

Sage of Humanity - Chapter 71 - 69: Three Layers[1,262 words]

Amber, who was eating to one side, shrank its head and significantly quieted the noises of its swallowing.

Seeing it behave this way, Yiyi knew it must have done something wrong...

She pursed her lips and asked Lu Ye, "What did Amber do wrong?"

Lu Ye turned his head and glared at Amber. He briefly explained how Amber had rashly charged out during the previous rescue operation, then continued, "You still remember the first rule of our agreement, right?"

Yiyi obediently stood before him, her back ramrod straight, and immediately replied, "In all matters, you lead, and if opinions differ, I should listen to you!"

"Not a bad memory!"

Yiyi turned her head and sternly called out, "Amber!"

With a whimper, Amber's robust body slowly moved in front of Yiyi, raised its eyes, and looked pitifully at her. Yiyi raised her hand and slapped Amber on the head, "Lu Ye told you not to be impulsive, why didn't you listen? You shouldn't have charged blindly at that time; you needed to follow the plan."

She delivered a slap with each sentence.

Yiyi also knew that Amber's impulsiveness had caused some trouble. From the outcome, Lu Ye had killed those four cultivators and rescued her, but if Amber had shown a bit of restraint, things could have been much better, and perhaps Lu Ye wouldn't have fallen unconscious.

This time, her escape was entirely due to Lu Ye's decisive action; had Amber not charged out then, any hesitation on his part would have cost him the opportunity.

Yiyi kept this gratitude in her heart and to teach Amber a lesson, she did not hold back, hitting Amber's head until it thudded.

"Enough," Lu Ye interrupted her, looking at her earnestly, "I don't want this to happen again."

They had only started working together recently, and everyone needed time to adjust to each other and work out the kinks. But such incidents should only happen once; if it happened again, Lu Ye couldn't guarantee that he could come out unscathed, and he definitely didn't wish to be harmed by his allies one day.

"Understood!" Yiyi nodded and looked at Amber, "Did you understand?"

Amber whined softly as a response.

Yiyi then turned to Lu Ye and sincerely said, "Thank you!"

This thanks was for Amber as well as for herself; she had escaped thanks to Lu Ye risking his life. Moreover, the situation was still not over; they were trapped in the Sky-Splitting Gorge, and whether they could escape was still an uncertainty.

Lu Ye waved his hand and checked his own condition. He wasn't too worried about his injuries; a few days of recuperation would suffice. His spirit force had been significantly depleted in the recent battle and needed replenishing. Surprisingly, he noticed some loosening in the barrier of his 26th orifice's spiritual orifice.

Previously, he had cultivated up to the fullness of the 25th orifice and hadn't yet attempted to break through to the 26th. It seemed likely now that the turbulent surge of spirit force in the intense battle with Zharnng Wu had impacted the spiritual orifice barrier.

This was a fortunate occurrence as it saved him some cultivation time.

However, before that, he needed to fully replenish his spirit force. In such a perilous environment, being in optimal condition was crucial; he never knew when he might be forced into a fierce battle, and there would be no time for recovery then.

Yet, he didn't rush into cultivation but instead gave Yiyi a meaningful look.

Understanding his cue, Yiyi patted Amber's head, and the human and tiger immediately split up to scout both ends of the corridor.

This way, with the two monitoring the corridor, Lu Ye wouldn't likely be trapped in the corridor, thus allowing him room to maneuver in case of danger.

After Yiyi and Amber walked away, Lu Ye looked down at the back of his hand again. When he activated his spirit force, the back of his hand was covered in blue light, which formed several lines of large characters.

Name: Lu Ye.

Status: Disciple of the Righteous Blood Sect.

Cultivation: 25th orifice.

Merit: 34.

Lu Ye stared at the row of numbers for merit, unable to understand how the number 34 came to be.

Previously, in Qingyun Mountain, he had earned eight merit points from that fair-skinned man and Liew Ruyin; this time, having killed four people, his merit increased to 34. In other words, those four people added a total of twenty-six merit points for him.

Lu Ye still did not understand the usefulness of the merit points. He had asked Yiyi, but she seemed unclear about it too. Her memory was severely impaired; she understood some things, but there were others about which she knew nothing.

This thing must be useful, but how and where it could be utilized would have to be explored slowly.

Not understanding it, he didn't bother to think further.

Lu Ye popped a Spirit-Nurturing Pill into his mouth, refining the pill energy to replenish his spent energy, and his spirit force gradually recovered.

