

Humanity 861

Chapter 861 Should Be Beheaded According to the Law

"You have quite a relationship with Shui Yuan, don't you? By right, you should be looking after the people of the Righteous Blood Sect. What are you up to?" The man in strong attire was rather puzzled.

"Personal relationships are personal, this is Haotian City, this is the Heralds Office. How can personal affairs be mixed with military duties?" The woman spoke righteously and sternly.

The man in strong attire smiled lightly, "I almost believed it!"

"Suit yourself!"

At that moment, a violent wave of spirit force suddenly came from outside the hall, followed by someone shouting, "Impudent!"

The sound of spirit force clashing echoed, mixed with the noise of spiritual artifacts colliding. Then, three figures rushed into the main hall, one in front and two behind.

The man in strong attire looked at Lu Ye, who charged in with a knife, and exclaimed, "You have guts!"

What kind of place is this? This is the Heralds Office in Haotian City, and no one has ever dared to barge in so directly!

What surprised him even more was that Lu Ye really did break in. The two guards at the door were quite formidable, yet they couldn't stop Lu Ye at all.

On the other side, Lu Ye lifted his eyes and quickly scanned the room, spotting the man and the woman at a glance. His heart sank as he realized their strength.

These two were undoubtedly strong cultivators in the Divine Sea Realm!

He didn't know which one was the Chief of the Heralds Office and which one was the guest.

But he had been waiting outside for so long, and there was still no indication that they intended to meet him. Clearly, they were deliberately making things difficult for him.

So it was pointless to wait any longer. Since that was the case, he might as well barge in directly.

Turning his palm, he raised a copper token high, the very transfer order Zhao Che had sent to the Righteous Blood Sect. Lu Ye shouted, "Disciple of the Righteous Blood Sect, Lu Ye, reporting for duty!"

The two cultivators who had rushed in after him looked both angry and terrified. One of them said, "Chief, forgive us, this man he..."

"Stand down."

"Yes!"

The two cultivators felt humiliated, each gave Lu Ye a hateful glance, and quickly retreated.

Lu Ye then looked at the elegantly dressed woman.

So she was the Chief of the Heralds Office!

The woman stood up and walked slowly to a distance of ten feet in front of Lu Ye, her expression indifferent and stern.

"Disciple of the Righteous Blood Sect, Lu Ye, reporting for duty!" Lu Ye shouted again.

The woman raised her hand, and the copper token flew into her hand. She then casually tossed it into a box on a nearby table.

With that, Lu Ye had fulfilled the reporting requirement.

"You have some nerve!" The woman coldly snorted.

"The deadline was approaching, and the disciple was anxious while waiting outside. Please forgive me, Chief!"

"So you just barged in directly?"

"A desperate measure!"

"A desperate measure indeed!" The woman seemed very angry, her Divine Sea Realm aura spread out. Lu Ye felt an immense pressure, sweat appearing on his forehead.

She coldly said, "I don't care about your status in the Righteous Blood Sect, or what you have done before. Now that you are here in Haotian City, you must abide by its rules! Did no one tell you this before you came?"

"My senior sister did advise me."

"Since you were advised, why did you not remember? If everyone was as unruly as you, the Bingzhou Guard would have fallen apart long ago!" She turned her head to the man in strong attire, "Qian Wudang! You are the Chief of the Justice Department. Unauthorized trespassing into a military important place, what is the penalty according to the law?"

The man named Qian Wudang's expression turned stern, and he said solemnly, "According to the law, death!"

Lu Ye's brow twitched, death for this?

Amber, perched on his shoulder, immediately growled at the woman, but was quickly silenced with a flick to its forehead by the woman.

Qian Wudang then changed his tone, "Considering it is his first offense, he can be punished with flogging and imprisoned for ten days to set an example. If there is a second offense, he will not be spared lightly!"

Lu Ye finally understood what this woman was up to, and it was indeed a cunning plan.

The woman glanced at him lightly, "The decision of the Chief of Justice has been spoken, so I leave it to you to handle." She turned and walked away.

Qian Wudang nodded, walked over to Lu Ye, and said with a smile, "Kid, you don't have much luck. Come with me!"

He began walking outside.

Lu Ye hung his head and followed, feeling helpless.

He had thought that after joining the Bingzhou Guard he would accomplish something significant. Now, even before officially joining, he was to be punished.

But at that moment, he had no other choice, clearly, the Chief of the Heralds Office was deliberately targeting him. If he hadn't barged in directly, he might have been delayed past the deadline, which would be a bigger trouble.

Compared to that, a little punishment was nothing.

This grudge, Lu Ye noted, would definitely be repaid in the future.

As for thinking about escaping from here... there was hardly any chance, and even if there was, Lu Ye could not do such a thing to disgrace his sect.

Desertion was a major taboo in the Bingzhou Guard.

"Kid, some things are not as simple as they seem, some people are not what you think. Now that you are new to Haotian City and young, it is natural that you cannot see or understand everything clearly. You will understand it all gradually."

Qian Wudang's voice suddenly came from the front.

Lu Ye remained silent, just following behind him.

Although this Chief of Justice didn't seem to bear any malice towards him and had even proposed a lighter punishment, one should never judge someone's intentions easily. Being new and ignorant, he decided to keep quiet and observe more.

"You are quite cautious, not bad." Qian Wudang seemed to sense his thoughts, smiled lightly, and didn't mind.

The two of them traversed across a part of Haotian City and landed at a place.

Here was a place resembling a small mountain, with a huge and ferocious stone carving of a beast head at the entrance, its wide-open mouth dark and gloomy, giving an eerie feeling.

This was the prison of Haotian City, feared by all Bingzhou Guards. There was a rumor that once you enter here, you might lose a layer of skin even if you don't die.

With the large number of Bingzhou Guards and the strict adherence to military regulations, there were always some cultivators who violated guard discipline for various reasons.

Most of these violators would be sent here for punishment.

No Bingzhou Guard would come near this place within a mile easily. Even when traveling through the air, they would avoid this place.

"Chief, what brings you here?"

The cultivators guarding the prison were startled seeing Qian Wudang, and an elderly man quickly approached.

"Delivering someone." Qian Wudang grabbed Lu Ye, who had been following him and curiously looking around, and brought him forth.

The elderly man was stunned.

In all these years, countless Bingzhou Guards came in and out of this prison, but this was the first time the Chief himself brought someone.

The elderly man immediately became serious, "Chief, what crime did this one commit?"

Automatically assuming Lu Ye had committed some horrendous crime, his mind raced with many vicious scenarios, making his expression towards Lu Ye very grave.

"Nothing serious, just a kid who doesn't know the rules and barged into the Heralds Office," Qian Wudang casually explained.

"Uh..." The elderly man didn't know what to say, looking at Lu Ye with some pity.

Barging into the Heralds Office, it's not a major or minor crime. It seemed like the Chief just brought him here because he happened to catch him.

"Take care of him," Qian Wudang instructed, then leapt into the sky.

"Safe travels, Chief!" The elderly man understood and, along with others, bowed in respect.

After Qian Wudang had gone far, the elderly man turned to Lu Ye with a smile and gestured, "Young friend, please?"

"Thank you," Lu Ye nodded and stepped towards the dark beast's mouth, entering the darkness.

Following the elderly man down, a damp and gloomy atmosphere hit them.

Soon they reached an underground level, filled with cage-like structures, many of which held cultivators. Many looked wretched, clearly having been punished severely, some even on the verge of death.

The elderly man smiled, "The prison holds those who violate guard discipline, unlike the environment young friend was used to, but every place has its rules. They broke the rules, so they must be punished. Seeing this, young friend should be more cautious in the future. Guard discipline is strict, and even your sect cannot protect you if you break them."

"Thank you for the advice, elder," Lu Ye appreciated the kindness, realizing the strictness of the Bingzhou Guard's rules.

If he broke any major rules here, even the sect master couldn't help him, Lu Ye reminded himself.

"The prison doesn't only hold Cloud River Realm cultivators. Going further, you'll find True Lake Realm and even Divine Sea Realm cultivators have been imprisoned here." The elderly man continued.

"What penalty will I face?" Lu Ye was more concerned about himself.

"Flogged three times and imprisoned for ten days," the elderly man didn't hide, having been informed by Qian Wudang of the punishment plan.

Lu Ye nodded.

Though not a physique cultivator, his body was strong. Three floggings were manageable, and ten days of imprisonment was no issue.

The elderly man chuckled, "Don't think the punishment is light, young friend."

"I won't."

A voice ahead suddenly shouted, "Just three floggings? Beat me hard! If I scream, you are my sons!"

The elderly man shook his head, "Some people are always reckless."

They arrived at a place where the offenders were punished. Lu Ye saw a burly bald man bound by his hands and feet, hanging in mid-air.

He roared in anger, "Just beat me directly! Why hang me! I am a True Lake Realm cultivator, I have pride!"

"Alright, alright, no more talking. Start the beating. Hang in there!"

"Come on!" The man taunted.

A sharp cracking sound followed by a whip striking the man echoed.

Lu Ye watched, his eyelids twitching, feeling an urge to fight his way out.

Because the moment the whip struck, the true Lake Realm cultivator's eyes turned white, his whole body shaking violently, clearly suffering immense pain.

For a full 5 breaths, the man slowly regained his senses and let out a continuous wail!

Chapter 862 Indelible Memory

The screams have been continuous since they started. The burly man who was just shouting non-stop now has no trace of his former toughness.

Lu Ye's eyebrows twitched as he watched.

The elderly man who led him explained, "The Reverse Dragon Spike used for punishment here is at the spirit treasure level. It doesn't just strike the flesh but also the psyche. Many ignorant cultivators have suffered greatly here. Young friend, you must brace yourself later."

Although there were instructions from Qian Wudang not to cause serious injury, the process still had to be followed.

Here, with the continuous screams, many imprisoned cultivators in nearby cells started to shout and jeer.

"Old One-eye, put more strength into it. This guy still has the energy to scream. You're going easy on him, aren't you?"

"Old One-eye, is this guy your son or grandson? You're hitting him so lightly, it's like scratching an itch!"

"Exactly, hit him harder!"

"..."

A completely unrestrained attitude towards the spectacle.

Lu Ye watched coldly from the side, seeing the spirit treasure long whip with barbs fall repeatedly on the bald burly man's body, tearing his clothes and flesh.

The long whip is called the Reverse Dragon Spike, wielded by a scruffy old man with gray hair and beard at the peak of the True Lake Realm. He should be the Old One-eye mentioned by the surrounding cultivators.

Old One-eye is true to his name, having only one eye, with a black hole in the other socket, possibly the result of some disaster. Even the remaining eye exudes a ghostly glow, making people tremble at the sight.

He is the executioner here. Everyone who enters the prison for punishment has to be processed by him, leaving with severe wounds.

Hence, in the entire Bingzhou guard, he is a notorious figure, causing cultivators who have been in the prison to shudder at his name.

The bald burly man, though having True Lake cultivation and a strong physique, succumbed after only five lashes from the Reverse Dragon Spike, which strikes both the body and the psyche.

Seeing the once-imposing figure now hanging like a dead dog, Lu Ye felt distressed.

This showed the foresight of the prison. If the burly man hadn't been hung up, he would have collapsed, making the punishment difficult.

While unconscious, he received four more lashes before being released and taken away by the prison cultivators.

Old One-eye walked to the side, sat in a blood-stained chair, grabbed a nearby wine jug, and took a gulp.

"Young friend, it's your turn." The elderly man spoke.

