

Sage of Humanity - Chapter 56 - 54: Sitting at Home[1,293 words]

During his search for the residence of the Righteous Blood Sect, Lu Ye noticed something about the map, that is, the text on the map was color-coded in four different colors: red, yellow, blue, and white.

The Qingyun Marketplace Three was marked with yellow text, while the Righteous Blood Sect was marked in blue.

This seemed to suggest that places marked in blue were under the Haotian Alliance's domain, red was for Ten Thousand Demons Ridge, and yellow indicated neutral areas, as for the white... Lu Ye guessed that these were ownerless lands; most mountains and rivers were marked with white text.

Looking at the whole ten-part map, the red and blue text markers intertwined with each other, creating a convoluted pattern. If the map were a chessboard, then the residence markings in red and blue were the chess pieces of the two factions, which, through years of conflict and entanglement, had turned into two major dragons on the board, strangling each other.

Lu Ye had not truly integrated into this battlefield yet, but even from the chess piece movements on the map, he could feel the extreme danger of this factional contest.

However, the general trends of the world were momentarily unrelated to him; he was just a nameless low-level cultivator from Spirit Stream Level 2, currently only focused on hurrying to the Righteous Blood Sect's residence.

Poring over the battlefield's ten-part map, Lu Ye meticulously planned his route, slowly forming a plan.

As the light dimmed at the entrance of the cave, Lu Ye looked up to see Big Tiger stepping inside, with Yiyi popping out from atop Big Tiger's head, cheerfully saying, "You haven't left?"

She had come by earlier in the morning and, not finding Lu Ye, thought that he had already left.

"I was about to leave, anything urgent?" Lu Ye gathered up the ten-part map, which was crucial for his smooth return to the Righteous Blood Sect's residence and also the most precious item he possessed, naturally he needed to keep it safe.

"I want to talk to you," Yiyi drifted forward, sitting upright in front of Lu Ye, her little face stern.

Lu Ye did not understand why she was adopting a negotiating demeanor and asked, frowning, "Talk about what?"

Yiyi asked, "Where will you go after leaving here?"

"It's none of your business."

"Okay." Yiyi knew she had asked a pointless question. They were neither relatives nor friends, and their recent interactions hadn't been very pleasant. Their only cooperation was when they killed that clean-cut man and Liew Ruyin, so she had no right to ask about Lu Ye's whereabouts.

Seeing her troubled expression, Lu Ye demanded impatiently, "What is it in the end?"

Yiyi's expression grew even more troubled, and Big Tiger stepped forward, nudging her back with his head. Biting her lip, Yiyi looked at Lu Ye and asked, "Can you take us with you?"

"What?" Lu Ye doubted if he had heard correctly.

"Take us with you," Yiyi repeated.

"Why?"

Yiyi explained, "Like you said before, since we killed that woman, the Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union might trace it back to us. This place is not safe anymore, so we need to leave too, but we don't know where to go."

"The battlefield is vast, you can go wherever you want." Yiyi's proposal surprised Lu Ye; he had never considered this before, nor had he expected Yiyi to come over and discuss these matters with him.

"But... but it was you who killed people, we did not intend to kill anyone," Yiyi said with a look of aggrievement.

After returning yesterday, Yiyi finally realized that while she and Big Tiger had been resting peacefully in their territory, Lu Ye had brought a cultivator there, asking them to help rob him, and in a swift motion he had killed him, and even killed a person from the Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union...

From start to finish, they had not understood what exactly had happened. It truly seemed like trouble had fallen from the sky while they were just sitting at home.

"Didn't you guys take a share of the loot?" Lu Ye looked at her puzzled, implying that since they participated in the killing and shared the loot, they naturally had to share the risks too.

Yiyi opened her mouth wide, unable to respond, and finally managed to stammer, "Why can't you take us with you?"

"You're too young!"

"Huh?" Yiyi stared blankly at Lu Ye, taking a long while to react. She crossed her arms over her chest, her cheeks turning red, "Pervert!"

Heaven only knows how a minion spirit could blush.

Lu Ye stood up, dusting off his buttocks, "Is there anything else? If not, I need to start my journey. We may never meet again after this, so I wish you all the best."

Yiyi couldn't figure out why her being small had anything to do with Lu Ye not taking them along, but seeing Lu Ye actually getting ready to leave, she also became anxious.

She was not just some naïve little girl; she was a cultivator while alive. After dying, by a twist of fate, Big Tiger turned her into a minion spirit. Although she lost many memories, she still remembered the ruthlessness of the cultivation world.

