

Humanity 181

Chapter 181 - Return to Mount Ying

Ultimately, Lu Ye never figured out the answer to this question, because Second Senior Sister didn't explain it to him.

Maybe she didn't want to, or perhaps she thought it wasn't the right time. Since she didn't speak, Lu Ye naturally wouldn't pry.

Soaking in that tub full of medicinal syrup as usual, Lu Ye's wounds quickly improved thanks to Second Senior Sister's meticulous treatment.

By evening, Lu Ye stepped out feeling refreshed, at which point Amber ran over to rub against him.

During his days in the Righteous Blood Sect, Amber evidently became much more robust, having nothing but good food and sleep, along with a plethora of Spirit-Nurturing Pills to swallow, and occasionally coming over to Lu Ye to consume a bloodline from a Scale Armor, carefree indeed.

As for Yiyi...

It was unclear what she was busy with over at the sect master's side. For the first few days, she followed Second Senior Sister, mysteriously telling Lu Ye that she wanted to learn how to be a healing cultivator from her.

Since Lu Ye had been injured so often along the way, it was foreseeable that he would inevitably engage in more battles in the future. Thus Yiyi's greatest wish was to become a healing cultivator, so that even if she couldn't be of much help during a fight, she could treat Lu Ye's wounds after.

But she disappeared after just a few days, and Lu Ye didn't know what happened, surmising that she probably wasn't doing too well with the training.

As a result, she spent her days at the sect master's side now, and Lu Ye wondered if she wanted to become a magic cultivator instead...

To Lu Ye's knowledge, the sect master was indeed a magic cultivator.

He took out the Scale Armor, let Amber come over and suck a mouthful, and the formidable-looking Amber immediately stiffened, flopping rigidly onto the ground as its blood Qi churned on its surface.

Second Senior Sister was not surprised by this. Lu Ye had told her about the origin of the Scale Armor, and she had carefully studied it, confirming it had a great effect on Body Refining. As long as the intensity was controlled and not too much was refined at once, there would be no danger.

Second Senior Sister had also said that there must be some secret hidden beneath Dragon Spring, perhaps a stroke of fortune, and that Lu Ye could look into it if he became more powerful in the future.

He definitely intended to check it out; Lu Ye still remembered Han Zheyue from the Tailuo Sect. If it weren't for that woman exposing him on the Golden Light Peak, would he have had to fight so many Level 6 cultivators?

He had noted this grudge and would seek retribution sooner or later.

Ignoring Amber, who was thrashing about as though it was about to give up the ghost, Lu Ye headed straight for Heaven's Augury Hall.

Moments later, he appeared in the Heaven's Augury Hall of his station, lifted his hand to touch the battlefield marking, and sent out a message.

Soon came a reply, "There are hardly any qualified people. I've asked around, and no one dares to go, although there are two who are not afraid of death. One is at Cloud River Realm, and the other at Spirit Stream Realm, but I suspect Brother Lu wouldn't want to bring along a burden."

He had previously entrusted Chen Yu to help him find suitable candidates to join the Spirit Stream Defense Battle, but it seemed the situation was not optimistic.

Most cultivators had heard of the famous Spirit Stream Defense Battle, but those independent cultivators gathered here generally didn't have high levels of cultivation. Apart from Seven Level Chen Yu, there were only a few more at Level 6, all of whom were cautious by nature, or in other words, timid.

With their strength, they could already venture into the inner circle of the battlefield, but they stayed in the outer circle simply because they were afraid.

The casualties in the Spirit Stream Defense Battle were always substantial, so how could they dare to participate?

Even Chen Yu didn't dare commit. If he truly had the courage to take part in the Spirit Stream Defense Battle, he wouldn't be mingling in the outer circle but would have gone to the inner circle long ago.

The independent cultivators were a lost cause, something Lu Ye had been mentally prepared for.

If so be it, then there was no helping it...

Lu Ye walked out of Heaven's Augury Hall and took a foot-long fish out of his storage sack. The fish was entirely blood-red, as if cast from Blood Jade.

This was a Blood Red Trout from Moon Lake. During his time at the Righteous Blood Sect, Li Baxian caught many, most of which were eaten, and Lu Ye secured a few for himself.

A moment later, a huge shadow descended from the sky, landing before Lu Ye, bringing with it a howling wind that made Lu Ye's face sting. It was Little Gray, the gray hawk.

It bent down and pecked gingerly, grabbing the Blood Red Trout in its beak and swallowing it with a tilt of its head.

Previously, Second Senior Brother had said Little Gray liked eating Blood Red Trout, so Lu Ye occasionally brought a few over. There was no way they would fill it up, given the size difference; the foot-long Blood Red Trout looked like a worm in Little Gray's beak.

But Little Gray really liked these fish, and as a result, its attitude toward Lu Ye was much more cordial.

For decades, no one had tended to it; it had always guarded the Righteous Blood Sect's territory, loyal to the end, until Lu Ye's arrival brought it a dash more vitality.

After eating one fish, Little Gray tilted its head to look at Lu Ye, its eyes full of anticipation.

Lu Ye then took another fish and tossed it, and Little Gray caught it precisely.

Looking up at the hawk, Lu Ye asked, "Little Gray, could you take me somewhere?"

Little Gray looked down at him and then bent its head, its curved beak hooking Lu Ye's collar just so, before gently tossing him onto its back with a flick.

Lu Ye's face darkened instantaneously, "A nod would've sufficed; I could've climbed up myself. You're making me lose face like this!"

Little Gray had spread its wings; the wind started howling, and Lu Ye felt his body become weightless as he was suddenly thrust upwards into the sky.

He quickly crouched down, clinging to the eagle's back while simultaneously spurring his spirit force to resist the fierce wind that was hitting his face.

An eagle cry that seemed to rip through the sky and halt the clouds sounded, seemingly inquiring from Lu Ye which direction to go.

Lu Ye took out his ten-part map to check and then pointed out a direction; the giant eagle immediately flew toward that direction.

Lu Ye then hurriedly activated his battlefield marking, sending a message back to his Second Senior Sister.

A short while later, he received a reply, "Be careful on your way and come back soon!"

Lying on the incredibly spacious back of the eagle, Lu Ye truly understood what it meant to move as fast as the wind.

Little Gray's speed was much faster than Tang Wu's Flying Spirit Artifact; after all, it was a flying-class demon beast with several decades of growth behind it, and Lu Ye seriously suspected that Little Gray's strength could compare to a cultivator who had cultivated a Heaven Rank Technique to the Level 9 realm.

However, it was restricted by the rules of the Spirit Stream battlefield and could not break through.

Recalling his Second Senior Brother's easy mastery of weapon control-flying, Lu Ye couldn't help but long for such skill, but his current cultivation was too low, and he would need to increase his realm to fly with weapon control.

Normally, cultivators would possess the ability to control weapons upon reaching Level 7, but to fly with weapon control, one needed to be at Level 8-9, which is when one has sufficient spirit force within their body to support flying for some time.

After reaching Level 9, one could switch to cultivating Heaven Rank Techniques, and only by cultivating Heaven Rank Techniques could one qualify to break through the Spirit Stream Realm and advance to the Cloud River Realm.

Once in the Cloud River Realm, one could physically fly through the sky.

These prospects, however, were still quite distant for Lu Ye.

Not only was Little Gray fast, but its endurance was also incredibly strong. After a day and a night, it finally landed to recover its strength. As for food, Lu Ye needed not worry; it could easily catch some food from the wild on its own and even shared its catch with Lu Ye.

For Lu Ye, the only discomfort was the need to continuously spur his spirit force to protect himself from freezing or being blown away by the violent winds.

In the outer circle skies, there were barely any riders, so the journey had been extremely smooth.

It was not until five days later, as the evening was approaching, that Lu Ye reached his destination.

The ten-part map indicated that this place was Mount Ying.

He wanted to participate in the Spirit Stream Defense Battle. Independent cultivators couldn't be relied upon, so Lu Ye had to find a helper by himself. However, he knew very few people. After much thought, he decided to turn to Hua Ci.

When he had left Mount Ying, this woman was at Level 5, and with so much time having passed, she should have reached Level 6 by now.

Such a level of cultivation was more than enough to qualify for participating in the Spirit Stream Defense Battle, and most importantly, she was a healing cultivator; if he were injured, she could treat him.

Of course, Lu Ye would not force her to do anything; everyone has their aspirations, and Hua Ci, a healing cultivator devoted to helping the world, might not be willing to get involved in such chaotic warfare.

This trip was merely an attempt.

Furthermore, having twice received life-saving aid from her, Lu Ye knew that independent cultivators led difficult lives and were not entirely safe. If possible, he thought to bring Hua Ci and her people over to the Righteous Blood Sect, where, at the very least, there was some guarantee of safety.

He had considered this before leaving Mount Ying, but at that time, he himself didn't even know where the Righteous Blood Sect was located and naturally couldn't rashly make any promises.

The giant eagle slowly descended, kicking up a whirlwind. The surrounding bamboo houses all creaked and groaned, and figures rushed out from within.

Eyes full of bewilderment and fear stared back at the giant eagle.

Lu Ye saw Hua Ci and Ruan Lingyu, and also the robust figure of Kong Niu, but there were several others he didn't recognize...

Perhaps they were new members recruited by the Independent Wanderers Society in recent times?

What puzzled Lu Ye was that some of those unfamiliar faces had quite impressive cultivation; among them were even a Level 7 cultivator and a Level 6 cultivator...

The Level 7 cultivator called out loudly, "Which Fellow Daoist graces us with their presence?" He vigilantly watched over Lu Ye, readying his spirit force.

Lu Ye looked towards Hua Ci; his smile gradually faded as he noticed a clear scar on her fair neck, seemingly inflicted by a sharp blade. To leave such a distinct scar meant the injury was not light, and from the angle and position of the scar, it seemed less likely that it was caused by someone else. Instead, it looked as if Hua Ci herself had cut it...

Why would this woman seek harm upon herself? Lu Ye frowned.

Just then, Hua Ci suddenly raised her hand, forming a magic spell with her fingers. A layer of visible gray ripples burst outward from her as the center, sweeping wildly in all directions.

Standing beside Hua Ci, Ruan Lingyu cried out, "Yiye, kill them quickly; they are from Ten Thousand Demons Ridge!"

With a bang, Kong Niu charged at a Level 5 cultivator, immediately engaging in battle with the stranger Lu Ye had never seen before. Kong Niu was now at Level 5 too, an equal match for his opponent.

However, after just a short clash, the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge cultivator seemed to be at a disadvantage as objects resembling mushrooms rapidly started to grow from his nose and mouth, disturbing his focus.

Chapter 182 Happiness Comes Too Quickly?

Not only did the Level 5 cultivator encounter this, but those few unfamiliar faces as well, especially the Level 7 one, whose situation was particularly severe. Suddenly, tiny mushrooms sprouted from his seven orifices, and he crushed them in one swipe, looked down, and saw his hands covered in fresh blood. He quickly realized what happened and bellowed, "How dare this bitch poison me!"

While speaking, he leaped up and charged toward Hua Ci.

Boom...

Lu Ye stepped off the back of an eagle, flipped mid-air, and positioned himself in front of Hua Ci and Ruan Lingyu, his long saber unsheathed and slashing horizontally.

A blaze of red spirit light ripped through the air, sparking a shower of flames, and the immense force sent the Level 7 reeling back. Lu Ye too stepped back but quickly stabilized himself, stomping on the floor of the bamboo tower as he ferociously pounced forward.

Two figures advanced and retreated, their Spiritual Artifacts clashing continuously, creating a cacophony of metallic sounds.

Since beginning his cultivation journey, Lu Ye had never fought a Level 7 cultivator. This exchange immediately put him under pressure. However, Lu Ye had grown significantly stronger since the battle at Golden Light Peak. Though his cultivation was still at Level 5, his skills in slaying enemies had greatly improved under the tutelage of his fourth senior brother.

The Boulder Mountain Saber in his hand seemed to take on a life of its own, slicing through the air with sharp lights. In just a few moments, Lu Ye found an opening and struck the cultivator in the chest and belly. The protective spirit force was shattered, and a foot-long wound opened up, spilling blood and flesh.

The Level 7 staggered back, his face a picture of shock, clearly not expecting to be wounded by a Level 5.

Without giving him time to think, Lu Ye pressed forward again.

After a few more moments of combat, another wound was added to the Level 7's body.

The surprise in his eyes turned to terror, for he realized that this unknown Level 5, who had appeared out of nowhere, moved faster and struck harder than himself. What terrified him even more was the deadly sharpness of the opponent's saber; a cut was certain to wound.

Double images appeared before his eyes, and a buzzing sound began in his ears. He didn't know what kind of poison he had been afflicted with, but he felt his spirit force rapidly draining away, as vibrant and diverse mushrooms sprouted from each orifice, rapidly consuming his spirit force.

