

Sage of Humanity - Chapter 41 - 39:

Division of the Battlefield[1,367 words]

One hour later, Lu Ye got up and set off in the direction of the Qingyun Marketplace, followed by Yiyi, who hovered mid-air, enthusiastically seeing him off.

For Yiyi and big tiger, Lu Ye was an unwelcome intruder who had wandered into their territory. These days, he had killed too many beasts, already affecting the stability of the region. Their previous attempts to trouble Lu Ye were due to this reason.

If Lu Ye continued to stay, it might not be long before the food in this region was completely depleted, forcing them to find new places to live. But too many demon beasts roamed this mountain range, and briskly intruding into another's domain meant facing unknown dangers.

So once Yiyi realized that sending Lu Ye away was a good thing, she cooperated obediently, or else she wouldn't have been so compliant.

Of course, before Lu Ye left, he warned them that if he couldn't successfully find the Qingyun Marketplace, or if they had given any false information, he would come back.

In response, Yiyi patted her flat chest and guaranteed that everything she had said was absolutely true.

As he moved forward, Lu Ye reflected on the various pieces of information Yiyi had disclosed.

It wasn't just information about the Qingyun Marketplace; Lu Ye also asked her many things about the Spirit Stream battlefield. It wasn't easy to encounter someone he could communicate with and control, so naturally, he had to make full use of her.

And Yiyi had told him everything without holding back!

The jade slip given to him by the sect master did record some information about the Spirit Stream battlefield, but the situation was too urgent at that time, and the sect master didn't know where Lu Ye would end up after entering the battlefield, so the information left behind was not detailed.

On the contrary, the information obtained from Yiyi was more suitable for Lu Ye's current situation.

According to Yiyi, the entire Spirit Stream battlefield was a circular area, enormously vast, as large as a provincial state, and could be divided into three major regions.

The outermost part was the outer circle, the middle part was the inner circle, and the innermost part was the Core Circle.

The deeper one went inward, the higher the concentration of nature's spiritual energy became, and in some special areas, there were magical yields, such as rare veins and precious spirit fruits, which were resources that cultivators would desperately vie for.

The big sects of the Nine Provinces each had their own base in the Spirit Stream battlefield, and the higher a sect's grade, the closer their base was to the center.

For instance, the bases of the 2nd-3rd grade sects from each provincial state were located in the Core Circle. Those ranged from 4th to 6th grade were generally scattered in the inner circle region, and as for the 7th to 9th grade factions, they could only be situated in the outermost circle.

Of course, sects and factions of this level were also the most numerous, so the outer circle was the largest region.

The good news was that the place where Lu Ye currently was, was already in the outer circle where the concentration of spiritual energy and the yield of resources were not as abundant as in the other two regions, hence it was unlikely to encounter particularly powerful beings from the Spirit Stream Realm.

But the bad news was that he didn't know the exact location of the Righteous Blood Sect's base. The Righteous Blood Sect was a 9th grade sect, so its base was naturally within the outer circle. If he was lucky, he would not be far from the Righteous Blood Sect's base.

But if he was unlucky, and he happened to be on the opposite side of the Spirit Stream battlefield's central axis from the Righteous Blood Sect's base, then if he followed the war imprint straight, he would have to cross the entire Spirit Stream battlefield, breaking into both the inner circle and the Core Circle.

With his cultivation at Spirit Stream Level 1, he could barely protect himself in the outer circle, but if he broke into the inner circle or Core Circle, his fate would no doubt be grim, as that realm would undoubtedly be filled with strong players.

The best strategy now was to take a curved path, following along the outer circle, which would allow him to avoid encountering overly formidable enemies.

In the Nine Provinces continent, the Haotian Alliance and the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge were constantly at war, with sects rising and falling. One could say that the cultivators of the Nine Provinces grew up amidst warfare and conflict.

Generally speaking, regardless of which faction disciples of the major sects belonged to, as long as they achieved the Spirit Stream Realm, they would be thrown into the Spirit Stream battlefield to be tempered.

But the gap in strength between the first and ninth levels of the Spirit Stream Realm was too vast. Even the disciples of the 1st grade sects did not have much advantage while their cultivation was low, which made neither the Core Circle nor the inner circle suitable places for cultivators with low cultivation to hone themselves.

This gave rise to a tradition.

All sects would send their disciples with low cultivation to the outer circle, allowing them to temper themselves in this environment, a process of survival of the fittest.

