

Humanity 541

Chapter 541 Big Loss

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When Tao Zhengyu followed Yiyi into the New Moon Sect's territory, the scene he witnessed was one he would never forget for the rest of his life.

Several gruesome corpses were scattered haphazardly on the ground, the earth was covered with splattered blood, and following that trail of blood and bodies, they finally reached the front of the Heaven's Augury Hall of the New Moon Sect.

On the steps of Heaven's Augury Hall, a figure sat casually, covered in blood, a long knife placed beside him; purple thunderbolt power roamed around the figure like spirit snakes.

Just looking at that purple thunderbolt gave Tao Zhengyu an extremely uncomfortable feeling, making it hard to imagine the torment one would suffer if enveloped by such power.

And inside the Heaven's Augury Hall behind this figure, an overwhelming stench of blood filled the air, with at least a dozen or twenty bodies piled up within.

This was the Core Circle, where every cultivator was at least at Level 9, if not higher.

But those cultivators who Tao Zhengyu once looked up to were now all lying in pools of blood, their bodies slowly cooling.

Along the way, he saw about fifty bodies or so.

Looking at the figure sitting on the steps, Tao Zhengyu suddenly felt a profound sense of reverence; in that moment, he clearly felt that this mountain before him was one he could never surmount in his lifetime.

This was his own Fifth Senior Brother!

Months ago, by his own strength, he subdued the entire Ten Thousand Demons Ridge to the point where none dared to speak out. On the day he advanced to the Cloud River Realm, the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge celebrated joyously with drums and gongs filling the air.

But who could have imagined that in just under three short months, he had again entered the Spirit Stream battlefield alone and picked out a sect to confront.

Stepping forward, Tao Zhengyu bowed respectfully, "Fifth Senior Brother."

"Go inside," was the response.

"Yes," Tao Zhengyu knew the purpose of Lu Ye bringing him here, and immediately stepped into the Heaven's Augury Hall, starting to plunder the many enhancements on the Heaven's Augury Pillar with his authority as the Governor.

After taking over as the Governor of the Righteous Blood Sect territory, this was the first time he'd done such a thing, but it wasn't difficult; after a bit of exploration, he knew how to proceed.

Yiyi placed the storage sacks she had collected along the way in front of Lu Ye and asked with concern, "Lu Ye, are you alright?"

The Soul-Destroying Divine Lightning was targeting the psyche and was extremely repressive to a Spiritual Body like Yiyi, so even just looking at the purple thunderbolt made Yiyi feel dizzy.

"I'm fine," Lu Ye replied casually. The Talent Tree continued to burn the invading Soul-Destroying Divine Lightning, so he felt relatively good, despite the pain, but it was bearable.

His merit, however, had not increased; in fact, it had decreased by nearly two thousand points.

It seems that even if Heaven's Augury suppressed his cultivation to the 9th Heaven level, the overall handling of merit still calculated based on his Cloud River Level 3 cultivation.

Killing enemies with a cultivation several levels above Spirit Stream Realm cultivators naturally would not grant any merit, rather merit would be deducted instead.

A bit of a loss!

Originally, Lu Ye came to the New Moon Sect to recoup his losses, but now not only was there no gain, but his losses were even greater.

Luckily, there were still numerous storage sacks. Lu Ye tossed a few elixir pills into his mouth, and while recovering and healing, he began to break the restrictions on the storage sacks.

The storage sacks of Spirit Stream Realm cultivators didn't contain much of worth, and this was also true for a 9th Heaven cultivator like Tan Li.

One by one, the storage sacks were opened.

About half a Shichen later, all the storage sacks were opened, and as expected, there was nothing particularly eye-catching.

Tao Zhengyu had already completely plundered all the enhancements from the New Moon Sect's territory, and now looked somewhat exhilarated as he approached Lu Ye and asked, "Fifth Senior Brother, which sect shall we go to next?"

Lu Ye put some elixir pills and Spirit Stones into a storage sack and threw it to him, "Wait."

After saying this, he turned and entered the Heaven's Augury Hall, approached the Heaven's Augury Pillar, and with a raised hand, connected his psyche to the Heaven's Augury treasure vault, and sold all the remaining spoils of war.

His merit increased to more than seven thousand points, and without hesitation, he spent all of his merit on Earth's Core Fire, consuming it bit by bit.

It was not without reason; the Talent Tree seemed to have run out of fuel, and he needed to replenish it quickly, otherwise, the Soul-Destroying Divine Lightning invading his body couldn't be burned off, which would be inconvenient for his next actions.

Compared to burning toxins, the consumption of burning the Soul-Destroying Divine Lightning was much higher, and Lu Ye didn't know how much fuel the Talent Tree had accumulated. Every time he consumed Earth's Core Fire, a part of the energy was used to activate the spirit runes on the Talent Tree, and another part was stored as backup fuel.

Since he started his cultivation, the Talent Tree ran out of fuel only once, which was during the battle at Golden Light Peak.

However, at that time, his cultivation wasn't high, and he wasn't well-off, so the energy consumed by the Talent Tree wasn't much; running out of fuel was expected.

Ever since he began purchasing Earth's Core Fire from the Heaven's Augury treasure vault, the Talent Tree never experienced a fuel shortage.

This was the second time the fuel had run out.

As he continued to consume the Earth's Core Fire, large swathes of gray fog began to rise on the Talent Tree again, but the purple thunderbolt that enveloped him showed no sign of diminishing.

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This time, killing over fifty people, the accumulation of Soul-Destroying Divine Lightning was so massive that it was bound to consume a lot of Earth's Core Fire.

What surprised Lu Ye was that, when he devoured the Earth's Core Fire this time, the leaves of the Talent Tree showed no reaction. It seemed that the Talent Tree also sensed that his situation was dire and had targeted responses.

Now, with his own body eroded by the Soul-Destroying Divine Lightning, all the devoured Earth's Core Fire turned into fuel, without providing energy to open new spirit runes on the Talent Tree.

Soon, the Earth's Core Fire, exchanged for over seven thousand merits, was completely devoured, with great quantities of grey fog continuously emerging from the Talent Tree.

After less than half a Shichen, the Talent Tree became quiet, its fuel once again exhausted.

Yet the Soul-Destroying Divine Lightning on Lu Ye's body was still as vibrant as ever, with no sign of fading.

Such a loss!

A twitch appeared at the corner of Lu Ye's eye. He had originally thought of compensating for his losses at the New Moon Sect, but instead ended up losing merits in killing people, and even the burning of Soul-Destroying Divine Lightning required the consumption of merits. To and fro, not only did he not compensate for his losses, but his deficit had also become even more severe.

However, if the plundering from Tao Zhengyu was taken into account, he surely made a profit.

But now that Lu Ye had reached the cultivation of the Cloud River Realm, the affairs of his station were irrelevant to him. Regardless of how much plunder Tao Zhengyu accumulated, the benefits were for the sect, and there was no way to share any of the profits with him.

Lu Ye began to rummage through his storage space again. After entering the Cloud River battlefield, he had obtained many spoils of war which he had not dealt with yet.

He had intended to handle them whenever he had the opportunity to visit the Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union, but now he no longer needed to think about those things.

Resolving his own troubles was the priority.

Once again connecting his mind to the Heaven's Augury treasure vault, he sold off various spoils of war that he couldn't use, keeping only Origin Spirit Pills and Spirit Stones, which he could use for his cultivation.

With some difficulty, he gathered over ten thousand merits and continued to buy Earth's Core Fire to replenish the Talent Tree's fuel.

While he was busy, a message spread like wildfire within the Nine Provinces, quickly propagating among the big sects of Ten Thousand Demons Ridge.

After three months, Lu Ye the Sect Destroyer reappeared on the Spirit Stream battlefield, and this time he came directly to the New Moon Sect's station. With his own strength, he caused a great slaughter, resulting in the fall of the New Moon Sect's station and over fifty disciples dead or injured, with even the New Moon Sect's Governor Tan Li being slain.

As the news broke out, all the big sects of Ten Thousand Demons Ridge were shaken.

Countless people jumped with anger and cursed, calling Lu Yiye outrageous for, as a cultivator of the Cloud River Realm, not cultivating on the Cloud River battlefield but instead flaunting his power on the Spirit Stream battlefield, especially enraging the entire New Moon Sect. The True Lake-Divine Sea Realm elders wished they could charge into the Spirit Stream battlefield right now and take revenge for their fallen sect members and disciples.

However, considering Lu Yiye's battle prowess in the Spirit Realm, akin to that of an overlord, even those of the True Lake-Divine Sea Realm dared not actually enter.

If they could win, it would be fine, but if they couldn't, it would be a laughingstock.

Regardless, this time the loss for the New Moon Sect was tremendously heavy. The fall of the station meant that the accumulated blessings of many years were certain to be plundered, and the loss of so

many sect members and disciples couldn't be replaced by simply recruiting more disciples; there had to be some explanation.

Back then, when Lu Yiye had extorted protection money from the Core Circle sects of Ten Thousand Demons Ridge, even the New Moon Sect had cooperated meekly.

If protection money had been collected a few months ago, on what grounds could he come to provoke and cause trouble again?

This was breaking one's word, this was reneging!

The upper echelons of the New Moon Sect immediately gathered the surviving members to inquire about the ins and outs of the incident.

They soon obtained useful information, that previously, Lu Yiye had mentioned Tan Sheng and even said that Tan Sheng had taken good care of him on the Cloud River battlefield, so he had come specially to repay a favor.

Of course, that was sarcastic.

Being in opposing camps, if Tan Sheng truly met Lu Yiye, once he uncovered his identity, he would surely strike to kill him; there would be no such thing as care.

However, based on this information, the New Moon Sect quickly realized that the root cause of the incident might be with Tan Sheng, and immediately dispatched people into the Cloud River battlefield to gather intelligence.

Message feeds came back quickly.

A month ago, a hunting ground appeared on the Cloud River battlefield. Tan Sheng and Lu Yiye were both there. In the end, Tan Sheng, aiming for the top spot on the Kills Ranking, used a tracking disc and joined forces with many powerful cultivators from Ten Thousand Demons Ridge to besiege Lu Yiye, nearly killing him.

Eventually, Lu Yiye was forced to use a Golden Body Token, and only after seeking help from the Heaven's Augury Pillar once the hunting ground closed did he manage to escape with his life!

A precious Golden Body Token, and a Heaven's Augury Pillar worth one hundred thousand merits...

The members of the New Moon Sect finally realized why Lu Yiye had come to trouble their station—it was clearly revenge.

For a while, the New Moon Sect didn't know what to say, blaming only Tan Sheng for not being thorough enough in his actions, failing to eradicate the root of the problem and leaving behind a major threat.

If the New Moon Sect could obtain information from the Cloud River battlefield, so could the other sects of Ten Thousand Demons Ridge. Even if the New Moon Sect didn't propagate it, the news about the hunting ground soon spread.

Countless Ten Thousand Demons Ridge cultivators marveled, Lu Yiye truly had enormous luck to have obtained something like a Golden Body Token. According to the information they gathered, if it weren't for the Golden Body Token, Lu Yiye would have died a hundred times over on that day.

And judging by the timing, right after leaving the Cloud River battlefield, Lu Yiye had almost immediately forced his way into the Spirit Stream battlefield. He was keen on taking revenge without delay, showing an extraordinarily petty nature.

Chapter 542 Next Family

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Compared to the fury of the New Moon Sect, what other sects of Ten Thousand Demons Ridge were more concerned about was the current status of Lu Yiye.

It may sound imposing to forcefully enter the Spirit Stream battlefield with Cloud River Realm cultivation and kill all around, but Heaven's Augury's punishment is no joke.

Especially since this time, Lu Yiye had killed more than fifty people. It was said that towards the end, the purple Thunderbolt almost materialized on his body, with lightning serpents slithering all over him...

The power of Soul-Destroying Divine Lightning is terrifying. Could it be that Lu Yiye died just like that?

If that were indeed the case, then New Moon Sect could claim a great contribution for their losses would then be acceptable.

This scourge had caused unrest in the Spirit Stream battlefield while he was in the Spirit Stream Realm, and the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge side had no way to deal with him. Once he entered the Cloud River battlefield, despite his weak cultivation, he was heavily surrounded by so many powerful cultivators but still managed to escape to safety.

If such a remarkable individual truly grew up, it would be a disaster for the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge side.

But if he died by the Soul-Destroying Divine Lightning, then that would be a cause for celebration.

For a while, countless messages were sent to the New Moon Sect, asking them to send someone into the Spirit Stream battlefield to check the situation and confirm whether Lu Yiye was alive or dead.

To such absurd requests, the New Moon Sect naturally refused sternly!

They are all a bunch of people who watch the excitement without fearing the seriousness of the matter. It wasn't their residence that was broken, not their disciples who were killed; it was the New Moon Sect that suffered the loss. If Lu Yiye the Sect Destroyer survived, sending people into the battlefield now would be like sending sheep into the tiger's mouth, wouldn't it?

Moreover, on that day in the hunting grounds, it was not only Tan Sheng who made things difficult for Lu Yiye; it's just that the origin of the matter indeed lay with Tan Sheng. They accepted the fact that their residence was broken, and their disciples were killed by New Moon Sect!

But considering Lu Yiye's mad momentum, he surely would want to take revenge not only on New Moon Sect. When the time came, the sects behind those strong cultivators who participated in the ambush that day, each and every one of them, would likely not be able to escape.

