

Humanity 971

Chapter 971 Is It Really Just Good Luck?

"Rest today, depart tomorrow." Lu Ye waved the mission jade slip in his hand.

"Yes!" Lin Yinxiu cheerfully accepted the order and returned to her room to rest and recuperate.

Xiao Xinghe saw her childlike demeanor and couldn't help but laugh, "Where did you find this girl, Junior Brother? She seems so inexperienced."

Lu Ye looked around to ensure no one was present, then whispered in Xiao Xinghe's ear.

Xiao Xinghe was utterly astonished, "Really?"

Doesn't seem like it.

Lu Ye nodded solemnly, "If it weren't the case, how could someone I have never met before become a member of my squad?"

Though he was initially displeased when Qian Wudang placed Lin Yinxiu in his team, he had slowly grown accustomed to her over time.

Lin Yinxiu's gentle and obedient nature makes her a favorable team member for any leader, even though her background is somewhat sensitive. By discussing it with the third senior brother, it could prevent any inappropriate incidents in the future.

Xiao Xinghe usually couldn't care less about such trivial matters, so he didn't inquire further, "I'm heading to the Heaven's Augury treasure vault."

This obviously meant he was going to exchange spirit fortune sticks for cultivation.

Typically, cultivators use whatever battle merit they have to exchange for spirit fortune sticks for cultivation, leaving very little saved up.

After all, for a cultivator, converting what they earn into cultivation is the best form of practice.

Only Lu Ye seemed to always have a stockpile of battle merit at hand.

After Xiao Xinghe headed to the Heaven's Augury treasure vault, Lu Ye returned to his room, immersing himself in the Origin of Soaring Dragon World.

Perhaps due to advancements in his cultivation, the time required to imprint the Origin of Soaring Dragon World was growing increasingly shorter.

The next morning, a spirit ark rose into the air from the small courtyard, and the three members of the squad set off once again.

In the main hall of the Justice Department, Qian Wudang was working at his desk. Across from him, a chubby old man lounged in a chair with his legs propped up, humming a tune nonchalantly.

Qian Wudang's forehead veins gradually bulged. Unable to bear it any longer, he slapped the table and said, "Old man, why aren't you working at the Hunting Pavilion? Why are you here? And in such a manner, if anyone sees, where does my authority stand?"

The chubby old man chuckled dismissively, "Mind your own business, enjoying my life has nothing to do with your authority."

Frustrated but helpless, Qian Wudang massaged his temples, "What do you want?"

The chubby old man sat up straight, "I'm just curious. You seem to have a lot of faith in that kid from the Righteous Blood Sect, putting that Yinxiu girl beside him."

A touchy subject for Qian Wudang, his heart twinged at its mention. The old man, who was childless, didn't understand his worries. No matter how optimistic he was about someone, this was not something he would do lightly. The reason Yinxiu was by Lu Yiye's side was entirely because of her own insistence.

Moreover, he knew he couldn't shield her forever; she needed to gain experience eventually, so this was like going with the flow.

"But one thing's for sure, that kid is really lucky. The last mission was completed in five days; who knows how long this one will take."

Qian Wudang remarked, "How long do you think it will take?"

"Who can say? Last time, the target was last seen ten days prior, which was traceable. This time is different; the last sighting was two months ago. Even a Divine Sea Realm would be gambling. With good luck, it might take a month or two; with bad luck, years could pass without results."

Qian Wudang laughed, "That's not bad."

"Why do you seem so pleased?" The old man was puzzled.

"What would you understand!" Qian Wudang was reluctant to explain further.

If the task is completed too quickly, that Yinxiu girl would gain a sense of accomplishment, which would keep her attached to Lu Yiye.

As it stands, it's quite perfect. With any luck, they'll be out for months with no success, and Yinxiu might tire of the assignment. With a little persuasion from me, she might reconsider her course.

With that thought, Qian Wudang felt his mood brighten considerably.

Time flew by, and four days later.

While dealing with official business, Qian Wudang sensed an incoming message and was utterly shocked upon checking it, "Mission... completed?"

How could it be completed so quickly?

It defied all logic.

The last mission's rapid completion could be attributed to luck, as the target had remained in the last observed location. But this time was different. The target's previous activity was logged two months ago. In that time, who knew where they could have gone?

It was akin to finding a needle in a haystack.

This is precisely why such tasks linger in the Hunting Pavilion without takers.

Ordinarily, no squad would take on such a task unless they were undertaking other missions and decided to study these cases, recording details about the targets so as to capture them during more lucrative missions, if lucky.

Once they have the person, it counts as task completion with full battle merit rewards.

What is Lu Yiye's deal? How is he easily accomplishing these tasks that even the Divine Sea Realm might struggle with?

Once might be luck, but twice suggests something more.

As a Divine Sea Realm himself, Qian Wudang's thoughts quickly turned to the exotic treasure—tracking disc.

But he quickly dismissed this idea.

Firstly, tracking discs are extremely rare, and even if Lu Yiye had one, it's unlikely he had a second.

Moreover, they're quite valuable, so using a tracking disc for such a task would hardly be worth it.

For a moment, he couldn't figure out what method Lu Ye used to complete the task so swiftly and efficiently, but he did capture the target and had already delivered them to the Penology Department.

Meanwhile, in the Hunting Pavilion.

The chubby old man was equally astonished, staring at Lu Ye who had come to return the task jade slip.

A few days ago, he'd told Qian Wudang that if lucky, one could finish this task in a month or two; if unlucky, it could take years. Who would have thought it would be completed in just a few days?

"Kid, how did you do it?" The chubby old man couldn't contain his curiosity.

"Heaven's Augury's blessing," Lu Ye said offhandedly.

The old man wasn't going to believe his nonsense.

"Senior, taking just one task at a time is rather inefficient. Can I take on several tasks at once?"

For him, capturing someone is the simplest of tasks, the only issue is the time spent traveling back and forth. If he could take on several tasks at once, his efficiency would significantly improve.

"Normally... that's not allowed. It's mainly to prevent biting off more than you can chew, and it wouldn't be fair to others if you took all the tasks. What if someone else wanted them too? That's why the Hunting Pavilion's rule is one task at a time," the chubby old man explained slowly.

"Nobody else seems to be taking these tasks either."

"Rules are rules, without them, there's chaos."

"Do you have any guidance, Senior?" Lu Ye asked tentatively.

The chubby old man chuckled, "You're silly. All the task jade slips are here. Just memorize the targets' traits in your mind. You don't have to officially take on the task to capture them. Once you bring them back, you can complete the task procedures, and you'll get all the rewards just the same."

Lu Ye suddenly understood, "Thank you for the advice."

"But kid, be honest, how do you think you can definitely complete these tasks? These people are hard to find; they're masters at hiding."

"Doesn't Senior know there's something called a tracking disc?"

"You're not being honest," the chubby old man fumed, "I've taught you a shortcut, and you're making up stories with me. That's not being straightforward."

Moments later, Lu Ye walked out of the Hunting Pavilion, puzzled.

Being honest, how was that deceiving people?

But he did use the tracking disc to find them...

The next day, the spirit ark ascended again as the trio set out once more.

In front of the Hunting Pavilion, Qian Wudang watched the spirit ark depart before turning and going inside.

The chubby old man was delighted, "A rare visitor, what brings Lord Department Chief to my place? Come, come, have a seat."

Qian Wudang's eye twitched, "Old Chief, can you take it easy and not tease the juniors?"

The chubby old man smiled warmly, "What Old Chief, there's only you as the Department Chief in the Justice Department."

"Did I want to be this Department Chief? Wasn't it you who elevated me?" Speaking of this, Qian Wudang felt a bellyful of frustration. Outsiders might see the Justice Department Chief as infinitely glorious, but being the head of a department is no easy task, filled with endless duties and little leisure time. Even his time with Yinxiu was greatly reduced.

Had it not been for this old man's trickery back then, he would never have agreed to take the position of Justice Department Chief.

As a result, soon after he took office, the old man, who was supposed to be dead, appeared lively in front of him and took charge of the Hunting Pavilion.

It's truly galling to have him under his nose like that.

"Why bring up the past," the chubby old man chuckled, "So, what instructions do you have for me, Lord Department Chief?"

Qian Wudang asked, "Did Lu Yiye take on that kind of task again?"

"Yes," the chubby old man nodded.

"Did you ask him how he finds people so quickly?"

"I did. He said he used a tracking disc, which is just a way to dodge the question. Tracking discs are items bestowed by Heaven's Augury and aren't something anyone can easily make. Who would be foolish enough to use them for the Hunting Pavilion's tasks?"

Qian Wudang frowned, "Isn't it possible that he really did use a tracking disc?"

The chubby old man looked at him speechlessly, "Is he foolish or are you?"

Qian Wudang resolutely refused to admit foolishness, so he said, "So you think his completion of those two tasks was just good luck?"

The chubby old man's expression turned solemn, "If someone's luck is that good, then it's nothing ordinary."

Qian Wudang felt a chill in his heart, clearly realizing something.

In the Nine Provinces, there is something called Heaven's Augury's favor!

Chapter 972 Dingtian City (Thanks to Alliance Hierarch Qingze Sister for the reward)

Outside Haotian City, the spirit ark soared through the sky.

The spirit ark was piloted by Xiao Xinghe, while Lu Ye sat cross-legged at the bow, with six tracking discs lined up in front of him, each shrouded with blood Qi, and each needle pointing in a different direction.

Lin Yinxiu watched in astonishment beside him: "Captain, where did you get so many tracking discs?"

In the previous two missions, Lu Ye completed them using tracking discs, which Lin Yinxiu had already found quite incredible, as these items are extremely rare. Using tracking discs to assist in missions seemed somewhat wasteful.

This time, it was even more excessive, as he used six tracking discs all at once.

The reserve of the various sects of the two major factions in Bingzhou combined probably doesn't have this many.

"I picked them up!" Lu Ye replied casually.

Items from the Hall of Battle Merits cannot disclose their origin and are only for personal use, a rule told to him by the gold and silver flood dragons the first time he entered.

Lin Yinxiu then asked innocently: "Where did you pick them up?" She displayed a hopeful expression as if she also wanted to find some.

Lu Ye really didn't want to bother with her; purchasing these six tracking discs from the Hall of Battle Merits cost him a large amount of battle merit, leaving him with just over twenty thousand.

Fortunately, he had just advanced to True Lake Level 5, and didn't need to use spirit fortune sticks for cultivation in the short term, reducing his urgent need for battle merits.

He closely monitored the changes of the needles on the six tracking discs before him.

Four hours later, under Lu Ye's direction, the spirit ark swept towards a certain direction.

Tracking discs trace people, and the squad of three took action to capture their targets, much more efficiently than before.

The only issue was these individuals were scattered across Bingzhou, taking some time to search for them.

Even so, within a mere ten days, five out of the six targets had already been captured, leaving only the last one named Zhou Wang.

The five people were now on the spirit ark; Lu Ye didn't treat them too harshly and even had no intention of binding them.

It could be said the five were completely free, except they couldn't leave the spirit ark.

Their cultivation levels were not very high, and they were sensible enough to stay docile since being captured, probably accepting their fate.

They knew that having committed wrongdoings, they would inevitably be targeted by the Law Enforcement Hall. They might evade for a while but not forever. Their offenses weren't too severe; once captured, they would be taken to the penal court, suffer for a while, and then be dispatched to the fiercely contested mountain pass to make amends. As long as luck wasn't particularly bad, their lives wouldn't be endangered.

But if they recklessly resist after being captured, their punishment would be more severe, intensifying their consequences.

Having captured five out of six targets, there was just one left to finish the task smoothly.

Lu Ye's willingness to use the tracking discs to complete tasks perceived as trivial by other Law Enforcement Hall squads wasn't for idle boasting.

Because only in this way could the squad have opportunities to take on other missions and earn more battle merits.