As for the method of delivery, it naturally involved the Heaven's Augury Pillars.

Heaven's Augury Pillars possessed various functions, one of which was the ability to perform targeted transport.

After paying a certain price, the large and medium-sized sects in the Core Circle and inner circle could use Heaven's Augury Pillars to send their disciples with low cultivation to the residence of allied minor sects, letting them undergo training in the outer circle.

In return, these large and medium-sized sects would protect these minor sects in times of need, such as when their strongholds were under attack.

Therefore, the connections between the sects on the Nine Provinces continent were very close. Often, a big sect would shelter dozens or even more minor sects underneath them, and a minor sect would be allied with several big sects.

Digesting this information, Lu Ye gained a clear understanding of his current situation.

He had to admit that his luck had indeed been good enough, for the sect master had sent him into the Spirit Stream battlefield at a position within the outer circle, which had given him the capital to continue surviving.

As for the Qingyun Marketplace... in fact, it wasn't just one location. Qingyun Mountain was vast, and there were several marketplaces at the foot of the mountain, all named Qingyun Marketplace.

The marketplace brought together cultivators from all over Nine Provinces, a place of mixed company, home to cultivators from Haotian Alliance as well as Ten Thousand Demons Ridge.

The marketplace had no owner; it was a spontaneously formed gathering place for cultivators and also a place for trading and resting.

So generally speaking, it was quite safe inside the marketplace because acting rashly here could easily trigger a large brawl between the two factions of cultivators. There were a few precedents for this, where personal grudges led to chaotic fights involving hundreds or thousands of people, resulting in countless injuries and deaths.

Since then, those who dared to make a move in the marketplace would be quickly surrounded and killed by the nearby cultivators.

This had become an unwritten rule that virtually all cultivators who entered the marketplace would abide by.

Of course, if one had the ability to silently and unnoticed eliminate another person, then they could act without fear.

But the cultivators in the outer circle all had low cultivation, so who could truly have such skill?

This was undoubtedly good news for Lu Ye. At Spirit Stream Level 1, he had just enough qualification to enter the Spirit Stream battlefield; it was no exaggeration to say he was one of the lowest in cultivation in the entire battlefield, with no advantage in combat against anyone.

Following the clues given by Yiyi, Lu Ye first crossed a small river, then passed through a chaotic forest of rocks, until he arrived at the foot of the mountain, where an area spanning several miles, with various buildings scattered like stars in the sky, came into view.

Qingyun Marketplace had arrived!

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Qingyun Marketplace and the Local Wealthy Landlord[1,270 words]

The Qingyun Marketplace had no fixed entrances or exits, and Lu Ye, descending from Qingyun Mountain, naturally blended into the streaming crowd moving in and out of the marketplace.

A boisterous atmosphere rushed towards him, and the complex intertwining streets were bustling with cultivators brushing shoulders as they passed by.

Lu Ye had not expected such a small marketplace to gather so many cultivators. Previously on Qingyun Mountain, he had hardly seen a soul, well, except for half of one.

It wasn't surprising when he thought about it. Regardless of the sect, the number of lower-level cultivators was always the highest, and the outermost periphery of the Spirit Stream battlefield was exactly where these base-level cultivators converged.

Just by looking at these passersby cultivators, one couldn't tell which faction they belonged to; after all, no one would wear their origins on their forehead for all to see.

He couldn't even begin to discern the levels of cultivation of these cultivators.

Lu Ye had originally wondered how cultivators from the opposing camps of the Haotian Alliance and the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge, their minds muddled by repeated conflicts and harboring irreconcilable hatred towards each other, could coexist peacefully. It wasn't until he arrived here that he realized nobody truly knew which faction the others belonged to.

Even if mixed together, at most they could only treat strangers with corresponding caution and would not rashly initiate a fight.

The cultivators coming and going wore a variety of colorful clothes that dazzled Lu Ye. Some female cultivators wore extremely revealing outfits, displaying large tracts of fair skin—a truly beautiful sight to behold.

Only then did he realize that the customs of the Nine Provinces were so open.

That was a misunderstanding on his part. The Nine Provinces was a vast world, with different local customs and cultural norms across its Nine Provincial States, and scanty clothing didn't necessarily denote an open personality.

"Kid, move aside,"

A deep voice suddenly sounded behind Lu Ye. Turning around, he caught sight of a sturdy chest covered in a clump of black hair. Under Lu Ye's gaze, the muscular pecs shook deliberately, showcasing explosive power.