Upon spreading this news, quite a few Ten Thousand Demons Ridge sects became anxious. They quickly sent people into the Cloud River battlefield to investigate which cultivators had participated in ambushing Lu Ye, and whether any of their own cultivators were among them...

But communication between the Cloud River battlefield and the Nine Provinces is not as convenient as it is with the Spirit Stream battlefield, so a lot of the information is unclear, and no one knows how long it will take for confirmation to come back.

Moreover, Lu Yiye is likely entangled with the Soul-Destroying Divine Lightning at this very moment. Even if he's not dead, he probably doesn't have the energy to cause trouble for other sects.

Thinking it over this way, the situation might not be as bad as the New Moon Sect has been proclaiming.

Still, it's ultimately necessary to ascertain Lu Yiye's condition; such matters cannot be taken lightly. Immediately, some powers from Ten Thousand Demons Ridge close to the territory of New Moon Sect dispatched people to inquire about the situation.

Somewhere in the Cloud River battlefield, Tan Sheng in green clothes had blood-red eyes, with tears streaming down his cheeks. He had just received news from the sect in the Nine Provinces about what happened in the Spirit Stream battlefield.

With clenched fists, Tan Sheng silently swore in his heart: If he doesn't kill Lu Yiye in this life, he won't consider himself a man!

From his standpoint, he was not wrong in targeting Lu Yiye in the hunting ground; he was only wrong in not having eradicated him and allowed Lu Yiye to escape with his life.

What was even more unimaginable was that this scoundrel actually broke into the Spirit Stream battlefield for retaliation, causing his own junior brothers and sisters to die miserably, and his own younger brother was also killed by Lu Yiye.

If before there was just an opposition between their factions, now it was truly a deep hatred of blood and sea. How could such hatred not be avenged?

He is a Level 9 cultivator of the Cloud River Realm, and previously in the hunting ground, he had gained a lot of benefits. He had originally planned to be promoted to the True Lake within a month, but now, given the situation, the promotion could be put aside. With deep blood feud before him, he intended to exhaust all his means to kill Lu Yiye, to seek revenge for his deceased junior brothers and sisters.

In the Spirit Stream battlefield, at the New Moon Sect's station, in front of the Heaven's Augury Hall's steps, Lu Ye casually sat, the purple Divine Lightning on his body already almost gone.

He was currently sending messages to some friends.

Not knowing where the leak came from, many in the Spirit Stream battlefield knew of his return and that he had breached the New Moon Sect's station. The various governors or deputy governors were suddenly like chickens on caffeine, sending him messages asking if he needed help.

Once upon a time in the inner circle of the battlefield, he led a group of the Haotian Alliance's Allied Forces to fight in all directions, causing many sects to profit handsomely. But after entering the Core Circle, there hadn't been such conveniences.

Now, with his return, it seemed to excite quite a few people...

Others also asked him how he was doing, obviously worried that he had killed too many and was eaten by Soul-Destroying Divine Lightning.

Lu Ye replied to each and every message.

It took a good while to finish.

People from the Haotian Alliance were worried about his condition; the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge side should be even more concerned. It's just a matter of how they would react when they confirmed he was safe and sound now.

Looking at it from a personal perspective, breaking into the New Moon Sect's station today was a loss, having invested nearly twenty thousand merits before and after.

But from the sect's perspective, it was clearly a profit, not to mention the additional plunder by Tao Zhengyu, which alone was worth more than twenty thousand merits.

Of course, the main thing was that he had let out a breath of bad air.

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He rose to his feet, gripping the long blade, and called out to Tao Zhengyu, who was waiting beside him, "Let's go, next one!"

On that day at the hunting grounds, there were so many powerful individuals who had surrounded him. He had no idea which sects most of them came from; he only knew that one, Tan Sheng, was from the New Moon Sect, and another, Wei Que, was from the Yunyang Sect.

Since Tan Sheng was the root cause of the situation, Lu Ye went to find the New Moon Sect first.

Wei Que was the most jubilant and loudest at that time, so he was set as the second target. However, he couldn't kill that many people again—not having any more spoils of war to liquidate and with his supply of Talent Tree fuel running low.

But he believed that with the New Moon Sect as a warning, the Yunyang Sect would make a wise decision.

As for the sects of the other people...

It didn't matter which sects they were from. Each and every one of the Core Circle sects of Ten Thousand Demons Ridge couldn't think of escaping, of course. Against those sects, Lu Ye wouldn't employ such methods.

Protection money, once collected, could certainly be collected a second time. He was sure that Ten Thousand Demons Ridge would also become accustomed to it.

Anyone who dared not to pay would find the New Moon Sect as an example to heed!

As for destroying all the stationed grounds of Ten Thousand Demons Ridge... Lu Ye had not done such a thing while he was at the 9th Heaven level, and now he certainly could not do it.

Once their stationed grounds were destroyed, those cultivators would become homeless. If it happened to the cultivators of one or two sects, it wouldn't affect the overall situation much. But if the entire Core Circle's cultivators of Ten Thousand Demons Ridge were made homeless, the situation would be uncontrollable.

Without any worries behind them, who knew what they would do? The most likely outcome would be them rallying together and breaking through the stationed grounds of Haotian Alliance Sect one by one.

So while Lu Ye indeed had the means to do so, he absolutely could not. Otherwise, he would only bury endless troubles for the Haotian Alliance camp.

Every choice had its gains and losses. The situation in the Spirit Stream battlefield had been maintained for so many years; suddenly breaking it might not only bring benefits.

Compared to a momentary satisfaction, Lu Ye preferred to gain some practical benefits.

He took out the ten-part map to scout and unexpectedly discovered that the Yunyang Sect's stationed ground was not too far from the New Moon Sect's. At his speed, it wouldn't take half a day to reach it.

He arose with weapon control and hadn't traveled far when several streaks of light suddenly approached from the front, the origins of which he did not know.

The others obviously noticed him as well, but they continued flying toward him, clearly relying on their numerical advantage, not taking Lu Ye into consideration.

About ten miles away, the group conversed while flying.

One of them said, "Senior Brother Miao, could that person be Lu Yiye? It looks like he's coming from the direction of the New Moon Sect's stationed grounds."

The one addressed as Senior Brother Miao, a 9th Heaven cultivator, replied, "Don't overthink it. Lu Yiye forced his way into the Spirit Stream battlefield and killed so many. Even if he's not dead by now, he would be wrapped in purple lightning. The person over there is clear and unmarked by any purple lightning; how could it possibly be Lu Yiye? He must be someone passing by."

"That makes sense," the other person nodded.

Senior Brother Miao then continued in a serious tone, "We're near the New Moon Sect's stationed ground—everyone, stay alert. That Lu Ye the Sect Destroyer is a great enemy of Ten Thousand Demons Ridge; we mustn't let him discover us. Remember, our mission is only to scout his situation, not to engage him. If we encounter danger, flee immediately—it's not shameful!"

"Yes!" they all responded.

They had received orders from their sect headquarters to come to the New Moon Sect's area to scout Lu Ye's situation. It just so happened that Lu Ye was flying straight toward them. The distance was still a bit far, so they hadn't recognized Lu Ye's face.

Only when the distance between them had closed to less than three miles did Senior Brother Miao frown and scrutinize Lu Ye.

Confident in their superior numbers, they did not change their direction, and the person flying alone didn't seem to plan on changing course either, which was rather strange.

When cultivators encounter each other like this in the wild, neither knows which camp the other is from. If they happen to meet head-on, it could easily cause trouble. Typically, the side that's weaker or has fewer people changes direction to avoid direct contact with unknown cultivators.

Therefore, Senior Brother Miao couldn't understand why the approaching individual seemed so fearless.

Looking up and employing his Ocular Power, Senior Brother Miao's figure immediately stiffened. He almost thought his eyes were deceiving him. On closer inspection, he realized he was mistaken; the figure directly approaching him was indeed the very person they were sent to scout— Lu Ye. He couldn't help but exclaim in his heart, "Impossible!"

As he had said earlier, since Lu Ye had killed so many, he would be swathed in purple lightning even if he hadn't died. Therefore, Senior Brother Miao had not expected that the man coming towards them would be Lu Yiye.

Looking now, Lu Ye bore no traces of purple lightning at all; Heaven's Augury seemed not to have imposed any punishment upon him.

And if it were merely a resemblance in appearance, it might be dismissed, but the person in question had a snow-white little beast perched on his shoulder—if not Lu Ye, who could it be?

Moreover, the individual was clearly coming from the direction of the New Moon Sect.

The distance between them had reduced to just two miles!

Chapter 543 Old Rules

"Flee!" Senior Brother Miao's thoughts raced, and he immediately uttered a low shout.

Several junior brothers and sisters looked on in bewilderment, with the person who had spoken earlier asking in confusion, "Senior Brother Miao?"

"That's Lu Yiye, run fast!" While Senior Brother Miao spoke, he summoned his Spiritual Artifact and assumed a defensive posture, clearly intending to stay behind and buy time for his juniors to escape.

It had to be said that as a senior brother, he exhibited considerable responsibility.

Yet upon hearing his words, the others' faces turned pale, and they were momentarily at a loss.

A person's reputation can cast a long shadow.

In the Cloud River battlefield, Lu Ye was virtually unknown, but in the Spirit Stream battlefield, it wasn't an overstatement to say that everyone knew of him.

Especially after he had recently performed that earth-shattering feat at the New Moon Sect base, single-handedly breaking through a Core Circle sect's base and killing more than fifty people, such a shocking battle achievement had a profound impact on anyone.

Who would have expected that in coming to the New Moon Sect base to gather intel, they would bump into this bringer of calamity.

A moment's hesitation had cost them the chance to escape; it was already too late.

The figure of Lu Yiye was now just a few hundred yards away.

"Act according to my gaze!" Senior Brother Miao shouted in a low voice, with spirit force quietly surging within him.

The others, facing a formidable enemy, hastily summoned their own Spiritual Artifacts, positioning themselves behind Senior Brother Miao, ready to advance or retreat together with him.

Shortly after, Lu Ye swept by them less than a hundred yards away and continued straight ahead.

Senior Brother Miao and his group stood stiff in mid-air, each with a grave expression, sweat beads sliding down their cheeks.

It was only after Lu Ye had gone far that they started to breathe heavily.

At that moment, they had thought they were certainly doomed, yet unexpectedly, Lu Yiye had simply passed by them.

Didn't he see them?

Of course, that was impossible; they were less than a hundred yards apart, and Lu Yiye certainly wasn't blind; how could he not have seen them?

If it wasn't that he hadn't seen them, then it was a pure act of disregard.

The others were alright, having narrowly escaped death they felt relieved, yet Senior Brother Miao alone felt both relief and shame—relieved that Lu Yiye hadn't attacked them, for they would have surely perished, and ashamed for feeling relieved...

Lu Yiye was now at the 9th Heaven level, and so was he. Though they were of the same realm, and he had the courage to fight, he had no confidence in defeating the opponent, considering he too was ranked within the top fifty of the Spirit Stream Ranking...

"Senior Brother Miao..." a junior sister's voice trembled, "he's coming back!"

Senior Brother Miao abruptly turned his head, indeed seeing Lu Yiye, who should have left, turning back and flying towards them.

Was he going to take action after all?

Senior Brother Miao's determination hardened; even if he had to die here today, he resolved to show Lu Ye the Sect Destroyer that Ten Thousand Demons Ridge cultivators were not to be trifled with!

The Flying Spirit Artifact halted less than a hundred yards away from them, a distance already viable for a 9th Heaven cultivator to strike.

"From the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge?"

Lu Ye inquired.

Sweat broke out on Senior Brother Miao's brow as he almost struck out with his weapon; upon realizing the situation, he gravely nodded his head. The figure standing before him seemed not just a fellow cultivator of the same rank, but rather a lofty and superior True Lake-Divine Sea Realm master.

The sense of shame deepened; faced with Lu Yiye, he found he did not possess the resolve he had imagined, not even the courage to refuse to respond.

"It seems you know who I am, so I won't waste words. Also, don't be nervous; I'm not in a killing mood today, and I won't do you any harm."

Basically, killing was too costly. Previously in the Spirit Stream battlefield, killing enemies earned merits, but now, not only were merits deducted, one also had to spend merits to purchase Earth's Core Fire to burn the Soul-Destroying Divine Lightning.

Hearing these words made Senior Brother Miao and the others twitch at the corners of their eyes.

He had just broken through the New Moon Sect base and killed more than fifty people, and this was called not being in a killing mood?

"What do you want from us?" Senior Brother Miao asked, steeling himself.

"Go back and relay a message to all the big sects of the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge. Tell them it's business as usual, Heavenly Sword Peak, within ten days! If I don't see what I want within ten days, I'll be visiting each household personally," said Lu Ye, before turning away and leaving, with Senior Brother Miao and the others wearing mixed expressions.

It was only after Lu Ye's figure had disappeared that someone finally spoke up, "Senior Brother Miao, what does he mean?"

Senior Brother Miao didn't answer. He naturally understood what Lu Yiye meant; after all, such an incident had occurred a few months before. That time, the Core Circle sects of the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge were unwilling to cooperate—as if they could willingly give away so much resources, especially to an enemy faction. Who could bear it?

But following Lu Yiye's battle with an Overlord-class demon beast, where he unprecedentedly rose to the status of an Overlord-level existence as a Spirit Stream Realm cultivator, those sects that were uncooperative all complied dutifully...

