

SAGE OF HUMANITY

Chapter 31 29: The Situation

Lu Ye stared at the back of his hand, it took him a long while to snap back to reality.

Recalling everything that had happened, the mark on the back of his hand was undoubtedly related to the sect master pressing that big seal against it.

He didn't know what exactly it was, but there were too many things in this world he didn't know, and the unknown wasn't to be feared. For now, he could only face it calmly.

However, the good news was that he had confirmed his location; he was indeed in the Spirit Stream battlefield.

Just from the prefix of this battlefield, Lu Ye felt a sense of unease brewing. If he wasn't mistaken, this was a battlefield where only cultivators from the Spirit Stream Realm were qualified to set foot.

As a junior cultivator who had opened three orifices, he was undoubtedly in great danger in this unfamiliar place. Just now, he had only encountered a pack of wolves, but what if he ran into a group of cultivators?

If it was a battlefield, then there must be cultivators present!

As for the two sides fighting in this battlefield, it wasn't difficult to guess that it would be the Haotian Alliance and Ten Thousand Demons Ridge.

He could understand the sect master's intention in sending him here. Under those circumstances, the sect master couldn't engage others in battle while taking care of him. If they had fought forcefully, he, as a junior cultivator, would most certainly have met a dire fate. The sect master had sent him here as a last resort, seeking a slim chance of survival in a desperate situation.

It seemed the sect master had also stuffed something into his bosom before.

Thinking of this, Lu Ye quickly started to search.

He soon found a storage sack, opened it, and took out a few bottles, some stacks of talisman paper, several sets of clothes, and then a jade slip.

He checked each item.

The bottles contained only two kinds of elixir pills, one was the blood Qi pill, and the other was the Spirit-Nurturing Pill. There were two bottles of the latter, about twenty pills in total, and fewer of the blood Qi pills, less than ten in a bottle.

As for the talisman paper, he had never seen it before, but he hazarded a guess at what they might be.

Indeed, upon checking them, he found that they were Spirit Talismans.

Extrinsic cultivation included experts in talisman drawing. Spirit Talismans could assist cultivators in battle or in their cultivation practice. However, Lu Ye had not been exposed to these before and had never seen them.

The Spirit Talismans in the storage sack varied, including the defensive Vajra Talisman, the offensive Fire Serpent Talisman, and the auxiliary Breath-concealing Talisman, as well as the Shadowfold Talisman for concealing one's tracks. The uses of each Spirit Talisman were clearly described, lest Lu Ye be unclear about them. There were more than thirty in total.

Gazing at these items, Lu Ye felt a surge of warmth.

Undoubtedly, these were all prepared by the sect master specifically for him, for whether it was the elixir pills in front of him or the Spirit Talismans, they were all suitable for a cultivator at his level. The sect master had no use for them.

The clothing didn't even need to be mentioned; it was clearly meant for a young man.

Thinking back to those days when the sect master had disappeared on the Flying Dragon Ship, Lu Ye understood that it must have been during those days that the sect master had gathered these items suited for him from disciples of other sects.

Perhaps the sect master had intended to give them to him after returning to Mount Ao, but they had encountered that incident halfway, and he had ended up giving them to Lu Ye in advance.

For someone who had just started their path of cultivation, these items were undoubtedly a vast fortune. Not to mention the bottles of elixir pills, even the Spirit Talismans alone seemed very valuable to Lu Ye.

This was because he had found no Spirit Talismans in Manager Yang's and Zhou Cheng's storage sacks, which indicated just how precious Spirit Talismans were. Yet, the sect master had managed to collect over thirty in various uses.

Taking a deep breath, Lu Ye carefully stored the items and picked up the jade slip.

If he wasn't wrong, this jade slip should be the same one the sect master had taken out while fleeing with him. The sect master had asked him if he had heard of the Spirit Stream battlefield, and when Lu Ye replied that he had not, the sect master had attached a jade slip to his forehead for a moment.

The information that the sect master wanted to leave him might be recorded here. As the situation was urgent at the time, the sect master had no time for explanations and could only convey the message in this way.

Lu Ye stimulated his spirit force, pouring it into the jade slip, but there was no response, which left him puzzled.

After a moment's thought, he mimicked the sect master, pressing the jade slip to his forehead and once again channeling his spirit force.

This time, a flood of information surged into his mind, stunning him.

A moment later, he lowered the jade slip, his expression complex.

Inside the jade slip, there were indeed some messages left by the sect master, all about the Spirit Stream battlefield.

The Nine Provinces World was made up of the Nine Provincial States, but the world of the Nine Provinces wasn't limited to these nine states; there were other spaces beyond them.

The Spirit Stream battlefield was one of these spaces.

Where exactly the Spirit Stream battlefield was located within the Nine Provinces World was unknown. Divine Sea Realm cultivators had tried to uncover this secret, but over countless years, no one had found useful clues and the matter had been left unresolved.

The conflict between the Haotian Alliance and Ten Thousand Demons Ridge wasn't confined to the Nine Provinces World. The battles within these spatial battlefields were the most ferocious.

To enter the Spirit Stream battlefield, one required the aid of Heaven's Augury Pillars, the crystal pillars that Lu Ye had seen before. Each sect had one, and even if a sect were destroyed, it would be preserved. Countless sects had been decimated over the years in the Nine Provinces World, so there were Heaven's Augury Pillars scattered in the wild, as numerous as the Myriad Stars.

Once sect cultivators entered the Spirit Stream battlefield through their own Heaven's Augury Pillar, they would appear within a fixed territory. This territory was typically fortified by the sect to serve as their base in the battlefield, with powerful cultivators stationed year-round to prevent surprise attacks.

However, if a cultivator didn't enter the battlefield through their own sect's Heaven's Augury Pillar, they would appear randomly somewhere within the battlefield.

As such, cultivators usually entered the battlefield through their own sect's Heaven's Augury Pillar and wouldn't use that of another sect unless they had the approval of that sect and were branded with a specific big seal. Only then could they appear within that sect's base.

The circumstances Lu Ye and the sect master had faced didn't leave the sect master with many choices. Even though he knew that sending Lu Ye into the Spirit Stream battlefield was more likely to bring misfortune than good fortune, he had no choice but to try his luck.

After going through the information in the jade slip, Lu Ye understood his situation.

He was somewhere in the Spirit Stream battlefield; as for the exact location, he had no idea because the entire Spirit Stream battlefield was extremely vast, as large as one provincial state.

The marking on the back of his hand that he couldn't see was a battlefield marking. Every cultivator who entered the battlefield had one, which recorded the cultivator's origin, cultivation, and merit.

This was also related to his way out.

His battlefield marking was branded by the big seal of the Righteous Blood Sect sect master. As a result, the marking had a connection to the Heaven's Augury Pillar at the Righteous Blood Sect's base. As long as he followed this connection, Lu Ye could head to the Righteous Blood Sect's base in the Spirit Stream battlefield, and once there, he would be able to return to the Righteous Blood Sect!

Chapter 32 30: The Might of the Spirit Talisman

After sorting through all the clues, Lu Ye had a general understanding of his current predicament.

Undeniably, his situation wasn't too good. The biggest problem was his low cultivation; a pack of fierce wolves had managed to corner him up a tree. If he happened to encounter any ill-intentioned cultivator, he would inevitably be powerless to fight back.

The good news was that with the battlefield marking, he knew which direction he should head to find the way out.

However, he had no idea how far he currently was from the Righteous Blood Sect's territory.

To get to the Righteous Blood Sect's base in the Spirit Stream battlefield, a certain level of cultivation was required, so the most urgent priority was to enhance his strength!

He now had quite a few elixir pills that could be used. If he could absorb and refine all these elixir pills, his strength would definitely increase significantly. He didn't dare to say he could rise to

several layers in the Spirit Stream, but at the very least, he would have more self-preservation capability.

With a plan in mind, Lu Ye looked down at the pack of wolves gathered below. To cultivate, he first needed to extract himself from this predicament; this environment was not suitable for cultivation.

Although these fierce wolves couldn't truly harm him, the noise they made was not insignificant and could easily attract the attention of others, posing a potential danger.

After thinking it over, Lu Ye took out a Spirit Talisman from the storage sack given to him by the sect master, sorting through them and picking out a Golden Wheel Talisman.

Of the thirty or so Spirit Talismans, only half were for attack, the rest were either for defense or assistance. Of those for attack, all were fire attribute or metal attribute talismans, which fit well with a person like Lu Ye who primarily wielded the fire element, complemented by metal.

The sect master had undoubtedly taken this into account when collecting these Spirit Talismans.

He didn't choose any of the fire attribute talismans mainly because Lu Ye suspected they would create quite the disturbance; after all, names like Fire Serpent Talisman and explosion talisman sounded exceedingly violent.

How to activate a Spirit Talisman was a problem, as Lu Ye had never used one before.