Currently, the squad only had three members, with each mission earning more than fifty thousand battle merits, which Xiao Xinghe and Lin Yinxiu equally shared, making their income quite substantial.

But eventually, the squad would reach six members, and even if he continued to take none, dividing the earnings among five wouldn't result in much for each.

Only by taking on tasks with richer rewards could the squad members grow more quickly.

The needles on the tracking discs were slightly shaking, indicating they were very close to their target.

Lu Ye took out the ten-part map to inspect it and found that the map marked a large city ahead called Dingtian City.

He couldn't help but frown; he vaguely remembered seeing this city name somewhere.

After a brief recollection, he recalled where he had heard of this city.

It was recorded in the jade slip of the Hunting Pavilion's tasks.

According to the jade slip, Zhou Wang belonged to the Zhou family of Dingtian City, a family with some reputation throughout Bingzhou.

Because it was a well-established 3rd grade cultivation family.

The two major factions of the Nine Provinces had countless forces, but those who reached the upper three grades were mostly sects. While there were many cultivation families, their grades were relatively low because family-style cultivation methods have many unavoidable drawbacks, notably the inability to assure the quality of subsequent talents, making long-term inheritance difficult.

A sect, on the other hand, can open its mountain gates widely, accepting talented individuals so that each generation has brilliant disciples, making inheritance easier than that of cultivation families.

The Zhou family reaching the upper three grades implied they were quite well-established, at least having a Divine Sea Realm cultivator overseeing them. However, how many Divine Sea Realm cultivators there were, or what level they were, Lu Ye couldn't say, as these details weren't recorded in the task jade slip.

Compared to the previous five task targets, Zhou Wang's offenses were not light; three years ago, he recklessly fought, impacting some commoners and causing dozens of deaths and injuries.

Such a heinous act, according to guard discipline, warranted execution!

Cultivators must not let their conflicts involve commoners; this isn't just guard discipline in Bingzhou but also those of the other Eight Great Provincial States. Whether it's Haotian Alliance or Ten Thousand Demons Ridge, they must strictly abide by this rule. Violators generally face severe punishment.

Lu Ye carefully recalled the task jade slip's details about Zhou Wang, confirming a piece of recorded information.

The target was last seen a year ago, right in Dingtian City; since then, the task details hadn't been updated.

This task had been in the Hunting Pavilion for such a long time and forcibly assigned to other Law Enforcement Hall squads, yet if Zhou Wang was in Dingtian City now, why hadn't those squads completed the task?

The previous task targets were hiding in desolate mountains and forests; without a clear direction, searching was indeed troublesome, and finding them depended heavily on luck. Zhou Wang's situation was different.

Lu Ye faintly realized this task might not be easy...

There was some invisible resistance lying ahead.

The spirit ark did not hurry to track the trail and stopped thirty miles away from Dingtian City.

Lu Ye stood at the bow of the ship, picked up the guard token from his waist, and infused it with spirit force, waiting quietly.

One incense stick's time later, a figure riding a Flying Spirit Artifact flew in from the direction of Dingtian City. Seeing the spirit ark from afar, he flew straight over and stopped ten feet away from Lu Ye, bowing and clasping his fists, "Greetings, sir."

The newcomer wore a mask, obscuring his face, but his cultivation was at the Cloud River Level 8. From his build, he was a man.

This was the Nightingale of this place.

"May I ask what business brings you here, sir?" Nightingale inquired, "Is there any place that requires my service?"

Lu Ye looked at him indifferently, "Capture Zhou Wang!"

Nightingale understood, "Please instruct me, sir."

Lu Ye did not rush to give orders but instead asked, "Was the Hunting Pavilion's latest updates a year ago reported by you?"

"Yes."

"Have you seen any traces of Zhou Wang in the past year?"

"To answer you, sir, I have not seen him. Zhou Wang knows he's committed a crime, so he likely fled far away."

Lu Ye's eyes narrowed slightly, "Do you know where he fled?"

"I do not, sir. If he is determined to hide, he won't be found by anyone."

"What about the Zhou family?"

"There has been no anomaly with the Zhou family."

Lu Ye nodded slightly, feeling there was no need to continue questioning. He then said, "Lin Yinxu."

"Present," Lin Yinxu stepped forward and replied firmly.

"Keep a close watch on them. Anyone showing any unusual behavior will be killed without mercy!" Lu Ye instructed, his gaze fixed on Nightingale, "Including him!"

"Yes!" Lin Yinxu accepted the order.

Nightingale was utterly shocked, "Sir?"

"Third Senior Brother, come with me." Lu Ye ignored Nightingale and, after speaking to Xiao Xinghe, flew straight towards Dingtian City.

Xiao Xinghe said nothing, tightly following.

After the two left, Lin Yinxu turned to Nightingale, saying with a disappointed look, "After this matter, go to Haotian City to plead guilty. You won't lose your life, but some punishment is inevitable."

Though she was naive and sometimes a bit silly, she was not foolish.

Although Lu Ye said nothing, she still vaguely sensed something.

Especially after following Lu Ye in recent times to catch people, always succeeding, she admired Lu Ye greatly. Since Lu Ye headed straight to Dingtian City, it showed he was sure Zhou Wang was in Dingtian City.

Yet Nightingale hadn't seen Zhou Wang for the past year, which clearly wasn't normal.

Her statement made Nightingale sweat profusely, his body almost stumbling.

Dingtian City was a large city, being the foothold of an upper 3rd grade family. Naturally, it was by no means small. Numerous mortals lived there, not only within the city but also in a thousand-mile radius around it, a territory controlled by the Zhou family.

Even though there were many mortals in the city, there were also many cultivators flying back and forth.

These cultivators were not all from the Zhou family. While the Zhou family dominated here, many low-grade cultivation families depended on them for survival.

Moreover, various families recruited some cultivators.

These recruited cultivators mostly came from independent cultivators or those whose sect or family had been destroyed, seeking cultivation resources alongside the Zhou family.

Dingtian City did not have a protective array, so Lu Ye and Xiao Xinghe easily entered the city.

The needle of the tracking disc in their hands swayed more intensely, confirming that Zhou Wang was somewhere in the city.

"Little Junior Brother," Xiao Xinghe suddenly called softly.

Lu Ye also put away the tracking disc simultaneously and looked ahead.

A goat-bearded elder was smilingly approaching them from the front, the spirit force surging from him revealing a powerful True Lake Level 8 cultivation.

The goat-bearded elder was clearly coming for them, blocking their path directly, and slightly bowing, "The two Daoists look unfamiliar, and seem not to be from Dingtian City. How should I address you?"

"Who are you?" Lu Ye's eyelids lowered slightly.

If he previously just suspected the Nightingale here, he now could be certain.

The Nightingale here had been bought by the Zhou family.

Otherwise, how could their whereabouts have been exposed? It must have been Nightingale who alerted the Zhou family as soon as he sensed their arrival.

This man before them must certainly be from the Zhou family.

Chapter 973 Forcing Entry

"This old man is Zhou Ze, the elder in charge of external affairs for the Zhou family." The goatee-bearded old man spoke with a smile, "May I ask how you two address yourselves?"

"Niu Meng!"

Zhou Ze nodded slightly, "So it's Fellow Daoist Niu. Observing your extraordinary demeanor and uncommon aura, may I inquire where you hail from and where you currently hold office?"

"My brother and I are merely independent cultivators." Lu Ye continued to fabricate stories.

Zhou Ze's smile remained, "I see, among independent cultivators, those of your age with such cultivation are indeed rare talents emerging among the generations! Since you have come as guests to Dingtian City, may I fulfill the host's responsibility?"

Lu Ye squinted at him, then seemingly inadvertently glanced around, and said flatly, "I was not aware the Zhou family is so hospitable."

All around, there were already numerous cultivators closely monitoring the situation here, and under Lu Ye's mental consciousness, their movements were naturally exposed. Although Xiao Xinghe's perception wasn't as clear, he also vaguely sensed something and appeared vigilant.

Zhou Ze laughed heartily, "My Zhou family has always forged wide connections with heroes from all around. Fellow Daoist should know that a noble family is not like a sect, finding footing in the Nine Provinces is not easy."

Lu Ye nodded slightly, "In that case, we must impose upon you a bit."

"Please!" Zhou Ze turned sideways, gesturing with his hand.

Lu Ye and Xiao Xinghe both walked by with their hands on their sabers, without looking sideways as they passed by him.

Soon, in a large manor within the city, the three descended. Zhou Ze led them to a side hall, where they sat down as hosts and guests, while attendants served tea.

Lu Ye and his companion sat immobile, while Zhou Ze spoke warmly, "I am a straightforward man, not one for beating around the bush. I invited you two over today because I am sincerely delighted by your talents. You two are young and promising, with a great future ahead. Although my Zhou family is situated in a remote location, we greatly enjoy making connections with heroes from everywhere. Would you two be willing to render your services to my Zhou family?"

"My brother and I are just passing through; we will leave shortly. Elder's goodwill, I appreciate it," Niu Meng replied.

Zhou Ze said, "Fellow Daoist Niu, don't be in a hurry to refuse. Though I am of family birth, I understand the hardships of independent cultivators. If you two are willing to work for my Zhou family, rest assured, we won't treat you poorly."

As he said this, he gently clapped his hands.

Immediately, two beautiful young maids entered from outside, each carrying a tray. They walked up to Lu Ye and Xiao Xinghe, placed two storage sacks from the trays before them, respectfully bowed, and then withdrew.

Lu Ye raised an eyebrow, "What does the elder mean by this?"

Zhou Ze smiled slightly, "Why don't you two take a look first?"

Lu Ye picked up a storage sack and opened it. It was filled with top-grade Spirit Stones, plenty of elixir pills used for cultivation, and even a magic-artifact class treasure.

"The Zhou family is truly generous!" Lu Ye put down the storage sack in his hand. Even though he was accustomed to seeing wealth, he was still surprised by the Zhou family's generosity. The contents of the storage sack were indeed substantial, and a great draw for any True Lake Realm cultivator.

"The Zhou family's generosity depends on the person," Zhou Ze stroked his beard with his hand, "You two surely have a bright future ahead. Even if you don't join the Zhou family in its service today, forming a good relationship is beneficial. We are a noble family and understand the drawbacks of family cultivation, naturally realizing that more friends mean more paths."

"That's indeed true." Lu Ye nodded.

"Does Fellow Daoist Niu agree? It seems Zhou Kui was right."

"Zhou Kui?" Lu Ye frowned, wondering why this unfamiliar name suddenly came up.

"Zhou Kui is a disciple of the Zhou family, currently serving in the Bingzhou Justice Department's Law Enforcement Hall as a squad leader."

Lu Ye then laughed, realizing that's why this old man suddenly mentioned Zhou Kui, it was an expectation all along.

Being people from the same Justice Department's Law Enforcement Hall, and with Zhou Kui as a squad leader, those who came on duty in the past had to give some face, coupled with the Zhou family's warm hospitality, even tasks previously taken by law enforcement teams came to a halt.

Law enforcement teams' deployments don't always yield results. Throughout Bingzhou, there are numerous cultivators, many violating guard discipline. Most are unreported, unpursued, and countless tasks in the Hunting Pavilion remain unresolved, so what significance is there in someone like Zhou Wang?

Even the Nightingales here have been secretly bribed by the Zhou family.

In such a scenario, how could Zhou Wang face judgment?

Sipping a cup of tea lightly, Lu Ye spoke, "Is this how the Zhou family gets the law enforcement teams that come on duty to retreat?"

The smile on Zhou Ze's face slowly vanished, staring at Lu Ye, "What is Fellow Daoist Niu saying? This old man doesn't understand."

"Whether you understand or not, it matters not to me." Lu Ye placed down the tea cup in his hand and turned to instruct Xiao Xinghe, "Third Senior Brother, the Zhou family intends to bribe the law enforcement team on duty; gather the evidence of people and items, and report back to Lord Department Chief."