He knew he must fight quickly and capture that bitch to obtain the antidote!

With this thought, he decisively reached into his storage sack, drew out a Spiritual Artifact, and shouted, "Go!"

The artifact immediately transformed into a streak of light, speeding toward Lu Ye like a bolt of lightning.

At Level 7, one could cultivate the path of weapon control.

As the streak of light emerged, Lu Ye's body hair stood on end, overwhelmed by a sense of immense danger. His gaze locked onto the streak of light, and time seemed to slow as he discerned the angle and direction of the incoming artifact's attack within the light.

The Dragon Pool Body Tempering, along with the Scale Armor he refined there, not only strengthened his physique but also enhanced his eyesight, allowing him to track faster movements and react more swiftly.

There was no blocking it! It was too late to wield his saber as the streak of light was too swift.

As he mobilized his spirit force, a Defense Spirit Rune appeared on Lu Ye's chest, continuously channeling more spirit force into it.

With a loud bang, the spirit force burst out, Lu Ye grunted, tasted metal in his mouth, and rooted his feet firmly into the ground, though he was shoved backward, carving deep grooves in the earth with his feet.

"Yiye!" Ruan Lingyu, standing beside Hua Ci, cried out in alarm, her face turning pale.

Meanwhile, Hua Ci gritted her teeth, changing the magic spell in her hands once again.

Thud, thud, thud...

Dull sounds echoed as the mushrooms growing from the Level 7's orifices burst one after another, spewing spores all over his face. He screamed in agony as his face seemed to be doused with acid, sizzling horribly, flesh becoming indistinct.

Lu Ye raised his saber, slashing away the continuous spirit light at his chest, and charged forward, under the horrified gaze of the Level 7 cultivator, he thrust his saber directly.

The Boulder Mountain Saber, reinforced with Sharpness Spirit Runes, pierced through the man's chest and exited through his back.

Lu Ye withdrew the saber, blood gushing forth.

"Ah!" Another scream sounded, and Lu Ye turned his head to see that the Level 6 had been caught in the beak of Little Gray, though it was unclear whether the cultivator had provoked Little Gray or if Little Gray had acted on his own initiative.

With a clamping of the massive beak, the man was cleaved in two, blood and organs splattering down.

At the same time, Kong Niu had also finished off his own opponent. Strictly speaking, Kong Niu might not have matched the man's skills since he had only recently advanced to Level 5. However, these outsiders were all unknowingly poisoned by Hua Ci. When she detonated those hidden potent toxins, their capabilities diminished.

In the heat of a life-and-death battle, suddenly having mushrooms sprout from one's eyes and nose would scare anyone, especially since those mushrooms were rapidly sapping their own spirit force...

The rushed battle concluded, Lu Ye shook the fresh blood from his long saber, sheathed it, and rubbed his aching chest. Though the Defense Spirit Runes had shielded him from the damage of the artifact, the force of the impact was something he couldn't mitigate.

"Who are these people?" Lu Ye frowned.

He had just arrived here and hadn't yet grasped what was happening when Hua Ci suddenly attacked. Right after Ruan Lingyu shouted, a fierce battle erupted.

"A few curs who ran out from the inner circle." Hua Ci explained nonchalantly, looking at Lu Ye with concern, "Are you alright?"

Lu Ye shook his head.

"Let's talk inside." Hua Ci moved towards the bamboo house.

Lu Ye followed her in.

Ruan Lingyu stayed outside, cleaning up the battlefield with Kong Niu and the others.

Once inside the house, Hua Ci poured him a glass of water. Lu Ye noticed her exhausted expression soften, clearly indicating that she had been having a tough time recently.

Lu Ye took a sip of water, "Being targeted?"

Although Hua Ci didn't say much, Lu Ye vaguely guessed what was going on, something he had worried about while he was at Mount Ying.

Hua Ci was quite renowned in the nearby marketplace. Many injured cultivators sought her for healing. While this could earn her some cultivation resources, if powerful Ten Thousand Demons Ridge cultivators targeted her one day, the members of Independent Wanderers Society wouldn't be able to resist.

However, they were at the outermost circle of the battlefield, and Hua Ci herself had Level 5 realm cultivation. With about a dozen members of the Independent Wanderers Society banding together, they had some power to protect themselves.

But life is not always smooth sailing.

Eventually, Hua Ci was targeted. It started when a Level 7 cultivator got injured and came to her for treatment, knowing her reputation. The cultivator was from the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge faction, and though Hua Ci was unwilling, she had no choice but to comply because she was not as powerful as her adversary.

Once the Level 7's injuries healed, he refused to leave and even made more excessive demands, wanting Hua Ci to earn Spirit Stones for him. In his eyes, a healing cultivator from an independent background was like a cash tree; as long as he controlled this tree, he wouldn't have to risk fighting in the inner circle.

He had run to the outer circle because he had been injured fighting someone in the inner circle.

This situation had persisted for more than twenty days. During these days, all the Spirit Stones Hua Ci earned in the marketplace were given to him in exchange for the safety of people like Ruan Lingyu.

"What about the others?"

The last time he had visited, there had been over a dozen members of the Independent Wanderers Society, but now only three remained.

"They were killed." Hua Ci sighed. The Level 7 had wanted to control Hua Ci, and people like Kong Niu were unwilling to comply, resulting in a conflict, and only a few members of the society survived.

If it weren't for Hua Ci threatening with her own life, probably the entire Independent Wanderers Society would have been decimated, leaving her alone. The scars on her neck came from that ordeal.

Until today, when Lu Ye suddenly arrived, Hua Ci didn't hesitate to act because she knew that no matter why Lu Ye was here, once he understood her situation, he would definitely help. With that in mind, she decided to strike first!

Fortunately, Lu Ye was stronger than she had imagined, and he successfully dealt with that Level 7.

Sensing Lu Ye's gaze, Hua Ci raised her hand to cover her scar, revealing a gentle smile as usual, "Regardless, thank you."

Lu Ye waved his hand, "Without me, they probably wouldn't have survived much longer."

He didn't know exactly what Hua Ci had done to those people, but he saw their miserable state and knew that even without him, given some time, Hua Ci could have killed those people, though not without some risk.

Hua Ci was a healing cultivator, but healing cultivators can also kill. From what Lu Ye knew, some healing cultivators preferred using poison, known as poison doctors. These individuals could often kill invisibly, and those they killed always died a gruesome death.

"Never mind me, but you, the famous Lu Yiye, instead of enjoying yourself at the Righteous Blood Sect, why did you come here? Did you lose something here?" She evidently also knew about the battle at Golden Light Peak.

Lu Ye's forehead bulged with veins, "My name is Lu Ye!"

"Oh?" Hua Ci looked surprised, "I remember someone telling me his surname was Lu, with the style name Yiye. Could they have been deceiving me?"

She gazed at Lu Ye sorrowfully, slowly shaking her head, "Indeed, a man's word cannot be trusted." She sighed again, "But never mind, since you saved me, they say there's no greater debt than a saved life, a debt repaid with..."

Her voice softened, and Lu Ye arched an eyebrow as he looked at Hua Ci, catching her shyly lowering her head. As she spoke, her jade hand that had been on her neck slid down slowly, resting on her garments.

Lu Ye suddenly felt dry-mouthed, his eyes fixated. Could this be happening too quickly? The hero saves the beauty, and the beauty throws herself into the hero's arms. Could such events also unfold for me?

Hua Ci smoothed out the wrinkles on her garment, her movements meticulous...

Lu Ye's gaze lifted, meeting a pair of teasing, playful eyes.

Lu Ye closed his eyes, took a deep breath, and with some expectation towards this woman in front of him, cursed internally, "I'm really such a fool!"

Chapter 183 You're Pretty Fast Too

In the bamboo house, Hua Ci smiled serenely while Lu Ye looked on with dissatisfaction.

It was a while before Hua Ci chuckled and said, "You saved me once, I saved you twice, so by that account, you still owe me one. If anyone is to offer themselves, it should be you offering yourself to me!"

"Your point makes perfect sense!" Lu Ye nodded incessantly. Why would he refuse such an appealing proposition? Saying so, he took two steps forward and began to loosen his clothes.

Hua Ci's smile remained on her face as she simply watched him.

Just as Lu Ye was undoing his top and about to remove his pants, Hua Ci's eyebrows twitched.

"Sister Hua Ci!" Ruan Lingyu suddenly pushed open the door and was met with the sight of Lu Ye, his top open and hands on his trousers.

The atmosphere suddenly quieted down.

"I'm interrupting!" Ruan Lingyu quickly exited, gently closing the door behind her. Her heart thumped erratically, and her cheeks heated up. She had no idea when Sister Hua Ci and Senior Brother Yiye...

No wonder Senior Brother Yiye had returned from so far away to find Sister Hua Ci.

Inside the room, Lu Ye methodically redressed, then nodded towards Hua Ci: "Well played!"

Picking up a cup of water, Hua Ci took a leisurely sip and lazily asked, "So, what brings you here this time?"

Lu Ye composed himself and explained his purpose.

Hua Ci nodded, "I see... I'll think about it."

Lu Ye didn't press her; this kind of matter couldn't be forced: "Alright, take your time to think it over."

He turned and walked out the door to find Kong Niu standing there. As their eyes met, the normally stoic Kong Niu managed to force out a smile uglier than crying. Ruan Lingyu, blushing, stood off to the side, seemingly too embarrassed to look at Lu Ye, though she stole glances at him now and then.

Lu Ye felt it was necessary to explain to her, as she seemed to have been frightened by what she saw earlier, but before he could speak up, Ruan Lingyu beat him to it: "Senior Brother Yiye, are you feeling better so quickly?"

After she spoke, she realized her words might be inappropriate and quickly added, "I mean, don't you need to spend more time with Sister Hua Ci?"

Lu Ye took a deep breath and decided not to speak.

The door behind him opened, and Hua Ci stepped out: "I've made up my mind."

"That was fast," Lu Ye said in surprise.

"Weren't you quick as well?" Hua Ci retorted.

Lu Ye stared at her slender and fair neck, holding back the urge to strangle her, and suddenly realized it was a big mistake to come looking for Hua Ci this time.

A woman like her should simply be left to her own devices.

Hua Ci explained to Ruan Lingyu and Kong Niu, "As you've heard before, Yiye is a Disciple of the Righteous Blood Sect. He's come to take us back to the sect. I've decided to go with him. If you two are willing, you can come along. If not, you're free to make your own way."

Ruan Lingyu finally understood the purpose of Lu Ye's visit and immediately nodded excitedly: "I want to!"

Kong Niu didn't say a word, just nodded slightly to express his stance.

"Shall we go then?" Hua Ci looked at Lu Ye.

"Let's roll!" Lu Ye beckoned with a wave.

Things went unexpectedly smoothly. Lu Ye had thought he might need to persuade Hua Ci if she refused, but to his surprise, she agreed so readily.

It was probably related to the ordeal with the Independent Wanderers Society. Of the eleven members, only three remained after the slaughter. This time, Lu Ye happened to be there to help Hua Ci kill that Level 7, but there was no guarantee she wouldn't encounter such dangers again in the future.

She couldn't always be this lucky.

But if she went to the Righteous Blood Sect with Lu Ye, situations like that shouldn't happen again with his protection.

The giant eagle's back was spacious enough for four people to sit comfortably. As the eagle soared high into the air, Kong Niu's face turned instantly pale, and Ruan Lingyu screamed repeatedly, while only Hua Ci seemed calm, though her tightly clenched fists betrayed her inner unease.

After getting past the initial discomfort, Ruan Lingyu quickly became excited, occasionally stretching out her arms and shouting loudly. Even Hua Ci leaned over from time to time to peek downwards, looking like a girl who had never seen the world before.

Kong Niu sat upright, pale as a sheet.

Seeing his poor condition, Lu Ye asked with concern, "Kong Niu, are you alright?"

Kong Niu's lips moved stiffly as he uttered a few hard-won words: "I'm fine, it's just too high."

Both Hua Ci and Ruan Lingyu looked at Kong Niu in surprise, having never imagined that this solid, quiet man had such a vulnerable side.

The journey that took Lu Ye almost five days to complete on the way there took just as long on the return.

Days later, the giant eagle landed in the plaza of the Righteous Blood Sect's headquarters. One by one, they dismounted. Kong Niu fell to his knees with a thud, gasping for breath as if he had just climbed ashore from a near-drowning.

The young girl Ruan Lingyu softly patted his back.

Hands poised in front of her, Hua Ci looked around: "Is this the Righteous Blood Sect headquarters?"

While Lu Ye rewarded Little Gray with a few Blood Red Trout, he nodded: "It's a bit run-down since it hasn't been managed for decades."

After eating the trout, Little Gray spread its wings and flew away, perching on a nearby mountain.

Next, Lu Ye activated his battlefield marking to send a message, reassuring his Second Senior Sister. Only then did he lead Hua Ci and the others around the headquarters.

