

Sage of Humanity - Chapter 46 - 44 I'm Back Again[1,436 words]

Many people like Liew Ruyin in the mercantile union are responsible for transactions with cultivators. Although they receive a salary every month, the salary is not high and does not meet their cultivation needs.

Tips from clients are one of their additional sources of income. Of course, being willing to humble themselves and serve clients like Liew Ruyin is another way to make money.

Everyone in the mercantile union comes from a background of independent cultivators, and before joining the union, they were all poor and destitute. They know better than any cultivator the cruelty of the cultivation world and the difficulty of survival. Therefore, serving clients is not something they find hard to accept; it's a necessity driven by life.

Stepping out of Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union, Lu Ye sighed.

He had intended to ask if he could sell those few storage sacks, but Liew Ruyin's handling of the situation made him forget all about it.

It seemed inappropriate to turn back now, so he would have to wait until next time. He had planned to set off on his journey to the Righteous Blood Sect's residence, but now it seemed there was no need to rush.

Having some good items on hand, he had to completely digest them and convert them into his own cultivation – that was the proper way. With a higher cultivation, the journey would also be safer.

As for staying at Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union, Lu Ye didn't consider it, as he was short on funds. The price of one Spirit Stone per night may not seem like much, but if he were to stay for many days, it would be a huge expense.

With only four Spirit Stones left, Lu Ye found an apothecary based on his daytime memories and spent two Spirit Stones on two Spirit-Nurturing Pills, then returned to the street where he had set up his stall during the day.

He casually placed a few pieces of ore on the stall from his storage sack, sat down with his legs crossed, and took out another Spirit Stone.

This was the first time he had obtained Spirit Stones, which could be used to aid in cultivation.

Lu Ye had already tried cultivating with medicine, and now wanted to try cultivating with Spirit Stones to compare the efficiencies. If it proved efficient, he would not need to spend Spirit Stones on elixir pills in the future.

Though he had never cultivated with Spirit Stones before, he was familiar with the concept – during the day, he had seen many stall owners selling goods while holding a Spirit Stone and cultivating, looking very comfortable and content.

Now, mimicking what he had learned, Lu Ye discovered one advantage of cultivating with Spirit Stones.

That is, you can interrupt cultivation at any time, unlike after ingesting elixir pills, where the pill energy spreads in the abdomen. If not guided in time, it could cause accumulations of pill energy.

Cultivating with Spirit Stones is different. If something happens, you can interrupt cultivation immediately without any adverse effects.

At night, the street was still bustling. From time to time, cultivators would come to inquire about prices. Lu Ye handled it as he did during the day and astoundingly completed a transaction, selling a piece of ore for five Spirit Stones.

By dawn, Lu Ye stopped this round of cultivation and opened his hand to look at the Spirit Stone – it had only shrunk a little. Looking at the increase of spirit force in his tenth spiritual orifice, Lu Ye frowned slightly.

After a night of trying, he reached several conclusions.

Cultivating with Spirit Stones is safer than with elixir pills. Firstly, the cultivation process can be interrupted anytime. Secondly, there are no hidden dangers with Spirit Stones, similar to absorbing nature's spiritual energy.

However, in terms of efficiency, it is nowhere near that of ingesting elixir pills.

Perhaps it's an issue with his own talents, making it difficult to channel the Spiritual Energy into his body. Lu Ye felt that with his current rate of cultivation, it would probably take several days of non-stop cultivation to deplete a Spirit Stone.

Other cultivators might have a higher efficiency, but definitely not comparable to taking elixir pills.

As for cost-efficiency...

The value of one Spirit Stone is basically equivalent to one Spirit-Nurturing Pill. The amount of spirit force gained after consuming a Spirit Stone is roughly the same as that gained from an elixir pill, making the cost-efficiency about the same.

After these trials, Lu Ye understood why everyone needed to convert Spirit Stones into medicine for cultivation – in terms of efficiency, taking elixir pills is indeed higher and naturally more preferred by everyone.

As daylight approached, Lu Ye packed up his stall and left the marketplace.

Since he was unwilling to spend unnecessary money on lodging at Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union, he would have to find another place.

He prepared to return to the cave he had found on Qingyun Mountain before, deemed relatively safe, where no one would disturb his cultivation.

The reason he didn't leave at night was mainly because it was dangerous to travel then.

Before departing, he spent two Spirit Stones on a lot of food, as hunting in the mountains was very time-consuming, and there weren't many wild animals left in that area anymore.

