

Humanity 201

Chapter 201 Bloodstain

When his whereabouts were exposed by Li Baxian, the young man knew there was no escape for him. Those various postures were nothing but attempts to lull Li Baxian into complacency. Now that he was directly called out, he spoke no more. He brandished the two scimitars in his hands and took a stance, "Then bring it on."

Lu Ye raised his hand to the hilts of his blades and gently grasped them.

Li Baxian's voice echoed in his ears, "Junior Brother, be careful on your own. This guy is a ghost cultivator. Don't be fooled by his apparent Level 8 cultivation; his real cultivation is at the 7th Heaven level. He has opened over two hundred and forty spiritual orifices. Of course, his position is tempered by Heaven's Augury, so the power he can leverage is only at the ordinary Level 8 standard.

However, his experience in killing enemies won't be suppressed. His strength and speed are not something an ordinary Level 8 can compare with. Even if you can handle an average Level 8, you might not be his match."

"I know!"

Lu Ye replied. As he did, pebbles flew beneath his feet and he had already pounced toward the ghastly young man. Regardless of Li Baxian's reason for letting him face this opponent alone, the Spirit Stream Defense Battle was drawing to an end. Considering such an opportunity to kill the enemy, he had to cherish it well.

Almost simultaneously with Lu Ye's move, a stream of light had already shot forth, reaching him in the blink of an eye.

With his saber unsheathed, Lu Ye slashed out. Sparks flew, and he felt an immense force coming straight at him. His palm split instantly, and the Boulder Mountain Saber in his hand was forced upward sharply.

Utilizing that force, Lu Ye flicked his long blade, deflecting the stream of light that had slashed toward his chest.

That stream of light turned out to be one of the opponent's scimitars. That strike was merely the might of weapon control. The scimitar spun through the air, and yet a wound had already appeared on Lu Ye's chest. Blood flowed, the result of the striking force of the scimitar.

Before he could stabilize his form, a shadow flickered before his eyes and the ghastly young man was already upon him, his speed astonishing!

Ghost cultivators were inherently known for their speed, not to mention a 7th Heaven level ghost cultivator. The tempering and suppression by Heaven's Augury indeed only allowed him to exert Level 8 power, but even with suppression, such speed was not something an ordinary Level 8 could match.

The opponent's other scimitar was already slashing toward him, and Lu Ye raised his saber to block. A clanging sound rang out and he staggered backward. At the same time, a gust of wind attacked from the back of his head—it was the very scimitar he had previously deflected, coming back at him.

Weapon control was simply unsolvable for Lu Ye at the moment.

Hua Ci looked on anxiously as Li Baxian had already clenched a sword light in his hand. Although he had let Lu Ye face this ghost cultivator, he would not truly stand by idly. If Lu Ye were in real danger, he would make his move.

Just as the returning scimitar was about to pierce the back of Lu Ye's head, a spirit rune abruptly appeared.

With a crack, the defense shattered, and Lu Ye ducked down dangerously, narrowly avoiding a lethal blow. A few broken hairs fluttered in the air while his hand thrust the long saber forward. Fiery red spirit force clung to the blade, enhanced by Sharpness Spirit Runes.

The ghost cultivator dodged the thrust and flicked the scimitar in his hand. With an inconceivable angle, he sliced open the flesh on Lu Ye's arm, leaving it to bleed profusely.

In just three breaths since the fight began, Lu Ye had already suffered two wounds. Although they weren't grave, it was clear to see there was a significant gap in strength between them. If he continued to fight like this, his situation would only worsen.

Feng Yuechan cast a leisurely glance at Li Baxian, her eyes seeking direction.

Li Baxian slowly shook his head. Now was not the time to intervene. The reason he wanted Lu Ye to face this ghost cultivator was that such opportunities were rare. Although he had instructed Lu Ye in the Righteous Blood Sect for twenty days, that was after all a Senior Brother's guidance to his Junior Brother.

No matter how ruthless he became, repeatedly injuring Lu Ye, it was hard for Lu Ye to truly appreciate the feeling of teetering on the edge of life and death, because they both knew Li Baxian wouldn't actually kill him.

But the situation now was different. The opponent against Lu Ye was a cultivator from Ten Thousand Demons Ridge. A lack of caution could indeed be fatal.

As a combat cultivator, if one couldn't get accustomed to this sensation of skirting the brink of death, it would be very hard to break through one's self.

However, the current situation made Li Baxian silently hesitate, wondering if he was being overly anxious and had chosen too strong an opponent for Lu Ye. With his current strength, the Junior Brother might have a chance against a typical Level 8, but the current opponent was indeed a challenge.

Fortunately, although Lu Ye had completely fallen into the disadvantage, his fighting spirit was not diminished in the slightest.

In the blink of an eye, the two exchanged several more moves. The ghost cultivator, with his superior speed and strength, not to mention his use of weapon control, really made Lu Ye struggle.

He gradually became familiar with the opponent's rhythm. While he couldn't reverse the downturn, he managed to block several attempts with Defense Spirit Runes and counterattacked just in time.

Amidst the clang of their exchange, the ghost cultivator suddenly withdrew his flung scimitar.

He realized that this cultivator from the Righteous Blood Sect who was well-known at Golden Light Peak was truly remarkable. His real strength was definitely beyond Level 6. He had thought he could easily dispose of him. He was ready, after defeating Lu Ye, to take him hostage and secure his own escape.

He dared not delay any longer, feeling significant pressure from Feng Yuechan and Li Baxian watching closely.

In such close combat, weapon control couldn't unleash much power, so it was better to retract it. With both scimitars in hand, his attack speed abruptly increased.

Lu Ye immediately faced greater difficulty, with new wounds appearing all over his body.

But as the number of wounds increased, so did the speed and force of his slashing. Moreover, the spirit force clinging to the blade became much more intense.

After a dozen breaths or so, Lu Ye slowly steadied himself and was surprisingly able to trade blows with his opponent.

The ghost cultivator's face was a picture of astonishment, completely failing to understand how Lu Ye could have made such a vast improvement in such a short time.

A dozen or so breaths later, to his horror, he found that in the contest of speed and strength, he was actually starting to fall behind!

As the Spiritual Artifacts clashed, not only did Lu Ye sustain injuries, but his opponent also gradually accumulated wounds.

At this moment, the Boulder Mountain Saber in Lu Ye's hand had taken on a deep crimson color, as if it had drunk its fill of blood. Upon closer examination, one could notice a faint blood Qi steaming around Lu Ye's body.

The ghost cultivator finally noticed something was amiss and exclaimed in shock, "A Blood Treasure?"

A Blood Treasure was a special kind of Spiritual Artifact with Blood Sacrifice Spirit Runes stamped into it, which would grow stronger after its owner was injured or voluntarily offered their own fresh blood. The more blood the Blood Treasure consumed, the greater its power became.

Therefore, upon seeing the change in the Boulder Mountain Saber that Lu Ye wielded, the ghost cultivator thought the saber was a Blood Treasure—which, although powerful, posed a great danger to its user as it would incessantly devour fresh blood. One moment of carelessness could lead to bleeding out.

Thus, in the cultivation world, Blood Treasures were generally frowned upon, and ordinary cultivators would not use such Spiritual Artifacts.

If even the ghost cultivator could tell there was something off with the Boulder Mountain Saber, Li Baxian naturally noticed it too. His expression grew solemn as he had only wanted Lu Ye to gain some experience fighting against formidable enemies. He hadn't anticipated that his junior brother would activate a Blood Treasure.

This was not a good sign, and if it damaged his junior brother's foundation and vital energy, the Second Senior Sister would surely smash his head in.

"It's not a Blood Treasure. Fourth Senior Brother, rest assured," Hua Ci's voice sounded.

"Then what is it?" Li Baxian asked.

Hua Ci explained, "Lu Ye has mastered a type of spirit rune called 'Bloodstain.' What he's probably activating right now is the power of that spirit rune." Previously, at Madam Yun's place, Lu Ye had revealed information about the four spirit runes he controlled, and Hua Ci, having been present, naturally remembered this.

"Bloodstain?" Li Baxian furrowed his brows. He did not know much about spirit runes and could not calm his mind enough to study them, so he was also unaware of what exactly Bloodstain Spirit Runes were.

But as long as the sabre was not a Blood Treasure, it was fine.

The clanging sounds of combat persisted, the confrontation continued, and Lu Ye was covered in wounds from head to toe. Strangely, all the blood flowing from the wounds turned into a mist, not spilling a single drop.

If Lu Ye's clothes were to be stripped off at this moment, one would see a complex spirit rune slowly rotating on his chest, constructed entirely of fresh blood, with a blood mist swirling around his body, turning his eyes a crimson red.

The Bloodstain Spirit Runes were not imposed on the Boulder Mountain Saber but on his body itself.

As his blood continued to vaporize, Lu Ye's sword strikes became faster and more ferocious, already exceeding his own limits.

The situation had completely reversed. The ghost cultivator, who had been entirely dominant before, now found himself only able to parry against Lu Ye's chopping blade, with no strength left to counterattack.

After a fierce battle, the ghost cultivator was struck in the chest by a slash from Lu Ye's saber, letting out a scream of agony. He staggered back several steps, a deep cut in his chest oozing blood.

Looking up, he saw a pair of eyes glowing with floating red light, and from the blood mist-shrouded figure, the long saber slashed down like a storm.

He roared and lifted his own Spiritual Artifact in defense.

The sound of the saber slicing through flesh rang out as Lu Ye, saber in hand, had already flashed behind the ghost cultivator, lightly landing, flicking the traces of blood off the Boulder Mountain Saber, and sheathing it.

The ghost cultivator behind him remained stiff, in a defensive stance, then rigidly fell over, blood spilling beneath him.

The blood mist enveloping Lu Ye burst open, revealing the figure that had been obscured by the mist. His body went limp, and before he could fall to the ground, Li Baxian had already caught him.

"Just exhausted," Lu Ye explained, his face paling visibly as he lost too much blood.

Li Baxian's expression was complicated, and after struggling for quite some time, he finally said, "Junior brother, you've pushed yourself too far."

This outcome was entirely unexpected to him. Even when Lu Ye had claimed earlier that he could kill a Level 8 combative cultivator, Li Baxian had merely assumed it was youthful arrogance and was ready to intervene in the fight at any moment.

But his junior brother had actually killed his opponent!

Alone, he had killed him!

This was too fierce.

That was a 7th Heaven level cultivator! Even if suppressed, he would not be much weaker than an ordinary Level 9 cultivator.

Li Baxian suddenly realized that he might have underestimated his junior brother.

Chapter 202 Overnight Fame

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In the wilderness, Lu Ye was lying flat on a large rock, with Hua Ci kneeling beside him, gently rubbing his arm. With each movement of her hands, streams of pure wood spirit force flowed into Lu Ye's body, penetrating deeply into muscle tissues, repairing invisible internal injuries.

Li Baxian sat awkwardly to the side, while Feng Yuechan stood not far away on guard, with formations already set up around them.

There was no longer a need to search for treasures; the battle just now had left Lu Ye with no light injuries. He was completely drained, feeling sore and aching all over, and currently lacked even the strength to move a finger.

Lu Ye had known that the Bloodstain Spirit Runes he had acquired would grant him a means to deal with powerful enemies, but there had been no opportunity to try them until just now.

These spirit runes were indeed remarkable; by devouring Lu Ye's fresh blood, they could enhance his strength. The more blood they consumed, the greater the increment in power.

One could tell from the process of the battle that initially, Lu Ye was no match for the ghost cultivator, whether in the strength of his blows or his speed, and the other party could also control weapons.

But as the Bloodstain Spirit Runes continued to take effect, the gap between them slowly diminished, even allowing Lu Ye to surpass his opponent.

Moreover, Lu Ye felt that the enhancement the Bloodstain provided him had not reached its limit; if he could devour more blood, he could gain an even greater increase in power.

Should he encounter more powerful opponents in the future, as long as he was not instantly killed by the enemy, there would be a chance to turn defeat into victory.

The Bloodstain was powerful enough, but the price was also evident.

Because he had exerted strength beyond his own capabilities, Lu Ye's muscles were damaged at this moment, he had lost too much blood, and the consumption of spirit force by the Bloodstain Spirit Runes was intense. Unlike Sharpness and weapon control, they required constant maintenance.

If Lu Ye hadn't opened more than eighty spiritual orifices recently, increasing his reserves of spirit force, he really wouldn't have had the qualifications to use this spirit rune in battle.

It was a one-off deal, which could also be seen as a trump card: once used, it meant either the enemy died, or he would.

This was also the result of Lu Ye's consistent use of the Scale Armor during cultivation, placing it in the groove of the Spirit Gathering Array to stimulate the blood Qi within the Scale Armor for absorption and refinement, toughening his physique. Otherwise, the damage this time might have been even more severe.

With Hua Ci's treatment, Lu Ye gradually recovered some strength, and while enjoying her healing, he took out some dried meat to eat.