Previously, Lu Ye had found that the efficiency of recovery and cultivation, as well as the consumption of elixir pills, varied greatly. Recovery alone was much faster than cultivation and required much less consumption.

The most direct comparison: Lu Ye currently had opened 25 orifices. He had spent nearly over two hundred elixir pills and almost three months in total. However, if his spirit force was exhausted in battle, it wouldn't be possible to consume as many as two hundred elixir pills, nor would it take three months to replenish.

If that were the case, the price a cultivator had to pay after a battle would be too great.

In cultivation, much of the pill energy is lost, and polishing the spiritual orifice also takes a lot of effort. An orifice progresses gradually from opening to Perfection. But once an orifice reaches Perfection through cultivation, recovery becomes much simpler and easier.

Time passed, and pill after pill was consumed; two days later, Lu Ye had fully recovered, but now he was left with only about twenty elixir pills.

There was no movement from Yiyi and Amber's side, which indicated they were still relatively safe for the time being.

Lu Ye wasn't in a hurry to leave; not knowing the outside situation, leaving rashly would only complicate matters.

Currently, Lu Ye was only two orifices away from reaching Spirit Stream Level 3; the barrier of his 26th orifice was already loosening, and he had enough elixir pills, so he decided to advance his cultivation by a full level first.

If he could handle Zharng Wu in Level 2 with Yiyi and Amber, his strength would increase even further if he reached Level 3, which would be greatly beneficial given his current circumstances!

Moreover, his injuries had not yet fully healed—it was a good opportunity to continue recuperating for a few more days.

Having made up his mind, Lu Ye continued to consume elixir pills and directed his spirit force towards the barrier of the 26th orifice.

Five days later, seated cross-legged in the mountain cave, Lu Ye appeared solemn. The day before, he had opened his 27th orifice, and after spending some elixir pills, he had cultivated it to Perfection. Today was the day to advance to Spirit Stream Level 3!

With the experience of the previous two times, this process was familiar to Lu Ye now. Starting from the 19th orifice, he guided his spirit force along the prescribed route through the 20th orifice, the 21st orifice, and up to the 27th orifice.

The spirit force circulated unceasingly among these nine major spiritual orifices, repeating continuously, and speeding up until a certain moment when he broke through a bottleneck. Seated in meditation, Lu Ye's body suddenly trembled, and his spirit force surged around him.

Sage of Humanity - Chapter 72 - 70 Declaration of War[1,448 words]

In the Spirit Stream Realm, each advancement of a level would result in the addition of a Minor Circumambulation circulatory system within one's body.

Now at Spirit Stream Level 3, Lu Ye had opened twenty-seven orifices, with nine forming a cycle, and thus three Minor Circumambulation circulatory systems existed within his body, where the spirit force flowed like a stream, babbling incessantly.

To Lu Ye's surprise, after he achieved Spirit Stream Level 3, he distinctly felt a resonance between these three spirit force circulatory systems, something that had not occurred when he was at Level 1 or 2.

This resonance made the flow of spirit force within his body a bit faster.

Now he had also cultivated the Golden Cicada Carefree Method he obtained from Manager Yang to Perfection. If the twenty-seven orifices opened in the body were connected in a certain sequence, the resulting pattern resembled that of a cicada.

The name of the Golden Cicada Carefree Method was probably derived from this.

Each circulation of spirit force was like the breathing of this cicada, and although the three circulatory systems seemed independent, they could actually influence one another...

Logically, an increase of one level in cultivation should have raised Lu Ye's strength by a bit more than thirty percent, but he felt that his strength had increased by not just thirty percent but by about half. He came to a realization that this was the benefit brought about by cultivating a complete Cultivation Technique to Perfection.

If he had faced Zharng Wu with the current level of cultivation back then, Lu Ye most likely wouldn't have paid such a heavy price, and might even have taken him down unscathed.

In terms of attack power, he had the Sharpness spirit runes, and even at Spirit Stream Level 2, the likes of Zharng Wu at Level 4 could not withstand it.

Regarding defense, he had the Defense Spirit Runes, which Zharng Wu could not break through.

Both attack and defense exceeded his current realm, and what he lacked was nothing but experience and skill in combat. However, experience is something that must be accumulated gradually through personal combat.

As for skill... along the way, he spent at least four hours practicing his saber skills every day. With limited time, he did not dare claim his saber skills were exceptional, but at the very least, his grip had become steadier than before, and his attacks quicker.