He took stock of his current possessions: forty-seven Spirit-Nurturing Pills, five low-grade Spirit Stones, almost thirty Spirit Talismans, six healing pills, nearly thirty pieces of origin magnetic ore, big and small, as well as some ores whose names Lu Ye couldn't recall, and four sets of clothes for changing.

Compared to when he first entered the Spirit Stream battlefield, his assets were roughly the same, but his cultivation had improved tremendously.

Lu Ye believed that if he could convert all the things he had into strength, he might be able to advance several levels in the Spirit Stream realm.

However, such things couldn't be rushed; they needed to be planned step by step.

The marketplace saw many cultivators coming and going, most of them in groups, but there were also lone wolves like Lu Ye—those independent cultivators who lacked support from family or sects.

Lu Ye left the marketplace when dawn was breaking; as he was alone, he inevitably had to be more cautious.

Upon smoothly entering Qingyun Mountain, Lu Ye ran at full speed, making detours on purpose a few times to make sure no one was following him before proceeding along the path leading out of the mountain.

By noon, Lu Ye had rushed back to his previous cave.

To his surprise, there was some noise inside the cave. He crept in cautiously, a Spirit Talisman clenched in his hand and ready to strike, but when he took a good look, he was almost beside himself with anger.

There, inside the cave, a white figure was lying on the ground, sound asleep—who else could it be but Big Tiger?

Yiyi floated out from Big Tiger's forehead, and as their eyes met, the scene became somewhat awkward.

"What are you doing in my house?" Lu Ye demanded.

Yiyi also asked, "Didn't you leave?"

"I've come back!"

A moment later, Big Tiger's robust figure darted out of the cave, turned back to roar at Lu Ye, and atop Big Tiger's head, Yiyi looked utterly indignant, gritting her teeth, "Big liar! Untrustworthy and disloyal!"

"Get lost!" came Lu Ye's shout from inside the cave.

Having driven away the intruders, one spirit and one tiger, who had taken over his nest, Lu Ye ate something and then entered a state of cultivation.

He first took out two Spirit-Nurturing Pills he had bought with Spirit Stones and consumed one. After the pill energy dispersed in his abdomen, he guided the spirit force into his spiritual orifice.

The spirit force in the tenth orifice slowly accumulated.

When the pill energy of one Spirit-Nurturing Pill had been fully expended, Lu Ye opened his eyes and noticed an issue—the efficacy of the Spirit-Nurturing Pill he bought from the marketplace seemed not as good as those given by the sect master. The difference wasn't huge, but it was there, discernible from the spirit force accumulated in his spiritual orifice.

He didn't rest; he took another Spirit-Nurturing Pill and, after the pill energy was completely spent, became even more certain of this result.

Afterwards, he took another Spirit-Nurturing Pill that he had gotten from the Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union and consumed it.

After comparing, he finally concluded that Liew Ruyin hadn't lied to him—the Spirit-Nurturing Pills from the Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union were indeed better than those sold outside and were equivalent to those given by the sect master.

Looking at it this way, he hadn't wasted his money. In the future, when buying elixir pills, he would still need to go to the Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union, where at least the quality was assured.

Sage of Humanity - Chapter 47 - 45 We Are So Pitiful[1,304 words]

Within the mountain cave, Lu Ye diligently practiced without rest, consuming Spirit-Nurturing Pills one after another. As one spiritual orifice filled up, the barrier of the next began to break. When tired, he slept; when hungry, he ate.

The days passed uneventfully, even somewhat dull and tasteless, but Lu Ye, feeling the continuous accumulation of spirit force within him, knew this was the process of growing stronger.

Before achieving the Spirit Stream Realm, he had managed to open an orifice every three days, consuming about six Spirit-Nurturing Pills each time.

Now that he had reached the Spirit Stream Realm, he could still maintain the pace of opening an orifice every three days, but the consumption had increased a bit, requiring eight or nine Spirit-Nurturing Pills to open each orifice.

The reason he could maintain the pace of orifice-opening was that his cultivation had improved, and he could refine the elixir pills more efficiently than before.

Previously, it took half a day to fully refine a Spirit-Nurturing Pill, refining only two in one day, but now, if he concentrated well enough, he could refine about three.

Thus, even though his consumption had increased, he could keep up the speed of opening orifices.

Time flew, and half a month passed in a hurry. The last Spirit-Nurturing Pill was consumed.

Lu Ye examined his cultivation. His realm was still at the Spirit Stream Level 1, but he had opened up to the 15th orifice, and the spirit force in the 15th orifice wasn't yet full.