The fist is not as big as others, and there are many lessons from the past; if they are not cooperative, what else can they do? Compared to the material resources invested, it's hard to imagine the loss that would come if the sect's stronghold were to be breached.

"Let's go!" Senior Brother Miao called out and hurriedly led his people toward their own stronghold. He needed to spread the news as quickly as possible. As for the rest, it was not something he, a Spirit Stream Realm cultivator, could consider. The strong ones in the sect would weigh those matters.

Half an hour later, the demands raised by Lu Ye were reported by Senior Brother Miao and then quickly spread to the various 1st, 2nd, and 3rd grade sects within Ten Thousand Demons Ridge.

Upon hearing this news, the first thing that the major sects paid attention to was not the unreasonable demands made by Lu Ye but his current condition.

According to the observation of Senior Brother Miao and the others, there was not the slightest trace of purple lightning entwining Lu Yiye's body; he seemed to be in a perfectly normal state.

This puzzled countless strong cultivators of Ten Thousand Demons Ridge.

Over fifty disciples from the New Moon Sect had died at the hands of Lu Yiye, and the cultivators who escaped from their strongholds had all seen him enveloped by purple lightning. So little time had

passed; how could the Soul-Destroying Divine Lightning, which even Divine Sea Realm cultivators feared, disappear without a trace?

It wasn't until Senior Brother Miao and others took a vow under Heaven's Augury that this news was confirmed to be true.

The forces of Ten Thousand Demons Ridge couldn't help but be stunned.

They had originally hoped that Lu Yiye would not be able to endure the torture of such soul-destroying methods and that, even if he didn't die, he would be too weakened to stir up any trouble. But now, it seemed he had somehow suppressed or even dispelled the Soul-Destroying Divine Lightning that had been swirling around him.

The Ten Thousand Demons Ridge side was more inclined to believe the former possibility, as the thought of eliminating the punishment of Heaven's Augury was somewhat far-fetched.

Then they remembered that woman from the Righteous Blood Sect, named Weh Ying, who had twice forcefully entered the Spirit Stream battlefield and killed many Ten Thousand Demons Ridge cultivators. After receiving the punishment of Heaven's Augury, she emerged unscathed just the same.

Did the Righteous Blood Sect possess some special, astounding method capable of suppressing the punishment of Heaven's Augury?

If that were the case, things would become troublesome.

Facing Lu Ye the Sect Destroyer, they couldn't beat him, and they couldn't defend against him. Other than cooperating with him obediently and appeasing his rage, there seemed to be no other choice.

Many sects within Ten Thousand Demons Ridge were indignant since it wasn't their cultivators who had troubled Lu Ye in the hunting ground, yet now they too had fallen victim to this unwarranted disaster.

Clearly, Lu Ye had no idea which individuals had actually troubled him in the hunting ground, so he simply decided to cast a wide net.

How could they be willing to accept this?

A few months ago, they had already paid protection money to Lu Ye, an indelible humiliation for the forces of Ten Thousand Demons Ridge. A few months later, would they really have to endure such humiliation again? Wasn't that like stabbing salt into a wound?

Most importantly, Lu Ye was from the Righteous Blood Sect, which was part of the Haotian Alliance.

The protection money paid by all those 1st, 2nd, and 3rd grade sects, when amassed, was an incredibly large sum of resources, which unequivocally nourished the enemy. The Righteous Blood Sect had already received a sum of protection money last time; that vast wealth was sufficient for the sect to not worry about its disciples' cultivation expenses for decades to come. It's said that the monthly stipend of the Righteous Blood Sect's disciples is now comparable to those from the topmost 1st grade sects in the Nine Provinces, so opulent that even their disciples in name receive better treatment than many other big sects.

A 9th grade sect where disciples receive such generous benefits, if not from the blood squeezed out of the many big sects of Ten Thousand Demons Ridge.

If this were to happen again, who knows how the Righteous Blood Sect might develop in the future.

Luckily, Lu Ye had given them ten days, just like last time, so there was still room for negotiation on the side of Ten Thousand Demons Ridge.

To compromise or not to compromise, that was a major issue.

For a time, many Divine Sea Realm cultivators from different sects gathered to discuss the matter.

Someone soon raised a critical question.

That was why Lu Ye had not killed Senior Brother Miao and the others!

If just conveying a message was his only goal, leaving one person alive would've been sufficient. Frankly speaking, Lu Ye could've gone to any Ten Thousand Demons Ridge stronghold himself to deliver the message personally.

The fact that Senior Brother Miao and the others were unharmed, that Lu Ye never even intended to attack them from beginning to end, was thought-provoking.

Given his decisive actions at the New Moon Sect stronghold, it made no sense for Senior Brother Miao and others to have escaped unscathed. Though at the time Lu Ye said he had no intention of killing and let them go, a deeper investigation would reveal that this excuse was full of holes.

There surely must have been some concern preventing Lu Ye from attacking Senior Brother Miao and the others.

This discovery brightened the eyes of many Divine Sea Realm cultivators.

Someone slowly spoke, "Now we speculate that the Righteous Blood Sect has some special method capable of suppressing the punishment of Heaven's Augury, but what if this method also has certain drawbacks?"

"What does Veteran Chen mean?" someone asked.

Veteran Chen stroked his beard, "Having lived for so many years, I've never heard of anyone who can contend with Heaven's Augury, and as ludicrous as a method of suppressing its punishment sounds, the facts are before us. I shall choose to believe it this time, but such a heaven-defying method must have a huge cost. Perhaps Lu Ye does not want to kill, or rather, he can no longer kill!"

Upon hearing this, the eyes of many Divine Sea Realm cultivators brightened further.

Someone nodded in agreement, "Veteran Chen's words are reasonable. Maybe if Lu Ye were to kill again, the suppressed punishment of Heaven's Augury might erupt even more fiercely."

"If that's the case, wouldn't that mean he is bluffing?"

"Do you remember when he was at 9th Heaven level, he broke through nearly thirty sects' core circles? That's why we were coerced into making a humiliating compromise. But now? Half a day has passed, and if he still had the ability to breach a second stronghold, why would he hesitate to apply more pressure?"

Chapter 544 Can This Thing Be Overdrawn?

Inside the great hall, as one Divine Sea Realm expert after another spoke up, the situation seemed to become clearer.

No matter what means Lu Yiye used to suppress the punishment from Heaven's Augury, he must have paid a heavy price, and at this moment, it was very likely that he was no longer able to kill.

If this was true, there was nothing to fear from him for those of Ten Thousand Demons Ridge!

He certainly had the ability to sneak into the bases of others, but with the premise that he couldn't kill, his threat to the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge side could almost be ignored.

Of course, this was only a hypothesis; without concrete evidence, no conclusions could be drawn.

"To verify it is simple," someone said. "First find out Lu Yiye's whereabouts, then gather some 9th Heaven cultivators to test him, and we'll know if he can still kill."

"Makes sense, let's do that. Any objections?"

"Agreed."

"No objections!"

"I have a suggestion, try to find ones from the Spirit Stream Ranking who are from 9th Heaven. If they are too weak, it won't prove anything. Besides, if possible, we might take the opportunity to eliminate him."

"Good, then it's settled. My Baiyue Sect can provide one person."

"Cape Pavilion will provide one person!"

"My Flying Lightning Order also provides one person."

A group of Divine Sea Realm experts each spoke up, and soon, they formed a team of about twenty to thirty people, all of whom were from the Spirit Stream Ranking, including many strong individuals ranked in the top twenty.

"Then, please quickly convey the message into the Spirit Stream battlefield, and let our young ones set off immediately." Seated in the foremost place, a Divine Sea Realm elder who had not spoken up until now said indifferently.

The crowd acknowledged the order and began to send the message outward immediately.

However, just at that moment, as if some message had arrived from the outside world, many Divine Sea Realm experts began to investigate one after another.

After a short while, everyone looked solemn.

Even the Divine Sea Realm elder who had just spoken knitted his brows and raised his hand, "The matter we just discussed, let's put it on hold." He lifted his seemingly turbid eyes, scanned the hall, and spoke slowly, "Reports have been received that just one incense stick's time ago, Lu Yiye broke through the Yunyang Sect's base and killed more than a dozen people!"

At these words, the entire hall fell silent.

These Divine Sea Realm experts were still discussing how to confirm their previous deduction, but now it seemed there was no need to verify anything; Lu Yiye had already struck at the Yunyang Sect's base and more than a dozen from Yunyang Sect had been slain, naturally invalidating their deduction.

The many gazes converging in the hall caught sight of a Divine Sea Realm powerhouse whose eyes shot flames as he clenched his teeth and cursed under his breath, "This little beast!"

This man was one of the Divine Sea Realm experts from Yunyang Sect, who happened to be present. He had also received a message from his own sect, informing him of the incident that had occurred on the Spirit Stream battlefield.

Although, when compared to the New Moon Sect, there were far fewer casualties among his own disciples, it was only because the New Moon Sect's precedent had made the Yunyang Sect's cultivators retreat more decisively. Otherwise, judging by Lu Yiye's methods, it would have likely turned into another bloody massacre, piling corpses like a mountain.

"Who has the ten-part map of the Spirit Stream battlefield?" asked the elder seated at the head.

He had never imagined that he, a dignified Divine Sea Realm expert, would have to personally inquire about the affairs of the Spirit Stream battlefield. However, the Spirit Stream Realm was the foundation of every sect, and the situation had escalated to a level that warranted his attention.

"I have it," following the voice, a ten-part map of the Spirit Stream battlefield was taken out. The Divine Sea Realm powerhouse poured spirit force into it, while another formed a peculiar set of spirit runes with his hand.

The spirit runes connected with the ten-part map, and in the next moment, a huge pattern was presented in the air before the eyes of everyone present.

Displayed on that pattern was the ten-part map of the Spirit Stream battlefield.

"The New Moon Sect's base is not too close, yet not too far from Yunyang Sect's base," the elder at the head said, looking at the ten-part map. "With Lu Yiye's strength, he should only need half a day to get

there, and the timing fits as well. But there are other sects' bases between the two; why did Lu Yiye not disturb those other bases, choosing specifically to attack Yunyang Sect's base?"

Just looking at the trajectory of Lu Yiye's actions, it seemed he was targeting the Yunyang Sect's base deliberately.

"Brother Fu, what is the reason for this?"

The Divine Sea Realm expert from Yunyang Sect, also known as Cultivator Fu, replied with a troubled look, "We received information earlier that one of our disciples named Wei Que was involved in the ambush against Lu Ye in the hunting grounds. That must be why Lu Yiye targeted us."

At these words, many Divine Sea Realm experts began to look uncomfortable.

First, it was Tan Sheng from New Moon Sect, now Wei Que from Yunyang Sect—Lu Yiye was targeting them purposefully.

But in the hunting grounds, those who had ambushed Lu Yiye were not limited to these two people. Many among them also had disciples who had taken part. Did this mean that Lu Yiye would also go after their own bases? Some were uncertain about this situation—they didn't know whether their disciples had been involved in the hunting grounds incident.

A grave crisis indeed!

They hastily sent word out, instructing the disciples on the Spirit Stream battlefield to be vigilant and to retreat to the Nine Provinces immediately upon detecting Lu Yiye's presence. If the base was breached, the augmentation from the Heaven's Augury Pillar would definitely be lost. At this moment, the only thing that could be saved was the lives of their disciples.

"Brother Fu, after Lu Yiye killed someone, did Heaven's Augury hand down any punishment?"

Cultivator Fu said, "I'll ask."

He reached out to his sect to inquire about the situation, and soon received a response. He spoke up, "Yes, from the moment he killed the first person, he was beset by purple lightning."

...

In the grand hall, nearly a hundred Divine Sea Realm cultivators were all silent.

They couldn't figure out what was going on with Lu Yiye's situation. At first, they suspected that he had some special means to suppress the punishment from Heaven's Augury, but the information they had obtained now seemed a bit off.

If there were indeed means to suppress it, there would be no reason for there to be lightning still entwined around him, yet if there were no suppression, how could Lu Yiye remain unharmed?

After a while, the elder sitting at the head of the table finally spoke, "Several months ago, our Ten Thousand Demons Ridge had already compromised once. Now, it's only been a few months, and Lu Yiye has made such impertinent demands again. We must not foster such perverse trends, or else he'll come back every few months. Are we to cave in every time?"

The crowd remained silent.

Upon reflection, although Lu Yiye was somewhat detestable, he was actually a reasonable person.

After receiving the protection money last time, he didn't trouble the sects of Ten Thousand Demons Ridge again, and not long afterward, he was promoted to Cloud River, leaving the Spirit Stream battlefield.

This time there was a cause as well, if not for being targeted in the hunting grounds in such a way, he probably would not have come to the Spirit Stream battlefield.

Of course, even though they thought this, they definitely wouldn't say it out loud.

"Does Veteran Chen have any thoughts?" someone asked.

"Let's send some people into the Spirit Stream battlefield to clarify the severity of matters with him. This young man acts with thought. I believe he is not brainless; he should understand that acting recklessly would lead to severe consequences."

Following that, Veteran Chen laid out his plan. After hearing it, the many Divine Sea Realm cultivators nodded in agreement.

Since Lu Yiye, like last time, had given a ten-day deadline, regardless of the outcome, it was better to go and talk to him first.

Although the hope was slim, what if they managed to reach an agreement?

Even if they couldn't agree, with a ten-day deadline for preparation, it would be sufficient.