After that battle, he felt famished enough to eat an entire cow.

With a large quantity of food ingested, Lu Ye's face finally regained some color.

Half a day later, he slowly got up. Although he still felt weak, there was no serious problem. The aftereffects of using the Bloodstain were too significant, and Lu Ye secretly decided that unless it was absolutely necessary, he must not easily resort to using it.

Li Baxian, who was watching him, asked with concern, "How do you feel?"

"Much better, thank you, Senior Brother!" Without Li Baxian's watchful eye, he would not have had the chance to duel such a strong opponent. Having had a taste of victory, he couldn't help wanting Li Baxian to take him to hunt down those isolated Ten Thousand Demons Ridge cultivators.

Such life-and-death battles were greatly beneficial to his growth.

However, even now, with Hua Ci's treatment, he had not fully recovered and had to suppress the thought in his heart.

"If you're all right, shall I take you to see something good?"

"Sure."

The group of four continued on their journey.

After traveling a few dozen miles, Li Baxian's suppressed strength began to slowly return. Although it had not yet reached its peak, flying with weapon control had become possible.

He threw out his wine gourd, and as spirit force surged around him, the gourd swiftly expanded, and with a light leap, he stood on it.

Feng Yuechan followed closely, and Hua Ci, along with her mechanical wolf, also jumped onto it, giving the limp Lu Ye a tug along the way.

"Rise!" Li Baxian commanded, and the gourd took to the sky, swiftly flying toward the front.

With weapon control-flying, the time it took to travel was significantly reduced, and as they moved further inward, the restrictions on Li Baxian lessened. Within the time it takes an incense stick to burn, he brought Lu Ye and the others to a place where a crowd had gathered.

Judging by the scale, it seemed that all the Haotian Alliance cultivators had congregated here, surrounded by evidence of the remnants of a great battle. Clearly, this place had seen a fierce conflict.

The appearance of the iconic wine gourd Spiritual Artifact drew the attention of many.

Someone pointed at the gourd and said with a smile, "Finally, Fellow Daoist Li and Fellow Daoist Feng have arrived. The people of Ten Thousand Demons Ridge can lose hope now."

As the gourd landed, many who were meditating and resting got up to greet them.

Li Baxian hopped down from the gourd and looking ahead at a large tree, he asked, "How's the situation?"

A burly physique cultivator responded, "The Ten Thousand Demons Ridge folks were a bit unwilling to give up earlier and organized several strong attacks, but after being taught a lesson several times, they've calmed down. Now that you're here, they probably won't dare to make any rash moves."

Li Baxian nodded slightly, exchanging greetings with some people.

Meanwhile, many low-level cultivators were also warmly interacting with Lu Ye and Hua Ci. They had been fighting side by side, and many had received Hua Ci's treatment, naturally feeling a great affinity for this Deputy Governor of the Righteous Blood Sect, not to mention that Hua Ci was also a graceful beauty.

In the last large-scale conflict with Ten Thousand Demons Ridge, it was Lu Ye and Hua Ci who took the risk of flying above the enemy camp to activate the arrangements they had left behind, securing victory in one fell swoop.

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It could be said that the current situation of the Haotian Alliance owes much to the contribution of the two from the Righteous Blood Sect.

"Are these two the Junior Brother Yiye and Junior Sister Hua Ci of the Righteous Blood Sect?" asked the physique cultivator who had been speaking with Li Baxian, suddenly turning his gaze toward Lu Ye.

Li Baxian smiled slightly and patted Lu Ye on the shoulder, "Come and meet Brother Mong Si. Mong Si is the Governor of the Righteousness Sect, with a cultivation at the 9th Heaven, ranked eighteenth on the Spirit Stream Ranking."

This ranking was not low. Lu Ye and Hua Ci paid their respects together. As for the Righteousness Sect, Lu Ye had long been familiar with it. It was a 1st grade sect of the Haotian Alliance in Bingzhou, and Vice Sect Leader Pang Zhen was even the Deputy Alliance Leader, overseeing all matters large and small within the cultivation world of Bingzhou.

Mong Si nodded slightly, "Descendants of a prominent sect, indeed extraordinary. The two of you have made great contributions in the Spirit Stream Defense Battle. On behalf of the cultivation world of Bingzhou, I extend my thanks to both of you!"

With that, he solemnly bowed to Lu Ye and Hua Ci.

Behind him, a group of cultivators from Bingzhou with 8th-9th Heaven level cultivation also bowed in unison.

Lu Ye and Hua Ci were somewhat taken aback, and before they could speak, another cultivator with an elusive presence said, "The cultivation world of Dingzhou thanks the two Junior Brothers and Sisters of the Righteous Blood Sect."

Another said, "The cultivation world of Yunzhou thanks the two Junior Brothers and Sisters of the Righteous Blood Sect."

"The cultivation world of Leizhou thanks the two Junior Brothers and Sisters of the Righteous Blood Sect."

"Wuzhou..."

Cultivators one after another paid their respects like stalks in the wind, rising and falling with the breeze.

Lu Ye and Hua Ci exchanged a glance and returned the salute with solemn expressions.

Li Baxian stood by, knowing in his heart that his Junior Brother and Sister had become famous in one fell swoop.

Unlike the incident at Golden Light Peak last time, that time many sects in the cultivation world remembered the achievements of the Righteous Blood Sect and cooperated to ensure the safety of the last Spirit Stream Realm disciple of the sect.

That was a legacy left by the Righteous Blood Sect.

But this time, the Spirit Stream Defense Battle was all thanks to Lu Ye and Hua Ci, who had made their own mark and brought glory to their sect.

Li Baxian's mind was filled with thoughts, and he thought of a blurred but towering figure. "Big Brother, oh Big Brother, if you have a spirit in heaven, you should rest easy now. The flag of the Righteous Blood Sect... did not fall! Decades later, someone took up that banner, lifted it high, and waved it in the skies of the Haotian Alliance."

"If the two Junior Brothers and Sisters visit the Core Circle for training in the future, just send a message and come to the Righteousness Sect headquarters," said Mong Si once again.

"You are also welcome at the Jade Cloud Palace headquarters," said another voice.

The others also voiced their invitations, all at once offering their places for training.

Lu Ye thanked them profusely; training in the Core Circle was a matter of time. Currently at Level 6, he could still mingle in the outer circle for some time. But when he reached Level 7 cultivation, he would need to consider entering the inner circle, and when he ultimately reached Level 9 one day and started cultivating a Heaven Rank technique, then he would go to the Core Circle.

With the grace from the Spirit Stream Defense Battle, he would have many choices of places to visit in the future.

A good while later, everyone dispersed one after another.

Only then did Lu Ye have the chance to ask about the doubts in his mind.

"Senior Brother, what is this spirit tree? The fruits on it smell so fragrant," Lu Ye asked.

He had noticed this when he came here with Li Baxian: a fruit tree bearing nine fruits, filling the air with an enticing aroma that could be smelled from miles away.

Lu Ye knew there were heavenly materials and earthly treasures within the Chess Sea, unique to this place that could not be found in the Nine Provinces or the Spirit Stream battlefield. But since entering the Chess Sea, he had not seen any particularly special treasures.

The good things had probably been taken by others long ago.

It was not until this moment, upon seeing this fruit tree, that he knew it was something precious.

"This is a Breath Fruit," explained Li Baxian. "It's a valuable treasure."

Feng Yuechan also added from the side, "Breath Fruits are rare. They are only produced in the Chess Sea, and not every time is there a harvest. Last time the Chess Sea opened, there were no Breath Fruits. Its flesh possesses an incredibly strong restorative effect.

Take your fourth Senior Brother for example, if he were to exhaust all his spirit force, just a bite of the flesh would likely replenish it."

"That's amazing," Lu Ye exclaimed in surprise. Even though his fourth Senior Brother was at the 8th Heaven level, it was due to a damaged spiritual orifice that prevented his advancement. All his spiritual orifices were opened, and in terms of spirit force reserves, he was on par with other cultivators at the 9th Heaven level.

If someone as powerful as his fourth Senior Brother could restore all his spirit force with just one bite of the flesh, for someone at Level 6 like himself, perhaps a nibble of the peel could have the same effect.

In combat against formidable enemies, the restoration of spirit force is key to enduring the fight. If everyone were exhausted and someone suddenly consumed a Breath Fruit, the other side would likely despair.

In certain moments, this fruit could indeed be a lifesaver.

Li Baxian continued, "As precious as the flesh is, the real value of the Breath Fruit lies in its core."

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"How so?" Lu Ye asked earnestly for advice.

"The effects of the Breath Fruit Core are not fixed; some cores have one function, while others have a different one. In Tianzhou, there is a sect that once obtained a Breath Fruit. After using the core, they connected to an unknown small realm which contained a supreme-grade Spirit Vein, with abundant top grade and supreme-grade Spirit Stones throughout. The value is immeasurable."

"Some cores can even induce a cultivator into a strange cultivation state, where cultivating magic and spells, or doing other activities, all become twice as effective."

"Others can be sold directly to the Heaven's Augury treasure vault, with a starting merit of one hundred thousand!"

Lu Ye was shocked by the number, one hundred thousand merits—how many portions of Earth's Core Fire would that be? And that was just the starting number; it could be even more than one hundred thousand.

"Still, others can be placed within certain Arrays to act as the core, significantly enhancing the power of the Arrays several times over. The Core Circle of a provincial state has a 2nd-grade sect that was fortunate to acquire such a core. Their Array is the most powerful among all the sects in the Spirit Stream battlefield, unmatched even by those of 1st-grade."

Li Baxian and Feng Yuechan discussed the variety of uses for the cores, one after the other, leaving Lu Ye marveling at the marvels of Breath Fruits, a treasure unique to Chess Island.

This place was originally dominated by cultivators from Ten Thousand Demons Ridge, and without any accidents, Haotian Alliance wouldn't have had the slightest chance to get their hands on it.

However, the outstanding performance of the low-level cultivators this time thwarted the expectations of Ten Thousand Demons Ridge. Over the past few days, under the lead of powerful cultivators of the Core Circle, those from the Haotian Alliance had wiped out numerous enemies layer by layer throughout the provincial state, thoroughly driving the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge cultivators away.

Seeing a treasure that was almost within grasp being snatched away, the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge was naturally unwilling to let go, and had organized several attacks before. But now, whether it is low-level or high-level cultivators, Ten Thousand Demons Ridge's numbers paled in comparison to the Haotian Alliance, so how could they take it back?

Instead, they suffered heavy losses.

Now that Li Baxian and Feng Yuechan had also arrived, Ten Thousand Demons Ridge dared not to act recklessly anymore.

It was foreseeable that the coming days would be peaceful, as the Haotian Alliance intended to hold their position here until the Breath Fruits ripened, not planning any further attacks. Even if Ten Thousand Demons Ridge felt green with envy, they could only swallow their anger and remain silent.

The Spirit Stream Defense Battle was drawing to a close, but before that, the Breath Fruits would be able to mature.

"There are only nine Breath Fruits, with so many sects present, how will they be divided?" Lu Ye voiced the doubt in his heart. Everyone naturally wanted such a fine thing, but low-level cultivators had little chance to compete for it.

They couldn't just fight it out right here, and determine allocation by the strength of the victor – that would just provide an opportunity for Ten Thousand Demons Ridge to launch a sneak attack.

"In this kind of situation, the method of bidding is usually adopted," Li Baxian, who had been through many such events, explained to Lu Ye: "The Governors represent their respective sects to bid, and the highest bidder wins. The proceeds from the bidding are divided among all the sects present."

"That seems reasonable," Lu Ye nodded in agreement. It was a fair and equitable method, and likely, the sects without competitive power would also be willing to proceed this way. No matter what, they'd all get a share of the benefits.

As time passed, many on the side of Haotian Alliance were recovering and healing from injuries. However, more were gathered in small groups, discussing matters.

Such gatherings of Governors and Deputy Governors from many sects were rare; the Spirit Stream Defense Battle was one such opportunity. Almost every sect with a foothold in the Spirit Stream battlefield participated. As such, if any cooperation or important affairs between sects needed to be discussed, this was the place to do it. It was even possible to establish alliances between sects here.

A Governor had the authority to establish alliances within the Spirit Stream battlefield, but to form a true alliance between two sects, the sect leaders or Sect Masters would need to be present.

Lu Ye and Hua Ci also had a lively time, with many acquaintances coming over.

At the moment, Lu Ye was playing with a small and exquisite mechanical gadget—a spherical object with a pair of tiny wings, capable of flight. The sphere had two crystal eyes on its surface, and Loo Yushan was explaining the principles of this mechanical creation to him.

This little device wasn't of much use. It could be regarded as a special kind of Spiritual Artifact, which a cultivator, after refining, could release to scout dangerous places.

