

Humanity 891

Chapter 891 Divine Pool?

Lu Ye felt like he had a long dream, but when he woke up, he couldn't remember the contents of the dream.

However, his mind was unusually clear at this moment, and even his own thoughts seemed to spin faster than before, vaguely giving the impression of some kind of transformation.

He didn't understand what had happened to him, only remembering that he and Nian Yuexian had combined forces to fight their enemy using Twin Flying Phoenixes, and with a furious shout from Wan Zhanggang, he felt a sharp pain in his head and then lost consciousness.

Something seems different...

He looked at Yiyi in front of him and found that Yiyi was frowning as she stared behind him, her gaze seeming to pierce through the barrier of his body.

With uncertainty in her eyes, Yiyi turned to the side and asked, "Sister Yuexian, is this...?"

Lu Ye wanted to ask what she was looking at, but when he opened his mouth, no sound came out.

This startled him.

It was only then that he realized something incredible: he actually didn't have a body!

Although he was clearly standing there and could see everything around him, there was no physical presence!

Had he...died?

This thought left Lu Ye stunned.

"Mental Consciousness is unique to the Divine Sea Realm. You, at the True Lake Realm, have nurtured a soul body and birthed Mental Consciousness, which inevitably leads to some discomfort. Your Mental Consciousness leaving the body is not an accident; calm your mind and your Mental Consciousness will return to your body!" came the voice of Nian Yuexian from the side.

Lu Ye turned his head and met the cool gaze of Nian Yuexian.

She seemed to be able to see him and nodded slightly, "Do as I say, and you'll be fine!"

Lu Ye quickly calmed his mind, dispelling the many distractions within.

The next moment, he sensed something beside him that was closely connected to him. When he turned his head, he saw something astonishing.

His body was lying on a bamboo bed nearby!

Recalling Nian Yuexian's words earlier, Lu Ye roughly understood what had happened to him.

With a single thought, his Mental Consciousness returned to his body, and all previous discomfort vanished in an instant, allowing him to feel his presence again.

He suddenly opened his eyes and sat up from the bed.

"Lu Ye, you're awake!" Yiyi rushed over, looking at him with concern, "Are you feeling unwell anywhere?"

Amber also jumped onto his knee, staring at him with wide tiger eyes.

Lu Ye slowly shook his head, "No, I feel...very good!"

Indeed, he felt very good, from inside out, as if he had never felt this good before. He lightly clenched his fist, and although his strength had not changed, some internal transformation had silently been completed.

"Sir!" He stood up and cupped his fists towards Nian Yuexian not far away, asking for guidance, "Sir, you said I nurtured a soul body and birthed Mental Consciousness?"

Nian Yuexian nodded, "In the previous battle, you took a Mental Consciousness attack from Wan Zhanggang. An ordinary True Lake Realm cultivator would likely have died, but your psyche is strong enough to survive, though it was still heavily damaged, leaving you unconscious. To protect itself, it nurtured a soul body to escape hardship. Now that you've awakened, it shows the nurturing was successful. The earlier situation was just your Mental Consciousness leaving your body, nothing to worry about."

"Soul body, Mental Consciousness..." Lu Ye couldn't help but lose himself in thought, "So am I True Lake or Divine Sea now?"

"Is there such a weak Divine Sea?" Nian Yuexian replied indifferently.

Lu Ye thought the same. Even though he had nurtured a soul body and birthed Mental Consciousness, his cultivation remained at True Lake.

But on the other hand, having birthed Mental Consciousness meant he could employ some methods unique to the Divine Sea Realm, like Bewitchment Divine Runes, which require Mental Consciousness for constructing and driving.

"You've only just birthed Mental Consciousness, so there are likely many things you're not used to. With time, you'll adapt. Everyone has to go through this stage."

"Yes!"

"If you have any questions about Mental Consciousness, feel free to ask me anytime."

"Okay!"

"Here is some common knowledge about the Divine Sea Realm, take a look yourself." Nian Yuexian handed him a jade slip, evidently prepared for him.

Lu Ye accepted it, "Thank you, Sir."

"Also, wear this; it has some effect in resisting Mental Consciousness attacks." Nian Yuexian took out something else.

Lu Ye looked up and saw a small golden lock, similar to a longevity lock, seemingly meant to be worn around the neck.

"I wore this when I was at True Lake Realm, and it's no use for me now, so I'm giving it to you." Nian Yuexian said, tossing it to Lu Ye, and added, "Return it to me once you no longer need it."

Holding the golden lock, Lu Ye instinctively felt it must be a significant item to Nian Yuexian. He wanted to refuse, but recalling his recent experience, he received it earnestly.

For True Lake Realm cultivators facing a Mental Consciousness attack from a Divine Sea Realm, there is no real way to counter it other than relying on their psyche to withstand it. Someone like Lu Ye, with a strong psyche, could survive Wan Zhanggang's Mental Consciousness attack, but for those with weaker psyches, their fate would depend on their luck.

However, cultivators from big sects often wear treasures like this to ward off Mental Consciousness attacks to some extent.

This increases their chances of survival when facing a strong cultivator from the Divine Sea Realm.

Without hesitation, he wore the golden lock around his neck at once.

"Don't go out in the next few days; first get familiar with your Mental Consciousness." Nian Yuexian advised and then turned to leave.

Lu Ye always felt she was a bit strange.

Earlier interactions with the Mountain Pass Chief showed her as someone who put me through various troubles and assigned me all sorts of bizarre tasks. Her temperament seemed somewhat cold, disinclined to interact much with outsiders, yet overall, she didn't seem too difficult to get along with.

After this incident, Lu Ye felt that their relationship might improve somewhat, but now it seemed that her aura of keeping people at a distance had grown even stronger.

Although she reminded him of many things and even gave him presents, that feeling was unmistakable.

"Has the Second Senior Sister come?" Lu Ye suddenly sniffed lightly and asked.

Yiyi was amazed, "How do you know?"

When Shui Yuan arrived, Lu Ye was unconscious, and when she left, he was still not awake. It made no sense for Lu Ye to know this.

"I can smell the Second Senior Sister," Lu Ye replied casually.

Everyone has a unique scent, and Shui Yuan's scent gives off a very warm feeling.

Yiyi couldn't help but glare at Lu Ye and said, "When Sister Yuexian brought you back before, she informed the Second Senior Sister, so the night we returned, the Second Senior Sister rushed here. She's the one who treated your injuries and found out the reason for your coma. However, the Second Senior Sister has already returned to the sect headquarters."

Lu Ye sighed, "She left without waiting for me to wake up."

As he spoke, he examined the jade slip that Nian Yuexian handed him.

The jade slip recorded detailed information about the Divine Sea Realm and matters that new cultivators entering the Divine Sea Realm should be aware of, including extensive explanations of the soul body and Mental Consciousness.

It took Lu Ye no time to finish examining it.

Closing his eyes, he immersed his mind as instructed by the jade slip.

In the next instant, something wondrous happened to his being.

Lu Ye hurriedly inspected and found himself no longer in the bamboo loft, but rather in a strange world.

This should be the depths of his psyche.

At this moment, he was in a soul body state; every person's soul body is a reflection of themselves, mirroring their original appearance.

The soul body is shapeless and formless, seemingly both void and real; when gathered, it forms a soul body, when dispersed, it becomes Mental Consciousness.

Only when a cultivator takes a step like Lu Ye, nurturing their soul body and generating Mental Consciousness, can they enter the Divine Sea Realm.

This is a major hurdle, one that countless True Lake Realm cultivators throughout history have stumbled upon.

However, for Lu Ye, this hurdle was already overcome. In other words, advancing to the Divine Sea in the future will pose no obstacle, as long as his Cultivation Realm reaches the required level, it will all fall into place naturally.

This is undoubtedly good news; experiencing what needed to be experienced ahead of time indeed brings certain conveniences.

Looking ahead, ripples shimmer, and waves ripple.

Lu Ye's expression turned peculiar.

The name "Divine Sea Realm" comes from Mental Consciousness forming a sea.

But the rippling before me could hardly be considered a sea—not even a lake.

At most, it could be described as a small pond.

A Divine Pool?

Yet thinking about it, since he was, after all, a True Lake Realm cultivating a soul body, shattering the ancient shackles, it seems reasonable that the Divine Sea would be a bit smaller in scale.

It's not something to force.

If I continue to cultivate step by step, one day, the Divine Pool will transform into a Divine Sea.

With a thought, the psyche left the body, and Mental Consciousness spread outward.

Upon waking earlier, he instinctively activated his Mental Consciousness, but at that time, he wasn't clear about the situation, so he didn't feel much.

Until he actively exerted it at this moment.

With Mental Consciousness permeating all around, everything is vividly detailed, more so than with the naked eye.

Before having Mental Consciousness, Lu Ye relied mainly on his perception for the surrounding environment, but mere perception was extremely vague.

It's like someone standing behind you.

Through perception, Lu Ye knew there was someone behind him, but whether this person was male or female, or what they looked like, was completely unclear.

But now, with perception relying on Mental Consciousness, he can clearly observe even the person's appearance and what clothes they are wearing—nothing escapes scrutiny.

The perception relying on Mental Consciousness indeed had a qualitative breakthrough.

Moreover, when his Mental Consciousness left his body just now, Yiyi clearly noticed some clues, which resulted from his unfamiliarity in controlling his own Mental Consciousness, causing an aura leakage. If one were adept in control, this ability could be used to spy on some secrets.

It's just a question of how far it can see...

With this thought, Lu Ye extended his Mental Consciousness outward, reaching outside the bamboo loft in an instant.

Not far away, he spotted Nian Yuexian.

She was guarding nearby, sitting on the branch of a big tree, holding the fine wine Lu Ye had previously bought her from a nearby mountain pass, drinking alone under the moonlight.

Her figure was desolate and lonely.

Chapter 892 Harvest

Almost at the same moment Lu Ye's Mental Consciousness perceived her, Nian Yuexian turned her gaze and spoke lightly, "There is a considerable risk in letting your Mental Consciousness leave your body. If I were an enemy, I could have severed your consciousness, damaging your psyche. Therefore, even if one has reached the Divine Sea Realm, they wouldn't recklessly let their Mental Consciousness leave their body. Be cautious when you do this in the future."

After saying this, she averted her gaze and looked up at the moon.

Lu Ye quietly noted her words, then directed his Mental Consciousness past her, continuing to probe ahead.

However, the further he went, the more difficult it became, and Lu Ye could clearly sense his psyche force rapidly depleting, with a feeling of exhaustion arising within moments.

He dared not continue trying and hastily retracted his Mental Consciousness.

Upon opening his eyes, his head felt a bit dizzy, clearly knowing that it was due to the excessive depletion of his psyche force.

Ultimately, the Divine Pool was still too small. Although he had already nurtured a soul body and spawned Mental Consciousness, he still couldn't sustain it for long periods.

However, through this attempt, he confirmed one thing.

His Mental Consciousness could probe a radius of about a mile, which was far greater than the range his simple perception could cover, and it was also more precise and comprehensive.

Feeling a bit fatigued mentally, Lu Ye did not hesitate and directly consumed a drop of Soul Cleansing Water.

For others, Soul Cleansing Water was rare, but for him, it was something he could exchange with battle merit. In the Hall of Battle Merits, one drop of Soul Cleansing Water was worth thirteen thousand battle merit points; even if he used it all up, he could obtain more at any time.

Moreover, he still had quite a few on hand, so there was no need to be stingy.

In retrospect, it was precisely this generous mentality of his that had allowed his psyche to become strong enough, giving him a chance to turn misfortune into a blessing this time.

Familiarizing oneself with Mental Consciousness is not something urgent; it's not difficult to do in the first place. For Lu Ye, it's simply another means to scout enemy positions and target them.

With time, he would gradually become accustomed to it.

It's time to check the harvest from this trip.

He initially headed to the Cangyan Mountain volcano to ignite the spirit runes he had been yearning for two or three months, but unexpectedly, so many things happened.

Not only did he acquire seven new spirit runes, but the Talent Tree also showed signs of undergoing a transformation, and he obtained a large number of fire spirit stones.

Aside from putting himself in danger at the last moment to rescue Nian Yuexian, he had gained a lot.

But given the situation at the time, he could not stand by. Nian Yuexian was exposed and besieged by several Ten Thousand Demons Ridge cultivators at the Divine Sea Realm all because of him.

So in the end, the two of them were even.

Among the seven new spirit runes, Lu Ye was not yet clear on the effects of the Pseudo-Might, as Yiyi and Amber returned when he was already unconscious.

He immediately sought Yiyi to inquire about the situation at the time.