They couldn't just give him whatever he wanted each time; how would the cultivators of Ten Thousand Demons Ridge face others when they went out? Didn't they have any dignity?

While the Divine Sea Realm cultivators were discussing matters here, Lu Ye was diving into his consciousness in the Yunyang Sect's territory, checking the situation of the Talent Tree.

Patches of grey fog were rising from the tree, which meant that the fuel was still quite ample.

Mainly because he hadn't killed too many people this time.

Not that he didn't want to, but he hadn't managed to.

Once the cultivators of Yunyang Sect realized that Lu Ye had stormed their station, they quickly began to evacuate, leaving the place completely empty in a short span of time.

This had also spared Lu Ye some trouble.

The only thing that made him feel helpless was his own merit...

Previously, he had spent all his merit to buy Earth's Core Fire to fuel the Talent Tree.

As a result of this venture, the merit column in his battlefield marking unbelievably read: owed four hundred and thirty-five points.

It was Lu Ye's first time learning that merit could actually end up in a deficit!

Truly, it was an eye-opener.

Given this, it seemed that Heaven's Augury would definitely not engage in a losing deal, and Lu Ye had to admire it for that.

Fortunately, he had obtained some spoils of war. After carefully selecting and then depositing the spoils into the Heaven's Augury treasure vault, he managed to clear his outstanding debt and even ended up with a slight surplus.

Lu Ye didn't know what consequences owing merit to Heaven's Augury could lead to, as no one had ever tried it before; after all, who would end up in merit debt?

But during that moment he owed Heaven's Augury, he always had a sense of unease, as if something bad might happen to him at any time.

So it seemed, running a deficit on Heaven's Augury might affect one's fortune, leading to things not going as planned.

If someone like him, whose fortune was astounding, had such feelings after running a merit deficit, one could imagine what the outcome for a normal person who owed merit would be. They'd probably trip when walking and even get choked on water.

As the Talent Tree burned continuously, the entwined purple lightning gradually dissipated.

Tao Zhengyu stepped out from the Heaven's Augury Hall, his face brimming with excitement, "Fifth Senior Brother, where are we heading next?"

He had acquired a taste for it; following his Fifth Senior Brother, he faced no danger, could plunder the blessings from other sects' territories, and these were enhancements from the Core Circle sects' territories. The spoils from the last two raids had been substantial, although plundered blessings needed to be converted to sect merit upon returning to the sect's territory. As the current governor of the Righteous Blood Sect's station, he could give himself a bit of special treatment and grant himself a monthly salary.

Not to mention, he wouldn't have to worry about the merit required to purchase Heaven Rank techniques in the future.

This could be considered his travelling expense for the trip he took with Lu Ye for official business. He believed Second Senior Sister would allow this as well.

Among the past governors of the Righteous Blood Sect, only he and Fifth Senior Brother have had the chance to plunder multiple enemy sects' territorial blessings. No one else had ever had such an opportunity.

He was extremely proud to have joined the Righteous Blood Sect. Initially, he was but a mere independent cultivator, lonely and unable to guarantee his own cultivation resources. After joining the Righteous Blood Sect, however, life got better day by day. The monthly salary he received from the sect now was comparable to the treatment of a disciple from a 1st grade sect, and just this aspect alone was enough to make almost ninety percent of the Spirit Stream Realm cultivators across the Nine Provinces envious.

Chapter 545 The Preferences of Lu Ye the Sect Destroyer

The Righteous Blood Sect had formed Alliance Pacts with countless sects in both the inner and core circle. Once the disciples reached a certain level in their cultivation, they were free to choose their own training grounds. Recently, increasing numbers of Righteous Blood Sect disciples had left their outpost

to enter the inner circle. Some allied themselves with other sects' strongholds, while others, like Chen Yu, charged into the inner circle alone.

The choice was personal and voluntary; no one was forced.

Disciples from those Alliance Sects were also sent down to the Righteous Blood Sect for training, significantly enhancing the sect's strength. Recently, an Insect Plague occurred, turning the insect hive into a treasure trove for earning merit. The Righteous Blood Sect exhausted the vitality core energy of the hive and ended the battle only after it was completely depleted.

Within the entire outer circle of the battlefield, the Righteous Blood Sect's outpost was undoubtedly the behemoth. With the Righteous Blood Sect's base as the epicenter, within a thousand miles, Ten Thousand Demons Ridge cultivators dared not trespass randomly.

It was said that several Ten Thousand Demons Ridge forces nearby were considering relocating their bases.

They had no choice; life was becoming impossible, what else could they do but relocate?

"There's no next stop."

Hearing Tao Zhengyu's inquiry, Lu Ye stood up and stretched his body.

He too wished to move to the next location, but some things should not be overdone.

This time, no matter how one saw it, he had bullied the weaker, which was somewhat unlike his previous situation in the 9th Heaven level.

Most importantly, he did not know the origins of those from the Cloud River Level 9 who had ambushed him in the hunting grounds, otherwise he could have righteously attacked them.

The only reason he knew about the sects of Tan Sheng and Wei Que were due to Li Baxian and Xia Qianqian.

There was also a saber-wielder referred to as Xia Liang, seemingly from the Mad Saber Sect, whose mastery in saber skills seemed to have just taken a leap forward.

"Oh." Tao Zhengyu obediently responded, although slightly disappointed, he didn't press for more.

This time, the gains had already been substantial.

"Yiyi, escort Junior Brother Tao back to the base, be careful on the way," Lu Ye instructed.

"Got it, you be careful yourself," Yiyi replied, summoning a Flying Spirit Artifact.

She also had her own Flying Spirit Artifact, but since she was always with Lu Ye, she seldom had the opportunity to use it.

Moments later, Yiyi, with Tao Zhengyu, took flight on the artifact, speeding towards the direction of the Righteous Blood Sect's base.

Both she and Amber were capable of exerting the power of the 9th Heaven level, so in this Spirit Stream battlefield, they wouldn't likely meet any danger, especially now that all the major sects of the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge were on high alert, wary of Lu Ye's arrival, with no strong cultivators wandering around.

Even if they really encountered one or two individuals at the 9th Heaven level, they could handle it.

Thus, Lu Ye was not worried about the safety of Yiyi and Amber.

Pulling out the ten-part map for inspection, Lu Ye also summoned his own Flying Spirit Artifact, stepped on it leisurely, and flew off in a certain direction.

He was headed to Heavenly Sword Peak to wait for the delivery from the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge.

After being busy for so long, it was time to reap the rewards.

The agreed deadline was ten days, so there was no rush. Strolling around was quite free and leisurely.

While he was enjoying his freedom, many cultivators at the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge suffered.

Nearly every Ten Thousand Demons Ridge outpost received a message from their sect headquarters to beware of Lu Yiye; if Lu Yiye's whereabouts were detected, they were to retreat to the Nine Provinces immediately.

This led almost all cultivators in the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge core circle outposts to wait on alert, dreading the Sect Destroyer might suddenly attack.

Especially the sects close to the Yunyang Sect outpost endured a torrid time.

But despite the anxious waiting, no one saw a trace of Lu Ye the Sect Destroyer; after his attack on the Yunyang Sect outpost, he had disappeared.

Two days later, Lu Ye arrived at Heavenly Sword Peak.

A few months earlier, he had been here once, also waiting to receive protection money from the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge. He thought that after leaving the Spirit Stream battlefield, he would never return, yet there he was again, doing the same as he had months before.

Indeed, life is full of unpredictability.

Landing on a spirit mountaintop, he casually found a flat rock, sat cross-legged, with the Boulder Mountain Saber positioned beside him.

Gazing at the rolling clouds in front of him, Lu Ye suddenly regretted giving the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge such a long deadline.

Being in the Spirit Stream battlefield, he was unable to cultivate because his own cultivation level had already surpassed that of the Spirit Stream Realm. Thus, even absorbing nature's spiritual energy or consuming elixir pills would be futile.

With no other options, he could only pull out the books he had brought from Madam Yun's and study them.

He had read these books more than once, yet every time he perused them anew he discovered something fresh and learned some interesting spirit runes. However, since these were not the spirit runes from the Talent Tree, actually constructing them would require a lot of practice and carried a risk of failure.

Thus far, the most useful spirit rune Lu Ye had learned from the books was undoubtedly the Void Spirit Runes.

Without the Void Spirit Runes, he wouldn't have been able to repeatedly escape death in the hunting grounds or withstand the pursuit of so many powerful opponents for such a long time.

This spirit rune had great potential, and Lu Ye always believed that the Talent Tree must have Void Spirit Runes. Still, he had not yet managed to unlock them, nor knew which leaves they were on.

If he could unlock the Void Spirit Runes on the Talent Tree, setting up teleportation arrays afterward would be much more convenient. If that were the case, he would only need to establish a parent array and could teleport back into the parent array any time he was within the linked range of the teleportation array, without the need to trouble himself with setting up any child arrays.

The sole function of the Void Spirit Runes was to allow shifting and teleportation, but the purpose of incorporating them into a formation was to make the spirit runes more robust and stable.

Without the framework of a formation and no manual maintenance, spirit runes are very likely to collapse.

He could even construct Void Spirit Runes on his weapon control to develop some new methods of killing enemies.

Of course, these were all ideas he entertained in his spare time. To achieve this, he would have to ignite the leaves of the Talent Tree associated with the Void Spirit Runes.

While he was studying the books on Heavenly Sword Peak, within a sect's residence at the Core Circle, two figures emerged, flying on their weapons, a man and a woman. The man appeared to be in his thirties or forties, with a majestic look and a robust physique, clearly a person of high status.

The woman was beautiful, and judging purely by her appearance, one could hardly tell her age. Saying she was sixteen or seventeen years old wouldn't be a problem, and saying she was twenty-four or twenty-five also seemed plausible. She was tall and, exceptionally, very voluptuous.

Both individuals were powerful cultivators at the True Lake Level 9.

They had never thought they would have the opportunity to enter the Spirit Stream battlefield in this life, and even more so, be tasked with negotiating with a young cultivator from the Cloud River Realm.

This decision had been agreed upon by the cultivators of the Divine Sea Realm, and ultimately, they were chosen to come.

The issue was neither minor nor trivial, and it wasn't fitting for a Divine Sea Realm cultivator to appear in person. If the negotiations broke down, they couldn't gracefully disengage, and should fighting erupt, they couldn't easily settle the matter.

More importantly, with Lu Ye's overlord-level strength, those Divine Sea Realm cultivators really didn't have the confidence to outmatch him.

If they could win, fine, but what if they couldn't? They were all from the Divine Sea Realm, and being taught a lesson by a seventeen- or eighteen-year-old youth would be a disgrace.

Thus, after much deliberation, it was considered most appropriate for True Lake Realm cultivators to step in—first, it showed sincerity, and second, True Lake Realm cultivators were considered capable of managing the nuances of the negotiations.

The original choices were two men, but just before the mission, a Divine Sea Realm cultivator decided that the woman should replace one of them.

Flying on their weapons, the flower-basket-like Flying Spirit Artifacts was quite enchanting, complementing the woman's stunning beauty and voluptuous figure, enough to attract the gaze of nearly ninety-nine percent of men in this world.

Yun Qingyue stood on the flower basket, looking up at the ever-changing clouds in the sky, feeling somewhat troubled.

It wasn't just the occasional glances swept toward her from behind but also the admonishments from that Divine Sea Realm elder before she left.

She didn't know where that Divine Sea Realm elder had gotten his information, but it was said that Lu Ye the Sect Destroyer had no other preference but liked large and round women. That was why she was chosen to replace the original negotiator, hoping she would perform well.

Firstly, her body was outstanding, which matched Lu Ye the Sect Destroyer's taste, and secondly, her age was not apparent from her appearance, which could easily lead one to mistake her for a teenage girl, potentially lowering Lu Yiye's guard.

For a seventeen- or eighteen-year-old young man, coveting a beautiful woman was quite normal; out of all the female cultivators at Ten Thousand Demons Ridge, why did they pick her!

But when a Divine Sea Realm strong cultivator spoke, who was she to refuse? She could only brace herself and go, hoping not to suffer too much humiliation.

She thought she couldn't overcome his overlord-tier strength at the Spirit Stream Realm.

As for that saying that Lu Ye the Sect Destroyer liked them big and round, it was also verified,

He once challenged the Spirit Stream Ranking, and almost all the opponents who had fought him, regardless of gender, had died, except for a woman named Bai Lan who survived, and she was indeed big and round...

Even killing female cultivators showed that Lu Yiye was not one to pity the fairer sex, yet he oddly spared Bai Lan, naturally prompting deep reflection.

"Junior Sister Yun, no need to rush; the youngster gave a deadline of ten days, and only two have passed. From here to Heavenly Sword Peak, with our speed, it will take only a day," said Wu Jun, who followed behind Yun Qingyue.

The two did not belong to the same sect, but they had interacted when they were younger.

In fact, back then, he had also been smitten by Junior Sister Yun, who had made all the young men in Ten Thousand Demons Ridge utterly infatuated—an unrivaled beauty of their generation. Rarely did anyone see her and remain unmoved.

Unfortunately, at that time, he was obscure and only had the privilege of watching from afar.

Now, he too was a True Lake Level 9 cultivator, with prospects of reaching Divine Sea Realm – lacking the immaturity and lowliness of youth, he had gained a sense of composure. Although he still found the heavenly beauty pleasing to the eye, he no longer pursued those thoughts.

However, having the opportunity to join the goddess of his youth was undoubtedly pleasant, and he was not eager to rush the journey—rather, he wished they could take it slow.