Speaking of which, Lu Ye wasn't too familiar with his own residence. He hadn't visited many places there, and the place he frequented most was the training room, where he mainly focused on cultivation.

This exploration, however, turned out to be quite enjoyable.

After finding a place for Hua Ci and the others to stay, he led them around the marketplace.

It was Lu Ye's first visit to the marketplace. Chen Yu, who had somehow learned of their arrival, hurried over to receive them. He seemed to think that Lu Ye was there to inspect the marketplace, so he was very careful in every aspect, and even more attentive to Hua Ci and others who were clearly close to Lu Ye.

The marketplace run by the Righteous Blood Sect was not small; in fact, it was larger than any marketplace Lu Ye had seen before, located on the outermost edge of the residence. Independent cultivators were cautious by nature, and even though no one had come to the sect headquarters for decades, they dared not venture into the inner parts of the residence.

Therefore, despite the bustling activity here, it actually didn't affect the main residence that much, but rather added a bit of liveliness.

Having a marketplace nearby was also convenient for Lu Ye, as his cultivation mainly consumed elixir pills, but he had more Spirit Stones on hand, which he could use to buy elixir pills here.

When Chen Yu learned that Hua Ci was a healing cultivator, his attitude became even warmer. The number of healing cultivators among independent cultivators was very scarce. If they got injured in a fight, the better-off ones would take healing pills, while those less fortunate would have to rely on a slow self-healing process.

It was foreseeable that if Hua Ci set up a medical treatment place here, the business would certainly flourish.

After going around, Hua Ci and the others had some understanding of the place. Lu Ye let them act on their own and then took his leave.

He hadn't returned to the sect headquarters for more than ten days. Although he had previously sent a message to Second Senior Sister to report his safety, she was still somewhat worried.

When he returned to the sect headquarters through the Heaven's Augury Pillar, Second Senior Sister had already prepared a table full of medicinal cuisine.

Lu Ye then started to eat voraciously, but without his Fourth Senior Brother around, the atmosphere was somewhat less lively.

Shui Yuan didn't eat much; the meal was prepared for Lu Ye. While serving dishes to Lu Ye, she said, "The few people you brought back, if you think they are trustworthy, then bring them into the sect."

With food in his mouth, Lu Ye responded vaguely, "Is that okay?"

Shui Yuan smiled gently, "You are the Governor, and you have the right to decide on admissions. We didn't recruit people before due to the circumstances, but now that we've started, it doesn't matter

anymore. Not only should we recruit, but we should also recruit more. This relates to some future matters of the sect, and those independent cultivators who wish to join us can all be welcomed.

In this way, if anything happens at the residence later on, like if we are declared war upon, you will have useful people at your disposal."

"Understood."

"You can consider the recruitment yourself, the old man and I don't have any objections. The independent cultivators don't matter much, but if you want to bring them into the sect, you need to bring them back to the headquarters. I need to register them and verify their backgrounds," said Shui Yuan.

"Understood."

While eating, Yiyi ran over and sat next to Lu Ye, looking at him with a smile.

"Got some good news?" Lu Ye looked at her.

"No, nothing." Yiyi shook her head, "I just haven't seen you for a few days and came to check on you."

"So mysterious!" Lu Ye swallowed his food, "By the way, I have something to tell you. Do you remember that girl Ruan Lingyu?"

"Yes, I do. And Sister Hua Ci and the others." Yiyi nodded, suddenly getting nervous, "What happened to them?"

"They ran into some trouble at the Independent Wanderers Society, and only three members survived. Don't worry, both Hua Ci and Lingyu are fine. I've already brought them to our residence," Lu Ye reassured her.

Yiyi's eyes widened in shock, "You brought Lingyu to the residence?" Then she dashed off, her voice trailing behind her, "I'm going to see Lingyu!"

Soon after, Yiyi's calls could be heard: "Amber, Amber!"

"Wait for me!" Lu Ye called out back, but there was no response. He couldn't help but shake his head, "Always in such a rush."

After gobbling up the rest of the food on the table, Lu Ye patted his belly and stood up, "Second Senior Sister, I'm going to bring her into the residence."

"Go ahead," Shui Yuan replied, cleaning up the dishes and utensils.

Lu Ye went out for a walk but couldn't find Yiyi or Amber anywhere.

Eventually, he concluded they were no longer at the headquarters.

Upon entering the residence, Lu Ye finally found Yiyi, who was cheerfully chatting with Lingyu.

Lu Ye looked at her, befuddled, "How did you get in here?"

Yiyi was a minion spirit born alongside Amber, who was Yiyi's beast pet. Logically, without Lu Ye, they shouldn't have been able to enter the residence.

Yiyi proudly raised her right hand, and as she channeled spirit force, a battlefield marking appeared on the back of her hand!

Lu Ye was astonished, "You can have a marking too?"

"The sect master branded it on me," Yiyi giggled, "I'm also a Disciple of the Righteous Blood Sect now!"

That was possible? Lu Ye was somewhat taken aback.

But then, thinking about it, this was actually good; if Yiyi had the battlefield marking, she could enter and exit the residence at will with Amber, not needing to rely on Lu Ye.

"So that means... you are my Junior Sister now?" Lu Ye suddenly realized.

Yiyi stood up, bowed respectfully to Lu Ye, "Righteous Blood Sect Disciple Lu Yiyi greets Senior Brother Yiye!"

Lu Ye immediately raised his hand, "Looks like someone is asking for a spanking!"

Yiyi let out a yelp and quickly hid behind Hua Ci. Then she peeked out her little head and stuck her tongue out at Lu Ye.

Chapter 184 The Sect Master Got Hammered

The day after he brought Hua Ci and the others back, Lu Ye asked for their opinions and then, using the authority granted to him as Governor, took them back to the sect headquarters.

With her status as Seal Envoy, Shui Yuan branded Hua Ci and the other two with the battlefield marking of the Righteous Blood Sect. After paying respects to the sect master, Hua Ci and the others formally became disciples of the Righteous Blood Sect.

With that, including Yiyi, the Righteous Blood Sect now had five disciples within the Spirit Stream Realm.

Ruan Lingyu was very happy, and even the stoic Kong Niu had a few more smiles. Those days spent as independent cultivators were always tough, but from today onwards, they too had the backing of a sect.

As for Hua Ci... Lu Ye could sense that she did not have a strong personal desire to join a sect.

If she truly wanted to join any sect, with her current status as a Level 6 healing cultivator, she could easily receive attention from any sect in the outer circle, as healing cultivators were always indispensable talents for any big sect.

Her willingness to join the Righteous Blood Sect this time was partly due to her previous experiences, as she wanted to provide a more stable life for Ruan Lingyu and Kong Niu, and also because of Lu Ye.

Looking back, she had once harbored the thought of incorporating Lu Ye into the Independent Wanderers Society, but she did not mention it, considering which powerful family he might come from.

Yet, after all the twists and turns, the Independent Wanderers Society had disbanded, and she ended up becoming a disciple of the Righteous Blood Sect instead. It just goes to show that the affairs of the world are beyond words.

As disciples of the Righteous Blood Sect, they received a monthly stipend, which is a benefit provided by every sect. When Ruan Lingyu received her first stipend from Shui Yuan, she laughed until she cried, and Yiyi comforted her for a long time.

In the training room quarters, Lu Ye spent a great deal of effort constructing Spirit Energy Gathering Spirit Runes in several rooms. With this setup, Hua Ci and the others would be able to cultivate more efficiently here in the future.

Furthermore, now that they had joined the Righteous Blood Sect, the stipend given by his Second Senior Sister was substantial, and they did not have to worry about resources for their cultivation for a while.

Leaving the training room, he saw Hua Ci waiting outside. She had just tried out her own training room and was truly astonished by the richness of nature's spiritual energy within, which made her understand why Lu Ye's cultivation had improved so rapidly.

"Something on your mind?" Lu Ye asked her.

Hua Ci said, "The reason you went to Mount Ying to find me, was it for the Spirit Stream Defense Battle?"

"Who told you?" Lu Ye said, surprised. He had not yet had the chance to speak of it, as he had been planning to discuss it with Hua Ci in a couple of days, but she already had news of it beforehand.

"Chen Yu told me. He said you were looking to find someone from among the independent cultivators to accompany you, but you couldn't find a suitable candidate."

Lu Ye nodded, "I did consider that."

"Then why didn't you speak up? Were you afraid I'd hold you back?"

"No, that's not it. I just haven't had the opportunity yet. Now that you know, what do you think?"

Hua Ci lowered her eyes submissively, "My life was saved by you. Whatever you say goes. Do I even have room to resist?"

"Cut it out," Lu Ye replied uneasily. "It's your decision. If you want to go, we need to sign up in the next few days. If you don't want to go, then don't; I'm not insisting."

"Why wouldn't I go? If you're not scared at Level 5, why should I be scared at Level 6?" Hua Ci said with a light, graceful smile.

Lu Ye nodded and turned towards Heaven's Augury Hall. He didn't get far before turning back, looking at Hua Ci seriously, "Other sects' Governors usually have at least one Level 7 among them. It will be dangerous inside. Are you truly going to go?"

"I am," Hua Ci smiled, pressing her lips together. "If I don't go, who will collect your body?"

Lu Ye snorted and walked away.

He soon arrived at Heaven's Augury Hall and connected with the Heaven's Augury Pillar, using his authority as Governor to spend five hundred merit points for an augmentation.

In an instant, he felt a strange change inside the Heaven's Augury Pillar, accompanied by a series of clicking noises as the pillar turned left and right.

Then, the spiritual energy of heaven and earth around them began to surge, becoming even denser.

This was the effect of the Heaven's Augury Pillar's augmentation. The original pillar only increased the Spiritual Energy density in the area by ten percent more than the wilderness, and one augmentation increased it by another ten percent. In other words, the Spiritual Energy at the Righteous Blood Sect's location was now twenty percent denser than in the wilderness.

Lu Ye tried to purchase another augmentation but wasn't successful – he had run out of merit points. The feedback from his Governor's seal indicated that the second augmentation would cost a thousand merit points. He didn't know how much the third would cost.

The Fourth Senior Brother once said that the cost of augmentations from the Heaven's Augury Pillar would increase the farther you go, which meant it was not something a single cultivator could afford. It required the collective effort of the entire sect to accumulate the necessary merits.

Additionally, the Governor could adjust the range of the Heaven's Augury Pillar's augmentation. Lu Ye had the option to confine the augmentation's effects to certain areas, meaning that if he wanted, the marketplace where the independent cultivators stayed would not benefit from this enhanced Spiritual Energy.

With one augmentation, the Righteous Blood Sect was now eligible to sign up for the Spirit Stream Defense Battle. Lu Ye fiddled around for quite a while before figuring out how to register. As Heaven's Augury descended, his battlefield marking slightly heated up, and a flood of information entered his mind.

There were still several days before the Spirit Stream Defense Battle would officially begin, and before then, Lu Ye could raise his cultivation to the Level 6 Realm. He was only a step away from Level 6.

This was the confidence he had for wanting to participate in the Spirit Stream Defense Battle. Being at Level 5 was somewhat inadequate, but if he were to reach Level 6, the situation would change.

Inside the rear hall of Righteous Peak at the sect headquarters, Lu Ye and Hua Ci arrived side by side.

"Sect Master, did you want to see us?" Lu Ye greeted with a fist and palm salute, and Hua Ci also performed a disciple's bow.

The sect master turned around, "Your Second Senior Sister told me that you two are prepared to participate in the Spirit Stream Defense Battle, and that you've already registered?"

"Yes."

"It's good for you to see the world out there," the sect master nodded slightly. "Righteous Blood Sect has not taken in disciples for several decades, and now with several of you, there's much more life in the sect. It's a pity this old body of mine can't help you much, and last time I almost caused you harm because of past events."

Lu Ye hurriedly said, "As a disciple who has joined the Righteous Blood Sect, I should naturally bear the sect's grudges and fortunes. Moreover, in the end, I was lucky to turn misfortune into fortune, thanks in large part to the remaining prestige of the sect. You need not worry, Sect Master."

Patting his beard, the sect master remarked, "It's commendable that you think this way." He sighed and then said, "Come with me; I'll take you to a place."

With that, he walked outside, and Lu Ye and Hua Ci quickly followed him.

Upon exiting the main hall, with a wave of his wide sleeve and the surging of his powerful spirit force, he enveloped Lu Ye and Hua Ci, shooting up into the sky.

Moments later, they landed on the mountaintop of a spirit peak. Lu Ye turned his head to look back and could see Righteous Peak not far away, which meant they were likely still within the Righteous Blood Sect headquarters.

At the top of the peak stood a building that was neither quite a hall nor a tower, with an odd shape.

Standing in front of the building, the sect master turned back to Lu Ye and Hua Ci and instructed, "Wait here."