Upon learning that the two of them could simulate the might of the Divine Sea Realm, Lu Ye immediately realized that he had underestimated this spirit rune.

It indeed couldn't enhance his strength directly, but at crucial moments, this spirit rune could have some miraculous effects.

Take this time, for example: if it weren't for Yiyi and Amber rushing over with the might of the Divine Sea Realm at the last moment, Wan Zhanggang wouldn't have retreated so easily, and it's likely they would have fought to the death with Nian Yuexian.

The Moon Return requires no further explanation, as it is the core spirit rune of the anti-array. Although Lu Ye activated it to resist Wan Zhanggang's attacks, seemingly with little effect, it actually worked wonders.

At that time, without Moon Return, merely relying on defense, he wouldn't have been able to withstand even a hurried strike from a Divine Sea Realm, let alone if it were an intentional attack.

The Twin Flying Phoenixes was crucial in rescuing Nian Yuexian this time, and the corresponding Telepathy point Lu Ye had yet to try, but this spirit rune was not something to be tested casually unless he used Yiyi as the test subject.

Besides these four spirit runes, the remaining three are Thousand Faces, Split Shadow, and Single-Stalk Twin Lotus.

Thousand Faces is a camouflage type of spirit rune; by activating it, Lu Ye can alter his appearance.

A while ago, he intended to purchase a treasure that could alter his appearance from the Heaven's Augury treasure vault, as he was quite famous, and many Ten Thousand Demons Ridge cultivators had seen his images, with many occasions requiring him to conceal his identity.

But he never found a suitable one, so he only used masks as substitutes.

However, masks are ultimately conspicuous. While many cultivators did use them to hide their true faces, sometimes it's inconvenient to wear them.

Like previously, when accompanying Ying Wuji to Gushan City Pass, the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge powerhouses were busy dealing with the Fire Spirit Race army's attack and didn't pay him much attention. Plus, being with Ying Wuji, they naturally assumed he was one of their own.

But in usual circumstances, wearing a mask would only draw more suspicion, and if they truly checked his identity in Gushan City, he wouldn't pass.

Now with the Thousand Faces spirit rune, he could completely discard the mask, freely transforming into any appearance he could imagine.

However, unlike wearing a mask, the Thousand Faces spirit rune requires spirit force to maintain, which is a drawback compared to just wearing a mask to achieve its effect.

Thousand Faces is practical, and Split Shadow is also a very useful spirit rune. When activated, it can create an identical shadow using his blood Qi and spirit force, which can be utilized to escape or confuse enemies in critical situations.

This time, if he weren't constantly holding Nian Yuexian, he could have activated this spirit rune in response to Wan Zhanggang's assault... Yet, as for how effective this spirit rune would be in front of a powerful Divine Sea Realm, that was unknown.

Regarding the Single-Stalk Twin Lotus...

This spirit rune is quite peculiar, somewhat like a combination of Twin Flying Phoenixes and Telepathy yet not entirely.

Lu Ye wasn't sure when to use this spirit rune.

However, after experiencing the Pseudo-Might Spirit Runes, Lu Ye is quite hopeful about these runes. Spirit runes that require dozens of leaves to bear are extraordinary items. Currently, he can't find the correct way to use them, but he should discover something in the future.

Obtaining seven new spirit runes at once has already broken the previous record. This was mainly because of the massive amount of energy absorbed by the Talent Tree at the Cangyan Mountain volcano's mouth, not only lighting up seven spirit runes but also giving the Talent Tree signs of transformation.

The transformation of the Talent Tree will certainly require absorbing a large amount of energy. Fortunately, he harvested quite a few fire spirit stones on this trip.

The fire spirit stones mined by Ying Wuji's squad are all in his hands, though these are only a portion. The real bulk is what he and Yiyi found in that underground city.

The enormous quantity should be enough for the Talent Tree's transformation.

But to speak of it, he and Yiyi only searched a small area and reaped such rewards. If the entire underground city was searched thoroughly, the gains would surely be greater.

There's also a hidden fire type earth vein there. If he can obtain it, who knows how the Talent Tree might change.

Sadly, it's likely all falling into the hands of the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge now. The Fire Spirit Race army didn't conquer Gushan City Pass, and instead suffered heavy casualties. The Ten Thousand Demons Ridge's side is bound to completely eliminate this hidden threat.

Once the Fire Spirit Race is eradicated, everything inside the volcano will belong to the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge.

Feeling slightly regretful, it remains beyond his control.

At Cangyan Mountain Pass, there's only him and Nian Yuexian, having just experienced a dangerous situation, naturally needing to keep a low profile for a while.

Not wanting to dwell on these matters, Lu Ye took out his Boulder Mountain Saber, drew it to examine, and his eye twitched.

Though the harvest was great, there were losses as well.

The biggest loss is the Boulder Mountain Saber. This magic-artifact class saber suffered several cracks on its blade because it blocked Wan Zhanggang's punch, clearly rendering it unreliable.

Lu Ye cannot simply switch sabers unless the Boulder Mountain Saber completely shatters.

Since he won't switch sabers, he can only have it repaired.

He raised his hand and tapped on the battlefield marking, sending out a message.

He quickly received a response, unaware of why Feathered Master seemed so leisurely.

He flashed out of sight, arriving under the large tree where Nian Yuexian was, calling up, "Madam, is there a Heaven's Augury Hall here?"

In theory there should be, but Lu Ye didn't know the exact location.

"City center, go find it yourself," Nian Yuexian replied casually.

Lu Ye clasped his fists in farewell and darted towards the ruined city.

Moments later, he reached the city center and found a still decent hall.

Upon entering, he indeed saw a Heaven's Augury Pillar standing there.

Stepping forward, he pressed his hand on the Heaven's Augury Pillar and silently uttered, "Spiritual Artifact upgrade, Feathered Master!"

The next moment, the world spun around him and then he found himself in a room resembling a sealed chamber.

In the center was a stone platform, opposite him stood a woman around thirty years old, with fair skin, wearing a form-fitting floral dress, awaiting him.

Their eyes met, and she spoke in an ancient voice, "Little friend's strength has improved again?"

Last time, during the Spirit Stream competition, Lu Ye had entrusted her with the Spiritual Artifact upgrade, elevating the Boulder Mountain Saber from spiritual-artifact class to magic-artifact class.

In theory, it shouldn't be so soon to seek her again.

Yet today she received Lu Ye's transmission to meet at the usual place.

"No." Lu Ye didn't waste words, directly handing over the Boulder Mountain Saber.

The woman accepted it, drew the blade to inspect, her beautiful eyes narrowing. She had crafted this magic artifact herself, and she knew well how durable the Boulder Mountain Saber was, being fundamentally robust.

But now cracks were clear on the saber, and the patterns evidently created by brute force.

"You got hit by the Divine Sea Realm?" Her surprise was immense.

Lu Ye was speechless, having said nothing, yet this woman inferred such details merely by looking at the blade. Evidently, she was a shrewd character.

"Interesting, you actually survived!" The woman chuckled gently.

The Boulder Mountain Saber was severely damaged, and there was no logical reason the wielder survived, but here Lu Ye stands before her.

From this, the young man must have hailed from a top-tier big sect, possessing life-saving exotic treasures; otherwise, there's no reason he'd survive.

"Name your price."

Having interacted several times, Lu Ye roughly knew her temperament, hence he was not inclined to exchange more pleasantries.

Soon, they agreed on the price and delivery time, setting down a Heaven's Augury Pact, each etching their mark on it.

Chapter 893 Cultivation Method of the True Lake Realm

Without hurriedly leaving the Heaven's Augury treasure vault, Lu Ye bought some fresh meat and once again connected with the Hall of Battle Merits.

There was something he needed to buy and keep for future use.

Upon his arrival, the figures of the two flood dragons on the ancient door immediately came to life. The silver flood dragon on the right was particularly eager: "Kid, what delicious food did you bring this time?"

The gold flood dragon on the left remained silent, but its high-raised head clearly indicated its urgency.

Endless years of monotonous waiting can be endured, but once they've tasted temptation, their mindset inevitably changes.

They could endure endless silence and darkness, as long as they'd never seen the light.

Lu Ye smiled slightly, took out the prepared meat, and fed it to the two dragons separately.

The silver dragon was still the same, eating and shouting, "Satisfying, delicious."

The golden dragon's temperament was undoubtedly more reserved than the silver dragon's, but its wolfing down was just as eager.

Devouring the meat in a few bites, the silver dragon expectantly looked at Lu Ye, obviously wanting more.

But Lu Ye had none left. The meat he bought from the Heaven's Augury treasure vault was costly, spending nearly twenty thousand merits, all from the blood and flesh of Demon Commander-level demon beasts. Although he wasn't lacking in merits, he couldn't afford to buy too much at once.

After staring at Lu Ye for a while without getting any more food, the silver dragon seemed to have noticed something strange, and with a surprised voice, it stretched its long body, encircled Lu Ye once, with its large head floating in front of Lu Ye, its vertical pupils reflecting his image, and suddenly laughed: "Brother, look, this kid has spiritual consciousness now!"

The gold dragon's eyes narrowed slightly as it carefully observed Lu Ye, revealing a look of surprise: "Indeed."

Lu Ye was immensely astonished; could they really see that? What were the origins of these gold and silver dragons?

His presence here should only be a projection of his mind, not physical, as his body was still in the Heaven's Augury Hall.

Logically speaking, the two dragons shouldn't be able to discern anything, because even if Lu Ye stood before a Divine Sea Realm strong cultivator, unless he used his spiritual consciousness actively, it would remain undiscovered.

But here he was, merely a mind projection, yet the two dragons could discern some secrets.

This was somewhat baffling.

"Kid, how can you, a True Lake Realm cultivator, develop a soul body and give birth to spiritual consciousness?" The gold dragon looked puzzled. In their ancient lives, they had never encountered such an odd occurrence, inevitably piquing their curiosity.

"A bit of luck, some fortuitous encounters," Lu Ye didn't intend to explain too much to them, mainly because he didn't see it as significant. Although he didn't know why the two dragons guarded the Hall of Battle Merits, after several interactions, he could somewhat surmise that it was not their intention. It seemed more like they were merged with the door through some mysterious means, thus stuck here unable to escape.

If that's the case, being discovered by them wouldn't affect much.

"May I enter now?" Lu Ye asked.

The gold dragon gave Lu Ye a long look before letting out a sinister laugh: "Strange kid."

As the words fell, it and the silver dragon retracted their bodies, their forms twisting on the door into a concentric circle.

With a creaking sound, the doors to the Hall of Battle Merits opened.

Lu Ye walked straight inside, familiar with the place, arriving at a stone platform where he spent eighteen thousand battle merits to buy a battlefield marking from Ten Thousand Demons Ridge.

A faint warmth appeared on the back of his hand, followed by a flash of red light.

The battlefield marking bought from the Hall of Battle Merits was not permanent; it was a one-time-use item. Lu Ye had known this since the first time he purchased it.

Moreover, its duration is short, lasting only two hours.

In other words, the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge battlefield marking hidden on the back of his hand, once activated, would last for two hours before dissipating on its own.

Thus, the day Lu Ye accompanied Ying Wuji to the Gushan City Pass was quite risky because, at that time, if anyone wanted to verify their identity, he would have been exposed.

However, he was confident that it was highly unlikely for Gushan City to act in such a manner, which is why he was bold enough to proceed with his plan.

After all, he was following Ying Wuji, naturally giving the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge side a preconception. Moreover, with the Fire Spirit Race army poised to attack, who would have the mind to verify his identity?

The previous Ten Thousand Demons Ridge battlefield marking had long since vanished, so he naturally had to buy another one for backup.

Experiencing this incident made Lu Ye increasingly realize that this item was valuable. It could often be used to blur the lines, confusing the enemy's perception.

For instance, if he didn't have the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge battlefield marking this time, it was most likely that he would have clashed with Ying Wuji and others, causing a significant disturbance...

Checking his battle merits, he had eighty-eight thousand four hundred and ten remaining.

This was more than the last time he had checked, rather than less.

Lu Ye pondered for a moment, it must be from the battle merits gained during the previous killing of the Fire Spirit Race, plus the monthly salary from his position as Roving Lieutenant Colonel had been distributed.

He previously thought these positions were unnecessary, but now he realized they actually held value.

He held two positions, one as Base Lieutenant Colonel and another as Roving Lieutenant Colonel, allowing him to receive two sets of monthly salaries, each being twenty thousand battle merits.

This means that even if he does nothing at Cangyan Mountain Pass, just goes out for a patrol each day, he can easily earn forty thousand battle merits every month. It's truly a golden opportunity.