"Brother Yiye, if you're interested in this field, you're welcome to visit the Thousand Contraptions Pavilion when you have time." Loo Yushan warmly invited him. They could be considered friends who had been through life and death together. Moreover, the Thousand Contraptions Pavilion had never been stingy with its heritage, because the cover armorer faction had always been a minor one.

Each generation's Pavilion Master of the Thousand Contraptions Pavilion had made it their mission to expand the faction, which is why the doors of the Pavilion had always been open to the big sects of the Haotian Alliance. Regardless of one's background, anyone interested in the Cover Armor Technique could go to the Thousand Contraptions Pavilion to study and learn intensively.

Therefore, within the entire Haotian Alliance, though the Thousand Contraptions Pavilion was only of 8th-grade and not very prominent, it had extensive connections. In each of the Nine Provincial States, many sects had established alliance pacts with them.

However, the Cover Armor Technique required a certain talent. Thus, even with the continuous efforts of the Thousand Contraptions Pavilion generation after generation, the number of cover armorers remained few. Especially at higher levels of cultivation, the number of cover armorers dropped sharply, mainly because of their heavy reliance on external devices.

When their cultivation levels were low, they could use various ingenious mechanical beasts to exhibit strength far surpassing their own. But over time, this reliance was bound to hinder their personal cultivation progress.

The Thousand Contraptions Pavilion was aware of this drawback, but there was no real solution to this issue. The nature of cover armorers doomed them to spend a lot of energy on mechanical devices.

Another faction that shared a similar fate with cover armorers was the beast-taming faction. This faction was also rare; their practitioners focused on beast taming, and from a young age, they would select a natal demon beast, living and growing together with it. They regarded the demon beasts as lifelong partners.

Whether from the cover armorer faction or the beast-taming faction, although niche, they were certainly not to be trifled with. They often turned weakness into strength, with their prowess tied to their mechanical creations and the demon beasts they tamed. Judging their true abilities merely by their cultivation levels was impossible.

"Brother Loo," Lu Ye suddenly remembered something, "do you have those huge constructs on your side, ones that a cultivator can stay inside to fight enemies together with? It doesn't necessarily have to be a mechanical beast; a humanoid one would also do, hmm, preferably humanoid."

"You're talking about cover armor?"

Lu Ye immediately became intrigued, "Really? Do you have one?"

"We do, but I can't make them just yet; I need to continue my cultivation practice," Loo Yushan said with a smile, "When the day comes that I can create one, I'll give you one."

"Then I'll thank you in advance, Brother Loo," Lu Ye said, full of anticipation.

Cover armor, huh... He wondered if it was the same as what he envisioned; that would surely be a great thing.

This time, at the Spirit Stream Defense Battle, he had his eyes wide open to marvels. The more he learned, the more he realized the unfathomable depths of the cultivation world.

Despite the bustling congregation, they didn't let their guard down. Ten miles away from the Breath Fruit Tree, ghost cultivators had camouflaged themselves to monitor the surroundings, to prevent any sneak attacks from Ten Thousand Demons Ridge, even though this possibility was already slim. Still, precautions had to be taken.

At one moment, the scent of the fruit suddenly vanished. The cultivators who noticed it immediately looked towards the Breath Fruit Tree and saw that the fruits had ripened; nine shimmering blue fruits weighed heavily on the branches.

At the same time, a barrier that had been lingering around the perimeter of the tree also dissipated instantly.

The reason why the cultivators from Ten Thousand Demons Ridge didn't destroy the Breath Fruits before they were repelled was mainly that the Breath Fruit Tree had a natural protection. A transparent barrier surrounded the tree, which persisted until the fruits matured. Not only was destroying the Breath Fruits impossible, but even approaching them was not allowed.

Otherwise, why would Ten Thousand Demons Ridge leave such treasures to the Haotian Alliance if the situation turned sour? What they couldn't have, they would destroy.

A multitude of gazes turned eager; everyone's eyes were filled with longing. Although the uses for a Breath Fruit Core were manifold and diverse, every one of them was immensely useful. At the very least, it could be sold to Heaven's Augury treasure vault for a hundred thousand merits.

One could say that each Breath Fruit was priceless.

Desire aside, no one dared to go up and pick them. At this moment, anyone who acted rashly would undoubtedly be blasted to bits.

"Fellow Daoist Li, please!" someone suddenly spoke up.

All eyes turned to Li Baxian.

Li Baxian smiled slightly and cupped his fists to all sides, "Then I will respectfully comply!"

With a leap, he hovered in mid-air, searching among the nine fruits. Whether he saw any differences among them was unknown, but he promptly picked one, took out a wooden box, and carefully placed it inside.

He then approached Lu Ye, handing over the wooden box, "Junior Brother, Sister Hua Ci, this is for you."

Lu Ye looked at him in astonishment.

Li Baxian said with a smile, "This time, you and Sister Hua Ci have made such significant contributions. The big sects cannot merely thank you verbally. It was discussed earlier that a share of the Breath Fruits would belong to you."

Mong Si also looked at Lu Ye and nodded, "This is rightfully deserved by the Righteous Blood Sect. Take it."

Lu Ye's gaze swept over the crowd, meeting pairs of eyes filled with smiles and appreciation.

This sudden fortune took Lu Ye by surprise. He of course wanted such a valuable thing as the Breath Fruit, but previously, his Fourth Senior Brother had said that they would decide the ownership of the

Breath Fruits via an auction, where the cultivators would represent their respective sects and bid, the highest bidder winning.

The Righteous Blood Sect was currently in decline, with nothing much of value besides a few minor members and some spirit mountaintops; how could they have the capital to participate in such an auction?

He had thought that he would be content with sharing a portion of the auction proceeds, which should have been a considerable gain. Little did he expect such a windfall to come his way.

In the Spirit Stream Defense Battle, the two members from the Righteous Blood Sect had made enormous contributions. Without the cultivator team gathered around them, the current situation wouldn't exist. When Chess Island completed its final integration to form the provincial state, the high-level cultivators were evading the pursuit from Ten Thousand Demons Ridge.

Even Li Baxian had come with dozens of people to join Lu Ye, not to mention others. It was the battle fought by the low-level cultivator team on the outskirts that quelled the momentum of Ten Thousand Demons Ridge and turned the tide of defeat.

For such merits, verbal thanks would not suffice to express the gratitude of the big sects. A Breath Fruit was something tangible and real.

As Mong Si said, they deserved it.

Chapter 204 Return

With such a treasure before him, Lu Ye truly did not have the heart to refuse. He took the wooden chest from Li Baxian, turned around, handed it to Hua Ci, and said with cupped fists, "All my fellow sect brothers and sisters honor us so, we will keep this in mind, thank you all."

Li Baxian laughed and said, "Since you have already obtained one Breath Fruit, you will not have a share of the subsequent auction proceeds."

"Of course."

Lu Ye would not covet the auction proceeds. The value of one Breath Fruit was enough; to desire more would be to lack understanding.

Li Baxian then looked around and said, "I will preside over this auction. Does anyone object?"

Who could object? Among everyone present, there might have been some older than Li Baxian, but those older did not have his strength, and the younger ones even less so. He was tenth on the Spirit Stream Ranking, having fought Yan Xing, who was second, to a standstill. In the crowd, only Feng Yuechan could possibly match him.

But everyone knew of Feng Yuechan's affection for Li Baxian. How could she possibly undermine him?

Moreover, this had been previously agreed upon, and everyone happily consented.

Li Baxian took charge without reluctance, "We will now start the auction for the first Breath Fruit, those interested please start bidding!"

Immediately Feng Yuechan called out with a smile, "Loyal Heart Sect bids 10,000 top-grade Spirit Stones."

No sooner had she finished speaking than another voice overruled her, "Tianyuan Sect bids 13,000."

"Qingxu Palace bids 10,000 top-grade Spirit Stones and an additional ten pounds of Blue Sky Divine Iron!"

...

The atmosphere became extremely heated, with the bidders mostly coming from big sects of the Core Circle. They had profound foundations and ample resources, not something that sects from the inner or outer circles could contend with.

The foundation of a sect was not something built in just one or two generations, it required efforts from generations, and currently, the 2nd-3rd grade big sects in the Nine Provinces, each one had reached their position step by step. No one was born strong.

The bids were based mostly on top-grade Spirit Stones, some even added various special heavenly materials and earthly treasures, many of which Lu Ye had never even heard of.

As for top-grade Spirit Stones, he had never seen any. All the Spirit Stones he had obtained were low grade, supposedly above which were mid-grade, above mid-grade were top-grade, and then there was an even more special supreme-grade Spirit Stone.

The bidding continued in this intense yet peaceful atmosphere, and after round after round of raising bids, the first Breath Fruit was secured by a big sect from Wuzhou. When Li Baxian announced the result, the sect's Governor cupped his fists towards all sides, "Thank you for yielding!"

He flew up smiling, searched carefully, took one Breath Fruit, and sealed it in a container.

Then it was no longer his concern.

One after another, the Breath Fruits found their owners, the auction lasting a full two hours. Towards the end, Lu Ye distinctly felt the Governors intensifying their bidding.

In the end, the eight individuals who obtained the Breath Fruits were overjoyed, and those who did not were not too disheartened. One could not tell whether spending so much to secure a Breath Fruit was a gain or a loss.

The only one who clearly benefited was the Righteous Blood Sect.

The Governors represented their respective sects, and naturally, the bids they made here could not be fulfilled immediately. They would need to return to Spirit Stream battlefield and the Nine Provinces, report to their sects, and then representatives from the sects would gather the auction items and distribute them.

Haotian Alliance would naturally handle this affair. They had capable individuals who specialized in managing such matters. The distribution of proceeds from the bids would include not only the sects represented by the Governors standing there but also those who had died in combat.

Essentially, every sect that participated in the Spirit Stream Defense Battle would receive some benefits, though after being divided, the benefits would not amount to much.

"Junior Brother, once you bring back that Breath Fruit, hand it over to Second Senior Sister. She will take care of processing the pulp," Li Baxian reminded him from the crowd.

"Understood."

Li Baxian patted his shoulder and said, "You are growing quickly, but you must calm your mind and find time to settle your thoughts."

"Yes."

Thunderous sounds came from all directions as the entire province began to shake. The vast province started to disintegrate into numerous Chess Islands. The Spirit Stream Defense Battle was over.

Lu Ye could distinctly feel the scenery around him begin to warp and blur, as if overlapping with another dimension.

"Fourth Senior Brother, Senior Sister Feng, take care!" Lu Ye called out with cupped fists.

Standing by his side, Hua Ci also bowed graciously to the two.

"Take care!" Li Baxian nodded his head.

Farewells sounded from all around. Lu Ye turned his head, saw Lann Yudie, saw Gao Tai, saw the brother and sister Loo Yushan, and waved lightly.

...

The distortion and overlap of space had gotten more severe. After a momentary daze before Lu Ye and Hua Ci's eyes, the two found themselves standing in the Heaven's Augury Hall of the Righteous Blood Sect's headquarters, the bustling crowds around them nowhere to be seen.

...

...

Beside Hua Ci followed a mechanical wolf, its body draped with storage sacks.

...

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They turned their heads to look at each other and shared a smile.

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The Spirit Stream Defense Battle had lasted a month, and the time they had spent was rich and colorful, surely to become an unforgettable experience for both of them.

...

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"Both of you, you've finally come back."

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A voice rang from outside the great hall, and Lu Ye turned his head to see it was Chen Yu.

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Lu Ye instructed Hua Ci, "You go back to the sect first and report to the sect master and the Second Senior Sister that we're safe. I'll join you shortly."

...

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"Okay," Hua Ci acknowledged and used the Heaven's Augury Pillar to return to the sect headquarters, disappearing from sight.

...

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Lu Ye stepped outside and once he reached the outside of the great hall, he sat down on the steps with a relaxed posture and said, "If you're going to wait, you might as well go inside and wait. What's with skulking around outside every time?"

...

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The sect headquarters was always the safest place. Throughout the Spirit Stream Defense Battle, Lu Ye had been on constant alert, only now fully relaxing.

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Chen Yu hastily said, "The Righteous Blood Sect has allowed us independent cultivators to stay in its headquarters, which we are already immensely grateful for. How could we presume to enter the Heaven's Augury Hall, such an important place of the sect?"

...

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The independent cultivators were all quite cooperative, or to be precise, under the supervision of Chen Yu, they were very self-aware. Even though the headquarters had been without people for dozens of years, none of the independent cultivators had tried to take over the place.

...

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"What's the matter?" Lu Ye asked nonchalantly, stretching his neck. After several interactions, they were already familiar with each other. In fact, Lu Ye had previously entrusted Chen Yu to buy elixir pills with Spirit Stones.

...

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Chen Yu said with a smile, "I hear that the Righteous Blood Sect is going to accept disciples?"

...

Lu Ye looked at him. "Your information is quite accurate."

...

...