However, he had to try now, no matter what, as he needed to free himself quickly.

Holding the Spirit Talisman in his hand, Lu Ye channeled spirit force into it with caution.

Immediately, the talisman emitted a layer of golden light, and following that, the golden light condensed into a round disc-like object in front of Lu Ye.

The round disc was glittering with gold light, semi-transparent, and about the size of a washbasin, with spirit runes flowing inside it.

Before Lu Ye could react, a golden sharp edge shot out from the disc, like a crescent moon, and vanished in an instant.

There was a muffled thud, and as Lu Ye looked up, he saw a deep cut in the trunk of a large tree that took several people to embrace,

"Hiss hiss..." from the semi-transparent golden disc in his hand, a steady stream of crescent-shaped sharp edges slashed out. In no time, the surrounding trees suffered, as branch after branch was cut off and fell with a rustling sound.

"So that's how it works!" Lu Ye understood, hurriedly adjusting the direction of the disc in his hand towards the wolf pack below.

Hiss hiss hiss...

The incredibly sharp golden crescents broke through the air and slashed into the bodies of the wolves clustered together, instantly splashing blood and scattering flesh.

Once hit by the blade, the wolves the size of calves were instantly cleaved in half.

The wolf pack visibly panicked, scattering and dodging. Lu Ye kept adjusting the angle, trying to aim where the wolves were thickest.

Wolf after wolf fell, and the air was thick with the scent of blood.

Moments later, the wolves seemed to sense the danger. After a distant howl, the wolves below hustled away with their tails tucked, leaving behind the corpses of over a dozen of their pack.

Lu Ye controlled the disc in his hand and pursued the fleeing wolves for a while, feeling extremely satisfied.

Spirit Talismans indeed were wonderful items; a single talisman allowed him, a cultivator with the 3rd orifice open, to go on a killing spree without any restraint. The only downside was that it was his first time using a talisman, and he didn't quite grasp how to control its direction and aim, otherwise, he could have killed even more.

While thinking this, Lu Ye suddenly felt a sense of fatigue, his heart pounding, stars appearing before his eyes, and he swayed, almost tumbling down from the tree.

This scare wasn't light, and he quickly steadied himself, panting heavily for a moment.

After a slight recovery, Lu Ye looked down and found that the semi-transparent golden round disc had disappeared, and the spirit talisman in his hand had dimmed, with its patterns indistinct and obscure.

The spirit talisman was no longer usable, Lu Ye realized.

But what had just happened to him?

After some inspection, Lu Ye figured out the truth of the matter.

The spirit force within his body was completely depleted! His three spiritual orifices were empty, the spirit force that had been stored inside utterly dried up.

The fatigue was a result of this.

He quickly took out a Spirit-Nurturing Pill and popped it into his mouth, fully focusing on refining it, and it took a good while before he felt somewhat rejuvenated.

A single Spirit-Nurturing Pill naturally couldn't fully restore him, he didn't even wait for the pill energy to be completely dissipated before leaping down from the tree.

The smell of blood here was too strong, and it could easily attract more fierce beasts, so it was wise to leave first. As for the residual pill energy within his body, he could dissolve it while on the move, although the efficiency would be somewhat lower.

He also took the time to cut several large chunks of wolf meat and stuff them into his storage sack.

Through this incident, Lu Ye learned a lesson: when using spirit talismans, one must never get carried away and must always pay attention to the consumption of one's own spirit force.

This time it was just wolves, but if he were to encounter a hostile cultivator next time, running out of spirit force would leave him waiting for death.

Half a day later in a dry and shadowy cave, Lu Ye sat cross-legged on a cushion placed beneath him.

The wilderness was full of such caves that could offer shelter. After checking, Lu Ye determined that this cave seemed to be unclaimed, and settling here, he needn't worry about being disturbed by any returning fierce beast.

The conditions inside the cave were mediocre, but now wasn't the time to be picky. If nothing unexpected happened, Lu Ye felt he might need to stay here for a while.

He had surveyed the surroundings earlier, and there were no traces of any particularly ferocious wild animals, but many small ones.

That was good news for him; if he got hungry later, he could always go hunting and not have to endure an empty stomach.

In front of Lu Ye was a pile of odds and ends as he took inventory of his possessions.

Three storage sacks, one belonging to Manager Yang, one to Zhou Cheng, and the last one given by the sect master. This thing wasn't expensive, anyway, every cultivator Lu Ye saw usually had one, maybe even more.

The sect master didn't carry any, but he must have had other means of storage, which was not something Lu Ye could know.

Twenty-five Spirit-Nurturing Pills in total, twenty of which were given by the sect master and five acquired from Manager Yang and Zhou Cheng's storage sacks. He originally had six more, but Lu Ye had used one after killing the wolves.

In total, sixteen blood Qi pills, most of which were given by the sect master and the rest acquired from Manager Yang and Zhou Cheng's storage sacks.

Eight healing pills.

More than thirty pieces of origin magnetic ore, along with other ores whose names Lu Ye couldn't recall.

One storybook!

One set of the Golden Cicada Carefree Method!

Nearly thirty various spirit talismans.

Five sets of clothes in various styles.

The assorted pills that had previously been stored in Yang and Zhou Cheng's storage sacks were nowhere to be seen now, probably confiscated by the sect master during the cultivation on the Flying Dragon Ship; those bottles of pills were likely nothing good.

Chapter 33 31: 8th Orifice

For an initiate who had only opened his 3rd orifice, these things were undoubtedly a huge fortune.

Ores and Spirit Talismans were of no use for the time being. To improve his cultivation, he would have to rely on those Spirit-Nurturing Pills and blood Qi pills.

Lu Ye packed the ores and most of the elixir pills and Spirit Talismans into the storage sack given to him by the sect master. After securing it close to his body, he divided the remaining items into two portions, placing them into the storage sacks belonging to Manager Yang and Zhou Cheng. One portion he tied around his waist for easy access, and the other, he hid close to his chest as a reserve.

He then changed into a set of clean clothes, as his previous ones were already tattered and bloodstained from the scuffle with Manager Yang; he would have discarded them long ago had he had a change of clothes.

With new clothes came a fresh spirit, and Lu Ye felt clear-headed and refreshed.

Once everything was ready, he took out a Spirit-Nurturing Pill, popped it into his mouth, and began to refine its effects.

Soon, a warm current emerged in his lower abdomen—it was the pill energy dissolving, transforming into Lu Ye's spirit force and flowing into his spiritual orifice.

The spiritual orifice, which was not quite filled to begin with, gradually became brimming with energy.

But soon, Lu Ye discovered something odd. There was a peculiar presence around him, invisible and intangible, yet omnipresent. It was only when he calmed his mind that he could sense it.

This reminded him of the time when his talent was tested, sitting upon the round disc Formation.

Is this... Spiritual Energy?

Ingesting Spiritual Energy is one of the primary methods of cultivation for cultivators. Spirit Stones can be exhausted; elixir pills should not be consumed too much for fear of accumulating pill poison; Essence Refinement-Qi Conversion is not very efficient. Hence, most cultivators often inhale and exhale nature's spiritual energy for their practice.

Spiritual Energy is omnipresent between heaven and earth; it's only a matter of concentration.

Since Lu Ye had opened his orifices, he had only sensed the existence of Spiritual Energy during the talent test, a result of the fog of spirit force from the Spirit Stones on the Formation.

Apart from that, he had never sensed any traces of Spiritual Energy.

Until now!

Why did he suddenly start sensing the existence of Spiritual Energy? It certainly wasn't due to an increase in his cultivation—there's not much difference between opening one orifice and three.

Could it be that the Spiritual Energy here is so dense that he was able to perceive it?

Lu Ye focused and discerned that the concentration of Spiritual Energy around him was only slightly less than during the talent assessment. Yet, it was much better than that of Evil Moon Valley or the outside environment.

Is this the unique environment of the Spirit Stream battlefield? In that case, cultivating on the battlefield would clearly be advantageous for cultivators.

Lu Ye vaguely understood the significance of the Spirit Stream battlefield for cultivators.

In fact, his conjecture was correct; the Spiritual Energy within the Spirit Stream battlefield was indeed much denser than in the outside world. And this was just the wilderness of the battlefield. If Lu Ye could go to the encampments of the big sects, he would find that the Spiritual Energy there was even denser.

The higher the grade of the sect, the denser the Spiritual Energy, and the faster the progress for a cultivator's practice.

This was why so many new sects continued to emerge over the years. After establishing a sect, they would obtain a Heaven's Augury Pillar, which would then allow them to establish a base in the Spirit Stream battlefield. Cultivating in their encampment was far more efficient than in the outside world.

Moreover, the big sects could use their encampment on the battlefield for not just cultivation, but also growing Spirit Plants, producing Spiritual Medicines, or other activities.

Essentially, each sect's encampment on the battlefield was the most important foundation for the sect.