No wonder so many cultivators are eager to head to the frontline where the two major factions clash, continuously joining the provincial guard.

Yiyi has a position over there, but it's quite unique, known as the Seat Walker, without any military rank. Her monthly salary is unknown.

With over eighty thousand battle merits, he could exchange them for several gold-hued spirit fortune sticks. After a brief contemplation, Lu Ye decided not to exchange them.

He needs to accumulate more battle merits to buy a treasure.

The setback under Wan Zhanggang made him keenly aware of the vast difference between himself and the Divine Sea Realm.

In the future, he is bound to interact with other Divine Sea Realm cultivators. Although he has now formed his own Divine Pool and nurtured a Mental Consciousness, it was through chance and an unorthodox path that he created his Divine Pool, making him considerably different from a traditional Divine Sea Realm.

How to protect his psyche in front of strong cultivators from the Divine Sea Realm is now his foremost concern.

Nian Yuexian gifted him a golden lock, which supposedly can slightly resist Mental Consciousness attacks, but its effectiveness is uncertain. He hasn't tested it, and Lu Ye is unsure of its power. He cannot rely solely on the golden lock for his safety.

Within the Hall of Battle Merits, if nothing else, there are the most numerous variety of treasures.

Among them, there are certainly treasures that protect the psyche, and such treasures have a particular name.

Soul Device!

Lu Ye has set his eyes on a Soul Device, but it's too expensive for him to purchase at the moment.

Without lingering in the Hall of Battle Merits, Lu Ye quickly departed, watched by the gaze of the gold and silver flood dragons behind him.

Leaving Heaven's Augury Hall, Lu Ye returned to his bamboo building, where Yiyi and Amber were already waiting.

"Cultivation, cultivation!" Lu Ye called out.

The spirit and tiger immediately came to his side, obediently sitting down.

The cultivation at the True Lake Realm differs from the Spirit Stream-Cloud River.

Pang Huanyin once wondered about something after arriving at the Nine Provinces side. Although she could sense the vast land and deep heritage of Nine Provinces, the local nature's spiritual energy didn't seem particularly abundant. Compared to the broken Unparalleled Continent, it was much better, yet

insufficient to birth strong cultivators like the Divine Sea Realm. In fact, relying solely on Nine Provinces' local nature's spiritual energy, it was challenging for cultivators to break through to the True Lake Realm.

Yet in reality, True Lake Realm cultivators are as common as cattle in Nine Provinces, and the number of Divine Sea Realm cultivators is certainly not small.

The root of everything lies in the Nine Provinces cultivators' unique cultivation methods.

During the Spirit Stream Realm, cultivators have the Spirit Stream battlefield as a large environment. Each minor sect and family has its own station, where the Heaven's Augury Pillar enhances the area's nature's spiritual energy, sufficient for cultivation in the Spirit Stream Realm.

Upon reaching the Cloud River battlefield, there are various spirit fortune sticks and spirit grounds, also allowing cultivators to rapidly grow.

At the True Lake Realm, spirit fortune sticks can still be used, and acquiring them is somewhat easier than during the Cloud River phase.

However, relying solely on spirit fortune sticks for cultivation is impractical since they must be exchanged with battle merits.

Thus, True Lake Realm cultivators have their own unique cultivation methods.

Before setting off from the Righteous Blood Sect, Shui Yuan had discussed these methods with Lu Ye.

This cultivation method doesn't consume spirit fortune sticks or battle merits but... merit!

In the bamboo building, Lu Ye recalls Shui Yuan's prior teachings, touches the battlefield marking, lets his mind connect with Heaven's Augury.

In the next instant, a message bursts forth inside his mind, and as the battlefield marking on his hand heats up slightly, a rotating vortex suddenly appears before him.

As the vortex forms, extremely dense nature's spiritual energy gushes out, spreading throughout the room as though it has intelligence, enveloping Lu Ye, Yiyi, and Amber's three figures, stopping its outward spread.

Lu Ye has already constructed numerous small spirit energy gathering funnels on his body surface, which guide the nature's spiritual energy to rush within, enhancing his own foundation.

Yiyi speaks: "Lu Ye, this cultivation method is somewhat similar to using spirit fortune sticks."

Indeed, it is somewhat similar. When using spirit fortune sticks, just like now, crushing the sticks leads to the appearance of a vortex, from which pure nature's spiritual energy gushes forth.

This nature's spiritual energy seems to come from nowhere, clearly driven by Heaven's Augury.

By comparison, the nature's spiritual energy drawn by spirit fortune sticks is much purer, allowing cultivators to absorb it directly without refining, rapidly converting it to their spirit force. Hence, using spirit fortune sticks is the fastest way for cultivators to enhance their cultivation.

However, the vortex before them draws dense spiritual energy that needs refinement, making cultivation less efficient than using spirit fortune sticks.

Using spirit fortune sticks consumes the sticks.

The present method consumes merit.

Under Lu Ye's attention, his merit diminishes at a slow and small rate, which is why his hand felt a slight warmth earlier.

Chapter 894 Gained Additional Battle Merit

Lu Ye observed for a moment, noticing that the rate at which his merit decreased was quite slow. If he continued cultivating for a day and a night at this rate, the merit consumed wouldn't exceed five thousand points.

Five thousand points of merit naturally wasn't a big deal for Lu Ye, but cultivation for a cultivator wasn't a matter of a day or two—it took years and months.

At five thousand per day, it would be one hundred fifty thousand in a month, and one million eight hundred thousand in a year, which was a rather frightening number.

And the concentration of the spiritual energy from the surrounding environment was comparable to the conditions found in the Class A Spirit Ground of the Great Reversal Valley.

Lu Ye was naturally not satisfied with this environment, and with a thought, he immediately made a change.

In the next instant, the spiritual energy surging out from the vortex became richer, and correspondingly, the rate at which his merit decreased also quickened.

Utilizing his own merit, he opened a vortex capable of pouring out dense spiritual energy, a unique method of cultivation exclusive to those above the True Lake Realm.

In the Nine Provinces, this cultivation method is known as Borrowing Heaven's Augury.

In this process, the richness of the spiritual energy emanating from the vortex can be adjusted as desired. The cost is merely the speed at which merit decreases: the denser the spiritual energy drawn from the vortex, the faster the merit decreases, and vice versa. It is exceedingly convenient.

This method of cultivation is divided into different levels based on the rate of merit consumption.

What Lu Ye needed to do now was to find the level that suited his cultivation the best.

It is not the case that the higher the level, the denser the spiritual energy, and the faster the cultivation speed.

Everyone has their own limits; if the concentration of spiritual energy exceeds a cultivator's refining speed, unnecessary waste will occur.

No one's merit comes blowing in with the wind.

However, if the concentration of spiritual energy is slower than the cultivator's refining speed, it will unknowingly reduce the cultivator's cultivation efficiency.

Normally, cultivators who have just entered the True Lake Realm would choose the most basic first level, because it is already sufficient to meet their cultivation needs.

But this was clearly not suitable for Lu Ye.

Around him, he had constructed numerous small spirit energy gathering funnels, allowing him to refine spiritual energy at a much faster rate than ordinary True Lake cultivators.

The second level wasn't sufficient either.

It wasn't until he adjusted the spiritual energy gushing from the vortex to the third level that Lu Ye felt it was about right, a level generally chosen by cultivators after the True Lake Level 6.

As for the higher levels, those are the exclusive domains of cultivators in the late stages of the True Lake Realm.

Beyond that, there are levels suitable for the great cultivators of the Divine Sea Realm, of course, the higher the level, the greater the consumption.

Lu Ye noticed that the speed of his merit consumption had approximately doubled compared to at the beginning.

In other words, if he maintained such a cultivation environment, he would consume ten thousand merit points in a day and night, or three hundred thousand in a month.

Of course, cultivation certainly wouldn't sustain for prolonged periods, but even if he only cultivated for half a month, it would still consume one hundred fifty thousand merit points.

Lu Ye had a considerable amount of merit. After he learned from Shui Yuan about the cultivation method of the True Lake Realm, he specifically went to the Righteous Blood Sect's treasure vault to select and sell some items to the Heaven's Augury treasure vault, amassing fifty thousand merit points in hand.

Previously, he bought some meat for two flood dragons, now he had around forty-eight thousand left.

This number wasn't small, but it could only support Lu Ye's cultivation for two or three months, after which he would have to return to the Righteous Blood Sect.

It wasn't much of a hassle.

Such a cultivation method was undoubtedly very convenient.

Cultivators above the True Lake Realm in the Nine Provinces, regardless of their location or time, can always connect with Heaven's Augury, open a vortex, and create a suitable cultivation environment for themselves, reducing many restrictions. Unlike in the Spirit Stream battlefield and Cloud River battlefield, where they must be at their sect's stationed location or in a spirit ground to enjoy such convenience.

Moreover, they can terminate it at any time without causing significant waste.

This is incomparably better compared to cultivating with spirit fortune sticks.

Once you start cultivating with spirit fortune sticks, you cannot easily interrupt it.

Therefore, merit is extremely important to any cultivator, especially those in big sects. Only with enough merit can cultivators above the True Lake Realm continuously improve their cultivation, strengthening the sect's foundation.

The Righteous Blood Sect had been sparsely populated and desolate, with hardly any income. Thus, even with Shui Yuan's outstanding talent, she couldn't advance into the Divine Sea Realm.

This was because there was no way to earn merit.

Once Lu Ye gifted her Soul Cleansing Water and brought tremendous benefits to the sect, Shui Yuan soared high due to the plentiful resources at her disposal, allowing her to cultivate without concern.

The heritage of a big sect requires unity from top to bottom; the leaders shield the members, and in their efforts to grow, the members also create and bring wealth to the sect—an interdependent relationship where they share both glory and shame.

Lu Ye had not yet tried what the fourth level cultivation environment was like. Since his current setup was already sufficient for his cultivation needs, opting for the next level would certainly lead to unnecessary waste.

Beside him, Yiyi and Amber had already begun cultivating.

He appeared idle, so he decided to take out some fire spirit stones and activated the Talent Tree's power to keep devouring them.

The fire spirit stones contained extremely pure fire spirit power, precisely the power the Talent Tree craved. Although the benefits one fire spirit stone provided to the Talent Tree were far less than those from a lump of Earth's Core Fire, the number of fire spirit stones Lu Ye obtained was sufficient to solve many problems.

Soon, the fire spirit stone in his hand exhausted its energy and turned to dust, prompting Lu Ye to quickly take out another.

As time passed, both his merit and fire spirit stones were continually being consumed.

The process of cultivation is monotonous, yet Lu Ye doesn't find it dull. He has something to look forward to in his heart—he really wants to know what the Talent Tree will look like after this transformation.

However, he hasn't forgotten his duties as a patrol officer. Since he's receiving a monthly salary, he naturally must fulfill his responsibilities, so every day he sets aside two hours to patrol around with Yiyi and Amber.

Even though he knows it's purely a formality...

Two days later, while Lu Ye was cultivating, he suddenly felt a slight warmth on the battlefield marking on the back of his hand.

He quickly focused his mind to investigate.

Name: Lu Yiye.

Identity: Disciple of the Righteous Blood Sect, Base Lieutenant Colonel of the Cangyan Mountain Pass Big Moon Checkpoint, Roving Lieutenant Colonel of the Cangyan Mountain Pass Big Moon Checkpoint.

Cultivation: True Lake Level 1.

Location: Bingzhou Cangyan Mountain Pass.

Merit: Four hundred sixty-five thousand six hundred thirty-two points.

Battle Merit: Three hundred ninety-four thousand six hundred fifty points.

Lu Ye was startled and carefully checked, making sure he wasn't seeing things. The battle merit indeed read over three hundred ninety thousand.

How could this be?

He distinctly remembered his battle merit should be eighty-eight thousand four hundred ten points. In recent days, he had been staying here at the Cangyan Mountain Pass cultivating and patrolling around. He hadn't done anything else, so how could there be a sudden increase of more than three hundred thousand battle merit for no reason?

Such a massive amount of battle merit could only compare to the gains from Xianyuan City that one time, where he also earned three hundred thousand battle merit. But that was from killing the Insect Race, a credit with traceable achievements.

What is this over three hundred thousand battle merit about?

Lu Ye didn't feel any joy but rather found that something seemed off.

Heaven's Augury is reputed to be fair and impartial. Previously, Nian Yuexian assigned him some random tasks, which seemed like she was messing with him, but actually, she was looking for ways to increase his battle merit. Lu Ye thought that method was improper and could eventually cause trouble.

This sudden increase of over three hundred thousand battle merit was a recipe for big trouble!