After all, he had killed a few people and slowly became accustomed to the feeling of his long saber breaking through the protective spirit force of his enemies and cutting into their flesh. By firmly embedding this feeling in his mind and transforming it into instinct, he naturally evolved superior skills.

His cultivation could no longer continue; he only had a handful of elixir pills left in his hand and no compatible Cultivation Technique.

His injuries had completely healed, and after pondering for a moment, Lu Ye stood up.

A short while later, he gathered Yiyi and Big Tiger and left the passage where they had been hiding for several days.

According to the information Yiyi relayed, Xuanmen and Nine Stars Sect had been fighting incessantly inside Sky-Splitting Gorge over the past few days, with small-scale battles breaking out from time to time and both sides suffering damages.

Lu Ye mentally applauded Xuanmen.

It was exactly the situation he had hoped to see, and also the reason why he had been able to hide for so long.

He had previously suspected that Xuanmen and Nine Stars Sect could not coexist peacefully. If there was any significant move from Nine Stars Sect, Xuanmen would surely respond. Now it seems he had underestimated the deep-seated enmity brought on by the opposition of their factions.

The whole affair started with Lu Ye killing four disciples led by the Young Master of Nine Stars Sect, which then triggered a large-scale search by Nine Stars Sect for Lu Ye's whereabouts. But while he was quietly healing his wounds, the situation had already evolved into full-blown combat between the cultivators of the Spirit Stream Realm from the two big sects.

He had originally planned to stir the waters further, but it appeared there was no need for such trouble.

While the situation was in his favor, Lu Ye thought it unrealistic to consider just walking away; he had no idea how many personnel these two sects had deployed in Sky-Splitting Gorge. Now that he was caught up in it, escaping required leveraging someone else's power - the power of Xuanmen.

Having decided on a course of action, he had Yiyi scout ahead to check the situation while he and Big Tiger stealthily followed thirty yards behind her.

In a ten-yard-wide canyon, seven cultivators were engaged in a relentless melee, three on one side, four on the other. It appeared that the side with fewer people was gaining the upper hand, mainly because their average cultivation was higher, with one at the Spirit Stream Level 4 and two at Level 3.

On the other hand, the group of four consisted of two at Spirit Stream Level 3 and two at Level 2. One of the Level 3 cultivators had an arm drenched in blood, clearly having been wounded.

Among low-level cultivators, close-quarters combat was the norm. The use of magic and spells was rare because their cultivation wasn't high enough to wield powerful spells, and casting spells took time, making it easy to be interrupted. Even if a spell was successfully cast, accuracy remained an issue.

In this style of combat, the side with higher cultivation and stronger weapons naturally held the advantage.

Among the group of four, the leader was a bulky, robust man. He held a large saber in front of his comrades, retreating while shouting, "Go on, get out of here!"

It bore a sense of wanting to cover their retreat.

The other three, with expressions of sorrow, did not abandon him to escape. Instead, they fought shoulder-to-shoulder with the robust man, retreating as they fought.

But this was merely a desperate act. Once the robust man fell, all four of them would lose their lives here.

The opponent at Level 4 clearly understood this, so even though he had opportunities to kill the robust man, he refrained from doing so. Instead, he continuously inflicted cuts on the man, making his predicament look even more pitiable.

Not far behind the four men, amidst a pile of chaotic rocks, Lu Ye and Big Tiger were concealed, peering through the gaps between the stones at the scene unfold.

Originally, he was somewhat worried about how to distinguish between the cultivators of Xuanmen and Nine Stars Sect, as it certainly wasn't feasible to simply ask someone's affiliation.

However, upon seeing the conflict between the two sides, he realized he had been overthinking it. The cultivators of Xuanmen and Nine Stars Sect were easy to tell apart, as there was a glow of different colors shining on the backs of their hands.

Lu Ye was quite astonished, not understanding why this was happening.

During his previous skirmishes, the battlefield marking didn't show any such activity.

He was unaware that this was all Wang Yeang's handiwork. Xuanmen and Nine Stars Sect had been competing over this territory for many years, but since Xuanmen's Spirit Stream Realm cultivators were more numerous and stronger, they had always had the upper hand.

This caused the Nine Stars Sect's Spirit Stream cultivators to lay low in this region, making it difficult for Xuanmen to hunt down their adversaries.

With the killing of the Nine Stars Sect's Young Master, nearly all the Spirit Stream Realm cultivators of the clan had come out in pursuit, presenting an opportunity for Xuanmen.

An opportunity to hunt and kill the disciples of the Nine Stars Sect en masse.