At the moment, Lu Ye knew little about the battlefield, only feeling a sense of novelty after discovering the surrounding Spiritual Energy.

However, he did not engage in ingesting Spiritual Energy for cultivation, as the efficiency was simply too low.

Of the numerous methods of cultivation for cultivators, popping pills was undoubtedly the most efficient.

One day later, Lu Ye's 3rd orifice was replenished. After a short rest, he took out some wolf meat he had previously cut off, roasted it, and ate it in large bites.

Wolf meat was not tasty; even roasted, it still had a gamey taste. But Lu Ye knew he must prioritize increasing his strength and naturally did not want to waste time hunting.

He remained dedicated to cultivation, consuming Spirit-Nurturing Pills one after another without stopping.

After half a day, the barrier of his 4th orifice broke open. Three days later, the 4th orifice was full.

Another three days passed, and the 5th orifice was full.

Three more days, and the 6th orifice was full.

The consumption of a large amount of blood Qi pills and Spirit-Nurturing Pills allowed Lu Ye's spiritual orifices to open one by one.

When he had consumed all the Spirit-Nurturing Pills and blood Qi pills, Lu Ye had opened up to the 8th orifice, and only half a month had passed!

In half a month's time, he had opened five orifices, maintaining a pace of opening one orifice every three days. Considering his previous three orifices, Lu Ye had now become a cultivator with eight orifices, just one step away from reaching the Spirit Stream Level 1.

Such a speed of cultivation was staggeringly fast. Lu Ye did not know how fast others cultivated, but it definitely could not be as quick as his own.

That was because in this half-month, he had consumed too many elixir pills.

By now, he had also confirmed one thing: popping pills to cultivate indeed posed no great hidden dangers to him. His spirit force remained as pure as before, and there was no sign of pill poison accumulation or the impediment of spirit force that the sect master had mentioned previously.

With both the Spirit-Nurturing Pills and blood Qi pills exhausted, the barrier to the 9th orifice had not been breached, which made Lu Ye feel somewhat frustrated.

He tried ingesting Spiritual Energy for his cultivation, only to discover that such training was extremely inefficient and that it was difficult for him to draw the external Spiritual Energy into his body.

Of course, it wasn't entirely without effect. Lu Ye estimated that if he cultivated here for three to five months, he might have the chance to break through the barrier of the 9th orifice.

Three to five months was too long and uncertain. Lu Ye needed to achieve the Spirit Stream Realm as quickly as possible to be barely qualified to survive on the battlefield!

He regretted in silence that the sect master had not prepared more elixir pills for him.

It was, however, an oversight on his part. Normally, for a beginner like Lu Ye, the correct way to cultivate would be to consume one Spirit-Nurturing Pill every three to five days. As one's cultivation gradually increases, one could appropriately increase the frequency of consuming elixir pills.

The sect master had prepared twenty pills for him at once, and counting those he already had, it was enough for his practice for a long time, not to mention there were also blood Qi pills.

Who could have known that he would consume pills like eating beans, using up all the elixir pills in just half a month?

No one cultivates like this in the world; for cultivators, ingesting Spiritual Energy or utilizing Spirit Stones is the orthodox and safe way to practice.

Chapter 34 32 Big Tiger

By the remnants of a fire that had burned out, Lu Ye was feasting heartily on a big snake. It was over ten feet long and thick as an arm. The snake meat was fine, white, and tender, leaving a lingering fragrance on his lips.

It had been half a month since his supply of elixir pills was exhausted. Naturally, his progress in cultivation wasn't as good as before, but it was a bit better than he had expected. According to his current pace, he would be able to break through the barrier of the 9th Spiritual Orifice in another month.

The reason for this progress was a discovery he had made.

That was, the efficiency of his Essence Refinement-Qi Conversion was slightly faster than that of absorbing Spiritual Energy.

Where does the essence come from? Without blood Qi pills, the only option was to eat!

He had noticed this while eating wolf meat earlier, and after hunting and killing other beasts, he found that the meat from the creatures of the Spirit Stream battlefield was very nourishing. The larger and fiercer the beast, the more noticeable this was.

He was not adept at absorbing Spiritual Energy, perhaps due to his low innate talent. It was difficult for him to guide Spiritual Energy into his body, but it was different with the things he ate. As long as he could digest them, it would enhance his blood Qi energy. Then, he could refine his blood Qi energy into spirit force, achieving the same effect of strengthening his power.

Thus, in the past half month, the nearby beasts had suffered. As soon as Lu Ye opened his 8th orifice, his appetite increased greatly, and now that he was focused on the path of Essence Refinement-Qi Conversion, he ate even more.

This actually led to a radius of several miles around the cave where no beasts could be seen. Today, Lu Ye had searched for quite a while before finding this big snake.

Halfway through his meal, the entrance of the cave darkened as a pungent wind hit him in the face.

Lu Ye raised his head to see a huge silhouette standing at the cave entrance, accompanied by a low growl.

Lu Ye quickly got up and took a Longsword from his storage sack. With the sword in one hand and a Fire Serpent Talisman in the other, he silently stimulated his spirit force.

He had been living here for a month without running into other cultivators or encountering any powerful beasts. He had thought it was a peaceful place, but unexpectedly, an unwelcome visitor disrupted his day today.

Lu Ye had anticipated such situations, so he was surprised but not panicked, and he quickly made the correct response.

The cave was narrow. If the enemy dared to charge at him, the Fire Serpent Talisman in his hand could give them a hard time. If the Fire Serpent Talisman wasn't enough, he had other Spirit

Talismans. If all else failed, he could slap a Vajra Talisman on himself, and the Longsword in his hand wasn't just for show.

Only then did Lu Ye get a clear look at the unwelcome visitor—it was, astonishingly, a big tiger.

Its whole body was covered in snow-white fur, spotless, with a large "king" character on its forehead, and its two amber eyes were soul-stirring.

As Lu Ye's eyes met those tiger eyes, his spirit involuntarily blurred for a moment, aware that he had encountered an incredibly fierce creature.

During this time, he had killed many beasts, some even larger than this tiger, but none had ever given him the oppressive feeling that this big tiger did.

One should know he was now a cultivator who had opened his 8th orifice.

This was no ordinary beast; it was a demon beast with some cultivation!

There was a difference between demon beasts and common beasts; demon beasts understood how to cultivate. It was rumored that if certain key spiritual orifices opened, a demon beast could transform into human form.

This was the origin of the adage circulating in the Nine Provinces that without opening an orifice, a demon cannot transform, and without opening an orifice, a human cannot cultivate.

Many sects also included demon cultivator disciples because most demon cultivators were naturally strong and made excellent candidates for the path of physique cultivators.

As of now, Lu Ye's understanding of the Nine Provinces cultivation world was limited, so he didn't know this information.

He only knew that his current situation was a bit troublesome. Stuck in the cave with the big tiger blocking the entrance, there was no way out unless he fought his way through.

But he didn't know the strength of the big tiger.

During the stand-off, the big tiger let out a roar at him, making Lu Ye even more nervous and nearly triggering the Fire Serpent Talisman in his hand!

"Boy, is it you who's been slaughtering all around?" a voice like rolling thunder echoed in the cave, causing the surrounding rocks to rattle and fall.

Lu Ye couldn't help but pause for a second, looking at the big tiger with astonished disbelief.

"It is I, the great king, who is speaking, you odd-smelling brat who marvels at the mundane!" Seeing Lu Ye's confusion, the big tiger spoke again.

Lu Ye's heart sank to the bottom, and he got a chill, realizing that he might have underestimated the strength of the big tiger. This creature could already articulate human speech, and who knows how high its cultivation was, but it seemed to be much more powerful than himself.

"The great king is asking you a question, why don't you speak?" The big tiger's temper wasn't very good, and it let out another roar, with a threatening growl emanating from its throat.

If it's not a blessing then it's a disaster that can't be avoided, Lu Ye could only brace himself and feigned ignorance: "It wasn't me!"

The big tiger lifted its paw and angrily slapped the ground; the earth seemed to shake a bit. "If it wasn't you then who could it be—in this thirty-mile radius, you are the only human!" It paced back and forth at the entrance of the cave, its tiger pupils still fixed on Lu Ye: "This is the great king's territory.

Without my permission, you dared to wantonly slaughter my food, it looks like you don't want to live!"

Lu Ye's scalp tingled, feeling life and death hanging by a thread.

But he did understand why the big tiger had come knocking on his door—the area was its territory, and the animals he had killed were food within its domain. Lu Ye had killed quite a few over the past half-month, which caught the attention of the big tiger that followed some clues here.

"Speak up, how do you want to solve this matter?" the big tiger said again.

By this point, Lu Ye wasn't as panicked as before. Although it was rather odd to be negotiating with a demon beast here, it was still better than it attacking him without a word.

He frowned and said, "They've all been eaten, how do you want to resolve this?"