Lu Ye looked up to see a towering figure standing behind him, tall enough that Lu Ye's own height only reached his chest.

The man had two curved horns on his forehead, which left Lu Ye somewhat flabbergasted.

"Huff..." The towering figure exhaled two streams of hot air from his nostrils, looking down at Lu Ye, "You're in the way!"

Lu Ye quickly jumped aside, his hand instinctively resting on the hilt of his sword.

However, his alertness quickly dispersed because next to the horned strongman stood a petite woman, the key feature being two fuzzy ears sticking up on her forehead, resembling cat ears, and likely the strongman's companion.

"Meow~" The woman looked at Lu Ye amusingly, softly meowing and giving him a wink, brimming with allure.

Wow...

Lu Ye's heart blossomed with joy.

Under his reluctant gaze, the horned strongman and the cat-eared lady quickly disappeared into the crowd.

"Those were demon cultivators who hadn't fully transformed," a voice suddenly said beside Lu Ye.

Lu Ye turned to look and saw a plump figure standing next to him, smiling broadly and squinting his eyes at him.

This person was dressed in clothes adorned with gold and jade, with several jade thumb rings on his hands, looking less like a cultivator and more like a local wealthy landlord.

"Demon cultivator?" Lu Ye raised an eyebrow.

He had heard of demon cultivators before, and the sect master had mentioned them too, saying that many demon cultivators naturally excel physically, making them suitable for the path of physique cultivation. Many sects would also take in demon cultivators as disciples.

However, he had never seen a demon cultivator before, and seeing one for the first time inevitably piqued his curiosity.

"Yes, but as their cultivation rises, those demon beast features will gradually disappear. It seems you are interested in that kind of... cute demon cultivators?" the local wealthy landlord said, stretching out two fingers and mimicking horns on his head.

Lu Ye hesitated before saying, "It's my first time seeing them."

"I see, you're an independent cultivator, right?" the local wealthy landlord asked cheerfully. He inferred this mainly because Lu Ye was alone.

Generally, if disciples from a sect entered the Spirit Stream battlefield, they would not be alone; at the very least, they would move with some fellow sect brothers and sisters for mutual support, just like those two demon cultivators who actually came from the same sect.

Lu Ye casually responded, "Something like that." The sect master had instructed him never to reveal his identity as a disciple of the Righteous Blood Sect, so he obviously wouldn't spill the beans carelessly.

The wealthy landlord then sighed, "Being an independent cultivator isn't easy. I was an independent cultivator myself, and I understand your situation well." His tone changed, and he chuckled, "If you're interested in that kind of cute thing, you might want to visit my Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union. As long as you can afford it, hehe, everything is negotiable."

Lu Ye said sternly, "You've misunderstood, I'm not that kind of person!"

"Understood, understood," the wealthy landlord nodded repeatedly. "Of course, if you want to buy any elixir pills, Spiritual Artifacts, Spirit Talismans, intelligence, maps, or if you have anything valuable to sell, you can come to my Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union. We can guarantee to meet your needs."

Lu Ye asked, puzzled, "What does your mercantile union do?" The scope of the mercantile union's business seemed very wide, and what intrigued him was the use of 'Heaven's Augury' in its name, which seemed somewhat unusual.

The landlord responded, "A mercantile union, naturally, is based on commerce. We do whatever business makes money, welcome customers from the Nine Provinces, and embrace wealth from all directions. However, please be assured, although Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union is big and wealthy, we always adhere to a principle of fairness to all, regardless of one's cultivation level."

By then, Lu Ye had come to a realization.

This landlord from Heaven's Augury was probably observing him like a countryman entering the city, to see if he could circle in close and find any business opportunities.

"I'm very poor," Lu Ye shook his head.

The wealthy landlord chuckled, "A dragon in shallow waters doesn't get to flex its might, but observing you, my fellow Daoist, you have an extraordinary bearing and will surely achieve great things. It's okay to be poor now; there will come a time when you rise with the winds and the tides."

"I hope your words prove prophetic!" Lu Ye nodded. He certainly didn't believe this guy could really tell anything; if not mistaken, he spoke the same way to any stranger he encountered, merely trying to forge a good connection.

"If you want to visit the mercantile union, just head this way. The most prominent building you see will be it." The wealthy landlord pointed Lu Ye in a direction and then bowed with his fists clasped, "Then, I'll leave you be!"

With that, he left freely.