"Yes!" Xiao Xinghe grabbed the two storage sacks and stuffed them into his bosom.

Zhou Ze abruptly stood up, "Fellow Daoist Niu, the path is beneath your feet, do not walk a narrow path!"

Lu Ye also stood up, raising the guard token at his waist, "The Justice Department's Law Enforcement Hall is executing a task, anyone who obstructs shall be killed without mercy according to guard discipline!"

Lu Ye wasn't sure if guard discipline included such a rule; he's not familiar with it. But the work of the law enforcement team is to offend people. Zhou Wang's brawl affected numerous mortals, treating human lives as trivial—how could such a cultivator be allowed to get away?

Since Lu Ye accepted the task, he was determined to fulfill it.

Zhou Ze clearly knew their identity long ago, but he feigned ignorance because he claimed to be the independent cultivator Niu Meng.

Although Lu Ye could still maneuver, he did not plan to waste much time here. If he wanted a quick resolution, he must lay everything on the table.

Looking at the guard token in Lu Ye's hand, Zhou Ze's expression shifted several times; he never expected the visitor's stance to be so unyielding this time.

Previously, there were also two law enforcement teams that came, but Zhou Ze managed to resolve them with similar tactics, ensuring Zhou Wang was unharmed.

No matter what, cultivators are also human. Those cultivators who came to enforce the law had to consider the Zhou family's face or Zhou Kui's face.

Lu Ye had no knowledge of Zhou Kui. He hadn't been in the Justice Department for long and only knew the members of the A-3 squad.

With a shout, Lu Ye headed straight outside, walked out of the main hall, took out the tracking disc, confirmed its direction, and rushed deep into the Zhou family estate with Xiao Xinghe following closely.

There Zhou Wang... was hidden deep within the manor.

Nightingale, not having seen Zhou Wang's whereabouts for the past year, might not be lying. The Zhou family knew of Zhou Wang's crimes, so they concealed him internally. If he did not show himself, Nightingale would never see him.

But Nightingale definitely knew Zhou Wang's location.

As they went, they encountered many Zhou family cultivators along the way. These people had clearly received orders, knowing the consequences of openly obstructing Justice Department officials. They did not trouble Lu Ye and Xiao Xinghe but followed them with a watchful gaze.

In no time, nearly a hundred Zhou family cultivators were following them, with more coming from all directions, gradually increasing in numbers.

Until they reached a small courtyard, numerous cultivators finally blocked their path ahead.

Lu Ye paused, his aura surged, and he shouted fiercely, "Law Enforcement Hall is on duty, who dares to obstruct!"

The shout from the two carried the momentum of thousands of troops.

Many Zhou family cultivators showed a difficult expression immediately.

Just two True Lake Realm cultivators would not be feared by the Zhou family, but Lu Ye and Xiao Xinghe were members of the Justice Department's Law Enforcement Hall, posing a dilemma.

They were facing not only Lu Ye and Xiao Xinghe but also the Justice Department behind them.

Zhou Ze soared and landed in front of Lu Ye and Xiao Xinghe, his expression solemn: "Gentlemen, this is the forbidden land of our Zhou family, please do not trespass. We have no objection to your duties here and will cooperate, but if you dare to trespass the forbidden land, our Zhou family will not allow it."

Lu Ye stared at him, and replied coldly, "If you don't want us to intrude, hand over Zhou Wang, and I'll take him away!"

"Zhou Wang is no longer with the Zhou family."

"I received definite news that Zhou Wang is hiding inside."

"I say no, you say yes, then you must present evidence; otherwise, our Zhou family's forbidden land is not open to everyone!"

"This is the evidence!" Lu Ye raised his hand and threw out the tracking disc hidden in his sleeve.

Zhou Ze caught it, his face changed, clearly recognizing the tracking disc.

He never expected the Justice Department to be so extravagant in executing tasks, actually using a tracking disc to catch someone, an unprecedented event.

"Out of the way!" Lu Ye stepped forward, intending to charge into the courtyard.

"Block them!" Seeing Lu Ye truly intend to force his way in, Zhou Ze shouted angrily.

Immediately, someone flew out, thrusting a sword at Lu Ye, imposing and forceful, with True Lake Level 7 cultivation.

"Bold!" Lu Ye glared, drew the Boulder Mountain Saber, and slashed.

Sword and saber clashed, accompanied by a muffled groan, blood splattered in the air.

Shock filled the eyes of many Zhou family cultivators as the one sent flying was the Zhou family's Level 7 cultivator.

This moment of astonishment left numerous Zhou family cultivators frozen on the spot.

Lu Ye's steps continued uninterrupted, slashing forward through the waves, the Zhou family cultivators blocking ahead promptly retreated.

Xiao Xinghe closely followed, his long saber emitting brilliant flashes, aiding Lu Ye from both sides.

"Surround them!" Zhou Ze shouted in anger.

They could only encircle them. Even if Lu Ye's attack was harsh, the Zhou family dared not harm or kill Lu Ye and Xiao Xinghe here. Otherwise, the Justice Department would seek vengeance, and the Zhou family, even as a 3rd grade family, wouldn't withstand its wrath.

In an instant, numerous Zhou family cultivators surrounded them, encasing Lu Ye and Xiao Xinghe tightly.

Zhou Ze continued to shout angrily, "Apologies to you both, this is our Zhou family's forbidden land, truly cannot be trespassed. Today's events will be accounted for with the Justice Department in the future. I ask you both to leave swiftly."

Chapter 974 Taking People

Zhou Ze's words were polite, but his attitude was extremely firm. He clearly knew that no matter what, Lu Ye could not take Zhou Wang away today. Once Zhou Wang fell into Lu Ye's hands, he might survive today, but he would surely die in the future!

In the center surrounded by many Zhou family cultivators, the saber lights of Lu Ye and Xiao Xinghe crisscrossed, but they could not break through the encirclement by the Zhou family cultivators. The situation was at a stalemate for a while.

Although the two had the ability to fight across levels, they were currently unable to contend against the sheer number of opponents from the Zhou family. If the Zhou family truly intended to block them, their means were simply insufficient to resolve it.

Thankfully, these people knew their limits and did not dare to strike heavily, or even attack proactively, merely defending passively.

Lu Ye's offensive was fierce, and now with True Lake Level 5 cultivation, many Zhou family cultivators fighting him were caught off guard, constantly being injured and crying out.

He remained unflustered.

Relying solely on his status as a disciple of the Righteous Blood Sect, he could never cause such commotion or have such capability. Regardless, the Zhou family was a 3rd grade cultivation family, not a place anyone could invade.

But now he was part of the Law Enforcement Hall of the Justice Department, backed by the Justice Department of Bingzhou, which was his confidence for barging into the Zhou family today.

Xiao Xinghe did not know what Lu Ye intended, but from recent interactions, he understood that his junior brother never engaged in useless endeavors; he always acted with a plan. So even though the situation temporarily appeared unfavorable, Xiao Xinghe remained composed.

He vaguely felt that his junior brother surely had a backup plan.

Moreover, even if his junior brother didn't have a backup plan today, at most they would leave the Zhou family in embarrassment, but their lives would not be in any danger.

Lu Ye indeed had a backup plan. While contending with the numerous Zhou family cultivators, he was constantly focusing on sensing the commotion in the small courtyard.

He dared not use mental consciousness, as there must be a Divine Sea Realm master residing in the Zhou family; recklessly using mental consciousness could easily be detected by that person.

Until at some point, amidst the crowd encirclement, Lu Ye suddenly turned his head towards a direction, barely sighting someone swiftly flying out of the small courtyard.

It was evident that Zhou Wang, hiding in the courtyard, couldn't sit still or had received some directive, preparing to change location.

The tracking disc had just been given to Zhou Ze by Lu Ye; once Zhou Wang moved, it would be difficult for Lu Ye to track him without using the disc.

Zhou Wang had a great plan, little knowing Lu Ye was waiting for this very moment.

There were several True Lake Realm presences in the courtyard, and Lu Ye had never seen Zhou Wang before. If Zhou Wang didn't actively reveal himself, Lu Ye wouldn't know who was who, and even rushing into the courtyard might not succeed.

The fact that Zhou Wang revealed himself saved Lu Ye a great deal of trouble.

As Lu Ye swung his saber, a powerful momentum burst forth from him.

In a fleeting moment, many Zhou family cultivators around him faintly felt as if a crescent moon was suspended high behind Lu Ye. Those sensitive to such nuances immediately changed expression, "Saber Intent!"

There was no actual crescent moon; it was merely the precision of saber intent influencing himself.

An extremely dangerous aura emanated from Lu Ye, even causing Xiao Xinghe, fighting alongside him, to feel his skin tighten. Though he had spent time with Lu Ye and seen him in action, he had never witnessed Lu Ye exerting his full power; at that instant, Lu Ye felt entirely unfamiliar, deeply aggressive, and threatening not only to aura but also the soul.

It made everyone confronting him feel like a rabbit facing a tiger.

The influence of such aggression and intimidation was immense during a fierce battle.

The saber fell, upon the high-hanging crescent moon, streams of lunar radiance poured like water.

Each stream of lunar radiance was a sheet-like blade light.

Tyrannical Saber 2nd Movement, Crescent Moon!

"Be careful!" cried one who reacted quickly, hastily defending themselves.

The sounds of "shish, shish, shish" echoed incessantly, many Zhou family cultivators surrounding Lu Ye and flipping over, blood spurting.

They dared not strike heavily at Lu Ye and Xiao Xinghe; Lu Ye attacked without any restraint.

Previously, he only shouted "Those who dare obstruct official duties shall be killed without mercy," wasn't merely arbitrary; if not for the sheer number of Zhou family cultivators succeeding one another in defense against him and Xiao Xinghe, there might already be casualties all around.

If Tyrannical Saber 1st Movement, Myriad Stars suited solo combat against enemies, then the 2nd Movement, Crescent Moon, was perfect for solo fighting multiple foes.

Under the Crescent Moon, a slight flaw finally appeared in the tight formation. Despite Zhou family cultivators quickly rushing to remedy it, Lu Ye was already enveloped by fire-red spirit force, twisting and rolling around him, transforming into dense Yin-Yang Dual Origins, interlocking and embedding.

Making him look as if encased in a burning egg.

As the eggshell shattered, the call resonated throughout Dingtian City, a gigantic Fire Phoenix soared, crashing through the encirclement of Zhou family cultivators unprepared, charging toward Zhou Wang escaping.

Sensing commotion behind him, Zhou Wang looked back, beholding a magnificent burning Fire Phoenix, stunning him, hastily summoning his weapon to strike at the Phoenix.

The Fire Phoenix did not evade, letting these weapons gouge into its body, flames swirled, its momentum ever fiercer.

Their distance rapidly closed.

In the blink of an eye, the silhouette of the Fire Phoenix engulfed the area where Zhou Wang was, accompanied by a ghastly wail.

The many cultivators of the Zhou family, only just coming to their senses, were frozen in shock, staring agape at this scene.

The burning flames suddenly dissipated, revealing two figures. At this moment, Lu Ye held Zhou Wang by the arm with one hand, a saber pressed against Zhou Wang's neck, while his gaze was solemnly fixed on a certain spot of the Zhou Family Manor.

Just at the moment of success, he sensed a trace of a Divine Sea Realm presence, signaling an intent to act. However, he achieved his goal too swiftly, causing the other party to restrain their original intention. The presence of the strong cultivator from the Divine Sea flickered momentarily and then vanished.

After quietly watching that direction for a moment, Lu Ye finally withdrew his gaze.

Looking at the figure he had seized, burned beyond recognition, he asked in a deep voice, "What's your name?"