He straightened his expression and proceeded forward.

Outside the hall, Hua Ci nudged Lu Ye's arm and they exchanged glances, both inquiring and unsure. Lu Ye slowly shook his head; he had never been here before and had no idea why the sect master had brought him and Hua Ci to this place.

While musing, they suddenly heard a woman's voice from inside, "You old thing actually have the face to come find me?"

Lu Ye was startled. There was actually someone here?

As he wondered, a gust of wind hit them in the face. With his vision, Lu Ye could just make out a dark shadow flying out from the building and hitting a large tree with a loud boom.

The wind made the garments flap wildly and the cheeks of Lu Ye sting. He turned and squinted at the sight, his face changing dramatically. He and Hua Ci hurriedly went to help the sect master who was now slumped on the ground.

The sect master had a dark bruise on his left eye, clearly marked by a fist imprint.

"Sect Master, this..." Lu Ye had no idea what had happened; all he knew was that a woman lived here and that this woman had just pummeled the sect master...

"It's nothing, it's nothing," the sect master lightly brushed off his clothes and explained to Lu Ye, "An old friend of mine lives here. She has quite a temper. I'll go talk to her again. Just wait here."

Lu Ye and Hua Ci watched speechlessly as the sect master entered the building again.

"Get lost! Dare to come in again and I'll break all three of your legs!"

Another furious shout followed, and then the sect master was sent flying out again, hitting the same tree and slowly sliding down.

This time the sect master's right eye was also bruised... Two fist imprints, one on each side, perfectly symmetrical.

"Sect Master!" It was difficult for Lu Ye to watch this unfold.

The sect master raised his hand: "It's all right; just let her vent."

He stood up and went forward for the third time, as if immune to the multitude around him.

Fluctuations of spirit force and the woman's curse soon came from inside. Lu Ye and Hua Ci stood outside, listening with trepidation, fearing the sect master would be thrown out again.

But this time, the sect master wasn't sent flying out, and the cursing inside gradually ceased.

Everything happened so quickly that Lu Ye was struggling to understand, when Hua Ci leaned in close and whispered, "The person living here is probably one of the Sect Master's old flames."

"Nonsense!" Lu Ye rolled his eyes, "Didn't you see the sect master get hammered?"

Hua Ci chuckled, "You're still young, you don't understand women."

"You understand?"

"I am a woman, of course, I understand," Hua Ci puffed up her chest.

Lu Ye felt her reasoning was sound and found himself at a loss for words.

After a while, the authoritative voice of the sect master came from inside, "Come in, all of you."

Lu Ye and Hua Ci immediately straightened their expressions and respectfully answered in agreement, and then they walked into the building, one after the other.

Crossing the threshold into the interior, Lu Ye was astonished; the building appeared small from the outside but was a different world entirely inside. The walls of the building were covered with profound and mysterious spirit runes that moved like fish, appearing and disappearing, unpredictable and ever-changing.

He looked at the spirit runes, unable to recognize a single one, hugely amazed.

They were in a grand hall, where the sect master stood, and beside him was a beautiful woman with a grace that belied her age. At first glance, she seemed young, but upon closer inspection, her eyes betrayed a sense of age and experience.

Chapter 185 Rune Tattoo, Wings

The elderly lady could not be young, for the sect master had referred to her as an old friend, making a conservative estimate that she was from the same era as the sect master. Her youthful appearance was likely the result of special techniques for maintaining beauty.

"This is Madam Yun," the sect master introduced.

Lu Ye and Hua Ci both performed a salute: "We've met Madam Yun."

Madam Yun nodded slightly and sized up Lu Ye, then said, "The old immortals mentioned you encountered some fortunes at the Spirit Stream battlefield, including the inheritance of a spirit runes master?"

Lu Ye did not know how this misunderstanding had come about, but it probably had something to do with his ability to activate spirit runes in battle.

Lu Ye turned to look at the sect master, who nodded slightly to give him a cue.

Lu Ye responded, "Yes."

No matter how one thought about it, the Talent Tree was related to the inheritance of a spirit runes master.

"Activate your spirit runes for me to see," Madam Yun commanded.

Lu Ye hesitated for a moment, then opened his palm and activated a Defense Spirit Rune.

Madam Yun's expression showed surprise: "Such speed..." She had only heard from the sect master that this youngster named Lu Ye had an encounter related to a spirit runes master, but she had not asked for more details until now, and only now did she realize that this young man's mastery of spirit runes had reached the level of spontaneous activation.

However, she was also experienced and well-informed, knowing that disciples from top big sects who had studied the art of spirit runes from a young age might well have the opportunity to achieve this.

She stepped forward, bent down to inspect the spirit runes in Lu Ye's hand: "This is Defense... hmm? Your spirit rune..." She suddenly frowned and, for some reason she grasped Lu Ye's hand to examine it closely.

Lu Ye looked at the sect master for help.

The sect master shook his head slowly, signaling him to remain calm.

After a good while, Madam Yun finally let go of Lu Ye's hand, her expression turning deep in thought.

Seeing this, the sect master asked, "Is there a problem with his spirit runes?"

"No problem," Madam Yun shook her head, "It's just that they're somewhat different from the spirit runes in Nine Provinces, though they seem more logical. I need to do some comparisons to see the specific differences."

While speaking, she turned to Lu Ye: "Do you know any other spirit runes?"

Lu Ye truthfully said, "I know three more."

"Show them to me," she requested.

Lu Ye then activated the spirit runes Sharpness, Gathering Spirit, and Bloodstain, one after the other. After Madam Yun's careful examination, she confirmed, "The heritage you've received is extraordinary; the person who left behind these spirit runes must have had exceptional accomplishments on the Path of Spirit Runes."

"Oh?" the sect master expressed his surprise. It was rare to hear Madam Yun so highly praise someone, and he curiously asked, "How does she compare to you?"

Madam Yun shook her head: "She is more formidable than me. This person's approach to the Path of Spirit Runes has transcended the existing system in Nine Provinces, presenting a remarkably different way of expression, but each spirit rune is much more powerful than those from Nine Provinces." She looked at Lu Ye again: "What do you know about the Path of Spirit Runes?"

Lu Ye was embarrassed: "I only know how to use these four spirit runes; I know nothing else."

Madam Yun was surprised and laughed, "It seems that the inheritance you received was not complete, which is quite common." Indeed, many fortunes and incomplete inheritances from unknown powerful figures were found in the Spirit Stream battlefield.

In Madam Yun's view, although Lu Ye could spontaneously activate those four spirit runes, his knowledge about spirit runes was limited, which clearly indicated an incomplete inheritance. A complete inheritance would at least have allowed Lu Ye to understand the construction methods and basic characteristics of spirit runes.

"You can come to me regularly in the future. You provide these runes for my research, and in return, I can teach you some knowledge about spirit runes. How about that?"

As soon as she said this, the sect master standing beside Madam Yun gestured vigorously to Lu Ye, who caught on immediately: "Yes, thank you, Senior."

Madam Yun nodded with a smile, her expression towards Lu Ye becoming much kinder.

The sect master coughed lightly: "Don't forget the important matter."

"Come with me." As Madam Yun spoke, she led the three down a corridor to a small room with a bed in the middle.

A stool was also nearby.

Upon entering the room, Madam Yun formed a hand seal with one hand and lightly touched a spot on the wall. As spirit force surged, the room lit up brightly, illuminating the space like several powerful lamps, yet the light was not harsh but rather soft and gentle.

"Take off your shirt and climb up there," Madam Yun instructed.

Lu Ye was puzzled.

The sect master explained: "Madam Yun will tattoo a spirit rune onto your body. This kind of rune is known as a rune tattoo, which can bring the effects of spirit runes into play, and might give you some help during the Spirit Stream Defense Battle."

Lu Ye was hearing of such things for the first time and became curious. It seemed this was the reason why the sect master had brought him and Hua Ci here. Without hesitating, he untied his shirt and climbed onto the bed.

Madam Yun, sitting on the nearby stool, took out a jade box and opened it to reveal a collection of needles of varying lengths.

"The ingredient?" Madam Yun held out her hand to the sect master.

The sect master handed her a bottle, which she opened and sniffed, raising an eyebrow: "The blood of a big demon from the True Lake Realm, which demon beast?"

The sect master replied, "Fire entity!"

"It's rare indeed," Madam Yun nodded, then teased with a chuckle, "How unusually generous of you."

The sect master looked sheepish and didn't respond.

Madam Yun took a long needle from the jade box, dipped it into the blood of the fire entity, and unleashed her spirit force. The needle immediately came to life, greedily drawing in the beast blood, and in an instant turned a deep red.

She lifted the needle and placed her hand on Lu Ye's shoulder blade, "It's going to hurt a bit, bear with it."

As soon as her words fell, she stabbed the long needle into Lu Ye's back.

Lu Ye instantly felt a stinging sensation followed by a burning pain. The soreness was not intense, but it was extremely irritating and difficult to endure.

He clenched his teeth tightly.

Madam Yun's hands were very steady; the thin needles in her hand were changed one after another, her movements sometimes quick, sometimes slow, and even the fluctuation of her spirit force varied with her motions.

Hua Ci stood by, watching as a unique pattern of spirit runes slowly formed on Lu Ye's back.

After two hours, with the final needle down, Madam Yun let out a long sigh of relief and gently patted Lu Ye's back, "Done!"

Lu Ye stood up, and after sensing it for a bit, he dimly felt something extra on his back. This thing gave him a peculiar sensation, as if it were integrated into his body, yet also like an external object. He could sense that if he stimulated his spirit force, he could even activate it.

The sect master explained at his side, "Your cultivation is too low right now, not suited for a permanent wings spirit runes, so Madam Yun has given you a temporary rune tattoo. If you encounter an unbeatably strong opponent, activate it with your spirit force, and you'll have the power to fly."

"This spirit rune is called 'Wings'!" Madam Yun continued, "At full power, it can let you fly for just six hours. If you try to extend the time, the wings rune tattoo will lose its effect."

A spirit rune that allowed for flight! Lu Ye was deeply moved and felt the sect master's care.

He and Hua Ci were about to participate in the Spirit Stream Defense Battle, and they couldn't enhance their strength by much, but with this wings rune tattoo, even when faced with an unbeatable powerful opponent, they would have a chance to escape.

However, the cost of such a rune tattoo was not small, not to mention it required a sophisticated expert like Madam Yun, and the blood of the fire entity was a rare treasure as well.

Using the blood of a big demon from the True Lake Realm on someone in the Spirit Stream Realm like Lu Ye was indeed somewhat wasteful.

Lu Ye's heart was full of emotion.

"What are you waiting for? Get out!" Madam Yun suddenly said sternly, ushering them away.

The sect master and Lu Ye quickly left, embarrassed.

The door was closed tightly behind them. The sect master led Lu Ye out of the hall.

"You need practice to master the art of flying. Yiye, would you like to give it a try now?" the sect master asked.

"I was planning to," Lu Ye nodded, a small excitement in his heart.

Flying! Although he had experienced air travel before, it had always been with someone else carrying him. He had never tried flying by himself and thought that he would have to wait until he reached Level 8-9, but now he could experience it ahead of time.

Although the wings rune tattoo could only last six hours in total, the sect master was right: such things needed to be practiced in advance to grasp the essentials; otherwise, any missteps could occur when danger arose.

Stimulating his spirit force and pouring it into his back, the wings rune tattoo activated with a rustling sound. On Lu Ye's left and right shoulder blades, two fiery-red wings of flowing spirit force emerged.

The wings were not thick but quite thin. And by the looks of the wings, they resembled those of a demon beast.

Lu Ye guessed that the appearance of these wings was probably similar to those of a fire entity.

With a flicker of thought, the wings fluttered lightly, a gust of wind howled, and Lu Ye suddenly turned into a streak of firelight, shooting off at a diagonal.

The sect master swept his hand, and a gentle spirit force enveloped Lu Ye, stabilizing him in mid-air.

Looking at a big tree not far in front of him, Lu Ye's forehead broke out in a cold sweat, thankful that the sect master was there to watch him; otherwise, he would have had a hard crash.

As the sect master's spirit force slowly retracted, Lu Ye once again controlled the spirit force wings behind him, attempting to fly.

After numerous failures and several close calls, he slowly got the hang of it and began to fly more steadily, although he still didn't dare to go too fast for fear of losing control.

After practicing for one hour, Lu Ye finally let go, flying around freely in the air, thoroughly enjoying himself.

Considering the wings rune tattoo's limited time, Lu Ye landed with some reluctance as the fiery-red wings on his back slowly disappeared.

This thing was definitely a life-saving tool. The only downside was that it was incredibly draining; he felt that after just one hour, only about thirty percent of his spirit force remained. So unless it was absolutely necessary, he should not activate the wings spirit runes at will.

Hua Ci came out after a little while.

