

# SAGE OF HUMANITY

## Chapter 21 19 Results

Having made his choice, Lu Ye felt a sense of relief wash over him.

He had always been open-minded and quickly accepted reality when he was captured by Evil Moon Valley and became a mining slave.

The worst that could happen now was missing the opportunity to join a sect for cultivation.

Since the results would be out soon, those who had submitted their applications didn't disperse but gathered quietly, waiting together.

On the contrary, the cultivators in the valley suddenly became busy, figures flitting back and forth in midair, constantly entering and exiting from nearby peaks.

Lu Ye didn't know what they were doing, but it seemed like some emergency had arisen. However, as a junior cultivator awaiting fate's judgment, it wasn't his place to worry about these matters.

Half a day later, when the man with the pencil mustache who had collected everyone's applications reappeared, Lu Ye knew the results were in!

Walking straight to the front of the crowd, the man with the pencil mustache held a list in his hand. After catching everyone's attention, he announced loudly, "Righteousness Sect, Cui Dayuan!"

In the crowd, a stout young man froze upon hearing his name, then jumped three feet high, whooping in delight; his excitement was unmistakable.

Those around him looked on with envy, and those who knew him offered their hearty congratulations.

The man with the pencil mustache didn't pause or bother with the commotion below, and continued on, "Qingyu Sect, Luh Tianyi, Dong Peng!"

"Qimu Mountain, Zhao Wenlin, Tang Ni, Gao Rui..."

"Burning Moon Mountain..."

The voice of the man with the pencil mustache wasn't loud, but no matter how noisy and boisterous the crowd was, his voice could still be heard clearly by everyone.

As each sect's name was called, as every name was announced, those whose names were called were overjoyed. It meant they were leaving behind their identity as mining slaves for good, gaining the means to change their destinies, never again to be oppressed without the power to resist like before.

In the back of the crowd, Lu Ye listened quietly, his expression calm, devoid of the nervousness of those around him, somewhat out of place with his environment.

Just as he had thought earlier, the two 1st grade sects that had come this time hadn't taken in many disciples. Righteousness Sect only accepted one person, and Qingyu Sect took two, seemingly just for formality's sake.

The real recruitment was done by the sects ranging from 4th to 7th grade, and the lower the grade of the sect, the more disciples they took in, with the highest taking in more than twenty people.

Yu Xiaodie's name was also called, and she, along with some others, was accepted into Hundred Flowers Valley.

The young girl's face flushed with excitement, a pity she had no one to share her joy with.

More and more sect names were read out, and those who hadn't heard their names became increasingly anxious.

Finally, the last name was called. The man with the pencil mustache put away the list and said, "Sect Disciples who have been accepted, stay where you are. Your senior brothers and sisters will come to fetch you soon. I hope you will cultivate earnestly in your respective sects so that one day you can fight by my side."

"Brother, is that all?" someone asked with a trembling voice, clearly among those whose names hadn't been called.

Like him, there were about ten people who hadn't been called, meaning they had missed the chance to join a sect for cultivation. At that moment, their expressions revealed their dejection, with one woman softly sobbing.

Lu Ye was among these ten, showing no sign of disappointment. He had already made his choice, opting solely for the lowest-grade Righteous Blood Sect. Being eliminated in this way meant that no matter what choice he had made, it wouldn't have made a difference.

He had heard that cultivators without a sect could become independent cultivators. Though without the protection of a sect, cultivation would be more challenging, the upside was being free and unbound—a pleasing thought indeed.

Moreover, he still had the Talent Tree, a unique advantage others didn't possess.

Lost in these thoughts, Lu Ye hadn't noticed that the man with the pencil mustache had already looked up, his gaze passing over the crowd and settling on some distant place.

In that direction, an elder had appeared at some point, his gaze fixed on Lu Ye, and it was Veteran Thang.

Since the moment the pencil mustache began to read the results, Veteran Thang had been present, observing Lu Ye from the shadows.

For some very special reasons, the Righteous Blood Sect had not taken in any disciples for a full thirty years, so suddenly accepting someone would definitely stir the sensitive nerves of certain people.

But if this disciple's talent were only that of Yiye, it seemed to matter little, as a poor talent would inevitably mean no significant achievements in the future, thus unlikely to attract the attention of those with ulterior motives.

Veteran Thang himself was not keen on taking on sect disciples, but given the constraints of the alliance's rules, he could not refuse, truly a dilemma.

So he wanted to come and see Lu Ye for himself.

Among the more than a hundred people, Lu Ye undeniably stood out. Those whose names were called jumped for joy, those who were eliminated grieved as if for parents, but he alone stood there quietly, from start to finish.

Recalling the moment he saw Lu Ye in the dark mine, Veteran Thang sighed lightly and under the watchful eye of the pencil mustache, he nodded slightly.

Bound by the alliance's rules, he really had no choice but to accept him, so he might as well take him under his wing for now, and later ask some old friends for a favor, to send him to another sect for cultivation.

Having received Veteran Thang's response, the pencil mustache smiled slightly.

Looking at the person who had just asked the question, he said, "Ah, there is one more sect!"

His expression serious, he declared, "Righteous Blood Sect, Lu Ye!"

Lu Ye, among the crowd, had let his thoughts wander to the skies; hearing his own name, he couldn't help but startle and looked up towards the pencil mustache.

Their eyes met, the pencil mustache smiled faintly, "Congratulations, Lu Yiye!"

This was never going to end, Lu Ye felt the corner of his eye twitch involuntarily.

The pencil mustache added, "Alright, that concludes it, those who didn't have their names called, follow me."

"Brother!" Lu Ye called out with a raised hand.

The pencil mustache looked back, "What is it?"

Lu Ye stared at him, "May I ask for brother's honorable name and cultivation level?"

The pencil mustache stroked the beard at the corner of his mouth, looking at him with interest, "What's the matter? You want to hit me?"

Lu Ye was expressionless, "I wouldn't dare, I only wish to remember brother's kindness today."

"Ambitious!" the pencil mustache laughed heartily, "Then listen well, I am Yue Shan of the Righteousness Sect, and as for cultivation, Level 7 of Cloud River, got it?"

Another one from the Righteousness Sect, Lu Ye nodded, "I've got it!"

"Then work hard in your cultivation, Lu! Yi! Ye!"

Yue Shan led away those whose names hadn't been called, their hearts filled with irritation at this moment. If they had known such would be the outcome, they would have chosen the Righteous Blood Sect; perhaps they could have been accepted, which would be better than being now without support or backing.

What they didn't know was that if they had indeed chosen the Righteous Blood Sect, even Lu Ye would have been eliminated with them.

Haven't taken on any disciples for a full thirty years, if it weren't for the alliance's rules, Veteran Thang wouldn't have agreed this time either.

## Chapter 22 20 Boarding the Ship

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One after another, cultivators from various sects came to pick up their people, leaving fewer and fewer behind.

Yu Xiaodie followed a female cultivator from Hundred Flowers Valley away, bidding Lu Ye farewell before she left.

Less than one hour had passed, and nearly a hundred people had vanished without a trace, leaving Lu Ye standing alone.

After waiting for more than two hours, there was still no sign of the Righteous Blood Sect, leaving him clueless about what they might be busy with.

With nothing else to do, Lu Ye found a clean spot, sat down cross-legged, and attempted to open his second orifice.

His first orifice had long been filled to the brim, and he had thoroughly studied the Golden Cicada Carefree Method he had obtained from Manager Yang. However, he had not been able to locate the position of the second orifice, which had delayed his cultivation progress.

Yu Xiaodie had told him that this was a common issue for cultivators who had just begun their cultivation journey, as they did not have sufficient spirit force within their bodies to accurately

locate their spiritual orifices. There were two solutions to this problem: one was to grope around slowly and try their luck; the second was to seek guidance from cultivators above the Cloud River Realm.

Lu Ye's desire to join a sect was largely due to this reason.

He had groped around in the mines several times without success in finding the position of the second orifice. If he could join a sect, he could ask for guidance from the elders of the sect, which would save him a lot of trouble.

But with the Righteous Blood Sect still out of sight, and with nothing else to do, he might as well waste a bit of spirit force—on the off chance that he got lucky and stumbled upon it, he would strike it big.

After more than two hours had passed, Lu Ye opened his eyes, looking rather frustrated. As expected, luck had nothing to do with him; his recent attempt had ended in failure.

Fortunately, his diet had been good these days, and he had nourished himself with blood Qi pills. His blood Qi was abundant, and by refining some of it, he had replenished the loss.

More cultivators came and went in the valley, many of them assembling on a large scale. It seemed they were preparing to evacuate this place?

Come to think of it, before his death, Manager Yang had told him that the Haotian Alliance could not hold onto this place for long—they would have to withdraw in a month or two at most. Given the current situation, it indeed appeared to be the case.

Hence, if Manager Yang had managed to kill Lu Ye at that time and hide in that dark tunnel, he would have had a good chance of escaping from this disaster.

Unfortunately for him, he had not anticipated that a mere mortal like Lu Ye would dare to scheme against him, leading him to a place shrouded by the origin magnetic field, where his cultivation could hardly be unleashed, resulting in his unclear and unjust death.

Suddenly, a shout came from not too far away. Lu Ye followed the sound and saw a middle-aged cultivator floating in mid-air, with spirit force swirling around him, releasing something from the palm of his hand.

The distance was substantial, and Lu Ye could not make out what it was. Then, the scene he would never forget unfolded before his eyes.