After a little contemplation, Lu Ye had some guesses. If things were as he suspected, it might be no bother. But if not, it would be troublesome.

He immediately stopped his cultivation, flashed out of the bamboo building, and looked for Nian Yuexian.

He searched for a long time but couldn't find her and didn't know where she went.

Helpless, he could only try to contact her through the Guard Token.

Still no response, just as Lu Ye was at his wits' end, the woman suddenly appeared mysteriously in front of him, looking like she had just been in a fight, somewhat disheveled, with hair hanging loosely.

Lu Ye's eyelid twitched, and he immediately understood what she had been up to.

Obviously, she went to find trouble with Wan Zhanggang, though it was unclear if she benefited from it.

"What is it?" Nian Yuexian spoke, still with that icy demeanor.

"My lady, I've suddenly received a large amount of battle merit," Lu Ye replied.

"Good thing, what's the problem?"

"The amount is too large; I'm feeling anxious and uneasy."

Nian Yuexian immediately understood what he was worried about. He was a little paranoid from her previous torment, fearing that this was her using the authority of a Mountain Pass Chief to gift him battle merit.

"It's what you deserve, don't worry."

Lu Ye frowned, "Please, my lady, explain!"

Nian Yuexian then slowly explained, "The Ten Thousand Demons' siege on Gushan City Pass before incurred severe losses, and the Fire Spirit Race's attack was considered your doing, so the credit naturally counts in your favor. Plus, you saved my life, which is a significant achievement. I already requested Heaven's Augury to reward your accomplishments, so this is what you deserve."

Lu Ye was stunned, "The Fire Spirit Race's attack on Gushan City Pass counts as my credit?"

"Why wouldn't it?"

After thinking it over carefully, it barely made sense. The Fire Spirit Race was stirred up by him and people like Ying Wuji, then led to Gushan City Pass, resulting in massive losses there. Relatively speaking, it was also a contribution to the Haotian Alliance.

Moreover, using his True Lake Realm cultivation to perform various tactics right under the eyes of three enemy Divine Sea Realm experts to rescue Nian Yuexian was indeed a huge merit.

If this matter were reported to Haotian City, they would surely grant a reward.

However, Nian Yuexian knew that it was not appropriate for Lu Ye to be too high-profile at the moment, so she only requested Heaven's Augury to bestow battle merit without reporting the prior incidents to Haotian City.

"How much battle merit did they give you?" Nian Yuexian hadn't intended to ask, but her curiosity got the best of her.

"Over thirty thousand!" Lu Ye reported truthfully.

"Not bad," Nian Yuexian remarked flatly and then turned to leave, but a spark of shock glinted in her eyes.

She knew Lu Ye's harvest this time wouldn't be small, but she hadn't expected it to be so much.

Heaven's Augury seemed to lavish this little guy with some extra favors?

Chapter 895 Soul Suppressing Pagoda

Knowing that the battle merit was issued by Heaven's Augury and not a special privilege from Nian Yuexian, Lu Ye's worries vanished.

Sweet!

He turned to look in the direction of the Heaven's Augury Hall. The treasure he wanted could finally be his!

He rushed to the Heaven's Augury Hall, placed his hand on the Heaven's Augury Pillar, and connected with the Hall of Battle Merits.

In the next instant, he found himself in front of the ancient door of the Hall of Battle Merits.

Suddenly obtaining a large amount of battle merit, Lu Ye was understandably excited. He then reached out to push the heavy door.

Noticing his arrival, the gold flood dragon and silver flood dragon just poked their heads out, only to be pushed back by Lu Ye.

The door was hefty, but it didn't require much effort to open. Only when it was fully open did Lu Ye realize something seemed off.

He didn't rush in but stood at the entrance and looked around.

The gold flood dragon and silver flood dragon popped their heads out again, and the silver flood dragon asked delightedly, "Kid, did you bring us some delicious food again?"

No way!

He had just fed them two days ago, but the silver flood dragon always seemed as if it was starving.

Besides, he was in a rush to buy that Soul Device today and completely forgot to bring any food for the dragons.

More importantly, Lu Ye was concerned with something else.

After pondering for a moment, he asked, "Isn't the door supposed to require both of you to open?"

The first time he came, the two dragons wriggled around on the door to form a concentric circle, causing the door to gradually open.

This led Lu Ye to initially believe that the door was controlled by the dragons.

But now it seemed that wasn't the case.

Heaven's Augury had granted him permission to enter the Hall of Battle Merits, allowing him free access without needing the dragons' help.

The silver flood dragon was momentarily stunned by Lu Ye's question and didn't know how to respond, so it turned its gaze to the gold flood dragon.

The gold flood dragon spoke with an apparently dignified voice, "Naturally not, but... we can open it too."

Lu Ye was puzzled, "Then why do you twist your bodies into a concentric circle every time before opening the door?"

He thought that pattern was the key to opening the door.

The gold flood dragon was momentarily speechless, and the silver flood dragon next to it was anxiously rolling its eyes.

Lu Ye roughly understood their intent, found it amusing, and didn't expose them. He simply cupped his hands and said, "Thank you both."

With that, he slipped into the Hall of Battle Merits and headed straight for the stone platform where the Soul Device was located.

"Big bro, the kid found out, what do we do?" the silver flood dragon asked anxiously, "If he knows he won't need us to open the door in the future, he might not bring us any more treats!"

"Not really, that kid doesn't seem like the type to destroy bridges after crossing them," the gold flood dragon said with an outward calm, though feeling a bit troubled inside.

How did he get found out? The last kid who came here took years to notice.

"Brother, you're confused; the human race is the most cunning. This kid seems honest, but who knows his true nature? We can't rely on anyone's kindness."

"So you're suggesting..." the gold flood dragon looked at the silver flood dragon.

The silver flood dragon's eyes showed a trace of determination, "Since we've been discovered, we have no choice but to do that; otherwise, we'll have nothing to keep us company as we guard this place. Isn't that a tragedy?"

After some thought, the gold flood dragon sighed and nodded, "Let's go with that, then."

The dragons communicated silently, leaving Lu Ye in the Hall of Battle Merits unaware.

At that moment, he stood before a stone platform, looking at a small tower-shaped treasure on it.

The tower had nine levels, appearing delicate and exquisite. Most importantly, it seemed insubstantial, shifting between reality and illusion.

Soul Device, Soul Suppressing Pagoda!

Both insubstantial and substantial; this is a feature of most Soul Devices, as they are meant to be housed in a cultivator's Divine Sea.

Such items are extremely difficult to craft, and even strong cultivators in the Divine Sea Realm find it incredibly challenging to obtain one.

The gold lock Nian Yuexian had previously given to Lu Ye, while somewhat protective of the psyche, was far from the level of a Soul Device.

This item is rare and invaluable, extremely expensive as well.

One hundred thousand eight hundred and eighty-eight points of battle merit...

Lu Ye had no words for the peculiar pricing by Heaven's Augury, finding it whimsically strange.

Without hesitation, he exchanged the merits. In an instant, his battle merits decreased by said amount, leaving him with two hundred five thousand seven hundred and sixty-two left.

The restriction on the stone platform vanished, and Lu Ye reached out to grasp the Soul Suppressing Pagoda.

The divine consciousness surged, enveloping the Soul Suppressing Pagoda, and Lu Ye could clearly sense that the small pagoda was perfectly merging with his own divine consciousness.

As he withdrew his divine consciousness, the Soul Suppressing Pagoda disappeared along with it, as if it had never been there.

Not in a hurry to leave, with so many battle merits suddenly in hand, things he previously wanted but couldn't afford could now be obtained.

The Hall of Battle Merits contained many treasures. Previously, although Lu Ye had a lot of battle merits, he used them all to exchange for gold-hued spirit fortune sticks in his rush to advance to the True Lake Realm, and could only admire those various treasures without indulging in them.

Now he had the capital, and could proudly declare that he wanted them all.

Combat arena, eleven thousand battle merits, exchanged.

Tracking disc, thirty thousand battle merits, exchanged.

Mental Consciousness Destruction Sword, twenty-six thousand battle merits, exchanged.

...

After acquiring various exotic treasures, about one hundred and forty thousand battle merits remained.

Lu Ye had never experienced such a sense of wealth before. In the past, although he occasionally acquired a large amount of battle merits, they would quickly be spent, unlike this time, when so many treasures were exchanged and there was still a considerable surplus.

He didn't use the remaining battle merits; the cultivational level had already advanced to the True Lake Realm, and there was no rush to further enhance it.

Without lingering further, he stepped out of the Hall of Battle Merits.

Just at the door, he was stopped by the silver flood dragon.

"What advice does the senior have?" Lu Ye was eager to return and investigate the powers of the Soul Suppressing Pagoda, naturally not wanting to linger here.

Though he hadn't brought food for the two dragons this time, it had only been two or three days since his last visit. Moreover, feeding the two dragons was something he did voluntarily, with no obligation to do so.

The two dragons were unlikely to trouble him over this.

The silver flood dragon tried to appear profound: "Kid, the last time you came by, I noticed you had already nurtured a soul body and birthed a divine consciousness."

"Indeed!" Lu Ye nodded, still unsure of what it wanted.

"Divine consciousness has always been the exclusive domain of strong cultivators in the Divine Sea Realm. I don't know what fortune you have or what kind of providence you encountered that allowed you, a True Lake God, to birth a divine consciousness. But have you considered, if you encounter a Divine Sea Realm cultivator, you are still merely an ant that can be crushed at will; the divine consciousness attacks from the Divine Sea Realm are something you are utterly incapable of withstanding."

"Yes!" Lu Ye deeply agreed, recalling the psyche attack from Wan Zhanggang that left him unconscious, not without a shudder.

"If you hadn't birthed a divine consciousness, it would be fine; the most that would happen is your psyche would be injured. But since you have birthed a divine consciousness, there must be a Divine Sea. Should you encounter a divine consciousness attack from the Divine Sea Realm again, it wouldn't just injure the psyche; it could very likely shatter your Divine Sea, rendering you unable to ever tread into the Divine Sea Realm again!" The silver flood dragon's tone gradually became serious.

Lu Ye nodded repeatedly: "What the senior says is true."

Nian Yuexian had mentioned this before in the jade slip she gave him, which was also why Lu Ye was eager to exchange for the Soul Suppressing Pagoda.

As a True Lake God, nurturing a soul body and birthing a divine consciousness seemed like a good thing, but in reality, it increased its own risks, and he had to quickly prevent the potential for such adverse scenarios.

"What does the senior mean to say?"

The silver flood dragon's roundabout speech left Lu Ye not knowing what it intended.

The silver flood dragon chuckled: "Kid, do you want to know if there's a way to protect the Divine Sea?"

Before its voice faded, Lu Ye had already summoned the Soul Suppressing Pagoda: "Will this do?"

The silver flood dragon's eyes widened like copper bells, utterly not expecting Lu Ye had purchased this treasure, leaving it speechless for quite some time before murmuring: "This... can be done."

If this gadget couldn't, then nothing in this world could protect the psyche.

Quickly, it looked over at the gold flood dragon.

The gold flood dragon, understanding without words, spoke with authority: "Although this item is wonderful, it can only suppress internally, not defend externally."

Lu Ye stored the Soul Suppressing Pagoda, solemnly looking at the gold flood dragon: "I ask the senior for guidance."

The gold flood dragon said: "This item is called the Soul Suppressing Pagoda. If you refine it, it can be stationed in your Divine Sea, so that when you encounter divine consciousness attacks later, even if the opponent's power is immense, it can ensure your Divine Sea remains unperturbed and unbroken. But its effect is limited to this, unable to guard against external divine consciousness attacks. Do you understand?"

Lu Ye suddenly understood: "You mean, even with this item, which can guard my Divine Sea and keep it intact, I would still have to endure the attacks that come my way."

"Smart," the gold flood dragon had a look of someone who finally found a teachable student.

Lu Ye's good mood faded by half, because if this was the case, the Soul Suppressing Pagoda was actually no better than the golden lock given by Nian Yuexian, which though not a Soul Device, could at least somewhat resist divine consciousness attacks.

Lu Ye initially thought that with the Soul Suppressing Pagoda, he wouldn't have to worry about divine consciousness attacks from the Divine Sea Realm in the future. But now it seemed that the object's efficacy fell short of his expectations.

It also showed how short-sighted he was. If a true Divine Sea Realm cultivator saw the Soul Suppressing Pagoda, they would surely discern all its functions without assuming, as Lu Ye did, that having this pagoda meant he could even contend against the Divine Sea Realm.