Lu Ye took a deep breath, grabbed Amber from his shoulder, put the Boulder Mountain Saber in its mouth, and stepped forward.

"A young lad."

Someone in a nearby cell saw Lu Ye and spoke with a smile, "And it's a young one from the Cloud River Realm."

"Lad, what did you do to get caught here?"

"Perhaps you fled on the battlefield and became a deserter?"

"Lad, let me give you some advice. Don't use your spirit force to resist. Completely relax your psyche. One lash and you'll faint, then you won't feel anything."

"Brother Zhuang speaks from experience. Lad, don't refuse the favor!"

...

Amidst the shouts from all directions, Lu Ye walked to the execution site, where prison cultivators came forward to bind his hands and feet.

The ropes used to bind him were clearly extraordinary, capable of restraining even True Lake Realm cultivators, at least they were spirit treasure level items.

Lu Ye did not resist. There was no need for that, and he let them bind and hang him up.

Not far away, Amber, biting the Boulder Mountain Saber, looked at him with teary eyes....

The elderly man approached Old One-eye and whispered a few words.

Old One-eye didn't even look up, "You know my rules."

The elderly man replied, "This is the Department Chief's order. He brought the person himself."

The wine jug held to Old One-eye's mouth paused. He looked seriously at the elderly man, who nodded slightly, indicating he wasn't lying.

Old One-eye then turned to look at the hung-up Lu Ye.

"Don't ask me, I don't know anything!" Without waiting for Old One-eye to speak, the elderly man blocked his inquiry.

"Understood!" Old One-eye put down the wine jug, stood up, grabbed the Reverse Dragon Spike, and walked behind Lu Ye.

The moment spirit force was activated, the sound of the whip cutting through the air was heard.

Lu Ye felt his back as if struck by a thunderbolt, the protective spirit force shattered instantly, and intense pain spread throughout his body. The pain in the body was nothing compared to the more severe pain in the psyche.

He had experienced psyche pain countless times.

Back then, when his psyche wasn't strong, every time he used the Mirage Stone for grinding and emerged from it, there was a moment of pain.

When probing the information on the leaves of the Talent Tree, the pain was equally unbearable.

But those pains compared to what he was suffering now were like the difference between a gentle breeze and a raging storm.

He finally understood why even True Lake Realm cultivators couldn't withstand such whipping.

This was simply beyond the endurance of ordinary people.

An involuntary scream escaped, Lu Ye's veins bulged on his forehead, his whole body trembled violently.

"Hmm?" Old One-eye frowned.

Executing punishment is an art. To ensure the punished remembers the lesson and doesn't repeat the offense, pain must be tasted.

To remember the lesson, the punished must not lose consciousness.

Controlling the force is a skill.

Old One-eye had been in charge of punishment for decades, and he could make someone faint or stay conscious whenever he wanted.

Lu Ye was brought by Department Chief Qian Wudang personally, and he had instructions to take care of him. He could ignore others but not the Chief's face.

Originally, he planned to whip Lu Ye into unconsciousness with one lash. A Cloud River Realm cultivator would only need a hundredth of the Reverse Dragon Spike's power.

If so, Lu Ye would not feel the pain from the next two lashes, and Old One-eye would adjust his strength accordingly, ensuring nobody would notice anything unusual.

Surprisingly, Lu Ye, though screaming miserably, showed no sign of passing out!

Such a strong psyche!

Old One-eye immediately understood the issue.

The Reverse Dragon Spike strikes both body and psyche. A typical Cloud River Level 9 cultivator would faint instantly without screaming, but Lu Ye was different. His psyche was much stronger than expected, allowing him to withstand the lash.

With this thought, Old One-eye continued, whipping twice more, causing Lu Ye's back to become a bloody mess.

After three lashes, the elderly man immediately ordered people to let Lu Ye down and grabbed his arm.

Lu Ye trembled uncontrollably, drawing cold breaths. This experience was unforgettable!

He swore never to return to this prison again!

"Young friend, can you withstand it?" The elderly man asked.

Lu Ye gritted his teeth and nodded silently.

"Amazing!" The elderly man praised. He clearly saw Old One-eye's immense power in the first lash, which should have been impossible for a Cloud River cultivator to withstand.

The subsequent two lashes were indeed weaker, though appearing fierce, their strength was less than two-tenths of the first lash.

"Take some healing medicine quickly; you can't use spirit force in the Dragon-Trapping Lock." The elderly man whispered a reminder.

The so-called Dragon-Trapping Lock is the cell where cultivators are imprisoned.

Cultivators are different from ordinary people, so their cells are specially crafted treasures, covered by a big array. Once inside, spirit force is suppressed within the body, unable to be activated.

Upon hearing this, Lu Ye's trembling hands grabbed some healing pills and swallowed them. After pondering, he took out a jade vial and kept it close.

Soon, under the elderly man's guidance, Lu Ye was placed in an empty Dragon-Trapping Lock. "Rest well, young friend, you will be free in ten days."

"Alright!" Lu Ye nodded.

The elderly man left, and prison cultivators closed the cell and activated the restriction.

Instantly, Lu Ye felt the spirit force in his body being squeezed by an invisible hand, becoming stagnant and immovable.

He realized the power of the Dragon-Trapping Lock.

Such a treasure would be highly effective in capturing people, if not for the challenge of trapping enemies inside.

Cultivators differ from ordinary people mainly by having spirit force.

With spirit force disabled, their only advantage is the strong bodies gained from cultivation.

In this aspect, physique cultivators have a big advantage, whereas magic cultivators are unlucky. Although their bodies are much stronger than ordinary people's, they are the weakest among all cultivators and can't recover well without spirit force.

Lu Ye wasn't worried. Though his body wasn't as gifted as Giant Armor's, it was just as strong as other physique cultivators in the same realm.

Moreover, he obtained the Soaring Dragon World's fragmentary origin, his body teeming with vitality. Even with spirit force disabled, his recovery rate surpassed ordinary cultivators.

Sitting quietly, he touched Amber, "I'm fine!"

He reassured Amber and Yiyi.

In this environment, Yiyi couldn't show herself and was surely worried.

The physical injuries weren't a problem, but the pain in his psyche wouldn't fade quickly. However, Lu Ye had a way to cope.

He had faced such situations many times.

Glancing around discreetly, ensuring no one noticed him, he took out the jade vial, opened it, dipped his hand in, and put a bit into his mouth.

Soul Cleansing Water, the ideal treasure for the current situation.

A warm sensation spread through his psyche, like invisible hands easing the pain, making him feel refreshed.

Lu Ye exhaled softly and relaxed.

This ordeal was over.

Chapter 863 Incomplete List

Haotian City was bustling with crowds, with a large number of cultivators from the Cloud River battlefield gathering here.

Although they were considered as part of the Bingzhou guard now, it had not yet been decided where exactly they would be sent. So in the short term, they could only stay in Haotian City, and only once their destination was determined, would they be dispatched to various front lines to serve.

Bingzhou had 12 Major Checkpoints, with each major checkpoint having dozens to hundreds of smaller passes. The frontlines were centered around these 12 Major Checkpoints, with the numerous small passes as nodes, forming a tight defense line to protect the Haotian Alliance's foundation in Bingzhou.

Each of these checkpoints and passes needed cultivators to guard them.

The frontline battles were intense, with many casualties among the cultivators, so the Bingzhou guard frequently needed reinforcements.

Especially now, with a large number of new Bingzhou guards gathering, Divine Sea Realm strong cultivators from the 12 Major Checkpoints were returning to Haotian City to divide these new guards.

Inside a grand hall in Haotian City, twelve people were seated, conversing and laughing.

Suddenly, someone walked in straight, holding a jade slip in both hands: "Report, Chiefs, the recent list of new guards is here, please take a look."

Upon hearing this, everyone nodded. One handsome young man raised his hand, and the jade slip inscribed with the new guard list landed in his palm.

He glanced at the other eleven people and smiled slightly, "Shall we begin?"

"Let's begin." Someone nodded.

"Alright."

The young man responded, and with a forceful squeeze, the jade slip shattered. At the same time, a powerful mental consciousness surged, an invisible ripple spreading outward from him.

This seemingly young man turned out to be a Divine Sea Realm strong cultivator.

As the ripples spread, thousands of glimmers flew out from the shattered jade slip, instantly filling the grand hall, resembling the arrival of a stellar space.

The mental consciousness of the twelve people spread out, instantly scanning the countless glimmers, imprinting the information encoded within the glimmers clearly into their minds.

Each glimmer represented a new guard, including their background, sect, cultivation level, age, military rank, and more, detailed to the utmost.

This facilitated the twelve in selecting their desired talents.

"I'll take this one." One elderly man smiled slightly, pointing his finger, and a glimmer was drawn, landing in a blank jade slip in his hand. This meant he had selected this new guard to be brought to the checkpoint he represented.

How the distribution would be handled there was a matter for later.

All twelve began to take action, although it seemed slow, the countless glimmers filling the hall were rapidly disappearing.

Snatching talents!

This was a long-standing tradition among the Bingzhou guards; every checkpoint needed excellent talents. It's a matter of speed.

Therefore, every time the representatives of the 12 Major Checkpoints came to Haotian City to divide new guards, they were all individuals with strong mental consciousness. Only with sufficiently powerful mental consciousness could one gain an advantage in this process.

In just half a cup of tea's time, the selection of new guards was complete, largely determining their future destinies.

The situations of the 12 Major Checkpoints in Haotian City were different; some had favorable positions in the conflict against Ten Thousand Demons Ridge, making it safer to go there, while others were the opposite, making those areas more dangerous.

The young man who had received the jade slip earlier looked around, smiling slightly, "It seems everyone has gained something, then let's end here."

"Wait." An elderly woman suddenly spoke.

Everyone turned to look at her.

The elderly woman looked at the cultivator who had brought the new guard list earlier, "Is this list incomplete?"

The cultivator immediately replied, "All the new guards reporting to Haotian City are included, none are missing."

"Not necessarily." The elderly woman sneered lightly, "From what I know, there is one person not on the list."

"Oh?" The young man looked puzzled, "One person missing, Veteran Yu knows about it, it seems you are quite interested in that person. Who is this youngster you have your eye on?"

The others showed curious expressions. Logically, as representatives of the Divine Sea Realm from various checkpoints, they should be eager to head to the front lines with their selections rather than linger here debating the completeness of the list, which was the Recruitment Department's concern.

Furthermore, most of the new guards were in the Cloud River Realm, a few in the Spirit Stream Realm, none of whom should attract undue attention from Divine Sea Realm strong cultivators.

Thus, the elderly woman's interest seemed a bit peculiar.

"One worthy of my attention is naturally no ordinary youngster. You might have heard his name," she said, looking at the cultivator who had brought the list, "Hasn't Lu Yiye from the Righteous Blood Sect reported yet? As far as I know, the deadline given by the Heralds Office has long passed. If he hasn't reported, according to guard discipline, he should be executed! If he has reported, why isn't he on the list?"

Righteous Blood Sect...

Upon hearing this, everyone understood.

Bingzhou's Righteous Blood Sect was a particularly notable sect; many had benefited from it, and many bore grudges.

Clearly, the elderly woman was the latter, and her hatred for the Righteous Blood Sect was never hidden. Her only son had served under Feng Wujiang in the Righteous Blood Sect, made a grave mistake, and was executed by Feng Wujiang to stabilize military morale!

Later, Feng Wujiang died, the Righteous Blood Sect declined, but over the years, her hatred could not be erased.