The big tiger stared at him, then demanded, "Hand over your elixir pills, and we'll let this matter rest. If you dare to utter a word of refusal, this place shall be your grave today!"

"I don't have any elixir pills left," Lu Ye shook his head. If he had elixir pills, why would he need to kill beasts for their meat?

The big tiger said, "Spirit Stones will do."

"I don't have any Spirit Stones either."

The sect master hadn't prepared any Spirit Stones for him, perhaps thinking that Lu Ye didn't need them right now?

"You don't have this, you don't have that, I think you want to die!" The big tiger was clearly getting impatient.

Lu Ye sighed, "I really don't have any!"

"Then what's inside your storage sack?" the big tiger demanded.

"Some Spirit Talismans and a bottle of healing pills," Lu Ye replied truthfully.

"What a pauper!" the big tiger couldn't help but sneer, "Give me the healing pills, and we'll call it even."

"What do you want with the healing pills?" Lu Ye's expression was somewhat puzzled.

"That's none of your business. Just give them to me!"

"Alright..." Lu Ye reluctantly agreed, taking a bottle of healing pills from his storage sack and after a moment of hesitation, he slowly placed it on the ground.

"Throw it over!" the big tiger ordered.

Lu Ye looked at it: "Why don't you come and get it yourself?"

"I told you to throw it over!" Lu Ye's response undoubtedly angered the big tiger, which roared fiercely.

"Fine." Lu Ye lifted his foot and kicked the bottle on the ground towards the tiger while simultaneously activating the Fire Serpent Talisman in his hand. As the spirit force surged within him, the talisman turned into a streak of red light, like a fire serpent attacking the big tiger.

That wasn't all. He pressed his foot to the ground, his figure swiftly moving like lightning, sword in hand, charging into battle.

Chapter 35 33: When Strength Falls Short, Rely on the Spirit Talisman

Lu Ye had originally thought he encountered an incredibly ferocious creature, but after actually interacting with it, he found that the big tiger might not be as powerful as he had imagined.

It kept standing at the entrance of the cave, not daring to venture deeper. If its strength was truly much greater than Lu Ye's, why would there be so much unnecessary talk?

That was the first point.

The second was that after the tiger failed to obtain elixir pills from Lu Ye, it lowered its demands to Spirit Stones; failing that, it then asked for healing pills, giving off the impression of a thief who wasn't willing to leave empty-handed.

Therefore, Lu Ye deduced that although the big tiger seemed formidable, it was likely just a paper tiger.

Lu Ye took out a healing pill and placed it at his feet, as a final test.

Just as expected, the big tiger was unwilling to come close to Lu Ye and simply asked him to throw the healing pill over.

Having confirmed the big tiger's strength was not as immense as imagined, Lu Ye let down his guard. His task was now simple: kill the tiger, eat its meat!

It was undeniable that this was a demon beast with cultivation. If he could kill and eat it, it would surely be more beneficial than eating many ordinary wild beasts; perhaps his success in opening the 9th orifice would be thanks to this big tiger.

Lu Ye had never been one to just follow the rules; otherwise, he wouldn't have lured Manager Yang into the mine filled with the origin magnetic field.

He would prepare for potential dangers and also strive to seize possible opportunities.

He activated the Fire Serpent Talisman, which sent flames swirling towards the big tiger, and at the same time, Lu Ye charged forward with his sword.

However, as soon as he made a move, he felt a heaviness on his shoulder, as if something had weighed down on his body, causing him to stoop almost to the point of kneeling on the ground.

At the same time, a piercing shriek echoed in his ears, and in an instant, he felt as though someone had struck his head hard with a hammer, leaving him dazed, with stars flashing before his eyes.

He propped himself up with his sword in one hand, forcing himself to stay upright. Simultaneously, he drove the spirit force within the 8 Major Spiritual Orifices to protect his body, and in an instant, it seemed as if there was a layer of fire burning on the surface of his body, the flames tinged faintly with gold.

His element sign was primarily fire with a secondary of metal; therefore, the spirit force within his body would exhibit the luster of these two attributes of the Five Elements.

A miserable and wretched scream rang out, and the heavy feeling on his shoulder instantly disappeared. His head was still dizzy, but he had recovered significantly.

What he found inconceivable was that he had just been sneak-attacked!

The attacker was not the big tiger, but someone else!

Lu Ye had been at the bottom of the cave the whole time, with the big tiger blocking the cave entrance. From beginning to end, he had only been communicating with the big tiger, and no one else was in sight.

Therefore, it never crossed his mind that someone would launch a sneak attack from behind. Fortunately, it seemed the attacker was not very powerful; he had merely activated his protective spirit force, and the assailant had been repelled.

As the shrill scream was heard, Lu Ye abruptly turned around, catching sight of a vague form merging into the rock wall and disappearing from the corner of his eye.

Without time to investigate the identity of the assailant, he was caught by a pungent wind; the big tiger had already pounced towards him.

The Fire Serpent Talisman had not killed the opponent; it had merely scorched its fur, which just goes to show that the big tiger indeed had cultivation.

At this moment, using another Spirit Talisman was clearly too late, and Lu Ye had missed the best opportunity to strike. He could only slash fiercely with his sword, powering it with spirit force and enhancing it with Sharpness spirit runes!

During this time, using Manager Yang's longsword, he had killed quite a few ferocious beasts. Alas, since he never learned any proper sword techniques, his attacks mostly consisted of simple chopping and slashing.

The longsword, enhanced with Sharpness, was incredibly sharp. When he fought Zhou Cheng, the latter's similarly-made sword was cleaved in two by a single strike from Lu Ye.

However, the bones of this big tiger seemed even tougher than Zhou Cheng's sword. Lu Ye's strike landed on the beast's shoulder blade, and to his surprise, he did not completely sever the creature's body. Instead, he was thrown off balance by a strong force.

Lu Ye took the opportunity to retreat a few steps and withdrew his longsword as tiger blood splattered.

Before he could make another move, he felt a numbness in his chest. He had been hit by a swipe of the tiger's claw, stripping away a layer of his flesh.

The pain did not affect Lu Ye; it actually sharpened his awareness. In the confined space, the struggle between man and tiger was incredibly dangerous, with death potentially just a breath away.

However, after this exchange, Lu Ye was significantly reassured because his judgment was correct.

The cultivation of the big tiger was not as profound as he had imagined. This was not an insurmountable enemy. With the right tactics, the day when he would defeat the tiger and feast on its flesh was close at hand!

The big tiger roared and pounced on Lu Ye again. At the same time, a series of ghostly wails and wolf howls suddenly echoed in the cave, disturbing Lu Ye's mind.

It was a trick played by an enemy lurking in the shadows.

Lu Ye ignored this hidden foe, focusing only on the big tiger's movements. As the beast leaped forward, he swiftly crouched down, stamped his foot, and slid under the tiger's belly.

As their figures crossed, Lu Ye's longsword thrust upward sharply, striking the tiger's soft underbelly. He had thought this strike would gut the tiger, but unexpectedly, a pale golden light appeared around the creature's belly, providing protection. Even the longsword, bolstered with Sharpness, only managed to penetrate the light barrier slightly, failing to seriously wound the beast.

When they both rose again, their positions had swapped.

Originally, Lu Ye was deep inside the cave, with the big tiger blocking the entrance, but now the situation had reversed.

Moreover, after this exchange, Lu Ye realized that while the tiger's strength was not great, it was not weak either, probably slightly stronger than himself.

It was only because he possessed a sharp weapon, a weapon still capable of being augmented with spirit runes, that he had a slight advantage.

Yet continuing the fight like this would surely lead to mutual destruction.

With this in mind, Lu Ye reached into his storage sack and pulled out a Spirit Talisman.

If his own strength was insufficient, Spirit Talismans could make up the difference. The thirty talismans given to him by the sect master were not just for show. Lu Ye had no intention of being frugal; if not now, then when?

But before he could activate the talisman, a crisp voice urgently cried out, "Surrender, and spare my life!"

With downcast eyes and brows, Lu Ye found his will to fight waning at hearing such words at a critical moment. With spirit force surging in the hand clutching the talisman, he shouted lowly, "Come out!"

From the depths of the cave, beside the big tiger, there emerged a figure from the rock wall. The figure wasn't substantial but seemed to be a convergence of spirit force.

After stepping out, the figure slowly became solid, gradually indistinguishable from a normal person.

Turned out to be a slender and beautiful girl with waist-length black hair, wearing a white dress, with a mole beneath the corner of her eye that added a touch of charm. She looked to be about sixteen or seventeen years old.

Once the girl appeared, she stood beside the big tiger and looked at Lu Ye timidly, showing an expression as if she had done something wrong.

Lu Ye furrowed his brow, "What exactly are you?"