The might of the Fire Phoenix was overwhelmingly strong, and Lu Ye was now at the True Lake Level 5 realm. The person he captured was only at True Lake Level 2, so although Lu Ye quickly dispersed the Fire Phoenix, the other was still severely burned, their clothes charred and sticking to their bloodied skin, writhing in pain.

Yet he gritted his teeth and refused to answer, imploringly looking at the place where Lu Ye had fixed his gaze earlier, clearly hoping for rescue from his family's Divine Sea Realm cultivator.

"No one can save you," Lu Ye said calmly.

That Divine Sea Realm cultivator hadn't intervened earlier and certainly wouldn't now.

He likely valued Zhou Wang greatly, otherwise, he wouldn't have hidden him despite knowing his transgressions. But now that he had fallen into Lu Ye's hands, if he forcefully intervened, even killing Lu Ye and Xiao Xinghe here, the Justice Department would not let it go.

The Zhou family might be 3rd grade, but in front of the entire Justice Department, they're still incredibly fragile.

In his high position, he must consider not just momentary honor or disgrace, or one person's life, but the future of the entire family.

"This person is not Zhou Wang, Fellow Daoist Niu captured the wrong person," Zhou Ze shouted in frustration.

Never did they expect that so many people from the Zhou family would fail to stop Lu Ye.

They were indeed caught off guard; who would have thought that someone at True Lake Level 5 could exhibit such powerful strength with such earth-shattering explosiveness.

Neither the Crescent Moon nor the Fire Phoenix were techniques that ordinary cultivators could wield.

Of course, the main issue was their own qualms, fearing true retribution against Lu Ye and Xiao Xinghe, giving Lu Ye an opening to exploit.

If the previous clash had been a life-and-death battle, Lu Ye might have protected himself, but Xiao Xinghe would undoubtedly have died on the spot.

"Whether it's the wrong capture will be known once taken to the Justice Department for trial!" Lu Ye naturally couldn't be bothered with him. He didn't know Zhou Wang, but others did, and the Nightingale of this place was still with Lin Yinxiu. He called to Xiao Xinghe, "Third Senior Brother, let's go!"

Xiao Xinghe nodded silently and flew into the sky.

"Who dares to leave!" Zhou Ze shouted, leading a group of Zhou family cultivators to surround them again.

Lu Ye ignored him, only looking toward the hiding place of the Zhou family's Divine Sea Realm cultivator and said calmly, "Your honor should know the Justice Department's style of conduct. Now that I have captured the person and am leaving, if the Zhou family insists on blocking me, I can leave the person behind and take his life instead!"

As he said this, his Boulder Mountain Saber moved slightly.

Zhou Wang instantly let out a muffled groan, his neck beginning to drip with blood.

A surge of Mental Consciousness suddenly erupted, unnoticed by others, but Lu Ye sensed it clearly.

After a while, Zhou Ze restrained his previously firm stance, clasping his hands and saying, "Fellow Daoist Niu, it is a misunderstanding. The Zhou family does not intend to obstruct, only that his... injuries are severe. Can we have our healing cultivator tend to him first?"

This was evidently instructed by the Divine Sea Realm cultivator secretly, who understood that at this stage, they couldn't get the person back, and causing more trouble wouldn't benefit the Zhou family at all.

Lu Ye glanced at Zhou Wang, snorting lightly, "These injuries won't kill him!"

Zhou Wang's injuries seemed severe, but he was still a True Lake Realm cultivator, hardly so easy to die from this.

He shifted his tone: "But since the elder has spoken, I'll give you this courtesy. Thirty miles west of the city, the Zhou family may send a healing cultivator; I will wait one incense stick's time!"

With those words, he turned and left!

Xiao Xinghe followed closely behind.

Just as they flew out of the Zhou family's manor, they saw a familiar figure rushing towards them from afar, full of momentum.

It was Lin Yinxiu.

Lu Ye was greatly surprised, "Didn't I tell you to wait over there? How come you ran over?"

Lin Yinxiu said, "I saw there was movement over here, guessed you were in a fight, and thought to come support... Is it over?"

"It's over."

"We won?" Lin Yinxiu glanced at Zhou Wang, who Lu Ye was carrying, and exclaimed in admiration, "Captain is amazing."

Chapter 975 The Righteous Lu Yiye

"Where are those people?" Lu Ye asked.

Lin Yinxiu was responsible for guarding the captives from before. Now that she wasn't doing her job and had run over here, wasn't that place unguarded?

Lin Yinxiu smiled confidently, "Don't worry, Nightingale is watching over there. They won't be able to escape."

The three of them hurried back, and when they arrived, Lu Ye discovered where Lin Yinxiu's confidence came from.

On the spirit ark, those five people were not only bound by her web-like treasure, but there were also Explosive Fire Spirit Stones placed all around them. Nightingale was sweating profusely as he held an explosion talisman, watching them warily.

The atmosphere was such that if anyone dared to move, he would immediately activate the explosion talisman and send them all on their way together.

In such a situation, who would dare run away? They all stayed in place obediently, not moving a muscle.

Although Nightingale had been bribed by the Zhou family and had failed to transmit the information effectively, he was still part of the Justice Department. His actions were exposed by Lu Ye's Insight, and now he was trying to redeem himself. Lin Yinxiu gave him this opportunity, and Nightingale naturally seized it.

Seeing Lu Ye and the others return, Nightingale was visibly relieved.

Lin Yinxiu stepped forward to retrieve the Explosive Fire Spirit Stones she had placed, as well as her net treasure.

Lu Ye threw Zhou Wang onto the spirit ark and waited quietly.

The Zhou family was quite efficient. Not long after they returned, Zhou Ze rushed over with a healing cultivator.

The healing cultivator examined and treated Zhou Wang, while Zhou Ze came over to Lu Ye, cupped his hands and bowed, "Fellow Daoist Niu, today's matter was a mistake on the part of the Zhou family. We apologize. However, please consider the Zhou family's sincere effort to protect our disciples."

"I understand," Lu Ye responded calmly, "But the Zhou family should also understand that our work is not easy."

After all, they had already captured the person. Although the process had been somewhat unpleasant for everyone, the other party had now shown a submissive attitude, so there was no need to press the issue further.

His purpose in coming this time was simply to do his job.

Zhou Ze nodded repeatedly, "I understand, sir!" He looked around and said in a low voice, "But, sir, I have one more request that I hope you will grant."

"Let's hear it."

"Today, the Zhou family gave some items to you two. Please do not report this. If it gets out, it will benefit neither you nor our Zhou family."

"What items?"

Bribing the members of the Law Enforcement Hall in private would indeed be detrimental to the Zhou family if it became known. However, it would also be disadvantageous to the Law Enforcement Hall squads previously tasked with executing missions.

If an investigation were conducted, those Law Enforcement Hall squads that had dealt with the Zhou family before would inevitably be implicated.

Lu Ye was currently serving in the Justice Department, doing work that inherently offended people. Nevertheless, he did not wish to unnecessarily offend his colleagues without reason, so he didn't plan to report this matter anyway.

Besides, did Qian Wudang really not know about this kind of thing? Perhaps he had been aware of it all along but chose to turn a blind eye.

If even the Department Chief Lord acted like that, why should he make a fuss?

Hearing Lu Ye's words, Zhou Ze stroked his beard and smiled slightly, "I must have been mistaken, please don't mind, Fellow Daoist Niu."

Meanwhile, the healing cultivator had already finished treating Zhou Wang's injuries, which, although seemingly severe, were actually not serious, and thus not difficult to treat.

"Fellow Daoist Niu, as you journey to Haotian City, please take care of this inept disciple of the Zhou family. We are grateful to you."

"I am only responsible for taking him back to Haotian City. As long as he doesn't cause any trouble, I won't do anything to him."

"He won't cause any. Rest assured, Fellow Daoist."

Lu Ye nodded and turned to Nightingale, who was waiting for his punishment. His expression turned serious, "Go to Haotian City and receive your punishment."

Nightingale looked as if he had been granted an amnesty, "Yes!"

He summoned his Flying Spirit Artifacts and hurriedly left. Judging by the direction, he was indeed heading towards Haotian City.

"Farewell!" Lu Ye turned around, cupped his hands towards Zhou Ze, stepped onto the spirit ark, and shortly after, the spirit ark soared into the sky, transforming into a streak of light that quickly disappeared into the distance.

Zhou Ze watched him go, then turned and flew towards Dingtian City. It didn't take long for him to return to the Zhou Family Manor and meet with the current head of the Zhou family, Zhou Dingtian, in a forbidden land.

The name of Dingtian City was taken from him.

The forbidden land was the place where Lu Ye had previously sensed the Divine Sea Realm's aura and was also Zhou Dingtian's place for quiet cultivation.

"Family Head, they have left," Zhou Ze reported.

Zhou Dingtian sighed lightly, "I knew this day would come sooner or later."

"If you were reluctant to let them go, why did you allow them to leave the Zhou family earlier?"

"What else could I have done? Forcibly detained them?" Zhou Dingtian slowly shook his head, "If they were just two ordinary True Lake Realm cultivators, this family head naturally wouldn't take them seriously, but standing behind them is the Justice Department. It was wrong of you all to obstruct them in the first place. If I had intervened, the situation would have only escalated, and besides... If I'm not mistaken, that young man, Niu, is that rising star of the Righteous Blood Sect."

"Righteous Blood Sect?" Zhou Ze was slightly taken aback, soon realizing, "You mean Lu Yiye? How can you be so sure?"

Zhou Dingtian said, "The Four Auspicious Sacred Beasts!"

Righteous Blood Sect's Lu Yiye has been making a name for himself over the past few years, causing disturbances in both the Spirit Stream battlefield and the Cloud River battlefield on the side of Ten Thousand Demons Ridge, which naturally caught the attention of many.

Zhou Dingtian had taken note of him as well.

As soon as the Four Auspicious Sacred Beasts' Fire Phoenix technique was displayed, Zhou Dingtian was certain of Lu Ye's identity because he had once received intel detailing Lu Ye's various actions in the hunting grounds.

Lu Ye used the Fire Phoenix in the hunting ground.

Under the reflection of the two, if Zhou Dingtian still doesn't know that Niu Meng is Lu Ye, he's wasted all these years of living.

"Thang Yifeng has already risen again, ranked in the Elder Council. You must have heard of who he is. If I make things difficult for Lu Yiye here, Thang Yifeng might come to our Zhou family tomorrow."

Zhou Ze was drenched in cold sweat, with a look of lingering fear, grateful that he ordered the Zhou family's cultivators to surround but not harm Lu Ye due to concerns about his identity with the Justice Department's Law Enforcement Hall. Otherwise, if Lu Yiye had been hurt, bringing Thang Yifeng out... things would be hard to resolve.

"But Young Master Zhou Wang over there..."

Zhou Dingtian sighed slightly: "Send a message to Zhou Kui, tell him to handle things well. Don't seek to avoid punishment, just try to keep him alive."

"Yes!"

...

"Junior brother, is this the direction to Mount Ao?" On the spirit ark, Xiao Xinghe examined the ten-part map and found the spirit ark was flying towards Mount Ao instead of Haotian City.

"It's just on the way, returning to the sect to handle some matters."

"Alright, it's been a while since I've seen Second Senior Sister." Xiao Xinghe nodded, suddenly remembered something, and took out two storage sacks from his chest: "These things..."

These were the two storage sacks previously sent by Zhou Ze, containing quite a lot of good stuff.

"Senior brother, you can keep them for your own cultivation; I don't lack cultivation supplies, nor does Yinxiu."

With Qian Wudang backing her, how could Lin Yinxiu lack cultivation resources?

"Isn't this improper? Weren't you saying before..." Xiao Xinghe hesitated a bit.

"Just talk, who really would turn them in?"