The two dragons suddenly mentioned these things again and hinted at internal suppression and external defense, giving Lu Ye some guesses, and he immediately respectfully said: "Again, I ask the senior, is there a means to resist divine consciousness attacks?"

"You asked the right person." The silver flood dragon immediately became proud, "My brother and I find you quite agreeable and have decided to pass on a secret technique to you, specially used to protect the psyche, as a way to repay you for your previous deeds."

"How could this be accepted..." Lu Ye said as such but straightforwardly cupped his fists: "A gift from an elder is not to be declined, so thank you both for your kindness."

The silver flood dragon looked at him speechlessly, only now realizing that this kid before him had quite a thick skin.

Chapter 896 Familiar Faces

The dignified voice of the gold flood dragon arose: "Calling it a secret technique is a bit misleading; it's more like a method. However, to employ this method, you need a certain degree of trust in the two of us. If you don't trust us, it cannot be executed."

"I trust you!" Lu Ye nodded decisively.

For a moment, the gold flood dragon didn't know how to respond. Initially, it thought that if Lu Ye refused, it might have to persuade him a bit, but now there was no need to waste any words.

However, it still needed to offer a word of caution: "Boy, when you're out there and you meet others, you cannot be so innocent. Who knows when you might suffer a big loss? Are you sure my brother and I harbor no ill intentions toward you?"

Being called innocent for the first time, Lu Ye found it both funny and exasperating. He pondered for a moment and spoke, "Although I don't know why you two are trapped here, nor how long you've been here, this place shouldn't be somewhere just anyone can come to. If something happens to me, perhaps it would take a very long time before someone else comes to chat and relieve your boredom. So, I believe you two seniors won't harm me."

Hearing this, the silver flood dragon nodded repeatedly, "You're truly a smart lad."

The gold flood dragon also sighed, "It seems you're not entirely clueless."

The method they were about to employ would cause them some self-damage. Pleasing Lu Ye so that he might bring some food next time was secondary. The primary thought was indeed to protect Lu Ye.

As Lu Ye said, they had been trapped here for too long. Although occasionally people favored by Heaven's Augury would arrive, they would vanish after a few years without a trace.

The last person eligible to come here was decades ago.

If Lu Ye encountered any mishap, who knows how long they would have to wait for the next one.

If not for this consideration, how would the two flood dragons think about using such a method?

"Then let's begin, boy, don't resist." The gold flood dragon gave a low growl, and in the next instant, a brilliant light erupted from their bodies as their Demon Origin surged.

Lu Ye only saw a point of gold and a point of silver light suddenly separate from the flood dragons, crashing straight towards his head.

With a buzzing sound, Lu Ye almost couldn't maintain the manifestation of his spirit here.

When he came back to his senses, he found the presence of the two flood dragons in front of him weakened, seemingly suffering a significant loss of energy.

"What is this..." Lu Ye was completely confused.

The gold flood dragon weakly explained, "You are free to go. This secret technique is called Twin Dragons Guarding the Sea. Along with your Soul Suppressing Pagoda, it defends both inside and out, protecting you. In the future, even if you encounter Divine Sea Realm's mental consciousness attacks, you won't have to worry about dying suddenly."

Lu Ye bowed solemnly, "Thank you, seniors, for your kindness. I will visit you again next time."

Saying this, his spirit withdrew from this place.

Once he departed, the weakened flood dragons became energetic again.

The silver flood dragon happily said, "Big brother, now that kid will probably be grateful to us, and we won't have to worry about food in the future."

The gold flood dragon reprimanded it, "After all these years, your vision is still so narrow. Is eating all you can think about?"

The silver flood dragon sulked a bit, "Being trapped here, if I don't think about eating, what else should I think about?"

The gold flood dragon gazed at it deeply, "You also said we're trapped here. What should we be thinking about?"

The silver flood dragon pondered briefly, then suddenly shook, understanding what its big brother meant, "Big brother, are you pinning hopes on him?"

"Throughout the ages, many heroes and legends have come here, yet none have reached the end. I don't know if he can, but he's come here with the lowest cultivation, and furthermore, with a True Lake realm body, nurturing a soul body and birthing a mental consciousness. Even this alone surpasses his predecessors. Perhaps we should indeed hope for something from him."

The silver flood dragon fell into contemplation for a long moment before shaking its head, "Disappointments are many, and hope becomes a luxury."

"Who knows."

The two flood dragons retracted back into the door, leaving the place in silence.

In the Heaven's Augury Hall, Lu Ye immersed his spirit, examining the changes in his Divine Sea.

The Divine Sea itself hadn't changed; it was still that Divine Pool...

But unlike before, a small nine-layered pagoda now suppressed inside the Divine Pool, and outside it, there were two dragon shadows, intertwined head to tail, with gold and silver lights interwoven together, guarding the Divine Pool.

This should be the method called Twin Dragons Guarding the Sea, performed by the gold and silver flood dragons together.

The two dragon shadows were most likely the mental consciousness manifestations of the flood dragons themselves.

Viewing it for a moment, Lu Ye felt a great sense of security in his heart.

Regarding the protection of his psyche, he now had a triple layer of methods. The first layer was the gold lock gifted by Nian Yuexian, which could provide a certain level of defense but was somewhat limited.

The second layer was Twin Dragons Guarding the Sea. With these gold and silver dragon shadows guarding the Divine Pool, his soul defenses would not be easily breached by a Divine Sea Realm.

Even if breached, he still had the Soul Suppressing Pagoda to stabilize the Divine Pool, keeping it tranquil and unbroken.

With this triple layer of protection, the difference between him and the Divine Sea Realm was purely a matter of strength.

Feeling at ease, his mood greatly improved.

As for what he previously said to the two flood dragons, it wasn't the entire truth.

He didn't know their origins, but their power was undoubtedly great, surely among the top in the Nine Provinces, and who knows how many years they've lived. Just as humans grow wiser with age, so too do demons, and Lu Ye wouldn't easily trust them.

The reason for allowing them to act was that Lu Ye's trust was not in them, but in Heaven's Augury.

Heaven's Augury gave him access to the Hall of Battle Merits, and they were trapped there guarding the door, inevitably a manipulation by Heaven's Augury. If they truly harbored any harmful intentions or actions against him, Heaven's Augury would certainly deliver punishment.

Facts have proven that he did indeed gain benefits from them, achieving ultimate protection over his psyche.

Leaving Heaven's Augury Hall, Lu Ye walked to Nian Yuexian's bamboo building. His Mental Consciousness spread outward, sensing Nian Yuexian's presence inside, confirming she was there. He clasped his hands and said, "Lord, I wish to request a day off."

"What do you plan to do?" Nian Yuexian's voice emerged from inside the bamboo building, but no figure was seen.

"I intend to return to Haotian City to get a military rank promotion."

The level of military rank is directly related to the battle merits a cultivator has previously achieved; these merits' usage does not affect the ranking.

Lu Ye had accumulated 500,000 battle merits, so his initial rank attained at the Department of Appointments in Haotian City was lieutenant colonel.

The next rank is Capital Commandant, requiring one million accumulated battle merits.

Lu Ye was unsure of the exact number of battle merits he previously acquired, but with this endeavor, he should reach one million, enough for a promotion.

The urgency naturally stems from the impact on the monthly salary.

The monthly salary for lieutenant colonel is 20,000 battle merits, whereas Capital Commandant's is 30,000, a surplus of 10,000.

Moreover, he holds two positions, meaning post-promotion, his monthly salary will be 60,000 battle merits, with gold-hued spirit fortune sticks enough to exchange for the 4th Dao.

As such, an earlier promotion means earlier enjoyment.

Thus, the cultivation matter can be slightly postponed.

Furthermore, given his current speed, a round trip to Haotian City takes merely a day and a night, not delaying much.

"Go then, and there's no need to hurry back."

Bidding farewell to Nian Yuexian, Lu Ye discerned the direction, summoned his spirit ark, and flew straight toward Haotian City.

It seemed only recently he departed from Haotian City accounting for just over a month.

After advancing to True Lake Realm, the speed of weapon control-flying increased greatly; along the way, Lu Ye appeared relaxed, not hurried.

During the flight, he did not forget to take out the fire spirit stone, holding it in his hand, and activated his Talent Tree to devour its power.

More than four hours later, he was already far from Cangyan Mountain Pass.

While passing a spirit mountaintop, Lu Ye suddenly sensed something, looked down, and saw a figure standing atop the spirit mountaintop.

Intently observing, Lu Ye's brows furrowed.

It wasn't that he recognized this person, but because this person was wearing a white mask, beneath which, their gaze was fixed in his direction, clearly watching him.

Many cultivators enjoy acting with masks. Some do so to hide their true identities; others do it for mystery, like Lu Ye for the former.

Across Nine Provinces, mask patterns vary greatly and white masks are among them.

However, if a white mask had red and blue patterns on each side, it would appear quite unusual.

Lu Ye had seen such a mask before!

Back in the Cloud River battlefield, on his way to the Hundred Arrays Pagoda, while escaping pursuit by Ten Thousand Demons Ridge cultivators, a woman in such a mask had appeared suddenly, aiding him.

The strength she exhibited far exceeded the typical Cloud River Level 9.

Experiencing various events later, Lu Ye realized she was not a Cloud River Realm cultivator but a True Lake Realm!

That woman likely belonged to a mysterious organization, which had profound divine skills, many hidden bases on Cloud River battlefield, could set up teleportation arrays, and send cultivators above Cloud River Realm into Cloud River battlefield like Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union.

Lu Ye thanked her and inquired her name, but she did not answer, only stating she was acting as commanded!

She even forcibly tried to send Lu Ye back to Nine Provinces due to many pursuing him.

Lu Ye naturally refused; they briefly clashed, during which some seal within her seemed to break, revealing her true cultivation, resulting in being expelled from the Cloud River battlefield.

Not much time had passed and memories of such experiences were vivid to Lu Ye, hence unforgettable.

Since that episode, he always felt he would encounter more members of that organization.

To his surprise, he would meet them here.

Lu Ye himself frequently wore a mask, naturally understanding what such people might be thinking.

This place lay on the necessary path from Cangyan Mountain Pass to Haotian City; clearly, the other intentionally waited here, unknown for how long.

Moreover, this location was quite peculiar, positioned between Cangyan Mountain Pass and Haotian City; whatever occurred here went unnoticed by both places.

Their presence here obviously demonstrated caution toward Nian Yuexian and the strong ones in Haotian City.

...

Chapter 897 Survive First

Lu Ye had no good feelings about such sneaky behavior.

Instinctively, he knew not to get involved with people from this organization, as it would be very troublesome. As for the mysterious woman's life-saving grace, it was pointless to mention, for even if she hadn't helped, Lu Ye was confident in escaping, and in fact, her involvement only complicated matters.

With various thoughts passing through his mind, Lu Ye quickly averted his gaze, secretly on guard while preparing to fly over from above.

The other party dared to openly appear here, likely because they were from the Haotian Alliance, so there was no worry about being questioned.

"Is it Lu Yiye from the Righteous Blood Sect?" a voice called out from below.

"No!" Lu Ye responded decisively.

Then, under the bewildered gaze of the other, he quickly flew away.

There was no sign of pursuit; they just watched him leave.

Lu Ye frowned; the situation was somewhat different from what he expected...

But never mind, since they weren't pursuing, he was spared some trouble, and he should quickly get to Haotian City to promote his military rank.

After flying for a short while, Lu Ye suddenly felt something was off—the surrounding scenery looked too familiar, as if he had just seen it.

Looking up, a spirit mountaintop entered his view, even more familiar. Atop that mountaintop stood a figure wearing a white mask.

Lu Ye's expression turned serious.

Things were indeed amiss.

Before he got close, the person from afar called out: "Is it Lu Yiye from the Righteous Blood Sect?"

It was like time had rewound, and he was experiencing the same event once again.

This time, Lu Ye didn't even bother to respond; he simply changed direction and flew toward another side.

After a short while, he encountered that spirit mountaintop again and saw the same cultivator, who tirelessly asked again: "Is it Lu Yiye from the Righteous Blood Sect?"

Lu Ye cast a deep glance at him, meeting the mischievous gaze beneath the mask, and realized he had fallen into their trap.

He ignored the person, changed direction once again, used Insight Spirit Runes to enhance his vision, and flew while observing.

He kept experiencing the same scene, encountering the same spirit mountaintop, the same person, hearing the same question.

Lu Ye initially thought he was trapped in some big array, but after careful observation for a long time, he confirmed it wasn't an array. Even the most sophisticated array, with his current achievements in the Array Path and Insight Spirit Runes, should reveal some clues.

In fact, he hadn't discovered any traces of an array.