The object that flew out from the palm of the middle-aged cultivator swelled with the wind and, in an incredibly short span of time, transformed into an enormous thing that spanned across the sky.

It was a huge ship!

A ship floating in mid-air!

The ship had three levels and was nearly a hundred zhang in length. Its dark hull made of unknown material gave it an imposing presence, and the fluid lines of the ship's structure along with the unrecognizable fixtures on it exuded a chilling sensation.

Lu Ye had never seen such an incredible scene and was stunned in his tracks.

It was not just one ship. Following the middle-aged cultivator's method of bringing forth one ship, several more appeared one after another.

And then, someone shouted loudly, "All sect members, board the ships!"

The cultivators from various big sects, already gathered together, transformed into colorful streaks of light, one after the other diving into the several large ships. From a distance, the sight was spectacular.

After a short shock, Lu Ye was overwhelmed with excitement.

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Having been here for over a year, he knew this was a world where cultivation was practiced, yet his daily companions were rocks, and the people around him were lowly, impermanent mining slaves.

He had never imagined that the act of cultivation could be revealed before his eyes in such a spectacular and colorful manner.

This had exceeded what he could understand, making him more acutely aware that this world was completely different from the one he had come from.

"Quite a sight, isn't it?" Just as he was dizzily watching the spectacle, a voice suddenly sounded beside him.

Lu Ye instinctively responded, and then realizing who it was, he turned his head to see a middle-aged elder had appeared beside him at some point.

The middle-aged elder smiled and stroked his beard, gazing at the several large ships floating in the sky, and slowly said, "Those are the Flying Dragon Ships of the Haotian Alliance, powerful weapons for assaulting forts and strongholds, not easily deployed."

Looking at the profile of the middle-aged elder, Lu Ye recognized him as the old man who had led him out of the mine. Remembering how others had referred to him, he quickly paid his respects, "Veteran Thang."

Veteran Thang responded with a slight smile and summoned, "Let's go."

"Where to?" Lu Ye was puzzled.

Veteran Thang raised his hand and pointed, "Board the ship!"

Lu Ye hesitated, "But I'm supposed to wait here for the senior brothers and sisters from the Righteous Blood Sect..." Mid-sentence, he vaguely realized something, "Is Veteran Thang from the Righteous Blood Sect?"

It made no sense for Veteran Thang to suddenly seek him out and ask him to board the ship unless he was from the Righteous Blood Sect.

"I was temporarily detained by some matters, didn't make you anxious, right?" Veteran Thang asked kindly.

He really was from the Righteous Blood Sect!

"No, not at all." Lu Ye was somewhat excited. Although the ones who had come to receive him before were all handsome senior brothers and gentle senior sisters, here at the Righteous Blood Sect, it was an old man; but this old man was a very nice person.

From the help he offered previously in unlocking the restriction on Zhou Cheng's storage sack, Lu Ye could tell. Although he did not know how advanced Veteran Thang's cultivation was, at that moment, if he had really wanted Zhou Cheng's storage sack, Lu Ye had no right to refuse.

But the old man only took a bottle of what was called Dragon-Tiger Pill as a reward and returned the rest of the items to Lu Ye.

"Let's go." Veteran Thang smiled, his figure soaring into the air, and Lu Ye felt a gentle force envelop him, as he followed Veteran Thang toward one of the Flying Dragon Ships.

Upon reaching the Flying Dragon Ship, Veteran Thang headed straight for the interior of the cabin, and Lu Ye followed closely behind.

The cabin had many rooms, bustling with people, all cultivators from the big sects. Those cultivators who passed by and saw Veteran Thang all respectfully paid their respects, which amazed Lu Ye.

The Righteous Blood Sect was only a 9th grade sect. According to the knowledge Yu Xiaodie had imparted to him, Veteran Thang should only be a cultivator of the Cloud River Realm; because if there were any from the True Lake Realm, then the Righteous Blood Sect would be more than just 9th grade.

It seemed, though Veteran Thang's cultivation was not high, he was still treated with great respect, perhaps due to his age?

They walked all the way to the innermost area, standing at the door of a room. Veteran Thang waved his hand, and a flash of light appeared on the door, then he pushed it open and entered.

Lu Ye followed right behind, closing the door behind him.

Once inside, Lu Ye looked around and found it to be a very simple cabin. The furnishings were extremely plain; there was no bed, not even a table, just a meditation cushion on the floor.

There was a window, but it could not be opened; the round window was sealed with a transparent material similar to glass, allowing the outside scenery to be seen.

## Chapter 23 21 The Wrong Way to Open

Inside the cabin of the Flying Dragon Ship, Lu Ye glanced left and right. By the time he regained his senses, he noticed that Veteran Thang had already seated himself on the meditation cushion.

He quickly walked over and sat upright in front of Veteran Thang.

Destiny is sometimes quite wonderful. Meeting in the mine, Lu Ye never expected to join the sect where Veteran Thang belonged. However, no matter what, from now on he had a place in this world. Thinking about this warmed his heart.

Choosing the Righteous Blood Sect was an act of helplessness, but if it was the sect where Veteran Thang belonged, it was acceptable.

"I am Thang Yifeng!", Veteran Thang spoke, "the tenth-generation sect master of the Righteous Blood Sect."

Lu Ye was momentarily startled.

Although he did not know much about the cultivation world, he understood what a sect master meant.

He had guessed that Veteran Thang's status in the Righteous Blood Sect must be high, but he never expected that the person in front of him was the sect master.

He quickly performed a salute: "Disciple pays respect to the sect master."

Veteran Thang nodded, "Although today I have accepted you into the sect, every nation has its laws and every sect has its rules. Currently, you are not yet an official disciple, merely a recorded name. You need to pass some tests to truly enter the sect. We won't discuss the contents of the tests now; you will know once we return to the sect.

Moreover, with your current cultivation, it's not yet time for the tests."

Lu Ye listened attentively and responded, "Disciple understands."

Initially, those mining slaves who wanted to join Evil Moon Valley also had to undergo tests, so Lu Ye was not surprised by Veteran Thang's words.

Not just him, those previously chosen by the various big sects were not official disciples either. Every sect had its own tests, filtering the disciples through trials of character, morality, or other aspects. Only those who passed these tests were truly considered initiated.

"Righteous Blood Sect is located in Mount Ao of Bingzhou, established a thousand years ago, having nurtured sixty-three thousand six hundred sixty-two sect members and disciples, among them Divine Sea Realm totals..."

As Veteran Thang narrated, the historical scroll of the sect unfolded gradually before Lu Ye, giving him a basic understanding of the Righteous Blood Sect.

At present, he was not clear what those numbers represented. Only in the future would he understand the heavy significance of those figures.

A moment later, Veteran Thang looked at Lu Ye, "If you have anything you wish to know, feel free to ask me."

Lu Ye asked a question that greatly intrigued him, "Sect Master, during this attack on Evil Moon Valley, why didn't we see any brothers or sisters from our sect?"

Before, when Veteran Thang had gone to find him, he hadn't noticed anything amiss. Knowing now that Veteran Thang was the sect master of the Righteous Blood Sect, he immediately realized an issue.

Righteous Blood Sect... it seemed that only Veteran Thang had come, otherwise it would not have been Veteran Thang who came to find him. Such a task of welcoming new members could easily be delegated to a disciple, and surely would not require the sect master himself to take action.

"Ahem..." Veteran Thang coughed lightly, clenching his fist, "Well, our Righteous Blood Sect doesn't have many people."

Lu Ye understood: "So, we are saying our talent is declining, and the sect is in decline."

Thinking about it made sense. A 9th grade sect was the lowest tier in the Nine Provinces cultivation world, and recruiting disciples was probably not an easy task. Take this rescue of the mining slaves, for instance, out of more than a hundred people, only Lu Ye chose the Righteous Blood Sect, and that was after listening to Pang Dahai's advice.

"That... is not incorrect." Veteran Thang said somewhat helplessly.

"Then Sect Master, how many people are there currently in the sect?"

Veteran Thang said, "Let's change the question."

"Ah?"

"Don't you have any questions about cultivation?"

"I do!" Lu Ye quickly nodded, "Disciple currently has one orifice filled, but when trying to open the second orifice, I just can't find the correct position. Please enlighten me, Sect Master."

Veteran Thang nodded slightly, "At the beginning of cultivation, it's indeed easy to encounter this problem, but if you want to open the second orifice, you need the right Cultivation Technique."

"I have a Cultivation Technique," Lu Ye said as he started unbuttoning his clothes. Under the astonished gaze of Veteran Thang, he took out a second storage sack that he had kept close to his body the whole time.

This was Manager Yang's storage sack. When he decided to leave the dark tunnel, Lu Ye had carefully hidden it on his person, as it contained many valuable items and he was afraid of attracting unwanted attention.

Now that he had joined the Righteous Blood Sect and was in the presence of the sect master, there was no need to hide it anymore.

Looking at the storage sack on Lu Ye's waist and then at the second one he had just taken out, Veteran Thang instantly understood what was going on.

This youngster didn't just kill one person from Evil Moon Valley in that mining tunnel!

"Sly fox!" Veteran Thang commented.

Lu Ye gave a sheepish laugh, took out a book from Manager Yang's storage sack, and handed it to Veteran Thang, "This 'Golden Cicada Carefree Method' was collected by a cultivator from Evil Moon Valley. I wonder if I, as a disciple, could cultivate it?"