Xiao Xinghe was speechless. Previously, Lu Ye had forcibly stormed the Zhou family, brazenly acted, and caught Zhou Wang right under the noses of a group of Zhou family's cultivators, making him think his junior brother was upright and law-abiding. But now it seemed, the junior brother wasn't entirely inflexible.

He felt relieved all of a sudden.

"Then I won't be polite." Xiao Xinghe laughed heartily and put away the storage sack.

Though they said it was on the way, they did take a bit of a detour. But generally, the direction was correct.

By noon the next day, the spirit ark arrived at Mount Ao's territory, and after flying forward for a long time, it finally reached Righteous Peak.

The huge peak was still empty, without a single person in sight.

Although the Righteous Blood Sect now has quite a few disciples, their cultivation time is still short. Either they are cultivating hard at the Spirit Stream battlefield's residence or have entered the Cloud River battlefield, naturally making the sect headquarters seem quiet.

Unlike other sects, where both the headquarters and the two battlefields have the presence of large numbers of disciples.

But soon, a familiar figure came into view; it was Shui Yuan who noticed the commotion.

Seeing Lu Ye and Xiao Xinghe at the boat's bow, Shui Yuan's face blossomed into a smile.

The spirit ark flew down; Lu Ye leaped off the spirit ark: "Second Senior Sister."

Shui Yuan slightly nodded, her gaze turned to Xiao Xinghe.

Xiao Xinghe took a deep breath, calmed his excitement, grinned at Shui Yuan and said: "Second Senior Sister, I'm back."

There was a slight mist in Shui Yuan's eyes; she raised her hand and lightly patted Xiao Xinghe's shoulder. Because of the height difference, she slightly stood on her tiptoes.

Just as Lu Ye expected to see a warm scene of sisterly love and brotherly respect, Shui Yuan's jade hand moved like lightning, grabbed Xiao Xinghe's ear, harshly twisted it around, gritting her teeth: "You still know to come back, huh? I haven't seen you for years; I thought you died out there!"

Xiao Xinghe tilted his head, hunched over, and pleaded with gritted teeth: "Ouch ouch ouch, little junior brother, save me!"

Lu Ye silently took a few steps back and decisively said: "I'm off to see the master!"

Better to slip away first!

On the unemptied spirit ark, Zhou Wang and five others shivered, sensing Shui Yuan's Divine Sea Realm's powerful aura.

Lin Yinxu, on the other hand, watched with cheerful curiosity, looking quite intrigued.

At Bright Heart Peak, Lu Ye arrived with ease, but only saw the master's doppelganger, Little Butterfly, not the master himself.

Of course, Little Butterfly is the master's doppelganger, which means she is practically the master.

According to her, during the repairs of the Dragon Throne, the master gained many insights, and after the sect master took the Dragon Throne away, he began to close in seclusion for comprehension.

Since he was in seclusion, Lu Ye naturally wouldn't disturb him too much, and the master using a doppelganger to speak with him also required distraction.

After listening to some instruction for a moment, Lu Ye hurriedly left Bright Heart Peak.

Just as he was about to return to Righteous Peak, a message suddenly came from the battlefield marking, Lu Ye checked it and found that it was sent by Yiyi.

When he came over here earlier, Yiyi and Amber had separated from him and headed to Emerald Bamboo Peak.

Emerald Bamboo Peak is Lu Ye's spirit mountaintop; because he seldom returns, every time he comes back, Yiyi always tidies it up.

"Lu Ye, come quickly, there seems to be someone here."

"Who is it?" Lu Ye was quite surprised. This is the Righteous Blood Sect's headquarters, and Emerald Bamboo Peak is his spirit mountaintop. Shui Yuan also stationed here regularly. Who could have gone over there?

Chapter 976 Don't Work So Hard

Quickly rushed to Emerald Bamboo Peak, and saw Yiyi from afar standing in front of his bamboo lodge, Amber revealed his true form, crouching low and growling at the bamboo lodge.

Lu Ye fixed his gaze, eyebrows furrowed.

For there were many traces of formations around the bamboo lodge.

Undoubtedly indicating someone was inside!

The traces of formations appeared because Yiyi wanted to enter the bamboo lodge to clean, but triggered the lodge's formations and was blocked by them.

Something seemed amiss.

Second Senior Sister now has Divine Sea Realm cultivation, if someone truly trespassed here, she had no reason not to notice. Since the person is staying here, it means they got Second Senior Sister's approval.

But this is his spirit mountaintop, his bamboo lodge, who could make Second Senior Sister compromise like this?

Just as Lu Ye was puzzling over this, a delicate and beautiful face appeared in the window of the bamboo lodge's second floor, clearly someone inside noticed the commotion outside and looked out.

Eyes met, Lu Ye was extremely astonished: "Lord?"

The person residing here wasn't anyone else, it turned out to be Nian Yuexian who claimed she would be retreating for a while.

Amber immediately transformed to the size of a kitten, no longer appearing majestic, but rather exceedingly docile...

"Lord, why are you here?"

Nian Yuexian looked at him, speaking, "Came here to retreat, borrowing your place, I've already informed Shui Yuan."

Lu Ye then understood, quickly clasped his fists, "I was unaware, Lord, I beg your pardon, I will take my leave!"

After speaking, he signaled to Yiyi and Amber, and swiftly left.

Slowly, he started to understand, since Nian Yuexian wanted to retreat, she definitely needed a safe and quiet place. She originated as an independent cultivator, and though Bingzhou was vast, besides Haotian City, nowhere was suitable for her.

Yet Haotian City evidently wasn't right for her.

Righteous Blood Sect was the best choice.

This sect, apart from Shui Yuan, had few disciples coming and going; plus Shui Yuan could help watch over, no one would disturb her.

Yet unexpectedly today, he and Yiyi were startled.

However, talking about it, why does Nian Yuexian always have issues with his bamboo lodge.

Previously at Cangyan Mountain Pass, she forcibly occupied his first bamboo lodge, and now she's here again taking over.

The Mount Ao region is so vast, plenty of spirit mountaintops, she purposely chose Emerald Bamboo Peak for retreat and cultivation.

No choice but to let it be.

Returning to Righteous Peak, Shui Yuan was busy in the small kitchen, Lin Yinxiu helped her, though it was evident Lin Yinxiu hadn't done such chores before, awkward and clumsy, yet enjoying herself.

No sign of Xiao Xinghe.

"Where's Third Senior Brother?" Lu Ye asked.

"Went to Moon Lake to catch fish." Shui Yuan casually replied, disciples originating from Righteous Blood Sect had a fondness for Moon Lake's Blood Red Trout, as did Fourth Senior Brother, just like Third Senior Brother, who hadn't been back for years, he returned now, naturally wanting a feast.

"Second Senior Sister, I need some supplies!" Lu Ye spoke.

This trip back to Mount Ao wasn't exactly along the way, he went the extra mile for this.

Lu Ye now receives a fixed large income from battle merit every month, as long as he doesn't waste it, it's enough for his use, yet he doesn't have much merit left.

He doesn't have a great need for merit, yet at times it's necessary.

Just like the previous purchase of a spirit ark for the squad from Heaven's Augury treasure vault, which required merit expenditure, usually when not using spirit fortune sticks for Theft of Heaven's Augury cultivation, it also demands merit expenditure.

Acquiring merit is simple, just sell more items to Heaven's Augury treasure vault.

Back in the Spirit Stream battlefield, Lu Ye extorted various big sects of Ten Thousand Demons Ridge twice, gaining resources worth tens of millions of merit, stored in Righteous Blood Sect's treasure vault, now he needed them, Shui Yuan naturally wouldn't refuse.

Obtaining the restriction jade cluster from Shui Yuan, Lu Ye went straight there, quite familiar with the route.

The treasure vault is located within Righteous Peak, using the jade cluster to activate various restrictions, he entered a large cavern, neatly categorizing all kinds of cultivation resources and Spiritual Artifacts.

Lu Ye searched around.

Soon left the treasure vault, went to Heaven's Augury Hall, sold the collected items to Heaven's Augury treasure vault, his merit increasing visibly, until nearly a million where he stopped.

This amount of merit would be sufficient for his use for a long time.

Night fell, outside the small kitchen, four people sat down, tasting Shui Yuan's culinary skills.

Lu Ye and Xiao Xinghe toasted each other, even Shui Yuan, who usually disapproved of them drinking, had a few cups.

Lin Yinxiu, unaware of limits, joined in, soon her cheeks flushed rosy, had it not been for her True Lake Realm cultivation, she would have been sprawled on the ground.

Harmony prevailed.

On the spirit ark, Zhou Wang and the other six who were captured watched from afar, full of envy, thinking about their future days, feeling bitter inside.

It wasn't until late at night that the banquet dispersed, each rested.

The next day dawned, Lu Ye and others prepared to set out, Shui Yuan earnestly reminded, "Don't be reckless, the old man is now in Haotian City, if anyone dares trouble you, go find him."

"Understood, Second Senior Sister." Lu Ye and Xiao Xinghe responded together.

"Go on, come back often if you have time." Shui Yuan waved.

"Second Senior Sister, take care!" Lu Ye and Xiao Xinghe saluted together.

Soon, the spirit ark transformed into a stream of light, soaring into the sky.

On Emerald Bamboo Peak, in the bamboo tower's second floor, Nian Yuexian quietly watched until the spirit ark disappeared from sight, then waved her jade hand, activating many formations and restrictions around her.

Time to retreat and cultivate again.

Haotian City, Justice Department main hall.

Today is quite leisurely, with not much official business to handle, a rare day of relaxation, Qian Wudang certainly wouldn't stay in the Justice Department hall all day.

He got up and walked outside, planning to visit Fan Xiangyi at the Heralds Office to chat and express his grievances.

He was troubled!

Ever since Yinxiu left him before, he would often send messages to inquire, but rarely received much response, leaving his heart uneasy, always worrying she might be bullied or encounter invincible opponents outside.

Passing by the Hunting Pavilion, he paused and turned to enter.

The elderly man was snoring thunderously, having fallen asleep on his desk.

Qian Wudang's forehead twitched, he went up and knocked on the desk.

The elderly man slowly raised his sleepy eyes, upon seeing Qian Wudang, he grumbled, "Disturbing people's dreams, is this how you do your job as Department Chief?"

Qian Wudang was amused, "Is this how you guard the Hunting Pavilion?"

The elderly man sat upright, "I've toiled my whole life, now at this age, just want to live peacefully, have no ambition. What, Lord Department Chief plans to punish me for neglecting duty? Go ahead, send me to the prison for a few days, enjoy some tranquility."

Qian Wudang was left speechless, "You weren't like this when you were young, how come you've gotten more unruly with age!" He didn't feel like quarreling, changed the subject, "Speaking of serious matters, that brat Lu Yiye still hasn't returned to hand over his tasks?"

The elderly man's eyes widened in surprise, "Isn't Yinxiu in his squad? Wouldn't you know the situation over there?"

Speaking of this, Qian Wudang felt a twinge in his heart...

Perhaps, after years of restraining Yinxiu too tightly, now that she's gained freedom, she's somewhat liberated herself, rarely replying to his messages.

"Now it's the Department Chief asking you!" Qian Wudang took on the demeanor of the Justice Department Chief.

The elderly man continued to poke his heart, chuckling, "Yinxiu doesn't want communication with you? Told you before, girls aren't raised like that, being overly protective isn't helpful, you wouldn't listen. That girl Yinxiu, while she seems obedient and gentle, she's actually very much like her mother."

Qian Wudang turned to leave.

The elderly man grabbed his arm, "Leaving in a hurry?"

Qian Wudang shouted, "Old thing, I've nothing to say to you, let go!"

"Haven't finished talking, you were asking about Lu Yiye's situation?"

Qian Wudang stopped struggling, "What is it?"

"Nothing much, haven't seen him recently."

Qian Wudang pondered, "So it means, the task he took last time still hasn't been completed. Previously, could quickly complete them, was just sheer luck?"