Therefore, Wang Yeang couldn't care less about the cause of the conflict; he only saw a chance to deal a heavy blow to the Nine Stars Sect. To this end, he didn't hesitate to pay some price and, using the Heaven's Augury Pillar at his clan's base, he declared war on the Nine Stars Sect.

While Nine Stars Sect had the right to refuse such a declaration, they could hardly decline while they were on a mission to track down the killer of their Young Master.

Dong Shuye had no choice but to bravely accept the challenge, inwardly bestowing Wang Yeang's ancestors with an affectionate greeting that spanned eighteen generations.

During the declaration of war, whenever cultivators of the two sides clashed, different colored glows would emanate from the backs of their hands, clearly aligning their stances.

It's important to know that there were many independent cultivators on both sides, and the faces of these independents were very unfamiliar to the majority of cultivators from the two big sects. The battlefield marking was useful to prevent friendly fire, and it also allowed for the quick identification of enemy from ally.

Sage of Humanity - Chapter 73 - 71: To Test One's Skill for the First Time[1,383 words]

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As a newcomer who had arrived at the Spirit Stream battlefield about three months ago, Lu Ye naturally couldn't understand the intricacies involved.

However, the light from the battlefield marking was convenient for his actions.

At the moment, Lu Ye and Amber were located behind the four people from Xuanmen, about thirty zhang away from the opponents. As the Xuanmen quartet continuously retreated, the distance between them kept shrinking.

The burly strongman was accumulating more and more injuries, and the situation became increasingly unfavorable for the four from Xuanmen.

Seeing that the burly strongman was about to give in, another Level 3 cultivator by his side bellowed, "All of you go to hell!"

As he spoke, he brought out a dazzling golden Spirit Talisman, activated it with spirit force, and in an instant, a golden round disc with flowing spirit runes the size of a face basin appeared in front of him.

This was indeed the Golden Wheel Talisman that Lu Ye had used when he first entered the Spirit Stream battlefield against the wolf pack.

Though this Spirit Talisman's single-target lethality wasn't as powerful as that of the Fire Serpent Talisman, it had the advantage of endurance; with it, Lu Ye had repelled the wolf pack that surrounded him at that time.

With the golden light shining brilliantly, a golden crescent slash soared from the disc, accompanied by the sound of tearing through the air.

For low-level cultivators, a single Spirit Talisman was quite valuable, but as long the person had enough wealth, they would always carry one or two as life-saving trump cards.

As this person unleashed the Golden Wheel Talisman, the Level 4 cultivator from the Nine Stars Sect immediately stepped back, not daring to recklessly counter the attack of the Golden Wheel Talisman, which would be suicidal.

He quickly pulled a palm-sized round shield from his storage sack at his waist and held it in front of himself, while his two companions placed their hands on the shield.

All three simultaneously channeled spirit force into the shield, and the palm-sized shield suddenly expanded to the size of a tabletop, shielding the figures of the three men behind it.

The golden crescent slash bombarded the shield, producing an aggressive clanging, the force of the impact making the three members of the Nine Stars Sect retreat continuously, and deep slashes of various depths appeared on the shield, but the Golden Wheel Talisman's attack clearly couldn't penetrate the shield's defense.

This shield was a defensive Spiritual Artifact.

The four from Xuanmen grew increasingly desperate...

The golden circular disc formed by the Golden Wheel Talisman began to slowly fade away, and the Level 4 cultivator from the Nine Stars Sect put away the shield, his face filled with a murderous air, "Now you can't even choose to die!"

Although his defensive spirit artifact had blocked the opponent's attack, it was severely damaged, and he didn't know how many Spirit Stones it would take to repair it, which made him so heartbroken that he felt like bleeding.

He lifted the weapon in his hand, ready to step forward to kill, but then he looked toward the rear of the Xuanmen quartet with astounded eyes.

At the same time, the four from Xuanmen also sensed something extraordinary; someone was swiftly rushing up from behind. Before they could turn their heads back to look, a shadow had already swept over their heads.

The next moment, a snow-white big tiger appeared in their sight, with a black-clad young man riding on the tiger's back...

White Tiger, young warrior...

In an instant, all seven cultivators present understood who the newcomer was.

Lu Ye had his hand on the hilt of his blade, leaped down from the back of the tiger, his eyes fixed on the Level 4 cultivator, drew his Longsword from its sheath, and slashed downward from above toward the opponent's neck.