She and Big Tiger reigning as kings of their mountain seemed carefree, but in reality, they were walking on thin ice. No one knew when disaster might strike, and when it did, they wouldn't be able to defend themselves with their current strength.

She had considered looking for a cultivator to rely on, but the cultivators she met in the outer circle were so low-level she couldn't respect them. What if they just sold Big Tiger after she relied on them?

Lu Ye was different; he must be a disciple of a big sect, otherwise, he wouldn't have so many Spirit Talismans. Over the past few months, Yiyi saw Lu Ye growing stronger, at a terrifying pace.

She felt that sticking with Lu Ye was a good choice. Despite looking somewhat annoying, he acted on a set of principles. Take yesterday's spoils; if Lu Ye had wanted to keep them all, she and Big Tiger couldn't have stopped him, but he chose to share evenly with them.

All these reasons made Yiyi resolve that staying here was merely waiting for death. Going out with Lu Ye seemed the only way forward.

That's why she came to speak these words with Lu Ye.

As they brushed past each other, Lu Ye felt his clothes being tugged at. Turning his head, he saw Yiyi looking up at him, her eyes seemingly brimming with tears.

Lu Ye remained unmoved, "Crying won't work on me!"

Yiyi continued to look at him.

The two of them just stood there, staring at each other.

After a long moment, Lu Ye finally said, "Give me three sentences to convince me!"

Yiyi's eyes brightened, as if she already had her arguments ready. She quickly said, "You know how low-level cultivators fear Amber. If you ever encounter an enemy you can't defeat, I can collaborate with Amber to scare them off, making them retreat in the face of difficulty."

Lu Ye stroked his chin and nodded thoughtfully, "You make a good point there."

Encouraged, Yiyi went on, "Also, if you need to travel, you can ride Amber. It will save your energy and keep you ready for emergencies, plus it's very fast. If someone is chasing you, it can help you escape!"

"Will it listen to me?" Lu Ye looked at Big Tiger.

Lu Ye had witnessed Big Tiger's speed the day before when they pursued Liew Ruyin. Even though Big Tiger started later than him, it managed to intercept Liew Ruyin, without which Lu Ye would have had trouble catching up to her.

"Definitely!" Yiyi nodded vigorously.

"And also, also..." Yiyi spoke eagerly, struggling to continue, then finally slapped her chest, "And me!"

"You?" Lu Ye looked down at her.

"I can ambush others! Just like yesterday," Yiyi declared, chest thrust forward.

Sage of Humanity - Chapter 57 - 55 Benefits[1,363 words]

The combination of Big Tiger and Yiyi was quite intimidating. Low-level cultivators with little experience could be easily frightened by a demon beast that could speak. Riding Big Tiger on the journey was undoubtedly a tempting prospect.

The trip to the Righteous Blood Sect's base was long, and Lu Ye did not know when he would arrive. If he rode Big Tiger, he could save energy on the road, and even cultivate.

For him, this was an excellent choice. After all, his current cultivation level was still low, and his priority was to improve his strength. If he traveled on his own, he would not be able to cultivate along the way and would waste a lot of time.

He had not originally planned to bring this spirit and tiger with him. The three sentences he said to Yiyi were but an excuse; he had intended to refuse regardless of what Yiyi said.

But now, he found himself somewhat persuaded by Yiyi's words...

"How about it, how about it?" Yiyi looked at Lu Ye eagerly, fearful he would utter a 'no'.

"It's not that it's out of the question..."

Before Yiyi could cheer, Lu Ye changed tack, "However, we need to agree on three rules!"

Yiyi was puzzled, "Which three?"

Lu Ye raised a finger, "First, everything follows my lead. If there's any disagreement between us, you must listen to me."

Yiyi nodded, "That's no problem." Since she had decided to come to Lu Ye, she and Big Tiger were already mentally prepared for that.

"Second, there might be times when I'll ask you to do something. As long as it's within your capabilities, you cannot refuse. Of course, I won't ask you to do anything that endangers your lives. If such a situation arises, you can make your own judgments based on the circumstances."

"That's acceptable."

"Third, if one day you no longer wish to stay, just let me know instead of leaving without a word."

"We won't do that," Yiyi shook her head.

"If all of that's acceptable, then... shall we say 'Pleasure doing business'?" Lu Ye extended a hand to Yiyi.

Yiyi tilted her head, looking at him with confusion, but still mimicked his gesture and extended her own hand, which Lu Ye grasped and shook lightly.