"Seems like it." The elderly man nodded.

Qian Wudang understood, "That's normal, one's luck can't always be so favorable."

Just then, he turned to look outside, seeing a familiar figure entering with a blade.

"Senior, I'm here to submit the task." Lu Ye walked into the Hunting Pavilion and felt surprised, "Lord Department Chief is here too."

Qian Wudang smiled, "Task completed?"

"Completed." As Lu Ye spoke, he handed the jade slip he last took from here back to the elderly man.

"Not bad." Qian Wudang praised, considering for a moment, remarked, "No need to rush so much, focus more on your cultivation, with higher cultivation, you can complete tasks more effectively."

"Understood." Lu Ye replied casually, turning to the elderly man, "Senior, about the jade slips containing the tasks you took out last time?"

"They're all here." The elderly man picked up the jade slips, these tasks were the kind that no one was interested in, so the jade slips had remained there.

Qian Wudang frowned, he just advised Lu Ye not to be so hasty, and now this kid is ready to take on more tasks? Completely disregarding the Department Chief's words!

Just as he was about to persuade Lu Ye to let Yinxiu rest for a few days, he saw Lu Ye sorting through the jade slips in his hand, returning them to the elderly man, "Submitting the tasks!"

The elderly man looked at Lu Ye, Lu Ye looked at him, both stared at each other for a moment.

"What do you mean?" The elderly man was baffled.

"Didn't you mention last time, it's possible to first accomplish the task objectives, then later complete the submission process, isn't it?"

The elderly man regained his senses, somewhat incredulous, "You mean to say, the targets from these tasks, you've accomplished them all?"

"They're waiting for disposal over at the prison." Lu Ye gave a thumbs-up, pointing behind him.

The elderly man turned to look at Qian Wudang.

Qian Wudang was examining messages, remarkably a report from the prison, sensing the elderly man's gaze, he nodded slightly, his expression was surprised.

Previously he thought, completing a task in half a month was normal efficiency.

But completing six tasks in half a month... that wasn't normal.

How did this kid manage to do it?

Chapter 977 Hundred Fragrance House

No one would joke about this in the Hunting Pavilion, and now with Qian Wudang's confirmation, the chubby elder finally confirmed that Lu Ye really completed all the tasks on the jade slip.

But... can such a thing really be done?

Half a month, six tasks, even a Divine Sea Realm cultivator might not achieve such efficiency. Just finding people alone requires a lot of time and effort.

"Then I shall take my leave!" Lu Ye returned the task jade slip, cupped his hands in salute.

"Not taking any more tasks?" The chubby elder casually asked.

"Not for now." Lu Ye continued walking, lightly waving his hand.

The main reason being that he had no more battle merit.

He now had just over twenty thousand battle merit remaining, while a tracking disc alone costs thirty thousand, simply unaffordable.

Moreover, after roaming outside for quite some time, he certainly needed some rest, at least giving the third senior brother time for cultivation, otherwise what's the point of earning battle merit?

Normal law enforcement teams would exchange the battle merits earned from completing a task for spirit fortune stick cultivation, and once the battle merit ran out, they would take up another task.

This is the cultivation rhythm for most cultivators, who would spend their battle merit as quickly as possible, converting it into their own foundation.

Lu Ye left, inside the Hunting Pavilion, Qian Wudang and the chubby elder exchanged looks.

"Old Department Chief, do you think this could be Heaven's Augury's blessing?" Qian Wudang asked with a solemn expression.

"Absolutely not!" The chubby elder shook his head decisively.

Even if blessed by Heaven's Augury, a person's luck wouldn't be this good. Half a month for six task targets, subtracting the travel time, averaging two captures in one day, this cannot simply be explained by Heaven's Augury's blessing.

"Then how did he do it?" Qian Wudang racked his brain but couldn't figure it out.

The chubby elder mused, "He said he borrowed a tracking disc, but I absolutely don't believe it. Yet now it seems that except for the tracking disc, there is no other explanation."

"Does he have that many tracking discs?"

"Whether he does or not, just ask that girl Yinxiu, she was out on tasks with this lad, she must know how the tasks were completed."

Qian Wudang nodded, "I'll give it a try."

Just worried Yinxiu wouldn't tell him...

Yet this time they were lucky indeed, Lin Yinxiu soon replied.

"How is it?" asked the chubby elder.

Qian Wudang laughed helplessly, "That lad really did borrow tracking discs for tasks... He's certainly extravagant."

Since Lu Ye entered the Justice Department's Law Enforcement Hall, he had completed eight tasks, spending less than a month, which means, in under a month, he used up eight tracking discs.

Where did he get that many tracking discs?

"I do recall a matter," the chubby elder said leisurely, "Back in the day, Feng Wujiang used several tracking discs to locate the strong figures of Ten Thousand Demons Ridge, then assassinate them! This caused great fear among them. I never understood then, where Feng Wujiang got so many tracking discs either, so I asked him face-to-face, and he said he could craft them."

"But tracking discs are Heaven's Augury artifacts, how could Feng Wujiang craft them?"

"That's something beyond me."

"Are you suggesting..."

"Tracking discs really might be crafted, Feng Wujiang had the method, so it's no surprise if Lu Yiye knows how as well, given they're both from the Righteous Blood Sect."

Qian Wudang lightly nodded, it made sense like this.

"This lad is a treasure!" the chubby elder began, "He crafted the Explosive Fire Spirit Stone; if he can also craft tracking discs, his value is immense."

"That's why I told you not to give him too difficult tasks, not just for Yinxiu's sake; I'm worried he'll end up in danger, this lad dares to intrude places like Jinglan Lake Pass, must be extremely bold. I hoped to use these tasks to occupy him for some time, but didn't expect he could craft tracking discs."

With this, the previous plan falls through.

"What's your plan then? Surely you can't stop him from taking tasks, the Justice Department has no such rule or precedent?" asked the chubby elder.

"I'll find a chance to talk with him." Qian Wudang said with concern.

If Lu Ye was truly someone with no ambition, coasting along, it wouldn't be troublesome. But observing Lu Ye's growth, how could he not know this lad isn't one to abide quietly?

But as the old Department Chief said, they can't stop him from taking tasks; there's no such precedent in the Justice Department.

In the courtyard, Lu Ye returned but didn't see Xiao Xinghe and Lin Yinxiu, probably resting.

The snowman in the yard had long melted, and the piled snow had turned into streams.

Lu Ye entered his room and began crafting Explosive Fire Spirit Stones. In a few days, it'll be time for delivery again.

Thinking he could slightly increase output, thus gaining more monthly battle merit, but he couldn't push it too much, otherwise it couldn't be explained—twenty thousand battle merit a month was just right.

While busy, a message came through the battlefield marking.

Lu Ye checked and found it was Warlord Geng's message, asking if he was in Haotian City.

Lu Ye quickly replied, thinking it was A-3 squad lacking manpower for a mission, but unexpectedly it was a call to drink.

A-3 squad had just returned from a mission, and gathering after each task had become their tradition.

Lu Ye had no reason to refuse, stepped out of the room, thought for a while, and arrived at Third Brother's door, gently knocking.

Drinking was naturally not a solitary act; the more people, the merrier.

Besides, everyone was now working at the Law Enforcement Hall, future interactions were inevitable.

Xiao Xinghe pushed the door open.

Lu Ye stated his purpose: "Someone called for a drink, if Senior Brother is free, would you like to join?"

Xiao Xinghe laughed heartily: "Such a good event, how could I miss it? Let's go together."

"I'll go too!" Lin Yinxiu poked her little head out from the next room, and even Amber, resting in the hallway, leaped onto Lu Ye's shoulder, ready to share the joy and face the challenges together.

"Let's go then." Lu Ye called out, and the three of them immediately took flight.

A short while later, they arrived at Hundred Fragrance House, the hall was full of guests, very lively.

Lu Ye led Xiao Xinghe and Lin Yinxiu inside, and saw Xiao Ruyun waiting for them.

"Yiye, you're late, later you have to drink three cups as a penalty!" Xiao Ruyun called enthusiastically, previously calling Lu Ye Junior Brother, but now as Lu Ye's cultivation improved rapidly, he was on the brink of surpassing him, so calling him Junior Brother wasn't fitting anymore. They were quite familiar, calling him Yiye felt more intimate. He also noticed the two people Lu Ye brought: "Who are these two..."

"This is my third senior brother Xiao Xinghe, and this is my squad member Lin Yinxiu." Lu Ye introduced.

Upon hearing Xiao Xinghe was Lu Ye's third senior brother, Xiao Ruyun was extremely enthusiastic, and Lin Yinxiu, being a beauty, received his praises.

Although sometimes his words lacked tact, he wasn't inherently bad, his verbal skills made people feel close quickly.

The four proceeded further in.

Hundred Fragrance House had a large area, the outer hall had three stories, accommodating dozens of tables, and the back hall had several elegant courtyards, with pleasant environments mainly serving regular guests.

Warlord Geng had a close relationship with the owner of Hundred Fragrance House, naturally each visit was arranged in the elegant courtyard.

This courtyard was not the previous one, but the environment was generally the same, quite nice.

Within the pavilion in the courtyard, a long table, A-3 squad members sat on both sides, drinking and making merry, Xiao Ruyun led Lu Ye and others to join.

After exchanging greetings, Lu Ye introduced Xiao Xinghe and Lin Yinxiu.

Others didn't have much reaction, being warm in attitude, but Warlord Geng looked at Lin Yinxiu with surprise.

He often visited the Justice Department main hall, recognizing Lin Yinxiu naturally!

Unexpectedly, Lord Department Chief had let her out, and joined Lu Ye's squad, showing Lu Ye's importance in the Department Chief's eyes.

Though he saw through it, he didn't say much, treating Lin Yinxiu as a regular cultivator from the Law Enforcement Hall.

Muk Zheng was obviously delighted, as each gathering had only her as a female, despite their close relationships akin to siblings, there were always inconveniences.

Lin Yinxiu's arrival gave her someone to share secrets with, and in no time the two women were together.

Constantly, delicate and delicious food was served, with everyone having cultivation, they drank freely, speaking boldly, the scene was lively.

The adjacent courtyards likely had gatherings too, their conversations could be heard occasionally.

The courtyard had some restriction formations, if one didn't want their talks heard, they could activate these to isolate themselves, generally only done for important discussions, not needed for casual gatherings.

After all, activating restriction formations required consuming Spirit Stones.

After three rounds of drinks, the atmosphere grew even more intense.

Warlord Geng and others tapped their bowls with chopsticks, singing low or loud, Lu Ye listened with delight, not clearly hearing what they sang, but feeling the deep camaraderie among A-3 squad members.

Cultivators who left the sect, ventured into Nine Provinces and joined Bingzhou guard, still held the sect as their main support, but made indispensable friends of like-minded nature along the way.

Thus, life's many wonders were born.

Amid this harmonious atmosphere, suddenly a harsh shout came from the neighboring courtyard:
"Howling like ghosts and wolves, disrupting peace!"

The singing stopped abruptly, everyone exchanged glances, feeling awkward.

No one was angry over it, knowing they were at fault first for disturbing others, which was indeed inappropriate. They were too excited and drank quite a lot, hadn't considered this aspect. Normally their gatherings were lively, but not as rowdy as today.

Warlord Geng thus instructed: "Ruyun, activate the courtyard's restriction."

"Okay!" Xiao Ruyun responded, about to trigger the courtyard's restriction.

Just then, a startled cry came from the neighboring courtyard, as if someone was frightened, followed by the voice of the one who shouted earlier: "Boss Shen, if you don't drink this wine, you're disrespecting my brothers, today I'm not in a good mood, can't help but act rudely."

Xiao Ruyun's movement paused, and Warlord Geng suddenly raised his head, looking towards the direction of the neighboring courtyard.