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The Level 4 cultivator's reaction was not slow; as soon as Lu Ye appeared, he discerned Lu Ye's cultivation level, Spirit Stream Level 3, just as Senior Brother Cao had predicted.

His own cultivation was one level higher than Lu Ye's, so he naturally did not fear the attack. Holding his weapon sideways, he blocked the imposing slash. However, since Lu Ye had seized the initiative and carried the momentum of the assault, the slash forced the cultivator to stoop.

Before he could deflect the force, Lu Ye was already in mid-air, slashing back at him directly.

This thrust was extremely tricky, and the Level 4 cultivator had a hard time defending against it. He too was determined and immediately spurred on his protective spirit force to shield the area likely to be hit, while simultaneously chopping his weapon towards Lu Ye's neck.

Although there was only one level of difference between Levels 3 and 4, the disparity in strength was huge, as opening more spiritual orifices at Level 4 would significantly increase one's power.

Therefore, the man believed that, at most, Lu Ye's slash would only cause him minor injury. His protective spirit force was not just for show, but if Lu Ye were hit by his strike, his entire head would be severed.

Thinking of the reward of 1,000 Spirit Stones, the Level 4 cultivator's heart grew hot. With so many Spirit Stones, he could definitely advance to Level 6 or even Level 7!

With a squelch, the longsword pierced through the chest, shattering the Level 4 cultivator's illusions, and what shocked him even more was that his attack, which he thought was certain to hit, did not wound Lu Ye in the slightest.

Just as his weapon was about to hit Lu Ye's neck, something vaguely flickered and vanished, blocking his strike.

Lu Ye flipped over him and then slashed at the back of his neck with another strike.

The sharp edge of the blade, like cutting through tofu, severed his neck, rendering the protective spirit force useless, and the head flew off, blood spurting from the stump.

Lu Ye tumbled to the ground, a stream of blood spurting from his waist, the result of another Level 3 cultivator who had stabbed him by surprise. The wound was not deep, at most a flesh wound.

At the moment he had to activate the Defense Spirit Runes to block the fatal blow from the Level 4 cultivator, he could not defend against another attack and had to rely on his protective spirit force, which was fortunate enough to be pure enough to offer a decent defense.

The sudden developments left the four from Xuanmen dumbstruck.

They had believed themselves dead for sure, only to be stunned when the youth riding the White Tiger burst forth and slashed their Level 4 opponent in one encounter.

While they were still astonished, Lu Ye wasted no time. The moment he landed, dust billowed beneath his feet as he charged at the Level 3 cultivator who had stabbed him.

The opponent, clearly shocked by the death of his Senior Brother, could only instinctively raise his sword to block when faced with Lu Ye's oncoming slash.

And yet, the longsword snapped under the blow! Not every low-level cultivator possessed a Spiritual Artifact. The sharpness-boosted longsword could only be withstood by a Spiritual Artifact; ordinary artifacts simply couldn't block it.

The sharp blade fell from the bridge of the opponent's nose, cleaving through his cheek and cutting a foot-long gash across his torso, blood and guts flowing out together. The man only had time to scream before Lu Ye's sword came down, cutting him to the ground.

The second one!

The last remaining Level 3 was in a fierce battle with Amber. When Lu Ye charged in riding Amber, he had targeted the opponent's Level 4, and Amber had pounced on another Level 3. Amber was somewhat outmatched and kept roaring as it was slashed repeatedly, the tiger's roars shaking the heavens.

However, once Lu Ye joined the fray, the situation changed. On the same level, Spirit Stream Level 3, Lu Ye's combat power was much higher than that of his opponent. With the big tiger coordinating on the side, it only took a moment to kill the opponent on the spot.

Amber, not feeling vindicated, bit through the other's neck, warm blood spraying over its head and face, making it look all the more fierce and terrifying.

When the fierce battle subsided, three from the Nine Stars Sect were no more, and the entire battle had lasted only about ten breaths' time, so fast that the four people of Xuanmen barely had time to react.

Sage of Humanity - Chapter 74 - 72: Confirming the Look[1,356 words]

By the time the four from Xuanmen regained their senses, Lu Ye had already sorted out the spoils of war, mounted the tiger, and left swiftly.

"Just now... he..."

Within the group of four, a young girl stammered out a sentence, and even her companions couldn't figure out what she was trying to say.

The scenes they had just witnessed were too shocking for them.