He was only three orifices away from reaching the Spirit Stream Level 2! If he could advance to the Spirit Stream Level 2, his strength would undoubtedly see a significant increase. For now, though, although his stores of spirit force had greatly expanded, the newly opened orifices were not yet integrated, unable to offer much help to Lu Ye in combat.

In his hands, he still had ores that could be exchanged for Spirit Stones, and with his previous experience in mind, he planned to make another trip to the Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union.

Walking out of the cave leisurely, the sun shone brightly outside. The dense canopy of the forest allowed only sporadic rays of light to pierce through the dense foliage, creating spots of light on the ground.

Lu Ye squinted slightly, took a moment to adjust, then continued on his way.

He hadn't walked far when he suddenly heard some unusual noises not far away. He frowned slightly and stealthily approached the source of the sounds.

A moment later, he hid behind a big tree and looked ahead.

In that direction, three cultivators stood as if facing a great enemy. Each of them looked like they had lost a loved one, their expressions tense, with one of the female cultivators almost in tears.

Not far from these three cultivators, a robust, snow-white big tiger paced back and forth. With amber eyes that glanced occasionally at the cultivators, it exuded an immense sense of pressure.

As it paced, its mouth opened and closed: "Open your storage sacks and throw them on the ground, then get out of here. Otherwise, this king wouldn't mind eating you!"

Lu Ye's eyes twitched at the sound, recognizing the solemn and aged voice he had heard once before, which turned out to be the trickery of the minion spirit named Yiyi.

The three cultivators were clearly frightened. One of them shakily untied the storage sack from his waist, unlocked the restriction lock, threw it on the ground, and, looking at the big tiger with terror, pleaded, "Great King, please calm your anger. We did not mean to offend. Everything is here; please spare us."

The big tiger looked at the storage sack on the ground and roared: "Go away!"

The man quickly turned around and ran without looking back.

With him leading the way, the other two cultivators also hastily threw down their storage sacks and fled for their lives.

After making sure the three cultivators had run far away, the big tiger slowly paced forward. However, before it could reach the storage sacks, someone suddenly leaped out, grabbing the three sacks in hand.

The big tiger was startled and leaped backward. At the same time, a small figure floated out from atop its head, staring dumbfounded at Lu Ye: "Those are our things!"

Lu Ye, holding the storage sacks, gave them a quick check, and frowned.

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He found that the belongings in these storage sacks were pitifully scarce; each person only had a few Spirit-Nurturing Pills and some herbs, along with a mishmash of household items. As for Spirit Stones, there was no sign of them at all.

Cursing under his breath at their poverty, Lu Ye took out the Spirit-Nurturing Pills, divided them into two portions, kept one for himself, and tossed the other to Yiyi: "Finders keepers!"

Yiyi was shocked by his action, and lunged at him with bared teeth and flailing claws: "Give them back to me!"

"Clang!" Longsword unsheathed, Lu Ye looked at Yiyi who pounced towards him, smiling silently.

Yiyi's form stiffened in front of the Longsword, grinding her teeth in anger, swearing fiercely, and her small mouth was as if smeared with honey.

"Or should I call those three back?"

Yiyi immediately shrank back, reluctantly withdrawing, knowing deep down that she couldn't get the elixir pills back from Lu Ye's hand. She could feel that Lu Ye had become much stronger than he was over a month ago, and if it really came to a fight, the big tiger would stand no chance.

However, being robbed made her feel incredibly wronged, muttering under her breath about shamelessness and despicability, among other things.

"I have a question for you," Lu Ye began.

"I won't tell you anything!" Yiyi snapped.

"Answer well, and I'll give you these items back," Lu Ye said, waving the stolen goods in his hand. A few Spirit-Nurturing Pills were hardly of consequence to him anyway.

"Heh!" Yiyi let out a scornful laugh, sitting proudly on the big tiger's head with the airs of one who considers money as mere dirt, and looking up she said: "Ask away!"

"I saw many demon cultivators in the marketplace at the foot of the mountain, and they didn't seem to be anything special. So why are those people so afraid of you?"

This was something that Lu Ye found quite puzzling. Those demon cultivators were definitely stronger than the big tiger. Logically speaking, cultivators who were used to seeing demon cultivators shouldn't be so terrified of a demon beast that hadn't changed its shape, becoming utterly panicked after a mere few threatening words.

"You just don't understand," Yiyi said smugly. "Shapeshifted demon cultivators and unshapeshifted demon beasts are not the same..."

With her explanation, Lu Ye finally understood. Not all demon beasts choose to shift their shape, whether due to issues with their spiritual intelligence, their own choices, or perhaps because of their Bloodline heritage. In any case, a considerable number of them still retain their original form.