Chapter 978 Beat Them

Lu Ye paused with his wine glass at his lips, listening intently.

If he wasn't mistaken, that earlier exclamation should be the voice of Hundred Fragrance House's proprietress, Shen Manzi.

He had no idea what the table next door was up to, but to make such arrogant remarks at this gathering seemed audacious.

Those who were settled in the elegant courtyard were undoubtedly regulars of Hundred Fragrance House. Whenever these regulars came, Shen Manzi would usually go to toast them with a few glasses, which was normal business practice.

Shen Manzi must have gone to offer a toast, but it's uncertain if she might have done something insufficiently well, prompting such an attack from the other side.

"Captain!" Xiao Ruyun stood not far away, looking at Warlord Geng.

Warlord Geng remained seated, slowly shaking his head, "Don't worry about it for now."

Cultivators coming to Hundred Fragrance House for leisure and joy came in all kinds, and Shen Manzi, with her charm and grace, though such incidents were rare, had encountered such situations before and always resolved them smoothly.

She was indeed someone adept at handling situations, otherwise, she could not run such a wine house in Haotian City.

Then, from the courtyard next door, Shen Manzi's voice could be heard, "It's rare for you esteemed guests to come by, I should naturally accompany you more with drinks, I'll drink first as a toast."

Not long after, cheers erupted from that side, probably because Shen Manzi downed a glass.

"I've heard of Boss Shen's great capacity for alcohol for a long time, and seeing it today, it truly lives up to the reputation. Come, come, let me toast Boss Shen." Someone else spoke.

Another wave of enthusiastic persuasion ensued.

Although Shen Manzi declined kindly, she couldn't resist the extreme enthusiasm of the others and had to drink another glass.

"Let me toast Boss Shen!" Another person spoke up.

Shen Manzi's gentle voice came, "I really can't drink anymore, if I drink more, I'll truly get drunk."

"Boss Shen, you're being disrespectful, you accompanied the previous few brothers, how can you say you'd get drunk when it comes to me, does Boss Shen look down on me?"

"How dare I, you're joking, respected guest."

"If you respect me, then drink them all!"

"Respected guest, please let go!"

While there was a struggle occurring over there, in the pavilion of this courtyard, Shangguan Qiu vaguely sensed something was off and looked at Warlord Geng, "Captain, it seems to be targeted at us!"

Otherwise, there would be no reason to take things to such an extreme.

Those who could be settled in the elegant courtyard were undoubtedly regulars, being regulars, they should give Shen Manzi some face, and they should also be aware of Shen Manzi's relationship with Warlord Geng.

Although Warlord Geng was not in the Divine Sea Realm, as the captain of the Justice Department's Law Enforcement Hall Team A-3, he was somewhat of a figure in Haotian City, and ordinary people wouldn't dare to get drunk and cause trouble here.

Unless they were targeting Team A-3, just not daring to outright clash with them, and used Shen Manzi to disgust Warlord Geng.

"It's people from Team A-5 and Team D-7!" Kang Yuanqiao recognized the voices of a few people, further confirming Shangguan Qiu's suspicion.

Although they all belonged to the Justice Department's Law Enforcement Hall, the teams weren't on entirely harmonious terms with each other, perhaps due to personal reasons or perhaps due to the influence of their backing sects, there were always minor grudges and frictions, and of course, more of it was competition.

The relationship between Team A-3 with Team A-5 and Team D-7 wasn't considered harmonious.

Especially with Team A-5, Team A-3 once had a joint mission experience with them, during which Team A-5, to seize merit, altered the action plan without permission, indirectly leading to a member of Team A-3 dying in battle!

This is also the reason why Team A-3 has only five members to this day.

Although most of Team A-5's battle merits were deducted as punishment afterward, the member of Team A-3 who died in battle could not be revived, which also led to the members of Team A-3 harboring great resentment towards Team A-5's people.

Of course, the perception of Team A-5 towards Team A-3 wasn't good either, in their view, the team member died entirely because he wasn't careful enough, otherwise, how come no one else was harmed, and only he died, resulting in them laboring hard for little battle merit.

"I'll go take a look." Warlord Geng drank from his glass and stood up.

The members of Team A-3 all rose.

"You all stay put!" Warlord Geng ordered, leaping into the adjoining courtyard.

Immediately, exclamations came from the other side, "Warlord Geng!"

Warlord Geng's voice arose, "If you want to drink, I'll accompany you, what skill is there in a bunch of men bullying a woman!"

"We're all guests here, showing her respect by toasting. How is it bullying? And what position do you have, Warlord Geng, to stand out?"

Warlord Geng said in a deep voice, "Drink or not? If you're drinking, drink, if not, get out!"

"Brother Warlord certainly has a grand demeanor, even when the proprietress hasn't spoken, you've already driven us out, is this how Hundred Fragrance House does business?"

"It's long been heard that Brother Warlord takes great care of Boss Shen, now it seems true."

"Indeed, Boss Shen must be so enchanting, making Brother Warlord comfortable in bed, that's why he takes such care of her."

"I've heard many people look after Boss Shen too." Someone chuckled lowly.

"I can look after Boss Shen too, if only Boss Shen were willing..."

"Crash!" A sound like a wine jar breaking rang out, followed by an angry shout: "Warlord Geng, how dare you hit me!"

"Hit him!"

In an instant, the courtyard next door was thrown into chaos.

Xiao Ruyun and others, who had been paying attention to the commotion, immediately got up. Their figures flashed like lightning as they rushed over.

Lu Ye, Xiao Xinghe, and Lin Yinxu also followed closely behind.

Upon entering the scene, Xiao Ruyun and the others' eyes turned red with rage, for Warlord Geng was currently surrounded and beaten by more than ten people.

Although he was a physique cultivator with great physical strength, in such a scenario, even he was finding it difficult to fend off so many attacks, appearing utterly disheveled.

"Beat them!" Xiao Ruyun roared in anger as several members of Team A-3 charged into the fray like tigers descending a mountain.

Lu Ye hadn't expected that having a drink could lead to such a brawl, but since things had come to this, he couldn't just stand by and watch, so he plunged into the fight as well.

"Don't use spirit force!" Warlord Geng shouted, mostly worried that Lu Ye might go overboard with his spirit force, though he wasn't concerned about the others.

Haotian City had strict rules, and such mass brawls rarely happened. However, exceptions existed, especially among such hot-blooded cultivators, making disputes inevitable.

If spirit force wasn't used, a regular scuffle wouldn't lead to death, but if spirit force was employed, the situation would spiral out of control. If someone died, it would be disastrous for everyone involved.

Therefore, in Haotian City, even if disputes arose, using spirit force or Spiritual Artifacts was strictly avoided, leading to simple brawls.

In such scenarios, physique cultivators undoubtedly had great advantages due to their formidable physical bodies.

Having just drunk quite a bit, everyone was at the perfect state for impulsiveness. Coupled with the deliberate provocations from the people in the adjacent courtyard, a fight naturally broke out.

Warlord Geng was in a dire situation, after all, before everyone arrived, he was besieged by over ten people from two teams, prompting everyone to rush forward to help.

Just as Lu Ye landed, ready to charge, a figure flashed before him. A robust young man stood in his path.

Without a word, the young man reached out to grab Lu Ye.

This strike seemed prepared for a while. Caught off guard, Lu Ye was grabbed by the shoulder; a sharp pain followed as the young man pressed him down with a big hand, delivering a fierce kick to his chest.

Though no spirit force was used, the young man's physique amplifying his strength made the kick extremely powerful.

If hit by such a blow, severe injury was certain.

However, he underestimated Lu Ye's reaction speed. Faced with such an attack, Lu Ye also raised his leg and fiercely kicked back.

With a boom, both their figures jolted intensely. Lu Ye merely swayed slightly and was unharmed, while the young man needed several steps back to stabilize himself, feeling one of his legs go numb.

His eyes filled with uncertain astonishment, never expecting that Lu Ye, shorter by a head, could surpass him in sheer physical strength.

Just as the young man steadied himself, a tiger's roar echoed. In his view, Amber, originally cat-sized, rapidly expanded, turning into a ferocious beast, lunging with jaws wide open.

The young man was shocked.

Hurriedly, he dodged to the side, narrowly avoiding Amber's strike.

In such a fight, the presence of a fierce Demon Commander-level demon beast offered significant intimidation.

Amber swiped past him, claws raking to tear away a piece of flesh.

He barely noticed, as at that moment of distraction, Lu Ye had charged in front, throwing a punch.

This punch unleashed all Lu Ye's strength, force roaring from his fist.

The young man squinted his eyes, sensing something ominous, but already unable to evade, he also punched forward.

Upon impact, the young man's face twitched violently, feeling as if a mountain, not a fist, struck him.

His body uncontrollably retreated again, while Lu Ye, relentless, pursued for more punches and kicks, attacking with abandon.

Amber turned around from afar, possibly intending to assist, but seeing Lu Ye gaining the upper hand, it pounced into the chaotic melee instead.

With their fewer numbers, Warlord Geng and the others were at a disadvantage, yet Amber's involvement significantly improved the situation.

Lu Ye's punches landed solidly, causing the young man to grimace continuously. Clearly unable to withstand it any longer, as Lu Ye's fist struck again, the young man's blood Qi and spirit force burst out in defense.

Previously, without his opponent using spirit force, Lu Ye couldn't gauge his depth. However, the moment spirit force was used, the opponent's cultivation was laid bare.

Surprisingly, the opponent was a True Lake Level 9 cultivator!

Recognizing the cultivation, Lu Ye frowned, suddenly sensing a dissonance.

Why would someone with such high cultivation intercept him? Recalling the confrontation, Lu Ye couldn't shake off the feeling that the opponent had specifically targeted him.

There was no time to ponder, as the opponent used spirit force, Lu Ye naturally wouldn't hold back. In an instant, he transformed his fist into a palm, a Sharpness spirit rune enhancing the edge as he slashed down.

The protective shield formed by blood Qi and spirit force shattered instantly, striking the young man, who grunted, face twisted in pain.

Chapter 979 Gang Fight

In the elegant courtyard, nearly twenty True Lake Realm cultivators were engaged in a fierce battle. Tables, pavilions were shattered, and food and drinks were strewn all over, creating a chaotic scene.

Shen Manzi was frantically trying to mediate, but at this moment, who could listen? Everyone was treating her words like the wind, solely focused on fighting their opponents.

The commotion here naturally alarmed many cultivators in the front hall, who rushed to watch.

Such scenes were rarely seen in Haotian City, and they all found it astonishing, watching with great interest.

"Madam Boss, what should we do?" asked a servant from Hundred Fragrance House.

The hem of Shen Manzi's skirt fluttered as she silently kicked a Team A-5 member who had stumbled in front of her back into the fray, sighing quietly, "Report to the Justice Department."

She couldn't stop it but couldn't just watch the situation worsen. After all, this happened on her turf. Currently, these two groups were somewhat restrained, with only Lu Ye and that Level 9 young man occasionally using spirit force, while the others showed no traces of using spirit force. But if the fight continued like this, no one could guarantee how the situation would develop.

If someone accidentally ended up dead, the participants in the fight, without exception, would all face severe consequences.

Just as Shen Manzi's words fell, a mighty pressure from a Divine Sea Realm strong cultivator suddenly rose from a place in Haotian City, swiftly heading over.

Someone watching the scene had already reported to the Justice Department.

The pressure was formidable, rising from the Justice Department's hall, taking just a few seconds to reach the skies over Hundred Fragrance House, revealing a figure—it was Qian Wudang.

At the same time, from various places in Haotian City, strands of Mental Consciousness spread out and converged here, clearly startled by Qian Wudang, curious about what had happened, using their Mental Consciousness to investigate the situation.