The sect master took Lu Ye to bid farewell to Madam Yun, who waved her hand and then turned back into the house.

Lu Ye raised an eyebrow to Hua Ci, "Want to try flying? The sect master said you need a lot of practice to get the hang of flying."

Hua Ci happily responded, "Sure!"

As spirit force surged, a pair of green wings emerged on her back, and soon she began to float up slowly, wobbling from side to side before stabilizing gracefully.

In a short while, watching Hua Ci dance in the sky like a butterfly, Lu Ye's eyes twitched—how come people were just... different?

Chapter 186 - Spirit Stream Defense Battle

In the training room stationed at the camp, the Spirit Gathering Array and three Spirit Energy Gathering Spirit Runes operated simultaneously, causing nature's spiritual energy to surge wildly. The entire room was filled with a dense spiritual energy, among which streaked lines of blood Qi, writhing like spirit snakes.

Both the spiritual energy and blood Qi, driven by some force, continuously burrowed into Lu Ye's body.

Moreover, his abdomen emitted a series of thunder-like buzzing sounds, the result of the Bestial Gluttony Feast being in operation.

At one moment, Lu Ye opened his eyes, looked down at the back of his hand, where the battlefield marking was slightly warm, with a hint of Heaven's Augury stirring within.

The time had come!

He concluded his practice and stood up, retrieving the Scale Armor placed on the Spirit Gathering Array, and walked out the door.

Shortly, he arrived in front of the Heaven's Augury Pillar at Heaven's Augury Hall.

Hua Ci hadn't arrived yet; lately, she had been inseparable from Second Senior Sister, busy with something. Since both women were healing cultivators, it was probably the case that Second Senior Sister was teaching Hua Ci some aspects of healing cultivation.

While waiting, Lu Ye activated his battlefield marking to check his own information.

Name: Lu Ye.

Identity: Disciple of the Righteous Blood Sect.

Cultivation: 83rd orifice.

Location: Spirit Stream battlefield.

Merit: Twenty-six.

Almost two months had passed since the battle at Golden Light Peak. Since his injuries had significantly healed and he had restored the effects of burning away pill poison with his Talent Tree, Lu Ye's cultivation had been increasing day by day.

Since returning from Madam Yun's place that day, he had advanced to 81 orifices, breaking through to Level 6 of Spirit Stream, and had opened two more orifices as of today.

It is worth mentioning that this progress was also due to some delay. The round trip to Mount Ying to find Hua Ci and the others had taken over ten days. If not for these interruptions, his cultivation would have improved even faster.

Since the training environment in his stationed location was much better than before, it was also much safer.

As for cultivation, he reached his expected results; as for merit... it was somewhat dilapidating.

If it weren't for slaughtering a Level 7 at Mount Ying, Lu Ye's merit would currently only be five, not twenty-six.

Previously, Lu Ye didn't know the use of merit; now he understood, with wondrous places like Heaven's Augury treasure vault, merit was extremely attractive to any cultivator.

Not to mention he also needed to spend merit to purchase fuel for the Talent Tree from the Heaven's Augury treasure vault, foreseeably, his future need for merit would be enormous.

Accumulating merit by killing alone was too slow, unless he could exceed his level in battles. The Spirit Stream Defense Battle was a good opportunity, with every sect betting a basic Dao foundation as stakes, being strong enough there could surely earn massive amounts of merit.

This time in the Spirit Stream Defense Battle, Lu Ye could actually have brought Amber, his beast pet, as they had already established a pet contract, and Amber was part of his own strength; thus, he could fully participate in the Spirit Stream Defense Battle.

However, both Second Senior Sister and Fourth Senior Brother advised against it.

Because the aftermath of the battle at Golden Light Peak had just settled, and many people knew of a large white tiger by Lu Ye's side, bringing Amber along could easily lead to recognition, and possibly attract the gang from Ten Thousand Demons Ridge.

Instead of running such a risk, it was better not to bring him, as this would at least help conceal his identity.

Indeed, many people had seen Lu Ye at Golden Light Peak, but in Spirit Stream battlefield, the Ranks were countless and many who had not seen or recognized him, were far more.

A figure slowly revealed itself beside him, enveloped in a refreshing fragrance, Hua Ci had arrived.

Lu Ye scanned her and said with surprise, "New clothes, new outlook?"

Hua Ci had previously not worn this garment, evidently a new one. It was a tight-fitting white dress adorned with small red flowers on the hem, the pure color complementing Hua Ci's complexion to near perfection.

However, Lu Ye soon sensed something was amiss; this seemed to be more than just a pretty dress.

"Spiritual Artifact?" Lu Ye raised an eyebrow.

"Second Senior Sister gave it to me; she wore it when her cultivation was lower and doesn't need it now."

Could Second Senior Sister's figure fill out this dress? It fits Hua Ci perfectly, yet if worn by Second Senior Sister's petite body, she would probably look like she was dressing up for a play.

Lu Ye felt a bit sour: "I was the one who joined the sect first."

Hua Ci smiled, holding her lips together: "Second Senior Sister said, you combat cultivators are not suited to wear defensive Spiritual Artifacts; excessive protection would cause you to lose your sharpness."

Lu Ye thought for a moment and nodded, "Second Senior Sister has a point." Just as Fourth Senior Brother Li Baxian had taught him during that time, how could combat cultivators advance if they could not feel danger and death up close? Relying on external protection, one would inevitably become overly dependent one day.

His head felt heavy, and turning to look, Lu Ye's expression darkened: "What are you doing?"

This woman... had actually patted his head!

Hua Ci showed a warm smile like that of an older sister: "Nothing, just suddenly felt, this is also quite nice!"

Lu Ye's eyes dropped low: "Hasn't anyone told you, a man's head is not to be touched casually?"

"No," Hua Ci regarded him as a matter of fact, "What consequences could there be?"

Lu Ye's gaze turned fierce...

"It has begun!" Hua Ci suddenly straightened her face and pressed her hand towards the Heaven's Augury Pillar.

Lu Ye glared at her bitterly, somewhat unwillingly placing his hand on it as well.

The Heaven's Augury surged, the scenery around them warped, and the sound of waves faintly reached their ears.

When everything around them stabilized again, the two found themselves in an unfamiliar land, exchanging glances and immediately being on guard.

The next moment, Lu Ye saw two figures not far away. As Lu Ye spotted them, they too were looking in his direction.

As their gazes met, all were wary, secretly stimulating their spirit force.

Lu Ye sized up the spirit light of the two individuals opposite him and discovered that both were at Level 7. Not only that, but the battlefield markings on the backs of their hands also emitted a faint red glow, while his and Hua Ci's markings showed blue light.

Those from Ten Thousand Demons Ridge!

"What a lucky start!" one of the two opposite, a young man dressed in a tight outfit, laughed aloud and charged forward, clearly feeling fortunate to have encountered two Level 6s right away.

Behind him, another Level 7 calmly reminded, "Don't be careless!"

As he spoke, spirit force surged, and a golden light shot out from his hand towards Lu Ye and Hua Ci, unleashing an attack as soon as they made contact.

Hua Ci leaped to the side, while Lu Ye bent down and dashed forward fiercely.

The golden light struck the sandy beach, blasting a hole into it.

The distance between them wasn't great to begin with. As Lu Ye and the young man charged at each other, it rapidly closed.

Lu Ye's arrogant demeanor undoubtedly infuriated the young man with the sword, who drew his sword and stabbed at him, intending to teach Lu Ye a lesson. The sword gleamed with spirit light, flickering like a spirit snake, making this strike imposing.

Lu Ye drew his sword. A flash of fiery red sword light glinted, and with a clanging sound, the young man's face changed drastically, as the force from the sword was immensely powerful, nearly making his longsword fly out of his hand.

Is this guy a physique cultivator or a combat cultivator? The young man with the sword wondered, but his hands did not slow down as he gripped his sword tightly, showcasing all his skills.

The sounds of clashing filled the air, sparks flying everywhere as the two figures tangled in battle. However, the expressions on the faces of the two combatants were different.

Lu Ye's expression remained calm, while the young man with the sword grew more and more horrified, as the supposed easy-to-crush Level 6 cultivator was displaying an extraordinarily powerful combat ability.

He was stunned to find that he was somewhat outmatched!

The opponent's speed and strength surpassed his own, and in just a short exchange, he had completely fallen behind. Every collision made his sword wail and his palms ache.

Is this really a Level 6?

He seriously suspected that the opponent might be wearing a Spiritual Artifact that concealed his cultivation, pretending to be weak while being strong.

However, the principles of Heaven's Augury were beyond doubt. They were supposed to encounter opponents not stronger than themselves in this place.

Another three breaths passed, and the young man with the sword felt he could no longer hold on. The palms holding the sword were already cracked, with blood flowing freely.

No longer hesitating, he quickly took out a Golden Body Talisman and stimulated his spirit force to slap it on himself, but this action undoubtedly exposed even more flaws.

Most combat cultivators during battle wouldn't activate a spirit talisman because it disrupted their combat rhythm.

Lu Ye's Boulder Mountain Saber flicked up, accompanied by a clanging sound. The young man's longsword was knocked out of his hand, and he himself screamed and flew backward. The Golden Body Talisman on his body, which had just taken effect, was instantly dimmed and shattered by that slash.

Lu Ye was already pursuing him, delivering a slash towards his flying body.

While he was full of shock, a cunning triumph flashed in his eyes as he gestured with one hand, his body surging with spirit force, "Die!"

The flying longsword immediately turned into a streak of flowing light, plummeting from midair directly behind Lu Ye.

Blood splattered, and the eyes of the young man with the sword shifted from slyness to horror as he was cleaved from between his legs, leaving a foot-long gash.

At the same time, Lu Ye too was knocked down onto the sandy beach by the descending flying sword, his back aching. With his previous experience at Mount Ying, how could he not anticipate the opponent's weapon control technique? As the opponent controlled his weapon, Lu Ye had constructed a Defense Spirit Rune behind him.

Once cultivators reached Level 7, they could practice the Weapon Control Path, partly to lay a foundation for future weapon control flying, and also to provide the cultivator with another means of slaying the enemy.

Under weapon control, the wielded Spiritual Artifact could unleash even greater power.

Scrambling to his feet, the sword-holding youth hadn't died yet. Lu Ye's Boulder Mountain Saber flipped and plunged into his chest. As he withdrew the sword, blood gushed out.

Without a moment's pause, he dashed towards the magic cultivator, leaving deep footprints in the damp sand.

The magic cultivator was bombarding Hua Ci with magic and spells, putting her in extreme disarray. He had assumed his comrade could handle Lu Ye, but the outcome had shocked him.

His Level 7 comrade had been killed by a Level 6! What a fool!

The magic cultivator fumed internally. He hadn't clearly seen what had transpired, only feeling that his comrade had been too careless. Otherwise, how could a Level 7 be no match for a Level 6?

Chapter 187 Chess Sea

Seeing Lu Ye charging towards himself, the magic cultivator no longer cared about Hua Ci, and the golden light in his hand changed direction, blasting towards Lu Ye.

As he charged, Lu Ye's figure flitted and swayed, seemingly narrowly avoiding the opponent's spells in dangerously close calls, but in reality, he was doing so with ease.

His eyes could see the rapidly wind-like traces of the spells, and his movements could keep up with the commands of his thoughts. As such, unless it was a spell with a wide coverage area or one that was extremely fast, it was very difficult for them to hit him.

Three breaths later, the magic cultivator's eyes were brimming with horror, because the fellow charging at him had perfectly dodged every single spell he cast!

He hastily retreated while the spirit force around his body surged wildly. A large ball of golden light rapidly gathered in front of his chest, bearing the look of a highly powerful spell being prepared.

Just then, a streak of emerald green shot through the air like an arrow from the side, striking the magic cultivator, whose entire attention was absorbed by Lu Ye. He was completely unprepared for this attack, and was struck so hard that he stumbled, his hastily gathered spirit force dissipating.

Hua Ci had made her move.

Indeed, she was a healing cultivator, but that did not mean she lacked the ability to fight. As an independent cultivator, lacking the ability to fight would have seen her dead long ago.

In addition to being a healing cultivator, she was also a magic cultivator, albeit one who didn't possess many spells, and those she knew were not particularly powerful.

This emerald green spell did not carry much killing power, but its effect was incredibly pronounced.

The Level 7 magic cultivator's spell preparation was interrupted. Seeing Lu Ye already closing the distance, he was forced, in his panic, to once again launch the same golden light towards Lu Ye.

Lu Ye's figure shifted, easily dodging the attack, and the Boulder Mountain Saber came slicing down, its bright blade flashing.

The golden light that had accumulated around the magic cultivator's body shattered explosively. A wretched scream filled the air as a huge wound was sliced across his chest, and he staggered backwards.

Like a bone-burrowing maggot, Lu Ye relentlessly followed up with a thrust, its blade now even sharper with the enhancement of sharpness spirit runes.