Several years ago, the Righteous Blood Sect was nearly abolished, but then Lu Yiye emerged, preserving the sect's lineage. Now the Righteous Blood Sect showed signs of revival.

The elderly woman had come here with both public and private motives.

Publicly, she represented her checkpoint in selecting new guards.

Privately, she aimed at Lu Yiye from the Righteous Blood Sect!

If Lu Ye fell into her hands, his fate would certainly not be pleasant; there were many legitimate means within the Bingzhou guard.

But the new guard list didn't include the person she sought.

"Veteran Yu, it's been many years, and the event back then..." The young man frowned, thinking it unseemly for a Divine Sea Realm cultivator to target a Cloud River Realm cultivator. After all, grievances have origins, and back then it was Feng Wujiang's execution, what did it have to do with Lu Yiye?

When Feng Wujiang was dominating the scene, Lu Yiye hadn't even been born.

Doing this, if word spread, could damage the reputation of the Bingzhou guard.

"Don't talk to me about the past!" The elderly woman was furious, "I am now the Chief of the Sky Gate Checkpoint Recruitment Sub-department, it's my duty to select elite soldiers for the checkpoint. Lu Yiye from the Righteous Blood Sect is a rising star, renown far and wide. I fancy him and want to take him to Sky Gate Checkpoint to build his career. What's wrong with that?"

Indeed, nothing was wrong!

Her lofty words left the others unable to argue, even though they knew her true intentions.

"Or are you all trying to compete with me?" Her cloudy eyes sparkled as she scanned the crowd.

Some frowned, others remained indifferent...

Seeing no one speaking, the elderly woman looked at the cultivator again: "Lu Yiye is not on the list. Has he reported? If not, by law, he should be executed!"

"This matter... this disciple is not sure." The cultivator sweated. He was just delivering the list, how could he know what had happened?

Moreover, who knew about Yiye? He truly was unsure.

"Not sure? Then ask quickly!" The elderly woman ordered.

"Yes, please wait a moment, Chiefs!" The cultivator responded hurriedly and began inquiring about Lu Ye's status.

Soon the news came, and he looked bewildered.

"What's the matter?" The elderly woman asked sternly.

"Reporting to Chief Yu, Lu Yiye from the Righteous Blood Sect reported several days ago, but..."

"But what?" The young man urged, seeing him hesitate.

The cultivator's expression turned peculiar, and he said, "But it's said that when he reported, he offended Chief Qian and Chief Fan and was sent to prison by Chief Qian to be punished. He has yet to report to the Recruitment Department, so he's not on the list."

"Qian Wudang..."

"Fan Xiangyi..."

They were both Divine Sea Realm strong cultivators, both holding chief positions, so they naturally understood who Chief Qian and Chief Fan were.

What courage did Lu Yiye have to offend them? Or was there a hidden agenda?

Among the twelve, some looked thoughtful, some found it laughable.

The elderly woman frowned deeply, not expecting this turn of events, but she could see through it. Clearly, someone was trying to protect Lu Yiye by putting him in prison under the guise of punishment.

"What was the punishment given by the Justice Department?" The elderly woman asked sternly.

"Three lashes, ten days of confinement!" The cultivator replied, adding, "Today is the fifth day."

"A minor mistake, a light punishment should suffice. Bring him out and have him report to the Recruitment Department immediately!" The elderly woman ordered.

Though Lu Ye's punishment would end in five days, she couldn't wait for that here. With new guards selected, she must return to Sky Gate Checkpoint promptly.

As for Lu Ye, she intended to take him today!

"Ah..." The cultivator panicked, looking for help from other Divine Sea Realm strong cultivators. How could he proceed with such a task, even if the elderly woman ordered it?

The elderly woman was chief of the Recruitment Sub-department at Sky Gate Checkpoint, while the prison was under the Justice Department, she couldn't manage prison affairs.

"Veteran Yu, why make things difficult?" The young man said, gesturing to the cultivator.

The latter, feeling relieved, quickly left. The situation here was perilous, he dared not be dragged into it.

The elderly woman realized she had been too harsh, so she didn't stop the cultivator from leaving but immediately contacted her connections through her battlefield marking to rescue Lu Ye from prison.

Seeing this, the others shook their heads, knowing they couldn't interfere.

Chapter 864 The Bearded Yue Shan with the Character for Eight

Originally, the new guards were already assigned, and everyone had no intention of staying in Haotian City for long. But now, something unexpected has happened, so it's hard to leave casually.

Among the twelve, there were some who were inclined towards the Righteous Blood Sect. Seeing the old woman send a message, they secretly frowned, thinking about how to resolve this matter.

With the old woman's capabilities, bringing a Cloud River Realm cultivator out of prison shouldn't be a big problem. Once Lu Yiye is released, he can go to the Recruitment Department to register and have the identity of a Bingzhou guard. Then, the old woman can justifiably take him to Sky Gate Checkpoint.

By then, no one can stop her unless they are willing to fight over Lu Yiye with the old woman. But if they really do that, given the old woman's hatred for the Righteous Blood Sect, they will definitely break all ties.

Several Divine Sea Realm cultivators inclined towards the Righteous Blood Sect were secretly troubled.

Meanwhile, at the Heralds Office, just like a few days ago, Fan Xiangyi was leisurely sipping tea when a figure suddenly barged in. It was Qian Wudang.

Fan Xiangyi didn't even lift her head: "What's the matter?"

Qian Wudang sat down in front of her, poured himself a cup of tea, and drank it all in one gulp: "That mad woman surnamed Yu at Sky Gate Checkpoint wants to get someone out of prison."

"Lu Yiye?" Fan Xiangyi immediately understood.

"Who else could it be?" Qian Wudang snorted coldly: "A dignified Divine Sea Realm cultivator, scheming against a Cloud River Realm, it's simply disgraceful!"

"Hatred, like old wine, gets stronger as it ferments." Fan Xiangyi spoke lightly, "Especially for someone with one foot in the grave, how could they easily let it go."

"Fortunately, he's been detained for ten days, and now there are five days left. If I don't speak up, not even a fly can get out of that prison. That mad woman won't wait until the five days are over."

"Release him."

"Hmm." Qian Wudang casually replied, but quickly realized something was wrong: "Release him? Are you sure? If he's released, he will be taken to Sky Gate Checkpoint!"

"Release him, she won't be able to take him away!"

Qian Wudang frowned: "What are you up to? Do you intend to bring him into the Heralds Office?"

But that's not right either. Regardless of his Justice Department or Fan Xiangyi's Heralds Office, the requirement for cultivation is very high. The cultivators in both departments are at least in the True Lake Realm. Cloud River Realm cultivators are simply not qualified to join.

Because transmission tasks require great speed, hence the high cultivation requirement. Similarly, the Justice Department often has to act to capture erring Bingzhou guards, so a low level of power won't do.

So with Lu Ye's current cultivation level, he can't join either department.

"Naturally, someone will fight her for him!" Fan Xiangyi smiled softly.

Qian Wudang glanced at her side profile, vaguely realizing something, and nodded: "Since you've made arrangements, I won't interfere."

He immediately sent out a message.

In the dragon-trapping lock of the prison, Lu Ye sat upright.

The wounds from the whip had basically healed, his life force was vibrant, and the benefits of a strong physique were evident. Even though he couldn't mobilize spirit force here, it didn't affect his recovery much.

However, due to the inability to mobilize spirit force, he couldn't cultivate.

Fortunately, Lu Ye could reflect on the Origin of the Soaring Dragon World, not considering it a waste of time.

As he was reflecting, his mind was suddenly shaken. He quickly regained his focus and opened his eyes to see the elder who had sent him here standing in front of him: "My young friend, you can leave now."

Lu Ye was surprised: "Isn't the time limit not up?" He had been told he would be detained for ten days, and it should only be five days now.

The elder shook his head: "I don't know, I'm just following orders."

Lu Ye didn't ask further questions, stood up, and Amber jumped onto his shoulder and crouched.

Following the elder, they soon saw daylight again.

Outside the prison, the elder said: "There are instructions from above, asking you to go to the Recruitment Department immediately, just in that direction."

"Alright, thank you!" Lu Ye cupped his fists in gratitude and flew up towards the sky.

The Recruitment Department was in a very prominent location. Lu Ye had passed by it a few days ago, and at that time it was crowded with cultivators registering themselves.

But today it was rather deserted. The Recruitment Department's efficiency was very high, and all the cultivators who arrived earlier had completed their registration, and their assignments were already decided. Now it was only Lu Ye who was late.

Rushing to the hall of the Recruitment Department, several pairs of eyes immediately turned to him. It was evident they were all cultivators on duty here.

Lu Ye immediately saw a familiar face!

"Lu Yiye!" That person was handsome, his pencil mustache adding a touch of charm, and he smiled at him.

Lu Ye's face darkened instantly, and he replied irritably: "I never thought we'd meet again!"

The person in front of him was Yue Shan from the Righteousness Sect!

The name "Yiye" was spread from him, Lu Ye had encountered Pang Dahai on the Cloud River battlefield and had wondered if he would ever meet Yue Shan.

He had already decided if they ever met, he would definitely teach him a lesson. Because of this guy, his name changed.

Even his battlefield marking now showed Lu Yiye!

He hadn't seen Yue Shan on the Cloud River battlefield, but unexpectedly, they met here.

"I never thought that in just a few years, the boy from back then has achieved so much!" Yue Shan laughed, noticing the hostility in Lu Ye's eyes, and was immediately puzzled: "Do you want to hit me?"

"Absolutely not!" Lu Ye denied promptly, mainly because he probably couldn't win. Yue Shan was now in the True Lake Realm, while he was invincible in the Cloud River Realm, in a real fight, he might not be his opponent.

Being from the Righteousness Sect, Yue Shan naturally had a solid foundation, stronger than the average True Lake Realm cultivator.

"That's good!" Yue Shan warmly patted Lu Ye on the shoulder, "Come, come, we've been waiting for you. Let's get you registered first."

Leading Lu Ye forward, he whispered: "Did you offend someone?"

"I just got here, who could I offend? What's happening?"

Yue Shan shook his head: "I don't know, we just received the order to quickly get you registered. Something unusual is happening, be careful yourself."

Lu Ye nodded, he hadn't noticed anything strange before, but now that Yue Shan mentioned it, he did sense something was off.

He was supposed to be detained for ten days, yet now it was only the fifth day and he was released. The Recruitment Department had received orders to quickly get him registered.

It was as if someone was eager to do something to him.

With Yue Shan's lead, they arrived at a table where a cultivator waited behind it, nodding slightly at Yue Shan before looking at Lu Ye: "Name, sect, and cultivation, do not lie, do not exaggerate. If we find any false information, the Justice Department will come after you."

Lu Ye naturally didn't lie, Yue Shan was right here, and there was no need to lie about such basic information.

"Lu Ye, Righteous Blood Sect, Cloud River Level 9."

The cultivator immediately activated the spirit force and recorded Lu Ye's basic information into a jade slip.

After finishing, he took out a round disc-like object and said: "Raise your hand and place the battlefield marking here."

Lu Ye looked at the disc, somewhat puzzled.

Yue Shan kindly explained: "Registration is one part; once registered, you become a Bingzhou guard. Naturally, you need to determine your military rank. This is the second task of the Recruitment Department. Your rank depends on two factors: your cultivation and the battle merits you've achieved. The higher your cultivation and the more battle merits you've gained, the higher your rank. This affects your future monthly allowances. As you're a Cloud River Level 9, you can likely become a pentrarch. If your past battle merits are sufficient, you could even become a decarch."