Chapter 36 34: Lu Ye, Who Lacks Common Sense (Thanks to Alliance Hierarch Xiong Xiao Mao for the reward)

With Lu Ye's discernment, he could not tell if this strange girl was human or ghost, but based on her behavior just now, the likelihood of her being human was extremely low.

This person had managed to appear behind him unnoticed and launch an ambush; her body seemed both insubstantial and substantial, and she could freely move through the rock walls, something no ordinary person could do.

This was the first time Lu Ye had encountered such a strange entity, making him all the more cautious, especially since she was clearly in league with the big tiger.

Although he currently held a geographical advantage, any complacency could lead to irreversible disaster.

According to his thinking, since he had the initiative, it would be best to directly use a Spirit Talisman to kill the big tiger, but he was unsure how to deal with this ghostly girl appearing and vanishing unpredictably, which made him uncertain.

The question seemed to trouble the girl, who hesitated for a while before opening her mouth and saying, "My name is Yiyi..."

"I didn't ask your name." Lu Ye raised the Spirit Talisman in his hand, the threat unmistakable, causing the big tiger to crouch lower and growl softly.

The girl named Yiyi quickly soothed the big tiger, knowing very well that in the current situation they were at his mercy, and must cooperate to save their lives.

"Have you ever heard of 'becoming a minion for a tiger'?" Yiyi countered.

Lu Ye nodded.

Yiyi said, "Some tiger demon cultivators awaken a Divine Skill during their growth that can transform the soul of a recently deceased person into a minion specter."

"So... you are a minion specter?" Lu Ye frowned for he had heard of the idiom 'becoming a tiger's minion,' but he had never imagined that in this world of cultivation it would have such a peculiar explanation.

"No." Yiyi shook her head, her black hair flying.

"Are you joking with me?"

"Really, I'm not." Yiyi was somewhat anxious, "Normally, minion specters are controlled by the tiger demon cultivator that transformed them and lack spiritual intelligence and independent thought, but I am different. Look at me, except for not having a flesh and blood body, I am just like a living person."

"Then what exactly are you?"

"A minion spirit?" Yiyi tilted her head.

Lu Ye fell silent, his gaze shifting between Yiyi and the big tiger, his eyes slightly narrowing, "So if I kill this big tiger, will you also vanish?"

"Yes... No!" Yiyi shouted, sensing Lu Ye's murderous intent, "Don't kill us, we realize our mistake... We'll pay money for our lives!"

The light from the Spirit Talisman in Lu Ye's hand gradually dimmed; he was about to activate it. He was confident that he could eliminate the big tiger, and as for the girl named Yiyi, he had been wary of her, but now that he was sure of her symbiotic relationship with the big tiger, there was no need to worry too much.

Her strength was likely not high; her previous attack was only to use some minor tricks to impede his actions and could not actually harm him.

But this would certainly cost him several Spirit Talismans, and he would definitely get injured in the fight.

If the cost was too great, then the battle would not be worth it, especially since he was now only one step away from reaching Spirit Stream Level 1. If he exhausted too much spirit force, it would undoubtedly increase the time it would take to achieve Spirit Stream.

Yiyi's last statement quelled Lu Ye's killing intent as he raised an eyebrow, "Pay money for your lives? What do you have?" A demon beast living on the Spirit Stream battlefield and a corresponding minion spirit, what good could they have?

"Wait here! I'll go get it!" Yiyi exclaimed, her figure dashed away and then disappeared into the rock wall.

However, she soon poked her head out from the rock wall, "You can't kill Amber! I'll be back soon!"

Amber... Lu Ye glanced at the majestic big tiger in front of him, whose presence was as formidable as a mountain, and his face twitched.

With Yiyi gone, Lu Ye was left facing Amber from afar, also staying on guard against Yiyi, who, despite seeming sincere, might be hiding in the shadows ready to ambush him.

His cultivation was still low and he had no effective means to track the girl's whereabouts.

Yiyi indeed returned quickly, Lu Ye had only waited a mere tea's time before the girl's figure reappeared, this time emerging from behind Lu Ye.

With his back against the rock wall, Lu Ye let the girl walk into the cave. She was holding something in her hand, raising it up, "We will use these things to buy our lives; do not kill us!"

When Lu Ye got a clear look at what was in the girl's hand, he was immediately startled—it was several storage sacks!

Storage sacks were possessions of cultivators and it was problematic that they appeared in the girl's hands, especially since there was more than one; she held at least four or five in her hands.

This spirit and tiger duo indeed were up to no good; they had probably engaged in killing and looting quite often.

"You misunderstand!" Seeing the expression on Lu Ye's face, the girl realized what he was thinking, "Amber's strength is not high, you should have felt it when you fought with it. The cultivators operating in the Spirit Stream battlefield are at least at Spirit Stream Level 1; Amber couldn't have killed them."

"Then where did these storage sacks come from?" Lu Ye, of course, did not easily believe her.

Yiyi shuffled uncomfortably, "Fooled them... Those cultivators are very cowardly; a little scare and they dropped their storage sacks."

Lu Ye reflected on his own earlier encounters, realizing that if he hadn't sensed something off about Big Tiger and indeed didn't have any elixir pills and Spirit Stones, he might have chosen to pay off the threat to avoid further disaster.

Certainly, compared to these extraneous possessions, his own life was naturally more important.

Of course, Big Tiger's soul-stirring aura was indeed frightening; ordinary cultivators with low cultivation, faced with the amber gaze of its tiger eyes, would lose heart by a third, and after being threatened a few times, who would still have the will to fight?

Little did they know, the one who hid behind and spooked them was just a delicately built girl.

"Throw them over," Lu Ye instructed.

Yiyi yelped softly, throwing the several storage sacks in front of Lu Ye, who picked up one with his foot, giving it a brief check, his face darkening immediately.

The storage sack was locked...

He looked at the second one, which was the same.

The third was still...

After checking all the storage sacks, Lu Ye looked up, "Are you playing me?"

The locked storage sacks weren't impossible to open, but Lu Ye didn't have the ability to do so.

Yiyi looked somewhat aggrieved, "Some of them ran fast, dropping the storage sacks even with the restriction locks unopened. There were also those who followed commands to open them, but we used up the useful things inside a long time ago..."

This was indeed the truth; over the years in this forest, Yiyi and Big Tiger had obtained more than just these few storage sacks, but the contents of the other sacks had been used up, only empty bags remained, which Yiyi did not bring along.

Lu Ye's eyebrows drooped, "If this is all the sincerity you show, then there's no need to negotiate further. These items are not enough to buy your lives."

"How can it be like this..." Yiyi was close to crying, regretting provoking Lu Ye deeply, mainly because she hadn't expected him to be different from the cultivators she had encountered before.

In this area, the cultivators were not of high cultivation, mostly independent cultivators or disciples of minor sects because this was the border of the Spirit Stream battlefield. To these cultivators, encountering a demon beast that could speak human language, any who had common sense were utterly horrified.

Because a demon beast capable of human speech was definitely not something they could provoke.

Ironically, Lu Ye was lacking in common sense; he didn't know what a speaking demon beast represented, with no such preconceived notions, he only believed in his own judgment.

Chapter 37 35 Barrier-breaking Fruit

Looking back now, Yiyi and Big Tiger as a duo never showed any intention of killing Lu Ye from the beginning, and it was Lu Ye who initiated the fight.

Even more so, the reason they came looking for Lu Ye was because he had trespassed into Big Tiger's territory and killed too many ferocious beasts.

They probably wanted to drive Lu Ye away while taking the opportunity to gain some benefits from him.

If Lu Ye had been a cultivator with even a bit of common sense, their plan would almost certainly have succeeded.

But things didn't go as expected, and now they had not only failed to steal a chicken but also lost their rice; they were instead cornered by Lu Ye in the cave, caught in a dilemma.

For Lu Ye, he didn't necessarily want to fight to the death with Big Tiger. Although killing the tiger and eating its meat would greatly benefit him, if the cost was too high, the fight wouldn't be worth it.

The only thing was that he had already used a Fire Serpent Talisman and had been injured in the chest; naturally, he had to get some compensation from the other party.

A few storage sacks were not enough to satisfy Lu Ye; these were locked and who knew what was inside. Besides, storage sacks of low-level cultivators usually didn't contain much of value, not everyone was as rich as he was.

"You can take these storage sacks to the Qingyun Marketplace to have them opened, there are definitely good things inside," Yiyi said urgently.

"Qingyun Marketplace?" Lu Ye frowned.

"It's a marketplace where independent cultivators gather, only fifty li away from here. I can take you there."

"No need!" The reason he had stayed in this jungle all this time was that his cultivation was too low. In his plan, he wouldn't leave this place easily without reaching the Spirit Stream Realm.

Yiyi was greatly troubled by Lu Ye's intransigence as she pleaded, "Can't you just let us go? We already know we were wrong."

Lu Ye indifferently said, "Making a mistake comes with a price. My patience is limited; you'd better stop talking nonsense!"