If it's not an array, then it's a treasure!

A treasure like the Nine Arrays Diagram, able to create a space of its own!

Lu Ye became secretly vigilant.

Though he was only at the True Lake Level 1 now, he had already developed Mental Consciousness, with extremely keen senses. Someone who managed to trap him unnoticed must undoubtedly be a Divine Sea Realm strong cultivator!

The person who called out to him earlier wasn't a Divine Sea Realm; they were just a True Lake.

In other words, there's a powerful figure behind this person!

"Is it Lu Yiye from the Righteous Blood Sect?" called the voice once more.

Lu Ye landed in front of him, examined him from head to toe, and slightly nodded: "Yes, it's me!"

Since the other had already acted and identified him, denial was meaningless.

"I've long admired your name," the person cupped his fists in salute.

"What do you want?"

"My master wishes to meet Fellow Daoist."

"Your master?" Lu Ye squinted slightly, "If he wants to see me, why hide his face? Just come straightforwardly."

"There are some inconvenient reasons. Please forgive us, Fellow Daoist," the masked cultivator slightly lowered his head as if apologizing.

"Lead the way then."

The masked cultivator said, "But before that, I must test Fellow Daoist's skills to see if you qualify to meet my master."

He spoke politely, but Lu Ye was amused.

"Your master wants to see me, but before that, you want to test my abilities?"

"I ask for your understanding, Fellow Daoist!"

"Whether I understand or not... survive first!"

Do you really think I'm made of clay, to be at someone's mercy?

As he spoke, a saber light like a startling rainbow slashed down.

The masked cultivator clearly hadn't expected Lu Ye to suddenly make a move, and hastily summoned his spiritual artifact to block in front of him.

The next moment, his face changed drastically. Originally, he saw Lu Ye was just a True Lake Level 1 and didn't take him too seriously. Even though he had gathered various intelligence on Lu Ye, knowing he excelled at fighting enemies above his level and had assessed him highly, it was only after the actual confrontation that he realized Lu Ye's foundation was much deeper than he anticipated.

With overwhelming force carrying tremendously violent spirit force, the saber-wielding Lu Ye embodied the Saber Intent of the Tyrannical Saber Technique. The oppressive and aggressive aura surged, causing the masked cultivator's chest to feel congested.

It's worth noting that his cultivation was several minor levels higher than Lu Ye.

Such strength, such foundation, was simply monstrous, causing inevitable shock in the heart.

Clang, clang, the continuous crashing sounds of spiritual artifacts clashing spread out, the masked cultivator retreating step by step, momentarily suppressed.

Until with a crashing sound, the long saber in Lu Ye's hand shattered.

His Boulder Mountain Saber was still being upgraded, the saber he wielded a moment ago was merely one with a similar style, a loot he somehow acquired.

Its quality was only that of a top-grade spirit artifact; how could it withstand Lu Ye's wild slashing?

The offensive suddenly slowed down.

Though Lu Ye quickly retrieved another long saber, the masked cultivator, being of True Lake Realm, naturally wouldn't miss the opportunity. Just as he was about to counterattack, he paused for a moment, only to retreat swiftly and shout aloud, "Fellow Daoist Lu, we shall meet again someday. Farewell for now."

As if receiving some instruction, he already retreated.

Lu Ye intended to chase, however, an astonishing force surged from the front, causing him to halt abruptly. The force blasted at him, making him retreat dozens of yards before stabilizing.

Looking up again, there was no trace of the masked cultivator, who had long fled.

The surrounding scenery seemed to twist and change for a moment; Lu Ye knew the means of the powerful figure behind this had already failed.

Standing in place, Lu Ye knitted his brows, muttering a curse.

He did not know who the person at the Divine Sea Realm behind this was, but it was clear this person had intervened earlier to stop him. Yet, the person didn't want to kill him; otherwise, they would have shown up and acted directly.

However, despite wanting to meet him, the individual left in haste; no clue as to what had happened.

Unable to comprehend, he was unwilling to dwell on it, considering he would certainly cross paths with this mysterious organization again, and one day everything would be revealed.

Identifying the direction, Lu Ye headed towards Haotian City again, this time extraordinarily smoothly, with no repetition of the earlier Time Retrospection-like occurrence.

About 30 miles away, two figures stood, one being the masked cultivator, the other an elderly man with spirited energy.

Recalling the brief engagement with Lu Ye earlier, the masked cultivator still appeared shocked, for even though his cultivation was several minor levels higher than Lu Ye's, he didn't gain the slightest advantage, indicating that, in a life-or-death battle, he might not be Lu Ye's match.

That's just too exaggerated.

Can one's foundation be this strong?

It should be noted that he himself was a sect elite capable of defeating enemies across levels.

"Master, did Nian Yuexian arrive?" He cleared his mind of other thoughts and asked.

"No."

"If not, then why retreat so hastily? Wasn't Master planning to meet him?"

"There's no need anymore." The elderly man gently shook his head.

The reason for the meeting was primarily to assess his foundation, which had already been verified and was impressively extraordinary, meeting the organization's recruitment requirements.

Secondly, to probe Lu Ye's character, which the elderly man also had some judgment on.

The purpose had been achieved, so there was no further need to meet, as doing so would only increase Lu Ye's aversion, resulting in loss rather than gain.

"This time, it was my mistake." The elderly man stroked his beard, despite being a strong cultivator at the Divine Sea Realm, he didn't shy away from acknowledging his error, "I thought he was just a freshly advanced True Lake novice, a little display of skills would awe him, but it backfired. There's no need to meet. This young man is proud and rebellious; when dealing with him in the future, make sure not to harbor any cunning plans, but approach with sincerity."

"Yes," the masked cultivator respectfully replied, "And about recruiting him..."

"The time isn't right; for someone like him, sooner or later he will perceive the issue at hand, and naturally, he will develop a philosophy that aligns with ours. Should that happen, even if he isn't formally recruited, he will be a kindred spirit!"

The masked cultivator appeared deep in thought.

"Go," the elderly man waved him off.

The masked cultivator bowed and respectfully withdrew.

The elderly man looked towards the direction of Righteous Blood Sect, pondered for a moment, then soared into the sky, heading straight for the sect.

It had been years since he last saw Thang Yifeng, wondering how the old guy was doing.

...

An unexpected encounter such as that certainly caused some delay, but the rest of the journey was devoid of obstacles.

As evening approached, the vast Haotian City came into view.

After flying a bit longer, Lu Ye finally reached Haotian City. Having had the previous experience, he didn't bother seeking the city gates, he headed straight inside.

Compared to the last visit, Haotian City was evidently much quieter, with fewer cultivators moving around compared to the last bustling and crowded occasion.

Last time was a special situation when this generation of cultivators from the Cloud River Realm coincidentally encountered the rare domain fusion, drawing numerous Cloud River Realm cultivators with nowhere to go into Haotian City, subsequently being dispatched to various checkpoint passes.

Among the various checkpoints, the number of Cloud River cultivators far exceeded usual numbers, except the special Cangyan Mountain Pass which counted Amber amongst its mere four members.

Swooping into Haotian City, relying on memories from the previous visit, Lu Ye headed directly towards the location of the Department of Appointments.

Before reaching the Department of Appointments, a familiar figure suddenly flew from ahead.

It was none other than the Justice Department Chief, Qian Wudang, the very individual who had thrown him into the jail last time.

Seeing him from afar, Lu Ye couldn't help but shrink his neck, opting to change direction to avoid him.

Chapter 898 Temporary Summons

Unexpectedly, just as the thought occurred, Qian Wudang looked over with a smile, and the distance between them quickly closed.

With no other choice, Lu Ye flew forward to meet him, cupped his fists, and said, "Greetings, my lord!"

Qian Wudang stood three feet in front of Lu Ye, one hand behind his back, assessed him from head to toe, and nodded, saying, "Not bad, you've reached the True Lake. What brings you here?"

"I have some personal matters to deal with," Lu Ye casually replied, without going into detail.

Qian Wudang smiled slightly, not taking it to heart, and merely said, "When you return to the Cangyan Mountain Pass, convey my regards to your Mountain Pass Chief. Over a month ago, she came and went in such a hurry, not even willing to meet."

"Over a month ago?" Lu Ye was taken aback.

Qian Wudang's smile was full of meaning: "It was during the few days you were detained in the prison, otherwise, how do you think you got to the Cangyan Mountain Pass?"

Lu Ye really didn't know about this matter.

However, Qian Wudang obviously had no intention of explaining further, casually saying a few words before flying away.

Leaving Lu Ye deep in thought.

Listening to Qian Wudang's words, it seemed that his transfer to the Cangyan Mountain Pass was directly related to Nian Yuexian's last visit to Haotian City.

It appeared that Nian Yuexian specifically requested his transfer from the Recruitment Department?

It explained the coincidence of being sent to such a unique place as the Cangyan Mountain Pass among the many passes on the Bingzhou defense line, where for decades, Nian Yuexian had held the post alone.

Perhaps the Second Senior Sister had a hand in this as well.

The two women had a good relationship, and with no members of the Righteous Blood Sect at the front lines to care for him, they had Nian Yuexian, who had ties to the sect, act on his behalf.

With this thought, Lu Ye had pieced together most of the situation, although he could never know that in order to secure him, Nian Yuexian completely offended another strong cultivator in the Divine Sea Realm, even publicly assaulting him.

At the Department of Appointments, the comings and goings of cultivators were frequent, as they returned from various mountain passes, with the same thought as Lu Ye: to get promoted in rank as soon as possible and receive more monthly salaries.

On the front lines, battle merit accumulation often relied on time since conflicts and battles with the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge were not as frequent as imagined.

However, there were exceptions at some passes, where the battles were extremely fierce, and both sides continuously sent new troops. In those places, battle merit increased quickly, but so did the casualties.

After a short wait at the Department of Appointments, it was Lu Ye's turn. He stepped forward and handed his guard token to the petite round-faced female cultivator handling the matter.

The female cultivator was accustomed to promoting the military ranks of numerous cultivators daily. Naturally adept, she took the guard token, asked about Lu Ye's background, matched it with the information in the token, and after confirming it, asked him to place the hand with the battlefield marking on the battle merit panel to check the accumulated merit.

As the last time, the colors on the battle merit panel changed constantly, and the female cultivator's expression, as calm as water, changed along with it.

Until a low exclamation: "Violet!"

The last time he checked, the light emitted by the battle merit panel was yellow, corresponding to lieutenant colonel; this time, it was violet, corresponding to Capital Commandant!

It seemed that his calculations were correct, and the accumulated battle merit was indeed sufficient for a rank promotion.

Raising his eyes, he saw the female cultivator handling the matter before him, her beautiful eyes filled with shock and admiration.

The number of Capital Commandant level cultivators in the Haotian Alliance was not small, and she had dealt with many rank promotions here. She had seen not only Commandants but also some higher-ranking Brigadier Generals.

But where in the world was such a young Capital Commandant?

Due to Lu Ye's extensive travels and battles, he appeared older than his actual age, though not by much, just around twenty.

A twenty-year-old Capital Commandant? Not only had she never seen, but had never even heard of such a thing.

And his cultivation was merely at the True Lake Level 1!

Generally speaking, it took reaching at least the True Lake Realm Late Stage to be promoted to the rank of Capital Commandant. As for Brigadier General and Major General, those were exclusively for strong cultivators in the Divine Sea Realm, and there was no precedent for anyone in the True Lake Realm being promoted to Brigadier General.

For those at that level, it wasn't just about accumulating battle merit but also about the size of their achievements.

Perhaps someone in the True Lake Realm could accumulate enough battle merit through monthly salaries, but if their achievements weren't significant, they still couldn't be promoted to Brigadier General or Major General.

A not even twenty-year-old Capital Commandant at True Lake Level 1 left the female cultivator, who had been here for years, seeing Lu Ye today, shocked and puzzled.

She couldn't figure out what Lu Ye had done to accumulate such battle merit.

"Senior Sister?"

Lu Ye saw her lost in thought and couldn't help but call out.

The female cultivator returned to her senses, apologetically said, "I'll be done in a moment."

With those words, she went through the procedures with Lu Ye's guard token and quickly returned it to him, "Junior Brother Lu, please check to see if everything is correct."

Lu Ye took his guard token, channeled his spirit force into it, confirmed it glowed violet, then put it away, nodding slightly to the female cultivator, "Thank you, Senior Sister."

Under the stunned gazes of several nearby cultivators, he calmly departed.

It wasn't until he left that the female cultivator showed a look of regret. She had been too shocked earlier and forgot to exchange markings with Lu Ye. Such a promising young man, if those pretty junior sisters in the sect could interact with him more, they might gain something from it.