He patted Lu Ye's shoulder: "Ranks are important; they affect your monthly allowances and your status in the Bingzhou guard. But they can be raised gradually, so don't worry too much about your initial rank."

Lu Ye nodded: "Understood."

He then placed his left hand with the battlefield marking on the disc.

The cultivator holding the disc activated the spirit force, and the disc immediately emitted a light, flowing into Lu Ye's battlefield marking.

"The battle merit panel can detect the past battle merits of a cultivator. Even if you've spent them, there's still a record. Different levels emit different lights; white means the least, indicating few past battle merits. If your cultivation is not high enough, you can only become a foot soldier, following orders from others."

As Yue Shan explained, the light from the panel indeed started as milky white but quickly transformed into green.

"Green represents roughly ten thousand merits, combined with your Cloud River Level 9 cultivation, pentrarch is assured..."

Before he finished speaking, the green turned to blue.

"Blue is within fifty thousand merits. Congratulations, Lu Yiye, you can become a decarch...uh, it's now green again..."

Yue Shan's expression grew increasingly shocked, as the light from the panel rapidly changed from green to yellow.

The yellow grew intensely bright, almost transforming into the next color before it stabilized.

In the Recruitment Department, several cultivators were astonished, staring at the bright yellow unwaveringly.

Such a bright yellow indicates tens of thousands or even close to a million merits, something these True Lake Realm cultivators hadn't achieved.

How could a Cloud River Level 9 achieve this?

Their first thought was...

"Is the battle merit panel malfunctioning?"

Yue Shan shook his head: "The battle merit panel connects to Heaven's Augury and links to the battlefield markings, it can't be wrong."

If it's not wrong, it means Lu Ye's past battle merits...are immense!

Several pairs of eyes turned to Lu Ye, deeply shocked.

Yue Shan stammered: "Lu Yiye, have you achieved many battle merits before?"

"I've gained some."

"Do you remember the exact amount?"

Lu Ye shook his head: "I don't remember exactly, but probably tens of thousands."

Chapter 865 The Difference in Military Ranks

Lu Ye couldn't recall the exact amount of his accumulated battle merit, but he had a rough idea.

Throughout the Spirit Stream battlefield, he hadn't come into contact with the concept of battle merit. It wasn't until he entered the Yunhe battlefield and ventured into the secret realm of Ten Thousand Beasts Domain that he first encountered battle merit.

However, the battle merit he gained within the secret realm wasn't substantial, only around thirty thousand points, mainly because the final battle had too many participants, and the rewards were divided.

Subsequently, during his trip to Xianyuan City, he gained three hundred thousand points of battle merit, which he exchanged entirely for soul water.

During his journey to the Soaring Dragon World, he gained two hundred eighty thousand points of battle merit.

Most recently, he gained over one hundred eighty thousand points of battle merit during the Unparalleled Continent trip.

In total, the battle merit he had accumulated so far amounted to approximately eight hundred thousand points.

For any cultivator in the Cloud River Realm, and even the True Lake Realm, this was a significant amount!

Take Yue Shan, for example, who had only accumulated little more than three hundred thousand points thus far. Compared to Lu Ye, the difference was more than twofold.

The amount of battle merit a cultivator obtained directly determined their rank and status within the Bingzhou Guard.

With Lu Ye's current capital, his initial rank had already reached the level of a lieutenant colonel.

This had never happened before!

It should be noted that Yue Shan was currently just a major, and the rank of lieutenant colonel was a step higher. On the front lines, should an emergency arise, Yue Shan would have to obey Lu Ye's commands, even if his cultivation was higher.

Of course, without a direct chain of command, Yue Shan could disobey and submit an appeal to the Justice Department.

The Recruitment Department had the authority to determine a new guard's initial rank, but since its creation, no new recruit had ever attained such a high initial rank!

Under normal circumstances, a Cloud River Level 9 cultivator like Lu Ye would join the Bingzhou Guard at the rank of pentarch or decarch. Only a few might achieve the rank of major.

However, Lu Ye's initial rank was lieutenant colonel, and the intensity of the color on the battle merit panel suggested it was close to ascending to the next level.

Above the rank of lieutenant colonel was that of a capital commandant, a rank only seasoned True Lake Realm cultivators could reach.

It could be said that the current situation was beyond their routine handling capacity.

Yue Shan rubbed his temples, feeling quite troubled. He hadn't expected such an extraordinary event to unfold right under his nose.

After some thought, he said, "Lu Yiye, wait a moment."

He then tapped on his battlefield marking, sending out a message.

It was clear he was calling someone over.

During the wait, Yue Shan asked curiously, "What have you done to accumulate such an enormous amount of battle merit?"

Normally, the secret realms the Cloud River Realm cultivators ventured into wouldn't yield such huge rewards.

"A bit of opportunity," Lu Ye replied casually. The secret realms he experienced weren't ones others could easily replicate. The rewards he reaped were the result of both luck and risking his life. Not to mention the final battle against the Golden Corpse King in the Unparalleled Continent and the gift from the remnant origin of the Soaring Dragon World that saved his life.

As for Xianyuan City... that was beyond anyone's reach.

"Senior Brother Yue Shan, could you explain the difference in ranks?" Lu Ye inquired.

In the Righteous Blood Sect, Shui Yuan had told him a lot about the Xianyuan Guard but hadn't gone into much detail about ranks, probably assuming Lu Ye would quickly grasp the concept upon arrival.

Thus, Lu Ye didn't know this place could track a cultivator's past battle merit and use it to establish the initial rank.

There was no harm in explaining, so Yue Shan began, "The Bingzhou Guard operates in a military hierarchy, and there are nine ranks from bottom to top: foot soldier, pentrarch, decarch, major,

lieutenant colonel, capital commandant, brigadier general, major general, and lieutenant general. The twelve Major Checkpoints of the Bingzhou frontline each have a lieutenant general, all of whom are at the peak of the Divine Sea Realm. These lieutenants are also the checkpoint lords, stationed permanently to safeguard Bingzhou."

"When determining the initial rank of new recruits, the two main factors considered are past battle merits and cultivation level, with battle merit being the primary consideration. The color shown on the battle merit panel corresponds to the rank. However, there can be exceptions; for example, if a True Lake Realm cultivator joins the Bingzhou Guard, even without any battle merit, the minimum rank would be decarch because starting a True Lake cultivator as a foot soldier would be inappropriate."

Lu Ye understood, "So, while rank is primarily determined by battle merit, cultivation level can also allow for discretionary promotion."

"Exactly," Yue Shan replied, adopting an expression of approval, "Discretionary promotions are not managed by our Recruitment Department but by the Department of Appointments."

Lu Ye nodded, "What about my situation?"

Yue Shan spread his hands, "Your initial rank is too high; we can't handle it here. I've already sent a message to Veteran Shi. He will probably take you to the Department of Appointments, the only place capable of promoting beyond the major rank. Remember, future promotions will also require a visit to the Department of Appointments."

"Understood," Lu Ye nodded.

As they spoke, a short old man with a red nose suddenly appeared and sized Lu Ye up, "Is this the kid?"

Yue Shan and the others quickly saluted, "Veteran Shi!"

Lu Ye followed suit, "Lu Ye of the Righteous Blood Sect, greetings senior."

The old man with the red nose might be short, but given the respect Yue Shan and the others showed him, he was undoubtedly a Divine Sea Realm cultivator.

"Righteous Blood Sect..." Veteran Shi stroked his chin and chuckled, "Always producing little monsters. How intriguing. Follow me."

With that, he turned and left.

Lu Ye quickly followed.

Once they exited the main hall of the Recruitment Department, Veteran Shi soared into the sky and propelled Lu Ye with his spirit force. In an instant, Lu Ye experienced what it felt like to move at lightning speed.

Even with his wings and Move-Like-The-Wind spirit runes, he could not match the old man's casual flight speed.

Within just a dozen breaths, Veteran Shi brought Lu Ye to another large hall.

This was the Department of Appointments in Haotian City, the place Yue Shan had mentioned for rank promotions.

The Department of Appointments was much busier than the Recruitment Department, with people coming and going—cultivators from the Bingzhou Guard seeking to promote their ranks.

The hall was spacious and simply arranged. Behind each table sat a cultivator, each with a battle merit panel. Bingzhou Guards stepped forward in sequence to submit their inscription tablets, placing the battlefield markings on the panels to have their ranks assessed and their tablet information updated.

The process was very efficient.

Veteran Shi clearly had no intention of waiting in line. He led Lu Ye directly to a side room and pushed the door open.

Inside, a woman was waiting. She glanced up, "Is it him?"

Veteran Shi nodded, "This is the kid. Do what you need to." He then sat to one side, pulled out a smoking pipe, and started to puff away.

The woman glared at him, then turned to Lu Ye, "Let's see your battle merit."

Lu Ye stepped forward and placed his hand on a battle merit panel.

Just as in the Recruitment Department, the panel's color shifted continuously, from white to blue, then to green, and finally settled into a deep yellow.

Despite knowing this result was coming, Veteran Shi still couldn't help but sigh, "So young and already a master of slaughter. Truly extraordinary."

The woman remarked, "The battle merit checks out, but the cultivation level is a bit low." No Cloud River Realm cultivator had ever affected the panel's color so dramatically.

"What's the Department of Appointments' decision?" Veteran Shi asked.

"We follow protocol, what else?" the woman smiled.

Veteran Shi nodded slightly.

During their conversation, the woman retrieved an inscription tablet, infused it with her mental consciousness and spirit force, then handed it to Lu Ye, "This is your guard token, symbolizing your identity. Keep it safe and do not lose it."

"Understood." Lu Ye took it.

Every member of the Bingzhou Guard possessed a guard token. While battlefield markings recorded various information, if a cultivator fell in battle, their marking would dissipate.

With a guard token, it was at least possible to confirm the identity of the deceased.

The guard token also supported communication, facilitating troop mobilization within the Bingzhou Guard, unlike the battlefield markings, which required mutual exchange of marking imprints for messaging.

"What are you still standing here for?" Veteran Shi asked when he saw that Lu Ye hadn't left.

"Where should I go?"

"Anywhere you wish, just don't leave Haotian City." Veteran Shi waved him off, "Someone will notify you when it's time to move out."

Lu Ye understood and quickly left.

After he departed, the woman sighed, "After all these years, still fixated on the Righteous Blood Sect—it's somewhat excessive."

She seemed to have heard something.

Veteran Shi replied, "What can you do? Thang Yifeng doesn't like mundane affairs and won't come to Haotian City, so it's no surprise his disciples get bullied."

"If he's indeed sent to the Sky Gate Checkpoint..." the woman was visibly concerned.

"Why worry about that?" Veteran Shi took a drag from his pipe, "If Qian Wudang spoke up to pull this kid out, haven't you wondered why?"

The woman's expression shifted, "You mean to say..."

"Hmph, you know the relationship between Qian Wudang and Fan Xiangyi, and Fan Xiangyi is close with that little girl from the Righteous Blood Sect. They wouldn't neglect a disciple of the Righteous Blood Sect. Locking the kid in prison was their ploy, probably intending to arrange his placement after those people left. But since he was already targeted, it may not be easy for that crazy woman to take him to the Sky Gate Checkpoint."

"I see!" the woman understood, "You truly have a broader perspective."