This type of demon beast doesn't speak while its strength is low, but once they reach a certain level of power, they can articulate human speech.

In other words, a demon beast that can speak already counts as a heavyweight! As for how strong they actually are, at the very least, they're not beings that low-level cultivators on the fringe can afford to provoke.

Therefore the combined threat posed by the big tiger and Yiyi was terrifying, and quite a few cultivators who strayed into their territory suffered as a result.

"So that's how it is!" Lu Ye realized, feeling that he had learned some more common knowledge of the cultivation world.

He tossed back the stolen goods and turned to walk out of the mountain.

Yiyi checked them over, confirmed there were no issues, and shouted after Lu Ye's retreating figure: "Are you leaving?"

"None of your damn business!" Lu Ye's voice carried back from the distance.

"Dammit!" Yiyi muttered under her breath, turned to hug the big tiger's head, and said mournfully: "Amber, we are so pitiful!"

"Woo ao..."

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Sage of Humanity - Chapter 48 - 46: The Difference in Maps[1,393 words]

Emerging from the mountains once more, Lu Ye seemed much more at ease, making his way to the Qingyun Marketplace at the foot of the mountain, and then on to the Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union with the familiarity of an old hand.

Without waiting for the maid at the door to inquire, Lu Ye uttered a single word, "Sell!"

Sitting in the private booth, he was once again sipping the Spiritual Tea provided by the Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union, but unfortunately, this time he had barely finished a single pot when someone entered.

"I apologize for the wait, Fellow Daoist!"

Accompanying the voice, a middle-aged man entered the booth and bowed to Lu Ye, "I am Liu Quan, it is a pleasure to meet you, Fellow Daoist."

Lu Ye nodded in acknowledgment, and Liu Quan took a seat, getting straight to the point, "May I ask what you are looking to sell, Fellow Daoist?"

Lu Ye took out the ore he had prepared beforehand, of course, the origin magnetic ore being the main attraction. The ore sold last time for those Spirit Stones, much of it was due to the value of the origin magnetic ore.

This time, the origin magnetic ore pieces he took out were a little bigger, and as such, might fetch a slightly higher price.

Liu Quan inspected each piece in turn, and then quoted a price for each one. During this process, Lu Ye remained silent, merely sipping his tea.

Finally, setting down the origin magnetic ore, Liu Quan spoke, "This item is rare in the outer circle and can be priced at thirty-eight Spirit Stones. The total would be fifty-one Spirit Stones. If Fellow Daoist finds this acceptable, then we can proceed with the transaction."

"Can't it go any higher?" Lu Ye looked at him.

Liu Quan shook his head with a wry smile, "It cannot go higher. After these items are collected, they still require experts to refine and extract useful materials from them. If the price were set any higher, then the mercantile union would have no profit margin."

This guy is more difficult to deal with than Liew Ruyin! Lu Ye couldn't help but curse inwardly. Last time, after some bargaining with Liew Ruyin, she immediately added four more Spirit Stones to the offer. Despite being a woman, she was much more straightforward than this Liu Quan.

What he didn't realize was that Liew Ruyin had been willing to raise the price because of an unwritten rule, and she had also hoped to conduct another line of business with him. That's why she had been so forthcoming. Unfortunately, Lu Ye was completely unaware of such a rule and hadn't even given her a tip, which left Liew Ruyin slightly displeased.

Liu Quan, being a man, had no intention of conducting any other sort of business with Lu Ye, naturally adopting a businesslike demeanor.

After a brief silence, Lu Ye, not wanting to waste more words, took out four storage sacks, "You can open these, can't you?"

These were given to him by Yiyi before, who had mentioned that someone in Qingyun Marketplace could unlock the restriction locks on storage sacks. However, last time Lu Ye had completely forgotten about it.

Liu Quan, with a calm expression, took the storage sacks, evidently used to such requests. After a brief inspection, he said, "If Fellow Daoist wishes our help in opening these, it is certainly possible, but there will be a charge."

"How much?"

Liu Quan named a price.

Lu Ye's face darkened; that price seemed a bit steep.

With a smile, Liu Quan said, "Of course, Fellow Daoist could sell these storage sacks to our mercantile union for this amount each."

He gestured with his hand to indicate the amount.

Lu Ye laughed, "That's even less than what you just quoted me!"

In other words, the number of Spirit Stones required to unlock the storage sacks was in fact more than the amount one would get from selling the storage sacks directly to the mercantile union, which hardly seemed reasonable.