As a cultivator at Spirit Stream Level 3, Lu Ye could not hide his capabilities. Among them, there were also two at Spirit Stream Level 3, but none of them had ever imagined that someone at Spirit Stream Level 3 could possess such formidable aggression. In just ten breaths' time, he had killed three opponents they found difficult to contend with, including one at Spirit Stream Level 4!

This was considered defeating an enemy of a higher level, usually achievable only by disciples from big sects.

It was certain that if the young man riding the tiger had decided to attack them, they would have died even faster than the three from Nine Stars Sect.

During their moment of distraction, the big tiger suddenly changed direction and charged towards them again.

The burly man at Level 3, face changing, quickly shielded his three juniors behind him and watched vigilantly ahead.

After a short while, Amber stopped in front of the four people with Lu Ye sitting on the tiger's back, looking down at them from above, less than 15 feet between them.

The intense oppressive feeling caused the female cultivator in the group to gasp for air, her chest heaving.

"Do you have elixir pills?" the young man on the tiger suddenly asked.

"Ah... Yes!" the burly man hastily replied, "Do you want them?"

Lu Ye nodded, "I need elixir pills."

The burly man quickly unfastened his storage sack from his waist, opened the restriction lock, thought for a moment, then whispered to his three juniors, "Give me your elixir pills."

The three didn't dare to object; they frantically took out the elixir pills from their own storage sacks and handed them clumsily to the burly man.

The burly man then took out his own items and transferred them to someone else's storage sack.

In a short time, he tossed the storage sack containing the elixir pills to Lu Ye, who caught it in one move.

"Thank you." Lu Ye said, and tossed the previously gathered loot out; Amber turned around and left again.

It was only after Lu Ye's figure had disappeared that all four members of Xuanmen finally breathed a sigh of relief, having thought that Lu Ye's return was to rob them when he asked for elixir pills earlier.

Even so, they could only resign themselves to it. Not to mention that they were no match for Lu Ye, one way or another, Lu Ye essentially had saved their lives.

With their lives hanging in balance against the elixir pills, the priority was naturally their lives. The burly man had already prepared his reasons, ready to offer the elixir pills as a token of gratitude when he threw them to Lu Ye.

Unexpectedly, Lu Ye did not take the elixir pills for free; he threw the loot he had just obtained back to them.

Looking at the three storage sacks, two low-grade Spiritual Artifacts, and a battered small shield on the ground, the four members of Xuanmen were momentarily speechless.

After a quick calculation, the group realized that not only had they not lost anything, but they had even made a small profit... they all felt somewhat ironic.

Bending down to pick up the items from the ground, the burly man pondered for a moment, then decisively said, "Back to our base!"

They were all basically injured, and most critically, they had run out of elixir pills, unable to sustain any more battles. In the present circumstance, it was undoubtedly wisest to first return to their base to recuperate.

Moreover, they did not have the capability to open the storage sacks of the Nine Stars Sect cultivators; they could only go back to their base, hand them over, and ask the elders of their sect to help.

On the other side, Lu Ye rode Amber and found a tunnel to check his gains.

It was a sudden inspiration to exchange with the people from Xuanmen for elixir pills because he had accumulated quite a few storage sacks. Before entering the Sky-Splitting Gorge, he already possessed several storage sacks, and after killing the Young Master from the Nine Stars Sect and his group, he gained four more.

If he acquired any more, he would have no place to put them. Keeping them all in his bosom would also affect his fighting...

Besides, these storage sacks were locked by restriction locks, and he couldn't open them. Rather than keeping them, he might as well exchange these items with the people from Xuanmen for some elixir pills.

The number of elixir pills given by the four from Xuanmen wasn't many; everyone's cultivation was not high and they weren't wealthy, so any elixir pills they acquired were quickly used up.

Four people managed to collect sixteen elixir pills for Lu Ye, five of which were healing pills. At that time, when Lu Ye asked for elixir pills, he didn't specify which kind, so they took out both the Spirit-Nurturing Pills and the healing pills.

The gains were decent...

Lu Ye felt that the spontaneous idea he had come up with was very good; this way, he might be able to obtain a substantial amount of cultivation supplies here in the Sky-Splitting Gorge.

The number in his battlefield marking of merit had also changed, from thirty-four to fifty-six, an increase of twenty-two points.

This increase was quite a mystery to him; last time when he killed four people including the Young Master of the Nine Stars Sect, it increased by twenty-six points, this time by twenty-two, and he didn't know what the standard for the increase was.

He decided in his heart that the next time he killed someone, he would pay close attention to the change in numbers, perhaps deducing some patterns.