"Since it's a Cultivation Technique, you can cultivate it. What are you worried about?" Veteran Thang took it and started to read.

"This is after all a Cultivation Technique practiced by disciples of Evil Moon Valley. I worry that it might be an evil technique..." Lu Ye stopped mid-sentence, unable to continue.

Because suddenly, from Veteran Thang's side, a series of bizarre sounds emerged, which were quite grating in the silence of the cabin.

Lu Ye couldn't help but twitch the corner of his eye.

But Veteran Thang was thoroughly engrossed in it.

The sounds grew louder and more tumultuous, with rises and falls, pauses and emphases, and even included some strange dialogues.

Anyone unaware would probably think something indecent was happening in the cabin.

Unable to help himself, Lu Ye leaned forward halfway to peer at the book in Veteran Thang's hands.

He saw that as Veteran Thang stimulated his spirit force, the originally stiff characters in the book seemed to come to life. The sounds Lu Ye heard were coming from this book.

At this moment, he had also realized that he had taken the wrong item.

In Manager Yang's storage sack, there were three books in total; one was 'Sword Saint Chronicles,' another was 'Golden Cicada Carefree Method, and the third one, which Veteran Thang now held, had been mistakenly taken by him.

He had previously thought the craftsmanship of this book extraordinary; the characters looked vividly alive, but he never imagined that the book had such miraculous aspects.

Had he opened it incorrectly before?

Lu Ye was astonished!

As Lu Ye was in shock, Veteran Thang had already closed the book, and instantly, both the visuals and sounds disappeared.

As they looked at each other, Lu Ye said, "Sect Master, this book..."

Veteran Thang's expression was solemn, "This is a dual cultivation technique. There are indeed some useful parts, but you are too young to be exposed to this too early."

"No, Sect Master, this isn't my possession, but the spoils of war I seized from a disciple of Evil Moon Valley," Lu Ye hurriedly explained.

Veteran Thang nodded, "That's good. You are still young, so I will keep this item for you for now. I will return it to you when you are a bit older."

Lu Ye felt this statement somewhat familiar...

Veteran Thang had already put away the wondrous book, and without any visible storage sack on him, Lu Ye had no idea where he had stored it.

## Chapter 24 22: There is No Absolute Right or Wrong in Law

"Where's the Golden Cicada Carefree Method?" Veteran Thang broke the silence.

Lu Ye quickly took out the Golden Cicada Carefree Method from his storage sack and handed it over to Veteran Thang.

Veteran Thang took it, flipping through it once and slightly nodded, "A very common Yellow Rank technique. When cultivated to perfection, it can open twenty-seven orifices."

Lu Ye understood the twenty-seven orifices mentioned by Veteran Thang, as he had discovered this aspect when he had studied the Golden Cicada Carefree Method before. If this technique was fully cultivated, it could indeed open up to twenty-seven orifices.

But he was somewhat puzzled about the 'Yellow Rank' mentioned by Veteran Thang and immediately voiced his confusion.

Veteran Thang explained, "The human body has three hundred and sixty orifices, aligning with the concept of the Major Circumambulation. In the Nine Provinces cultivation world, cultivation techniques are as numerous as hairs on an ox. Different techniques can open different numbers of spiritual orifices.

Depending on the number of orifices each can open, techniques are graded into four ranks: Heaven, Earth, Black, and Yellow.

Only Heaven Rank techniques can open all three hundred and sixty orifices, Earth Rank techniques open one hundred and eighty orifices, and below that are Black rank techniques that open eighty-one orifices..." he tapped the Golden Cicada Carefree Method in his hand, "The lowest are these Yellow Rank techniques, which only open twenty-seven orifices, and are also the most common."

Hearing Veteran Thang's explanation, Lu Ye suddenly understood.

The Golden Cicada Carefree Method was just the worst technique in the Nine Provinces, no wonder Manager Yang could carry it with him.

He was also fortunate not to regard it as any treasure, otherwise he would have made himself a laughing stock.

"Not only does the grade of a cultivation technique determine how many spiritual orifices a cultivator can ultimately open, but it also results in significant differences in strength among cultivators at the same cultivation level, as well as their future prospects," Veteran Thang said.

"The higher the grade of the cultivation technique, the stronger the cultivator, and the broader the future prospects?" Lu Ye asked.

"Exactly," Veteran Thang nodded, "Do you know why that is?"

"Please enlighten me, sect master," Lu Ye humbly requested.

Veteran Thang paused slightly to organize his thoughts, seemingly considering how to explain more clearly to Lu Ye. It had been many years since he had discussed these matters with anyone. After a moment, he asked, "Do you know how the cultivation realms are classified?"

"Spirit Stream, Cloud River, True Lake, Divine Sea, the four major realms," Lu Ye answered, something Yu Xiaodie had told him before.

"Then what is the Spirit Stream?"

Recalling what Yu Xiaodie had previously told him, Lu Ye answered, "By opening a sufficient number of spiritual orifices, allowing one's spirit force to circulate and flow through these orifices, forming a Circumambulation cycle, flowing like a stream, that is the Spirit Stream Realm."

"Precisely!" Veteran Thang stroked his beard, "But how many spiritual orifices are considered sufficient?"

"That..." Lu Ye was somewhat at a loss for words.

Veteran Thang smiled slightly, tapping the Golden Cicada Carefree Method in his hand, "If you cultivate this technique, opening nine orifices would bring you to Spirit Stream Level 1, eighteen orifices to Level 2, and twenty-seven to Level 3."

Lu Ye immediately sensed something was amiss, "Isn't there supposed to be nine levels in the Spirit Stream?"

"Yellow Rank techniques can only cultivate up to the third level of Spirit Stream, which is why they are the lowest grade. If you cultivate a Black rank technique, you can reach up to Level 6; as for Earth Rank, it can reach up to Level 9. If you cultivate a Heaven Rank technique..."

"Twelve levels?" Lu Ye looked puzzled, as he had never heard of a twelfth level in the Spirit Stream.

Veteran Thang smiled and shook his head, "Still nine levels."

Lu Ye asked, puzzled, "Why is that?"

Veteran Thang explained, "Because different cultivation techniques require different numbers of spiritual orifices to reach the same realm. This 'Golden Cicada Carefree Method' only needs to open nine orifices to achieve the Spirit Stream Level 1, but if you cultivate a Heaven Rank technique, it takes opening eighteen orifices to reach that realm."

A cultivator of an Earth Rank technique who opens 180 orifices reaches Spirit Stream Level 9, but a cultivator of a Heaven Rank technique who opens 180 orifices only reaches Spirit Stream Level 6."

Lu Ye vaguely understood, "Does Veteran Thang mean that the higher the grade of the cultivation technique, the more spiritual orifices are required to reach the same realm?"

"Exactly."

"So, the cultivation level of cultivators cannot be used as a basis to evaluate the strength of their abilities?"

A cultivator at Spirit Stream Level 9 with an Earth Rank technique who has opened only 180 orifices would certainly be no match for a cultivator at Spirit Stream Level 7 with a Heaven Rank technique, because the latter has opened more than 180 orifices.

Lu Ye suddenly understood the meaning behind Veteran Thang's earlier words. If that was the case, then the grade of the cultivation technique could lead to significant power discrepancies under the same realm and even affect one's future prospects.

"Sect Master, if the Heaven Rank techniques are so superior, why doesn't everyone cultivate them? What is the point of having Earth Rank, Black Rank, and Yellow Rank techniques? Could it be that Heaven Rank techniques are difficult to obtain?"

Veteran Thang said with a smile, "Although Heaven Rank techniques are not easy to come by, anyone with enough determination, even an independent cultivator, can acquire them. The reason why not everyone cultivates Heaven Rank techniques is that every cultivator has their own limit in opening spiritual orifices!"

"A limit in opening spiritual orifices?"

"In the beginning of cultivation, opening orifices is difficult, but as the number of one's spiritual orifices increases and one's cultivation improves, opening them becomes relatively easier, until a limit is reached. Once that limit is reached, it becomes extremely difficult for a cultivator to open more orifices. Even if they have the best techniques available, what use are they?"

A cultivator whose limit is 180 orifices finds cultivating a Heaven Rank technique meaningless, so one must cultivate within their means."

"I see," Lu Ye acknowledged.

"Moreover, starting with a Yellow Rank technique is actually better initially."

"Because it's simpler?"

"Exactly. A Yellow Rank technique only requires opening nine orifices to reach Spirit Stream Level 1, but a Heaven Rank technique requires opening eighteen orifices. Allowing spirit force to flow through the orifices early by achieving the Spirit Stream realm can also enhance the efficiency of one's cultivation.

Therefore, in the cultivation world, whether they are independent cultivators without support or disciples from prestigious sects, everyone generally starts their initial cultivation with a Yellow

Rank technique. Once they have perfected their cultivation of the Yellow Rank technique, they switch to other techniques."

However, Veteran Thang hadn't completely told the truth about changing cultivation techniques.

Only those cultivators without solid foundations, such as independent cultivators or disciples of insignificant families, start with Yellow Rank techniques when they begin their cultivation.

Changing cultivation techniques, although not greatly problematic, is somewhat bothersome, so those with even slight connections prefer to choose Black Rank or Earth Rank techniques, because no matter whether it's Yellow Rank, Black Rank, or Earth Rank, the requirement for reaching Spirit Stream Level 1 is always to open nine orifices.

Only when cultivators reach the limit of opening their orifices, and there is a need, do they switch to cultivating Heaven Rank techniques, and those without the ability just attempt to break through.