From their conversation, Lu Ye was somewhat concerned about the Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union, and it had to be said that although the wealthy landlord was striking up a conversation, he never gave Lu Ye any bad feelings. Even though he knew Lu Ye was an independent cultivator, his words were appropriate and quite likable.

It might be worth a visit.

Lu Ye naturally didn't have the financial capability to buy anything, but he still had items that could be sold, perhaps at the Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union for some elixir pills in return.

However, it wasn't urgent. He had just arrived at this marketplace, so it was more important to get familiar with the environment and the atmosphere of the cultivation world first.

Sage of Humanity - Chapter 43 - 41: Setting Up a Stall[1,313 words]

Qingyun Marketplace was a small marketplace, such marketplaces were countless across the entire Spirit Stream battlefield, where cultivators always needed places for trade and rest. Thus, these spontaneously formed marketplaces came into existence.

Since no one managed the marketplace, everything in it seemed quite chaotic, especially the buildings. Featuring different styles from across the Nine Provinces, they stood scattered and made the marketplace look like a hodgepodge.

These buildings were constructed by the cultivators who had lived there for many years. With several cultivation resources available in the nearby Qingyun Mountain, and a high safety factor, it naturally attracted many low-level cultivators, especially those independent cultivators without a sect or a school.

Each building was a shop, selling various cultivation supplies, and there were even teahouses and bars.

Low-level cultivators also needed food and drink, and because cultivators had more daily needs than ordinary people, such businesses were inevitable.

Lu Ye walked past several shops, looking but not buying, mainly because he had no money, and gradually understood the trading methods among cultivators.

Lu Ye didn't know what currency system was used in the common world of the Nine Provinces, but trade among cultivators was generally done with Spirit Stones, the hard currency of the cultivation world. In daily cultivation or combat, as well as in talisman drawing and array setup, Spirit Stones were very useful. For this reason, they became the standard measure in trades between cultivators.

Lu Ye had never seen a Spirit Stone; Although the third senior brother from Qingyu Sect had placed Spirit Stones in the Array during the talent assessment, he hadn't paid much attention at the time.

Only now did he realize that these Spirit Stones were semi-transparent crystals, about the size of a thumbnail, and they also varied in quality. However, perhaps because the cultivators here were of low level, they all used low-grade Spirit Stones.

It appeared that there should be better ones like top-grade Spirit Stones.

The majority of the shops in the marketplace sold elixir pills or miracle cures for cultivators, an enticing sight for Lu Ye who had no money in his hands.

However, after visiting multiple shops, he had a bit of an idea about the general prices of things.

Beside these regular shops in the marketplace, there was a street filled with many independent cultivators who set up simple stalls by the roadside, showcasing items they wanted to sell, with interested parties haggling over prices.

This street was incredibly lively, more so than any other street Lu Ye had passed, selling all sorts of things, bustling like a market open for business.

After spending most of the day wandering in the marketplace and seeing everything there was to see, Lu Ye simply found an unoccupied spot on this street, sat down with his legs crossed, took out

several ore stones from his storage sack, and after a thought, also took out a fist-sized piece of origin magnetic ore.

He didn't intend to sell these ores; he primarily wanted to find out how much his items were actually worth.

After roaming around for most of the day, he was hungry and took out some beast meat to eat; he had hunted quite a few beasts earlier, cooked them, and stored them in his storage sack, which was enough to sustain him for a few days.

While eating, he watched the passing cultivators, observing them carefully.

The level of cultivation among the cultivators was a mystery to him; he only knew that those who were qualified to roam the Spirit Stream battlefield were at least at Spirit Stream Level 1, but he couldn't tell how much higher their cultivation levels might be.

This wasn't a good thing, as he would definitely have conflicts with others in the future, and not being able to determine the level of other's cultivation posed some danger to him.

If he encountered a cultivator who was far beyond his own capabilities, he might lose his life before he could even gauge the other's strength.

So through such observations, he hoped to pick up some clues, which might save his life in the future.

As cultivators passed by, Lu Ye observed each one carefully, but couldn't discern anything.

"Junior Brother, what are you looking at?"

Lu Ye's unusual behavior caught the attention of a stall owner nearby, a plump female cultivator dressed in a green robe. The garment had been washed many times, but it was still neat, her hair lightly coiled up, revealing her slender and fair neck.

Lu Ye had not noticed her before, but when he turned his head to look, he immediately saw a view of undulating hills.