Liu Quan said with a smile, "I understand what you're thinking, Fellow Daoist, but that really is the price. You must understand, the storage sacks of outer circle cultivators are not worth much, and

who knows, there might be nothing inside, just an empty sack. The mercantile union will have to assume some risk, hence the price won't be very high.

Of course, if Fellow Daoist wishes to take a gamble and see if there are any treasures worth a fortune inside these storage sacks, you only need to pay a small unlocking fee. It all depends on how Fellow Daoist decides."

Lu Ye remembered the three cultivators who were robbed by Yiyi and big tiger before; there indeed wasn't much of value in their storage sacks.

He immediately got an idea, and after some bargaining with Liu Quan, he sold the four storage sacks for twenty Spirit Stones to the mercantile union.

Adding to the previous amount, that would be seventy-one Spirit Stones!

With the deal concluded, Liu Quan also seemed quite happy and asked, "How would Fellow Daoist like to make the payment? In Spirit Stones or elixir pills?"

Lu Ye asked, "Do you have a map of the Spirit Stream battlefield?" He had thought to ask this because he remembered the local wealthy landlord he had met when he first entered the marketplace, who mentioned that maps were sold within the mercantile union.

If he wanted to go to the Righteous Blood Sect's territory, he would have to figure out its exact location first. Having a map would naturally make things more convenient.

Liu Quan immediately became enthusiastic, "Of course we do, which kind of map does Fellow Daoist wish to have?"

"How many kinds do you have?"

"There are three-part maps, seven-part maps, and ten-part maps."

"What's the difference?" Lu Ye couldn't help but frown. It's just a map sale; why all the fuss?

"This is how it is..." Liu Quan began to explain, and as Lu Ye listened to his explanation, he gradually understood the differences between the three types of maps.

In the entire Spirit Stream battlefield, there are countless strongholds of all sizes, after all, the sects from the entire Nine Provinces have their own territories within the battlefield. The powers crisscross and interweave, which means territories often change hands, making map drawing a cumbersome task.

However, the Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union had this capability because it had countless branches throughout the entire battlefield. They could easily draw up a map of the entire battlefield by compiling the situations of various regions, an ability that no other power possessed.

A complete map included everything about the strongholds in the Spirit Stream battlefield, detailing the affiliations to various camps and the grades of the sects, as well as marking the various terrains and landscapes of the battlefield.

This was the ten-part map.

The seven-part map was a reduced version of the ten-part map, encompassing only about seventy percent of the strongholds in the battlefield...

And the three-part map was even less detailed, with only thirty percent of the stronghold information, and none of the natural terrains and landscapes that the battlefield originally had...

For Lu Ye, if he were to buy a map, it would definitely be the ten-part map, because the Righteous Blood Sect was only a 9th grade sect, which might not be marked on the three-part or seven-part map. If he bought one and couldn't find the Righteous Blood Sect, it would be a huge loss.

Moreover, there was another advantage to buying the ten-part map; he could always go to the Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union to update the map later. Due to the constant warfare in the Spirit Stream battlefield, territories frequently changed hands—today a territory might belong to the Haotian Alliance, and tomorrow it could belong to the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge.

If one wasn't careful and stumbled into these areas, disaster was certain, so having an up-to-date map could avoid many risks.

However, when Lu Ye asked about the price, he discarded the idea.

A ten-part map sold for six hundred Spirit Stones, even after a discount.

As for the three-part map that Liu Quan highly recommended, it would still cost several tens of Spirit Stones, but what would Lu Ye do with a three-part map?

In the end, he could only conclude the transaction and keep one of the seventy-one Spirit Stones, using the remaining seventy to buy seven bottles with a total of sixty-three Spirit-Nurturing Pills. With so many Spirit-Nurturing Pills, his advancement to the Spirit Stream Level 2 was imminent.

Sage of Humanity - Chapter 49 - 47: Spirit Stream Level 2[1,375 words]

Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union, Liu Quan courteously escorted Lu Ye to the door, as most cultivators from the outer circles are quite impoverished, except for those disciples from big sects.

Therefore, a transaction involving several dozen spirit stones was not easy to come across, and since Lu Ye was quite straightforward in nature, Liu Quan naturally wanted to get to know him better for future business opportunities.

Watching Lu Ye's figure disappear, Liu Quan turned around only to be greeted by a fragrant breeze, with someone standing behind him.

"You scared me!" Liu Quan said with annoyance, "Why are you standing behind me instead of attending to the guests?"