Considering that Lu Ye was only a disciple in name with mediocre natural talent, Veteran Thang thought he would probably never be able to open many orifices in his lifetime; a Yellow Rank technique would suffice for him.

Naturally, Veteran Thang didn't reveal this and didn't look down upon Lu Ye for it. As a sect master, he took great care in instructing Lu Ye, who was merely a disciple in name, without showing any impatience.

"Regarding your earlier concern that this technique might be an evil technique..." Veteran Thang lifted his eyelids and looked solemnly at Lu Ye, "Remember, the law does not differentiate between good and evil; it is people who are divided into the good and the wicked. No matter what technique

it is, it is merely a means of cultivation. What truly determines good and evil is the cultivator's nature.

Not everyone in the Haotian Alliance is of evil nature, and many in Ten Thousand Demons Ridge are of high moral character."

"Disciple will remember it well," Lu Ye said respectfully.

## Chapter 25 23: Spiritual Orifice Barrier and Residue (Thanks to the Alliance Hierarchy from Idle Fish in the Glass Tank for the Reward)

"Xuántiān Sect never taught you these things before?"

After some conversation, Veteran Thang discovered that Lu Ye's understanding of cultivation basics was superficial at best, which he found quite strange.

Lu Ye couldn't explain the truth and could only say, "When I was younger, I was ignorant and stubborn. Although the elders in the sect tried to teach me, I did not listen."

Veteran Thang laughed, "That's alright. You are still young; as long as you diligently cultivate in the days to come, that's what matters."

"Yes."

Veteran Thang lifted his hand and extended a finger towards Lu Ye's lower abdomen. "Feel your current orifice is full. If you wish to open the second one, then calmly sense it!"

Lu Ye immediately sat upright and still.

As Veteran Thang's finger touched him, Lu Ye immediately felt an external force invading his body. It was Veteran Thang's spirit force, but it was gentle and therefore did not do any damage to Lu Ye.

This force flowed through Lu Ye's Root Spiritual Orifice and slowly gathered at a spot near it. Lu Ye was familiar with this spot; it was exactly the position of the 2nd Spiritual Orifice for practicing the Golden Cicada Carefree Method. He had tried several times before to find the exact spot but had not succeeded, yet Veteran Thang had done so with ease.

This was the advantage of joining a sect and having the protection of seniors in one's practice—it saved a great deal of the energy and time one would otherwise spend figuring things out alone. The initial stage of cultivation is the most precious time for cultivators. Gaining a faster start at this stage provides an undeniable advantage in future cultivation.

"This is the 2nd Spiritual Orifice of the Golden Cicada Carefree Method. Try to guide your own spirit force into it," said Veteran Thang's voice.

Lu Ye hastened to do so.

The spirit force brimming in his Root Spiritual Orifice began to slowly move towards the 2nd Spiritual Orifice under his influence, but he clearly perceived that there was a barrier outside the 2nd Spiritual Orifice blocking the entry of spirit force.

"Each spiritual orifice is protected by a spiritual orifice barrier. Breaking through the barrier is necessary to successfully open the orifice, and this is something others cannot assist with, so you must rely on yourself."

With Veteran Thang's cultivation level, he could easily help Lu Ye break through the spiritual orifice barrier, but doing so might cause irreversible damage to Lu Ye's spiritual orifice. Thus, all he could do was guide Lu Ye to the location of the spiritual orifice; he would not help him open it.

It was only then that Lu Ye learned about the existence of spiritual orifice barriers. He had opened his Root Spiritual Orifice with the help of the Talent Tree. Reflecting on that experience, he faintly remembered the sensation of something inside him breaking, which, it seemed now, must have been the barrier of the Root Spiritual Orifice.

Veteran Thang's spirit force did not linger, continuing to flow within Lu Ye's body. Breaking through the spiritual orifice barrier was not a task to be completed in a short time. Having helped Lu Ye locate the position of the 2nd Spiritual Orifice, the rest was up to Lu Ye's own effort.

After a while, Veteran Thang withdrew his hand and spoke, "Following the route of the Golden Cicada Carefree Method, I have left some guiding spirit force in the next eight spiritual orifices within your body. Whenever you open one orifice, you will be able to sense the position of the next one.

The day you open all eight orifices and allow your spirit force to flow through the Root Spiritual Orifice and these eight orifices, the Spirit Stream Realm will naturally form."

"Thank you, Sect Master!" Lu Ye bowed respectfully.

Veteran Thang smiled faintly, "Go ahead with your cultivation. It will still be some time before we head back to Mount Ao."

"Yes." Lu Ye answered, not changing his spot, and began to cultivate right there.

Having the Sect Master there in person, any problems that might arise during his cultivation could be overseen by him.

Now that the position of the 2nd Spiritual Orifice was confirmed, Lu Ye felt a surge of motivation. He activated the spirit force in his Root Spiritual Orifice and directed it toward the barrier of the 2nd Spiritual Orifice.

The barrier, whatever it was, seemed to loosen slightly with each of Lu Ye's impacts.

However, the sensation of impacting the barrier was not pleasant. Every time he gathered spirit force for the impact, it felt like a small hammer was striking the location of the spiritual orifice.

Once or twice didn't matter much, but after numerous attempts, a slight swelling and soreness began to emerge from his 2nd Spiritual Orifice.

Moreover, each attempt to strike against the spiritual orifice barrier consumed some spirit force, and Lu Ye finally understood why the sect master had said that in the early stages of cultivation, as one's cultivation level increased, orifice-opening would become relatively easier.

If one were to compare spiritual orifices to buckets, and spirit force to the water in them, Lu Ye currently had just one bucket of water. If he had two buckets, or three, he would have much more spirit force available, which would naturally make orifice-opening faster. Perhaps he could then break through the spiritual orifice barrier in one fell swoop.

Half a Shichen later, Lu Ye found it increasingly difficult to muster his spirit force; the water in the bucket was nearly depleted.

He took out a bottle of blood Qi pills from Zhou Cheng's storage sack and was about to take two out when suddenly...

"Have you always used this to aid your cultivation?" Veteran Tang's voice sounded.

Lu Ye hurriedly responded, "Indeed!" Seeing Veteran Tang's expression, a jolt went through his heart, "Sect master, is there something wrong with these blood Qi pills?"

Veteran Tang frowned, "Did the people of Evil Moon Valley tell you these were blood Qi pills?"

"These aren't blood Qi pills?" Lu Ye was startled. He had taken these pills before and they indeed increased his blood Qi energy. If these weren't blood Qi pills, then what were they?

Veteran Tang reached out, took Zhou Cheng's storage sack, rummaged through it, inspected various bottles and jars, then placed a bottle in front of Lu Ye, "This is the actual blood Qi pill."

Lu Ye picked up the bottle and saw that the elixir pills inside were quite different from the blood Qi pills he had been taking. He had checked these items before, but since he did not recognize them, he had not dared to take them rashly.

Who would have thought that what he believed to be blood Qi pills were not, and that the real blood Qi pills were something else?

"Then what is this?" Lu Ye asked, pointing to the bottle he was about to take.

"Residue from refining blood Qi pills," explained Veteran Tang. "Not every attempt at elixir pill refinement is successful. If it fails, it becomes residue. The residue usually has no effect, but some still retain a bit of medicinal efficacy; this is the failed residue from refining blood Qi pills."

After Veteran Tang's explanation, Lu Ye's face darkened as if it were the bottom of a pot. He had once questioned why there was always a burnt taste when taking blood Qi pills, thinking it was their inherent flavor, it turned out what he had been consuming was merely residue of failed creations, and such a taste was inevitable.

"What did the cultivators of Evil Moon Valley want with these things?" Veteran Tang couldn't understand.

"They gave them to us mining slaves," Lu Ye explained the resource exchange system in the mines.

Veteran Tang then realized, and put away the residue, "Such things should not be consumed; they will impact your future cultivation."

Lu Ye immediately tensed up, "What kind of impact will it have?"

"Every medicine contains some toxicity and the elixir pills we use for cultivation are no exception. The lower the quality of the elixir pill, the worse the pill poison. Not to mention the residue from failed pills, which has the most violent pill poison. Thus, although cultivation can be aided by elixir pills, one must not overly rely on them.

If one consumes too many, excessive accumulation of pill poison can at best make the spirit force murky and spells ineffective, or at worst shake one's foundation, causing damage to one's cultivation," explained Veteran Tang.

Lu Ye listened with a sense of dread. Considering that he had consumed two to three hundred pills worth of residues, according to the sect master, wouldn't his situation be dire?

He swallowed nervously and asked tentatively, "Master, is there a guideline for using elixir pills in cultivation? How can one know how much pill poison has accumulated inside their body?"

Veteran Tang said, "Look at the spirit force. As I've just stated, if the pill poison accumulates too much, the spirit force will become unclear and murky. The purer a cultivator's spirit force, the better for combat and cultivation, and vice versa. I've checked your spirit force a while ago, and it was still fairly pure, so there's no need for excessive worry."

He had helped Lu Ye locate the 2nd orifice earlier, and thus the spirit force from Lu Ye's Root Spiritual Orifice had passed through his hands, giving him a clear understanding of the condition of Lu Ye's spirit force.

With these words, Lu Ye's mood became oddly mixed.

## Chapter 26 24 The Joy of Cultivation Through Medication

The sect master was unaware of his situation, but Lu Ye knew his own affairs.