Withdrawing his gaze, Lu Ye shook his head, "I wasn't looking at anything." He took a dry bite of jerky and sipped some water.

The female cultivator pursed her lips and said, "You weren't trying to gauge the cultivation levels of others, were you?"

Lu Ye was surprised, "Is it that obvious?"

The female cultivator laughed, "Because when I first entered the Spirit Stream battlefield, I looked just as clueless as you."

So everyone had the same idea... Lu Ye chuckled to himself.

"Being an independent cultivator is tough, with no one to guide you, no seniors to protect you, not even a shelter to shield you from the elements," the female cultivator said, evidently reminiscing about her own past experiences. She sighed deeply, no longer reminiscing, then advised, "Just relying on the naked eye won't tell you much."

Lu Ye sought advice, "Then what should I do?"

"Since you've reached Spirit Stream, you should have enough spirit force. Why not try activating your spirit force?"

Upon hearing this, Lu Ye was startled and cursed himself for his stupidity. He immediately tried as the female cultivator had suggested, channeling his spirit force to his eyes. The next moment, it was as if he had opened the door to a new world.

The cultivators coming and going before him were all enveloped in a layer of spirit light invisible to the naked eye, gently flowing. It was a sign of the spirit force circulating within the bodies of the cultivators.

At first glance, the spirit light looked no different, but if one discerned carefully, some differences could still be seen.

Some people had spirit light that flowed faster and was denser around their bodies, while for others, the opposite was true.

Lu Ye came to a realization, those with denser and faster-flowing spirit light undoubtedly had higher cultivation levels, and vice versa.

"Do you see it now?" the female cultivator asked again.

Lu Ye continuously nodded.

The female cultivator said, "If you could join a sect, these things would come naturally, but as an independent cultivator with no one to guide you, you have to figure things out on your own."

At that moment, Lu Ye noticed several peculiar individuals; they had not a trace of spirit light on them, which puzzled him. After those individuals passed by, he asked the female cultivator about this.

The female cultivator said, "It's quite normal. They either have a Spiritual Artifact that shields their aura or they have practiced some Secret Technique to conceal their aura. However, the cultivators appearing here don't have high cultivation levels, so they likely don't have the energy to practice such Secret Techniques. It's probably the former."

"I see!" Lu Ye nodded, understanding.

"Here's some advice," the female cultivator said earnestly, "in the future, if you encounter such people, stay as far away as possible, because they definitely come from some well-established powers, far beyond what we minor independent cultivators can match. Also, while this method can generally estimate one's cultivation level, it's not completely accurate."

You can only truly judge someone's exact cultivation level when they actually start using their spirit force in action."

Lu Ye expressed his gratitude, "Thank you for the guidance, senior sister." He thought for a moment, then took out a piece of jerky from his storage sack and handed it over.

The female cultivator chuckled, did not refuse his kind gesture, took it, and began to eat slowly, her eating much more graceful compared to Lu Ye's.

Sage of Humanity - Chapter 44 - 42 Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union[1,350 words]

Lu Ye watched the spirit light emanating from the bodies of the cultivators coming and going for a while, then compared it to his own, roughly estimating the cultivation realms of these cultivators.

Generally speaking, there were many at Spirit Stream Level 2 and 3, fewer at Level 1, and most of them were independent cultivators.

Although it only required reaching Spirit Stream Level 1 to qualify for cultivation and travel on the battlefield, if a sect had the resources, they naturally waited for their disciples to attain a higher level before allowing them to leave the sect, thus giving them a better chance of survival.

For those independent cultivators, however, with no backing, the battlefield, although dangerous, was filled with opportunities. If they wanted to live comfortably, they naturally came out to struggle early.

This was somewhat akin to the difference between the children of poor families and those of rich families.

There were also those at Spirit Stream Level 4, but they were few in number, usually only appearing once or twice among dozens of cultivators.

Lu Ye even spotted a guy who appeared to be at Spirit Stream Level 5. This person was extremely sensitive; as soon as Lu Ye spotted him, he turned his head to look over, his crimson eyes like those of a beast, exuding a tremendous oppressive force, making Lu Ye feel a chill all over.

After such observations, Lu Ye had somewhat of an idea in his mind.

Reflecting on the time he had killed Manager Yang and Zhou Cheng in the mine, Lu Ye had only known that their cultivation was not high, but he had no clear idea of their exact levels.

Now it seemed that Manager Yang was probably at Spirit Stream Level 3, and as for Zhou Cheng, at most Level 2.