Yiyi understood what he meant, smiled with her eyes narrowed, "Pleasure doing business!"

Big Tiger let out a sound from behind her.

Yiyi climbed onto Big Tiger's head and said to Lu Ye, "As a sign of good faith in our cooperation, I have a benefit to offer you!"

"A benefit?"

Upon hearing three words from Yiyi's mouth, Lu Ye was instantly intrigued.

In the depths of Qingyun Mountain, close to Big Tiger's territory, Lu Ye arrived at a very hidden cave entrance led by Big Tiger and Yiyi.

The entrance was concealed by thick weeds and dense shrubbery, making it hard to find unless one was familiar with the terrain.

"Is this the place?" Lu Ye peered into the cave entrance, which was pitch-black, revealing nothing.

"Yes," Yiyi and Big Tiger led the way in front and behind, signaling Lu Ye to follow.

Lu Ye carried a long saber at his waist, hand on the hilt, ready to respond to any sudden situations.

According to Yiyi, a snake demon resided deep in the cave. She and Big Tiger had once ventured deep inside and suffered at the hands of the snake demon, but it was also because of that they discovered a secret.

That secret was the benefit she had mentioned to Lu Ye.

The cave sloped downward, and Lu Ye felt he had descended dozens of feet underground without reaching the end, indicating the cave's depth.

And here, the surrounding coolness was no longer felt; instead, waves of heat emanated continuously from ahead.

The further they moved forward, the more intense the heatwaves became.

Yiyi began to pant heavily and finally came to a stop, "I can't go any deeper." After all, she was a Spiritual Body, and the scorching environment was unfriendly to her.

Lu Ye suddenly realized, "You were injured last time by coming here?"

Yiyi nodded, "That thing is only found here. Amber will go in with you. The snake demon's strength isn't very formidable. With big tiger's cooperation, you should be able to take it down."

"Then wait here for me," Lu Ye nodded and continued on the path with big tiger.

After a long while more, Lu Ye suspected that he had already delved a hundred zhang underground, where the scorching air was so thick it was unbearable. Even as he channeled spirit force to protect his body, he found the heat difficult to resist. As for big tiger, it was even worse, tongue lolling out, looking deflated and spiritless, like a dog suffering from heatstroke.

After a moment, they finally reached the end.

It was an underground cavern, not a small space. Standing at the entrance, Lu Ye immediately saw a large snake coiled in the depths of the cavern. The snake's body was as thick as his thigh, its full length unknown, as it raised its head high, breathing in and out towards a small tree about half a man's height.

The tree was entirely red, as if it were a red-hot iron bar. There were two fruits the size of a baby's fist hanging from it, and a strange fragrant smell permeated the entire cavern.

Barrier-breaking Fruit!

This was the "advantage" Yiyi mentioned before.

If it were an ordinary item, Lu Ye's current wealth might not have tempted him, but Barrier-breaking Fruit was different. This item was extremely beneficial for cultivators to impact the spiritual orifice barrier. One could say that as long as the spiritual orifice had not reached Perfection, it would always be needed.

Lu Ye had consumed a Barrier-breaking Fruit once before and had managed to advance to the Spirit Stream Realm solely because of that fruit. So when Yiyi mentioned it, he was instantly interested.

The Barrier-breaking Fruit that Yiyi gave him last time was stolen from here. She, being a Spiritual Body, could come and go without a trace, and although the snake demon dominated this area, it couldn't guard against her.

However, the environment here was extremely harmful to her. If there had been any other way, Yiyi wouldn't have risked coming here last time.

In the end, although she got her hands on the fruit, Yiyi was weakened for many days before she recovered.

She and big tiger already had some unresolved issues with this snake demon. Previously, lacking the strength, they couldn't seek revenge. Now, with Lu Ye as a strong backer, and about to leave, it was natural for Yiyi to seek retribution for past grievances.

At the same time, it would allow Lu Ye to obtain two Barrier-breaking Fruits, deepening the affection between them and making their partnership even more solid. It was a win-win situation.

The snake demon, coiled up, used its snake body to conceal and enclose the Barrier-breaking Fruit Tree in the middle. With the high head moving up and down in breathing, one could see fire-red Spiritual Energy swirling into its nostrils and mouth as if it were cultivating.

Two uninvited guests disturbed it.

With a roar from big tiger, the snake demon abruptly raised its head, its tongue flicking in and out.

Big tiger charged like the wind, but in the next instant, the snake demon shot out, opened its mouth, and bit onto big tiger's neck.