Not to mention that in the previous year he had continuously exchanged thirty blood Qi pill dregs from Manager Yang for consumption, even in that cave, over the span of more than ten days, he had consumed two to three hundred pills.

Normally, consuming so many dregs would definitely pose a great hidden danger to oneself.

Yet the sect master actually said his spirit force was fairly pure?

The sect master should not make a mistake about such a matter, Lu Ye was unclear about how high his cultivation was, but being the master of a 9th-grade sect, he must at least be in the Cloud River Realm.

In other words, there probably really was no problem with his spirit force.

But where was the problem? Lu Ye's first thought was the Talent Tree. Previously, when he was in the mines, he had a vague feeling that the Talent Tree carried more than just spirit runes. Now it seemed his pure spirit force must also be related to the Talent Tree; otherwise, there was no explanation for his current situation.

This was not a matter he could openly discuss with the sect master. After pondering, Lu Ye said, "Sect master, if pill poison accumulates too much and spirit force becomes turbid and unclear, how should one resolve it?"

"Naturally, one can only pause cultivation practice and slowly dissolve the pill poison, which takes a lot of time. Therefore, relying too much on elixir pills for cultivation not only fails to speed up one's practice but can have the opposite effect. However, you need not worry, appropriately using elixir pills to aid is not an issue.

The key is to control the extent by oneself," the sect master replied.

"Disciple understands," said Lu Ye.

"Hmm, your current cultivation is shallow, so it's not unreasonable to rely on elixir pills. However, since you have Spirit-Nurturing Pills, why not use them instead of relying on blood Qi pills for Essence Refinement-Qi Conversion?"

You should know that although both types of elixir pills can aid in cultivation, the latter is more important for supplementing blood Qi energy, foundation fortification, and cultivation nourishment," the sect master said.

Lu Ye was suddenly taken aback, "Disciple does not recognize Spirit-Nurturing Pills..."

Earlier, he had habitually taken out a blood Qi pill to consume, merely thinking about quickly restoring Spiritual Energy and breaking through the spiritual orifice barrier, without giving it much thought.

Veteran Thang was surprised and chuckled, pushing a bottle towards him, "These inside are Spirit-Nurturing Pills. Although they are the lowest grade, their quality is not bad and are just right for your use."

Lu Ye poured out one from the bottle, examined the appearance of the Spirit-Nurturing Pill, and thought to himself that indeed, there were also Spirit-Nurturing Pills in Manager Yang's possession. He had seen this kind of elixir pill in Manager Yang's storage sack but had not dared to consume them casually.

Now with the guidance of the sect master, he had no concerns and swallowed the Spirit-Nurturing Pill in his hand, calmly beginning to refine it.

"After taking an elixir pill, one must guide the pill energy to prevent accumulation, which could leave lingering problems," the sect master's voice echoed in his ear.

This was also why he said the lowest-grade Spirit-Nurturing Pills were appropriate for Lu Ye—considering Lu Ye's current 1st orifice cultivation level, if he were to truly consume too high-quality elixir pills, the rich pill energy might be too much to guide in time. Once too much pill energy accumulated in the body, it would greatly impact his cultivation.

Lu Ye heard the sect master's words and acted accordingly.

A warm current slowly emerged in his lower abdomen, the pill energy from the Spirit-Nurturing Pill being released, converting into spirit force that a cultivator can use.

As Lu Ye guided it, the transformed spirit force was slowly channeled into his Root Spiritual Orifice.

The previously nearly drained Root Spiritual Orifice gradually became replenished.

The medicinal effect of the Spirit-Nurturing Pill was much better than the blood Qi pill dregs he had consumed before!

The Spirit-Nurturing Pill itself was more suitable for cultivation than the blood Qi pill, and what Lu Ye consumed previously were residues from the failed alchemy of Evil Moon Valley cultivators. Moreover, he had to go through a process of Essence Refinement-Qi Conversion to transform the power of his blood Qi into spirit force; obviously, there was no comparison.

Only at this moment did he truly appreciate the joy of cultivation through consumption of pills!

In less than half a day, the nearly drained Root Spiritual Orifice was refilled, and the pill energy from the Spirit-Nurturing Pill continued to exert its effect.

Lu Ye quickly began to guide the spirit force in the Root Spiritual Orifice, forcefully impacting the barrier of the 2nd Spiritual Orifice again and again.

Until a certain moment, he sensed something within him shatter, and the spirit force that had been hindered suddenly flowed freely.

The 2nd Spiritual Orifice, open!

From the Root Spiritual Orifice brimming with spirit force, it trickled into the 2nd Spiritual Orifice, and Lu Ye only felt a sense of comfort throughout his body and mind.

The effects of the Spirit-Nurturing Pill still lingered, and it was only after a long while, when he noticed that the effects of the pill had been completely consumed, that Lu Ye opened his eyes. He was about to share the good news with the sect master, only to find that the sect master was no longer there.

He had left without him noticing.

Lu Ye didn't mind, the sect master was the head of a sect and had his own matters to attend to. After all, the sect master had already helped him identify the locations of the next few spiritual orifices, so all he had to do was to follow the plan and cultivate diligently.

Lu Ye's goal was to open those spiritual orifices as quickly as possible, and, by following the route of the Cultivation Technique, to imbue these orifices with spirit force to reach the Spirit Stream Realm. Only then could he consider himself a true entry-level cultivator.

Eager to test his previous conjecture regarding the Talent Tree, Lu Ye did not rest and consumed another Spirit-Nurturing Pill.

The rich pill energy turned into spirit force, and under Lu Ye's guidance, it filled his spiritual orifices. Two days later, after consuming nearly six Spirit-Nurturing Pills, the 2nd orifice was full.

Lu Ye was stunned by this speed.

To think it had taken him over ten days to fill his 1st orifice after opening it, yet now, a similar progress only took two days—the difference was too great.

Indeed, the effects of the Spirit-Nurturing Pill were incomparable to those scraps, even if it was the lowest quality of Spirit-Nurturing Pills.

He thought of Yu Xiaodie again.

Yu Xiaodie had told him that it took her more than twenty days to fill her 1st orifice after opening it, and she had also consumed Spirit-Nurturing Pills, provided by a cultivator from Evil Moon Valley.

Comparing the two, the speed of Lu Ye's cultivation was clearly abnormal.

He could be sure that this had a great deal to do with the Talent Tree, but as for the specifics of this connection, he was clueless at the moment.

No matter what, this was a good thing for him. Perhaps, once his cultivation became stronger, he would be able to slowly unearth the secrets of the Talent Tree.

The sect master was still absent, and although Lu Ye had been cultivating for two days, he didn't feel tired at all, only terribly hungry.

Ever since he had successfully opened his orifices, his appetite had increased significantly. He had noticed this while in the mine, but at his current age, having a good appetite was a positive sign—for the more he ate, the more vigorous his blood Qi energy would be.

It was not feasible to go out searching for food, but fortunately, Zhou Cheng's storage sack still contained some edibles. Lu Ye wasn't picky and started eating and drinking with water.

Having eaten his fill, Lu Ye continued cultivating.

Half a day later, the barrier of the 3rd orifice broke apart.

Two more days passed, and the 3rd orifice was filled.

Again, it took six Spirit-Nurturing Pills.

He wanted to continue cultivating, but as soon as he relaxed, weariness overcame him. Knowing that he had been cultivating for too long, he had no choice but to rest for now.

He took out bedding from his storage sack, Lu Ye fell asleep as soon as his head hit the pillow, quickly drifting into slumber.

## Chapter 27 25: Ambush

Lu Ye was gently awakened by the sect master. As he opened his eyes, he saw the sect master standing beside him and quickly got up.

"Sect Master." Lu Ye rubbed his eyes, patted his face, and immediately felt much more awake.

"It's time to disembark," the sect master said with a smile.

Over the past days, more than ten sects of the Haotian Alliance had evacuated from Evil Moon Valley together. They had now reached the territory of the Haotian Alliance, and naturally, it was time for each to return to their own homes. Several sects had already left earlier.

Lu Ye packed up his bedding, stuffed it into his storage sack, and tidied up his appearance before following the sect master out of the cabin.

Soon, they reached the deck, where a stern-looking, tall middle-aged man was waiting.

Lu Ye did not recognize this man, but after a brief glance, he felt that the middle-aged man emanated an aura of soldiers and iron horses.

The sect master approached and spoke a few words with the man.

Suddenly, the man turned his head to look at Lu Ye, who was standing beside the sect master, and said, "Being able to join the Righteous Blood Sect is your good fortune. You must cultivate diligently and not bring disgrace to the name of our sect."

Lu Ye quickly replied, "Yes!"

The sect master bowed with a fist, "Then, I shall take my leave first."

"Please," the middle-aged man gestured with his hand.

With a flip of his palm, the sect master produced an object from nowhere and casually tossed it; spirit light suddenly appeared, and a double-horse carriage appeared on the deck.

The two horses pulling the carriage were completely white and looked extraordinarily spirited, snorting softly and restlessly pawing the ground with their hooves.

Before Lu Ye could see clearly, he found himself involuntarily floating into the carriage, wrapped in spirit force by the sect master.

"Open the array!" the middle-aged man shouted. As he gave his order, the protective array of the Flying Dragon Ship opened a gap, letting a fierce wind howl in, causing everyone's clothes on the deck to flutter loudly.

The sect master and the middle-aged man bowed to each other. As the two horses neighed and raised their heads, spirit light formed around their hooves. They dashed out through the gap in the protective array and sped away into the distance at a very high speed.