Yiyi bared her small white teeth, "If we really fight, you won't have it easy either. I don't believe..."

"Is that so?" Lu Ye raised his hand and took out another Spirit Talisman.

Yiyi instantly caved, looking at the Spirit Talisman and shrinking her neck, knowing she had truly hit a snag. Having so many Spirit Talismans at hand, the man before her must be an important disciple from a big sect. Facing such a person, a few storage sacks from low-level cultivators indeed couldn't sway him.

As though she had made up her mind, she sighed and said, "There's another item, I'll go get it for you."

Big Tiger seemed to understand her plan and immediately turned to her with a roar, but Yiyi forced a smile, reaching out to pat Big Tiger's head, "Wait here for me, I'll be back as soon as possible. Don't conflict with him before I return."

Big Tiger roared again, but Yiyi put on a stern face, "Behave!"

Big Tiger reluctantly lowered his head.

Yiyi patted its head again, turned around, and disappeared into the rock wall.

Leaving Lu Ye and Big Tiger to continue their standoff.

However, the exchange between Yiyi and Big Tiger made Lu Ye realize that this demon beast must understand human nature; indeed, if it didn't, how could Yiyi have worked with it to intimidate those low-level cultivators?

As time passed, Lu Ye's expression gradually became solemn because the Big Tiger he had trapped in the cave was becoming increasingly restless, pacing back and forth, occasionally looking up at Lu Ye.

Lu Ye sensed a breath of danger, which made him even more vigilant.

Yiyi had been gone for quite a while this time, about two hours, before she suddenly reappeared. However, her condition seemed off, her body turning somewhat translucent, giving off an extremely weak impression.

Lu Ye furrowed his brows, unsure whether this woman was faking it or had truly been injured, but his attention was quickly drawn to what was in Yiyi's hands.

It was a bright red fruit, the size of a baby's fist, and as soon as Yiyi brought it into the cave, a peculiar fragrance filled the air.

"What is this?" he asked, not knowing what the fruit was but instinctively feeling that it was definitely something good.

Yiyi weakly said, "Barrier-breaking Fruit."

"What use is it?" Lu Ye asked again.

Yiyi was somewhat puzzled. In theory, an important Disciple from a big sect like Lu Ye should have heard of the Barrier-breaking Fruit's fame. This thing was precious to any Spirit Stream Realm cultivator; however, she was in no good condition to waste words and explained, "It's used to break the spiritual orifice barrier."

Lu Ye's eyes lit up at this; he didn't know where Yiyi had found this fruit, but if what Yiyi said was true, then it was extremely useful to him. He looked up, gesturing to Yiyi, "Toss... Send it over!"

Yiyi shook her head, "The fruit can be yours, but you must make an oath to Heaven's Augury, beseeching Heaven's Augury that after obtaining the fruit, you must not harm us again."

Even in her near-slumber state of weakness, Yiyi hadn't forgotten the predicament they were in. If Lu Ye still meant them harm after getting the fruit, the tiger and she would have no chance of leaving this place.

Lu Ye didn't know what an oath to Heaven's Augury was, but he had heard the phrase "beseeching Heaven's Augury" once before.

Having a rough understanding of Yiyi's meaning, he nodded and said, "Okay!"

After deliberating over his words for a moment, Lu Ye said, "Lu Ye, a Bingzhou cultivator, beseeches Heaven's Augury. If Yiyi hands over the Barrier-breaking Fruit to me, under the condition that she does not provoke or harm me first, I will no longer trouble Yiyi and Amber!"

He thought it was simply making a straightforward oath, but to his surprise, after he finished speaking, an invisible and mysterious force descended from the heavens and thundered into the battlefield marking on the back of his hand.

The force didn't harm him, but it gave him a strange feeling—that if he broke his word, he would inevitably suffer dire consequences.

This discovery sent a chill through Lu Ye's heart, and he immediately realized that in this world, oaths were not to be taken lightly, especially oaths witnessed by Heaven's Augury.

After Lu Ye made the oath to Heaven's Augury, Yiyi breathed a sigh of relief. Her form floated in front of Lu Ye, and she handed over the Barrier-breaking Fruit to him.

"Are you injured?" Lu Ye picked up the Barrier-breaking Fruit and asked Yiyi.

"Mhm." Yiyi nodded, turned, and called out to Amber, "Amber, let's go."

The robust Amber stepped out, and Lu Ye, gripping his Spirit Talisman, retreated from the cave.

A moment later, Amber stepped out of the cave. Yiyi plunged into Amber's body and disappeared without a trace, and the big tiger turned its head to roar at Lu Ye before vanishing into the jungle with a few leaps.

Watching the direction in which the big tiger had disappeared, Lu Ye pondered for a moment and slowly shook his head. The experiences of the past half-day were bizarre, but fortunately, the outcome was fairly good.

Looking at the Barrier-breaking Fruit in his hand, his expression turned eager. If this thing truly had the effects Yiyi described, then achieving the Spirit Stream Realm was now within his grasp!

Chapter 38 36 Rabbits Are So Cute

Lu Ye didn't rush to take the Barrier-breaking Fruit, as he was unsure of its authenticity and dared not consume it recklessly.

The fight with Big Tiger was brief, but the momentary clash was extremely perilous, and he was wounded. He had been confronting Big Tiger, with no time to check his injuries.

Only when he removed his clothing did he realize that his chest was a blur of flesh and blood, his torso marked by several deep claw wounds, and his blood had already dyed the clothes below his chest red.

Fortunately, he was no longer a mortal body; during his standoff with Big Tiger, he had consciously activated his spirit force to seal the wounds, so the bleeding wasn't too severe, but the injuries looked rather gruesome.

After moving his limbs to make sure there were no fractures, he breathed a sigh of relief. If it was just flesh wounds, they were relatively easy to handle.

He still had eight healing pills, which were very effective for treating wounds.

Taking out the bottle containing the healing pills, Lu Ye swallowed one and then took out another, crushed it with his finger, and evenly applied the powder to the wounds on his chest.

He winced in pain.

Having attended to these matters, he then dressed, sat down cross-legged, and began refining the pill energy of the healing pills.

After one night, Lu Ye felt much better. The wounds had started to heal and scab over, and he expected to recover in a few days.

In the meantime, he finished eating the remains of a large snake to replenish his strength.

At dawn, Lu Ye went to a water source a few miles away, easily caught a fat rabbit, and, holding it by the ears, headed back to the cave.

A moment later, Lu Ye sat cross-legged in the cave, holding the Barrier-breaking Fruit in one hand and gently peeling off a layer of its skin with his Longsword. He then pried open the rabbit's mouth, stuffed the skin inside, closed the rabbit's mouth, and vigorously shook it for a while.

After making sure the rabbit had consumed the skin completely, Lu Ye let it go. Likely terrified, the rabbit lay motionless on the ground.

Ignoring it, Lu Ye blocked the cave entrance to ensure it couldn't escape, then began to examine the storage sacks Yiyi had brought over. When Yiyi and Amber had left the day before, they hadn't taken these storage sacks back with them, mainly because these items were locked with a restriction lock, which was useless to them.

The storage sacks were covered in mud, as if they had been dug out from the ground.

Picking up a storage sack, Lu Ye activated his Spiritual Energy towards it, but he distinctly felt that his spirit force couldn't penetrate the sack, blocked by a peculiar force.

That was a restriction lock; each storage sack had its own restriction lock, unlocked by the cultivator owner's spirit force.

Originally, Lu Ye had three storage sacks. One belonged to Manager Yang, one to Zhou Cheng, and one was given to him by the sect master.

Manager Yang's sack, although locked, was opened by Yang before he died in order to retrieve a sword. In the urgency of the moment, Manager Yang had neither the extra energy nor the inclination to relock the storage sack, so its contents went to Lu Ye at a bargain.

The storage sack from Zhou Cheng was forcibly opened by the sect master.

These two storage sacks remained with their restriction locks disengaged.

The storage sack given to him by the sect master was brand new. After Lu Ye acquired it, he nurtured the restriction lock in the sack with his own spirit force, allowing his spirit force to permeate the restriction, thereby gaining the ability to freely open and close the restriction lock.

If he happened to lose his storage sack, even if someone else found it, they couldn't easily open it unless they had some special lock-picking skills.

Lu Ye naturally didn't have any special lock-picking skills; he was just trying it out of boredom.

Spiritual force slowly seeped into the storage sack, sensing the presence of the restriction lock, Lu Ye continuously stirred his spiritual force, charging at the restriction lock.

Once, twice, by the third time, the restriction lock suddenly disappeared without a trace.

As Lu Ye was astonished, a burst of flame suddenly erupted from the storage sack in his hand, blazing fiercely. He hastily threw the storage sack away, watching it burn to ash in an extremely short amount of time...