Big tiger, in pain, roared, and bit into the snake's belly in response. However, given the disparity in strength, big tiger was left bloody and injured, while it remained unscathed.

A fiery red demonic power enveloped the snake demon's body, forming a protective layer that made it difficult for big tiger to bite through.

In the first clash, the imposing big tiger was at a significant disadvantage, and the several zhangs long body of the snake coiled around, swiftly turning big tiger into a bundled rice dumpling.

It was a quick defeat! Although both were demon beasts, the gap in strength was notable.

Luckily, Lu Ye was there. As big tiger lunged, he used the big tiger's body as a shield and charged forward.

At this moment, as the two beasts tangled, it was the perfect opportunity to strike.

As the long sword was unsheathed, Lu Ye channeled spirit force onto the blade, reinforcing it with Sharpness spirit runes. In an instant, the bright sword light flashed, and blood splattered.

Sage of Humanity - Chapter 58 - 56 Stirs[1,342 words]

Brushing past the two beasts entangled in battle, Lu Ye had not yet steadied himself when a reddish snake tail whipped towards him like a lash, the force of the wind bearing down on his face.

Unable to turn around in time, Lu Ye could only hurriedly muster his spirit force to protect his body.

With a loud smack, he was flung away, a sour ache in his shoulder as he rolled several times on the scorching ground.

Getting to his feet, he looked up, somewhat surprised.

The sharp blow he had fortified failed to sever the snake in one strike, merely slicing halfway through its body, blood pouring out as the snake demon writhed in pain on the ground.

Big tiger took the opportunity to break free from its hold, courageously and recklessly lunging at the wound and sinking its teeth in.

Violently, it tore off a large chunk of flesh.

The snake's head reared back, its mouth opening wide with a hint of red light brewing within, aimed straight at Big Tiger as the temperature in the cave suddenly shot up.

Big Tiger's animal instincts alerted it to the danger, it growled lowly and sprang agilely to the side.

In the next instant, a blast of Raging Flames burst forth from the snake's mouth, distorting the air in front of it with searing heat.

Seeing this, the corner of Lu Ye's eye twitched, knowing full well that the snake demon was far more powerful than Big Tiger, and he was lucky that Big Tiger had captured its enmity; otherwise, he would have had to use a Golden Body Talisman to withstand such a fiery attack.

Big Tiger evaded just in time, the flames missing it completely, while Lu Ye seized the moment to strike from behind the snake demon, aiming a strike at the base of its head.

This strike, too, only cut halfway through the snake's body, the blade hindered by the snake's bones. With two losses under Lu Ye's hands, the snake quickly turned its head, setting its sights on Lu Ye as red light began to gather in its mouth again.

Lu Ye did not retreat, but instead thrust his blade directly into the snake's mouth and fell backward.

As the flames surged out, the long blade pierced through the snake's head and emerged from the back of its skull.

A white shadow leapt from the side, slamming into the snake's body, knocking it sideways so that the blast of flames missed its target and scorched empty space instead.

Lu Ye, who had fallen, quickly got up and took out a Spirit Talisman from his storage sack, holding it in his hand as he fixed his gaze and remained on guard.

But soon he stowed the talisman away, standing silently at his original spot to wait.

His final strike had pierced through the snake's head, a fatal blow. The snake writhed on the ground, clearly not going to survive. The long blade, stuck in its mouth, caused more damage as it twisted, with snake blood spattering everywhere on the ground, sizzling as it evaporated from the extreme heat.

Big Tiger also got up, shaking its body, its white fur in disarray and visibly singed in places, looking incredibly disheveled.

From the beginning of Big Tiger's attack to this moment, no more than a dozen breaths had passed. The outcome had been decided, life and death pronounced, yet within this extremely brief time, the exchange had been perilous to the extreme.

Lu Ye was surprised to find that his first cooperation with Big Tiger was nearly perfect.

Especially at the last moment—when Lu Ye made that fatal thrust, he was already falling backward, attempting to dodge the enemy's fiery breath. However, Big Tiger's collision ensured Lu Ye's safety.

Against such a snake demon, Lu Ye mused that if he had come alone, he would have undoubtedly faced a tough battle, possibly even using several Spirit Talismans.

But with Big Tiger's cooperation, they brought it down in just a brief moment.

He suddenly felt that agreeing to Yiyi's request hadn't been such a bad idea after all.

"Well done," Lu Ye said to Big Tiger with a nod, sparing no praise.