Chapter 546 Can It Be Proven Now?

Yun Qingyue said, "Although there are still ten days left, there is no conclusion to the negotiation, so we must leave enough time for the big sects to prepare. Therefore, we need to act quickly."

As she said this, not only did she not slow down, but she actually sped up. Seeing this, Wu Jun had no choice but to follow helplessly.

Racing along the way, from a distance, Heavenly Sword Peak was in sight.

Suddenly, Wu Jun spoke up, "Actually, we could try to let the ghost cultivators assassinate him. If they could kill him, all our troubles would be easily resolved."

"And if they can't?"

If they can't, it would only completely enrage Lu Yiye, and the consequences that would arise from that are unpredictable.

In fact, the cultivators of the Divine Sea Realm had considered sending high-cultivation ghost cultivators into the fray, but the risk was too great. Not to mention anything else, Lu Yiye himself was an expert on the Array Path. Even if he stayed on Heavenly Sword Peak, he would certainly have set up some alarm arrays around him, and the ghost cultivators might not be able to infiltrate his vicinity safely.

If he discovered their tracks, with his Overlord-level strength, the ghost cultivators would surely meet a terrible end.

It was precisely because of such concerns that Ten Thousand Demons Ridge did not dare to act rashly, but instead sent Wu Jun and Yun Qingyue to negotiate.

As they arrived above Heavenly Sword Peak, the two scanned the area and saw the lone figure sitting atop the spirit mountaintop.

"Over there," said Yun Qingyue, and she steered her Flying Spirit Artifact downward, with Wu Jun following closely behind.

In a moment, the two landed about thirty feet in front of Lu Ye.

Upon closer inspection, both of them were secretly shocked; on Lu Ye, there was not a trace of purple Divine Lightning.

According to the information they had received before, after Lu Ye had breached the New Moon Sect's stronghold and killed more than fifty people, the purple Divine Lightning on his body was so dense it was almost tangible. When he appeared at the Yunyang Sect's stronghold half a day later, the purple lightning had vanished, and when he killed again, the purple lightning reappeared.

But now, the purple lightning was gone again...

This undoubtedly indicated that Lu Yiye really did have a way to suppress the punishment of Heaven's Augury, but does such a miraculous method truly exist in this world?

As the two observed Lu Ye, Lu Ye, who was reading a book, also lifted his gaze toward them, his eyes immediately brightening upon seeing Yun Qingyue.

A woman who is considered a heavenly beauty by the men of her era possesses a naturally stunning beauty, and beautiful things always bring pleasure to the heart.

His gaze shifted downward, and his eyes brightened even more.

This subtle movement naturally couldn't escape Yun Qingyue, who had strong Ocular Power. She felt a helpless sense of resignation inwardly; this youngster was indeed as rumored...

Thankfully, while his gaze lingered, there was nothing lecherous in it, and he soon diverted his eyes.

Lu Ye then glanced at Wu Jun and didn't pay much attention.

He could be sure that these two were not of the Spirit Stream Realm, not even the Cloud River Realm. They must be at least of the True Lake, if not possibly the Divine Sea.

What made Lu Ye somewhat puzzled was the woman's age; judging by her appearance, she didn't seem any older than him, but how could a cultivator of at least the True Lake Realm be so young? Her appearance belied her age, which could only mean that she took excellent care of herself.

"Are you Lu Yiye from the Righteous Blood Sect?" Yun Qingyue was the first to speak.

The youth before her was the only one in history who had, by his own power, caused the Spirit Stream battlefield to be in constant turmoil and left Ten Thousand Demons Ridge at a complete loss, so Yun Qingyue, despite having a much higher cultivation than Lu Ye, did not undervalue him in the slightest.

Moreover, she was naturally a gentle and amicable woman.

Having seen Lu Ye's portrait before she came, she recognized his face, but still felt the need to ask.

Not only was her appearance exceedingly beautiful, pleasing to the eye, but her voice was also extremely gentle and pleasant, like a spring breeze brushing past one's ear.

As a cultivator of the True Lake Realm, she condescended to address Lu Ye with the term "Fellow Daoist," thereby showing her sincerity. Given her status and cultivation, she could have easily called him a junior or simply referred to him by his name.

"Yes, that's me."

Lu Ye put away the book he was holding.

He silently speculated on Ten Thousand Demons Ridge's intention in sending such a woman to find him. What could they be after?

Soon, he concluded that these two were not there to deliver protection money.

"Do you have any proof that you're Lu Yiye?" Wu Jun suddenly asked.

Before they came, he and Yun Qingyue had agreed that one would play the bad cop and the other the good cop. Negotiations are always such, and this was why Ten Thousand Demons Ridge had specifically chosen them. If both were too agreeable, there would be nothing to discuss as they would just acquiesce to everything. Therefore, there always needed to be one person to take on the harsher role, thus supporting the sincerity of the other, facilitating the bargaining process.

Wu Jun bore no subjective malice toward Lu Ye, given the apparent gap in their cultivation levels. As a cultivator of Ten Thousand Demons Ridge, however, Lu Ye's actions inevitably roused his sense of shared enmity. Thus, his tone was naturally less than courteous.

"What proof do you want?" Lu Ye did not believe that these two had not seen his portrait or something similar before they came.

Wu Jun said, "It's said that Lu Yiye is always accompanied by a small white beast, never leaving his side. As far as I can see, it's not here."

"It's not here."

Yiyi was sending Tao Zhengyu back to their quarters, and Amber had to follow. A spirit and a demon, bound at birth, could not be too far apart.

"Cloud River cultivators who forcefully enter the Spirit Stream battlefield and kill others will be punished by Heaven's Augury, entangled by Soul-Destroying Divine Lightning. I see no trace of Divine Lightning on you, so how do you prove you are Lu Yiye?" Wu Jun, seizing the opportunity to press his advantage, was determined to intimidate Lu Yiye and make him realize that Ten Thousand Demons Ridge was not so easily manipulated.

Most importantly, Wu Jun wanted to know by what means Lu Ye was able to suppress the punishment from Heaven's Augury. If he could understand that, any price paid would be worth it.

"Tss..." With a light sound, the Boulder Mountain Saber was unsheathed, its bright saber light flashing thrice. Three crescent-shaped saber beams slashed out, heading straight for Wu Jun.

Wu Jun had not anticipated Lu Ye would actually strike at him. Seeing the three saber beams slash towards him, his face tightened, and he immediately stimulated his spirit force and blood Qi to protect himself.

As a physique cultivator, especially one of the True Lake Realm, he had passed the stage of relying solely on Spiritual Artifacts for protection. His own body was his strongest defense.

Thud, thud, thud—three muffled sounds. Spirit light flickered around Wu Jun's body, and he was forced to retreat several steps by the three saber beams before he could stabilize his stance.

His expression immediately became grave.

Even Yun Qingyue, observing from the sidelines, showed a look of surprise.

Now she understood that the rumors were not unfounded; Lu Yiye indeed possessed the prowess of an Overlord.

Such a display of saber beams had surpassed her understanding of what a Spirit Stream Realm cultivator could accomplish.

"Is this proof enough?"

Lu Ye slowly sheathed his saber.

Wu Jun remained silent, utterly shocked. Though it was only three saber beams, they gave him a glimpse of the tiger's might. In a genuine fight to the death, with his current ability to exert power, he would not last more than three moves against this Lu Yiye.

Youthful prowess truly was to be feared!

"Fellow Daoist Lu, please calm your anger. Senior Brother Wu and I indeed have not seen you before. Moreover, today's visit is of great importance. Senior Brother Wu was merely being cautious, with no ill

intentions." As she said this, she also gracefully bowed to Lu Ye: "Snow Feather Sect's Yun Qingyue, at your service, Fellow Daoist Lu."

Wu Jun also unwillingly cupped his hands and said gruffly: "Fengyun Manor, Wu Jun."

Lu Ye had seen Snow Feather Sect and Fengyun Manor on the ten-part map; both were 1st grade sects, one from Leizhou and the other from Youzhou, all of which were marked on the map.

Lu Ye nodded slightly in acknowledgment, returning the gesture. "Righteous Blood Sect, Lu Ye."

Despite being on opposing sides, when someone of a higher realm beyond True Lake politely offered a bow, he could not well appear discourteous in response.

"What brings you both here? You don't seem to be here to deliver anything," Lu Ye asked directly.

Yun Qingyue replied, "In frankness, the Divine Sea Realm cultivators are still deliberating whether to agree to your demands. After all, such a thing has happened once before. Last time, it was we of Ten Thousand Demons Ridge who made concessions for peace. We had thought that after leaving the Spirit Stream battlefield, you would not return, yet to our surprise, in just a few short months, the past repeats itself. The Divine Sea Realm cultivators find it difficult to accept."

Primarily, no one expected that after ascending to the Cloud River Realm, Lu Ye would be able to kill on the Spirit Stream battlefield without restraint. Normally, higher-ranking cultivators who forcefully enter the Spirit Stream battlefield are very constrained in their actions, yet somehow Lu Ye was unconstrained.

"Senior Brother Wu and I are here on behalf of many Divine Sea Realm cultivators to discuss with Fellow Daoist Lu a proposal that both sides can accept."

Lu Ye focused unblinkingly on Yun Qingyue, who met his gaze with a smile.

"How do you wish to discuss?"

Yun Qingyue said, "Regardless, Fellow Daoist Lu, what you have done can be seen as bullying the weak. Each battlefield has its rules, and you, as a Cloud River Realm cultivator, forcefully made your way into the Spirit Stream battlefield and destroyed two major Ten Thousand Demons Ridge sect encampments, which is somewhat inappropriate. If every sect's cultivators were to act this way, would the Spirit Stream battlefield not descend into chaos? What do you think, Daoist Lu?"

"In all the heavens, aside from myself, who else possesses such ability?"

Yun Qingyue was momentarily at a loss for words. This was the insurmountable problem for Ten Thousand Demons Ridge; without resolving this issue, they would never have the standing to negotiate on equal terms with Lu Ye.

"If there is anyone in Ten Thousand Demons Ridge who wishes to emulate me, they are welcome to try; there's no need for any reservations. I have the ability, so I set the rules. Those without should comply obediently. As for 'bullying the weak'—by age, most cultivators within the Core Circle are older than me; by cultivation level, Heaven's Augury has suppressed my cultivation to the 9th Heaven. The power I can exert is also that of the 9th Heaven, so where is there 'bullying the weak'?"

Yun Qingyue, looking helpless, said, "That may be the case, but Fellow Daoist Lu's demands are indeed too harsh. Last time, the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge's major sects already bled profusely. Should this be repeated, the sects will certainly not agree, and this is a consensus reached by the Divine Sea Realm cultivators. I know you have suffered greatly and are deeply aggrieved by what happened in the hunting ground, and while your demands are understandable, you have already destroyed the outpost of two sects and killed many people. Could this not alleviate some of the anger in your heart?"

Lu Ye stared intently into her starry eyes with a cool demeanor. "If Fellow Daoist Yun has come to speak nonsense, then there's no need for further words. I will only wait here for ten days."

Chapter 547 The Choice of the Divine Sea Realm

Atop Heavenly Sword Peak, Yun Qingyue still wanted to persuade further, but Lu Ye interrupted with a raised hand, "I've laid out the terms; whether you accept them or not is your affair, no need to discuss anything with me."

Wu Jun stepped forward, his voice grave, "And if we don't agree? Do you truly have the guts to storm the strongholds of all the sects in Ten Thousand Demons Ridge?"

"Do you think I don't dare?" Lu Ye turned his gaze to Wu Jun.

"I believe Fellow Daoist Lu is indeed capable of that!" Wu Jun met his gaze unflinchingly.

Considering what had happened a few months ago, with so many strongholds in the Core Circle of Ten Thousand Demons Ridge being breached, and so many Ten Thousand Demons Ridge cultivators killed, Lu Ye certainly did have the capability. However, just because he was capable, that did not mean he would actually do it. If he did, the Haotian Alliance would definitely not fare well, and the entire Spirit Stream battlefield would fall into complete chaos. Any sensible person, including Lu Yiye, would refrain from such a brainless act.

"You have a point; to conquer all the sect strongholds in Ten Thousand Demons Ridge is indeed unrealistic," Lu Ye shifted his tone, his expression leisurely, "But there are so many Core Circle Ten Thousand Demons Ridge sects; picking off thirty or fifty doesn't seem like it would affect the grand scheme of things. Let's start with the Snow Feather Sect and Fengyun Manor. What do you two think of that?"

What have we done to you?

Yun Qingyue and Wu Jun's expressions changed slightly. If Lu Ye truly acted in such a manner, the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge side would indeed have no good countermeasures. Compared to the number of sects in the Core Circle of Ten Thousand Demons Ridge, thirty or fifty wasn't many, and just as Lu Ye had said, even if taken over, it wouldn't affect the grand scheme of things.

He had already done it once a few months ago, when he had taken nearly thirty strongholds.

If he did it again, who knew which stronghold he would take next? As long as this matter remained unresolved, every Core Circle sect felt a pressing sense of impending doom as if a sword hung overhead—no one dared bet that their strongholds would remain untouched.

When that time came, Lu Yiye would surely be willing to pay some price in exchange for the safety of the strongholds.

As for Lu Ye saying he would start with the Snow Feather Sect and Fengyun Manor, that was a blatant threat. How could Yun Qingyue and Wu Jun not understand?