However, one was disrupted by the origin magnetic field and had difficulty exerting his spirit force, and the other was gravely injured, which allowed Lu Ye to take advantage of them, and by now the grass on their graves was probably three meters tall.

Lu Ye also felt, whether it was an illusion or not, that the spirit light emanating from his body was clearer than that of others at Spirit Stream Level 1.

As he was observing this, someone suddenly squatted down in front of him, picked up a piece of ore from Lu Ye's stall, and asked, "How much for this?"

How would Lu Ye know how to price it? He had displayed these few pieces of ore exactly to test the waters, so he had already prepared his response, "You make an offer. If it's appropriate, I'll sell."

At the same time, he checked the cultivation of the person who asked. Judging from the spirit light on his body, he should be a cultivator at Spirit Stream Level 2, but this guy's spirit light seemed much murkier than others.

Lu Ye suddenly realized, could this be what the sect master mentioned about murky spirit force? If so, that would mean this person had recently consumed too many elixir pills and had accumulated pill poison in his body.

The person then stated a price, "Two Spirit Stones!"

"Scram!"

Although Lu Ye did not know the exact value of his ore, he was certain that the man was hoping to get a bargain, so there was no need to think too much about it.

The man did not get angry either; he just saw that Lu Ye looked naive and had come to see if there was an advantage to be gained. Having confirmed through his gaze that Lu Ye was not someone who could be easily taken advantage of, he naturally had no reason to hold a grudge against Lu Ye and left after putting down the ore.

Subsequently, more people came to ask about the prices, and Lu Ye asked each one to make their offer, but not a single transaction was successful.

What caught Lu Ye's attention was that the origin magnetic ore was asked about the most, and the highest offer was also made for it, a price of twenty Spirit Stones by a cultivator at Spirit Stream Level 4.

It seemed that this item was indeed valuable, no wonder both Manager Yang and Zhou Cheng had used their positions to secretly stash some.

Such an item was indeed a significant wealth for cultivators at their level.

Lu Ye hadn't opened his stall, whereas the female cultivator's stall next to him continually saw its goods decrease. She was selling herbs she had mined herself from Qingyun Mountain, which attracted a wide audience, and in less than half a day, she had sold everything.

As the female cultivator packed up her stall and prepared to leave, she asked Lu Ye, "You want to know the value of these ores, don't you?"

Having observed for quite a while, how could she not understand Lu Ye's intentions?

"Yes," Lu Ye nodded. "Does sister know the value of these items?"

The female cultivator shook her head and said, "I'm not well-versed in ores. I don't even recognize what these stones of yours are, so I also don't know their worth. However, if you really want to sell them, you could go to the Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union. Their purchasing prices are a bit lower than the usual rate, but generally speaking, they're fairly honest.

The problem is that the cultivators here aren't very wealthy. Selling small items isn't an issue, but with something like your origin magnetic ore, there aren't many who have the financial capacity to buy it, and the price offered won't be too high."

Lu Ye had also noticed this issue, but he hadn't planned to sell his ores here in the first place. Now having heard the female cultivator's advice, he naturally followed it smoothly: "Thank you, sister, for your guidance."

"Then I wish you good luck!" The female cultivator smiled warmly at Lu Ye, took a few steps, and merged into the crowd, disappearing from sight.

Not long after the female cultivator left, Lu Ye also packed up his stall.

He hadn't set up the stall to sell items, but rather to more conveniently observe other cultivators and to find a method to gauge their strength.

Now, having achieved his objective with the guidance of the female cultivator, there was no need to waste more time.

One incense stick's time later, Lu Ye stood in front of a gigantic circular building, looking up at it.

In the disorganized and chaotic marketplace, such a building was certainly an eye-catching landmark.

This was the Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union, a building that effortlessly showcased its profound background and immense wealth through its sheer presence.

The union's sign hung above the main door, which, like the maw of a beast, saw countless cultivators entering and exiting. On either side of the door were a pair of glittering couplets, the left reading "Welcoming guests from Nine Provinces," the right reading "Joyously receiving wealth from all directions," with the phrase "Feel at home!" across the top.

Lu Ye followed the crowd into the main hall, and curiously, despite the many cultivators going in and out, the hall remained incredibly quiet.

Almost immediately, a pretty, slender female cultivator approached him and gave a greeting: "I've seen senior brother."

Lu Ye returned the greeting, but couldn't help glancing at the pair of fuzzy ears on her head.