Big Tiger let out a roar in response. Although it couldn't speak and wasn't particularly powerful, through their several encounters, Lu Ye found that it possessed high spiritual intelligence, understood human speech—quite impressive indeed.

When the snake finally lay still, Lu Ye walked over and kicked it, assuring himself it was indeed dead.

Looking at the long knife stuck in the snake's mouth, Lu Ye found himself in a dilemma; the knife had been heated red-hot by the snake's raging flames, and he feared that picking it up now would leave him with a serious burn.

He had no choice but to wait a while.

In the meantime, Lu Ye walked over to the Barrier-Breaking Fruit Tree and carefully picked two fruits, storing them in his storage sack.

As for the tree itself, Lu Ye decided not to disturb it, as he wouldn't be able to keep it alive even if he took it with him.

Just as Lu Ye was about to retrieve his knife, his mind suddenly blurred for a moment, as something inside him stirred.

This feeling involuntarily took him back to an experience a few months ago...

He hurriedly said, "Amber, you go ahead, I will find you guys later."

Big Tiger let out a howl and raised its paw to pat the dead snake.

Lu Ye immediately understood, "I know, this is valuable stuff; how could I possibly leave it behind?"

Only then did Big Tiger leave contentedly, and before it left, it even carried off a piece of flesh it had torn from the big snake earlier.

Once Big Tiger's figure had disappeared, Lu Ye looked back at the Barrier-Breaking Fruit Tree.

That stirring sensation came again.

He quickly focused his mind, and to his surprise, he didn't see the shadow of the Talent Tree in his vision this time; instead, there was something unusual in his Root Spiritual Orifice.

He hurriedly closed his eyes to sense more carefully.

Faintly, he seemed to see a phantom of a large tree within his Root Spiritual Orifice, the very Talent Tree.

The roots of the Talent Tree extended tendrils, just like what happened a few months ago in the mines of Evil Moon Valley.

The tendrils penetrated an unknown place, and the next moment, a fiery red force was drawn up along the tendrils.

As this fiery red force flowed in, he clearly saw a leaf on the Talent Tree start to glow with fire, and then it burst into flames.

Then came the second leaf...

By the time of the third leaf, it only emitted a glow and did not catch fire.

The tendrils slowly disappeared, and when Lu Ye opened his eyes, he found his hand was on the Barrier-Breaking Fruit Tree without knowing when.

The fruit tree had withered completely, and the once scorching cave had changed entirely, no longer carrying any trace of searing heat.

Lu Ye fell deep into thought.

He recalled the first time the Talent Tree underwent a change; he was inspecting the belongings of Manager Yang at that time, having found an unknown ore. Then the Talent Tree grew tendrils that penetrated that ore, which cracked open to reveal an orange-yellow flame.

After absorbing the power of that flame, a leaf bearing Sharpness spirit runes on the Talent Tree flared up fiercely.

This time was even more incredible, the Talent Tree drew upon some unknown power, causing two leaves on the tree to burn, and the third leaf showed a significant change.

It appeared that his guess from a long time ago was correct—the Talent Tree indeed needed to absorb some sort of flame or scorching force to change, a theory that his recent experiences undoubtedly confirmed.

The energy required by the Talent Tree undoubtedly lay beneath the floor of this cave, and having been absorbed by the Talent Tree, the place was no longer hot.

The habitat of the Barrier-Breaking Fruit Tree had been destroyed, and naturally, the tree itself died too. It could even be said that the fruit tree also contained some searing power within, which was entirely drained by the Talent Tree, so how could it continue to live?

Sage of Humanity - Chapter 59 - 57 On the Road[1,356 words]

...

In the cavern, Lu Ye closed his eyes once more, quietly attuning himself to the sensations around him.

The Talent Tree was indeed within his Root Spiritual Orifice; when he concentrated, he could "see" this scene.

This was indeed different from before; when his focus was adequate, the Talent Tree used to appear within his sight, presenting itself as a phantom image.

Perhaps... the Talent Tree had always been in the Root Spiritual Orifice, but because he hadn't opened his orifice in the past, all he saw was the phantom in his vision?

After the orifice-opening, he could now perceive it more directly.

Since his arrival at the Spirit Stream battlefield, he had been constantly busy enhancing his cultivation, relentlessly committed to his rigorous practice, and had not taken the time to pay attention to the state of the Talent Tree until it had once again drawn in external power, prompting him to notice the changes.

This was a good thing; he had always harbored a doubt that he couldn't clarify, which was that his cultivation through consuming elixirs seemed to come without any hidden dangers. He guessed it must be related to the Talent Tree, but the exact nature of this relationship was a mystery to him.