Chapter 866 Nian Yuexian

In the grand hall, more than half of the Recruitment Sub-department Chiefs of the 12 Checkpoints of Bingzhou had left. The new guards had been distributed, and it was time for them to return to their respective checkpoints. Staying here any longer was pointless.

Only five or six people remained behind for various reasons.

That old crone with the surname Yu naturally hadn't left.

Her target was Lu Ye, and she wouldn't leave easily until the matter was settled.

No matter what, she was determined to take Lu Ye to the Sky Gate Checkpoint!

Despite the few people around who tried to persuade her earnestly, their efforts were in vain and only served to irritate her further, causing her to lose her temper several times.

Seeing she was truly angered, the others stopped their attempts at persuasion and could only shake their heads and sigh.

They knew well that if the young boy from the Righteous Blood Sect were to be taken to the Sky Gate Checkpoint, his fate would likely be grim. Although the Bingzhou guard strictly forbade internal strife, those in power had many justifiable means at their disposal. A Divine Sea Realm expert wanting to deal with a Cloud River Realm cultivator would face no resistance from the latter.

"Has he not been brought yet?" The old crone slapped the armrest of her chair in frustration, unable to contain her impatience.

At this moment, a person hurriedly walked in, bowed respectfully, and reported, "Righteous Blood Sect disciple Lu Ye has been registered!"

While speaking, he respectfully presented a jade slip with both hands.

A gleam flashed in the old crone's eyes as she reached out, using spirit force to draw the jade slip toward herself.

The jade slip naturally contained Lu Ye's information. When it fell into the old crone's hands, it meant Lu Ye would be assigned to the Sky Gate Checkpoint.

Just as the jade slip was about a foot away from the old crone, the several Divine Sea Realm experts in the hall suddenly changed their expressions. A ripple in the void appeared out of nowhere, followed by a sharp flash.

The old crone screamed, retracting her hand as if shocked by an electric current.

A ghostly figure suddenly appeared, and a fair jade hand caught the jade slip mid-flight!

This abrupt change made the Divine Sea Realm experts think they were being attacked. They all instantly surged with spirit force, causing a whirlwind inside the hall that exuded tremendous pressure.

The cultivator who had delivered the jade slip also had a True Lake Realm cultivation, not a weakling by any means, but he yelped in alarm and quickly retreated out of the hall to feel safe.

In the brief chaos that ensued, the Divine Sea Realm experts finally saw the appearance of the sudden intruder.

It was a woman, full of charm and extraordinary beauty, with a tear mole under her eye that added to her allure. However, her aura was extremely cold, like an iceberg that had not melted for ten thousand years.

As she appeared, even the Divine Sea Realm experts couldn't help but shiver, as if their psyche was touched by the cold aura.

At this moment, the woman held a dirk in her right hand and the jade slip containing Lu Ye's information between the fingers of her left hand, looking impassively at the old crone.

Just moments ago, it was she who had intercepted the jade slip.

Before she appeared, none of the five or six Divine Sea Realm experts there had detected her presence.

"Nian Yuexian!"

The old crone screamed, as if seeing a ghost. Her murky eyes trembled, clearly not expecting to see this woman here at this moment.

But upon pondering, she immediately understood why Nian Yuexian had appeared – she had also come for that boy from the Righteous Blood Sect!

That explained it...

Earlier, when Qian Wudang had spoken to bring the boy from the Righteous Blood Sect out of the prison, the old crone had found it odd. Qian Wudang had been too accommodating for once. He had always been known for his unwavering principles, strictly enforcing guard discipline, and this was an exception.

It turned out they had been waiting here for her.

What was even more alarming was that none of them had noticed Nian Yuexian lurking here. If she hadn't revealed herself, they probably wouldn't have known her presence.

Nian Yuexian's high level of mastery in the Path of Concealment was evident.

The few Divine Sea Realm experts, being savvy old hands, immediately grasped the situation upon seeing Nian Yuexian. They had stayed behind with the intention of persuading the old crone and leaned somewhat towards the boy from the Righteous Blood Sect.

But all their efforts had been in vain.

Now that Nian Yuexian had appeared and snatched the jade slip, it meant the situation they were worried about wouldn't occur, making them breathe a sigh of relief.

In the entire Bingzhou guard, if anyone dared to disregard the old crone and wasn't afraid of offending her, Nian Yuexian was certainly one of them.

Not just the old crone, even the twelve lieutenant generals had to give Nian Yuexian some face. In terms of strength, Nian Yuexian was qualified to be a checkpoint lord. However, she lacked the ability to command, which was why she wasn't a checkpoint lord.

Throughout the Bingzhou guard, Nian Yuexian was a very unique individual, and her name was widely known even in the other Eight Great Provincial States.

After relaxing, their hearts started to pound again.

The situation became clear but potentially dangerous.

On one side, there was a determination to take the boy from the Righteous Blood Sect to the Sky Gate Checkpoint. On the other side, someone was intent on stopping it, and had even snatched the jade slip... were they about to fight?

This was Haotian City; if two Divine Sea Realm experts started fighting here, it would be outrageous. The Justice Department would definitely take action, and both might end up in prison afterwards.

The chubby old man with a smiling face spoke up, "Junior Sister Nian, why are you here?"

Nian Yuexian replied coldly, "Why can't I be here?"

Her words were as cold as ice. The chubby old man quickly said, "Of course, not. It's just... it's been many years since I've seen you. Junior Sister, you still look stunning while I've grown old. Time spares no one."

"You've always been this old!"

The chubby old man's face showed a hint of hurt. Although he knew Nian Yuexian's temperament, he still felt uncomfortable and didn't want to say another word.

The old crone stared at Nian Yuexian and then at the jade slip in her hand. "Nian Yuexian, hand over the jade slip. Name your condition!"

"You want it?" Nian Yuexian stared at her, "Try to take it if you can."

"Nian Yuexian!" The old crone gritted her teeth, seemingly about to explode but holding back due to her lack of strength. "For so many years, you never ask for a single soldier or troop. Why intervene today?"

"Just had a sudden impulse."

"In that case, I can give you some men. Take as many as you want... a hundred, a thousand..."

"I prefer taking what I grab!"

The old crone fumed with anger, "Must it be this way?"

Nian Yuexian's lips curled up slightly, "Yes... so what?"

The old crone stared at her fiercely, her eyes filled with resentment and anger. After a long pause, she gritted her teeth and said, "Fine!"

With that, she stood up abruptly and started to leave.

However, just then, Nian Yuexian moved, enveloped in a fragrant wind, and lunged at the old crone.

Nobody expected her to actually make a move here, not even the old crone herself. After all, Nian Yuexian had been lurking nearby, and if she intended to harm the old crone, she could have done it earlier.

She chose to act straightforwardly now instead of ambushing her.

The old crone's scream echoed once more. The clash of the two Divine Sea Realm experts caused the sturdy hall to collapse, and several figures scattered the dust, standing in mid-air.

From a distance, their eyes narrowed.

In the distance, they saw the old crone's figure wrapped in a layer of blood light, fleeing rapidly. Nian Yuexian stood not far away, playing with her dirk, watching the old crone's retreating figure coldly. She said indifferently, "I told you thirty years ago, each time I see you, I will beat you. Did you think I was joking?"

The chubby old man and the other Divine Sea Realm experts hearing this couldn't help but shiver.

Women... they all held grudges. The old crone carried a grudge, insisting on taking the boy from the Righteous Blood Sect to the Sky Gate Checkpoint.

Nian Yuexian held a grudge, daring to make a move within Haotian City and injuring the old crone, even if she didn't kill her.

The commotion naturally alarmed some patrolling cultivators from the Justice Department, who were about to investigate but received some command and changed their direction, leaving swiftly.

The Justice Department was known for its strict enforcement. Since they saw nothing and received no report, they acted as if nothing had happened.

The chubby old man and the others saw this from afar, speechless. When they looked back, Nian Yuexian had disappeared without a trace.

The chubby old man sighed, "Holding a checkpoint by herself, Junior Sister Nian's skills are formidable. No wonder Ten Thousand Demons Ridge doesn't dare to act rashly."

Ghost cultivators had always been a troublesome faction, especially the powerful ones who could kill without a trace.

Sometimes, the mere presence of a powerful ghost cultivator served as a deterrent to the enemy.

This was the reason behind Nian Yuexian's legendary status of holding a checkpoint by herself.

The matter had taken a few twists and turns but ultimately didn't head in the worrisome direction. With the jade slip in Nian Yuexian's hands, they no longer had to worry about anything. As the old crone left, they too quickly departed.

Meanwhile, outside the Department of Appointments, Lu Ye was examining his battlefield marking.

As for the information in the battlefield marking, nothing had changed much except for his location which had become Haotian City.

Except that, below his battle merits, there was an additional line.

Rank: Lieutenant Colonel.

The nine ranks of military merits, Lieutenant Colonel was the fifth rank, and given Lu Ye's current battle merits, he wasn't far from reaching the sixth rank, the Capital Commandant.

Though advancing in ranks was not very difficult initially, it became increasingly harder towards the later stages.

Lu Ye was satisfied. Regardless, with this rank, he would receive a certain amount of battle merits as a monthly stipend, which was the most appealing aspect of the Bingzhou guard for cultivators.

Having checked his battlefield marking, Lu Ye then looked at his guard token.

The guard token was not complex to craft, but due to its Heaven's Augury enhancement, it couldn't be easily counterfeited by ordinary cultivators.

Besides, no cultivator would dare to forge it. If discovered, they would face the full force of the Bingzhou guard's pursuit and have no place to stand in Bingzhou.

The guard token was just a black plaque, unclear what material it was made from, with no distinct patterns or characters. Lu Ye poured his spirit force into it, and the guard token immediately emitted a bright yellow glow.

Chapter 867 Cangyan Mountain Pass

The bright yellow light corresponded exactly to the rank of lieutenant colonel.

In this way, when Bingzhou guards with different ranks encounter each other in the wild, they can quickly determine each other's rank by showing their guard tokens. This is beneficial for quickly gathering and coordinating actions during emergencies.

This item must be kept close to the body and cannot be placed in a storage sack because many orders for Bingzhou guards are issued through these tokens. If placed in a storage sack, communication would be impossible.

This operates on the same principle as an audio transmission stone.

Just as Lu Ye was about to tuck the guard token into his sleeve, he suddenly had a feeling and quickly immersed his mind.

A message appeared in the token.

The message was simple, instructing him to report to the Cangyan Mountain Pass within three days.

Lu Ye frowned. This order seemed somewhat strange because new guards like him typically went to one of the twelve major checkpoints first and then were assigned to a subordinate mountain pass from there.

To be instructed directly to bypass the main checkpoint and report to a pass was quite unusual.

However, he didn't think much of it. Now that he had joined the Bingzhou guard, he had only one thing to do: follow orders.

The order required him to reach the Cangyan Mountain Pass within three days, so he had to arrive within that time frame. If he exceeded the limit, he would be subject to military law.

He took out the ten-part map, found the location of the Cangyan Mountain Pass, which wasn't far from Haotian City, and determined that he could reach it within a day given his speed.

The three-day limit was generous, so there was no rush to set out.

It was already dark, so resting for the night before departing wouldn't be too late.

Haotian City had many vacant rooms available for cultivators to rest, and these rooms were free of charge. Any Bingzhou guard could select a room by using their token.

Lu Ye found an empty room nearby, opened the restriction with his token, and walked in.

The room was small and simply furnished, but more than sufficient for one person's rest.