It was true as the Second Senior Sister had mentioned before. Previously, it didn't matter that the Righteous Blood Sect didn't recruit disciples, as she and the sect master had been waiting to be removed from the sect. But now that there were Lu Ye, Hua Ci, and others, they might as well widen this opening.

As a Governor, Lu Ye was qualified to accept disciples in the Spirit Stream battlefield, of course, those who he accepted would initially be disciples in name, requiring a period of assessment before becoming official disciples.

...

...

Additionally, Shui Yuan had also said that many independent cultivators wished to attach themselves to the Righteous Blood Sect. Lu Ye was to recruit as many as he could, which was related to the future development of the sect. If the sect encountered any trouble, he would also have a pool of helpers available.

...

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Due to his participation in the Spirit Stream Defense Battle, Lu Ye had been too preoccupied to deal with this. Unexpectedly, before he could start, the news had already spread.

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It must have leaked from either Kong Niu or Ruan Lingyu, the latter being the more likely source, as the little girl liked to run off to the marketplace.

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"Is that so?" Chen Yu looked surprised and delighted.

...

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"What, you want to join the Righteous Blood Sect?" Lu Ye asked him surprisingly.

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"I do have that thought; just not sure if the opportunity will arise."

...

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"With your Level 7 cultivation, joining a sect shouldn't be difficult. Why set your sights solely on the Righteous Blood Sect?"

...

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Chen Yu gave a bitter smile, "Big sects actually prefer to nurture disciples from the ground up, as it fosters a higher degree of loyalty and identification with the sect. As for someone like me, even if I were to join a sect, I wouldn't be given much attention. What big sect lacks a Level 7 cultivator?"

...

...

That was indeed the truth. Even the outer circle of sects, not to mention the 9th grade sects, had many cultivators at Levels 7 and 8; they just weren't seen often as they went to the inner circle to experience and grow.

...

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Someone like Chen Yu was actually qualified to serve as a governor for a 9th grade sect, but which sect would trust him enough to do so?

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Lu Ye couldn't help but remember Dong Shuye.

...

...

Dong Shuye, who had served as a governor for the Nine Stars Sect, later defected to another power and ended up becoming a personal guard for a wastrel young master of that power. How sad that was.

...

...

"I've been settled here since I was at Level 2, and now I am at Level 7. After such a long time, naturally, I've developed feelings for this place. It's not just me; many independent cultivators who have settled here feel the same way.

We are unaffiliated with any sect or clan, have no backing behind us, but because we are united here, we've also formed a force in and of ourselves, supporting one another. Even though the Righteous Blood Sect has never taken notice of us, we've already received protection from the sect."

...

...

With a Little Gray in the headquarters, which sect from Ten Thousand Demons Ridge would dare to challenge us?

...

...

"So I was thinking, if the Righteous Blood Sect truly opens its gates widely to recruit followers, could you perhaps consider us independent cultivators first? Our talents may be a little worse than others, but our loyalty and identification with the Righteous Blood Sect are stronger; it's just that we have never dared to consider ourselves disciples of the sect," Chen Yu said earnestly.

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"Is this just your personal idea?"

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Chen Yu shook his head, "It's not just me; many others feel the same way, and they've asked me to come here to get a clear answer."

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Lu Ye leaned back, with one hand supporting his chin and the other resting on his knee, his demeanor relaxed as he lightly tapped on his knee and said, "Do you all understand that the Righteous Blood Sect

is no ordinary 9th grade sect? Once you are truly branded with the sect's mark, you will definitely face more dangers than others.

The incident I encountered at Golden Light Peak, I presume you've heard about it?"

...

...

Chen Yu responded, "Which path of cultivation isn't fraught with risks? Right now, we indeed have no sect's branding, but if we were to encounter powerful individuals from Ten Thousand Demons Ridge, would they let us go just because of that? Fellow Daoist Ye's heroic deeds at Golden Light Peak are well known to us, and we hold them in high regard.

We independent cultivators might not have the same abilities as you, but if we're fortunate enough to be accepted into the Righteous Blood Sect, we'd swear to defend the sect's honor with our lives!"

Chapter 205 Congratulations from All Sides

In front of Heaven's Augury Hall, Lu Ye pondered slightly, "I'll go back and consult the sect master about taking in disciples, and I'll let you know when I have an update."

He didn't immediately give any response.

"Then I'll have to trouble Fellow Daoist Yiye," someone replied.

After Chen Yu had left, just as Lu Ye was about to examine the gains from his recent exploits, a message came through the battlefield marking. Upon opening it, it was from Second Senior Sister, "Time to come home for dinner!"

Remembering the delicious meals prepared by his Second Senior Sister, Lu Ye patted his butt, stood up, and walked to the Heaven's Augury Pillar. He placed his hand upon it and in the next moment, he was back at the sect headquarters.

Second Senior Sister must have timed it perfectly, preparing a table of dishes, waiting for Lu Ye and Hua Ci to return.

Lu Ye first paid his respects to the sect master. Hua Ci had already returned earlier to report their safety, but when the sect master saw him now, he still sized up Lu Ye from head to toe, confirming he was unharmed before nodding in relief, "Go have your meal; your Second Senior Sister has made lots of delicious food."

He didn't ask Lu Ye about his experiences during the Spirit Stream Defense Battle. For him, it was enough that the few remaining disciples of the sect had returned safely; he desired nothing more.

"Yes!"

The dining table was lively; the few remaining disciples of the Righteous Blood Sect were all gathered here, eating delicious food and continuously laughing and talking.

Amber stood at the door, sizing up the mechanical wolf that Hua Ci had brought back with her beastly eyes, then with a pounce, she toppled the mechanical wolf, stepping on it with her paws triumphantly.

Meanwhile, in the sect master's sleeping chamber, the sitting sect master opened his eyes, sensing his own marking.

The message was abruptly from Pang Zhen, "Veteran Thang, the Righteous Blood Sect has indeed taken in two promising disciples!"

The sect master frowned, puzzled by the implication. From Pang Zhen's words, it seemed like Lu Ye and Hua Ci had done something remarkable during the Spirit Stream Defense Battle?

Just as he thought of inquiring further, another message arrived—this time, shockingly, from the old ghost of Loyal Heart Sect, "When is Righteous Blood Sect going to disband? That disciple named Lu Ye and Hua Ci from your sect, I'll take them."

"Scram!" The sect master retorted curtly.

Soon afterwards, messages kept coming through the marking, all from various sect leaders or big sect masters of the Nine Provinces, overwhelming the sect master momentarily so he couldn't make immediate inquiries.

After a while, when the flood of messages thinned a bit, but still steadily continued to come.

One by one, the sect master checked the messages—some congratulating, some thanking on behalf of their disciples, and some wanting to form strategic alliances with Righteous Blood Sect.

The sect master truly became confused, but from those messages, it became apparent that his two disciples indeed did something significant, something that concerned many sects and even the entire Haotian Alliance, though he was not yet clear about the specifics.

He found Pang Zhen's marker and transmitted a message, "What happened?"

Pang Zhen immediately replied, "Veteran Thang, are you not aware? Haven't your two disciples come back?"

"They have returned."

"Since they have returned, why don't you ask them in person?"

"The youngsters are currently dining together, it wouldn't look good for an old man to interrupt now, just tell me."

Pang Zhen then recounted all about this time's Spirit Stream Defense Battle.

The sect master looked on in stupor, silent for a long time before suddenly bursting into loud laughter.

He truly hadn't expected that Lu Ye and Hua Ci, merely two Level 6 cultivators, could stir up such a storm in the Chess Sea.

Initially, he had simply sent Lu Ye and Hua Ci to broaden their experiences, never imagining these two young ones would indirectly save the fate of the entire Haotian Alliance for decades to come—an achievement so grand it was rare even once every hundred years, comparable only to the monumental battle fought by his eldest disciple forty years ago.

Unfortunately, his eldest disciple ultimately met with a disgraceful fate, dragging the sect down with him into decline, becoming sinners.

Today, decades later, the actions of the two disciples of Righteous Blood Sect somewhat redeemed the sect from past sins.

The sect master was genuinely relieved and happy.

"Veteran Thang, I've already sent orders not to let the news spread, to avoid drawing the attention of Ten Thousand Demons Ridge to Righteous Blood Sect any further," Pang Zhen transmitted yet again.

"Thank you," the sect master replied.

"Supporting the younger generation, just as you once supported us, is only right," came the reply.

Ending the communication with Pang Zhen, the sect master busied himself for a while, replying one by one to the messages from various sect leaders and masters, and then he finally stepped out of the sleeping chamber.

In the dining hall, where Lu Ye and others were still eating, a figure suddenly appeared—it was the sect master, and everyone hurriedly got up.

The sect master gestured for them to sit, smiling broadly, "Continue eating."

Turning to Shui Yuan, he said, "Bring some fine ingredients; I feel like cooking today and want to show off my skills." Saying this, he headed toward the kitchen.

Everyone looked at each other in bewilderment. Lu Ye, astonished, turned to Second Senior Sister, "The sect master can cook?"

Shui Yuan, with a suppressed smile, responded, "My culinary skills were taught by the old man himself; carry on eating." With that, she hurried after the sect master, puzzled and wondering why the old man was in such a good mood today.

Could it be that things have thawed with Madam Yun; has the old tree bloomed again?

During the meal, everyone's stomachs were bursting; who would have thought that the sect master of the Righteous Blood Sect, a strong cultivator from the Divine Sea Realm, possessed such impressive culinary skills.

Yiyi poked Ruan Lingyu's bulging belly, causing Lingyu to cry out in protest.

After a satisfying meal, Lu Ye greeted the Second Senior Sister and the others, then went into his room and fell straight to sleep.

In the Chess Sea, neither he nor Sister Hua Ci had much rest; over the month, both were physically and mentally exhausted.

In a daze, his nose tickled and when he opened his eyes, it was Yiyi poking his nostrils with his hair.

Lu Ye slowly got up, sitting in a daze.

Yiyi brought some water for washing his face, handed him a wet towel, and said, "Wake up, you've been asleep for a whole day and night."

Seeing no reaction from him, Yiyi slapped the towel on his face and began to scrub vigorously.

"I'm awake!" The cold water sharpened his senses, and Lu Ye immediately felt more alert, taking the towel and getting out of bed.

"How's everything been recently?" Lu Ye asked as he washed his face.

Yiyi stood next to him, hands behind her back, humming a tune. "Pretty good, it's just less lively without you and Sister Hua Ci around."

These days were truly idyllic; recalling their first encounter on Qingyun Mountain, Yiyi felt it was a fateful meeting.

If it weren't for meeting Lu Ye, she and Amber would still be at Qingyun Mountain and might have been captured by some cultivator one day - the thought alone was too frightening to contemplate.

Though the journey with Lu Ye had its dangers, now within the Righteous Blood Sect, under the protection of the sect master and with Lingyu and Amber as playmates, their days were incredibly comfortable.

Lu Ye finished with the towel and suddenly turned to look earnestly at Yiyi.

"What's the matter?" Yiyi felt puzzled under his stare.

Lu Ye reached out, pinched her cheek, and squeezed.

"What are you doing?" Yiyi asked, her words muffled.

"This texture... It's becoming more and more indistinguishable from a real body," Lu Ye said with a look of surprise, "And... have you gotten fatter?"

Yiyi suddenly panicked, "No way, you're making that up!" she said insecurely, patting her cheeks, suspicious in her gaze.

"Hmm, indeed, you've gotten a bit bigger." Lu Ye nodded seriously. "Can you still grow?"

Yiyi was initially stunned, then blushed, "Where are you looking?"

"Could it be related to Amber?" Lu Ye rubbed his chin, deep in thought. After returning, Amber's aura had strengthened significantly, and it immediately demanded the Scale Armor from him. Lu Ye didn't refuse, handed over the Scale Armor for Amber to absorb some blood Qi. As expected, Amber lay rigid on the ground, completely intoxicated.

"I... I'm going to tell Sister Hua Ci you're being a pervert!" Yiyi stomped her foot and ran out.

Feeling fresh and revitalized, Lu Ye stepped out of the room and bumped into Ruan Lingyu. The young girl glared at him, deliberately positioning herself in front of Lu Ye and stamping her feet, huffing loudly to express her displeasure at him bullying her friend.

"Have you completed your cultivation for today?" Lu Ye looked down at her.

Ruan Lingyu was somewhat evasive, "No, not yet... haven't started."

"Then go cultivate now!"

"Oh!" The little girl ran off toward Heaven's Augury Hall, her twin braids swinging from side to side.

"Second Senior Sister." Lu Ye called out to Shui Yuan as she approached.

Shui Yuan handed him a somewhat familiar wooden box. "The flesh of the Breath Fruit is being processed, which will take some time. Here, take this fruit core for now. It's unclear what it's used for, so you'll need to stimulate it with spirit force yourself.

Some fruit cores choose their master—whomever first activates its power, it will acknowledge as its owner." Given this possibility, Shui Yuan dared not recklessly explore the effects of the fruit core.