This was another demon cultivator, and one who hadn't completely shape-changed. According to what that portly cultivator had said earlier, as these demon cultivators advanced in their cultivation, their demon beast characteristics would slowly vanish, making them indistinguishable from ordinary people.

So, seeing many demon cultivators with beastly traits here wasn't surprising, since the cultivators in this place didn't have high levels of cultivation.

Although she noticed Lu Ye's gaze, the female demon cultivator had grown accustomed to such looks and showed no signs of discomfort, continuing in a warm tone, "Does senior brother intend to buy, sell, or just browse?"

It seemed there were different services depending on one's needs, so Lu Ye composed himself and replied, "Sell."

The female demon cultivator's smile brightened, and she gestured with her hand: "This way, senior brother."

Lu Ye followed her in the indicated direction, which seemed to have many compartments, where shadowy figures could be seen sitting and negotiating.

Sage of Humanity - Chapter 45 - 43 Selling[1,514 words]

A while later, Lu Ye sat in a private compartment, surrounded by screens that blocked prying eyes. The female demon cultivator had disappeared without a trace, but just before she left, she asked Lu Ye to wait here, assuring him that a manager would soon come to trade with him. If there were any other instructions, he could also ring the nearby bell, and someone would come to attend to him.

There was a pot of brewed tea on the table, so Lu Ye poured himself a cup. After taking a sip, he immediately showed a look of surprise, because this tea seemed to be no ordinary brew — it contained some spirit force, though not much, it was definitely there.

This discovery made Lu Ye appreciate even more the vast wealth of Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union; this was just tea for entertaining guests, and heaven knows how much it would take to consume so much every day. Without a solid foundation, they could not afford such extravagance.

So he drank heartily. After finishing the whole pot, still no one had come to greet him. Lu Ye was not in a hurry, and gently shook the nearby bell.

Immediately, a maid from the Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union came in, "Guest, may I help you with anything?"

Lu Ye pointed to the empty pot on the table, "Another round!"

The maid was slightly startled, but she caught on quickly. With a suppressed smile, she picked up the pot and went out.

A short while later, she returned with another pot of Spiritual Tea, placing it down gently, "Enjoy your tea, guest."

It was only after Lu Ye had consumed three pots of tea and had begun to burp that a woman entered, "I apologize for the wait, Fellow Daoist. I am Liew Ruyin, and it is a pleasure to meet you."

A faint hint of her scent lingered at Lu Ye's nose, and on observing the incoming woman, dressed scantily with a large expanse of snow-white skin exposed, coupled with her soft voice, the atmosphere in the small compartment became somewhat ambiguously charged.

"No trouble at all," Lu Ye nodded.

The woman named Liew Ruyin pulled out a chair across from Lu Ye and sat down, then picked up the teapot to pour him a cup of tea herself. As she leaned forward significantly, the outline of her back appeared enticing, and the white of her chest glimpsed from the parted neckline made Lu Ye's head swim.

He quickly took a sip of tea to calm his nerves.

When she came in, Lu Ye had sensed her spirit light and inferred that the woman was at Spirit Stream Level 3, but her spirit light wasn't very clear, which suggested she often relied on elixir pills for her cultivation.

After setting down the teapot, Liew Ruyin asked, "May I know what items you are looking to sell, Fellow Daoist?"

Lu Ye took out the pieces of ore he was planning to sell from his storage sack, but of course, he didn't bring them all out at once. This was his first contact with the Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union, and he was still unclear about the union's character.

What he took out were the same pieces he had put up for sale at his street stall before.

Piece by piece, Lu Ye placed the ore in front of Liew Ruyin. She casually picked one up, examined it for a moment, and nodded slightly, "This piece of red essence iron is of good quality, though a shame it is too small. If it were larger, it could be forged into a longsword."

She picked up another piece, her beautiful eyes lighting up, "This Star Moon Stone is also good, with very few impurities."

Then she reached for the third piece...

Lu Ye witnessed what professional knowledge looked like. This woman named Liew Ruyin seemed profoundly familiar with the ore in front of Lu Ye, and her comments were all pointed and accurate, even though Lu Ye hardly understood them.

Then she picked up the origin magnetic ore, her lips carrying a smile, "This item is rare in the outer circle of the battlefield; it would fetch a good price."

Putting down the origin magnetic ore, Liew Ruyin looked at Lu Ye and said, "The union is willing to offer fifty Spirit Stones for these items. If Fellow Daoist finds the price acceptable, we can proceed with the trade."