This strike pierced through the heart and out the back.

The magic cultivator grasped the blade with his hand, his eyes filled with a flabbergasted expression. It was only now that he finally understood that his companion had not died due to negligence, but because the enemy was too strong.

Lu Ye withdrew the saber, and along with severed limbs, blood sprayed into the air. The magic cultivator's body wobbled in place for a moment before collapsing to the ground, blood gushing beneath him, eyes wide open, meeting his demise without closing them.

Once Lu Ye closed the distance, it took only two strikes to slay a Level 7 magic cultivator, which was much simpler than killing a combat cultivator. But don't think that magic cultivators are easy to kill. At the same level of cultivation, it's very difficult for a combat cultivator to get close to a magic cultivator. Lu Ye had learned this the hard way when his own cultivation was not very high.

But now, it was almost impossible for a magic cultivator of the same level to hurt him, not to mention the consequences of letting him get close.

Two red lights flew out one after another, landing on the back of Lu Ye's hand.

He looked down and confirmed that his personal merit had increased by twenty-eight points. There were additional items in the mark—upon closer inspection, he realized it was the boost from the Heaven's Augury Pillar.

Every sect that entered here would stake a boost worth five hundred merit points. By killing them, one could seize this stake. As long as Lu Ye survived and returned to the Righteous Blood Sect, he could choose to place these seized boosts into his own sect's Heaven's Augury Pillar, enhancing the spiritual energy of his station, or exchange them for an equivalent amount of sect merit.

Sect merit differed from personal merit, but there was a certain degree of conversion between the two.

Therefore, every Spirit Stream Defense Battle had been a grand event for the Nine Provinces sects throughout the years. Due to the balance provided by the Heaven's Augury, both big sects and minor sects were eager to participate in such grand occasions.

"Are you alright?" Lu Ye turned his head to look at Hua Ci. He saw no obvious injuries, though she appeared a bit disheveled.

Hua Ci shook her head. Although her cultivation was one level lower than the Level 7 magic cultivator, it wouldn't have been easy for him to kill her. The Spiritual Artifact given to her by her Second Senior Sister greatly enhanced her defensive power.

After collecting the spoils of battle, they started to survey the surrounding terrain.

Moments later, standing at the highest point, they looked around and discovered that it was a small island. It was not large, being only about the size of a plaza. The island's vegetation was plentiful, but it was surrounded by sea on all sides.

With such a confined geography, it was impossible for others to be hiding here. In other words, besides themselves, there were only the two previously killed Ten Thousand Demons Ridge cultivators on this island.

The island was rich in spiritual energy, comparable to the wilds of the Spirit Stream battlefield, which was convenient for cultivation and recovery after combat.

"Chess Sea!" breathed out Lu Ye, determining the location of this Spirit Stream Defense Battle.

Each Spirit Stream Defense Battle took place in a different small space. According to incomplete statistics by the big sects of the Nine Provinces, the Spirit Stream Defense Battle had manifested in thirty-four different small spaces to date, including forests, deserts, marshes, plains, and oceans.

Chess Sea was one of the most famous of these spaces, as the small islands scattered across the unknown seas were like chess pieces on a chessboard.

The key thing was that these islands were not fixed; they drifted continuously in the sea. Over time, they would merge with other islands, and small islands would become medium-sized islands, which would then become large islands.

Eventually, all the islands would merge into one, forming a large mass of land.

This was an incredibly magical place, but it wasn't the friendliest for cultivators participating in the Spirit Stream Defense Battle.

Because if it were any other terrain, cultivators who were no longer able to fight could choose to flee to the periphery, finding a suitable place to hide and wait for the Spirit Stream Defense Battle to end.

But the Chess Sea was different, the continual fusion of small islands was destined to cause collisions between cultivators of different camps, leading to skirmishes.

Moreover, the vast sea within the Chess Sea harbored various dangers, including fierce and massive sea demon beasts, so hiding in the sea was also not an option.

Furthermore, one could not recklessly fly before those small islands had finished fusing, because flying above the sea consumed an enormous amount of spirit force, possibly exhausting all of one's spirit force before traveling very far.

Therefore, within the Chess Sea, even those from the Core Circle, such as the Governors, had no way of taking the initiative to attack; everyone could only obediently wait for their islands to merge with others.

If one were to rank the death and injury rates of the Spirit Stream Defense Battle by different small spaces, then the Chess Sea would definitely be in the top three.

Lu Ye had no idea what other cultivators would think upon learning this place was the Chess Sea, but when he exchanged glances with Hua Ci, they both saw the excitement in each other's eyes.

"I'm going to plant mushrooms," Hua Ci said so, and then happily made her way toward the center of the island.

Since Lu Ye and Hua Ci were to participate in the Spirit Stream Defense Battle together, they naturally had some understanding of each other and were clear about each other's methods of killing enemies and self-preservation.

Hua Ci's methods of killing were not many, and it was difficult for her to kill powerful enemies in a very short time like Lu Ye; however, if given enough time and space to set up, she could play a role far exceeding that of a Level 6 cultivator.

Planting mushrooms was her most powerful method.

Previously at Mount Ying, those cultivators from Ten Thousand Demons Ridge had unknowingly been mushrooomed by Hua Ci; if Lu Ye had arrived a few days later, when Hua Ci was fully prepared, she would have had the ability to kill those three Ten Thousand Demons Ridge cultivators herself, and even make them die without realizing it.

However, because of Lu Ye's arrival, Hua Ci could only launch an incomplete technique in haste; still, it caused great disturbance to the mind of the Level 7 cultivator.

After learning about Hua Ci's abilities, Lu Ye was secretly shocked; who would have thought that a healing cultivator, with a mission to save the world and heal the injured, would have such bizarre methods.

This also made him reevaluate and understand the character of a healing cultivator, especially independent cultivators like Hua Ci, who might appear gentle and benevolent on the surface but could possess the ability to slaughter cities and wipe out nations.

It could be said that a small space like the Chess Sea was extremely friendly to cultivators like Hua Ci and was the most suitable place for her to exhibit her abilities.

This was Lu Ye's luck, for he had no idea that the location of this Spirit Stream Defense Battle would be the Chess Sea before coming in.

Hua Ci was busy, not just planting mushrooms but also gathering medicinal herbs.

The Chess Sea was a place where spiritual energy was extremely rich, suitable for the growth of medicinal herbs, and cultivators could earn an income just by gathering medicinal herbs here, even if they did not kill any enemies.

Lu Ye was on guard by her side, the island was only so large, and one could see the end at a glance, so it was not difficult to keep watch.

But he could indeed feel that the island was drifting at a not-so-slow speed in one direction, and he was curious about how this island could be floating on the sea, as it was not a ship, and it couldn't possibly be empty below.

The battlefield marking suddenly reacted, and upon checking, Lu Ye found a message from his Fourth Senior Brother, Li Baxian. As the Deputy Governor of the Loyal Heart Sect, Li Baxian naturally also came to participate in the Spirit Stream Defense Battle and was now in the Chess Sea, definitely in the most central area.

In the message, Li Baxian informed him of various intelligence about the Chess Sea and ended with a warning, "Little Junior Brother, act according to your capabilities, and do not try to show off your strength."

Lu Ye replied with a thank you.

With Hua Ci having set up everything properly and nothing else to do, Lu Ye simply switched his Cultivation Technique and began his cultivation practice.

Before merging with another island, there would be no danger here.

Two hours later, Hua Ci suddenly called out to him.

Lu Ye stopped cultivating, leaped to the highest point, and stood beside Hua Ci, looking in the direction she pointed. In their field of view, a small black dot was moving toward them.

Another small island was drifting over, or rather, the two islands were attracting each other and moving closer.

The distance was still a bit far, and it was temporarily impossible to see the situation on it clearly, nor could they tell if there were any enemies on it.

The sea breeze howled, filling their mouths and noses with the salty taste.

Lu Ye silently estimated, at this rate, it would not take more than one hour for the two islands to collide.

Lu Ye thought for a moment, put the Boulder Mountain Saber, which was hanging at his waist, into the storage sack, and stood shoulder to shoulder with Hua Ci.

Once the two islands got close enough, they suddenly sped up, as if some force was pulling them toward each other.

At this distance, Lu Ye could also see the situation on the opposite island; likewise, there were two people standing at a high place, looking over at their side.

Chapter 188 - Mushroom Kill

They sized each other up, confirming each other's cultivation levels.

The two facing them were Level 7, carrying swords at their waists, appearing to be combat cultivators.

Before they even got close, one of the slightly thinner figures loudly called out, "Which camp do Fellow Daoists belong to? We are from the Haotian Alliance!"

The distance was still not enough, so the battlefield markings on the back of their hands had not reacted yet. However, if they had been close enough, their affiliation would have been clear at a glance, just like when Lu Ye and Hua Ci first arrived here and encountered two from Ten Thousand Demons Ridge, with the markings on their hands shimmering faintly.

This was a rule during the Spirit Stream Defense Battle, convenient for verifying each other's positions.

Lu Ye looked at him expressionlessly and did not answer.

The thin cultivator then said, "If it's convenient for Fellow Daoist, please show the battlefield marking to avoid misunderstanding."

Lu Ye silently activated his spirit force, raised his hand, and a fat firebird flapping its wings charged towards them. The corpulent firebird was so plump that it momentarily stunned Hua Ci, who then followed up with a magic spell as green as an arrow.

This was the first time she had seen Lu Ye use a magic spell, and of such a form too. If the situation hadn't been inappropriate, she probably couldn't have helped but laugh out loud.

That's when she realized why Lu Ye had put away his sword...

The two spells, one after another, blasted towards the opposite side. It wasn't that Lu Ye saw that they were lying, but rather that the newcomers inherently harbored ill intentions.

In the Nine Provinces, on the Spirit Stream battlefield, strange cultivators meeting each other wouldn't easily reveal their stance—it was common knowledge. The fact that they declared themselves from the Haotian Alliance right off the bat was suspicious.

Even if they truly were from the Haotian Alliance, it wouldn't matter, they could simply apologize later after the two islands merged.

But if the others were from Ten Thousand Demons Ridge... they were definitely from Ten Thousand Demons Ridge.

Striking first was simply to take the initiative.

With spirit force bursting forth, the shouting thin cultivator angrily burst out, "How daring, to launch a sneak attack! It seems you are tired of living!"

Though he said so, his actions did not stop as both of them dodged and moved around.

Neither Lu Ye's Fire Phoenix Technique nor Hua Ci's Green Arrow Technique were very powerful, and they weren't fast either. With a certain distance between them, dodging wasn't difficult; as one side fought merrily, the other evaded spiritedly, with the two islands quickly drawing closer.

Perhaps feeling too embarrassed by just taking hits without retaliating, the two combat cultivators opposite communicated briefly and each reached into their storage sacks at their waists, pulling out Spirit Talismans and activating them to attack Lu Ye and Hua Ci.

For a time, the sea was extremely lively with firebirds, green arrows, Golden Arc Slashes, and ice spikes crisscrossing back and forth.

While fighting back, the thin cultivator sneered, "Two Level 6 junior magic cultivators, just you wait, you'll get what's coming to you soon!"

As the words fell, all four of them staggered as the two islands collided.

Lu Ye and Hua Ci stumbled in a highly synchronized manner, appearing extremely disheveled. Meanwhile, the opposites stabilized themselves quickly, each pushing off powerfully with their feet, one rushing to the left and the other to the right towards them.

As the distance closed, the markings on the back of their hands gradually began to glow.

The backs of their hands blazed with red light—not from the Haotian Alliance at all, but clearly from Ten Thousand Demons Ridge.

"You're dead!" said the thin cultivator, his voice chillingly cold. Dodging several of Lu Ye's magic spells, he had already rushed close to him, and the other was targeting Hua Ci, who immediately left Lu Ye behind in a panic to flee.

"Haha," laughed the thin cultivator heartily, as if enjoying the sight of 'birds of a feather flocking together until disaster strikes and they flee separately.'

Dodging another magic spell, the thin cultivator leaped high, his longsword drawn from its sheath, a confident expression on his face.

One cultivation level above his opponent, and with a magic cultivator within reach, he was confident!

Then he saw Lu Ye reach into his storage sack and pull out a longsword...

"Huh?" A flicker of unease crossed the thin cultivator's mind.

And as Lu Ye drew his sword, with a flash of the blade, that unease soared to its peak, turning into terror.

With a clang, the longsword was knocked flying, and the thin cultivator, suspended in mid-air without any leverage, watched as Lu Ye's sword was enveloped in a fiery red spirit force, burning like the entire blade was aflame, then slashing down a second time!

"Ay!"

A scream echoed as a spray of fresh blood burst from the thin cultivator, who was hacked aside, one arm flying off.

Only then did he realize—the young Level 6 wasn't just a magic cultivator; this guy was also a combat cultivator!