As for herself, she was already married and had someone to stay with, so she didn't think much about it.

The sky was already dark, and Lu Ye did not plan to continue his journey.

He had taken a day off from Nian Yuexian, who also told him not to rush back. After all, there hadn't been any battles at Cangyan Mountain Pass for a long time, so he could stay in Haotian City for a few more days or even return to the Righteous Blood Sect to take a look.

Haotian City is not only the central hub of the Haotian Alliance in Bingzhou, but the city also contains many taverns and teahouses, as well as various shops, mainly for the convenience of cultivators traveling to rest and eat.

Moreover, the prices here are quite cheap, about half as expensive as outside.

Although Lu Ye wasn't exactly in a hurry last time, he was confined in a prison for several days and didn't have time to stroll around Haotian City carefully. Now, it was a good time to take a look around under the cover of night.

Amber perched on his shoulder, and the man and tiger strolled through Haotian City at night.

Before long, Lu Ye stopped in front of a shop specifically selling demon beast meat.

The two flood dragons in the Hall of Battle Merits were gluttons, and each trip cost him twenty thousand merits. He might as well buy some demon beast blood and meat here for backup. He and Amber might need it sometimes and could also feed the two flood dragons.

He rarely used spirit stones, so many had accumulated in his storage space.

After spending nearly a hundred thousand mid-grade spirit stones, he almost emptied the shop's stock and left satisfied, leaving the cultivator guarding the shop looking wistful.

He entered a tavern, ordered a table of good dishes, sat by the window, and feasted.

After eating and drinking his fill, he continued to wander, passing by a spirit artifact shop, and stepped inside calmly.

The day's encounter reminded him of something: recently, the Boulder Mountain Saber was in the middle of an upgrade, and he needed to find another long saber as a temporary replacement.

Although the Boulder Mountain Saber would be fully repaired soon, if during that gap he needed to face an enemy, not having a suitable weapon would hinder his ability to exert his power.

That was exactly what happened during the day. If his spiritual artifact long saber hadn't suddenly shattered, the opponent wouldn't have had a chance to breathe.

In the future, there might be situations where the Boulder Mountain Saber wouldn't be by his side. Having a spare could be useful in emergencies.

However, now that he was in the True Lake Realm, weapons at the spiritual artifact class were no longer suitable for him; he could only choose those of the magic-artifact class.

Of course, weapons at this level weren't cheap.

After searching through the spirit artifact shop, he found a few magic-artifact class long sabers, but only one barely met his requirements.

He spent a large number of spirit stones to purchase this saber.

Compared to the Boulder Mountain Saber, this saber was sharp enough but lacked weight. Lu Ye felt somewhat unhandy using it, and since the Boulder Mountain Saber had accompanied him for years, they were in harmony, something other weapons couldn't replace.

Realistically speaking, even if this long saber wasn't inferior in quality to the Boulder Mountain Saber, Lu Ye could only exert about ninety percent of his usual power with it.

Combat cultivators are overly reliant on their weapons, an undeniable drawback for them.

Having bought demon beast blood and meat, as well as a magic-artifact long saber, Lu Ye no longer felt like wandering around, afraid he would give in to buying more things.

Though he had gained much from his conquests, he couldn't afford to spend lavishly like this.

He found an ownerless house nearby, used his guard token to open the restriction, and entered to rest.

Yiyi finally had a chance to stretch and take a breath.

A moment later, one person, one spirit, and one tiger sat in a circle. With a thought, Lu Ye began cultivating by borrowing Heaven's Augury, while simultaneously activating the power of the Talent Tree, continuously absorbing the energy of the fire spirit stone in his hand.

The metamorphosis of the Talent Tree was not complete yet, and it was unknown how much energy was needed. Anyway, whenever Lu Ye had a moment, he would take out a fire spirit stone and let the Talent Tree absorb it.

After a peaceful night, Lu Ye got up the next day, prepared himself, and opened the door to return to Cangyan Mountain Pass.

However, just as he moved, someone descended from the sky, landing directly in front of him.

The newcomer was a husky man with a bushy beard, his face honest and seemingly straightforward.

Their eyes met.

The man spoke, "Does this Junior Brother have any military duties?"

Lu Ye shook his head, "None at all."

The man showed his guard token to Lu Ye, "I am the Warlord Geng, Captain of the A-3 squad under the Law Enforcement Hall of the Justice Department. We are now temporarily recruiting you to carry out a mission with our team. If you don't have other military duties, you must not refuse!"

As he spoke, the man's guard token emitted a strong yellow glow, while his own spirit force surged, showcasing his powerful cultivation at the True Lake Level 9.

Lu Ye was taken aback by his words but quickly realized—had he been forcibly conscripted?

But... could such temporary recruitment actually happen?

Perhaps sensing some misunderstanding, Warlord Geng explained, "Rest assured, Junior Brother. This mission doesn't have significant risks and won't take too long, at most three to five days, so it won't delay you much. Besides, participating in the mission with us will earn you battle merits."

Chapter 899 A-3 Squad

As for battle merit, Lu Ye couldn't care less. He still had a whole bunch of unused battle merits on hand, not lacking for now.

Compared to battle merit, he was more interested in the way this Law Enforcement Hall conducted its affairs.

Having joined the Bingzhou guard not long ago, he was not very familiar with the various aspects of Bingzhou guard. What piqued his curiosity was whether this kind of temporary conscription was allowed by the Bingzhou guard, especially since he wasn't allowed to refuse.

With this thought, he spoke up: "Senior Brother, please wait a moment. I've only been in the Bingzhou guard for a little over a month, and I've only taken a day's leave to come to Haotian City. I still need to seek permission from my superiors on this matter."

The beefy guy who claimed to be Warlord Geng frowned: "Who is your superior?"

"Mountain Pass Chief of Cangyan Mountain Pass at Big Moon Checkpoint, Nian Yuexian."

Warlord Geng was extremely astonished: "It's actually her! That's not right, I heard she's holding a pass all by herself without other provincial guards. How are you..."

"Indeed, there was none more than a month ago."

Warlord Geng nodded slightly: "If it's her, you can feel free to ask for instructions."

In other words, he had great trust in Nian Yuexian. If it were someone else, they might not receive such treatment.

Lu Ye then contacted Nian Yuexian through the guard token, explaining the situation he encountered.

Soon he received a reply—a simple word: "Allowed!"

This was considered consent.

With his top superior agreeing, Lu Ye naturally had no objections and left together with Warlord Geng.

Meanwhile, at Cangyan Mountain Pass, Nian Yuexian raised her hand, tapping on her battlefield marking, sending a message: "What are you up to?"

Soon the other party replied: "Senior Sister Nian, you finally agreed to contact me? I thought..."

"Enough nonsense, if you don't give me an explanation, I'll go to Haotian City right now and lift your skull!"

"Don't, I'm now the Justice Department Chief after all. If you really do that, I'll lose a lot of face." The other party pleaded, then quickly explained: "This kid under you has been wandering about Spirit Stream and Cloud River battlefields since the start of his cultivation, basically ignorant of the situation in Nine Provinces. He happened to join provincial guard and ended up at your place. You know better than anyone the situation over there; if he stays there for a long time, he won't have much chance to acquire battle merit or rank up in military service. This was intended as a way to train him while giving him a chance to understand the situation in Nine Provinces. It's said a good man has aspirations across lands; he can be considered talented. You surely don't want him to become a wastrel in your place, right? Of course, if you insist on nurturing him into a greenhouse flower, I can immediately order his release."

A greenhouse flower?

Nian Yuexian coldly chuckled inside; perhaps you don't know what he's done before. In the brief month he's been here, he inadvertently stirred up chaos at the Gushan City Pass, even saving my life under the eyes of several enemy Divine Sea cultivators. Even if he is a greenhouse flower, he's one with thorns all over.

Of course, such things weren't necessary to elaborate.

"If anything happens to him, I'll twist your head off."

In the Justice Department Hall at Haotian City, Qian Wudang looked at the message from Nian Yuexian, feeling mixed emotions. This Senior Sister, cold as frost in recent years, hasn't truly curbed her fiery temperament. Her threats to lift people's skulls or twist heads are terrifying to hear.

"Also, don't think I can't tell what tricky intentions you have!" Another message came through.

What tricky intentions could I have? Qian Wudang bitterly smiled inside, knowing his thoughts had been seen through. He decided not to discuss this and changed the subject: "What is this kid doing back in Haotian City this time?"

"Ask him yourself!" Nian Yuexian ended the messaging, making herself unreachable.

Qian Wudang had casually asked initially, but Nian Yuexian's attitude made him curious. Yes, this kid returned to Haotian City after only more than a month on the front line. What for?

He hadn't thought much of it before. With people constantly coming and going in Haotian City, no one restricted Lu Ye's entry and exit.

Looking back now, something indeed seemed off.

Immediately, he ordered an investigation.

Soon, he received feedback, and looking at the intelligence before him, Qian Wudang stood in a daze.

A True Lake Level 1 Capital Commandant?

Was it a mistake from the Department of Appointments or were his eyes deceiving him?

Recalling correctly, that kid was previously a lieutenant colonel. A Cloud River Level 9 lieutenant colonel was already impressive enough, but how did he suddenly become a Capital Commandant in just a month?

Qian Wudang's first thought was that Nian Yuexian used her Mountain Pass Chief authority to open the doors wide for Lu Ye, enabling him to swiftly accumulate a lot of battle merit.

But he quickly dismissed that thought, not because Nian Yuexian couldn't do it, but because she absolutely wouldn't do something like that.

She surely knew what consequences such actions would provoke, which would be subject to Heaven's Augury's reckoning, something even a Divine Sea cultivator couldn't withstand.

In other words, this kid genuinely claimed significant battle merit on his skill, thereby advancing from lieutenant colonel to Capital Commandant in a brief span!

Did he kill Wan Zhanggang or perhaps overturned Gushan City?

If such were the case, there should have been triumphant news from the front lines. Recently, Haotian City has not received any such reports.

Puzzled over what Lu Ye had done, itching with curiosity, he shamelessly sent another message to Nian Yuexian, hoping to get to the bottom of it.

But where was any response? Despite his persistent inquiries, there was no reply whatsoever from her side.

At this time, Lu Ye, under the leadership of Warlord Geng, had already rendezvoused with his A-3 squad.

Including Warlord Geng as the team leader, the squad consisted of only five people.

A sword cultivator with a gentle demeanor and a warm smile, named Kang Yuanqiao.

A magic cultivator with a silent and cold expression, named Shangguan Qiu.

A ghost cultivator with a cunning glimmer in his eyes, constantly glancing at a female companion, named Xiao Ruyun.

A petite and exquisite female cultivator with an attractive figure, named Muk Zheng.

Including the temporary addition of Lu Ye, the squad of six was gathered.

This was also the standard number of members for a law enforcement team in the Law Enforcement Hall.

Among the six, without a doubt, the strongest was the team leader Warlord Geng, who was at True Lake Level 9, not considered weak throughout the entire Nine Provinces.

The cultivation levels of the others varied, but all were above True Lake Level 3.

Everyone reported their names and cultivation levels, then looked towards Lu Ye.

Lu Ye had no choice but to say, "Lu Ye of the Righteous Blood Sect, True Lake Level 1."

In the Cloud River battlefield, or even in today's Spirit Stream battlefield, reporting the name Lu Ye of the Righteous Blood Sect would surely attract attention.

But these people before him had long since left the two battlefields and had been fighting on the front lines, naturally unfamiliar with Lu Ye's name.

However, the mention of the Righteous Blood Sect did make them take it more seriously.

Kang Yuanqiao asked in surprise, "Junior Brother is from the Righteous Blood Sect?"

"Indeed," Lu Ye looked at him, "Senior Brother Kang is from the Beixuan Sword Sect?"

Kang Yuanqiao shook his head, "The Beixuan Sword Sect's requirements for accepting disciples are extremely strict, I wasn't fortunate enough to be accepted, I come from a 4th grade sect."

"Although the sword cultivators of the Beixuan Sword Sect are remarkable, Senior Brother Kang's skills may not necessarily be inferior to theirs," said Xiao Ruyun, the ghost cultivator. "Kid, don't think just any sword cultivator is from the Beixuan Sword Sect; all major sects in Bingzhou have sword cultivators."

He then turned to Warlord Geng, "Captain, what's the situation here? Even if you're recruiting, you should pick someone with higher cultivation. This little guy looks like he just barely got promoted to True Lake, how much help can he be?"

He was straightforward, expressing his disdain for Lu Ye's cultivation openly without reservation.