The flesh of the Breath Fruit had extremely potent restorative effects, but it would be a waste to consume it directly, but in the hands of the Second Senior Sister, it was different.

Aside from being a healing cultivator, Shui Yuan was also an alchemy cultivator. With her expertise in medicine, she could certainly make good use of the fruit flesh.

That said, apart from the sect master, the Righteous Blood Sect currently had only six disciples, two of whom were healing cultivators—an odd ratio, considering that other sects had the fewest healing cultivators.

Lu Ye took the wooden box and gently opened it, discovering inside a blue, crystalline object that resembled a sapphire.

At first glance, it looked just like a piece of blue sapphire. He looked up at Shui Yuan, who said, "This is the Breath Fruit Core."

All Lu Ye could do was sigh, "It indeed lives up to the Breath Fruit, beyond ordinary reasoning as always."

"Shall we give it a try?" Shui Yuan was curious about the function of the fruit core herself.

Lu Ye nodded, picked up the blue fruit core, held it in his palm, and infused it with spirit force. The next moment, a somewhat familiar sensation emerged, similar to the feeling he always had when entering the Heaven's Augury treasure vault...

Chapter 206 Sect Recruitment

Entering Heaven's Augury treasure vault was by entering with one's consciousness, while the physical body remained outside. After activating the Breath Fruit Core with spirit force, the situation turned out to be astonishingly similar.

However, compared to entering the Heaven's Augury treasure vault, the feeling now seemed more real, as if he were truly standing here, with everything indistinguishable from the outside world.

Lu Ye first tried to sense his own physical body and, feeling reassured upon sensing it, he began to survey his surroundings.

He was in a small room, empty all around, with nothing at all.

He searched the room briefly, assured it was completely empty, and then stood in front of a door, the only door in the room, unknown where it leads.

Lu Ye reached for the door and gently pushed, preparing to open it.

But suddenly, a line of characters twisted like water ripples appeared on the door. He looked closely and saw it read, "To enter the Mirage Realm, fifty merits are required."

Lu Ye paused for a moment. The meaning was clear; to push the door open, he needed to spend fifty merits, which wasn't a small amount.

Considering that the Boulder Mountain Saber he had cost only one hundred and thirty-eight merits.

But a high price indicated the possibility of valuable gains. Just the entry fee to the door cost fifty merits. What treasures could be hidden behind this door? Remembering what Li Baxian and Feng Yuechan had mentioned earlier, Lu Ye secretly hoped for a Spirit Vein behind the door that could produce various top-grade and supreme-grade Spirit Stones.

Thinking this, Lu Ye pushed the door, and the battlefield marking on the back of his hand heated slightly. Lu Ye didn't check; he guessed his merits had been deducted, similar to when he bought items from the Heaven's Augury treasure vault.

Pushing open the door, Lu Ye stepped forward, and what he saw stunned him in his tracks.

A moment later, Lu Ye came to his senses. It felt as if a needle had pricked his brain, the pain was unbearable.

Shui Yuan, who had been standing by his side, quickly asked, "Are you alright?"

Lu Ye shook his head, feeling as though his brain was shaking.

"What is the Breath Fruit Core used for?" Seeing him look as if he had fought and lost a battle, Shui Yuan couldn't help but be curious.

Lu Ye then recounted his previous experiences, and Shui Yuan's eyes revealed a surprised expression, "The Breath Fruit Core has such a use? Let me see."

Taking the Breath Fruit Core from Lu Ye's hands, she sat down cross-legged, the spirit force swirling around her hand holding the core.

Lu Ye stood by waiting. Time passed, and the stabbing pain in his head gradually faded, but the discomfort lingered.

After a full two hours, Shui Yuan finally took a deep breath, opened her eyes, her face slightly pale, and handed the Breath Fruit Core back to Lu Ye, tiredly saying, "This is a good item. If used well, it can rapidly enhance your combat skills, but it consumes a lot of mental energy. Be careful, don't really hurt yourself."

"Mhm." Lu Ye carefully stored the Breath Fruit Core. Although his previous experience was not pleasant, and could even be said to have wasted fifty merits, he realized that the Breath Fruit Core was a valuable item.

Just as Second Senior Sister had said, if used well, it could rapidly enhance his combat skills, something he was sorely lacking at the moment.

More importantly, this item was not bound to any owner, anyone could use it. Thus, as long as one had enough merits, they could use it to refine their skills, which was its true value.

"By the way, Senior Sister, last time you mentioned the sect recruiting disciples and independent cultivators joining from the marketplace, it seems the cultivators there have heard some news and are inquiring,"

Shui Yuan said, "Now that you are the Governor, you can make decisions on these matters yourself; you don't need to consult me."

"Aren't you afraid I'll run the sect into the ground?"

Shui Yuan laughed, "The sect was nearly abolished; it was only from your addition that we managed to maintain our 9th grade. So, cause as much trouble as you like."

"Understood." Lu Ye nodded, reassured by Second Senior Sister's words, now he had no burdens.

After bidding Shui Yuan goodbye, Lu Ye used Heaven's Augury Pillar to enter the sect headquarters, sent out a few messages, and soon, Hua Ci and the others gathered around, lining up before him.

Lu Ye looked at the few faces before him and spoke, "Currently, our sect only has a few people. Looking around the Nine Provinces, the Righteous Blood Sect might just be the least populated. For the sect to develop, we need more disciples. The more people we have, the more promising our future. So, I've decided to recruit more disciples for our sect. Who agrees, and who disagrees?"

Yiyi immediately raised her hand supportively, "I agree!" Amber, crouching next to her, also gave a responding bark.

Lu Ye gave her an approving look.

As Yiyi's best playmate, Ruan Lingyu naturally raised both hands in agreement, and the reticent Kong Niu also raised a hand.

All eyes turned to Hua Ci, who said helplessly, "You're the Governor, just decide these things yourself. Why call us all here?"

"That won't do. Although I am the Governor, the sect belongs to everyone. I cannot be dictatorial. Moreover... Hua Ci, Fellow Daoist, please adjust your attitude."

Hua Ci looked confused, "What's wrong with me?"

Lu Ye gazed at her sternly, "I may be the Governor, but don't forget, you are the Deputy Governor. The mark of the Righteous Blood Sect is branded on the back of your hand. With this mark, you must share in the sect's honor and disgrace, and contribute ideas and efforts for the development of the sect, assisting this Governor in solving problems."

Hua Ci thought seriously for a moment and then nodded, "You make sense, I've grown lax in Mount Ying and have not yet adapted to my new identity."

"That's a good attitude!" Lu Ye gave her an affirming look, "It seems like no one else has objections, so let us officially start the recruitment for the sect! Deputy Governor Hua Ci, please promptly produce a set of rules and a recruitment plan, as there will be many independent cultivators in the marketplace wanting to join our sect."

However, the Righteous Blood Sect is not open to just anyone, certain requirements must be set. Regarding what exactly is required, let's discuss it further. Any other issues?"

Hua Ci looked at him doubtfully, "Yes."

"Speak!"

"I'll handle the recruitment. What will you be doing?"

Lu Ye replied, "As this sect's stationing Governor and the face of our sect to the outer world, my task is arduous. I need to enhance my cultivation quickly, otherwise, while other Governors are at Level 7, being at only Level 6 does not sound impressive when spoken of."

A group of people shot him knowing glances.

Lu Ye, as if he hadn't noticed, called out sharply, "Since no one has any other issues, let's disperse. Let's get moving; we need to be efficient, time waits for no one!"

Hua Ci and others gathered to discuss the recruitment matters, while Lu Ye ran to the training room, not to cultivate as he had said, but to install Spirit Energy Gathering Spirit Runes in several training rooms.

Currently, Hua Ci and others each have their training rooms where, in addition to the intrinsic Spirit Gathering Array, Lu Ye had installed Spirit Energy Gathering Spirit Runes on three walls, increasing the efficiency of cultivation significantly.

For now, the sect has only a few members, so these exclusive training rooms are sufficient. But once the sect starts accepting new members and a large number of independent cultivators affiliate, it will definitely be insufficient.

The sect is now accepting independent cultivators who typically have modest talents and low cultivation efficiency. To facilitate their rapid growth, Spirit Energy Gathering Spirit Runes are the optimal choice.

A sect cannot be strengthened by one or a few individuals alone; a collective improvement in strength is necessary.

If the Righteous Blood Sect is to develop, it must focus on foundational cultivation facilities, and this is a problem Lu Ye can solve.

As Lu Ye was installing Spirit Energy Gathering Spirit Runes in the training room, Hua Ci and others were discussing the standards and rules for recruitment. In just half a day, basic standards were established. Lu Ye reviewed them and found no major issues, but, just to be safe, he advised them to consult Shui Yuan, the Second Senior Sister.

The next day, at the marketplace's stationing site, Ruan Lingyu bounded excitedly into the marketplace, greeted warmly by the independent cultivators who also stuffed tasty treats into her hands.

Lingyu often visited here, so she was quite familiar with the independent cultivators at the marketplace who also knew she was a disciple of the Righteous Blood Sect, thus treating her with respect.

At the entrance of the marketplace was a notice board, previously erected by the independent cultivators. The board had all sorts of notices, including those buying various herbs and those seeking companions for training outside, among other things.

Lingyu walked straight to the board, took out a notice from her storage sack, and stuck it up neatly.

A female cultivator, seeing this, laughed and said, "What's this little Lingyu posting? Did you lose something?"

"Did Lingyu lose something?"

"What did you lose? Let's all help to look for it."

The independent cultivators nearby got noisy.

"I didn't lose anything. This is a recruitment notice for the Righteous Blood Sect," Lingyu explained while she neatly attached the notice.

The female cultivator laughed again, "So it's a recruitment from the Righteous Blood Sect..." Suddenly, she realized what it meant and hurriedly craned her neck at the notice board. After a quick glance, she rushed towards the Heaven's Augury Hall.

Meanwhile, independent cultivators from all directions surged towards the site, pushing Ruan Lingyu out of their way.

"The Righteous Blood Sect is enlisting!" someone shouted excitedly, and the news spread like wildfire, quickly stirring up the entire marketplace.

At that moment, in front of the Heaven's Augury Hall, Hua Ci sat poised behind a desk with a notebook in front of her, Kong Niu sitting at another desk on one side with a similar notebook, and Yiyi on the other.

Chen Yu stood nearby, grinning foolishly. As the manager of the marketplace and the cultivator with the highest cultivation level there, he was naturally the first to be recorded in the notebook. His origins, name, and cultivation level were listed on the first page, first line of Hua Ci's booklet.

He stood there partly to help maintain order and partly because he was well-acquainted with the independent cultivators, which allowed him to assist in verifying some information.

Within a few moments of waiting, one could see cultivators from the marketplace direction scrambling over here in a race.

The first to arrive was the female cultivator who had spoken with Lingyu. She gasped for air as she came up to the desk and asked breathlessly, "Is this where we sign up?"

Chapter 207 Harvest

In the past, the quiet front of Heaven's Augury Hall suddenly buzzed with activity, as independent cultivators formed three lines to register with Hua Ci Yiyi and Kong Niu. The registration included the independent cultivators' basic information, such as name, origin, cultivation, duration of cultivation practice, and level of talent.

But it wasn't as simple as becoming a sect disciple of the Righteous Blood Sect just by completing registration. If that were the case, it would be far too easy. What was being done now was only the most basic statistics gathering.

Eventually, Lu Ye and Hua Ci would have to discuss who among these people would be accepted into the Righteous Blood Sect, picking out the taller ones from among the shorter ones.

By nightfall, the independent cultivators in front of Heaven's Augury Hall dispersed, having completed all registrations.

Lu Ye sat on the steps in front of Heaven's Augury Hall, looking at a booklet and suddenly frowning, "Who registered this?"

The handwriting on it was incredibly ugly, and Lu Ye had to scrutinize it carefully to make out the words.

"Me!" A muffled voice rang out. Lu Ye looked up to see Kong Niu. Their eyes met, and the fellow gave Lu Ye a simple-minded grin.

Lu Ye was at a loss for words.

Gathering the booklet, Lu Ye said, "Everyone has worked hard. Hua Ci and Chen Yu stay behind; the rest may leave."

After a busy day, Yiyi, Ruan Lingyu, and Kong Niu left. The first two returned to sect headquarters, while Kong Niu went to the training room. He was the hardworking type who, except for mealtime returns to the headquarters, would typically stay at the training room.

In the past, he followed Hua Ci at Mount Ying, where there was no good cultivation environment. But now, at the Righteous Blood Sect, things were different. Not lacking in cultivation resources, the spiritual energy of nature in the training room was also extremely dense—a condition that could not be compared to Mount Ying.

Kong Niu cherished his current situation immensely.

In front of Heaven's Augury Hall, Lu Ye, Hua Ci, and Chen Yu were sifting through the candidates to be admitted into the sect. Chen Yu was more familiar with the independent cultivators in the marketplace and had a better grasp of their personalities and character. While he could not claim to know everything about them, he certainly knew more than Lu Ye and Hua Ci.