After a night of rest, Lu Ye felt refreshed and set out at dawn, heading straight towards the Cangyan Mountain Pass as indicated by the map.

The journey was uneventful, save for a few encounters with patrols. Lu Ye showed his token and passed without issue.

As night was about to fall, a range of mountains appeared on the horizon, and the area around him felt unusually hot.

This was the Cangyan Mountain, stretching for thousands of miles, with the Cangyan Mountain Pass situated within.

Following the map's guidance, Lu Ye soon found the specific location of the Cangyan Mountain Pass.

The large pass resembled a mountain fortress from afar, with towering walls and many defensive structures visible upon them. Though its defenses were not as formidable as those of Haotian City, if the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge launched an attack from here, these fortifications would be crucial.

However, Lu Ye was puzzled by the fact that he didn't see anyone on the walls, and the fortress showed no signs of a protective formation being in place.

Something was definitely amiss.

Lu Ye's heart sank. He instinctively felt that the pass might have been silently taken over by the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge. Otherwise, how could such a large pass be void of human presence?

He quickly activated his spirit force to conceal himself and put Amber into the spirit beast sack, silently advancing forward.

The closer he got, the more confused he became.

There were no signs of a battle, nor any hints of blood. The buildings all felt old and dilapidated.

Entering the fortress, he explored building after building, finding many of them covered in dust.

This certainly indicated that the place had been uninhabited for a long time.

What was going on with the Cangyan Mountain Pass? Lu Ye was completely bewildered.

Could he really be the only living person here? Or perhaps other Bingzhou guards were on their way?

As he pondered these questions, he suddenly felt a presence and turned to see a figure standing silently on the roof of a nearby building, framed by the round moon hanging high in the sky, with cold moonlight casting a surreal glow.

Lu Ye's eyes narrowed.

The person had a pair of beautiful eyes staring straight at him, completely ignoring his attempts at concealment.

Cold sweat formed on his forehead, and he tightened his grip on the Boulder Mountain Saber, not daring to make a rash move.

The person's capabilities were indiscernible, but someone who could see through his camouflage was likely a strong cultivator in the Divine Sea Realm.

Whether friend or foe remained undetermined.

"Why are you sneaking around... Looking for something?" the woman suddenly spoke, her voice cold as ice, like the frosty moonlight above.

She probably wasn't an enemy, Lu Ye thought. If she were, she would have attacked by now.

Since she wasn't an enemy, she must be the local Bingzhou guard in command.

With this in mind, Lu Ye revealed himself and saluted, "New Bingzhou guard, Lu Ye, reporting for duty!"

"Hmm," the woman responded casually, raising her hand. The token Lu Ye had kept close flew out and landed in her grasp. After a brief moment, she tossed it back to him.

"Alright," she said lightly, "From this moment on, you're part of the Cangyan Mountain Pass."

Lu Ye quickly checked his battlefield marking and found that it had indeed updated.

Under the identity section, where it previously only identified him as a disciple of the Righteous Blood Sect, there was now an additional line.

Cangyan Mountain Pass Base Lieutenant Colonel of Big Moon Checkpoint.

Cangyan Mountain Pass was under Big Moon Checkpoint, one of its many subordinate passes. Lieutenant Colonel was Lu Ye's rank, while the title "Base" indicated his military position.

From these details, Lu Ye understood that the woman was indeed in charge and held significant authority at the Cangyan Mountain Pass.

"May I ask, esteemed...?"

"In the guard, there are no seniors or juniors, only superiors and subordinates. You can call me 'Sir' or refer to me as the Mountain Pass Chief or Major General, whichever you prefer. Just don't call me senior," the woman replied.

Mountain Pass Chief was clearly her position, and Major General was her rank.

At that moment, Lu Ye realized that this woman was indeed the chief of the Cangyan Mountain Pass.

"I understand you're puzzled. Don't bother looking; it's just you and me here," she said.

Lu Ye was stunned.

While not entirely familiar with the front-line situation, he had heard his Second Senior Sister mention that Bingzhou's twelve major checkpoints each had many subordinate passes guarded by numerous cultivators.

What was going on with the Cangyan Mountain Pass? How could there be only two of them, including himself, with only the chief here before he arrived? he wondered.

"Find yourself a place to stay. There aren't many battles here, so you can do as you please. If you need anything, you can contact me through the guard token, but try not to disturb me unnecessarily," the woman said before floating away.

"May I ask your name, Sir?" Lu Ye called out.

Far off in the distance, a cold voice answered, "Nian Yuexian!"

Lu Ye memorized the name.

Even as Nian Yuexian disappeared, Lu Ye was still a bit dazed.

This situation was quite different from what he had imagined.

He had thought that upon joining the Bingzhou guard, he would interact with cultivators from various sects and fight against the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge here.

But now, the Cangyan Mountain Pass had only him and Nian Yuexian, with no sign of any other Bingzhou guards.

Did Bingzhou have such peculiar passes? he wondered.

With nothing else to do upon arrival, he decided to find a place to stay first.

Fortunately, the fortress was large with many buildings. Though many were in disrepair, some were still habitable.

Lu Ye found a decent-looking room, cleaned it up, and settled in.

He spent the night without incident.

The next day, Lu Ye went to a nearby spirit mountaintop and gazed around, feeling lost.

Even though this was the front line between two opposing factions, it gave off a strangely peaceful vibe.

Having fought in the Spirit Stream battlefield and the Cloud River battlefield, Lu Ye was used to the constant tension of battling the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge.

But arriving at this seemingly tranquil place left him at a loss.

He decided to build himself a residence first.

The fortress felt vast and empty with just him, so he figured it would be better to build a bamboo house on a nearby spirit mountaintop.

Having built bamboo houses before, Lu Ye quickly got to work and by midday had constructed a three-story bamboo house.

He set up numerous arrays around the house for protection before considering the job done.

Having a place to live, he now needed something to do. As a Bingzhou guard, he naturally wanted to serve Bingzhou well, so he attempted to contact Nian Yuexian to see if she had any tasks for him.

However, he received no response—Nian Yuexian was nowhere to be found.

Given her attitude before, Lu Ye realized she probably didn't want to be bothered.

With nothing else to do, he decided to focus on his cultivation.

Close to advancing to the True Lake Realm and with plenty of gold-hued spirit fortune sticks, he would have already advanced if not for the orders from Haotian City.

Cultivators must prioritize their cultivation, for higher realms made everything easier.

On the third floor of his bamboo house, Lu Ye sat cross-legged. Yiyi was beside him.

He began forming a small spirit energy gathering funnel, crushing a gold-hued spirit fortune stick.

Rich spirit force immediately emerged, which Lu Ye absorbed, continually enhancing his cultivation as a Cloud River Level 9 cultivator.

Chapter 868 True Lake

Lu Ye and Yiyi were both focused on their cultivation, while even Amber was nearby absorbing that pure spirit force.

Neither of them noticed a ghostly figure that had silently appeared and was standing just ten feet in front of them.

The numerous warning and protective arrays that Lu Ye had carefully set up seemed to have completely failed in their function.

The only person capable of such stealthy intrusion in today's Cangyan Mountain Pass was none other than Nian Yuexian.

At this moment, she was intently observing Lu Ye, clearly sensing the terrifying efficiency of his cultivation. With her keen eyes, she could easily spot the peculiarities in Lu Ye. Though this was her first time seeing him, a slight contemplation allowed her to roughly understand the situation.

She was greatly astonished, for even with her extensive experience, she had never thought that someone could cultivate in such a way.

Reflecting on the information she had gathered about Lu Ye's growth, Nian Yuexian finally understood how he could advance so quickly.

This kind of cultivation efficiency was beyond terrifying; normal cultivators' breathing exercises were not even comparable. This had nothing to do with cultivation aptitude anymore.

Seeing this, it was evident that this boy in the Cloud River Realm had been doing this since his cultivation was very low, and he had persisted until today.

Such audacity.

How astonishing must his talent be in the Path of Spirit Runes to have such a brilliant idea and to put it into action.

Even those who had reached the Divine Sea Realm usually had a calm mindset, yet Nian Yuexian was still shocked by Lu Ye's unique cultivation method.

Looking at Yiyi sitting beside Lu Ye...

She was even more shocked.

She had infiltrated to investigate because she sensed a strange presence in the bamboo house.

She had seen Lu Ye before; he was always accompanied by Amber, and she clearly remembered the aura of both. Suddenly sensing a new aura made her vigilant.

Upon entering, she discovered that beside Lu Ye and his pet beast, there was another extremely unique being—a young girl who had successfully concealed herself even from her.

After watching silently for a moment, Nian Yuexian's figure vanished as if she had never been there, leaving no trace behind.

One after another, gold-hued spirit fortune sticks were being consumed. After seven days, when the effect of the seventh stick was about to end, an enormous buzzing sound suddenly emanated from Lu Ye's body, like thunderbolts or raging rivers.

A torrent of spirit force surged within him, causing waves of energy to ripple outward.

The fullness he had experienced in recent days became even more pronounced, yet instead of discomfort, Lu Ye felt that every inch of his flesh was overflowing with spirit force.

Cultivators open numerous spiritual orifices starting from the Spirit Stream Realm. Once enough spiritual orifices are open, they can connect throughout the body, achieving the Cloud River. At that level, spirit force within the body flows like a great river connected end to end, unceasingly.

However, this river has its limits; the purpose of cultivation in the Cloud River Realm is to continuously expand this river of spirit force.

Every minor level advancement signifies an expansion of the river's capacity until it fills every corner of the body.

By this stage, the body is filled with one's own spirit force without limitations. The response of spirit force becomes immediate regardless of how it is mobilized, giving greater control than before.

At this point, the spirit force within is like a lake, signifying the True Lake Realm.

At this moment, Lu Ye had one foot in the doorway of the True Lake Realm, which essentially made him a True Lake cultivator.

However, the turbulence of spirit force around him indicated unstable cultivation. If left unchecked, he could fall back to Cloud River Level 9, rendering all recent efforts futile.

The cultivation in the True Lake Realm is different from the previous two realms.

In the previous realms, the goal was to increase the quantity of spirit force, especially in the Cloud River Realm.

But in the True Lake Realm, the focus shifts to improving the quality of spirit force.

The True Lake 9 Revolutions correspond to the nine levels within the True Lake Realm.

Lu Ye could only be considered stable in the True Lake Level 1 once he has refined his spirit force through the first revolution. As it stands, he is merely a house of cards, ready to collapse at any moment.

He had previously sought advice from Shui Yuan about cultivating in the True Lake Realm, so he knew what needed to be done at this crucial moment.

To refine his spirit force, he needed to rely on the Cultivation Technique he had acquired from the Heaven's Augury treasure vault during his time in the Spirit Stream Realm.

After entering the Cloud River Realm, his internal spiritual orifices connected to form the Major Circumambulation, creating a river of spirit force. Lu Ye once thought that Cultivation Techniques were no longer useful, but after consulting Shui Yuan about True Lake Realm cultivation, he realized his mistake.

Cultivation Techniques are extremely important and accompany a cultivator throughout their life. The better the technique, the more it helps in refining spirit force.

Lu Ye's Great Sun Glazed Glass Method was undoubtedly exceptional, one of the top techniques in the Heaven's Augury treasure vault. Although there were more expensive techniques available, this was the most suitable for him.

This made him grateful for not skimping on merit points back then.

The process of refining spirit force wasn't difficult, just tedious, as it involved circulating spirit force according to the technique's route, which naturally caused the abundant spirit force to undergo some marvelous transformations, becoming more refined.