In this battle, his injuries were not severe; he was only stabbed in the waist by a Level 3 cultivator. After bandaging it slightly and making minor adjustments, he was on his way again. With ample spirit force within his body, he could continue fighting.

Throughout the gorge, traces of a great battle were occasionally visible, with many dry bloodstains and broken bodies showing just how fierce the conflict between Xuanmen and the Nine Stars Sect had been here.

Not far ahead, Yiyi, who was scouting out front, reported that a two-person team was heading this way. Lu Ye immediately had Amber hide well while he went to meet the two.

Soon after, Lu Ye and the two-man team bumped right into each other, both sides wary and sizing each other up.

With brilliant spirit light in his eyes, Lu Ye assessed the others' cultivation—both were at Spirit Stream Level 3. Such a pairing wasn't too weak, and judging by their injuries, they had clearly gone through a battle; perhaps their original number was more than two people...

What puzzled Lu Ye was that there was no glow from the battlefield markings on the backs of their hands, making it unclear to which side they belonged, leaving him unsure how to act.

To his surprise, after evaluating Lu Ye for a moment, they relaxed, with one of them even coming forward with a smile, saying as he walked, "Fellow Daoist is quite brave to be moving alone here?"

With a quick thought, Lu Ye realized they must have mistaken him for one of their own. He loosened his hand on the handle of his knife and replied indifferently, "Got scattered by killing."

The man then said, "Then Fellow Daoist is indeed fortunate. If you don't mind, you can join us two; having three people provides more care."

"Naturally." Lu Ye nodded, maintaining a reticent demeanor.

The man raised his hand and said, "Though I feel it's not very necessary, might as well verify our identities, Fellow Daoist."

While speaking, red light flashed on the back of his hand.

Lu Ye's eyebrows lifted, confirming through his gaze, they were people he could attack!

As the stones underfoot burst into flight, Lu Ye, amidst their astonished gaze, raced forward with his knife to strike.

Sage of Humanity - Chapter 75 - 73 Mountain Tiger[1,297 words]

Just moments later, Lu Ye had gathered the spoils of war and left, leaving behind two incomplete corpses at the scene.

Spirit Stream Level 4 cultivators could not withstand even three strikes from Lu Ye, let alone those of Spirit Stream Level 3? Having seized the initiative, Lu Ye had sealed their fate.

This time, Lu Ye deliberately noticed that killing one person increased his merit by three points, and two people added up to six points, bringing his total merit to sixty-two!

As night fell, in a tunnel along the side of the mountain, Lu Ye hid and recuperated, while Yiyi and Big Tiger continued to guard both ends to prevent unseen intrusions.

Throughout the day, he fought in three battles, earning significant gains. He didn't keep any of the spoils for himself; instead, he exchanged them all for elixir pills with the people from Xuanmen, obtaining more than twenty pills, eighty percent of which were Spirit-Nurturing Pills.

Compared to these spoils, Lu Ye felt that the most significant gain was the experience of battling against others. Since entering the Spirit Stream battlefield, though he had experienced several fights, there were long intervals between those fights, unlike this time where he continuously battled throughout the day.

Such intense combat not only allowed him to quickly identify his shortcomings but also enriched his combat skills.

Cultivation in isolation could never compare with the real tests of combat, which were bought with blood and injuries.

He sustained some injuries, but none were serious.

Lu Ye first ate some dried meat to alleviate his hunger, and after eating his fill, he began to take elixir pills to replenish the spirit force he had lost.

In the battles, he frequently used Sharpness and Defense Spirit Runes. Although these spirit runes could perform beyond the level of his cultivation, the downside was clear: they consumed a lot.

If Lu Ye wanted to ensure his combat effectiveness in the upcoming actions, he had to keep his spirit force sufficiently replenished.

Now at Spirit Stream Level 3, his efficiency in refining pill energy had improved.

Lu Ye did not yet know the consumption required to open another spiritual orifice, but according to previous patterns, the consumption for opening spiritual orifices would increase, though the efficiency of cultivation would also improve accordingly, so the time added with each new orifice would not be too significant and could even out.

The night passed without incident. The Sky-Splitting Gorge was quiet, with no sounds of Xuanmen and Nine Stars Sect cultivators fighting. Currently, everyone's cultivation was still low, so almost unanimously, they chose to find places to recuperate at night, replenishing what they had spent during the day. Real battles only occurred during the daytime.

When dawn broke, Lu Ye led Big Tiger and Yiyi out of the tunnel, embarking on a hunting expedition.