With his help in the selection, it was undoubtedly easier to ensure the quality of the new sect disciples.

There were a total of four hundred thirty-two resident independent cultivators in the marketplace, and the number registered in the three booklets was the same, meaning that all the independent cultivators had come to register. This enthusiasm was beyond Lu Ye's expectations; he had thought it would be good if half of them registered.

The three of them were busy until late at night, initially drafting a list of one hundred people to be admitted into the sect. Those not chosen, if willing to affiliate themselves with the sect, were welcome;

the unwilling were not forced. However, judging by the passion of the independent cultivators that day, they would surely not refuse the offer to affiliate.

On the Spirit Stream battlefield, many independent cultivators would choose to affiliate with a certain sect. This way, they could utilize the sect's infrastructure, such as entering the training room to cultivate, establishing their dwellings within the sect's grounds, and enjoying the augmentation of nature's spiritual energy by the sect's Heaven's Augury Pillar.

In return, these independent cultivators were expected to contribute when the sect faced challenges and to follow orders.

For example, if the sect was declared war upon, those affiliated independent cultivators, when summoned, had to join in the battle. Otherwise, their affiliation would be revoked.

It could be said that every sect establishment on the Spirit Stream battlefield consisted of three types of people: the sect disciples, cultivators from big sects who came to train, and independent cultivators who chose to affiliate.

The biggest difference between the first type and the latter two was that sect disciples received a monthly stipend from the sect, granting them access to more cultivation resources.

However, those not chosen in the first round need not worry. Now that the Righteous Blood Sect had opened its gates widely to accept disciples, it was certain that more would continue to be admitted. As long as they performed well, there was a chance for everyone.

Chen Yu posted the list of the one hundred chosen people on the marketplace's notice wall overnight. Those whose names were on the list were naturally overjoyed. Those not on the list felt a natural disappointment but might still find it a good choice to affiliate with the Righteous Blood Sect.

Moreover, Chen Yu specifically revealed that the Righteous Blood Sect would continue to recruit disciples in the future, reassuring the independent cultivators to wait patiently.

Lu Ye then returned to the headquarters to report the progress of the new recruits to his senior sister Shui Yuan and also received some Spirit Stones and elixir pills from her.

The next day, inside the Heaven's Augury Hall at the Righteous Blood Sect's establishment, Lu Ye and Hua Ci stood at the front, with one hundred cultivators lined up below. Chen Yu was the first among them.

A hundred pairs of eyes gazed ardently as Lu Ye proclaimed, "From today on, you are the disciples in name of the Righteous Blood Sect, no longer the independent cultivators without support. I hope you will advance or retreat with the sect, share in its glory and disgrace. Today, we take pride in our sect, and perhaps one day, the sect will take pride in us.

I look forward to that day, the sect master looks forward to that day, and I believe, as long as we work together, that day will surely come!"

"Yes!" the crowd roared in unison below.

Lu Ye nodded satisfied, "Step forward when I call your name!"

Hua Ci took out the list, and her pleasant voice called out, "Chen Yu!"

"Disciple is here!" Chen Yu immediately stepped forward.

Lu Ye took out a big seal, his Governor's seal, and with a plea to Heaven's Augury, stamped it onto the back of his hand. He then handed Chen Yu a few Spirit Stones and a few elixir pills as a token of the monthly stipend for a disciple in name. Shui Yuan had allocated them the previous night. It wasn't much, not even enough for half a month's cultivation, but it was a benefit every sect provided.

He earnestly said, "Cultivate well."

"Yes," Chen Yu replied, accepting them solemnly.

"Zhang Hai."

"Disciple is here!"

"Liu Wu."

...

One by one, names were called, and Lu Ye stamped each person's hand with his Governor's seal and distributed the monthly stipend. Everyone was beaming with joy.

Gazing at the hundred people gathered in the great hall, Lu Ye was filled with a multitude of thoughts. The basic framework of the stationed area was set up, but to truly develop it would be a long and arduous task.

The independent cultivators' strength wasn't high; beneath Chen Yu, there were only a few at the Level 6 realm, and not many at Level 5, moreover, these independent cultivators didn't possess high talent, which made their cultivation efficiency worrying.

However, if talent was insufficient, Spiritual Energy could compensate for it. He was still setting up the Spirit Energy Gathering Spirit Runes in the training room, and as long as the concentration of Spiritual Energy in the stationed area improved, the efficiency of the sect disciples' early cultivation stages might not fall behind others.

The recruitment of a hundred disciples was quickly completed, and after they left, hundreds of independent cultivators who had been waiting outside poured into the great hall.

These independent cultivators were to be attached to the Righteous Blood Sect stationed area. Compared to those hundred disciples, they had no monthly salary, and their treatment was somewhat inferior, such as prioritizing sect disciples for the use of the training room.

After handing the independent cultivators over to Hua Ci to deal with, Lu Ye left the great hall and went to the training room to arrange the Spirit Energy Gathering Spirit Runes.

It wasn't until evening that Hua Ci sent news that the independent cultivators had been taken care of.

Lu Ye hurried back to the Heaven's Augury Hall, where Hua Ci was waiting.

"Let's begin."

What he now had to do was raise the concentration of Spiritual Energy in the stationed area, which was also the greatest gain he and Hua Ci had from participating in the Spirit Stream Defense Battle.

The reason he hadn't upgraded upon returning was considering that if the cultivation environment here improved, it would affect the choices of those independent cultivators.

As it turned out, he had worried needlessly; practically all the independents in the marketplace had either become disciples in name of the Righteous Blood Sect or chosen to affiliate with it, without exception.

Moreover, once word of this place spread, there would certainly be even more independent cultivators rushing here.

The foundational Spiritual Energy in any sect's stationed area was a tenth higher than in the wilderness; to raise the density of Spiritual Energy, one needed to buy the enhancement of a Heaven's Augury Pillar.

Before the Spirit Stream Defense Battle, Lu Ye spent five hundred merit points to buy an enhancement, using it as a bargaining chip to participate in the battle. Now, the Spiritual Energy at the sect's stationed area was two tenths richer than in the wilderness.

He attempted to buy another enhancement, but he was out of merit points, and the message returned informed him that it would cost a thousand merit points.

Lu Ye had a feeling that the richer the Spiritual Energy, the more merit points would be required for an enhancement; his fourth senior brother had said the same.

Checking his own marking, he and Hua Ci had secured a total of eighty-eight enhancements in the Spirit Stream Defense Battle, and each of these enhancements was the most basic type, worth five hundred merit points.

These enhancements could be exchanged for merits, but because they were property of the sect type, they could only be exchanged for sect merits and not directly into personal merits.

There is a certain way of conversion between these two, for instance, Lu Ye could donate his own personal merit points, turning them into the sect merits of the Righteous Blood Sect and storing them in the Heaven's Augury Pillar.

The reason the big sects had so many merit points to purchase enhancements from the Heaven's Augury Pillar was due to the cumulative donations of numerous Disciples. Matters within the stationed area couldn't be resolved by one person alone; it required the concerted efforts of many Disciples.

For example, as a Governor, bearing the heavy responsibility of safeguarding the stationed area, Lu Ye could receive a portion of the sect's merit points from the Heaven's Augury Pillar as his monthly salary. Hua Ci, as the Deputy Governor, also had this privilege.

In the future, if any Disciple performed outstandingly and made significant contributions to the sect, in addition to rewards of elixir pills and Spirit Stones, they could even be awarded a certain amount of merits directly, which would come from the Heaven's Augury Pillar.

These things were the most basic common knowledge, recorded in the jade slip previously given to Lu Ye by Li Baxian.

In the Heaven's Augury Hall, Lu Ye placed his hand on the Heaven's Augury Pillar, and with a mere thought, he exchanged all eighty-eight enhancements for sect merits, immediately adding forty-four thousand sect merit points inside the pillar.

He didn't immediately use these merit points to buy an enhancement; instead, using his authority as the Governor, he allocated this month's merit salary to both himself and Hua Ci.

Hua Ci noticed something and looked down to check her own battlefield marking, jumping in surprise, "Why is there so much?"

Her personal merit points had increased by four thousand four hundred points at once, which was a tenth of the total merits.

The same was true for Lu Ye.

"You didn't kill too many people in the Chess Sea, and everyone is short on merit points; hold onto these for now, you might need them sometime."

"That's too much; I won't need this many."

"You will need them."

If it were possible to allocate more than a tenth of the monthly salary, Lu Ye would have liked to give even more.

These merit points were earned together with Hua Ci in the Chess Sea. Even if they were divided equally, it wouldn't matter, but considering that they still needed to increase the Spiritual Energy concentration for the sect's stationed area and that a few thousand merit points were indeed a significant sum at this stage, it was sufficient for now.

Chapter 208 Purchasing Blessings

After deducting the monthly salaries of two people, only 35,200 merit points remained from the original 44,000.

Lu Ye's hand rested on the Heaven's Augury Pillar, and with a slight movement of his thoughts, he used the sect merits to purchase enhancements. The clicking sounds indicated that something inside the pillar was changing.

It was the same as the last time.

As 1,000 merit points were deducted, the concentration of Spiritual Energy at the residence increased by 10 percent.

Another enhancement increased the concentration by 10 percent, which this time cost 1,500 merit points.

For the third enhancement, 2,000 merit points were deducted.

Each enhancement required an additional 500 merit points more than the last.

When there were only 2,700 merit points left in the sect's account, Lu Ye stopped; he couldn't afford the next enhancement, which would cost 6,000 merit points.

The clicking sounds inside the Heaven's Augury Pillar grew more frequent and intense, signifying a significant transformation within the entire structure.

At the same time, the skies above the residence changed abruptly as a visible vortex of Spiritual Energy formed. Drawn by the vortex, massive amounts of nature's spiritual energy surged towards the residence.

The disciples in name and independent cultivators exploring the residence were astounded at the sight, but when they felt the surrounding Spiritual Energy growing rapidly, they understood what had happened.

Instantly, they were overjoyed and delighted, celebrating the occasion.

The vortex phenomenon lasted for two full hours before disappearing, and by that time the concentration of Spiritual Energy in the Righteous Blood Sect's residence had dramatically increased.

Adding the enhancement Lu Ye purchased a month ago to the current ones, the Heaven's Augury Pillar at the Righteous Blood Sect's residence now boasted eleven enhancements, making the Spiritual Energy inside at least 120 percent denser than outside in the wild!

Such a level of enhancement was terrifying, indicating that cultivating within this environment was more than twice as efficient as doing so in the wild.

Only recently had Lu Ye realized the severe losses a sect would face if their residence was captured. He used to think that even if their residence were taken over, as long as the territory remained, the losses wouldn't be significant—just some facilities destroyed and possibly some disciples killed.

But now he understood that once a residence was captured, all the enhancements on the Heaven's Augury Pillar would be stripped away! Such a loss could wipe out generations of accumulation, an unbearable pain indeed!

He finally understood why Dong Shuye had betrayed the Nine Stars Sect; with the residence overrun by Xuanmen, and the Pillar's enhancements taken, how could Dong Shuye, at Level 7, bear such responsibility? Without betrayal, he would have faced certain death.

Every Spirit Stream Defense Battle was a carnival for the Nine Provinces sects. During such grand events, those sects short on merit could plunder others' enhancements if they were lucky enough.

Take the Righteous Blood Sect, for example; at this stage, tens of thousands of merit points were unimaginably large. If it were not for Lu Ye and Hua Ci's substantial gains during the Spirit Stream Defense Battle, such an increase in the residence's Spiritual Energy wouldn't have been possible—it would have taken the disciples' contributions for ages to reach the current state.

Yet a single Spirit Stream Defense Battle had increased the energy at the residence by more than double, and Lu Ye and Hua Ci had profited immensely.

For any sect, the Spirit Stream Defense Battle was an opportunity to gamble small for big gains, but they also had to be ready to shoulder the corresponding sudden losses—500 merit points for one enhancement wasn't much, but the deaths of the Governor and Deputy Governor were true losses.

Still, that did not dampen the Nine Provinces sects' enthusiasm for participating in this grand occasion.

However, such good fortune did not come often; the Spirit Stream Defense Battle happened only once every three years, and Lu Ye reckoned he would no longer be on the Spirit Stream battlefield in three years' time.

"Oh, right." Lu Ye remembered something and took the Breath Fruit Core out of his storage sack. "Shall we try this thing out?"

"What's the use of this Breath Fruit Core for us?"

"All I can say is it's helpful for cultivation; you'll know once you try it." Lu Ye tossed the Breath Fruit Core over.

Hua Ci caught it and channeled her spirit force into it.

An ominous smile immediately appeared on Lu Ye's face.

After a moment, Hua Ci suddenly opened her eyes, moaning and gasping for breath with a layer of fine sweat on her forehead as if she had experienced something terrifying. She even looked down at her abdomen to ensure it was intact before taking a deep breath of relief.