Simply put, it's compression.

Two parts of spirit force would be compressed into one part through the technique, reducing in quantity but increasing in quality, marking a single revolution.

Once all of his spirit force reached this refined state, he'd be stable in True Lake Level 1.

To advance to True Lake Level 2, he'd need to repeat this process, further compressing refined spirit force.

And so on, with each level.

Therefore, the higher a cultivator's progression, the greater their spirit force requirements, as what once provided two parts of improvement now provides only one part in the True Lake Realm, and just half a part in True Lake Level 2...

The resource demand for True Lake Realm cultivators multiplies, reflecting its enormity.

While refining spirit force isn't difficult, it is laborious, repeating the same task over and over.

Moreover, the process demands incredibly pure spirit force; any impurities or pill poison significantly increase the difficulty of refining.

So, typically, cultivators focus their mind and body, striving to purify their spirit force as much as possible.

Lu Ye, having the Talent Tree to burn away pill poison, need not worry about such issues.

Spirit force surged within him as he concentrated, circulating spirit force according to the Great Sun Glazed Glass Method.

Though his internal spiritual orifices were flooded with spirit force, the orifices opened during the Spirit Stream Realm still existed, forming the foundation for his small spirit energy gathering funnel.

At this moment, spirit force surged through numerous orifices, causing the overflowing sensation, and initiated some remarkable changes.

After a dozen breaths, Lu Ye's focus wavered.

He distinctly felt a small, unique strand of spirit force within him. Though barely noticeable, like a blade of grass in his spirit lake, it was exceptionally potent compared to the rest.

An incessant buzzing echoed within him. The fullness did not diminish as the gold-hued spirit fortune stick continued its effect and his small spirit energy gathering funnel kept absorbing.

This highlighted the advantage of Lu Ye's unique cultivation method.

Normal cultivators could only focus on one task—either refining existing spirit force or absorbing external spirit force to replenish themselves. Dividing focus was impossible as both tasks consumed tremendous concentration.

Lu Ye, however, could do both simultaneously, saving significant time.

As time passed, more and more of his spirit force reached the first revolution, becoming distinctly recognizable until it completely replaced his original spirit force.

When all his spirit force was refined to the first revolution, Lu Ye abruptly opened his eyes.

In that instant, the entire world seemed different.

Lu Ye knew that it was not the world that had changed but himself.

The world was still the same, but he was no longer the same person.

An advancement in major realms brought profound changes.

Advancing to the Cloud River Realm was like this, and so was the True Lake Realm, albeit to a greater extent.

Lu Ye could clearly feel the terrifying power within him now. Compared to his pre-advancement self, his strength could only be described as skyrocketing.

If he were to face the Golden Corpse King from the Unparalleled Continent now, he felt he could end the fight in three strikes.

Moreover, he sensed a slight physical enhancement upon stabilizing in True Lake Level 1—though it might just be his imagination.

"Lu Ye, have you reached the True Lake?" Yiyi asked as he opened his eyes. She'd held back while Lu Ye's advancement caused quite a stir, ensuring not to interrupt him.

"Yes, the True Lake!" Lu Ye gently clenched his fist. Years of arduous cultivation had finally brought him to this level. Though higher mountains like the Divine Sea still awaited, he had undoubtedly broken free from the lower realms.

"Then Amber and I must work harder." Yiyi resolved silently. To avoid falling behind, she and Amber had never slacked in their cultivation. Usually, they trained while Lu Ye did.

Each had their unique method.

Lu Ye could ingest elixir pills to strengthen his foundation, while Amber consumed demonic pills to close the gap.

Through such efforts, they had kept pace with Lu Ye.

However, the advancement of a major realm instilled a sense of urgency in Yiyi.

"Shall we continue, then?" Lu Ye asked, noting the unfinished gold-hued spirit fortune stick. An opportunity for stability couldn't be missed.

"Yes." Yiyi nodded eagerly, immediately resuming her cultivation state.

Chapter 869 Just Say What You Want

Several days later, when all the gold-hued spirit fortune sticks had been completely used up, this arduous cultivation came to an end.

Lu Ye quietly inspected his body.

Compared to before, there was naturally no change in his realm, but the spirit force within him had undoubtedly become more refined, and his strength had clearly increased a bit.

The unique feature of the True Lake Realm lies in this.

In this realm, as long as the cultivator practices, their strength will increase, more or less.

This cannot be compared to the previous two realms.

In the previous two realms, whether in the Spirit Stream or Cloud River, a cultivator's strength only significantly increases when they break through and their realm rises.

But the True Lake Realm is different. In this realm, as the cultivator practices, their strength continuously and steadily improves.

Feeling joyful and satisfied, Lu Ye suddenly sprang up upon opening his eyes, placing his hand on the hilt of his Boulder Mountain Saber at his waist, his body slightly arched like a hunting leopard about to pounce, spirit force bursting forth.

Because a figure was standing quietly one yard away.

He quickly realized that the person standing before him was none other than his superior, the Mountain Pass Chief of Cangyan Mountain Pass, Nian Yuexian.

A cold sweat broke out as he felt a shiver of fear.

Is this the ability of a strong cultivator in the Divine Sea Realm?

Before opening his eyes and seeing her, he hadn't known when she arrived or detected any of her presence.

The numerous formations he had arranged were of no use at all.

When did she arrive?

The secrets of his cultivation and Yiyi's existence—weren't they all clearly exposed to her?

But upon thinking again, neither his cultivation secrets nor Yiyi's existence were really significant issues. At most, his cultivation techniques were just some minor special tricks, nothing shameful. Even if others knew, they couldn't imitate them. As for Yiyi... the Righteous Blood Sect had records of her, and she had the status of a disciple of the Righteous Blood Sect. If Nian Yuexian had any doubts, she could verify with the sect headquarters.

Moreover, since he would reside here long term under the watchful eyes of a strong cultivator in the Divine Sea Realm, these things would inevitably be exposed sooner or later.

Thinking of this, Lu Ye relaxed, released the hilt, and raised his fists in salute: "Madam!"

Nian Yuexian said faintly: "Your Array Path skills are quite impressive, and this bamboo building is nice too."

"Madam overpraises me." Lu Ye thought, no matter how good his Array Path skills were, she still silently infiltrated here.

Thinking this way, his superior's skills in Array Path were likely astonishing.

Is she a ghost cultivator?

Lu Ye realized belatedly.

Lu Ye naturally didn't know what type of cultivator Nian Yuexian was, but based on the current clues, she was very likely a ghost cultivator.

A ghost cultivator like Ying Wuji could intimidate cultivators of the same realm greatly, not to mention a strong ghost cultivator in the Divine Sea Realm. Lu Ye couldn't imagine how powerful she was.

"Madam, is there anything else?" Lu Ye felt pressured as she gazed coldly at him.

Nian Yuexian said nothing more, her figure slightly swayed, and she disappeared.

Lu Ye couldn't see how she left at all.

In the bamboo building, Lu Ye was bewildered: "What does she mean?"

His superior suddenly came just to praise him?

It doesn't make sense.

Yiyi tugged at Lu Ye's clothes: "Lu Ye, does she want this bamboo building?"

Women undoubtedly have more delicate thoughts. Lu Ye was confused by Nian Yuexian's actions, while Yiyi seemed to have a hint.

"Impossible." Lu Ye firmly denied, "If she wanted it, she could easily build one herself, why bother taking mine?"

With her skills as a strong cultivator in the Divine Sea Realm, building a three-story bamboo building would be effortless.

"True." Yiyi nodded, thinking she might have overthought.

But Nian Yuexian's words seemed to have a deeper meaning.

Thinking too much was useless, especially after days of cultivation that were inevitably dull.

"Let's take a walk." Lu Ye said, and taking Amber and Yiyi, he stepped out.

He immediately saw Nian Yuexian sitting on a tree trunk outside, leaning against the tree, gazing into the distance, lost in thought.

Lu Ye raised his eyebrows, puzzled by why she stayed here, or was it that this place happened to be where she usually rested, and he had coincidentally built the bamboo building here?

He walked forward a few steps and called out, "Madam, do you have orders?"

In his imagination, arriving at the Bingzhou guard front line required fighting against the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge cultivators and scheming, yet the environment here seemed overly peaceful.

The desolate checkpoint pass had only him and Nian Yuexian, and there were no signs of Ten Thousand Demons Ridge cultivators attacking or infiltrating.

Nian Yuexian had given him the role of a Base Lieutenant Colonel, but he couldn't just stay here indefinitely.

As a Bingzhou guard, without orders he couldn't act on his own, making things challenging.

"Do you want a task?" Nian Yuexian returned to her senses, looking down at him.

"If you have one..."

Nian Yuexian nodded, her hand turned, and the guard token appeared. Without any visible action, Lu Ye immediately felt a sensation, quickly took out his own guard token, immersed his mind to inspect.

A moment later, he looked at Nian Yuexian speechlessly.

Bingzhou guard tasks could be verbally transmitted by superiors or issued through the guard token. Nian Yuexian's recent action clearly issued a task through the guard token.

The task was simple: Find a shelter for the Mountain Pass Chief!

Seeing the task content, Lu Ye's eye twitched.

Yiyi was right!

But... if you want it, just say so, how would I know if you don't?

Besides, for a strong cultivator in the Divine Sea Realm, is building a bamboo building that hard?

Where did you shelter before I arrived? You couldn't have been living rough all these years.

Thinking carefully, it's actually possible.

Lu Ye had inspected the castle at Cangyan Mountain Pass and found no signs of inhabitants, and it hadn't been lived in for years. There were no buildings on the nearby spirit mountaintops either.

Which means, all the time Nian Yuexian was guarding Cangyan Mountain Pass alone, she had no fixed abode.

Feeling exasperated and amused, Lu Ye could only vent internally.

"Madam, if you don't mind, the bamboo building behind me has just been built..."

Before finishing, Nian Yuexian flashed into the third floor of the bamboo building, and the next moment, Lu Ye's prayer mat was thrown out and caught by him.

His eyelids twitched even harder.

The abrupt eviction was too excessive!

Lu Ye never expected his superior to be such a strong cultivator in the Divine Sea Realm!

Soon, he noticed something and quickly inspected his battlefield marking, his grievances vanished instantly.

Because the battlefield marking showed a change in the battle merits information.

Originally, after buying the gold-hued spirit fortune sticks at the Hall of Battle Merits, he had 46,672 battle merits, but now it became 42,672.

In other words, he received an extra 2,000 battle merits.

What a good thing!

Lu Ye was astonished.

He knew Bingzhou guards could earn battle merits, which attracted cultivators the most, and the ways to earn them were more than those in the Cloud River battlefield.

Monthly stipends were one way, killing enemies another, and completing tasks another—none of these existed in the Cloud River battlefield.

But he thought those tasks must be related to fighting against the opposing faction. Presenting a bamboo building to the Mountain Pass Chief also qualified?

This seemed strange.

It meant as long as he completed the tasks issued by his superior, no matter what they were, he could earn battle merits, unrelated to fighting against Ten Thousand Demons Ridge cultivators.

Though 2,000 battle merits weren't a lot, building a bamboo building was easy, making it a great deal.

"Madam, a bamboo building is too small to match your status. Would you like me to build a bigger residence for you?" Lu Ye shouted.

Yiyi looked at him in surprise, as if seeing a bootlicking sycophant.

No response...

Lu Ye sighed, feeling a bit regretful.

But there was no way around it.