"You talk too much. What's wrong with True Lake Level 1? Didn't you come up from True Lake Level 1 too?" Warlord Geng glared at him.

Honestly, if possible, he wouldn't have chosen Lu Ye either, but this command came directly from the Department Chief, and he couldn't resist.

He was puzzled internally. He hadn't heard of any close relationship between the Department Chief and the Righteous Blood Sect. Why would there be such favor towards this kid?

In his view, participating in this mission with them was a form of favor because it required little effort to gain considerable battle merits, adding to one's record of accomplishments.

Otherwise, although there are not many cultivators in Haotian City now, he wouldn't have targeted Lu Ye specifically.

"I was just saying," Xiao Ruyun shrugged, then turned to fawn over the nearby female cultivator, "Junior Sister Muk, after this mission, I'll take you to some fun places."

Muk Zheng smiled sweetly, "I won't go!"

Xiao Ruyun immediately looked heartbroken and began to act capriciously.

It was the first time Lu Ye saw such a True Lake, causing him to furrow his brows.

Kang Yuanqiao understood, smiling slightly, "The brothers have been together for a long time and have become easygoing. Junior Brother Lu doesn't need to mind."

"Alright, everyone's here, let's set off," said Warlord Geng, then summoned a spirit ark.

The spirit ark was clearly prepared for the squad, much more spacious than Lu Ye's, comfortably accommodating seven or eight people.

Everyone boarded, and the silent Shangguan Qiu moved forward to steer the spirit ark as it soared into the sky.

The others each found a place to rest.

"Old Kang, explain the rules to the new little brother," Warlord Geng ordered.

"Yes!" Kang Yuanqiao responded, looking at Lu Ye beside him, "Junior Brother, if you have any questions, feel free to ask me."

Lu Ye then voiced his doubt, "Can your law enforcement squad just randomly recruit people in the city when carrying out tasks?"

Kang Yuanqiao smiled slightly, "Junior Brother may not know, compared to the entire provincial guard, the Justice Department is the most understaffed because it requires at least True Lake Realm to join. With lower cultivation, one can't perform law enforcement duties."

This was understandable.

The cultivators daring to commit crimes wouldn't have low cultivation, thus requiring the law enforcement team to suppress them with stronger methods. Cloud River Realm cultivators were clearly unsuitable.

"The tasks conducted by the Justice Department include punishing those who violate the guard discipline internally and eliminating foreign enemies, and there are many obstacles during missions, making it relatively dangerous with high casualty rates. As a result, the department is perennially short-handed, and our team is no exception. Originally six members, one brother was killed on a previous mission, leaving a vacancy. Now with a new mission assigned, we had to recruit, which is permitted."

Chapter 900 Xianxia Mountain

Kang Yuanqiao had something he didn't mention to Lu Ye, which is that although the Justice Department is a powerful institution, and rarely provokes trouble when they're outside, the nature of their work often makes them unpopular.

Most cultivators are used to living freely without constraints in their actions.

But on the provincial guard's side, guard discipline is strict, and it's inevitable that some people will inadvertently break the rules, requiring the Justice Department to step in.

Handling these matters easily offends people, causing them to hold grudges against you.

This is the main reason why the Justice Department is often understaffed. In Bingzhou, the number of cultivators is vast, and even though the department has strict recruitment requirements, with a minimum cultivation of the True Lake Realm, it's still challenging to get enough personnel.

It's precisely because many times, the Justice Department's activities offend others and are unwelcome, so few people volunteer to join.

To gain battle merit, you can easily achieve that by going to any checkpoint on the frontlines.

Additionally, with high casualty rates, law enforcement teams in the Justice Department frequently face staffing shortages.

Recruiting extra hands becomes an unspoken rule.

Kang Yuanqiao spoke again with a grave expression, "Junior Brother Lu, during missions, there are three prohibitions. Please remember them, as breaking them will not be lightly forgiven."

"Please enlighten me, senior brother," Lu Ye replied, ready to listen carefully.

"First, you are not allowed to use your position as a law enforcement team member for personal gain or to satisfy personal desires."

"Second, during missions, unless granted permission, you must not contact outsiders at will."

"Third, do not act alone during missions. At least two people must move together. Remember these!"

Lu Ye nodded seriously, "I've noted them."

Seeing his seriousness, Kang Yuanqiao smiled slightly, "Of course, you don't have to be too tense, junior brother. Everything has a first time, and experience comes with practice."

Lu Ye thought to himself that he wasn't tense and casually asked, "What task do we need to carry out this time?"

Kang Yuanqiao smiled and shook his head, "Only the captain knows the mission's details. We just follow orders."

In the time that followed, Kang Yuanqiao explained many precautions to Lu Ye, which he remembered one by one. As for the others, they meditated with closed eyes, conserving energy, looking ready for a big operation.

After finishing all the necessary explanations to Lu Ye, Kang Yuanqiao handed him an item, "Junior brother, find some time to refine this."

Lu Ye received it, examined it briefly, and asked suspiciously, "An array disc?"

The item looked similar to an array disc, but not quite. It seemed more like a Magic Artifact, yet something seemed missing.

"It's the Six-Element Spirit-Sealing Lock, a unique Spiritual Artifact of the Justice Department's enforcement team, unavailable elsewhere. During missions, the six of us will position ourselves at six points and activate its power to prohibit the flow of spirit force in an area. If everything goes smoothly, we can capture the target effortlessly."

Lu Ye suddenly understood why it felt like something was missing. The item was part of a set, with six pieces in total, and each person held one piece.

Its operation is similar to a formation, essentially allowing six people to quickly assemble a great spirit prohibition array.

The greatest asset of a cultivator is their diligently cultivated spirit force. If spirit force is prohibited, their cultivation becomes useless, leaving them merely physically stronger than ordinary people, which naturally facilitates the enforcement team's missions.

No wonder they needed to recruit another person.

Since this item comes in six, they needed six people to cooperate. Missing one would render it useless, hence Warlord Geng had to randomly recruit someone to fill in for the A-3 squad's missing member.

"Senior brother, what is the cultivation level of the person we are targeting?" Lu Ye asked gravely.

This team's strength wasn't weak, yet they still needed to use such a Magic Artifact. How strong must the enemy be?

Kang Yuanqiao, understanding Lu Ye's concern, comforted him lightly, "Generally, the targets we deal with are typically at the True Lake Realm, so even direct confrontation allows us to capture them. Having this item just makes the task easier and avoids unnecessary injuries."

Lu Ye was now clear.

"Junior brother, refine this first. Once you can harness its power, I'll teach you the cooperative method."

"Thank you, senior brother."

Refining this Six-Element Spirit-Sealing Lock wasn't difficult. Lu Ye's own spirit force was pure enough, making his refining of anything efficient.

In just one hour, he had completely refined the Six-Element Spirit-Sealing Lock. After consulting Kang Yuanqiao about the cooperative method, everything was ready quickly.

The spirit ark zoomed through the clouds, during which Warlord Geng took over the navigation from Shangguan Qiu, slightly increasing the speed.

It wasn't until the next day that they finally reached their destination.

The spirit ark stopped, and the six of them disembarked one by one, standing in mid-air.

Lu Ye looked up and saw that amid the towering mountains ahead, there were numerous pavilions and structures, clearly indicating the presence of a sect.

From the looks of it, their mission target was within a certain sect!

"Xianxia Mountain!" Kang Yuanqiao, being more knowledgeable, immediately recognized this place as the domain of a sect called Xianxia Mountain.

Across the entire Nine Provinces, Xianxia Mountain might not be prominent, but within Bingzhou, this sect was somewhat renowned, being a 4th grade sect.

According to the Nine Provinces Heaven's Augury's evaluation, a 4th grade sect must have at least twenty cultivators at the True Lake Realm, although none at the Divine Sea Realm.

If there were a Divine Sea Realm cultivator guarding Xianxia Mountain, it would not be a 4th grade, but a 3rd grade.

The deployment of a True Lake Realm level law enforcement squad indicates that the target is likely a high-ranking member of Xianxia Mountain, possibly an elder or someone similar.

As for the specific person, only Warlord Geng, the leader, knows.

Lu Ye was curious about what exactly led the Justice Department to target this mission's objective. Did they violate some guard discipline, or could they potentially be a secret agent for Ten Thousand Demons Ridge?

"Descend." Warlord Geng waved his hand, and the group quietly traversed the mountains.

After traveling a distance, they saw a thatched hut.

In front of the hut, a solemn-looking old man was quietly waiting, presumably having an agreement with Warlord Geng.

The squad leader approached directly.

"Junior Brother Geng!" The old man cupped his fists.

Warlord Geng returned the gesture, "Sect Master Ahn, long time no see."

The old man was indeed the sect master of Xianxia Mountain, Ahn Mofeng. This A-3 squad was here to apprehend someone from Xianxia Mountain, and naturally, they needed to notify the sect master. Without his permission and cooperation, entering Xianxia Mountain, let alone apprehending someone, would be problematic.

Ahn Mofeng smiled wryly, "It's been years, Junior Brother Geng looks as dashing as ever."

"Sect Master Ahn is also as vigorous as ever."

"Not really, reaching the Divine Sea in this life seems hopeless for me. But Junior Brother Geng, with some effort, might still have a chance."

Warlord Geng's eyes flickered darkly. He was well aware of his own talent; without great opportunity in this life, he would go no further.

The gap between True Lake and Divine Sea is like a chasm that has brought countless heroes to tears throughout history. Since Warlord Geng was not exceptionally gifted, how could he escape the norm?

Sweeping away his inner melancholy, Warlord Geng composed his expression, "Let's not talk about trivial matters, Sect Master Ahn, you should know our purpose here."

Ahn Mofeng's gaze swept over the five people behind Warlord Geng, his expression becoming bitter, "Who is it?"

Ahn Mofeng couldn't possibly fail to recognize the Justice Department's Law Enforcement Team, could he?

It was precisely because he recognized them that he felt bitter; ever since receiving Warlord Geng's message, he had pondered over and over again but couldn't figure out who their target was.

The few remaining True Lake Realm cultivators within the mountain were all veterans who had made significant contributions to the sect. How could such people attract the Justice Department's attention?

If it was merely for violating guard discipline, that would be manageable.

Honestly, most of the provincial guard, more or less, had violated some guard discipline, only the extent differed.

Guard discipline is as strict as a mountain, but laws are not beyond human sentiment. If it was merely a matter of guard discipline, it wouldn't be a major issue.

The fear was that it was not just about guard discipline.

Warlord Geng did not speak, only moved his lips slightly towards Ahn Mofeng.

Ahn Mofeng's face changed dramatically, "How could it be him?"

Among the few True Lake Realm cultivators remaining in the mountain, Ahn Mofeng pondered and pondered. The others might have violated guard discipline, but not this individual. It was unthinkable. Yet, the name he deduced from Warlord Geng's lips was this person's. But if it wasn't about guard discipline, then...

Ahn Mofeng suddenly felt a chill, "What is the reason?"

"Sect Master Ahn should be aware of the Justice Department's rules. Please do not ask more questions." Warlord Geng maintained a stern and impartial expression.

"Ah." Ahn Mofeng sighed heavily, "If I were to say there might be a mistake, you all would likely not..."

Warlord Geng interrupted him, "Sect Master Ahn, please do not harbor any wishful thinking. You should know the Justice Department's style. Over the years, how many people targeted by the Justice Department were truly innocent? Without irrefutable evidence, the Justice Department would not make a fuss."

Because once the Justice Department takes action, even if there's nothing, it becomes something, easily tarnishing reputations. Therefore, the law enforcement of the Justice Department rarely mobilizes, but once they do, it means they have irrefutable evidence.

Ahn Mofeng's expression seemed to age significantly in an instant. He stood in place, silent for a long time, before finally speaking, "Follow me then."

"Thank you for your trouble, Sect Master Ahn." Warlord Geng's gaze was sharp, "But please, Sect Master Ahn, prioritize the greater good. I know you have a close personal relationship with that person, but do not forget, you are not just that person's friend or elder brother, but also the sect master of Xianxia Mountain!"

"I understand." Ahn Mofeng's expression was solemn, "No need for Junior Brother to remind me."

Turning, he led the way.

Along the path, they did not encounter a single Xianxia Mountain disciple. It seemed as though the entire Xianxia Mountain was unaware that a group of six had suddenly visited today.

Only after traveling dozens of miles, approaching the front valley, did the solitary old man fishing from a small boat in the lake in front of the valley's thatched hut tremble, letting his fishing rod fall into the water.

He sighed heavily, his face full of bitterness.

The inevitable had finally arrived!