Watching the double-horse carriage disappear from view, the middle-aged man turned around and strode toward the cabin, leaving behind a command: "Bring me that bastard Pang Dahai!"

"Yes," a few cultivators from the Haotian Alliance responded, their faces revealing a schadenfreude smile. Although they didn't know what Junior Brother Pang had done again to anger the Deputy Alliance Leader, it was clear that Junior Brother Pang was going to lose a fair amount of weight.

On the double-horse carriage, Lu Ye looked around excitedly, touching this and that, his eyes full of wonder.

Having been in the Nine Provinces for over a year, it was only in the last few days that he realized that what he knew of the Nine Provinces was not the true face of this world; there were too many things beyond his imagination.

Like the previous Flying Dragon Ship or this double-horse carriage, this huge disparity in understanding made him acutely aware of one thing.

This was a world of cultivation. Only by joining the Righteous Blood Sect did he obtain the means to integrate into this world of cultivation. As his cultivation strength continued to grow, the wonders of this world would gradually reveal themselves.

Otherwise, if he had spent his life mining in the ore veins, how could he have witnessed these colorful and diverse experiences?

"These two horses... are they not living creatures?" Lu Ye stood on the carriage pole, reached out and touched the behind of the front horse, and discovered it didn't feel like flesh and blood but rather like touching a piece of metal, cold to the touch.

On closer inspection, he realized that these two horses indeed lacked the breath of living creatures, yet they appeared so vivid and lifelike that they gave the illusion of being alive.

The carriage behind was open-air, topped with a large umbrella that spun with the wind. Strands of spirit light hung down like threads, blocking the fierce gales from above.

The sect master sat in the carriage, and upon hearing the words, he smiled and said, "This is the creation of the cover armorers, used for transportation."

"Cover armorer?" Lu Ye asked curiously.

"A form of extrinsic cultivation, skilled in artifact crafting. You'll come across it if opportunity arises," he explained.

Lu Ye did not ask further but eagerly looked around for a while before obediently taking his seat in the carriage.

The carriage was spacious enough to comfortably seat three to five people.

Of course, he wasn't foolish enough to sit beside the sect master. Understanding the basic respect of honoring his teacher, he chose a seat facing the sect master, directly opposite him.

"How was your cultivation progressing before?" the sect master asked.

"It went rather smoothly," Lu Ye replied. Through his recent cultivation, he had confirmed something: his drug-enhanced cultivation seemed to present no significant risks.

In the past few days, he had taken more than ten Spirit-Nurturing Pills and opened his 3rd orifice. Setting aside how efficient others might be in their cultivation, it was unlikely anyone could consume elixir pills continuously like he did.

The pill poison accumulation mentioned by the sect master, which could lead to murky and obstructed spirit force, hadn't occurred either.

It might still be too early to tell, as he had only taken more than ten Spirit-Nurturing Pills. This was something that would necessitate further observation to confirm.

He was considering whether to discuss his progress in orifice-opening with the sect master, hesitating, when he heard the sect master ask, "Among the six cultivations, which path would you like to pursue?"

The so-called six cultivations unquestionably referred to the information previously shared by Pang Dahai.

Lu Ye hadn't really thought about this. Being new to the world of cultivation, he was naive and uninformed about everything. How could he have decided on his future path?

He thus sought advice, "What do you think, Master?"

Veteran Thang stroked his beard and said, "Your physique isn't particularly robust, nor do you possess any distinct innate talents, so physique cultivation wouldn't suit you. Your dominant elements are fire with an auxiliary of metal, which makes neither ghost cultivation nor healing cultivation suitable for you. That leaves combat cultivation, magic cultivation, and extrinsic cultivation.

Speaking of extrinsic cultivation, every cultivator understands some extrinsic techniques to varying extents, so it can be seen as a supplemental path rather than a specialization."

Lu Ye nodded in understanding, "So, the paths suitable for me are just combat cultivation and magic cultivation?"

"That's correct," he replied.

"Which path do you follow, Master?" Lu Ye asked curiously.

Veteran Thang chuckled, "I am a magic cultivator. You don't have to imitate me. Determining your own path is a gradual process that requires true insight into your heart. I ask these now just to give you an idea, not to rush your decision. Once we return to Mount Ao..."

Lu Ye was attentively listening to the sect master's teachings when suddenly everything started spinning. Then, a roaring sound erupted, deafening to the ears.

As his vision whirled, he caught a glimpse of a blaze in the sky through the corner of his eyes. Looking intently, he saw a double-horse carriage ablaze, which had somehow been attacked and was now shattered into pieces. The two horses that pulled the carriage were also torn apart, scattering as they fell.

Lu Ye shook his head, feeling that the burning double-horse carriage looked identical to the one they had just been riding in.

He suddenly realized that it was the very carriage he and the sect master had been traveling in, merely struck by a mysterious attack!

Only at this moment did he discover that the sect master had already transported him away from the carriage, floating mid-air, with spirit light shining intensely around the sect master, enveloping him. The sect master formed hand seals, looked around coldly, his expression extremely grave.

## Chapter 28 26 Official Disciple

Ambushed!

Despite the dizziness overwhelming his mind, Lu Ye quickly pieced together the reality of the situation. He couldn't help but feel tense; as a junior cultivator with only his 3rd orifice opened, he was hardly a match for this kind of scene.

From a hill below, a yellow light shot up into the sky, charging towards the sect master and Lu Ye's position. The light, pillar-like and incredibly fast, arrived in an instant.

The sect master's hair and beard stood on end, his robes snapping in the wind. He rapidly drew a circle in front of himself, his fingertip brimming with spirit force.

A visible spirit force barrier quickly materialized, spherical in shape, shielding the sect master and Lu Ye behind it. Within the barrier, numerous intricate runes wriggled like tadpoles.

With a boom,

the yellow light struck the barrier, which held firm, but the light surged like a fountain, relentlessly bombarding them without pause.

The sect master's eyes bulged with fury, spirit force surged in his palm, sustaining the spirit force barrier in a deadlock with the yellow light.

Lu Ye had never seen such a wondrous scene of magical combat; for a moment, he was completely transfixed.

In the tense moment between the yellow light and the spirit force barrier, another sound came from the ground on another side. Lu Ye turned his head to see a towering figure, like an iron tower, soaring up towards them. Beneath that figure, a small hill crumbled, evidently crushed by the individual's leap.

The figure was shrouded in a blood-red glow, giving off the impression that all his blood Qi was evaporating, radiating extreme ferocity.

At that moment, the sect master was casting a spell, engaged in a struggle with the yellow light. The burly cultivator clearly aimed to take advantage of the situation and lunged forward; his speed was incredibly fast, closing in on the sect master within thirty yards in an instant.

The spell in the sect master's hand shifted, and the spirit force barrier that was battling the yellow light immediately changed its angle slightly.

The impact of the yellow light on the spirit force barrier, instead of direct confrontation, was redirected by the mirror-smooth barrier, veering towards the approaching burly figure.

The burly figure obviously hadn't anticipated this turn of events. By the time he saw the yellow light hurtling toward him, it was too late to dodge. With an enraged roar, he raised his arms in front of himself to block.

The next moment, the burly figure was engulfed by the yellow light, his form staggering, his flesh emitting a charred smell.

Seeing this, Lu Ye nearly let out a cheer. Although his eyes couldn't make out the dangers in these fleeting moments of conflict, the sect master's move carried a sense of effortlessly shifting the course of battle, a display of subtle brilliance unparalleled.

However, he was swiftly enveloped by an immense dread, instantly turning cold, as if even the blood in his veins had frozen.

Before he could fathom what had happened, the sect master grunted, and Lu Ye saw a flash of blood before his eyes, the smell of blood rushing into his nostrils.

After reeling for a moment, he snapped back to reality and looked down, his face filled with shock.

It was because the sect master had acquired a foot-long wound on his waist and abdomen, where his flesh was rolled back. Around the edges of the wound, green substances wriggled like maggots.

He had no idea when the sect master had been injured, nor who had inflicted it.

At that moment, the sect master mobilized his spirit force, dragging him along as they swiftly fled in one direction, their speed extreme.

The wild wind howled past their ears, and with the sect master's spirit force as a shield, Lu Ye was safe. Only then did he get a clear view of how many had launched the attack.

One was the burly figure he had seen before, and another was a gaunt man, presumably the one who had cast the yellow light. Amidst the chase and assault, they continued casting spells to cause interference, but fortunately, the sect master resolved them one by one.

No, there was a third person!

Behind the sect master, a figure that was intermittently visible pursued them closely, enigmatic as a spectral apparition, indistinct to the eyes. Yet, from the shapely silhouette, it was likely a woman who, each time she materialized, drew nearer to the sect master.

If things continued this way, escape was impossible. The lean man's magic and spells greatly interfered with the sect master's speed.

And on top of that, the sect master was injured.

By now, Lu Ye understood that it was the elusive woman who had injured the sect master. The three assailants had clearly divided their tasks. The lean man employing magic and spells to distract the sect master, the burly man to draw his attention, and the real deadly blow was delivered by the woman hidden in the shadows.

However, it seemed they had underestimated the sect master's strength. Their meticulously arranged ambush had been dodged by the sect master, who even managed to protect Lu Ye's safety with his remaining strength.

The current situation was clearly unfavorable for the sect master. If he were alone, even if he couldn't defeat the three pursuers, he would still be able to escape. This was the Haotian Alliance's territory, and he only needed to hold on for a moment before reinforcements would arrive. He had already sent out a distress signal when he was ambushed.