Feeling helpless, Yun Qingyue realized that her own efforts were in vain. Although this youth had taken an extra glance at her the first time they met, he didn't show her any particular favor as a result.

So young, yet so difficult to deal with.

She promptly said, "Fellow Daoist Lu, hold your anger. Senior Brother Wu and I have come to discuss a satisfactory solution for all parties. How about this? Ten Thousand Demons Ridge is willing to offer materials worth a total of three million merit, and if you agree, I can have it delivered immediately."

Materials worth three million merit, even if calculated at the purchase price from the Heaven's Augury treasure vault, was a substantial amount of resources.

Enough for any cultivator to enjoy for a lifetime.

Though cultivators in the Cloud River Realm earn significantly more merit than those in the Spirit Stream Realm, the majority of Cloud River Realm cultivators only manage to accumulate a few thousand to ten thousand merit. A terrifying figure like three million was enough to make any Cloud River Realm cultivator breathless with desire.

Lu Ye, however, remained expressionless.

He had already received materials worth twenty to thirty million merit from Ten Thousand Demons Ridge the last time. What was a mere three million in comparison? That was nearly a tenfold difference. For Ten Thousand Demons Ridge, this gesture was as meager as giving alms to a beggar.

Despite his aggressive demands, which might seem somewhat underhanded, since time immemorial, the two opposing factions have been at odds with each other. To weaken the enemy's assets while strengthening one's own has always been a universally welcomed strategy.

Not to mention, there was just cause this time.

Lu Ye remained silent, and so did Yun Qingyue, waiting quietly.

On the contrary, Wu Jun continued to play bad cop, his voice low, "Fellow Daoist Lu, materials worth three million merit is the greatest sincerity Ten Thousand Demons Ridge can express. One shouldn't be too greedy."

"Fellow Daoist Yun."

Lu Ye called out to Yun Qingyue without paying attention to Wu Jun.

Yun Qingyue immediately assumed a posture of attentive listening, "Please speak, Fellow Daoist Lu."

"If Ten Thousand Demons Ridge really finds it troublesome, I can withdraw my previous proposal. Materials worth thirty thousand merit will suffice."

Not only did Yun Qingyue's expression not brighten, it grew more solemn, "Does Fellow Daoist Lu have other conditions?"

Such a sudden shift from her opponent clearly meant he had something else up his sleeve waiting for her.

"Give me one more Golden Body Token, and this matter will be laid to rest!"

Golden Body Tokens aren't things that one can find just anywhere in the world. If Lu Ye was able to obtain one in the hunting grounds, Ten Thousand Demons Ridge surely had them in reserve, although their numbers were definitely not plentiful.

For any cultivator, it was a life-saving trump card. Having experienced the power of the Golden Body Token, Lu Ye naturally coveted it.

Compared to the loss of a Golden Body Token, the hundred thousand merit he spent requesting aid from Heaven's Augury Pillar in the hunting grounds seemed negligible.

Merit can be slowly accumulated with effort, but Golden Body Tokens were not something one could come by upon demand.

"Fellow Daoist Lu must be jesting. I have never seen a Golden Body Token in my life, where am I to find one for you?" Wu Jun's expression darkened.

And even if there were any, Ten Thousand Demons Ridge would not possibly hand them over to Lu Ye. These tokens were useful even to Divine Sea Realm cultivators, for they were protections granted by Heaven's Augury, impervious to attack until the time limit expired.

"No need for further words, then. Choose one of the two options!"

Wu Jun growled, "Lu Yiye, we have come in good faith to negotiate. Do not overstep!"

Lu Ye's fingers brushed against the Boulder Mountain Saber, his eyelids slightly lowered, as he spoke quietly, "Do you two think, if I killed you here, whether Ten Thousand Demons Ridge would seek revenge for you? Or perhaps, the two of you would like to test whether I'm capable of killing you!"

Wu Jun and Yun Qingyue both changed complexion and prepared to defend themselves in unison.

They felt relieved that Lu Ye showed no signs of initiating combat, but it was clear that he was growing impatient. If they kept entangling themselves here, the youth might actually make a move.

If they truly died here, it would be for nothing. Lu Yiye's hands were already stained with the blood of Ten Thousand Demons Ridge cultivators, adding two more would make little difference.

With this thought, Yun Qingyue spoke up, "We will report Fellow Daoist Lu's discussion to our superiors as soon as possible. If there is a result, I will come to notify Fellow Daoist Lu."

With these words, she gave Wu Jun a look, and the two soared away from Heavenly Sword Peak together.

It was only after they had flown tens of miles away that Yun Qingyue took a long breath, her chest rising and falling sharply. She had truly felt the breath of death in that instance.

She never thought that she, a True Lake Realm cultivator, would feel so powerless in front of a Cloud River Realm cultivator.

Not far from her, Wu Jun looked calm, but there was obviously a trace of lingering fear in his eyes.

"Send a message back and see how the Divine Sea Realm seniors will decide," Yun Qingyue said.

Wu Jun silently nodded.

Immediately, the two began transmitting the message of their negotiation to the cultivators of their own camps, who would then relay it back to the Nine Provinces.

However, both of them knew that Ten Thousand Demons Ridge would probably have to pay dearly this time unless they dared to ignore Lu Yiye's threats.

But who dared to ignore Lu Yiye's threats?

Just as he said, he indeed would not break through all the camps, only selecting thirty to fifty of them. Who would dare to bet their own station wouldn't be among the unlucky ones?

This was not something they could gamble on!

The most pragmatic issue was, if Lu Yiye now directly went to a Ten Thousand Demons Ridge station and demanded protection money, refusing to provide it meant having their station broken through. How were they to decide?

They would definitely pay! There was no need to even think about it. Compared to what they would lose at their own stations, what counted materials worth one hundred thousand, two hundred thousand, or three hundred thousand merits?

Thus, by spending only a little time, Lu Ye could visit each station in turn and achieve his goal without completely upsetting the balance of the Spirit Stream battlefield.

The two didn't have to wait long, receiving a message in less than half a day.

Upon examining it, they confirmed what they had suspected. The strong cultivators in the Divine Sea Realm had compromised. Though reluctant and shamed, they simply had no capital to refuse.

Correspondingly, Ten Thousand Demons Ridge also had some demands. The message was clear that if Lu Yiye could not meet these demands, the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge was prepared for mutual destruction. They would abandon all stations and consolidate their forces in the Core Circle, vowing to break through all Haotian Alliance stations as well.

This was a thorough scorched-earth policy, the last defiance of Ten Thousand Demons Ridge.

After reading the message, Yun Qingyue sighed. She did not know whether Lu Yiye would accept these demands. Strictly speaking, it was Ten Thousand Demons Ridge that was in a weaker position, and if he truly did not agree, no one could do anything to him.

After pondering for a moment, Yun Qingyue said, "Senior Brother Wu, I'll go by myself this time. You wait here for me."

With the final plan already in place, there was no need for the person playing the "bad cop" to show up, lest the atmosphere become tense again.

"How can that be? If Lu Yiye decides to strike at you, how will you defend yourself?" Wu Jun immediately shook his head.

Yun Qingyue said, "With his strength, if he really strikes, even if you and I join forces, we won't be his match."

Hearing this, Wu Jun's heart was filled with sorrow but he had no rebuttal...

"Senior Brother Wu, just wait here for me. I'll go and return quickly. Lu Yiye does not seem like someone who is unreasonable."

"Then Sister, be careful. We should keep in touch at all times," Wu Jun nodded.

Yun Qingyue brought out her flower basket spirit artifact and flew away through weapon control.

In a short time, she arrived again at Heavenly Sword Peak, where the youth was still sitting in the same spot, holding a scroll and studying it intently.

The sunlight broke through the clouds and struck the youth's profile, lending him a scholarly air.

Yet, this was the opponent who was causing an immense headache for the mighty Ten Thousand Demons Ridge, and he was ready to carve a piece of flesh from Ten Thousand Demons Ridge with a raised butcher's knife.

Once this knife fell, all the Core Circle sects of Ten Thousand Demons Ridge would not be able to escape.

"Fellow Daoist Lu," Yun Qingyue called out softly, even tucking some hair behind her ear. Her already stunning face took on an additional trace of bewitchment.

"Is there a result?" Lu Ye did not look up, only focusing on the content of the book, leaving Yun Qingyue feeling a sense of powerlessness as if punching into cotton.

"The seniors in the Divine Sea Realm have discussed it. Fellow Daoist Lu's demands can be met. However, there is one request they hope Fellow Daoist Lu can agree to. As long as Fellow Daoist Lu accepts this request, everything you want will be delivered within two days," she said.

"Speak!"

"Ten Thousand Demons Ridge hopes that Fellow Daoist Lu will not step foot in the Spirit Stream battlefield again!"

Chapter 548 Petty

Atop Heavenly Sword Peak, Lu Ye closed the scroll in his hand and looked up at Yun Qingyue, his gaze calm but his words resolute, "You can go. I won't kill you, and kindly convey to your Divine Sea Realm that as long as I, Lu Ye, live, I will come to the Spirit Stream battlefield every six months, selecting thirty sects from the Core Circle to breach their strongholds."

Having said so, he slowly rose and summoned his Flying Spirit Artifact, looking as if he intended to set off immediately.

Yun Qingyue paled dramatically and hastily called out, "Fellow Daoist Lu, please wait a moment."

"What else is there?" Lu Ye cocked his head to look at her.

Ten Thousand Demons Ridge wanting him to vow never to step into the Spirit Stream battlefield again was a condition they could never accept. Although he truly no longer needed to step onto the Spirit Stream battlefield after his advancement to the Cloud River Realm, and henceforth, there was no possibility to use the people or events of the Spirit Stream battlefield to threaten Ten Thousand Demons Ridge, there were limits to everything. This now being his third extortion of Ten Thousand Demons Ridge, they surely would no longer compromise, likely opting to fight Lu Ye to the death.

However, whether to step foot in the Spirit Stream battlefield was a matter of his own volition, not something imposed by Ten Thousand Demons Ridge.

If Ten Thousand Demons Ridge insisted on this condition, there really was nothing to discuss.

Gazing at Lu Ye, Yun Qingyue felt overwhelmingly helpless and ultimately sighed, "Fellow Daoist Lu, perhaps there's room to negotiate..."

She knew that having reached this point in the negotiation, as one of the negotiating parties, showing any hint of weakness was out of the question. But now, showing weakness was unavoidable. The man was about to leave, and without conceding, soon thirty sects would suffer under Ten Thousand Demons Ridge.

"He even said he would come every six months. Who can withstand that?"

If it were so, in the future, where would cultivators from Core Circle sects of the Spirit Stream Realm find peace to cultivate? The Spirit Stream Realm was the foundation of every sect, and if this foundation were to crack, it would affect the entire sect's heritage and future development.

Standing on the spirit ark, Lu Ye just watched Yun Qingyue, saying nothing.

Yun Qingyue bit her red lips, taking a long moment before she said, "In the future, unless an event similar to this hunt occurs, Fellow Daoist Lu must not indiscriminately attack the stationed areas of the sects on the Spirit Stream battlefield!"

Compared to the previous stringent conditions, this one was much more lenient as it did not restrict Lu Ye's movements in and out of the Spirit Stream battlefield. However, correspondingly, it did restrict the conditions under which he could attack the sects of Ten Thousand Demons Ridge unless a situation similar to this hunt arose.

It was a simple sentence, yet Lu Ye could understand the painful good intentions of Ten Thousand Demons Ridge.

Clearly, they had not given up on their plans to kill him.

Within the hunting ground, many cultivators from Ten Thousand Demons Ridge, far stronger than Lu Ye, had pursued and trapped him. They even used a secret technique from a tracking disc, making him unable to hide or escape, ultimately leading to an overwhelming siege by hundreds to thousands of people. Without delving into the long-standing grievances between the two camps, this action by Ten Thousand Demons Ridge was excessive. Lu Ye was fortunate to survive, enduring great cost to strike back at the Spirit Stream battlefield, and no one could fault him for it.

But if the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge party targeted Lu Ye again in the future, they would certainly be more cautious, never again giving him a chance to retaliate.

"This is the final bottom line of the Divine Sea Realm. If Fellow Daoist Lu cannot agree, then please do as you see fit," she said.

Yun Qingyue finished speaking, staring anxiously at Lu Ye, uncertain if he would agree.

Lu Ye nodded calmly, "Agreed. Is there anything else?"

Although he knew that the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge force had not abandoned their intent to kill him, frankly, a cultivation path without such challenges would be too dull. From the moment he stepped onto the path of cultivation, Lu Ye had always been clashing with opponents stronger than himself, especially after his identity as a disciple of the Righteous Blood Sect had been exposed, facing continuous oppression and attacks.

It was only through such oppression and challenges that he had managed to rise swiftly and dominate the Spirit Stream battlefield.

The Ten Thousand Demons Ridge party would not likely fear to act against him because of this incident, nor did he have any grounds to demand that Ten Thousand Demons Ridge refrain from targeting him in the future.

These were things both knew and need not be stated outright.

Seeing Lu Ye agree, Yun Qingyue breathed a sigh of relief, her expression visibly more relaxed. She had always been of a merciful temperament, genuinely reluctant to see too much bloodshed.

"There is also this matter: justice has its targets, and debts have their debtors. If Fellow Daoist Lu ever seeks to retaliate in the future, please direct it at the actual offenders, and do not involve innocent sects," she pleaded.

