was the Deputy Governor of the Loyal Heart Sect. If a personage like him was participating in that defense battle, what competitiveness could a Level 5 realm cultivator like Lu Ye have?

Li Baxian said, "Heaven's Augury is indeed cruel, but it wouldn't ask you to go to your death for nothing. It maintains balance in its own way. Though the Spirit Stream Defense Battle takes place within the same small space, that place has an invisible suppression. The further outward one goes, the stronger the suppression one faces.

Take me, for example; if I enter that small space, I would only appear in the very central area. If I were to move outward, my cultivation would be gradually suppressed. On the other hand, if a cultivator with your level of cultivation were to enter, you would only appear on the outermost parts, and the cultivators you would encounter wouldn't be too powerful.

Hence, participating in the Spirit Stream Defense Battle isn't merely about having higher cultivation; if your cultivation is high, the enemies you encounter will also be strong. Of course, the cultivation of a typical governor would be at least the Level 7 realm, and deputy governors might be at Level 7 or maybe Level 6."

"There's such a good thing... then there's no problem!" Lu Ye became interested.

Li Baxian glanced at him. If a regular Level 5 cultivator were to speak so recklessly, he would sneer at them, but his own little junior brother... indeed couldn't be looked at like a regular Level 5 cultivator. In these past days of instruction, he could feel Lu Ye's rapid growth, which was terrifyingly fast.

Shui Yuan said leisurely, "Righteous Blood Sect doesn't have the qualifications to register. The Defense Battle requires both a governor and a deputy governor to participate together. How can you go by yourself? Unless you find a deputy governor to accompany you."

It seemed the Second Senior Sister might not be in favor of Lu Ye participating in the Defense Battle, but her words didn't close off the possibility...

Lu Ye naturally felt her concern, but as the Fourth Senior Brother had said, the Second Senior Sister and the sect master could protect him for a moment, not for a lifetime.

So, if he wanted to participate in the Defense Battle, he still needed to find a deputy governor.

Where to find one? The suitable candidate needs to be trustworthy, and also their cultivation must be sufficient, otherwise bringing along someone in the Level 3-4 realm would just be a burden.

There were many people among the independent cultivators, but Lu Ye had never had any contact with them. Not to mention the issue of trust, he doubted those independent cultivators would be willing to participate in the Defense Battle, which was a place where one could die at any time.

He thought for a long time but came up with no clues.

After dinner, he took his usual beating from the Fourth Senior Brother and then was dragged away by the Second Senior Sister for healing. When night came, he resumed his cultivation in his lodgings.

That day, while Lu Ye was cultivating, he suddenly felt an invisible force emerging from the direction of Heaven's Augury Hall, subsequently radiating throughout the entire encampment.

He frowned, stood up, and walked towards the Heaven's Augury Pillar to investigate the situation, quickly understanding what had happened.

The results of the sect grading evaluation had been released—an act of Heaven's Augury, beyond the influence of mortal hands.

Originally, in this evaluation, Righteous Blood Sect was to be eliminated, but because they had gained him as a disciple, the sect barely managed to retain its status. This was also because the sect had one cultivator in the Divine Sea Realm and one in the True Lake Realm; otherwise, it would have been impossible for an ordinary sect to retain its Ninth Grade status with only three members."

How exactly the sect grade was determined, Heaven's Augury had its own standards, but overall, it was directly related to the number of cultivators in the sect and the levels of their cultivation.

Confirming that there wasn't any problem anywhere, Lu Ye returned to the training room to resume his cultivation.

The next day, at the Righteous Blood Sect headquarters, two figures collided, saber and sword interlocked, and the grating sound of friction filled the air. The stagnant figures passed each other, with fresh blood spurting from Lu Ye's chest and abdomen. He quickly turned around, holding his saber on guard.

Across from him, Li Baxian looked down at his own chest where a faint bloodstain was visible.

He slightly smiled, sheathed his longsword, and turned to look at Lu Ye, "Little junior brother, you've passed the test! There isn't much I can teach you anymore. In the future, when fighting enemies, just trust your own saber."

In a month's time, this was the first time Lu Ye had managed to injure Li Baxian. At the same level of cultivation, Li Baxian was simply an invincible existence, and Lu Ye's experience only further highlighted the weight of being the tenth on the Spirit Stream Ranking.

Putting away his saber, Lu Ye bowed respectfully, "Thank you for your guidance, Senior Brother."

Li Baxian tossed his wine gourd, which immediately enlarged. With a light leap, he stood upon it, "The results of the sect grade evaluation have come out, and I need to go back to the Loyal Heart Sect to prepare. Little junior brother, I'll come to see you again next time. If you encounter any trouble on the battlefield in the future, remember to tell me."

With that, he greeted Shui Yuan, faced the direction of the main hall, and gave a solemn salute. Then, standing upright, the gourd carried him away like a beam of light, disappearing swiftly into the distance.

True to his word, he left as he said he would, utterly unfettered.

Lu Ye watched him leave and finally voiced the question that had been weighing on his mind for many days, "Second Senior Sister, since Fourth Senior Brother came from our sect, why did he become a disciple of the Loyal Heart Sect?"

It seemed his Third Senior Brother had done something similar, now belonging to another sect.

But by the way Fourth Senior Brother acted, it was obvious that he still regarded this place as his home. The sect master and the Second Senior Sister didn't treat him as an outsider, letting him come and go as he pleased.