Could it really happen like this? Lu Ye frowned.

Only then did he understand that the restriction lock not only protected the storage sack from being taken by strangers but, in a critical moment, could even destroy the entire storage sack.

This indeed had a semblance of preferring to be broken rather than whole.

It looked like without special unlocking skills, one really shouldn't act rashly; destroying the storage sack was a minor issue, but if those restriction locks contained any dangerous restrictions, it could likely cause injury.

Lu Ye gathered the remaining storage sacks and then went to check on the rabbit's condition.

There was no problem; it still hopped around lively and looked very cute.

Grabbing the rabbit's head, he twisted it harshly. With a snap, such a cute rabbit would definitely taste delicious.

It was confirmed, even if the Barrier-breaking Fruit did not break the spiritual orifice barrier, it would not be poisonous.

Lu Ye completely set his mind at ease, walked over to where he cultivated, took out a cushion, sat down cross-legged, and took out the Barrier-breaking Fruit, taking a bite.

Juice spilled everywhere, leaving a lingering fragrance on the lips; unexpectedly sweet, Lu Ye raised his eyebrows and quickly ate up the Barrier-breaking Fruit completely.

The fruit had no core, and was like a small tomato.

After savoring it briefly, Lu Ye closed his eyes and concentrated, silently feeling its effects.

Initially, there were no changes, but soon a hot stream emerged from his lower abdomen, similar to the sensation when he used elixir pills for cultivation before.

However, the difference was, normally the pill energy from the elixir pills would transform into either spiritual force or blood Qi energy, but the hot stream produced by the Barrier-breaking Fruit was neither spiritual force nor blood Qi energy, it was a type of power that Lu Ye had never felt before.

The hot stream accumulated in his abdomen, and Lu Ye tried to guide it into his Root Spiritual Orifice.

It went smoothly...

The hot stream passed through the Root Spiritual Orifice and entered the 2nd Spiritual Orifice, then flowed into the 3rd Spiritual Orifice, the 4th Spiritual Orifice...

Within moments, it crossed the 8th Spiritual Orifice and continued charging towards the 9th Spiritual Orifice.

In the next instant, Lu Ye felt the spiritual orifice barrier at his 9th Spiritual Orifice rapidly dissolving, like snowflakes under the scorching sun!

This discovery startled him. Previously, each time he opened an orifice, it took a great amount of effort, repeatedly guiding spiritual force to strike the spiritual orifice barrier, and the feeling during the strikes was very uncomfortable, as though someone was hammering at the location of his spiritual orifice. After many times, an inevitable sense of soreness and swelling arose.

But now, there was no striking, no discomfort, the medicinal effect of the Barrier-breaking Fruit quickly dissolved the spiritual orifice barrier.

Comparing the two, the Barrier-breaking Fruit was truly a blessing for cultivators in opening orifices.

No wonder, when he had previously asked Yiyi about the uses of Barrier-breaking Fruit, that woman had looked at him strangely; now it seemed, the Barrier-breaking Fruit mustn't be an obscure item, likely every cultivator knew of the existence of this spirit fruit.

Chapter 39 37: 9 Orifices Connected, Spirit Force Turns into a Stream

In just a few dozen breaths, the barrier of the 9th Spiritual Orifice had broken, and Spirit Force, previously blocked, trickled in.

By this time, Lu Ye only needed to channel his own Spirit Force through the 9 orifices to form a Minor Circumambulation within his body, thus naturally entering the Spirit Stream Realm!

This had been his ultimate goal for the past month.

However, Lu Ye found that although much of the Barrier-breaking Fruit's medicinal effect had been expended, a substantial amount still lingered. If left unattended now, not to mention the potential impact on his future cultivation, at the very least, the remaining medicinal effect would be wasted.

This fruit was indeed a rare and valuable item; it would be a pity to waste it.

So, after only a slight hesitation, he began to mobilize his own Spirit Force, attempting to pinpoint the position of the 11th orifice.

The sect master had only helped him identify the location of up to his 9th Spiritual Orifice since, in the sect master's view, given Lu Ye Yiye's talent, even with a sufficient supply of Spirit-Nurturing Pills, it would likely take another two to three years to reach Spirit Stream Level 1.

It wasn't that the sect master looked down on him, but rather that his talent was too low, and his cultivation efficiency was indeed very poor.

Yet, the sect master hadn't expected that Lu Ye would be able to open up to the 9th orifice within just a month, and that was with a shortage of pills and medicine. With enough Spirit-Nurturing Pills, he would have progressed even faster.

By now, even without outside help, with Lu Ye's own reserves of Spirit Force, he could locate the orifices himself, though not with the ease of the sect master.

In the meantime, Lu Ye had taken the time to study the Golden Cicada Carefree Method, so he had a rough idea of the subsequent orifices' locations; as long as his luck wasn't too awful, locating the positions of the orifices shouldn't be a problem.

After about one hour of effort, Lu Ye finally pinpointed the location of the 11th orifice. He quickly directed the remaining medicinal effect of the Barrier-breaking Fruit towards this orifice, and the barrier of the 11th Spiritual Orifice quickly dissolved like before.

A few dozen breaths later, the barrier of the 11th Spiritual Orifice broke, and not much of the medicinal effect of the Barrier-breaking Fruit remained.

Lu Ye continued to locate the position of the 11th orifice.

About an hour and a half later, Lu Ye took a deep breath, opened his eyes, and at this moment, he could no longer feel the effect of the Barrier-breaking Fruit. The warm flow in his lower abdomen had also vanished without a trace. The barrier of the 11th orifice had not broken through but had loosened significantly.

This would make breaking through the barrier much easier when he resumed his cultivation in the future, so it was not entirely without gain.

One Barrier-breaking Fruit allowed him to open up two orifices, and the barrier of the 11th orifice also dissolved a lot, a tremendous gain.

Lu Ye suppressed the thought of immediately achieving the Spirit Stream Realm, because he faintly felt that while advancing to the Spirit Stream now might be successful, if he could cultivate his newly opened 9th orifice to a full state, achieving the Spirit Stream would be somewhat easier.

At this point, he was in no rush.

He walked aside, skinned and gutted a dead rabbit, started a fire to roast it, and feasted heartily.

In the following days, Lu Ye massively hunted nearby animals, eating a surprisingly large amount daily, and everything he consumed turned into his blood Qi energy, then refined through the Essence Refinement-Qi Conversion, and channeled into his 9th Spiritual Orifice.

About six days later, in the cave, Lu Ye sat cross-legged.

Although he had eaten a lot of beast meat these past days, instead of gaining weight, his body seemed even leaner, and his once-fitting clothes now hung a bit loose.

This was the result of Essence Refinement-Qi Conversion. Too much blood Qi energy had been refined into Spirit Force, reflected in his physical appearance.

Despite becoming leaner, Lu Ye felt no discomfort but instead felt stronger, his body sculpted with clearly defined muscles. Describing him as muscular would be most apt.

He had finally cultivated the 9th Spiritual Orifice to its full capacity.

After striving for so many days, today was finally the season of harvest, and Lu Ye could not help but feel excited.

Taking several deep breaths to calm his mind, Lu Ye followed the circulation pathway of the Golden Cicada Carefree Method. He initiated the spirit force of the Root Spiritual Orifice, channeling it into the 2nd Spiritual Orifice, driving the spirit force of the 2nd Orifice along with it into the 3rd Spiritual Orifice, then from there into the 4th Spiritual Orifice, and so on...

until the 9th Spiritual Orifice!

The location of the 9th Spiritual Orifice was near the Root Spiritual Orifice. After the Spiritual Energy surged into the 9th Spiritual Orifice, Lu Ye guided it back to the Root Spiritual Orifice. Thus, the 9 Major Spiritual Orifices were interconnected, forming a closed loop, known as the Minor Circumambulation!

If the spirit force previously stored in the spiritual orifices was like stagnant water, now it had turned into flowing water, beginning from the Root Spiritual Orifice, flowing through the other 8 Major Spiritual Orifices, and back to the Root Spiritual Orifice, circulating relentlessly.

Lu Ye suddenly experienced a rather different sensation.

However, he did not stop there. Instead, he continued to guide the spirit force, repeatedly practicing the Minor Circumambulation method, over and over.

In the 9 Major Spiritual Orifices, the flow of the spirit force grew faster and faster until it broke through a limit. At that moment, Lu Ye's senses buzzed. Even with his eyes closed, he was engulfed by a brilliant whiteness. Soon after, as the white light faded, his senses sharpened, and he felt an overwhelming sense of sublimation.

A visible ripple of energy, centered on Lu Ye, thunderously spread out in all directions, causing sand and stones to fly around inside the cave.

The Spirit Stream Realm was achieved!

Lu Ye did not rush to open his eyes, instead quietly sensing his current state.