For several consecutive days, Lu Ye spent his time constantly in battle, sometimes engaging in one or two, sometimes in three or four. His stash of elixir pills gradually increased, and his merits continued to accumulate.

He finally understood the method of calculating merits. From his observations, the cultivation level of a slain cultivator corresponded to the merit points: that was the basic value.

For instance, if he killed a cultivator of Spirit Stream Level 2, he would gain two merit points, Level 3 would yield three points, and so on...

However, if he killed an enemy of a higher level, the merit gained for each level over would increase by a fundamental value.

As Lu Ye was of Level 3, killing a cultivator of the same level yielded only three merit points, but killing one of Level 4 granted him eight merit points.

Previously, when he was at Level 2 and killed someone at Level 4, surpassing two small levels, the merit gained was twelve...

He did some quick calculations and found that this method matched the merits he had obtained from his previous kills. Apparently, this was the correct calculation method.

After several days of combat, he grew increasingly accustomed to the life-and-death struggles with his enemies. Although his cultivation had not increased, his combat skills had vastly improved, thus increasing his efficiency in killing enemies.

In recent days, Lu Ye had also tried to see if he could leave Sky-Splitting Gorge, but he found it highly unlikely.

He didn't know how many people Xuanmen and Nine Stars Sect had deployed in this area of Sky-Splitting Gorge, but according to his and Yiyi's observations, both sides had nearly a thousand cultivators in the Spirit Stream Realm!

Thousands of cultivators scattered in this vast labyrinth could encounter enemies at any time and place. After passing through the maze, the terrain ahead would suddenly narrow, eventually funneling into a single path through Sky-Splitting Gorge—the only way out.

Nine Stars Sect had positioned a large number of people at the gorge's mouth, and showing his face would almost certainly lead to a bad end for him.

It was better for him to hide in the maze and kill enemies.

Having acted several times in the last few days, Lu Ye's whereabouts had been exposed, and he distinctly felt that Nine Stars Sect's efforts to capture him were intensifying. The most obvious sign was the increased size of the cultivator squads he now encountered.

The squads he encountered initially consisted of three or four people, but now each squad had at least five or six, and some even had more than ten.

For squads of three or four people, Lu Ye would grit his teeth and take them on, but he wouldn't dare attack squads of five or six. As for those with a dozen members, he stayed as far away as possible.

After suffering a few setbacks, the cultivators from Xuanmen also made adjustments, increasing the number of people in their squads to counter Nine Stars Sect.

In the canyon maze, a major battle was raging, involving nearly twenty cultivators, with each side having about ten people, several of whom were in the Spirit Stream Level 4. However, the outcome was mutually detrimental, with casualties on both sides.

In the heat of the battle, a tiger's roar burst forth, causing both parties to tense visibly.

Someone exclaimed with exhilaration, "The mountain tiger is here!"

It was a cultivator from Xuanmen.

Riding rapidly toward the battlefield on a tiger's back, Lu Ye frowned upon hearing this. He didn't know how he had gotten the nickname "mountain tiger," which he found rather distasteful.

However, considering that neither party knew his real name to date, Lu Ye had no choice but to begrudgingly accept this nickname.

Coming from behind the Xuanmen troops and hearing the roar of the tiger, the Xuanmen cultivators tacitly cleared a path. Big Tiger charged into the battlefield and directly pounced on a Spirit Stream Level 3 cultivator, bringing him to the ground.

Meanwhile, Lu Ye, who was riding on its back, had already dashed forward. His long saber drawn, a flash of brilliant light from the blade aimed at a Spirit Stream Level 4 cultivator.

The person engaged in combat with him was a Level 4 from Xuanmen, who had an innocent baby face and seemed harmless. Seeing Lu Ye swoop down like a hawk, he couldn't help but shout, "Don't steal my kill!"

He was already gaining the upper hand, and with enough time, he could have taken down his opponent.

It was no wonder he shouted like that, given that in recent days, "mountain tiger's" fame had spread widely among the Xuanmen cultivators. It was said that he never took any spoils of war after his kills, requiring only some elixir pills from Xuanmen people. Moreover, this individual often appeared out of nowhere, fond of stealing kills.

Sometimes, his actions could save a disciple of Xuanmen from dire situations, earning him heartfelt gratitude.

However, sometimes, even when someone from Xuanmen was already prevailing, he would suddenly attack, stealing the deserved merits from others.

The cultivators of Xuanmen thus had a love-hate relationship with this man.