Now that he could perceive the existence of the Talent Tree directly, perhaps he could study it in detail when he had the time.

As he "watched" the two leaves of the Talent Tree burn brightly, even though Lu Ye knew those leaves were valuable, he couldn't help but recall some unpleasant memories...

Suppressing the urge to investigate further, Lu Ye went to the corpse of the snake demon, retrieved his weapon, and then chopped the body into more than a dozen pieces, packing them one by one into his storage sack.

The strength of this snake demon was much greater than that of the big tiger, and it could even breathe fire. The snake meat must be rich in spirit force and would provide a significant boost when consumed.

After he had finished with all this, Lu Ye looked around to ensure nothing was overlooked before leaving the cavern.

Half a Shichen later, Lu Ye met up with Yiyi and the big tiger who were waiting at the entrance of the cave. Noticing bloodstains on the shoulder of the big tiger, he took out a healing pill and administered it to the animal; the wound was inflicted during the earlier battle with the snake demon.

Lu Ye had also sustained a minor injury in the same shoulder area, having been struck by the snake's tail, but it was nothing serious.

A short while later, he mounted the big tiger, stroking its soft fur, and reminisced about the first time he met the big tiger and Yiyi. Back then, who would have thought that one day such a majestic demon beast would become his mount?

It must be said that riding on the back of the big tiger was quite a delightful experience, even making a Spirit Stream Level 2 cultivator like Lu Ye feel a surge of heroic pride as if commanding the world.

The big tiger was sturdy and broad-backed, making the ride quite comfortable.

"Where to?" Yiyi asked as she sat on the big tiger's head, turning to look at him.

Feeling the guidance of the war mark on his hand, Lu Ye pointed in a direction, "Follow this way, keep to the foot of the mountain!"

"Then let's set off!" Yiyi waved her little hand, clearly in high spirits.

With a low roar, the big tiger darted out like an arrow, and on that day, many low-level cultivators preparing to enter Qingyun Mountain to train caught a glimpse of a young man riding a snow-white big tiger, breezily sweeping by.

A drop of water falls into the sea, causing tiny ripples which will eventually stir up towering waves...

Night fell, and beneath a protruding, sloping cliff face, there was a recessed area at the base of the cliff, a natural harbor against the wind.

Yiyi, who had gone ahead to scout, stood there waving, "Lu Ye, over here, over here!"

Under the moonlight, Lu Ye walked forth with a majestic stride, one step at a time, full of grandeur.

Witnessing Lu Ye's peculiar walking style, Yiyi found it somewhat unbearable to watch, but in the end, she couldn't help herself and burst into laughter...

Lu Ye passed by her, giving her an intense glare.

He had thought that riding the big tiger would be a pleasant journey, yet just on the first day, he realized he had been naive.

...

The chafing on the insides of his thighs was unbearable; Lu Ye was certain they were raw and bloody by now. Even at this moment, he still felt the jarring sensation of riding on the tiger's back. Throughout the journey, it would've been an achievement not to have been bounced unconscious, let alone to cultivate while riding.

"You'll get used to it," Yiyi said from behind him.

Entering the natural depression, Lu Ye nodded, recognizing it as a fine place to rest.

He found remnants of a bonfire within the hollow, likely left by travelers who had come before.

After a brief rest, Lu Ye collected some wood to reignite the fire, then he pulled out a section of snake meat. He skinned and gutted it, slicing off a hunk roughly twenty pounds in weight. The rest he tossed to the big tiger.

Embracing the substantial meal, the big tiger devoured the snake meat with gusto, eating to its heart's content.

As flames danced, the aroma began to fill the air, and the sizzle of fat hitting the fire made a crackling sound.

While cooking the snake meat, Lu Ye took out a Barrier-breaking Fruit from his storage sack and gestured to Yiyi.

Yiyi looked at him, puzzled.

"Two fruits make five," Lu Ye explained.

Yiyi shook her head, "That's useful to you, but Amber and I don't need it. Keep it for yourself."

Lu Ye considered for a moment, "Does Amber eat elixir pills?"

Yiyi nodded, "Amber also eats Spirit Stones."

Lu Ye was shocked, "Spirit Stones can be eaten?"

Yiyi explained, "Spirit Stones are condensed Spiritual Energy. Demon beasts can eat them, but people can't—they can't refine them."

Lu Ye realized he had learned something new, no wonder when Yiyi and big tiger had come to rob him before, they had asked for elixir pills, and when they could not get them, had asked for Spirit Stones instead.