Having given away the bamboo building, he had to erect another one. Fortunately, it wasn't difficult.

Regarding location, Lu Ye decided not to stay on the same spirit mountaintop with Nian Yuexian as it was pressuring to coexist with a strong cultivator in the Divine Sea Realm.

Finding another nearby spirit mountaintop, he rebuilt a bamboo building with Yiyi after some time.

Just as they finished, the guard token reacted again.

Apparently, another task had arrived.

Lu Ye quickly checked, finding the task was to capture some wild game from the mountain to prepare some food.

This was simple, as Cangyan Mountain had plenty of wild beasts and occasional demon beast traces. With his strength in the True Lake Realm, it was easy to manage.

He darted out, quickly caught some game, and headed straight to Nian Yuexian's spirit mountaintop, lighting a fire below the bamboo building.

It wasn't to show off, the task had specified cooking here.

He skinned and cleaned the animals, washed the meat, threw fresh meat to Amber, and roasted the rest on the fire.

Having done this often, Lu Ye was skilled; the taste wasn't bad.

After half an hour, the aroma filled the air. When he prepared to give Nian Yuexian the best portion, she appeared before him.

Yiyi quickly got up, moved her stool behind Nian Yuexian, sweetly saying: "Sister, please sit."

Nian Yuexian strangely glanced at her but said nothing, just sitting gracefully.

Yiyi signaled Lu Ye, who hurriedly presented the meat: "Madam, please enjoy."

Nian Yuexian nodded slightly, taking the meat and eating calmly.

Without commenting on the taste, she finished everything given, even the bones, leaving Lu Ye and Yiyi astonished.

Chapter 870 I Want to Drink Fish Soup

Since that day, Nian Yuexian has been frequently issuing tasks to Lu Ye through the guard token, mostly trivial matters related to food and drink.

There was even a task that required him to go to a nearby mountain pass to buy a special type of wine.

Each time the task was completed, there were battle meritorious points to be gained, ranging from a few hundred to two thousand. In just a few days, Lu Ye had earned nearly ten thousand battle merits.

Although the rewards were good, Lu Ye still felt something was off.

The development of things shouldn't be like this.

A day like this, Lu Ye was still on the spirit mountaintop where Nian Yuexian resided, preparing food, roasting beast meat over the fire, cooking hot soup in the pot, and arranging a few jars of wine on the table, just waiting for Nian Yuexian's arrival.

Generally, she always appeared suddenly when Lu Ye had everything prepared.

A burnt smell suddenly wafted through. Yiyi turned her head, exclaiming, "Lu Ye, it's burnt!"

She hurriedly stepped forward, snatching the roasted meat from his hand, trying her best to salvage it.

Turning back, she saw Lu Ye sitting there with a troubled expression.

"What's wrong?" Yiyi was puzzled, not knowing what Lu Ye was worrying about.

"This isn't right!" Lu Ye shook his head.

"What's wrong?"

"It shouldn't be like this."

He joined the Bingzhou guard to protect the front line mountain pass of Bingzhou guard, not to be ordered around like a servant here. Though the orders came from above and he had to obey, what has he been doing these days?

Suddenly he stood up, kicked over the pot of soup in front of him, flipped the table amidst Yiyi's exclamation, and smashed the special wine bought from the nearby mountain pass. Looking at the bamboo house not far away, he clasped his fists and said, "Sir, your subordinate has something to say!"

From the third floor of the bamboo house, a beautiful figure revealed itself. Nian Yuexian descended gracefully, glanced at the mess on the floor, and said indifferently, "Speak"

"Sir, your subordinate requests you to issue some proper tasks and not let your subordinate do these trivial matters anymore."

"Were previous tasks... not proper?"

Proper or not, don't you know?

Lu Ye had a belly full of grievances with no outlet. Although battle merits are good things, this isn't the way to earn them. If this continues, he would be ruined.

"Sir, this is Cangyan Mountain Pass. We are both Bingzhou guard, and should fulfill the duties of provincial guards, not live idly like retirees."

Nian Yuexian, who was originally on the third floor, suddenly appeared in front of him, just a foot away. Her eyes turned sharp, "Am I very old?"

"That's not what I meant. Sir, there's no need to pick on that word." Lu Ye couldn't help but step back two steps.

Nian Yuexian merely stared at him quietly, making Lu Ye feel uncomfortable.

After a while, she finally spoke, "I understand."

Lu Ye sighed in relief, then said solemnly, "In that case..."

"I want fish soup!"

"Ah?"

"Fish soup made from Blood Red Trout, haven't had it for many years."

Lu Ye suddenly didn't know how to respond, and... how did she know about Blood Red Trout? It should be a product of Moon Lake of the Righteous Blood Sect. Or had she tasted it somewhere else?

"Within five days, I want to drink Blood Red Trout fish soup!" Nian Yuexian spoke.

"Sir, what I just said..."

"Are you defying orders?" Nian Yuexian's tone was faint.

Four eyes met for a long time, Lu Ye gritting his teeth, said word by word, "Your subordinate accepts!"

Saying so, he reached out, Amber immediately leaped up to land on his shoulder, but in midair, was drawn by an attraction force. When he came to, he was already in Nian Yuexian's arms, her delicate hand stroking Amber's fur like a little cat.

Master, save me!

Amber's tiger eyes widened, conveying its plea to Lu Ye.

Lu Ye raised his hand to the hilt of his blade, coldly looking at Nian Yuexian.

"They stay with me, you go alone." Nian Yuexian seemingly ignoring his hostility, turned her back to him with an unguarded stance, "Don't worry, I won't eat it."

If not for this sentence, it would have been better. As soon as she said it, Amber shivered.

Yiyi stepped forward, holding onto Lu Ye's arm, shaking her head continuously, "Don't be impulsive, return quickly. She has no ill intentions."

Primarily because they couldn't defeat her. Given her Divine Sea Realm cultivation, even if she left herself unguarded, Lu Ye couldn't be her match.

Moreover, in Bingzhou guard, revolt against superiors is a grave taboo!

"I request Sir to take good care of them. They are my closest kin!" Lu Ye said solemnly, then soared into the sky. Behind him, fiery spirit force flowed, transforming into a pair of wings as he rapidly flew away.

"Closest kin..." Nian Yuexian's figure paused, her lips curved slightly, lifting Amber by the neck, poking its nose.

Seeing her expression, Amber became more frightened, its eyes rolled back, and it fainted directly.

Holding it by the neck, Nian Yuexian gently said, "If you don't wake up, I'll make a pot of tiger bone soup."

Amber instantly opened its eyes, full of vigor, indicating it just had a brief nap.

...

Unexpectedly, upon joining Bingzhou guard, without encountering a single Ten Thousand Demons cultivator, he had to return to the sect once.

During these days of interaction, Lu Ye found Nian Yuexian somewhat unreliable. He was unlucky to be assigned under her, and coincidentally, he was the only one dispatched to Cangyan Mountain Pass.

Who knows what is going on in Haotian City?

However, staffing assignments are decided at higher levels, and Lu Ye couldn't resist.

The journey back to the Righteous Blood Sect is not close. Nian Yuexian only gave him five days, meaning he must return to the sect within two and a half days.

The task had already been issued through the guard token. If he exceeded the time limit, not only would he not get the battle merits, but Nian Yuexian could surely exploit this.

Lu Ye suspected she was using this method to force him to leave Cangyan Mountain Pass.

Before his arrival, she had always been alone. His arrival had disrupted her peaceful life, causing her some discomfort. Hence, she kept ordering him with these trivial tasks.

Otherwise, given her Divine Sea Realm cultivation, how could she possibly have so many food cravings, even sending him to the nearby mountain pass to buy specially made wine?

Lu Ye hadn't seen any signs of her drinking.

Time was urgent, and his speed had significantly increased after breaking through to True Lake Realm.

To make the round trip in five days was feasible.

Before the breakthrough, this task might have truly failed.

Traveling day and night, only occasionally stopping to recover some strength before moving on again.

After two full days, he finally arrived at Mount Ao.

Instead of going to Righteous Peak, he headed directly to Moon Lake.

From a distance, he saw Shui Yuan waiting there.

Lu Ye already notified Shui Yuan halfway, so Second Senior Sister knew he was rushing back.

However, Shui Yuan wasn't alone. As he neared, he saw Pang Huanyin.

She had returned from Unparalleled Continent.

Her figure flashed like lightning, landing before the two.

"Senior Brother Lu!" Pang Huanyin greeted with a smile.

"Palace Master Pang." Lu Ye responded, then turned to Shui Yuan, "Second Senior Sister, I need to catch some fish first. We'll talk later."

Saying this, he then dashed into Moon Lake, moving back and forth.

Not long after, he emerged again, spirit force protecting him, keeping him dry.

"Congratulations on breaking through to True Lake, Senior Brother." Pang Huanyin congratulated him, as the spirit force fluctuations from Lu Ye revealed his breakthrough from Cloud River Level 8 to True Lake Realm within a short period, causing her envy and admiration for the swift cultivation of Nine Provinces cultivators.

"Palace Master Pang is also close to True Lake." Lu Ye nodded.

Already at the Peak Cloud River, Pang Huanyin was limited by the environment of Unparalleled Continent and couldn't break through to True Lake. Now in Nine Provinces, True Lake Realm wouldn't be her limit, and her future would eventually be Divine Sea.

But recently, she had been preoccupied with mundane matters, without time for secluded cultivation.

Several members of Ziwei Dao Palace had come to Mount Ao using the Heaven's Augury Pillar from Righteous Blood Sect, establishing their sect and foundation on the thirty peaks she had previously designated. Once everything was ready, Ziwei Dao Palace would establish its sect in Nine Provinces and announce it to Bingzhou, with the Righteous Blood Sect as its superior sect.

News had spread, stunning many sects in Bingzhou, as there were quite a few sects stronger than the Righteous Blood Sect. Many didn't understand why Ziwei Dao Palace chose Righteous Blood Sect as their superior sect.

Only a few insiders knew the reason behind Pang Huanyin's decision.

It was a joyous occasion for the Righteous Blood Sect, with no one causing trouble.

"Second Senior Sister, do you know Nian Yuexian?" Lu Ye asked Shui Yuan.

During the messaging with Shui Yuan, Lu Ye mentioned the reason for the return, naturally mentioning Nian Yuexian, complaining a lot about her.

Shui Yuan didn't reply much, telling him to discuss in person.

From her tone, they seemed to know each other.

"Yes, I should call her Senior Sister." Shui Yuan nodded.

Lu Ye was surprised, "Is she from our Righteous Blood Sect?"

But that's how it looks. Yiyi previously called Nian Yuexian 'sister' correctly, while he calling her 'senior' was wrong.

"Certainly not." Shui Yuan laughed, "She has never joined any sect. Strictly speaking, she's an independent cultivator."

"An independent cultivator!" Lu Ye was amazed.

The harsh growth environment of independent cultivators was something he knew a bit about. On the cultivation road, independent cultivators needed to work much harder than sect disciples. To cultivate to Divine Sea Realm as an independent cultivator was unimaginable, given the hardships she must have endured.

From this perspective, Lu Ye felt respect for her.

"Did she have a grudge with our Righteous Blood Sect?"

"No grudges."

"Then why is she troubling me so much?"

Initially, Lu Ye didn't realize but was pleased about earning battle merits from completing tasks. However, now he saw that Nian Yuexian was just troubling him. Otherwise, as a True Lake Realm cultivator, how could she assign him those tasks?