The person behind him whined in a delicate voice, "I missed you."

Liu Quan, with a guilty conscience, glanced left and right to make sure no one was paying attention to this side before he lowered his voice and said, "I'll come to find you after I'm off work tonight."

"Okay..." The woman responded with a smile.

As if nothing had happened, Liu Quan walked back to the main hall to greet other customers, while the woman stood there, quietly watching the direction in which Lu Ye had left, her eyes thoughtful.

When night fell, the two shared an intimate embrace. After their lovemaking, they chatted casually. The topic was subtly steered by the woman towards the day's transaction. Liu Quan felt somewhat sleepy and responded sporadically, soon falling into a deep slumber.

The woman lay in his arms but was having trouble falling asleep.

If she wasn't mistaken, that customer from the day was the same person she had served half a month ago, who had sold a lot of ores and bought some elixir pills before leaving.

She had not expected that in just half a month, he would return to sell ores again.

Seeing that customer's appearance, he was undoubtedly an independent cultivator. It was naturally intriguing that an independent cultivator, alone and without support, could amass a wealth of several dozen spirit stones in such a short time.

Working at Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union like her, even counting the extra income, she would at most earn twelve or thirteen spirit stones per month. This reminded her of her days as an independent cultivator. By comparison, she couldn't help feeling a bit sour and let her thoughts wander for a long while before feeling drowsy, but she couldn't sleep soundly.

Meanwhile, in the cave at Qingyun Mountain, Lu Ye was cultivating.

After completing his transaction at Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union earlier that day, he had bought a lot of food with the remaining spirit stones and hurried back without a pause, just making it back here before nightfall.

With enough elixir pills at hand, he immediately began his medicinal cultivation.

Pill by pill, the spirit force in the 15th orifice gradually filled up, moving onto the assault on the 16th orifice.

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Twelve days later, inside the cave, Lu Ye sat cross-legged, calm and focused.

Today was a big day; if all went well, he would advance to Spirit Stream Level 2.

Since returning twelve days ago, he had continuously consumed over thirty Spirit-Nurturing Pills and finally opened the 18th orifice, also bringing the spirit force of the 18th orifice to full capacity.

Recalling the path of cultivation from the Golden Cicada Carefree Method, Lu Ye activated his own spirit force, starting from the 10th orifice, sequentially passing through the 11th, 12th... until the 18th orifice.

When he had achieved Spirit Stream Level 1, he had done this before, so now he was familiar with the process and encountered no difficulties.

The spirit force smoothly passed through the 9 major spiritual orifices, flowing gently like a stream. With Lu Ye's actions, the spirit force circulating through these 9 major spiritual orifices sped up continuously, moving in a circular cycle.

Until a certain limit, Lu Ye only felt a surge throughout his body as the spirit force flowing in his 10th to 18th orifices began to circulate on its own.

Spirit Stream Level 2 had been achieved!

Having experienced this once already, Lu Ye did not feel much excitement but merely the natural progression of events.

He was no longer the cultivator at the 3rd orifice who had been cast away to the Spirit Stream battlefield over two months ago.

If reaching Spirit Stream Level 1 had given him the qualifications to survive in the outer circle of the battlefield, then at Level 2, he was now qualified to travel through it. Of course, there was still a gap compared to cultivators with higher cultivation, but Lu Ye was already very satisfied.

Compared to achieving Spirit Stream Level 1, his promotion to Level 2 took even less time. It had taken him roughly forty days to advance from having opened the 3rd orifice to the Spirit Stream Realm, but it took less than a month to move from Level 1 to Level 2.

This was mainly because he had an ample supply of cultivation resources. Even so, this pace of cultivation was terrifying.

You must know that cultivators in the early stages of their cultivation need about ten days to open each orifice, primarily because they cultivate by absorbing nature's spiritual energy. With their cultivation not being high enough, the efficiency of the absorption is low, so naturally, the pace of cultivation isn't fast.

This situation would improve slightly only after reaching Spirit Stream Level 4.

In other words, for a typical cultivator at the beginning of their cultivation journey, advancing one level every three months was normal. But for Lu Ye, averaging one level a month, this was the joy of pill-assisted cultivation.

At Level 1, Lu Ye only had a Minor Circumambulation cycle of spirit force from his Root Spiritual Orifice up to his 9th orifice. However, after reaching Level 2, he now had another cycle that started at the 10th orifice and ended at the 18th orifice, giving him two spirit force circulation systems within his body.

Consequently, he could mobilize more spirit force in a short period, and naturally, the destructive power of his spirit force was stronger.