"Then, I'll exchange your fruits for elixir pills..." Lu Ye was a bit troubled, "But I don't know the value of these fruits."

Yiyi smiled lightly, "Just give whatever you think is fair. Amber only needs to eat two elixir pills a day now."

"That's not too much," he said.

The snake meat was done quickly. Lu Ye sprinkled some salt on it for flavor and began to eat heartily. Suddenly, he looked up at Yiyi, who was gazing at him with eager eyes, and offered her the snake meat, "Do you want some?"

Yiyi shook her head, "I can't eat food."

Lu Ye continued eating.

The snake meat was indeed nourishing. Having consumed several pounds of it, Lu Ye felt a warm surge of energy throughout his body, revitalized. Even the flow of spirit force within him seemed faster.

While continuing Essence Refinement-Qi Conversion, Lu Ye took his sword to an open area, removed his shirt to reveal a muscular torso, and started to practice his sword strikes with serious focus.

His recent fight with the clean-looking cultivator made him realize his utter lack of combat skills. While he could enhance his cultivation by consuming pills, combat skills were not something that could be improved in the same way.

With no one to guide him, Lu Ye found a rudimentary solution: repeatedly swinging his sword. He wasn't sure if it would be effective, but it was the only method he could think of.

In the future, he was destined to face ever stronger enemies. In close combat, both cultivation level and combat skills were indispensable.

Under the moonlight, the young man practiced his swordplay with dedication, drenched in sweat. Not far off, the white big tiger lay on the ground, deeply asleep, enveloped in a white glow, while the black-haired girl with her knees hugged close, watched silently, the full moon high above providing a hazy and picturesque backdrop.

Sage of Humanity - Chapter 60 - 58 Talisman[1,385 words]

After four hours, Lu Ye finally sheathed his blade, walked to a shady spot, pulled out his water flask, quickly washed up, donned his clothes, and returned to the base of the cliff.

Big Tiger had long since fallen into a deep sleep, his snores thunderous, while Yiyi still sat there, presumably waiting for him.

However, seeing Lu Ye's expression, she felt somewhat puzzled, because at that moment, Lu Ye looked as though he had made a difficult decision, with a determined expression as if he were ready to face thousands of foes alone.

She couldn't help but tilt her head in curiosity...

With a heavy heart, Lu Ye sat down cross-legged, thought for a moment, and warned Yiyi, "If I faint in a while, don't worry too much about it."

"Hmm?" Yiyi's face was full of confusion.

Lu Ye didn't bother to explain further, closed his eyes, immersed his mind, and once again "saw" the Talent Tree situated within his Root Spiritual Orifice.

On the immense canopy, three leaves were ablaze, and a fourth was shining brightly, though it was not yet aflame.

In the mines of Evil Moon Valley, his Talent Tree had sprouted its first burning leaf, bearing a spirit rune called Sharpness.

If it hadn't been for that Sharpness rune, he couldn't have so easily killed the seriously injured Zhou Cheng, wouldn't have been able to pierce the protective spirit force of the pale man with a single thrust, nor could he have dealt a heavy blow to the snake demon and ultimately triumph.

It could be said that this spirit rune helped Lu Ye considerably in several critical moments.

Now with two more leaves catching fire on the Talent Tree, his heart was in turmoil, but he also eagerly anticipated what kind of spirit rune he would receive.

As his concentration slowly gathered, Lu Ye looked towards one of the burning leaves, and just like the last time, that tiny leaf quickly magnified, filling his entire field of vision and mind in the blink of an eye.

Simultaneously, a deluge of information uncontrollably flooded his brain, and Lu Ye felt as though someone had brutally hammered his skull.

Last time, he had passed out immediately.

This time, despite feeling as though the world was spinning and enduring excruciating pain, he somehow managed not to faint.

Lu Ye almost wished he could have passed out because the whole experience was akin to a fate worse than death, as if someone was prying his brain open and forcibly stuffing in things he didn't understand at all, stirring them violently...

His eyes snapped open abruptly, and a suppressed low growl emanated from his throat, his eyes bloodshot.

Yiyi, who had been watching him closely, was startled, and even Big Tiger, in his deep slumber, was awakened, roaring in alarm and looking around defensively, mistaking the situation for an attack.

It took quite some time for Lu Ye to gradually calm down, his vision was a sea of red, his body drenched in sweat, with Yiyi and Big Tiger standing by anxiously, unsure of what to do.