But could a combat cultivator cast spells that fast? He hadn't had any doubts about this earlier, but the rapidity of the opponent's spellcasting had dispelled his suspicions; such swift spell formation couldn't be achieved without long-term practice.

Cunning little thief! The thin cultivator inwardly cursed, clenching his remaining hand in a magic gesture, frantically urging his spirit force, causing the flown-out longsword to tremble with a buzzing sound, turning into a stream of light.

However, before he could even activate this sword stream of light, his vision was already filled with slashing light, his life force rapidly fading.

From his charge at Lu Ye to now, it was only a matter of three breaths...

After slaying this man, Lu Ye immediately chased after the other cultivator, who was pursuing Hua Ci. Though Hua Ci was fast, she inevitably wasn't quicker than a combat cultivator. Just as she was about to be overtaken, the scream from behind startled that man.

When he turned his head to look back, he saw Lu Ye charging towards him with a fierce momentum.

His own companion had died? How? And, wasn't this youth a magic cultivator? What did it mean that he was holding a sword?

In that instant, one question after another erupted in his mind, none of which he could answer.

He hesitated for a moment between turning to face the enemy and continuing his pursuit, and before he could decide, he suddenly felt dizzy.

Beneath his feet, a gray mushroom was crushed, and its nearly imperceptible spores swirled around him, being inhaled into his lungs.

Although he did not know what had happened, he instinctively stimulated his spirit force and dispelled the uncomfortable sensation.

But in that blink of an eye's delay, Lu Ye had already rushed up close, and facing the sword strike from him, the cultivator could only fight back.

The sound of clanging rang out, and as the Spiritual Artifacts clashed, sparks flew everywhere.

The fleeing Hua Ci also stopped and turned around, with spirit force surging around her, and as she acted, the spirit light that blossomed from the Level 7 cultivator's body began to dim and become obscure.

Lu Ye felt that his opponent's moves were getting weaker and weaker. At the beginning of the battle, the opponent performed just like any other Level 7 cultivator, but after two moves, it seemed like his strength was greatly suppressed, and the fluctuations of spirit force on his body were now on par with his own.

He could kill a Level 7 cultivator, let alone a Level 6. Wanting to see Hua Ci's methods, he did not deliver a deadly blow but kept entangling with the opponent.

After a while, the other side's spirit force fluctuations dropped even further, falling to the level of Level 5. Not only that, but what had happened at Mount Ying occurred again: small mushrooms began to sprout from the cultivator's orifices, looking extremely terrifying.

The opponent clearly also realized something was wrong. After forcing Lu Ye back with a move, he stood his ground, clenched his teeth, and roared, "What have you done?"

"Is this the limit?" Lu Ye asked Hua Ci.

"Pretty much."

"Then kill him."

"Should I do it?"

"Mm, killing one yields 14 merit points."

"My hands are meant to save lives and heal wounds, not to kill," Hua Ci said somewhat aggrieved.

"I'll fight you guys!" the cultivator from Ten Thousand Demons Ridge roared angrily, charging fiercely towards Lu Ye. Neither of his enemies took him seriously, discussing the value of his life right in front of him—no one could bear such humiliation.

But as he charged towards Lu Ye, the mushrooms in his orifices quickly grew larger and then suddenly exploded, a sequence of sounds followed, and his face looked as if it had corroded, he slumped to the ground, and two red lights floated towards Hua Ci and Lu Ye respectively. Under him, the blood that flowed out was not a normal scarlet but leaned towards green.

The merit went to Hua Ci, while Lu Ye received the blessing from Heaven's Augury Pillar.

Lu Ye looked up at Hua Ci.

This woman smiled kindly, "The mushrooms killed him, what does that have to do with me?"

Lu Ye was left speechless and gathered the spoils of war.

When checking the battlefield marking, he realized that this time he received not one but two blessings from the Heaven's Augury Pillar...

So, these two cultivators from Ten Thousand Demons Ridge had also killed a group of people before, taking away their blessings, and now ended up sending them here.

Realizing this, Lu Ye raised his eyebrows, meaning that moving forward, the benefits of killing enemies would become greater.

By the end, killing a group might bring unimaginable benefits because, as the participants in the Spirit Stream Defense Battle kept dying, the Heaven's Augury Pillar's blessings would accumulate towards a few people.

The exploration of the island revealed that the two islands had not truly fused together but clung to each other like two magnets, strongly attached, drifting together in a certain direction.

Hua Ci walked towards the opposite island with cheerful steps, intending to plant mushrooms there, turning all the gathered islands into undetectable traps, so that anyone daring to rush over would get no good out of it.

Lu Ye did not follow. The enemies were killed, and there was no danger on that side.

He noticed that after the island grew larger, the nature's spiritual energy also became richer. However, he had not expended much in the recent fight, so he only needed a bit of simple rest.

Two hours later, Hua Ci returned, humming some tune and appearing to be in a very good mood.

"The power of your mushrooms seems to have increased," Lu Ye commented on his suspicion. Back at Mount Ying, although Hua Ci had implanted mushrooms in that Level 7 cultivator, they had not been this powerful or acted this swiftly.

"Second Senior Sister gave me some pointers," Hua Ci explained.

Lu Ye was surprised, "Second Senior Sister knows about this?"

"She doesn't know, but with her insights and experience, giving pointers to a junior cultivator like me is no problem at all."

That made sense.

Seeming to see what Lu Ye was thinking, Hua Ci smiled and said, "Every healing cultivator is adept at using poison; it depends only on whether they want to and are willing to use it. How can you heal without understanding poison? Don't underestimate those gentle-looking healing cultivators in the future."

"I never underestimate anyone, enemy!"

Chapter 189 Bone Fragment

Three days later, the small island where Lu Ye and Hua Ci were located had grown to ten times its original size, having merged with several drifting islands along the way. Some islands harbored enemies, while others were empty.

Lu Ye had wanted to observe the pattern behind the merging of islands, but in the end, he discovered there was no pattern to speak of.

They encountered the first small island one Shichen after their arrival. Then, there was no activity for half a day, yet the second and third islands almost arrived at the same time. At that moment, Lu Ye and Hua Ci were quite tense; if both islands had enemies, their situation would probably not be very good.

The islands that came afterward would suddenly appear within sight. There was no way to find a pattern. The islands seemed to drift with the waves upon the Chess Sea, drawing closer to each other until they merged.

Having killed several batches of Ten Thousand Demons Ridge cultivators and having the experience of their first cooperation, Lu Ye and Hua Ci's teamwork became increasingly adept.

Whenever they discovered an enemy, both would pretend to be magic cultivators and greet the opponent with magic and spells. If the other side was a combat cultivator or a physique cultivator, they would surely be unable to resist charging at them.

At that moment, Lu Ye always had a surprise for them.

However, there were exceptions. They once encountered two magic cultivators and passionately exchanged techniques with them for quite a long time. It was an intense exchange of spells.

In the end, it was Lu Ye and Hua Ci pretending to be overwhelmed and fleeing backward that lured the enemy in. Once their foes stepped into the mushroom field Hua Ci had planted, their fate was sealed.

Once Hua Ci's mushrooms were activated, the spore powder they released would invade the enemy's body. These spores, too small for the naked eye to discern, posed no lethal threat. They would only

make the cultivator's spirit force obscure and unclear for a short time, significantly reducing their strength.

At the same time, the spores would absorb the enemy's spirit force and grow within the 7th orifice. Experiencing such changes during a battle could leave anyone in panic, with their spirit in disarray and weakened spirit force; they wouldn't be able to withstand Lu Ye's long saber.

It could be said that Hua Ci's method of killing enemies was very intricate, not as straightforward as Lu Ye's, but extraordinarily effective.

Nevertheless, the mushrooms she planted did have a natural counter: the fire attribute spirit force, which could restrain those invading spores. If someone knew of her traps in advance and cleared the area with fire-type techniques, all her arrangements would be thwarted.

In three days, both had their gains. The acquisition of merits was not too abundant, but they received many enhancements from the Heaven's Augury Pillar. After the Spirit Stream Defense Battle concluded, if they invested all these enhancements into their base, the Spiritual Energy in their base would see a tremendous improvement.

Another battle ended, and Lu Ye stood amidst a pool of blood, covered in both the enemy's and his own, taking deep breaths.

By his side lay the corpses of four Ten Thousand Demons Ridge cultivators!

This time luck hadn't been on their side. Two cultivators from Ten Thousand Demons Ridge sects had joined forces. Had it not been for Hua Ci's preemptive arrangement, Lu Ye wouldn't have survived this battle by any means.

Although he could defeat enemies beyond his level, he also had his limits. With his current level of cultivation, facing two Level 7 cultivators was already very challenging, let alone three, which would have been certain death.

Hua Ci's mushrooms played a significant role. When they saw that the opponents were four strong, they knew they couldn't confront them directly. Before the other island could collide with theirs, they didn't even bother with the ruse of being magic cultivators and promptly retreated.

The size of the island had grown large enough, otherwise, they really wouldn't have had the space to flee.

What followed was them fleeing and four cultivators pursuing them, circling the island several times until they were finally cornered.

As the four enemies laughed ferociously, Hua Ci activated her technique. With her actions, the enemies' spirit force suddenly became muddled, while mushrooms started sprouting from their orifices.

Lu Ye erupted into action, instantly killing one.

Next ensued a fierce battle on the brink of life and death. Despite Hua Ci's technique taking effect, the sudden lethal assault from the three enemies still inflicted a significant amount of damage on Lu Ye. Even Hua Ci herself was struck by an enemy's weapon control, and if not for the Spiritual Artifact robe given to her by her Second Senior Sister, the blow would have pierced through her abdomen.

After holding on for ten breaths, the situation slowly improved as the enemies' strength rapidly decreased. Eventually, they couldn't even use their weapon control and fell one by one under Lu Ye's blade.

He turned to look at Hua Ci, noticing blood trickling from the corner of her mouth. Although she appeared uninjured on the surface, the strike from the enemy's weapon control was clearly not easy to endure.

Lu Ye himself had several wounds, with the most severe one nearly revealing the bone. However, on the whole, he was not in grave danger.

Their eyes met, each feeling lingering fear from their ordeal.

Hua Ci approached Lu Ye to heal him, enveloping him in a gentle emerald glow. The blood flow from the wounds stopped, and a tingling sensation continuously spread.

After reaching Level 6, Hua Ci's healing abilities had significantly improved. After some treatment, the wounds wouldn't heal immediately, but they were no longer a concern.

After tending to Lu Ye's injuries, she proceeded to heal herself.

Lu Ye swallowed a healing pill and a Spirit-Nurturing Pill, switching his Cultivation Technique to recover, while also keeping watch on his surroundings.

He didn't need to meditate with closed eyes like other cultivators during recovery because the Bestial Gluttony Feast was working autonomously. Once he took the elixir pills, he didn't have to worry about them.

It was the same while cultivating in his base. Other cultivators had to concentrate deeply, inhaling and exhaling nature's spiritual energy. Any lapse in concentration could affect their cultivation efficiency. But all Lu Ye had to do was set up the Spirit Energy Gathering Spirit Runes in his spiritual orifice and switch to the correct Cultivation Technique. He could even be busy with other things.

However, under normal circumstances, he had nothing else to occupy him. He spent most of his time daydreaming or sleeping...

At the center of the small island, which was also where he and Hua Ci had first appeared, he had laid out a rather sizable array of Spirit Energy Gathering Spirit Runes. This was mainly to consider providing a place for Hua Ci to recover. Her recovery speed was not as fast as his, so going there to recuperate after each battle would make the process more efficient.

In such a place where a great battle might erupt at any time, it was indeed very necessary to maintain an abundance of spirit force, especially since Hua Ci's cultivation of mushrooms was also extremely energy-consuming. Those unremarkable mushrooms were all cultivated using her own spirit force and some unique methods.

Now that the island had expanded, the number of places she needed to plant mushrooms had also increased.

However, correspondingly, the richness of nature's spiritual energy was also increasing. Generally, after every battle, Hua Ci only needed to sit in meditation there for a while to fully recover.

As usual, he collected the spoils of war. From the battle just now, Lu Ye had obtained enhancements from these four Ten Thousand Demons Ridge cultivators, as many as yi-yi, indicating that these four had already killed quite a number of Haotian Alliance cultivators.

These four must have been from two different sects. Lu Ye didn't know how they happened to have such good luck to be able to join forces.

He and Hua Ci had been on this side for several days and had not encountered a single Haotian Alliance member.

He took the storage sacks from the bodies and dragged the corpses to the seaside and threw them into the water. This was how Lu Ye had been dealing with the corpses these past few days. After all, they didn't know how long they would be staying on this island, and corpses would become rotten if left there.

When the blood-soaked corpses were thrown into the sea, Lu Ye clearly saw countless shadows surging below the surface of the water. In just an instant, the bodies were reduced to nothingness, not even leaving behind bones.