But he had to look after Lu Ye, and could not use his full strength, which meant in a few dozen breaths, he would be overwhelmed by the three attackers. Once a fierce battle ensued, Lu Ye's death was certain. The energy fluctuations alone from the cultivators' combat were more than Lu Ye could withstand, and his safety thus far was solely due to the sect master's protection.

At this point, there was only one thing to do: to take a gamble!

Having made up his mind, the sect master spoke, "Lu Ye, have you ever heard of the Spirit Stream battlefield?"

Lu Ye quickly replied, "I haven't!"

He didn't understand why the sect master would suddenly ask about this during their escape, but he genuinely hadn't heard of the Spirit Stream battlefield. He knew too little about this world.

"Whether you've heard of it or not, there's no help for it now," the sect master sighed. As he fled, he produced a jade slip and pressed it against his forehead.

Then, he took out a big seal. This seal was squarely shaped, completely white, and made of an unknown material. It was covered in flowing spirit light, clearly not a mundane object.

In a low chant, he said, "Thang Yifeng, the tenth-generation sect master of the Righteous Blood Sect, respectfully requests Heaven's Augury to accept the Bingzhou native Lu Ye as an official disciple of the Righteous Blood Sect. Let Heaven's Augury bear witness!"

As he said this, the sect master sprayed a mist of blood onto the big seal which made the already luminescent seal shine even more brightly.

In the midst of a profound silence, something seemed to descend from the heavens, landing on the big seal.

"Extend your hand!" the sect master commanded.

Lu Ye hurriedly stretched out his hand, and the sect master lifted the big seal and stamped it onto the back of his hand.

With a thunderous sound, Lu Ye felt as if he had been fiercely hammered, and he immediately became dizzy.

"Survive, I will have someone find you!" the sect master's voice rang in his ear, and at the same time, Lu Ye felt something being placed in his arms by the sect master.

The three pursuers, upon witnessing this scene, became even more eager in their chase, the lean man ceaselessly summoning streams of yellow light of varying sizes from his hands, forcing the sect master to dodge and weave.

Taking advantage of this distraction, the ghostly figure of the woman closed in rapidly on the sect master, looking about to strike.

Just then, the sect master's figure suddenly plummeted towards the ground below, crashing into a wilderness area.

This field was barren, overrun with weeds. However, the sect master seemed very familiar with this place; in the tall grass that reached the height of a person, he accurately located a dilapidated hall. With a sweep of his sleeve, the weeds flew sideways, revealing the true façade of the hall.

Seeing that hall, the lean man's complexion darkened. "Stop him quickly!"

The three of them had pursued in silence all this time, intent on bringing the sect master down. However, upon seeing the hall, they were thrown into a panic.

## Chapter 29 27: You Want to Leave After Touching the Tiger's Whiskers?

Amidst the angry shouts, the skinny man skilled in magic and spells changed the signs with his hands, casting a series of intricate spells. The burly man moved like thunder, with an imposing aura, while the slender woman's figure remained elusive. In an instant, the three of them formed an encirclement and lunged towards the sect master and Lu Ye.

The sect master flipped his palm, and several small flags appeared out of nowhere. He uttered in a low voice, "Go."

The small flags flew in all directions, disappearing into the Void.

"Rise!" the sect master shouted again, and spirit force surged around his body. In an instant, a transparent, semi-circular light barrier enveloped the hall, with mysterious spirit runes flowing across it.

The skinny man's spells bombarded the light barrier, causing ripples to form on it. The burly man's figure slammed into it, causing several spirit runes on the barrier to shatter. The elusive woman revealed her form; her face and hands were covered in strange patterns, masking her original appearance and giving her an eerie, ghostly look.

She held a dagger shaped like a spirit snake in her hand and slashed fiercely, causing even more runes to fragment.

"Formation!" the skinny man's eyes narrowed. The information had not mentioned that Thang Yifeng was skilled in Formation, but seeing the speed of his array setup, it was clear he had mastered the essence of Array Path.

"Three breaths!" the burly man roared, indicating that the formation could be broken within three breaths.

After all, this was a formation hastily set up by the sect master. Holding off three cultivators of equal cultivation for three breaths was an extraordinary achievement.

As he spoke, the burly man dug deep into his Dantian and slowly unleashed a punch. It seemed extremely slow, but as he threw the punch, his arm kept swelling and thickening.

Inside the formation, the sect master paid no heed to the three people outside but grabbed Lu Ye and brought him to the center of the dilapidated hall, where there stood a person-high, bucket-thick item that resembled a crystal pillar.

"Place your hand on it and channel your spirit force!" the sect master ordered in a low voice.

Lu Ye didn't know the purpose of doing so, but he understood the sect master wouldn't harm him. He hastily complied, and as he placed his palm on the crystal pillar and channeled his spirit force, the figure of the sect master standing before him suddenly began to blur.

He couldn't help feeling as if he was drifting farther and farther away from this world.

"Once you're inside, immediately find a place to hide and make sure you survive! Also... never tell anyone that you are a disciple of the Righteous Blood Sect!" the sect master looked at him, his eyes brimming with a guilt-laden expression.

Lu Ye tried to speak but could not hear his own voice. The figure of the sect master in front of him grew more and more blurred, along with the entire world around him.

By the time he regained his senses, the figure of the sect master had vanished, and even his surroundings had changed.

Crack...

The formation shattered, and as the burly man broke through the formation, he charged with full momentum towards the sect master and threw a punch, thinking to himself, "Success!"

In the next instant, a violent blast swept through, turning the already dilapidated hall into ruins, except for the crystal pillar, which remained intact.

The eyes of the beefy guy suddenly narrowed as he looked at the figure in front of him, whose upper body clothes had burst open, revealing well-defined muscles, and who caught his punch single-handedly, causing his eyelid to twitch violently, "How is this possible?"

It was widely known that Thang Yifeng from the Righteous Blood Sect was a magic cultivator, yet at this moment, what kind of magic cultivator was this? Clearly, he was a physique cultivator!

Moreover, the cultivation shown by Thang Yifeng at this moment was certainly not as simple as the information had stated.

"Mission failed, the intelligence was incorrect, retreat!" the skinny man skilled in magic and spells shouted loudly.

The slender woman, who had already pounced nearby the sect master, didn't hesitate and quickly retreated. With the original target lost, it was clearly not worth fighting to the death against Thang Yifeng.

Crack!

Accompanied by a muffled grunt, several bones in the fist captured in the sect master's palm were crushed. The beefy man, tough as he was, didn't make a sound. However, in the next moment, a fist struck his chin from an unexpected direction, smashing down hard.

The beefy man was launched skyward, seeing stars.

"You dare to provoke the tiger and think you can walk away?" the sect master's eyelids drooped, and as he spoke, he was already in mid-air, kicking out with his foot to the side.

With a thud, the slender woman who had concealed her figure and was fleeing into the distance was kicked, revealing her whereabouts. She screamed as she plummeted toward the mountain peak below.

The sect master raised his hand again, and an object resembling a rope flew out, winding toward the emaciated man.

...

A moment earlier.

Inside the cabin of the Flying Dragon Ship, Pang Zhen sat upright while in front of him knelt a chubby figure—Pang Dahai, this fellow was pinching his own ears with a pitiful look on his face.

Pang Zhen slammed the table and said angrily, "You scatterbrain, do you know what you've done!"

Pang Dahai responded with a grievance, "Isn't it just that I guided Lu Yiye and let him choose Veteran Thang's Righteous Blood Sect?"

"Do you realize that this is against the Alliance's rules?" Pang Zhen grew even angrier.

At that time, when Pang Dahai was guiding Lu Ye and Yu Xiaodie, he didn't avoid others. Although others didn't know what they were talking about, many people saw it.

Afterward, upon investigation, it was easily traced back to Pang Dahai.

Over the years, Veteran Thang had gone on many missions with the Haotian Alliance, rescuing many enslaved individuals. Yet, among those with cultivation aptitudes and talents, few had chosen the Righteous Blood Sect during their final selection of a sect, let alone choosing it exclusively.

This time, however, an exception had occurred.

Pang Zhen felt there was something fishy about the situation: was someone secretly guiding? Upon checking, it turned out it was an inside job.

"What should we do then? Uncle, should you handle this according to the Alliance's rules?" Pang Dahai looked at Pang Zhen, his eyes blinking mischievously.

"You fool, if not for your mother's sake, I would have slapped you by now!" Pang Zhen said, raising his hand as if to hit him. Pang Dahai involuntarily shrank his neck. Seeing that Pang Zhen didn't actually slap him, he laughed again.

Seeing his playful and smiling demeanor, Pang Zhen became even more annoyed, fumed silently for a while, and then said, "Fortunately, you knew your limits. That young lad only has the aptitude of a Yiye, and he won't achieve much in the future. According to Veteran Thang's plan, we will find a chance to send him to another sect for cultivation, hopefully without causing any issues."

Pang Dahai frowned and said, "Uncle, the Righteous Blood Sect hasn't accepted disciples in thirty years. If we don't start admitting, according to the rules of the Alliance, our entire sect will be abolished. Veteran Thang and Sister Shui Yuan are good people. I really couldn't bear to see it, so I ended up guiding Lu Yiye. But Uncle, what exactly happened back then?"

"Why do those people want to suppress the Righteous Blood Sect to this extent?"