In fact, Lu Ye's appearance was downright fierce at the moment, not only were his eyes bloodshot, but veins also bulged at his temples, as though he was enduring great torment.

After taking deep breaths for a while, Lu Ye finally regained a bit of composure and reassured the worried Big Tiger and Yiyi, saying, "It's over."

He closed his eyes once more.

The pain had passed, and it was time to reap the fruits of victory.

Yiyi and Big Tiger exchanged glances, both at a loss, but since it seemed related to Lu Ye's cultivation, and he wasn't talking about it, Yiyi didn't feel it was right to ask, so she and Big Tiger simply stood guard beside him.

At that moment, Lu Ye was examining the characteristics of the second spirit rune.

Defense!

This is the name of the second spirit rune, and judging by the name alone, this should be a defensive spirit rune.

Previously, Lu Ye had some guesses that if the first spirit rune was offensive in nature, perhaps the second one would be defensive, and it now seems that this is indeed the case.

Opening his eyes and after a brief preparation, a layer of visible spirit light suddenly flickered on his palm, transforming into the shape of a triangular shield engraved with intricate and complex patterns.

"This is... a spirit rune?" Yiyi, who had been silently observing Lu Ye, was shocked. Although she had lost many memories, she still remembered some common knowledge of the cultivation world, and she understood more than Lu Ye. Therefore, the sight of Lu Ye constructing a spirit rune with his own spirit force was almost inconceivable.

It is known that low-level cultivators like Lu Ye generally focus on improving their cultivation, not even having time to delve into studying magic and spells, let alone complicated spirit runes. Of course, some magic and spells can also be considered a manifestation of spirit runes.

Even to say, the spirit rune that Lu Ye was currently activating could be considered a defensive spell.

Magic and spells are closely related to spirit runes. Often they share commonalities yet are not completely the same, hard to explain in a few words.

But no matter what, it's still unbelievable for a low-level cultivator to be able to construct a spirit rune.

Yiyi became more certain that Lu Ye might be a disciple from some top big sect, and his status in that sect was certainly not low. It's possible that he was the illegitimate child of some sect master and due to some unavoidable reasons, had to come out and experience the world alone...

In just these few moments, she had already conjured up an entire drama filled with grievances and love.

Lu Ye, on the other hand, was not aware of Yiyi's gaze. At the moment, he was feeling the sturdiness of the Defense Spirit Runes. Just in terms of the defensive power, the protective ability of the Defense Spirit Runes completely blew his protective spirit force out of the water.

Comparatively speaking, the protective ability of the Defense Spirit Runes was at least several times that of his protective spirit force.

This meant that he had a better means of defense against attacks he might encounter in the future.

However, the outstanding defensive power also came with a high consumption rate. This Defense Spirit Rune the size of a palm had consumed the entire spirit force reserve of one of Lu Ye's spiritual orifices.

It had a greater consumption rate than Sharpness.

In other words, if Lu Ye were to continuously activate such spirit runes twenty times, his spirit force would be completely depleted.

Furthermore, if the area of protection were to be expanded, the consumption would increase. Right now, Lu Ye had only activated a Defense Spirit Rune that was the size of a palm, but that did not mean that the Defense Spirit Runes could only be that big. If he wished, he could completely activate a larger one.

All in all, this was a good spirit rune. Although he had things like the Golden Body Talisman, Spirit Talismans eventually run out. However, the Defense Spirit Rune is a power of his own.

Additionally, compared to the talisman, activating the Defense Spirit Rune was instantaneous, whereas it was more troublesome to activate a talisman. He would have to take out the talisman from his storage sack, infuse it with spirit force, and in the midst of intense combat, there often wouldn't be time for Lu Ye to do all that.

If he had such a spirit rune before he encountered the pale-faced man, he could have resisted the man's attacks head-on and fought him to the death.

Though a single spirit rune did not increase Lu Ye's cultivation, his combat abilities had increased substantially.

There was one more...

Considering his previous sensations, Lu Ye found them quite chilling. He decided not to explore the other spirit rune, at least not for the next couple of days.

His mind was now a mess, and if he were to probe that spirit rune again, it might well lead to someone's death.

So, he had to rest for a few days before attempting it.

Taking out a Spirit-Nurturing Pill and swallowing it, Lu Ye prepared to investigate a question that had puzzled him all along—whether his issue-free cultivation with elixir pills was related to the Talent Tree!

Focusing his mind, he quickly "saw" the Talent Tree hidden in his Root Spiritual Orifice.