Upon reaching Level 3, he would have three Minor Circumambulation cycles, and so on. A cultivator at Spirit Stream Level 9 would have nine such circulation systems within their body.

There were still thirty Spirit-Nurturing Pills left. Although Lu Ye wanted to continue his cultivation, he also knew the principle that haste makes waste.

First, he ate something, then stepped out of his mountain retreat to find a mountain spring for a bath and changed into a clean set of clothes. Afterward, amidst the trickling sounds of the spring water, he took out the Golden Cicada Carefree Method to study.

Next, he needed to work towards reaching Spirit Stream Level 3. He had to familiarize himself with the positions of the spiritual orifices after the 18th, which would facilitate his subsequent cultivation.

The wilderness was serene, with occasional sounds of birds and insects. Mottled sunlight filtered through the leafy canopy, illuminating the young man's profile like a scene from a painting.

"What are you sneaking around for?" Lu Ye called out without even lifting his head.

From behind a large tree, a small head peeked out. With her disheveled appearance, she would certainly startle anyone unaware of the situation.

Yiyi glanced at the manual in Lu Ye's hands, and when she saw that it was a low-level Cultivation Technique, she turned up her nose in disdain.

"Is there something you want?" Lu Ye suppressed the urge to punch her and asked, tilting his head.

"When are you leaving?" Yiyi asked.

Although Lu Ye hadn't gone out hunting again during this time, it was still her and Big Tiger's territory. How could they allow others to snore next to their couch? If it weren't for her wariness of the Spirit Talisman in Lu Ye's hand, she and Big Tiger would have worked together to drive Lu Ye away a long time ago. However, having suffered a loss at Lu Ye's hand before, Yiyi didn't dare act rashly.

Moreover, Yiyi could tell that in just two months, Lu Ye had grown much stronger.

Lu Ye closed the book, stood up, and stretched, "Tired, I'm going back to sleep!"

"Hey, I'm talking to you!" Yiyi said angrily. But she got no response and could only grit her teeth and curse, "You rogue, you disgusting thing! You're really making me mad, wahhh..." She scratched and clawed at a nearby tree, causing bark and splinters to fly.

Sage of Humanity - Chapter 50 - 48 Pursuit[1,321 words]

After a day of recuperation, Lu Ye felt the exhaustion from consecutive days of cultivation sweep away—it was time to advance towards Spirit Stream Level 3!

He didn't rush to consume an elixir pill but first stimulated his spirit force to pinpoint the location of the 19th orifice.

Now at Spirit Stream Level 2, his spirit force was much more robust and plentiful than it had been two months earlier, making the task of locating the spiritual orifices all the more effortless.

Within the time it took for one incense stick to burn down, he found the location of the 19th orifice.

Only then did he take out a Spirit-Nurturing Pill and consume it, refining the pill energy and directing his spirit force to assault the spiritual orifice barrier of the 19th orifice.

Three days later, having used nearly eleven Spirit-Nurturing Pills, the 19th orifice was filled.

This result was expected.

Before achieving the Spirit Stream Realm, the frequency of his orifice-opening was roughly one orifice every three days, costing six elixir pills.

Once he reached Spirit Stream Level 1, the frequency of opening orifices didn't change much, but the number of pills needed increased—about eight or nine each time.

Now at Spirit Stream Level 2, the consumption had further increased to eleven pills, with little change in the time required, mainly because his cultivation had improved, and he was refining the elixir pills more efficiently.

From this, it seems that the higher the Cultivation Realm, the more elixir pills would be needed to open orifices in the future.

He still had twenty elixir pills left, which should be enough to open two more orifices.

Lu Ye silently calculated that at the rate of one orifice every three days, it would take him a total of one thousand and eighty days to open all 360 orifices!

This calculation made him inwardly gasp; he didn't know how other cultivators practiced, but his own cultivation speed should be relatively fast. Yet even so, nearly three years would be needed to cultivate to Spirit Stream Level 9.

In the following days, Lu Ye stayed inside, not stepping out of his cave until the very last Spirit-Nurturing Pill was consumed.

The outcome was almost as he had anticipated—the spiritual orifice had opened to the 21st orifice, but was not yet filled.

To cultivate to the 27th orifice, at the very least, he would need nearly seventy more Spirit-Nurturing Pills. The only ore he had left now was the origin magnetic ore, having traded away the other miscellaneous ores to Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union during the previous two transactions.

This time he would have to sell two pieces of origin magnetic ore, in order to buy back seventy elixir pills.