He had never been able to see clearly what those shadows were, but he knew that venturing deep into the Chess Sea would certainly mean certain death.

The second body was thrown down, and disappeared in the blink of an eye.

The third body likewise. Just as Lu Ye was about to lift the fourth body, he suddenly frowned and looked towards the sea in front of him.

A bone fragment had somehow appeared floating on the water surface.

Near the bone fragment, the shadows retreated.

Lu Ye stared at the bone piece, recognizing it as something one of the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge cultivators had hung around their neck. He had seen it when going through the bodies earlier, and after confirming it was neither a Spiritual Artifact nor precious spirit material, he had disregarded it.

But now, it seemed that this object was somewhat extraordinary.

Because even the shadows below the surface of the water were avoiding it!

After thinking it over, Lu Ye put the body he was holding down and opened his jacket, pulling an object from the neck of the other person.

It was also a bone fragment, the same as the one floating on the water's surface.

He activated his spirit force into it, but there was no reaction. Squeezing it with his hand, it was very hard, confirming it wasn't any spirit material.

What exactly was this thing?

He had originally thought that the bone piece had some special significance for the two men, so each wore one. But now, thinking back, something seemed off.

Because those two individuals wearing the bone pieces didn't seem to be from the same sect. Lu Ye vaguely remembered that during the battle, the two didn't cooperate with each other but instead acted inseparably with others.

Two people from different sects, yet wearing the same pendant - a coincidence?

He didn't rush to throw the bodies into the sea and instead went to find a tree branch, returned to the water's edge, and fished the floating bone piece out of the water.

After dealing with the bodies and without the bone piece on the water's surface, the shadows below became active again.

Holding the two bone pieces, Lu Ye returned to the highest point of the island, while keeping watch all around, he pondered over them.

An hour later (two hours later), Hua Ci, who had fully recovered, walked up to him. Seeing the item in Lu Ye's hand, she asked curiously, "What is this?"

Lu Ye shook his head, shared his findings, to which Hua Ci said in wonder, "Are you saying the two people from different sects each wore a pendant made of this bone piece?"

"Mhm!" Lu Ye nodded, then described the features of the two individuals. Hua Ci thought carefully, "It seems they indeed are not from the same sect. Could it be possible that they're actually brothers with a blood relation? This might be an inheritance from their family."

This speculation was indeed plausible.

"Whatever it is, we'll know once we take it back to Second Senior Sister," Lu Ye said as he put the bone pieces into the storage sack.

Suddenly, Hua Ci nudged him with her elbow and pointed in a particular direction.

Lu Ye looked up and his expression became grave. In that direction was an island, not smaller than theirs, that was quickly approaching them.

Chapter 190 - Support

The small islands within Chess Sea all started off quite small, roughly the size of a plaza, but as time passed and they adhered to one another, their scales became larger and larger.

The larger the scale of the island, the stronger the enemies might be, and their numbers might also be greater, for in the repeated merging and elimination of the islands, any party with insufficient capabilities or numbers had already been eliminated.

Of course, there were exceptions, such as Lu Ye and Hua Ci, two Level 6 cultivators, occupying a relatively large island.

As the two islands rapidly approached each other, Lu Ye noticed something odd about the other side.

On that island, there appeared to be a fight going on, with flashes of magic and spells lighting up from time to time.

The closer they got, the more apparent the noise of the battle became.

If there was a fight, that meant not only Ten Thousand Demons Ridge cultivators were there but also Haotian Alliance members, although the current situation of the skirmish was unclear.

The other side was so engulfed in battle that they apparently hadn't noticed the two islands drawing closer, which might be something Lu Ye could take advantage of.

After a moment's contemplation, Lu Ye said to Hua Ci, "I'll go over and have a look, you stay here."

"Be careful."

Lu Ye urged his spirit force, and instantly a pair of wings laced with fire spirit power unfolded behind him, turning into a streak of Liu Guang towards the island ahead.

No sooner had he flown out of the small island and arrived above the sea, Lu Ye felt the spirit force inside his body pouring out like floodwaters breaching a dam, the extent of the consumption was nearly as much as maintaining a set of Defense Spirit Runes as tall as himself.

Secretly alarmed, he realized that one really couldn't fly carelessly within Chess Sea, or rather, flying above the sea surface was too costly in spirit force, and he wondered what the reason could be.

Fortunately, now the islands were not too far apart, and after just a few breaths, Lu Ye landed on the other island, retracting his wings and trying his best to suppress the outflow of his spirit force, moving towards the direction of the battle.

He didn't have much time as the two islands were about to collide, and the people here would surely become alert then.

Luckily, the island wasn't very big, and after a short while, Lu Ye arrived at the outskirts of the battlefield, looking on to see five Ten Thousand Demons Ridge cultivators besieging two from the Haotian Alliance.

Three corpses lay on the ground, which indicated a fierce battle had taken place.

Among the five Ten Thousand Demons Ridge cultivators, there were two magic cultivators, one physique cultivator, one combat cultivator, and one that appeared to be a ghost cultivator.

The two Haotian Alliance cultivators, one male and one female, were both covered in blood and riddled with wounds, showing signs they couldn't hold on much longer.

After all, they were two against five, clearly not a match; that they had managed to survive until now was firstly because the male cultivator from Haotian Alliance was a physique cultivator. He had a towering, burly figure, full of vigor, extremely tough, holding a big shield spirit artifact, blocking many attacks.

Secondly, the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge side was playing it safe, not wanting to take too many risks. They knew that if pushed to the edge, their enemy could have a last-ditch strategy, and one of their comrades lying on the ground was a testament to that.

They had not started as a battle of five against two, but six against four! After successfully killing one, a companion acted too hastily, resulting in another Haotian Alliance cultivator dragging them both to their deaths.

Currently, they only needed to pin these two down, break that combat cultivator's big shield spirit artifact, and their opponents would have no further means to resist.

The three Ten Thousand Demons Ridge cultivators, apart from the magic cultivators, surrounded the male and female, constantly harassing them, while the two magic cultivators stood a bit farther away, ensuring they would not accidentally injure their companions. They kept invoking spells, bombarding the big shield, which already showed dim spirit light, ready to be extinguished at any moment.

In such a situation, the two from Haotian Alliance found it incredibly difficult to escape – virtually impossible. Yet looking at their expressions, it was clear they were prepared to die. They did not beg for mercy, knowing it would be futile and only lead to further humiliation. For the female cultivator in particular, falling into enemy hands would mean a fate worse than death.

They were now waiting for an opportunity, an opportunity to take their enemies down with them.

That opportunity came in an instant!

With a loud boom, the ground shook as the two islands collided, causing everyone to lose their footing.

Several Ten Thousand Demons Ridge cultivators' faces changed colors, having encountered these Haotian Alliance members half a Shichen ago, so none had expected to come across another island so soon.

"Be careful!" someone shouted just as the collision occurred. At that moment, the two Haotian Alliance cultivators charged together toward the combat cultivator. The physique cultivator roared, swinging the big shield to protect the slender figure beside him as they broke through ferociously, their eyes filled with determination and ruthlessness, unsettling the targeted combat cultivator.

"Ahh!"

The scream did not come from the targeted combat cultivator but from another direction, catching everyone off guard.

The Ten Thousand Demons Ridge cultivators looked in the direction of the sound, only to see a dagger protruding from the chest of a magic cultivator standing on the outskirts of the battlefield. Behind the magic cultivator, a vague figure stood, and no one knew when he had arrived there.

How did he get here so quickly? They all were momentarily taken aback.

As the islands collided, they had realized others might arrive. If it was a Ten Thousand Demons Ridge cultivator, all would be well, but if it was from the Haotian Alliance, the situation would undoubtedly change.

What they hadn't expected was that a magic cultivator from their side would be attacked immediately after the islands touched! Had the attacker been hiding nearby all this time?

There was no time to think further, the great battle had already begun.

Two Haotian Alliance cultivators had charged towards a Ten Thousand Demons Ridge combat cultivator, recklessly determined to take him down with them, even at the cost of their own lives, and they almost succeeded.

Unfortunately, the two were too severely injured and the targeted combat cultivator was rescued by an allied physique cultivator. After being struck, he narrowly escaped death.

The four of them instantly clashed together, with the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge ghost cultivator not sitting idly by. His aura suddenly became elusive and unpredictable as he joined the fray from the side, and in no time, the two Haotian Alliance cultivators were in grave danger.

Meanwhile, after dealing with an opposing magic cultivator, Lu Ye pushed off the ground and sped towards the second magic cultivator, shouting, "Hold on!"

Upon hearing the voice, the physique cultivator wielding the big shield had no particular reaction, but the female cultivator who held a pair of daggers showed a shocked expression because she found the voice somewhat familiar... But there was simply no time to inquire into the newcomer's identity right

now, with purple lines already climbing up her fair neck and even into her eyes, turning them a violet hue.

The purple lines continued to spread upwards, making her appear both demonic and alluring.

Ghost cultivators excelled in stealthy attacks, not in direct confrontations like this, but at this moment, she had no other choice but to muster all her strength.

On the other hand, Lu Ye's movements were agile as he deftly dodged the barrage of magic and spells from the magic cultivator.

As the distance between them quickly closed, the magic cultivator's eyes revealed a hint of terror. He had never seen a combat cultivator move so lithely, easily evading his every spell.

Seeing that Lu Ye was about to pounce, the magic cultivator clenched his teeth and his body surged with spirit force, generating a huge repulsive force that swept in all directions.

Lu Ye was staggered by the impact, but the magic cultivator desperately moved towards the other Ten Thousand Demons Ridge cultivators, seizing the opportunity.

However, he had only run a few steps when a scorching breath struck him from the side. He turned his head to see a fat firebird flapping its wings.

He waved his hand hastily, and a spirit force barrier appeared in front of him.

With a loud boom, the firebird struck the barrier, scattering spirit force and causing his body to sway. Amidst the chaotic spirit force, Lu Ye burst forth, saber in hand.

The Boulder Mountain Saber rose, and a flash of fiery red light passed by. An arm was severed and flew off as the saber retracted and stabbed forward, piercing several bloody holes through the magic cultivator amid his pitiful screams.

Boom... the magic cultivator cast a final spell on Lu Ye's chest before dying, but it was blocked by the Defense Spirit Runes. The tremendous impact sent Lu Ye flying out, crashing to the ground.

He quickly got up and looked over; the magic cultivator had already collapsed, face down on the ground, with a speck of red light flying over from that direction.

Lu Ye tilted his head and spat out a mouthful of Blood Water, having long since vowed to kill any disagreeable magic cultivator on sight!

Without delay, he rushed towards the two Haotian Alliance cultivators to support them.

It seemed that Lu Ye's arrival brought them a glimmer of hope for survival, or perhaps, their plan to die together with the enemy was disrupted. At this moment, the man and the woman were fighting as they retreated, moving towards Lu Ye.

But their injuries were too severe, and they were outnumbered, clearly unable to hold out much longer, leaving a trail of bloody footprints along their path.

The attacks from the three Ten Thousand Demons Ridge cultivators grew increasingly fierce.

It was only after Lu Ye joined the fight that the situation barely stabilized. By then, the female cultivator finally realized who had come to their aid. Her emotions were complex, never having expected to encounter him again here.

"Go!" Lu Ye swung the Boulder Mountain Saber to block an attack from an opponent and shouted lowly.

Despite his participation, the situation was still dire. Continuing the fight like this, Lu Ye himself might not fear, but the other two Haotian Alliance cultivators would surely die.

The female cultivator and the physique cultivator hesitated, but Lu Ye shouted again, "Go now!"

The two Haotian Alliance cultivators no longer hesitated and immediately turned to flee.

Lu Ye suddenly felt an immense pressure as he faced three enemies alone, all at Level 7. Even for him, this was unsustainable.

A shield-sized Defense Spirit Rune manifested in front, and as Lu Ye's spirit force drained away frantically, the three enemies' attacks kept coming, fracturing the rune yet constantly repairing it under the influence of his spirit force in a never-ending cycle.

He held out for only the span of three breaths before he could no longer bear it, feeling as if all his internal organs were vibrating and his throat was filled with the taste of blood.

As he retracted the Defense Spirit Runes, he suddenly made a sweeping cut with his saber, forcing the three enemies back while he turned and ran.

By the time the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge cultivators looked up, Lu Ye had already dashed ten zhang away, amazed at how fast the boy could run. The three enemies simultaneously activated the Weapon Control Path, transforming three Spiritual Artifacts into streaks of light that shot towards Lu Ye.

Sensing the deadly threat behind him, Lu Ye shot upwards without a second thought, his fiery red wings unfurling at his back.

He did not activate the Defense Spirit Runes, sensing that they wouldn't hold against the assault, and even if they did, the tremendous impact would severely wound him in an instant.