Thanks to his observations in the marketplace earlier, Lu Ye had a rough understanding of the purchasing power of fifty Spirit Stones; moreover, the price was within his expectations.

Previously, while running his stall, even though many prospective buyers had approached with intentions of getting a bargain, overall, Lu Ye had gotten a decent idea of the general value of his ores.

One could say that the price quoted by Liew Ruyin was not far off.

He frowned slightly and said, "That's a bit cheap."

Liew Ruyin smiled and said, "Compared to Fellow Daoist selling each item individually, of course it's cheaper, but doesn't it save you a lot of trouble? The mercantile union has a large business with many people to support. Fellow Daoist should allow us some room for profit."

"Add a bit more."

Liew Ruyin raised her hand to rub her forehead, looking troubled, but her natural beauty made this gesture not at all displeasing; on the contrary, it added charm.

"Alright, since Fellow Daoist is sincere about selling, I'll take the initiative to add four more Spirit Stones. You mustn't haggle any further, otherwise I'll have to pay out of my own pocket to close this deal," she said, gazing at Lu Ye with a pitiful look as if she had been wronged.

Lu Ye certainly didn't believe her, but seeing her act this way, he knew he wasn't going to get a higher price and said, "Okay."

Liew Ruyin's smile blossomed like a flower. "How does Fellow Daoist wish to be paid, in Spirit Stones or elixir pills?"

"How do you sell these elixir pills?" Lu Ye asked, somewhat surprised that he could actually pay with elixir pills. He had planned to buy elixir pills after getting the Spirit Stones, but on second thought, many low-level cultivators must do the same. The Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union having such a method of payment undoubtedly saved one step in the process.

"A bottle of nine Spirit-Nurturing Pills is priced at ten Spirit Stones."

Lu Ye frowned and said, "Don't cheat me, outside they're only sold for one Spirit Stone each, why are yours even more expensive?"

Liew Ruyin explained, "Although they're all Spirit-Nurturing Pills, the quality of the elixir pills produced by different alchemy cultivators is not the same. The alchemy cultivators in the mercantile union who refine Spirit-Nurturing Pills are all strong cultivators with exquisite skills, not comparable to those outside.

If Fellow Daoist does not believe it, you can buy some to compare, and you will feel the difference. Moreover, if the quality of the mercantile union's elixir pills was truly questionable, there wouldn't be so many cultivators coming here to buy."

Lu Ye nodded, "You make some sense with that. Then, I'll take five bottles of elixir pills, and the rest in Spirit Stones."

"Certainly!" Liew Ruyin nodded, stood up, and said, "Fellow Daoist, please wait a moment."

She turned and left the compartment, swaying her hips as she walked away, then quickly returned, placing five bottles and four Spirit Stones in front of Lu Ye, "These are Fellow Daoist's items."

After the transaction was complete, they each stored their items in their respective storage sacks.

Before Lu Ye could stand, Liew Ruyin asked, "It's getting late. Does Fellow Daoist have a place to rest?"

Her inquiry made Lu Ye suddenly remember something—he hadn't seen any place like an inn in the marketplace, at least, he hadn't noticed one.

Seeing the expression on Lu Ye's face, Liew Ruyin understood and said, "The third floor and above of the mercantile union is an inn, where you can stay for a night for just one Spirit Stone, guaranteeing that Fellow Daoist's rest and cultivation will not be disturbed. Furthermore..."

She leaned close to Lu Ye's ear, exhaling a breath as fragrant as orchids, "If Fellow Daoist has any... other needs, they can also be fulfilled. Just notify the manager over there."

"I'm not that kind of person!" Lu Ye said sternly, while inwardly he was amazed, thinking that the Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union really did conduct all sorts of business!

Having seen many people like Lu Ye, Liew Ruyin acted as if she didn't hear his protest, speaking in a soft, sweet voice, "I'm currently off duty, but if Fellow Daoist wishes for my service, you can call for the manager at that time to find me."

Lu Ye felt his head swell, "I really am not that kind of person."

Moments later, as Liew Ruyin watched the retreating figure of Lu Ye, her smiling face turned serious, and she said annoyed, "Stingy man!"

Normally, when a cultivator conducted a large transaction here, there would be a tip of one or two Spirit Stones, especially after Liew Ruyin had raised the price for Lu Ye.

This was an unwritten rule.

However, it was Lu Ye's first time making a transaction here, so naturally he didn't know about tipping.