"Don't ask about things you shouldn't know. Remember, these waters are deep, and you, being only at the Cloud River Realm, shouldn't meddle. Less initiative from now on."

"Yes!" Pang Dahai hurriedly responded, knowing that he had narrowly escaped this predicament. He then casually stood up from the ground.

"Who told you to stand up?" Pang Zhen raised his eyes.

Plop...

Pang Dahai knelt down promptly and neatly.

Pang Zhen gave him a stern look. Just as he was about to scold him more, he suddenly furrowed his brows, looked down at the ring on his thumb, and in the next instant, his facial expression drastically changed. He then rose abruptly and rushed out!

Dozens of breaths later, a streak of Liu Guang fell into the wilderness, revealing his figure; it was Pang Zhen, who had hurriedly come after receiving Veteran Thang's message, without any delay.

Looking around, the wilderness was a mess, everywhere retaining traces of a great battle.

The body of a burly man lay nearby with a large hole in his chest as if he had been killed by a punch, while on the other side, a woman covered in Spectral Runes was twisted and folded into the side of a mountain wall. Another person was under Veteran Thang's foot with a shattered head and brain matter scattered all around.

Veteran Thang stood bare-chested, his body enveloped in swirling aura, with spirit force steaming around him.

Pang Zhen's eyelids involuntarily twitched.

## Chapter 30 28: Spirit Stream Battlefield

A physique cultivator, a magic cultivator, and a spectral cultivator, hiding in the shadows to assassinate Veteran Thang, ended up being counter-killed by him, and Pang Zhen quickly sorted out his thoughts in a very short time.

Moreover, from the leftover energy waves of the nearby fight, the three people who were killed were all Divine Sea Realm cultivators, but as to what levels of the Divine Sea they had reached, that remains unknown.

Facing three opponents alone and managing to kill all three of them in such a short amount of time, it seemed that his speculations over the years were correct, the cultivation level of the old gentleman before him was definitely not as simple as it seemed on the surface.

After all, he was one of the Three Heroes of Nine Provinces back in the day!

"Were they after you, elder?" Pang Zhen broke the silence.

Veteran Thang slowly shook his head, "They were after that kid."

He initially thought that these three were after him, but during the confrontation, he realized that their target was actually Lu Ye! The female spectral cultivator, who had hidden the deepest, launched her attack against Lu Ye first and nearly killed him. The wound around Veteran Thang's waist and belly were the result of him taking a strike meant for Lu Ye.

In the end, when Veteran Thang sent Lu Ye away, that magic cultivator even yelled out that their mission had failed, which without a doubt explained everything.

"No way." Pang Zhen furrowed his brows, "Where is that kid then?"

He hadn't seen the young man named Lu Ye.

"Sent into the Spirit Stream battlefield."

Only then did Pang Zhen notice the crystal pillar in the ruins, somewhat surprised, "Heaven's Augury Pillar? Is this the ruins of the White Dragon Court that was destroyed a hundred years ago?"

To enter the Spirit Stream battlefield, one must utilize the Heaven's Augury Pillar, and these pillars, blessed by heaven, are typically erected within the grounds of various sects, both big and small.

Of course, many Heaven's Augury Pillars are scattered in desolate and wild places. If one were to trace back in time, they would realize that each unclaimed pillar signifies the fall of a sect.

The Heaven's Augury Pillars are robust and protected by the heavens, making them hard to destroy. So even if a sect is annihilated, the pillars can survive for many years. If someone wishes to establish a new sect on these grounds, they simply need to ask for Heaven's Augury, and they can obtain ownership of the pillar, allowing them to utilize it for their purposes.

However, after the destruction of the White Dragon Court a hundred years ago, no sect has chosen to establish itself here, and the location has remained desolate ever since.

Pang Zhen, a native of Bingzhou and the Vice Sect Leader of Righteousness Sect as well as Deputy Leader of the Haotian Alliance, needed only a brief moment to determine which sect had left behind this particular Heaven's Augury Pillar.

"This is troublesome," he frowned.

The Heaven's Augury Pillar certainly can transport a person into the Spirit Stream battlefield, but if a cultivator enters the battlefield through a pillar not belonging to their own sect, there is only one result.

They will be sent to a random location within the battlefield.

The Spirit Stream battlefield is vast, nearly the size of a province. With Lu Ye being sent into it, no one knows his current whereabouts, and even if Pang Zhen were to send hundreds of Spirit Stream Realm cultivators into the battlefield to search right now, it would be unlikely for them to find any trace of him.

What's more, that kid has only opened his 3rd orifice...

With such a trivial level of cultivation entering the Spirit Stream battlefield, the outcome is almost certainly death. The minimum requirement for the major sects sending disciples to traverse the Spirit Stream battlefield is to be at Spirit Stream Level 1.

"Veteran Thang..." Pang Zhen called out.

Veteran Thang turned to look at him, his eyes and eyebrows drooping, "My Righteous Blood Sect has kept to ourselves for thirty years, yet those people still refuse to let things go, some are indeed going too far!"

Pang Zhen sighed in his heart, equally infuriated. Today's incident might seem like a mere ambush on Veteran Thang on his way home, but the implications were vast. Not to mention, three Divine Sea Realm cultivators had died! These Divine Sea Realm cultivators couldn't have just appeared out of nowhere; who was behind them?

If not handled properly, the cultivation world of Bingzhou might be severely shaken by this.

He could clearly sense the suppressed fury in Veteran Thang, like a volcano on the verge of eruption, a state of Veteran Thang he had never seen before.

"I didn't say I absolutely had to take that child into the sect. I was actually thinking of sending him to another sect for cultivation," Veteran Thang said with a cold laugh. "But in such a short time, those people couldn't wait."

He looked at Pang Zhen, the boundless rage burning in his eyes, "I want to know who has reached out their paws!"

Pang Zhen nodded in agreement, saying, "This matter will definitely be settled for you, elder."

Veteran Thang had left on the Flying Dragon Ship and was ambushed soon after; the question was, how did the assailants know of Veteran Thang's whereabouts? And how could they arrange the precise location for the ambush? This clearly involved some dirty secrets that nobody knew about.

...

"Lu Ye that kid..." Pang Zhen hesitated for a moment, then spoke, "Do I need to find some people to enter the Spirit Stream battlefield?"

Veteran Thang shook his head sadly, "There's no need."

The situation just now made it certain that if Lu Ye stayed behind, death was unavoidable; Veteran Thang couldn't possibly fight others while protecting him.

Left with no choice, Veteran Thang could only send him into the Spirit Stream battlefield, but what were the chances of survival for a cultivator who had just started their cultivation? Moreover, he didn't enter the battlefield through the Heaven's Augury Pillar of his own sect. Who knows where he might end up?

If by chance, he appeared in the territory of a sect of Ten Thousand Demons Ridge, he might already have been chopped into mincemeat by now.

Even if he were lucky enough to survive, navigating the Spirit Stream battlefield would be extremely difficult.

Veteran Thang could only hope now that Lu Ye's luck was good enough to appear in an uninhabited place, so that he might have a sliver of a chance for survival.

Of course, a search must be conducted, but not by asking others for help. This matter also shouldn't be publicized, otherwise, if those with ulterior motives found out that a disciple from the Righteous Blood Sect had entered the Spirit Stream battlefield, it would only cause more trouble for Lu Ye, turning what was a possible chance of survival into certain death.

It was with this consideration that, in the crucial moment, Veteran Thang urged Lu Ye to never reveal his identity!

...

Lu Ye was perched upon a tree trunk with a diameter that required several people to encircle, his face full of lingering fear.

Below, dozens of robust wolves gathered, looking like small calves, showing their teeth and snarling at Lu Ye above.

He didn't know why he had ended up in such a place, nor where the sect master had gone.

Following the sect master's instructions, he had placed his hand on that crystal pillar. Then the whole world turned blurry, and when his surroundings became clear again, he found himself in this jungle.

Not far away, a wolf spotted him; it lunged to attack, forcing Lu Ye to quickly draw his Longsword and, after a lot of effort, killed it. Yet more wolves gathered around him.

With no other choice, Lu Ye had to flee, eventually climbing up this tree.

Sitting on the tree trunk and looking around, he saw numerous other large trees like the one he was on. Giant canopies hid the sky, with only specks of sunlight filtering through the gaps in the leaves.

Where is this? Where's the sect master? What about those three who were chasing the sect master? Why did I end up here?

Lu Ye's mind was filled with questions.

Looking down at the pack of wolves gathered below, it seemed that they were not going to back off anytime soon. Left without options, Lu Ye realized that the immediate priority was to figure out his situation; at the very least, he had to identify the place.

He tried to recall his conversation with the sect master, and quickly grasped a key term.

"Spirit Stream battlefield?"

The sect master had asked him if he had ever heard of the Spirit Stream battlefield. In such a dire situation, the sect master wouldn't have asked him about something irrelevant.

Then the sect master pulled out a big seal, respectfully summoned Heaven's Augury as a witness and took him in as an official disciple of the Righteous Blood Sect, stamping it onto the back of his hand.

Thinking this, Lu Ye quickly checked the back of his hand but found nothing. After pondering briefly, he channeled spirit force into his hand.

The next moment, something miraculous happened.

A blue spirit rune suddenly appeared on the back of his hand, wriggling and morphing, and soon it formed a few lines of big characters.

Name: Lu Ye

Identity: Disciple of the Righteous Blood Sect.

Cultivation: 3rd orifice opened.

Location: Spirit Stream battlefield.

Merit: None.

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