The cultivators who troubled Lu Ye in the hunting grounds came from varied backgrounds, but it was certain that not all disciples from the Core Circle sects had participated.

Yet Lu Ye's proposed conditions targeted all Core Circle sects, truly causing many forces undue distress. But they couldn't well say that their disciples hadn't participated in the hunting event to ask Lu Ye to spare them, as that would be utterly laughable.

"It's only right," Lu Ye nodded. "Anything else?"

Yun Qingyue shook her head, "That's all."

She was momentarily lost in thought. Was that it? She had thought that Lu Yiye would not have agreed so easily, having prepared many persuasive arguments, but now none were needed.

"You have no more conditions, but I have two," he said.

Yun Qingyue tensed up, anxiously asking, "Please speak, Fellow Daoist Lu."

"In the hunting grounds, there was a guy named Xia Liang wielding a saber. If I'm not mistaken, he should be from Mad Saber Sect. I won't trouble Mad Saber Sect's stronghold. Communicate to them for me that, besides the thirty thousand merit's worth of materials, I also need twenty volumes of saber skill cultivation insights. Otherwise, I wouldn't mind making a trip myself."

Yun Qingyue diligently made a note, "Okay."

The insights on saber skills cultivation weren't precious unless they were unique, and even then, they could be replicated through printing. In Mad Saber Sect, such insights were abundant—twenty copies could easily be fetched.

"Additionally, add one hundred thousand merits worth of resources from Fengyun Manor."

"Fengyun Manor..." Yun Qingyue was momentarily speechless. Wasn't Fengyun Manor the sect of Brother Wu Jun? By allocating resources worth one hundred thousand merits to Fengyun Manor, Lu Yiye was clearly expressing his irritation towards Brother Wu Jun's poor attitude during the earlier negotiations.

This young fellow seemed reasonable on the surface but actually held petty grudges.

"Playing the villain comes with a price, don't you think?"

Lu Ye gave Yun Qingyue a languid glance.

Yun Qingyue chuckled wryly, "It seems Fellow Daoist Lu saw through it long ago." It wasn't a sophisticated tactic, and there was no helping it if he was seen through.

With a sigh, Yun Qingyue said, "I will report your two requests, but before that, I must ask you to sign the Heaven's Augury Pact."

"Agreed!"

Words alone are no proof; signing the Heaven's Augury Pact is the best constraint.

Yun Qingyue immediately summoned the Heaven's Augury Pact, listed a series of clauses, and handed it to Lu Ye for inspection. After confirming that there were no hidden linguistic traps, Lu Ye pressed his handprint on it.

Yun Qingyue also represented the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge side by pressing her handprint, and the Heaven's Augury Pact shone brightly, establishing the contract.

Storing away the Heaven's Augury Pact, Yun Qingyue felt much relieved. Honestly, although she was only dealing with a Cloud River Realm cultivator, the burden felt heavier than ever. Now that the negotiation was successfully concluded, her mission was also deemed complete.

"Then, Fellow Daoist Lu, we will meet again in the future." Yun Qingyue bowed deeply to Lu Ye, summoned her flower basket spirit artifact, and flew away using it.

Lu Ye watched her figure depart, then put away his book and walked to the side. He took out a saber and chopped down a large tree, trimmed it neatly, and chopped it into several sections, busying himself.

Time passed.

Three days later, while sitting on a rock reading a book, Lu Ye suddenly spoke softly, "Leave the items. Take the wooden plaque of the sect that the items belong to as my return gift. After ten days, any sect whose wooden plaque remains here will be visited by me."

No one was before him, but within his perception, unfamiliar auras had gathered around.

These individuals were naturally here to deliver the resources, but fearing his reputation, they temporarily hesitated to show themselves.

Upon hearing what Lu Ye said and looking a few feet away, where hundreds of wooden plaques lay, each inscribed with the name of a sect associated with Ten Thousand Demons Ridge, people remembered his words.

These plaques were marked by Lu Ye against the ten-part map and recorded precisely, ensuring nothing was missed. It wasn't to facilitate tallying up but to improve his memorization of the sects within the Core Circle. There were so many sects in Ten Thousand Demons Ridge, and through such a method, Lu Ye partly memorized the sects in the Core Circle, in case he encountered cultivators from Ten Thousand Demons Ridge again and could associate them with their respective sects.

Now, people in hiding understood the intention behind Lu Ye's words.

After a while, someone showed themselves, walked up to Lu Ye, dropped a storage sack, then picked a wooden plaque corresponding to their sect from the many plaques and hurriedly left.

Once someone took the lead, more quickly came forward, silently placing down storage sacks and taking their sect's wooden plaque.

As time passed, the number of storage sacks in front of Lu Ye grew while the remaining wooden plaques lessened.

Every cultivator who came here to deliver resources could see the amassed and spectacular storage sacks, knowing their value amounted to tens of millions of merits, but no one dared to harbor any greedy thoughts. After finally settling matters with Lu Yiye, if any complications arose now, not only would Lu Yiye not spare them, but even the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge wouldn't spare the sect behind them.

At one moment, Lu Ye noticed the wooden plaque of Mad Saber Sect being taken. He waved his hand, grasped the just-dropped storage sack, opened it, and saw that it contained many items, including twenty volumes of insights on saber skills cultivation.

That Xia Liang, indeed belonged to Mad Saber Sect!

Otherwise, the Mad Saber Sect wouldn't have conceded so obediently. The last time he personally went to the Mad Saber Sect, all he got were ten volumes of saber skills cultivation insights.

Lu Ye then began enthusiastically flipping through a volume of the saber skills cultivation insights.

Regrettably, Haotian Alliance didn't have a sect that specialized in saber training, or else he could have gone there to deeply study without so much effort in requesting saber skills cultivation insights.

Moreover, the insights given out weren't the best, and with Lu Ye's current strength and mastery in saber skills, although these insights could bring some benefits, they were unlikely to breakthrough his saber skills.

If someday, Haotian Alliance could conquer the headquarters of Mad Saber Sect, that would be ideal.

Of course, such thoughts were merely wishful thinking. Mad Saber Sect was a 1st grade sect with an immensely profound foundation, not something that could be conquered just like that.

Chapter 549 Turns Out to Be a Beast

...

Before the ten-day period was up, just seven days after Lu Ye had announced his terms, only two wooden plaques remained in front of him.

That meant that of all the sects within the Core Circle of Ten Thousand Demons Ridge, only two had not come.

Those two plaques bore the names New Moon Sect and Yunyang Sect, respectively.

Those two were not going to come.

With their bases destroyed and disciples harmed, why would they come to deliver supplies to Lu Ye?

Lu Ye had anticipated this and didn't mind too much.

Getting to his feet, he stretched languorously. Days of rest had left him feeling exceptionally revitalized. Now that the matters of the Spirit Stream battlefield were resolved, there was no need for him to linger here.

However, before leaving, he could pay a visit to Hua Ci. He had no idea how she was doing now, but considering the time, she should have advanced to Cloud River by now.

Summoning his spirit ark, he shot into the sky and flew towards Ten Thousand Poisons Forest.

Atop Heavenly Sword Peak, the wind howled, leaving behind only two wooden plaques with different names.

Lu Ye's collection of massive quantities of resources from Ten Thousand Demons Ridge twice had made Heavenly Sword Peak a poignant memory in the hearts of many cultivators from Ten Thousand Demons Ridge. Even many years later, cultivators from Ten Thousand Demons Ridge would go out of their way to avoid it, unwilling to set foot on Heavenly Sword Peak lightly.

Ten Thousand Poisons Forest was situated within the Core Circle, not too far from Heavenly Sword Peak. A day later, when Lu Ye leisurely arrived above Ten Thousand Poisons Forest, his expression turned to one of amazed suspicion.

He discovered that Ten Thousand Poisons Forest had changed from before.

The most obvious change was that the entire forest seemed to have shrunk considerably. Areas once enshrouded by poisonous fog had become safe zones.

Overall, it had diminished by at least thirty or forty percent.

This was a forbidden land of the Spirit Stream battlefield, a place where cultivators were loath to tread carelessly. Not only was there a deadly invisible poison fog, but also various poisonous creatures that lived in the forest.

Even a 9th Heaven cultivator couldn't penetrate too deeply into it.

Was the shrinkage of Ten Thousand Poisons Forest related to Hua Ci?

Lu Ye knew Hua Ci's cultivation required her to refine the poisonous fog, but it had only been a few months, and the forest had already changed so much. If Hua Ci were given more time, would this cultivator's forbidden land completely disappear?

This woman... truly was terrifying!

He ventured into the forest, heading deeper inside.

When he reached the front of the wooden hut he remembered, he saw a high fence constructed in front of the small courtyard, with the gate tightly closed.

Lu Ye approached and knocked on the gate, "Is anyone home?"

There was no response.

After a brief perception, it seemed there were also no signs of life within the hut.

Hua Ci wasn't there?

Lu Ye was somewhat surprised; he thought she had been here cultivating all along. But now there was no trace of her, leaving him uncertain of her whereabouts.

He pushed open the gate and entered the house, surveying his surroundings. Everything within was spotless, which undoubtedly meant Hua Ci still resided there, but at the moment he didn't know what she was doing.

Exiting the house, Lu Ye thought for a moment and then went towards the place where Hua Ci used to cultivate.

When he had previously stayed here, Hua Ci didn't cultivate inside the house because there was a Formation laid out by Lu Ye nearby. The Formation, as long as maintained, could ward off the invasion of the poison fog, which made it inconvenient for her to practice.

Not far into his walk, Lu Ye suddenly heard a soft, melodious singing accompanied by the sound of running water.

This woman... seemed to be in very good spirits, and he had no idea what she was doing.

He concealed his presence and hid his form, ready to give her a scare.

She had been alone here for several months without any interaction with the outside world, and she hadn't sent any messages to him in these days, clearly unaware that he had already arrived at the Spirit Stream battlefield.

If he suddenly appeared before her now, it would certainly be a surprise.

Following the sound of the singing, he made his way through a patch of low shrubbery, and as he looked up, Lu Ye's expression stiffened.

An unfamiliar pond had appeared; not too large, with a length and width of a few meters each. The water in the pond rippled with a weird green color that was unquestionably not normal.

Just looking at that water caused a great deal of discomfort, and one could imagine how deadly the water must be.

Lu Ye didn't know how Hua Ci had managed to create this pool of poisonous water; it wasn't there when he and Yiyi had been here, so clearly, it was Hua Ci's doing afterward.

Most importantly, Hua Ci was currently bathing in the pond.

She was almost entirely submerged, only her neck and above peeking out of the water, her arms pale and delicate like lotus stems, gently swaying on the surface. Occasionally, a few dainty toes would naughtily pop up, as she hummed an unknown little tune to herself.

Just from her current state, Lu Ye could imagine what she looked like!

This... If he were to be discovered, wouldn't he be beaten up for being a rogue?

He hadn't expected to come across such a scene.

Just as he was about to quietly back away, the singing suddenly stopped, followed by Lu Ye feeling a pair of sharp eyes locked onto his hiding spot.

He immediately sensed trouble!

With a splash, as Hua Ci flicked her wrist, a green water arrow shot out from the pond with incredible precision towards Lu Ye's position.

Should I dodge? Or should I not?

In that instant, Lu Ye's mind was in turmoil. To dodge would seem cowardice; to stay put would definitely reveal him.

Before he could decide, the water arrow hit him squarely in the chest. It caused no harm, but the arrow suddenly turned into a cloud of green mist, enveloping Lu Ye entirely and breaking his concealment.

Then, Lu Ye felt his Talent Tree start to be clouded by a mass of gray fog...

...

"Ah..." In the pool, with only her head poking out, Hua Ci covered her mouth in a surprised shout, "I thought it was some small animal, but it turns out to be a beast!"

She looked utterly shocked, spouting words more poisonous than the water in the pool.

"Give me a break!" said Lu Ye, annoyed, "In this damned place, who else but me could get in? You must've guessed it was me already, stop putting on an act."

It was evident from the non-lethal water arrow, Hua Ci knew Lu Ye was immune to all poisons, so the focus of the water arrow was the poison, not the attack itself.

Of course, if it were anyone other than Lu Ye, they would probably be waiting for death by now.

The poison in the pool was several times more fierce than any Lu Ye had experienced in the Ten Thousand Poisons Forest before.

"I didn't know, how could I have known."

Hua Ci pursed her lips and chuckled lightly, her hand stirring the pool water, "But why are you here? Isn't the Cloud River battlefield fun?"

"Fun, it's too fun." Since his whereabouts had been revealed, Lu Ye simply walked forward, came to the other side of the pool, crouched down, and scooped up some of the water.

More mist was rising from the Talent Tree...

Considering that he might not have much fuel left for his Talent Tree, Lu Ye dared not play any longer; otherwise, he would definitely be at Hua Ci's mercy.

"Ran into some trouble, and then came here, and stopped by to check on you."

"So it was just in passing..." Hua Ci's expression suddenly turned mournful. If someone ignorant saw this, they would probably think that Lu Ye had led her on and then abandoned her.

While she spoke, her hands kept moving; her slender neck, fair skin, and more loveliness were partly hidden and partly visible. Paired with her moisture-laden hair and woeful expression, she was truly heart-stirring.

If she claimed it wasn't intentional, Lu Ye wouldn't believe it even if he were beaten to death.

"Do I look good?" Hua Ci's cheeks flushed as she lowered her head slightly under Lu Ye's gaze, bashfully.

"Yes."