"Were you scared?" Lu Ye couldn't help but have a bemused smile. He and Shui Yuan had tried the Breath Fruit Core and hadn't reacted so dramatically.

Hua Ci looked up at him with eyes full of silent accusation, and after a long pause, she said, "Give me back fifty merit points!"

"Such a wealthy lady, caring about fifty merit points," Lu Ye retorted.

Hua Ci glared hatefully at Lu Ye, tossed the Breath Fruit Core back to him—although it was a good item, it wasn't suitable for her—and walked out.

At the entrance to Heaven's Augury Hall, she turned back with a smile, "You'd better avoid getting hurt from now on."

Lu Ye's expression darkened, "That's not fun at all..."

After Hua Ci left, Lu Ye stowed the Breath Fruit Core and checked his own battlefield marking.

Name: Lu Ye.

Identity: Disciple of the Righteous Blood Sect.

Cultivation: 86th orifice.

Location: Spirit Stream battlefield.

Merit: Five thousand three hundred and fifty-two.

The number of merits could be considered shockingly eye-catching, amounting to over five thousand. Just the Earth's Core Fire alone could buy more than twenty portions. Of course, this was also related to the four thousand four hundred merit points he had allocated to himself as his monthly stipend.

However, even without those stipends, he still had nearly a thousand merit points.

And all of it was earned in the Chess Sea; his Level 6 cultivation participating in the Spirit Stream Defense Battle was too advantageous. Casually killing a Level 7 cultivator would net him fourteen merit points.

Indeed, a horse will never get fat without night grazing. In the future, he should participate more in such lucrative opportunities.

There wasn't much change in his cultivation; since before participating in the Spirit Stream Defense Battle, he only opened two more orifices. Mainly, in that kind of environment, it was hard to keep his

spirit force in a state of Perfection. Without Perfection, he couldn't cultivate; all the spirit force he converted and devoured was used for recovery.

But that didn't matter, as the spiritual energy present at his current station was more than twice as dense as before, so his efficiency in cultivation would surely increase significantly.

Now, Lu Ye could be considered as one of those with vast wealth. There was no need to worry about merit points for the time being. With abundant cultivation resources, he entered Heaven's Augury treasure vault and bought ten portions of Earth's Core Fire in one go, spending two thousand merit points.

It wasn't that he couldn't buy more, but now with the Breath Fruit Core, he had an additional use for his merit points. It was always good to keep some in reserve.

Carrying ten portions of Earth's Core Fire, Lu Ye excitedly headed towards his designated training room.

He encountered many people on the way, all of whom stopped to pay their respects.

Some called him the fifth brother, which referred to sect disciples. Although Li Baxian was a disciple of the Loyal Heart Sect, he always had his place in the Righteous Blood Sect. He was ranked fourth, so naturally, Lu Ye was ranked fifth. Following him were Hua Ci in sixth, Kong Niu in seventh, Yiyi in eighth, and Ruan Lingyu in ninth. Beyond that, there were no rankings.

Others called him Envoy Lu, which referred to those independent cultivators under the sect's jurisdiction.

The station was obviously much livelier, not like before when not even a single person could be seen.

Upon entering his own training room, Lu Ye sat cross-legged, took out the portions of Earth's Core Fire one by one, and let the Talent Tree devour them completely.

With the depletion of the Earth's Core Fire, leaves began to burn on the Talent Tree, with each portion of Earth's Core Fire igniting a single leaf.

When all the Earth's Core Fire was gone, fourteen leaves burned on the Talent Tree. Lu Ye had never ignited so many leaves at once. Up to now, he had only acquired four spirit runes from the Talent Tree.

Looking at those burning leaves, Lu Ye felt a surge of excitement. The contents carried by these leaves were all extremely valuable treasures.

Taking a deep breath, Lu Ye set his gaze determinedly on the fifth leaf.

Surprisingly, this time the sensation was not as uncomfortable as he had expected.

After a short while, Lu Ye opened his eyes with a weird expression.

The situation was somewhat different from what he had expected. Although the fifth leaf also carried a spirit rune, it was different from the previous four. Whether it was Sharpness, Defense, or Spirit Energy Gathering and Bloodstain, they all had clear focuses whether in offense, defense, or support.

But the fifth spirit rune was a very special kind; it couldn't function on its own. In other words, even if Lu Ye constructed it, it would be of no use.

It was a spirit rune with connective qualities. Simply put, it could link different spirit runes together, allowing them to function simultaneously.

Rather than being a spirit rune, it would be more accurate to call it a technique.

Lu Ye had seen such a technique before.

The Boulder Mountain Saber contained nine spirit runes, seven of which were used to reinforce the saber, and the other two to enhance its lethality. These nine spirit runes were connected by a special technique so that they all acted as one, each displaying their respective functions.

He had been quite interested in this clever method, but he never had time to study it, and with his knowledge in the Path of Spirit Runes, even if he did study, it was doubtful he could glean anything significant.

Only now did he realize that, in addition to those spirit runes with various functions, there was also a type that could link different spirit runes together.

After a short rest, Lu Ye began to explore the sixth leaf, which turned out to be another connecting spirit rune, although it was quite different from the one on the fifth leaf. This suggested, it seemed, that different spirit runes required different methods of linking and needed various skills.

It wasn't until the seventh leaf that Lu Ye obtained a spirit rune that could function on its own.

He investigated them one by one, resting when he felt tired, for he didn't need to actively do much while cultivating here. Nature's spiritual energy continuously flowed into his body through the small spirit energy gathering funnel. The elixir pills he swallowed were being ground down by the Bestial Gluttony Feast into spirit force.

In essence, as long as he sat here, switched his Cultivation Technique to Bestial Gluttony Feast and constructed the Spirit Energy Gathering Spirit Runes in his own spiritual orifice, his power increased continuously. Of course, he needed to act on his own when it came time to break through the spiritual orifice barrier.

Chapter 209 Visit

After sporadically examining for two days, Lu Ye had finished investigating all the burning leaves and obtained four types of new spirit runes, while the rest were all those connecting spirit runes.

Sun Blaze, this spirit rune was the strangest. Once constructed, it could burst into intense light...

Lu Ye tried it and nearly blinded himself.

This rune's effect reminded him of Luo Ji from Endless Island, who had used a magic called Scorching White in battle. That magic wasn't powerful per se; it simply burst into bright light, and Lu Ye had been at a disadvantage when he first fought against him.

The effect of Sun Blaze was similar to that Scorching White magic but emitted an even stronger light.

Regarding this spirit rune, it could be said to be useful and at the same time seemed not so useful; it completely depended on how it was used.

Foundation Fortification increased sturdiness. Lu Ye compared it with the spirit runes in his Boulder Mountain Saber and found that the rune reinforcing the blade shared about seventy to eighty percent similarity with Foundation Fortification, seemingly originating from the same source. This rune was somewhat similar to the Defense Spirit Runes, but they functioned differently.

Defense Spirit Runes could form a protective barrier that blocked incoming harm, while Foundation Fortification made the object it was cast on more durable. Lu Ye tried it on himself, and the affected flesh twitched and became firmer, but the side effect was clear as the altered flesh felt sore after the rune dissipated.

Lu Ye figured that this rune was not meant for the flesh but for enhancing a Spiritual Artifact.

Move-Like-The-Wind lightened his body and made him run faster.

There were Move-Like-The-Wind Talismans, and Lu Ye had used two of them when Dong Shuye chased him for the first time. Having tasted their benefits, he always kept a few Move-Like-The-Wind talismans in his storage sack.

Facing some powerful enemies, if he couldn't beat them, his only option was to run, and having Move-Like-The-Wind Talismans undoubtedly allowed him to run faster.

However, since the talismans were external objects, now with the Move-Like-The-Wind spirit rune, those talismans could be discarded. This rune was arguably the most valuable one Lu Ye had acquired on this occasion.

Hefty Weight, this spirit rune created an invisible force field that made everything within it feel heavier. Lu Ye tested it and felt as if he was carrying several hundred kilograms on his body.

Although that weight was nothing for his current cultivation level, if it could be suddenly applied to an enemy during combat, it would definitely disrupt the enemy's combat rhythm. By the time the enemy adjusted, the Hefty Weight would disappear, causing further disruption.

Sun Blaze, Foundation Fortification, Move-Like-The-Wind, Hefty Weight, along with previously acquired Sharpness, Defense, Gathering Spirit, and Bloodstain, Lu Ye now controlled eight spirit runes.

As before, mastering new spirit runes didn't directly enhance his strength or cultivation realm. However, if he could use these runes at the right moment, his combat power could be greatly improved.

Lu Ye was gradually realizing the terror of being a spirit runes master because, unlike other sects, a spirit runes master in combat could activate various runes, leading to an extremely unpredictable and versatile battling style. If one couldn't keep up with the rhythm of a spirit runes master, it was akin to a slow death.

Now controlling just eight spirit runes, he could already simulate various combinations and combat methods in his mind. What about if it were 18, 28, or even 80 runes?

Spirit runes masters were indeed fearsome!

All his spirit runes came from the Talent Tree, which endowed him with the capability to freely construct spirit runes, leading to a certain issue.

Regarding the eight spirit runes he controlled or even those connecting spirit runes, he only knew how to activate them and their effects, but beyond that, he was completely clueless.

It was time to visit Madam Yun.

During his last visit, Madam Yun had told Lu Ye to visit her often, seeing potential in him as a spirit runes master. However, Lu Ye had been busy preparing for the Spirit Stream Defense Battle, urgently advancing his cultivation, so he never found the time to return.

Upon his return, he was busy reorganizing his residence and had even less time.

Initially, Lu Ye didn't know exactly who Madam Yun was, only sensing that her relationship with the sect master was ambiguous.

After inquiring from Shui Yuan, he learned of a rather complicated emotional entanglement. In short, the sect master felt guilty towards Madam Yun, and she held some resentment towards him, yet their relationship in the early years was too deep to sever abruptly.

That's why Madam Yun resided on a spirit mountaintop within the sect headquarters of the Righteous Blood Sect, living a solitary life without interacting with the sect master, with Shui Yuan occasionally visiting to chat with her.

In simple terms, these two were in a stage of living apart due to slight cracks in their relationship yet couldn't bear to let go entirely, only that this separation had lasted years, measured in decades according to Shui Yuan, maintaining this state for several decades.

But Shui Yuan highly admired Madam Yun, for she was an outstanding spirit runes master. If one were to rank the powerful spirit runes masters in the Nine Provinces, Madam Yun would definitely be in the top twenty, and that was decades ago.

In the past few decades, Madam Yun kept a low profile, and apart from the older generation familiar with her, almost the entire Nine Provinces had forgotten about this once brilliantly talented woman.

If Lu Ye wanted to advance in the Path of Spirit Runes, visiting Madam Yun was undoubtedly the best option.

After leaving the training room, he passed through Heaven's Augury Hall and returned to the sect headquarters, locating Shui Yuan, who was researching new recipes.

"You're going to visit Madam Yun?"

"Yes, I want to learn some things about spirit runes from Madam Yun."

"That makes sense, you hold the heritage of a spirit runes master, and Madam Yun is an expert in the Path of Spirit Runes, her guidance would be perfect for you. Then why are you looking for me? Do you want me to take you there?"

"That won't be necessary, it's not far, and I can go by myself. However, since I am visiting, I shouldn't go empty-handed, I was wondering if I should bring something..."

Shui Yuan pursed her lips and laughed softly, "If you're bringing something, go to Moon Lake and catch a few Blood Red Trouts. Madam Yun likes them but doesn't want to catch them herself because of her status. I always bring some for her every time I go. Also, never mention the sect master in front of her, or the consequences will be severe."

At its peak, the Righteous Blood Sect possessed dozens of spirit mountaintops, occupying a vast expanse of land. However, due to the dwindling of talents over the past few decades, even the Sect Protection Array had been gradually dismantled. Although those dozens of spirit mountaintops were still considered properties of the Righteous Blood Sect, the sect no longer managed them.

Remnants of buildings from the past could still be seen on those mountaintops, barely discernible among the clusters of dilapidated structures, hinting at the sect's former glory.

In the Righteous Blood Sect today, the only places that still had people were Righteous Peak at the very center and Bright Heart Peak where Madam Yun resided.

Moon Lake was located between Righteous Peak and Emerald Bamboo Peak.

With directions from his Second Senior Sister, Lu Ye was about to head to Moon Lake when Amber came bounding over, bumping his big head against Lu Ye, and making a soft woof.

Tigers grow lonely too!

Recently, Lu Ye had been dizzyingly busy, and Yiyi was also occupied. However, Yiyi did not often appear at their station; she spent more time at the sect headquarters because she was learning magic and spells from the sect master.

This left Amber often feeling lonely.