Half a day later, when Lu Ye entered the Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union and came out again, his storage sack held eighty-one more Spirit-Nurturing Pills and a few Spirit Stones.

A slender figure stood at the window on the second floor of the mercantile union, watching his departing figure. After hesitating for a long while, she sighed, placed her finger on the back of her hand, and immediately a marking emerged, unlike the blue battlefield marking on Lu Ye's hand, the one on the woman's hand was yellow.

She whispered a few words to the marking, and it disappeared.

A short while later, she exited the mercantile union, smiling and greeting acquaintances she encountered.

In Qingyun Mountain, Lu Ye ran towards the direction of the cave. He wasn't sure if it was his imagination or something else, but he'd been feeling an odd sensation ever since he left the Qingyun Marketplace.

Yet he couldn't quite put his finger on what exactly felt strange.

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Not until he had circled the jungle several times did he suddenly notice a figure lurking nearby; but before he could get a clear look, the figure had vanished.

Was he being watched? Lu Ye immediately became alert.

Each time he entered or left the marketplace, he was extremely cautious, especially on the way back. The previous two times nothing had happened, but this time he found himself inexplicably targeted by a mysterious cultivator, leaving him perplexed. He wasn't sure whether his pursuer had set out specifically to find him or if it was a chance encounter.

If it was the latter, then so be it; but if it was the former, it would be rather intriguing.

Luckily, the other's speed wasn't very fast. With Lu Ye fully exerting himself, the person found it difficult to catch up. This indicated that the pursuer's cultivation wasn't very high.

This wasn't hard to understand, as the cultivators who could roam the outer circle of the battlefield weren't known for their high cultivation.

Just as he was thinking this, there was a surge of spirit force from behind, followed by a chill. Lu Ye turned his head to look and saw an ice spike hurtling through the air, reaching him in the blink of an eye.

Lu Ye was startled and hastily turned around, drawing his sword and slashing out. As he channeled spirit force, his longsword shattered the ice spike, and the scattered chill covered his face.

Knocked off balance by the impact of the ice spike, Lu Ye stumbled several steps backwards. Rolling with the momentum, he managed to regain his footing, though he appeared extremely disheveled.

However, by the time he stood up, the ambusher had already closed in. The man was a few years older than him, pale and beardless, with fist-sized earrings on both ears, exuding quite an exotic flair.

The weapon in his hand resembled both a sword and a knife, longer than an average sword, but only half as wide as a normal blade, similar to the legendary Xiuchun Sword.

Seizing the moment Lu Ye was getting up, the fair-skinned male cultivator swung his sword down with force.

Caught off guard, Lu Ye had no time to stimulate the Sharpness spirit runes to reinforce his longsword and could only lift it to block.

With a clang, sparks flew, and a numbness shot through Lu Ye's palms. His longsword nearly flew out of his grip, and under the force of the slash, his form buckled, almost bringing him to his knees.

"Oh?" The fair-skinned man appeared somewhat surprised, not expecting Lu Ye to have withstood his fully powered strike.

As the man was still puzzled, Lu Ye's longsword had already parried his weapon, thrusting towards the man's chest.

The male cultivator didn't panic, flicking his long knife a few times. Before Lu Ye could react to what happened, he felt a pain in his arm, his thrust losing power and easily dodged by the other party.

The void thrust caused Lu Ye to lean forward, and a flash of blade light caught his eye. Lu Ye felt a piercing cold envelop him as the breath of death rushed toward his face.

Clang... the long knife struck Lu Ye's chest without the sensation of cutting flesh; instead, it sent him flying backwards.

Upon closer examination, Lu Ye was enveloped in a golden light. It was this layer of light that had protected him and saved him from a severe injury! Realizing he was no match, he had hastily taken out a defensive Spirit Talisman and slapped it onto himself.

"Golden Body Talisman?" The fair-skinned man's eyes reddened slightly—not from jealousy of Lu Ye's use of the Spirit Talisman, but because the talisman should have been his spoils of war. Seeing Lu Ye waste it made him feel pained.

However, this confirmed that the information he had obtained was correct; this Spirit Stream Level 2 independent cultivator indeed had substantial wealth. Otherwise, how could he have a Spirit Talisman to use? After all, a single talisman could be worth a dozen or more Spirit Stones, and it was rare for low-level cultivators to use them in fights.

Most could only afford to keep one or two for emergencies.

Watching the golden glow enveloping Lu Ye, the fair-skinned man glided back several yards, holding the knife in one hand and forming hand seals with the other. As a sneer curled on his lips, visible spirit force gathered at his fingertips.

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