"Want to see more?"

Lu Ye instantly perked up, "Can I?"

Still with her head lowered, Hua Ci's voice was as thin as a mosquito's, "Of course not for others, but since it's you... it doesn't matter."

With those words, she gently closed her eyes, her long eyelashes trembling restlessly, and then she slowly stood up. The emerald pool water slid down her smooth neck, tracing the most beautiful imagery in this world.

Lu Ye's eyes bulged like brass bells.

"Hahaha, you big fool!"

Standing in the pool, Hua Ci, dressed in her gown, laughed heartily, full of mockery.

Lu Ye closed his eyes in agony. To have any expectations of this woman, I'm truly rubbish!

But who could have guessed that a woman soaking in a pool in such an environment would still be clad tightly!

Lu Ye stood up and walked away.

Behind him, Hua Ci called out, "Hey, where are you going?"

"None of your damn business!"

A heart set to admire the beauty had been lifted high only to be smashed into pieces on the ground.
Don't I have any face left?

A few moments later, a neatly groomed Hua Ci appeared in the cabin, only to find Lu Ye lying on a hammock in the courtyard, his head resting on his hands, staring at the sky listlessly.

Hua Ci, bringing a breeze of fragrance with her, came to Lu Ye's side and bent down to look at him, "Are you angry?"

"What's there to be angry about," Lu Ye rolled his eyes, "I'm hungry, go make something to eat."

And truth be told, Hua Ci's cooking, though maybe not the prettiest, was really good, both in taste and effect - truly nourishing stuff.

"Okay!" Hua Ci said, and bent down even lower.

Before Lu Ye could react, she lightly kissed his forehead.

Before she could move away, Lu Ye grabbed her arm.

Hua Ci looked puzzled, "What are you doing?"

"What are you doing?"

"Aren't you angry? I'm apologizing," she said as if it were the most natural thing to do.

"Am I a child? Needing you to kiss my forehead?" Lu Ye's face showed his indignation. That was clearly a way of comforting a child.

"Then what do you want?"

Lu Ye's eyes shifted downward, staring at her moist lips.

Panic flickered in Hua Ci's eyes and she took a sharp breath, but soon enough, she put on an indifferent face, smiling sweetly, locking eyes with Lu Ye, those dazzling eyes shone like stars.

Time trickled by slowly as they held their pose, motionless.

It took quite a while before Lu Ye let her go.

Hua Ci stepped back quickly, taunting instinctively, "Coward!"

"Get over here!" Lu Ye roared in anger.

"Dream on!" Hua Ci laughed, darting even further away.

The gentle melody of a song rose again, clearly lifting Hua Ci's mood, and soon the fragrance of food wafted through the courtyard.

Chapter 550 Good Days Have Arrived

Before long, Lu Ye was shoveling food into his mouth in the small courtyard, while a fierce gray mist rose from the Talent Tree, indicating he would need to replenish its fuel soon.

Hua Ci sat opposite him, occasionally adding some food to his plate, while saying, "The glamorous world can blind one's eyes, best to nourish yourself well."

Lu Ye chose to ignore the comment.

"Where are Yiyi and Amber? I haven't seen them."

"They went back to the base." As Lu Ye responded, he removed two storage sacks from his waist and casually threw them on the table.

Picking them up, Hua Ci opened one and exclaimed in surprise, "There's so much stuff here, which sect did you rob this time?"

Each storage sack contained supplies from a 1st grade sect. The two storage sacks were worth a total of six hundred thousand merit points. Of course, if he were to sell these items to the Heaven's Augury treasure vault, their value would be at least halved.

Lu Ye gestured a circle with his hand: "Not a single one from the Core Circle got away."

Hua Ci didn't know whether to laugh or cry, "What did they do to provoke you?"

"It's a long story, better left untold."

There was no need to tell Hua Ci about how he had been surrounded in the hunting grounds and had been forced to use the Golden Body Token and even invoke the Heaven's Augury Pillar to break free, unnecessarily worrying her.

"I don't need these things for my cultivation..."

"If you don't need them, sell them for some merit. It will always come in handy on the Cloud River battlefield."

Hua Ci thought for a moment and nodded, "Alright then, I'll accept them."

"What's with that pool of poison?" Lu Ye asked offhandedly.

"That is the source of the deadly poison from the Ten Thousand Poisons Forest. I stumbled upon it and drew it out. This way, my cultivation efficiency is much higher than just refining the poison mist."

It was precisely because of her ability to refine the energy in that pool of water that the Ten Thousand Poisons Forest had reduced in size so quickly. The changes in Ten Thousand Poisons Forest had attracted the attention of many, but no one knew exactly what was happening. After all, at the Spirit Stream Realm level, apart from Lu Ye, no one else could safely enter and exit this place.

Curious, Lu Ye asked, "You're already at the 9th Heaven level, how can you still cultivate?"

The 9th Heaven was the peak of Spirit Stream Realm. At that level, unless one ascended to the Cloud River Realm, there was no way to continue cultivating further.

"I have my ways," Hua Ci said with a pursed smile.

"So you plan to refine all of this place's deadly poison before advancing to Cloud River?"

"Of course. Rarely is there such a conducive environment for cultivation. Naturally, I'll make good use of it. Is there a similar environment in the Cloud River battlefield?"

"I haven't paid much attention. I'll keep an eye out for you."

"If there are demonic pills from demon beasts, that would also work. Some demon beasts' demonic pills are deadly poisons."

"As for those, the Heaven's Augury treasure vault might have them. Once you ascend to Cloud River, you can buy some yourself. I'll also keep an eye out for you." Suddenly remembering something, he asked, "Have you challenged the Spirit Stream Ranking yet?"

Hua Ci playfully winked at him, "I've been at the top of the Spirit Stream Ranking for months now. Didn't you know?"

Lu Ye was incredibly astonished, "The top of the Spirit Stream Ranking? You?"

"Don't underestimate me!" Hua Ci wagged two fingers in front of him.

Hua Ci had the strength to challenge the Spirit Stream Ranking, of which Lu Ye was certain. Back in the Ten Thousand Poisons Forest, she had killed quite a few Ten Thousand Demons Ridge cultivators, but the claim that she had been holding the top spot for months was somewhat surprising.

However, Hua Ci wouldn't joke with Lu Ye about such matters.

First, it had been Lu Yiye from the Righteous Blood Sect dominating the Spirit Stream Ranking for months, and now it was Hua Ci from the Righteous Blood Sect firmly at the top, and it seemed she intended to stay there for a long while.

Moreover, the persona Hua Ci presented to the outside world was still that of a healing cultivator...

Lu Ye was curious to know what the 9th Heaven cultivators on the Spirit Stream Ranking were feeling about it now.

Throughout history, healing cultivators rarely made it into the top fifty of the Spirit Stream Ranking, but Hua Ci went straight to the top.

But upon reflection, although Hua Ci was a healing cultivator, having received a complete inheritance, she was quite different from ordinary healing cultivators.

Most healing cultivators also practice some form of magic cultivation or other disciplines for self-protection. Hua Ci, however, did not practice other disciplines. Strictly speaking, she was a poison doctor.

Traditionally linked, the lines between medicine and poison are blurred, but Hua Ci's definition of a poison doctor was completely different. If she wished, she could even make her breath deadly toxic, not to mention physical contact.

With such a background, holding the top spot on the Spirit Stream Ranking was, of course, no problem. Those Ten Thousand Demons Ridge cultivators who challenged her would often lose their wits to poison before even seeing her, forced to admit defeat and flee. After several such incidents, no one dared to challenge Hua Ci's position anymore.

The Ten Thousand Demons Ridge was even more curious now about the whereabouts of this healing cultivator from the Righteous Blood Sect, because so far, no one had seen her on the Spirit Stream battlefield; she hadn't even appeared in any sect's base.

For Ten Thousand Demons Ridge, while Lu Ye was indeed a nightmare, he at least made public appearances, stirring up trouble. However, Hua Ci was like an unsolvable riddle.

Looking over the entire Spirit Stream battlefield, in the recent year or two, Bingzhou's Righteous Blood Sect was like a mountain pressing down on all Ten Thousand Demons Ridge cultivators' heads, so heavy that it was suffocating.

Having had his fill, Lu Ye stretched lazily, his face the picture of contentment.

While Hua Ci was cleaning up the bowls and chopsticks, she asked, "Are you leaving now?"

"Mhm. You should come to the Cloud River battlefield early, I'll wait for you there."

"All right."

"By the way, do you have any more of those Ten Thousand Poisons Pills you gave me last time?"

In certain specific environments, those things could unleash tremendous lethality. For instance, in the Ten Thousand Beasts Domain's secret realm last time, had Lu Ye not used the Ten Thousand Poisons Pill, it would have been impossible to deal with Niu Meng. Although that thing did not discriminate between friend or foe, if used correctly, it could also turn the tides of adversities.

"Yes, of course," Hua Ci responded, reaching into her bosom and producing a handful of green, body-warm Ten Thousand Poisons Pills.

Lu Ye's eyelids twitched at the sight. Looking at those dozen or so pills, he didn't stand on ceremony with Hua Ci and took three, stowing them away in his storage space.

"Take a few more, I can refine them anytime," Hua Ci urged.

"No need, having a few for self-defense is enough."

While he did not know what price Hua Ci had to pay to refine the Ten Thousand Poisons Pill, he was sure that they were not easily come by and naturally should not be squandered carelessly.

"I'm off then." Lu Ye turned around, waved goodbye, and summoned his spirit ark. Stepping onto it, spirit force surged, and he soared into the sky.

Hua Ci stood where she was, looking up and suddenly shouting with her hand cupped around her mouth, "Hubby, take care!"

On the spirit ark, Lu Ye nearly stumbled and fell, looking down he glared fiercely at Hua Ci, only to see her on the ground, laughing merrily.

As he watched Lu Ye's figure disappear, Hua Ci stretched lazily as well, her lovely and graceful silhouette revealed unquestionably. Once again, she would be starting her life alone, but after the past few months, she had grown accustomed to such a life and did not feel too much loneliness.

Nevertheless... she should still focus on her cultivation. Strive to completely refine the source of that deadly poison, and join him at the Cloud River battlefield at the earliest opportunity.

Being a healing cultivator herself, she could at least help him with healing injuries when by his side.

The sky was clear, the scenery picturesque, as Lu Ye sped along his way.

The journey was smooth sailing, from the Core Circle to the inner circle, then transferring to the outer circle, and finally returning to his station.

In truth, after emerging from the Ten Thousand Poisons Forest, he could have utilized the Heaven's Augury Pillars provided by the nearby Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union to teleport directly back to his station. However, that would have cost a considerable amount of merit.

Since he had nothing pressing recently and couldn't enter the Cloud River battlefield anyway, he decided not to spend that money.

Three days later, Lu Ye arrived at the Righteous Blood Sect's station. He had just entered the protective array when he heard the crisp cry of an eagle.

Looking towards the nearby spirit mountaintop, he saw a familiar figure standing there, gazing in his direction.

Little Gray had returned.

Lu Ye rode his Spiritual Artifact towards the spirit mountaintop, arriving at the eagle's nest he fed Little Gray with a few fish caught earlier from Moon Lake and played with it for a while.

After a moment, he entered the Heaven's Augury Hall.

Along the way, numerous disciples bowed respectfully to him, including those from within the sect and those from outside the sect who were there for training; even the fiery female cultivators actively approached him for a chat, their eyes filled with admiration as they looked at Lu Ye.

Having dismissed those cultivators, Lu Ye stood before the Heaven's Augury Pillar, placed his hand on it, and connected his mind with the Heaven's Augury treasure vault.

He intended to sell some items to the Heaven's Augury treasure vault to ensure he had enough merit on hand for his use.

From his recent dealings with Ten Thousand Demons Ridge, he had amassed goods worth between twenty and thirty million merit. Even if he sold everything to the Heaven's Augury treasure vault at half price, he could still earn over ten million merit.

But of course, Lu Ye would not sell everything.

Having enough merit on hand for immediate use was sufficient for him, and he would leave the rest to Second Senior Sister to ensure the development and operation of the sect.

Especially now that Second Senior Sister had reached Divine Sea Realm cultivation, the resources needed for cultivation were also incredibly vast.

As a cultivator in the Spirit Stream Realm, one could cultivate in the Spirit Stream battlefield, and upon reaching the Cloud River Realm, one could enter the Cloud River battlefield. But upon promotion to the True Lake Realm, there were no specific battlefields available.

Lu Ye was not entirely clear on how strong cultivators in the True Lake and Divine Sea Realms should cultivate, but it was said to be related to a sect's heritage—the stronger the heritage, the faster the cultivation for True Lake and Divine Sea levels.

Thus, across the Nine Provinces, those powerful sects had generations of formidable individuals emerging. In contrast, those weaker sects could only slowly accumulate and develop, waiting for the day when they would leap through the dragon gate.

Given Shui Yuan's aptitude, she was actually qualified for the Divine Sea level a long time ago, but until half a year ago, she was still only at Level 9 of the True Lake.

It wasn't that her aptitude was insufficient; rather, the Righteous Blood Sect had previously been in too much decline to support her cultivation with ample resources.

However, with Lu Ye's rise, the good days for the Righteous Blood Sect had arrived.

Back then, Lu Ye had roused an alliance under the banner of Haotian Alliance within the inner circle, waging battles in all directions until they forced Ten Thousand Demons Ridge to make concessions, contributing a batch of supplies that quelled the situation.