Now being Lu Ye's beast pet and having shared hardships for so long, he was naturally very close to Lu Ye. Hearing the conversation between Lu Ye and Shui Yuan, it knew it was its time to enter the scene.

As the saying goes, "Raise an army for a thousand days, use it for one moment," Amber, as a beast pet, was very conscious of its role.

Perhaps it was because of the pet contract that bound them, but Lu Ye could now vaguely sense its thoughts. Although he did not have Yiyi's miraculous ability to understand what it was saying, he was very close to doing so.

"Then let's go together!" Lu Ye patted its big head and swung himself onto the tiger's back.

Amber immediately perked up and carried Lu Ye toward Moon Lake.

Before long, a crescent-shaped lake appeared in their view. Lu Ye had been here before; Li Baxian used to take him fishing in the Righteous Blood Sect occasionally.

Lu Ye found it rather pointless. If you wanted to eat fish, you could just dive in and catch them, he thought. Why bother fishing?

But Li Baxian always said there was enjoyment to be found in it.

Whether or not Li Baxian was around, Lu Ye naturally wouldn't waste time. He took off his clothes and jumped into the lake, catching several fat Blood Red Trouts in moments.

After getting back onshore and getting dressed, he rode Amber all the way to Bright Heart Peak.

Upon reaching the peak, he dismounted from the tiger's back and, standing in front of Madam Yun's residence, Lu Ye bowed respectfully, "Disciple Lu Ye has come to visit."

"Come in," came Madam Yun's voice from inside immediately.

Lu Ye gave Amber a look, signaling it to wait there for him, and fed it a few elixir pills, before carrying the Blood Red Trouts and stepping inside.

It was the same hall as last time, where Madam Yun stood quietly. Lu Ye bowed, "I've seen Madam Yun."

Madam Yun looked at the gift in his hands and said with a smile, "Did that girl Shui Yuan tell you to bring these?"

"Second Senior Sister mentioned that Madam likes this type of fish, so I casually caught a few," replied Lu Ye.

"Thoughtful of you," Madam Yun waved her hand and a maid-like young girl came forward, smiled faintly at Lu Ye, and took the Blood Red Trouts from his hands.

Lu Ye nodded in acknowledgment and was a bit curious. He hadn't seen this maid during his last visit, so it seemed Madam Yun wasn't living alone after all and still had some attendants around.

However, the maid gave him a strange feeling, but Lu Ye couldn't quite put his finger on what was odd.

"Have a seat," Madam Yun invited as she took her seat.

"I dare not; standing is fine for your disciple," Lu Ye responded.

Madam Yun did not insist and asked, "What brings you here this time?"

"I would like to learn the Path of Spirit Runes from Madam," Lu Ye stated.

"You may, as long as that old undying didn't send you." Madam Yun agreed promptly.

The "old undying" she spoke of was definitely the sect master. Lu Ye pretended not to hear and kept silent.

"Last time you told me you could construct those spirit runes, but beyond those four, you know nothing else about them?" she asked.

"Yes," Lu Ye confirmed.

Madam Yun nodded, "It seems the inheritance you received was indeed incomplete, or perhaps it was the kind where the essence is imparted all at once."

Chapter 210 Yin-Yang Dual Origins

Last time, Madam Yun had said that the inheritance Lu Ye received might be incomplete.

Whether it was incomplete or not, Lu Ye didn't know. He only knew that the Talent tree should indeed be the inheritance of a spirit runes master. However, unlike what others thought, he had not obtained it on the Spirit Stream battlefield, but had it upon arriving in this world.

Of course, there was no need to broadcast this everywhere.

"What do you wish to learn from me?" Madam Yun asked.

"If possible, Disciple would like to start from the very basics."

Madam Yun nodded, "That's the right choice. Come with me."

Saying so, she walked away, with Lu Ye following behind her.

Before long, they arrived in front of a room. Madam Yun pushed the door open and entered.

Unlike the room where the rune tattoo had been applied last time, this room was large, and the walls were lined with shelves filled with books of varying thickness, seemingly numbering in the thousands. It wouldn't be an exaggeration to call this place a small library.

Not only that, the walls displayed multiple visible spirit runes moving like fish, clearly indicating the presence of a very profound Array.

Madam Yun casually waved her hand, and a book about an inch thick flew into her hands. She handed the book to Lu Ye, "Start by finishing this book."

Lu Ye respectfully accepted it, thinking to himself that he still needed to self-study first.

After Madam Yun had left, Lu Ye looked around. There were no tables or chairs, so he took out a cushion from his storage sack, threw it down, and sat cross-legged, lowering his head to look at the book in his hands.

The cover had no title. When he opened the first page, a line of large characters caught his eye.

"The Path of Spirit Runes: A Search for Fundamentals."

It also had a signature, Muh Xiaoyao.

It appeared that this "The Path of Spirit Runes: A Search for Fundamentals" was authored by someone named Muh Xiaoyao.

Flipping to another page, Lu Ye stared intently.

"Chaos divides into Yin and Yang, Yin and Yang give birth to all things, all things in the world possess Yin and Yang, the Path of Spirit Runes is based on Yin-Yang, endlessly combining to create, extending infinite marvels..."

Time passed, and Lu Ye read each word closely, quickly immersing himself.

The book "The Path of Spirit Runes: A Search for Fundamentals" did not record any particularly magical spirit runes. Instead, Muh Xiaoyao used a simple yet profound approach, thoroughly dissecting the basics of spirit runes, which was particularly suitable for beginners like Lu Ye. If it were a typical beginner, they might not grasp the essence of the words within.

However, although Lu Ye was a beginner himself, he had already mastered some spirit runes. Combined with his own understanding of spirit runes, it allowed him to comprehend more deeply the principles explained in the book.

Before he knew it, Lu Ye had reached the last page. He sat where he was, holding the book in one hand and propping his chin with the other, lost in thought.

"Have you finished?" Madam Yun's voice suddenly rang next to his ear.

Startled, Lu Ye was about to get up when Madam Yun pressed her hand down to signal him to stay seated, and then she sat in front of him.

"What are your thoughts?" Madam Yun asked.

"The Path of Spirit Runes is profound and extensive, exceeding Disciple's original imagination." This was the truth; before reading this book, he knew that spirit runes were complex and profound, but he hadn't realized the extent of their complexity and profundity.

Madam Yun smiled, "That's why spirit runes masters are so rare. To follow this path, it's not just about perseverance and determination; one also needs talent, a very high level of talent! Fortunately, you have already received the inheritance of a spirit runes master, so talent isn't an issue."

"Disciple will double his efforts," Lu Ye said and then queried further, "According to the book, the two basic elements that make up spirit runes are Yin and Yang Origins. All spirit runes can be broken down into varying quantities of these Yin-Yang Dual Origins. Are there really no exceptions?"

Madam Yun shook her head, "There are no exceptions, at least none that I have seen."

Lu Ye couldn't help but admire, "The person who discovered these Yin-Yang Dual Origins was truly remarkable."

As recorded in "The Path of Spirit Runes: A Search for Fundamentals," chaos breeds Yin and Yang, Yin and Yang transform all things. Thus, everything in this world belongs to either Yin or Yang, and spirit runes are the culmination of the convergence of Yin and Yang.

The foundations for constructing spirit runes are of two types, the Yin Origin and the Yang Origin. The Yin Origin is a very simple pattern, looking like a flat "snake" character, whereas the Yang Origin, although it uses the same pattern, is the reverse of the Yin Origin.

Through different arrangements and combinations of the Yin-Yang Dual Origins, different kinds of spirit runes are formed. Should there be an error in any part, the spirit runes would fail to take shape, much less function.

According to Lu Ye's understanding, using Yin-Yang Dual Origins to construct spirit runes is akin to using two different types of building blocks to build variously shaped houses.

How to stably build these houses and enable them to function is what a spirit runes master needs to do.

This is no simple matter; each spirit rune contains at least a few hundred basic elements, and the number of possible arrangements and combinations of these elements are almost unimaginable.

This was also the reason why Lu Ye said that the Path of Spirit Runes was profound and extensive.

At this moment, as he recalled the spirit runes he had constructed, he realized that each rune indeed resulted from the arrangement and combination of Yin-Yang Dual Origins. He had not paid attention to this before and thought that at first glance, the internal structure of these runes seemed identical.

But now he knew that the constructions within each rune were vastly different; this was a case of a layman enjoying the show while the expert appreciated the technique.

Those who did not understand spirit runes could not discern the differences in the internal structures of different runes.

"The person who discovered Yin-Yang Dual Origins was indeed remarkable, but those spirit runes masters who created different spirit runes are even more so; each functional rune may be the fruit of one or several generations' tireless pursuits. Before these runes were created, they might have failed millions, tens of millions, or even more times."

Lu Ye nodded in agreement; the number was not exaggerated.

"However, it is precisely because of the contributions made by our predecessors, the spirit runes masters, that we later generations have so many runes to use." Madam Yun looked at Lu Ye, "A truly outstanding spirit runes master is able to innovate rather than merely rely on the achievements left by the ancestors. If everyone did the latter, the Path of Spirit Runes would inevitably decline."

I hope that one day you can contribute to the Path of Spirit Runes yourself."

"The disciple shall surely try."

Madam Yun nodded, "You have a basic understanding of spirit runes, so now you can start practicing."

As she spoke, she slowly raised her right index finger, and a pinpoint of light twinkled at her fingertip: "What can you see?"

Lu Ye concentrated his Ocular Power and after a moment hesitated, "A Yin Origin?"

"And now?"

"A Yang Origin?"

"Your vision is quite good. A spirit runes master must possess outstanding ocular power and also have extremely precise control over their own spirit force. Without this, one cannot become a spirit runes master. Let me see your ability; try to construct Yin Origin and Yang Origin as I just did."

"Yes!"

Lu Ye sat upright and raised a finger, channeling his spirit force and attempting to construct a Yin Origin on his fingertip.

Watching Madam Yun perform seemed effortless, but only when he actually attempted it did he realize it was not so simple. Fortunately, he already had multiple experiences constructing spirit runes; even though he previously hardly understood them, experience was still experience.

After the time it takes to burn one incense stick, a Yin Origin made of spirit force appeared on his fingertip.

Lu Ye frowned because the Yin Origin was too large. The one Madam Yun constructed was almost invisible and required full use of ocular power to barely see it, but the Yin Origin Lu Ye had just constructed was the size of a fingernail and also could not be maintained stably. As the spirit force fluctuated, the Yin Origin suddenly dispersed, lasting less than two breaths.

Such a large Yin Origin could not be used to construct spirit runes. A single rune contains hundreds of basic elements, and hundreds of such large items combined together would result in an excessively large rune, which would be too consuming for a cultivator during battle and not to mention, it was unstable.

Madam Yun said with a smile, "Not bad at all. When I first practiced, it took me two days to reach your level. It seems the legacy of that spirit runes master is very useful. Furthermore, your spirit force is sufficiently pure, making control easier. This is your advantage. Try constructing a Yang Origin now."

Lu Ye responded and tried to construct a Yang Origin.

With the prior experience, it was somewhat easier this time; however, he still could not resolve the issues of size and stability.

But Madam Yun was very approving, "You're progressing rapidly. Learning to construct Yin-Yang Dual Origins; the rest is just practice. When you can comfortably alternate between Yin and Yang Origins and make them stable enough, and then reduce their size to that of a grain of rice, you can move on to the next step."

As she spoke, she extended her hand, summoning more than a dozen books of various thicknesses from all directions, handing them to Lu Ye, "Take these back and read them; they all discuss the basics of spirit runes. Once you meet the requirements I mentioned before, come find me."

Lu Ye stood up and respectfully said, "Yes, the disciple will diligently practice after returning."

Shortly thereafter, Lu Ye left Madam Yun's residence and bowed again before departing.

Outside, Amber came running over excitedly, and Lu Ye mounted its back, heading towards Righteous Peak.

Madam Yun truly was a good teacher, gentle in nature. How could the sect master bear to let her live alone on Bright Heart Peak? Even if she had made a mistake, a simple apology should suffice. Indeed, the sect master's backbone was firm.

On returning to Righteous Peak and greeting senior sister Shui Yuan, Lu Ye entered his dwelling.

The dwelling was not as bustling as he imagined, mainly because the cultivation environment had suddenly improved so much. Whether it was new disciples from the sect headquarters or those independent cultivators, all were diligently practicing.

As a cultivator, one's own strength is fundamental, and without this realization, one cannot go far on the path of cultivation.

Lu Ye first sought out a junior brother staying at Heaven's Augury Hall, who informed him that recently there had been no issues in their location, so Lu Ye headed to the training room area.

The training room was crowded; even though there were hundreds of rooms, there were not enough for everyone, and some were waiting outside in line. One could cultivate outside too, but without the boost from the Spirit Gathering Array inside the training rooms, the efficiency would be lower.

However, this situation would gradually improve. Because everyone's resources for cultivation were limited, once the previously distributed monthly provisions were used up, the pressure on the training rooms would ease.