Although he was no longer actively guiding the flow of spirit force, the spirit force within his body continued to flow ceaselessly through the 9 Major Spiritual Orifices, murmuring like a stream, cycling over and over, practicing the Minor Circumambulation.

This was the hallmark of achieving the Spirit Stream Realm.

Unless Lu Ye died or he encountered depletion of spirit force and shattering of the spiritual orifices, from now on, the flow of his own spirit force would never cease.

Slowly opening his eyes, he raised a palm and slightly stimulated his spirit force, which immediately brought forth a faint brilliant glow in the palm of his hand. This was the glow of spirit force, yet the spirit force he felt now was distinctly different from before.

Although the storage of his spirit force had not increased compared to before, his current spirit force was clearly more destructive.

This fact was distinctly felt by Lu Ye, and he felt that his strength had improved more than twofold compared to before. If he were to fight the big tiger now, Lu Ye was confident he could take it down without the help of a Spirit Talisman.

After some contemplation, Lu Ye understood the reason.

Although he had opened many spiritual orifices previously, he could only stimulate the spirit force of a single spiritual orifice at a time. If the spirit force in that orifice was depleted, he would have to stimulate another. He couldn't stimulate two or more simultaneously.

But now, with the 9 orifices interconnected and the spirit force cycling with the Minor Circumambulation, the spirit force he stimulated was not merely from a single spiritual orifice anymore. It was the power of the 9 orifices.

Of course, its destructive power wasn't as great as ninefold, but a twofold difference was there.

As for the 11th Orifice, although it had been opened, it fell under the category of the Spirit Stream Level 2, separate from the Level 1 of the 9 orifices, and thus couldn't bring him much enhancement at the moment. At best, it would just increase his total storage of spirit force in the future.

Ultimately, the cultivation of the Spirit Stream Realm is a process from quantitative change to qualitative change. By opening enough spiritual orifices and allowing the spirit force to pass through these orifices, practicing Minor Circumambulation, one's strength would undergo a soaring increase!

Prior to this, the maximum effect of opening orifices was to enhance one's storage of spirit force, not directly increasing strength.

This was common knowledge in cultivation, and every cultivator would have it taught by a mentor at the beginning of their cultivation journey. However, Lu Ye, stranded in the Spirit Stream battlefield, bereft of support, had no one to teach him such knowledge. Thus, he had to rely on his own explorations and insights.

Chapter 40 38: Going Out

After achieving the Spirit Stream Realm, Lu Ye discovered something interesting: his perception of the Spiritual Energy in his surroundings had become much sharper.

The concentration of Spiritual Energy in the Spirit Stream battlefield was much denser than in the outside world. In the outside world, even in a state of cultivation, Lu Ye could not sense the presence of Spiritual Energy, but here, as long as Lu Ye could quiet his mind, he could generally sense the Spiritual Energy around him.

Now that the 9th orifice had been formed, Lu Ye found that even if he did not deliberately try to sense it, as long as he slightly focused his attention, he could clearly feel the nature's spiritual energy around him.

This was undoubtedly a huge progress.

Did this mean he could cultivate by ingesting and exhaling Spiritual Energy? Thinking this, an excitement surged in his heart. If this were truly possible, his future cultivation would definitely proceed much more smoothly.

He attempted it immediately.

One hour later, Lu Ye grimaced and stopped his cultivation attempt.

The situation was the same as before: for some unknown reason, it was very difficult for his body to channel the nature's spiritual energy inside. Judging by the rate of this cultivation method, it would be impossible to fill the 10th orifice to its full state in less than a year and a half.

It seemed that the result of the talent test he got earlier, being Yiye, was not without reason.

However, by this time, Lu Ye also had some insight: the method of a cultivator ingesting and exhaling Spiritual Energy for cultivation did not mean literally using the mouth to breathe in and out, but rather using the body to do so.

In that state of cultivation, every single one of the millions of pores on a cultivator's body was performing a miraculous type of breathing, absorbing nature's spiritual energy into the body and converting it into the cultivator's spirit force!

Yet he really couldn't use this method of cultivation.

Standing up, Lu Ye felt it was time to go out and take a look around.

More than a month ago, he was sent into the Spirit Stream battlefield by the sect master. Fortunately, he ended up in this jungle. He hadn't encountered any enemies too powerful to handle during this time, and the troubles caused by Yiyi and the big tiger were severely dealt with by him.

But one can't be lucky forever.

If he kept hiding here, he would eventually meet cultivators so strong that he would have no power to resist.

In over a month, he had grown from a cultivator with the 3rd orifice to now being in the Spirit Stream Level 1, having opened the 10th orifice, a tremendous growth.

Undeniably, his level of cultivation was still very low, but with the Spirit Talismans given by the sect master, he at least had some means to protect himself.

As for where to go... he needed to find that big tiger and that young girl; he had heard some interesting news from the girl earlier.

Hastily, two days later, Lu Ye found the snow-white big tiger, sprawled on the ground and sleeping soundly in a cave; but as he just walked in, a semi-transparent shadow drifted out from the tiger's body, looking at Lu Ye warily, "What are you here for?"

It was the minion spirit who called herself Yiyi. When she left that day, she appeared extremely weak. Nearly ten days had passed, and her body was still semi-transparent and unable to condense into a solid form, indicating that her previous injuries were indeed not light.

As soon as there was a disturbance, the sleeping big tiger immediately woke up, stood up, and growled at Lu Ye.

Lu Ye did not walk further inside, to avoid provoking the spirit and the tiger, especially since with Heaven's Augury oath in place, he couldn't do much to this pair.

"Don't panic, I'm just here to ask some questions," Lu Ye said.

"What do you want to ask?" Yiyi looked at him.

"You mentioned something about Qingyun Marketplace earlier. Could you tell me more about it?"

"You want to go to Qingyun Marketplace?"

"Exactly!"

Since the path of ingesting and exhaling Spiritual Energy was not viable for Lu Ye, and Essence Refinement-Qi Conversion was not a long-term solution, nearly all the beasts nearby had been killed by Lu Ye. Cultivating through elixir pills was the true source of joy. Qingyun Marketplace sounded like a trading place for cultivators.

Lu Ye was planning to go there to see if he could get some elixir pills to consume.

At the very least, he could broaden his horizons. Since he entered the cultivation world, he had always been working in isolation, which wasn't a good thing.

"I see..." Yiyi tilted her head and thought for a moment before sticking out her tongue playfully, "I'm not going to tell you. If you want to know, find out on your own!"

Having been so aggrieved by Lu Ye before, why would Yiyi cooperate with him now? Given the restraint of Heaven's Augury, as long as she and the big tiger did not provoke or harm Lu Ye, he could not harm them. What was there to fear?

Lu Ye stared at her for a moment, then turned and walked away.

"Eh?" This caught Yiyi by surprise. She hadn't expected Lu Ye to leave so cleanly and decisively. After hesitating for a moment, her form flickered, and she floated to Lu Ye's side, beginning to speak, "However, if you beg me, maybe if I'm in a good mood, I might tell you."

Lu Ye glanced at her, sensing her unpleasant character.

"Hurry up and beg me, if you don't beg me, I won't tell you. Otherwise..." Yiyi fluttered in front of him, gleeful as a little butterfly, "Just say you were wrong, and I'll forgive you!"

Lu Ye stopped, and reached into his storage sack to draw the longsword, slowly unsheathing it.

"What are you doing?" Yiyi was frightened, her complexion turning pale, and she quickly hid behind the big tiger that also crouched low, ready to roar.

"I told you I'm bound by Heaven's Augury oath, so don't mess around, or you'll surely meet a dire fate!" Yiyi peeked out from behind the big tiger, seriously warning him.

Lu Ye ignored her, just pointed his sword toward the Void, spirit force flowing into the blade causing shining streamers to flicker, while murmuring softly, "I've decided!"

"Decided what?" Yiyi was completely confused.

"From today, I'll kill ten beasts every day, until there are no more beasts left in this area!" Lu Ye declared resoundingly. After saying this, he touched his stomach, "I'm hungry!"

With a "clang!" the longsword sheathed, Lu Ye strode forward.

Yiyi, slightly taken aback, then had a bitter expression appear on her face while the big tiger turned its head to look at her, humanely rolling its eyes.

"Cultivator Brother, please wait!" Yiyi yelled, chasing after Lu Ye.

One incense stick's time later, under a large tree, Lu Ye looked at the scribbled markings on the ground, as Yiyi pointed out the directions in front of him, "Here is Qingyun Mountain, the marketplace at the foothold is Qingyun Marketplace. Our location is here.

If you walk from here towards the east side, you'll pass a small river after twenty miles, then ten miles further there'll be a rocky forest. Continue for another twenty or thirty miles and you'll reach Qingyun Marketplace."

Lu Ye furrowed his brows into a frown, impatiently saying, "Just directly point me in the direction I should head, don't mention east or west."

"Over here!" Yiyi decisively pointed in a direction.