After noticing the dispute here, the Divine Sea Realm cultivators stationed in various locations were all taken aback, never expecting such a thing to happen within Haotian City. However, this was ultimately an internal matter of the Justice Department, so these Divine Sea Realm cultivators had no intention of showing themselves, waiting for Qian Wudang to handle it on his own.

Looking down from above, Qian Wudang's face twitched slightly, a stern shout: "Stop all of you!"

As he spoke, his aura expanded violently, and an invisible hefty weight descended from the sky.

The many cultivators who had come to watch, hovering in mid-air, fell like dumplings, exclaiming in surprise.

They were only affected by the aftermath, but those fighting in the elegant courtyard were truly targeted, each feeling as if a mountain was pressing down, short of breath.

The chaotic scene was frozen still.

Warlord Geng's face was bruised, maintaining a defensive posture; he was the strongest in Team A-3 and a physique cultivator, thus surrounded and attacked by several people.

Xiao Ruyun lay on the ground, his legs locking around an opponent's waist, his hands clutching the other's face, thumbs pressing against the opponent's eye sockets, appearing ready to gouge out eyes, while the opponent grimaced in pain.

Kang Yuanqiao, usually a steady character, was at this moment riding on an opponent's neck, hands clasped, poised to punch.

Shangguan Qiu was the one being beaten... no way around it, magic cultivators have relatively weaker physique and truly don't gain any advantage in such brawls, his eyebrow arch was cracked, blood trickling down his cheeks.

Xiao Xinghe was in tattered garments, two opponents beside him watching him like tigers, clearly having suffered losses.

Lin Yinxiu and Muk Zheng faced off a few yards away with three female cultivators on the opposing side, the women all disheveled, panting heavily, no doubt having exchanged blows for some time...

As for Lu Ye, he was riding on top of the Level 9 young man, who was defensively covering his head before Qian Wudang's arrival, bracing for Lu Ye's torrential attacks.

Then there was Amber... with its massive bloody mouth open, holding a cultivator's head, leaving only the body exposed outside. At first glance, Amber seemed to be eating someone, creating a horrifying scene.

Qian Wudang glanced around, focusing for a moment on Lin Yinxiu's side, seeing Lin Yinxiu's disheveled appearance, heart aching almost to the point of breathlessness.

While beside him, Yinxiu, although mischievous at times, never acted in such a disgraceful manner. She had only followed Lu Yiye for a few days? How did she end up fighting like a shrew?

How unseemly!

Anger surged within him, intensifying the aura in the field, causing the crowd to hold their breath.

After a good moment, Qian Wudang coldly shouted, "Stand properly, all of you!"

With his command, the many cultivators in the elegant courtyard, without exception, released their opponents, straightening themselves up, except for Amber, who innocently spat out its opponent, transformed into a cat-size, stealthily snuck to the side.

The cultivator spat out by it was covered in saliva, his face showing an expression of utter despair.

"Team captains, step forward!" Qian Wudang shouted again.

Warlord Geng and Lu Ye stepped forward proudly.

On the other side, the Level 9 young man and another person also stepped forward.

Qian Wudang laughed in extreme anger, hands clasped behind him, nodding slightly, "Warlord Geng, Lu Yiye, Zhou Kui, Zhang Cheng, you four captains did well, didn't you? Leading your members to fight in a crowd here!"

Standing beside Warlord Geng, Lu Ye's expression slightly shifted.

Warlord Geng stood tall and replied solemnly, "My lord, you've misunderstood. We were merely gathered here to drink, and as the wine kicked in, my brothers engaged in a little sparring. We didn't intend to cause such a commotion to alarm you. We apologize and ask for your understanding, my lord."

Lu Ye, Zhou Kui, and Zhang Cheng nodded in agreement, all speaking in unison, "Just sparring, only sparring!"

No matter the fight just now, our attitude must be consistent at this moment.

"Do you take me for a blind fool? Sparring?" Qian Wudang fumed. "Is this how you spar? Look at how much you've broken, look at the injuries on yourselves, and you still dare tell me it's sparring!"

Warlord Geng shrank his neck, weakly saying, "That's the truth..."

Qian Wudang glared at him, causing Warlord Geng to immediately shut his mouth.

Understanding that this incident has blown out of proportion, having drawn the attention of many Divine Sea Realm cultivators, Qian Wudang, even if intending to downplay it, couldn't do so.

"Being members of the Law Enforcement Hall, you indulge in drunken disorder here, inciting brawls, knowing the law and still breaking it. Warlord Geng, tell me, what punishment should be meted out?" Qian Wudang questioned sternly.

Warlord Geng stiffened his neck, "I will go to the punishment rack and accept my penalty. However, the cause of today's matter lies with me alone. I appeal to your mercy, my lord, that all responsibilities fall upon me alone."

"You want to shoulder it all alone?" Qian Wudang glared angrily at him, "You don't have that capability! All who participated today, head to the punishment rack; captains will receive ten lashes each, others five lashes each — a minor punishment to serve as a warning. If any dare repeat it, there will be no leniency."

The declaration made all cultivators in the elegant courtyard shiver.

Lu Ye couldn't help but grimace; having tasted the Reversed Dragon Spike, he knew its pain.

"Hurry, get going!" Qian Wudang shouted furiously, feeling angrier than ever in his life, for such a disgraceful act in his Law Enforcement Hall, especially under the observation of numerous Divine Sea Realm cultivators, demands an appropriate explanation.

This punishment was the best solution he could offer.

Upon his command, everyone leapt and sped towards the punishment rack, their earlier fervent battle spirit long vanished, heads hung low, especially the female cultivators who looked pale.

The might of the Reversed Dragon Spike, even if not personally experienced, was rumored enough that with five lashes, one couldn't be sure if they could endure it.

"What are you looking at? Scatter quickly!" Qian Wudang turned his gaze towards the cultivators enjoying the spectacle and shouted, feeling infuriated by everyone today. With a wave of his sleeve, he headed towards the punishment rack too.

At the entrance of the punishment rack, the guarding cultivator smiled widely at the imposing procession of Law Enforcement Hall members coming his way.

Although Hundred Fragrance House wasn't nearby, Qian Wudang's loud reprimands echoed throughout Haotian City, making those stationed here aware of the incident despite their location.

Feeling they've witnessed something new, never seeing so many rushing together for punishment.

Like a welcoming host, he enthusiastically led the group inside, with Qian Wudang also heading in.

Descending into the depths, the chilling and dark environment added a sense of sneaky foreboding. Thinking of the punishment awaiting made their bodies cold.

"Feeling regret now? What were you doing earlier?" Qian Wudang, having reached the front, snorted coldly.

No one replied.

Soon, they arrived at the punishment area. Old One-eye, responsible for punishment was drinking, sensing Qian Wudang's presence, he stood to greet him, then glanced at the large group behind Qian Wudang in amazement, "Lord Department Chief, is this..."

"They've committed errors and are here for punishment!" Qian Wudang turned back, looking regretfully at everyone as those who met his gaze lowered their heads.

"So many." Old One-eye was a bit surprised, "This old man is going to have a hard day."

He said this as he leisurely walked to the place the Reversed Dragon Spike was stored, retrieving it with a crack that sounded like thunder.

The strike felt as if it landed on everyone, causing many to shiver.

"Who among you four will go first?" Qian Wudang's gaze fell upon Lu Ye and the others standing at the front, standing to the side, ready to oversee the punishment personally.

Lu Ye turned to signal Warlord Geng, who grasped the meaning, and both took a step back simultaneously.

Zhang Cheng quickly caught on and retreated.

From the back, someone snorted with laughter, easing the solemn tension a bit.

Leaving Zhou Kui standing alone, belatedly comprehending, "You all..."

"Well done!" Qian Wudang commended coldly, "Then Zhou Kui, you start first!"

"My lord, I was not..."

"Enough nonsense!" Qian Wudang reached out, grabbed Zhou Kui, and tossed him against the punishment rack, "Stretch your neck for a knife, shrink it for a knife too; the sooner it's over, the better!"

Chapter 980 Penalty

Old One-eye was ready, holding the Reversed Dragon Spike, he walked to the side and looked at Zhou Kui: "Do you want me to tie you up, or will you hold on yourself?"

The ends of the punishment rack are equipped with Magic Artifact ropes to bind the punished, mainly because they might faint and fall during the flogging. Tied up, even if fainted, they can remain standing.

Of course, it's not necessary to be tied, you can hold on by yourself.

Zhou Kui, being a gutsy spirit, knew this tribulation was unavoidable, so he gritted his teeth: "No need to tie!"

He is a physique cultivator, with a strong body, and although he had long heard of the Reversed Dragon Spike's reputation, he assured himself he could withstand this punishment.

Saying this, he stepped forward, took off his shirt, exposing his strong physique, grasped the Magic Artifact ropes on the sides of the punishment rack, and gritted his teeth: "Come on!"

Seeing him like this, members of Team A-5 encouraged him: "Captain, hang in there."

"No problem!" Zhou Kui snorted coldly.

"Then you better hold on!" Old One-eye walked behind Zhou Kui, took a sip from the wine gourd, sprayed it onto the Reversed Dragon Spike, and raised his hand to lash it down.

With a loud 'snap', it was clearly seen, blood splattered from Zhou Kui's back, even bringing out a piece of skin and flesh.

Zhou Kui's entire body was struck as if hit by thunder, suddenly rigid, head thrown back, eyes widened, almost popping out, his eyeballs instantly filled with blood veins, his expression becoming extremely ferocious and terrifying.

Maintaining this posture for a full three breaths, a heaven-shattering scream burst from Zhou Kui's mouth.

He realized he had underestimated the power of the Reversed Dragon Spike. If it merely caused physical harm, he could still endure it, but crucially, this spirit treasure not only struck the flesh but also targeted the psyche, and with one lash, he felt as if his psyche was about to be torn apart.

Watching this scene, all the cultivators from the Law Enforcement Hall wore somber expressions.

Seeing someone like Zhou Kui's reaction after being flogged made them further realize the terror of the Reversed Dragon Spike. Imagining such a thing striking their own bodies...

They trembled!

"Snap..." Another lash fell.

Old One-eye, having exercised punishment for many years, naturally knew how to hit where it hurts the most, and how to extend this pain to the extreme.

For someone like Zhou Kui who was confident in his physique, a lash every 5 breaths was the best rhythm.

Zhou Kui's scream abruptly stopped, only inhaling without exhaling, holding on for quite a while before screaming again.

Pa, pa, pa...

Old One-eye was indifferent, continuing his rhythm, a few lashes later, Zhou Kui suddenly fell to the ground.

He had fainted, though unconscious, his body kept twitching.

"Captain!" Members of Team A-5 shouted in alarm, everyone else's hearts were also heavy with fear.

Even a physique cultivator like Zhou Kui couldn't take a few lashes without fainting, and there were few present with a physique comparable to Zhou Kui's. Who could endure this?

"Still needs to be tied eh." Old One-eye stepped forward, lifted Zhou Kui, deftly tied his hands to the punishment rack, suspending his entire body up.

But he did not hurry to continue the whipping, instead, he approached Zhou Kui, took a sip of wine, and sprayed it all over his face.

Since it's punishment, it needs to be done while the punished is conscious, otherwise, the effect is greatly reduced.

"All of you, open your eyes wide and take a good look." Qian Wudang suddenly shouted sternly, as some couldn't bear to watch Zhou Kui's misery and averted their eyes, likely fearing a psychological shadow, since none could escape the Reversed Dragon Spike's flogging afterwards.

Under the stimulus, the unconscious Zhou Kui gradually regained consciousness.

"Can you still endure?" Old One-eye kindly asked.

Zhou Kui gritted his teeth: "Come... Ah!"

Almost as soon as Zhou Kui's words fell, another lash struck, his shout turning into a cry of pain.

After a moment, the ten lashes were finally done, and everyone was relieved, as if they had been the ones punished.

Only then did they understand the brutality within the prison, even merely watching others be punished, the bloody scene was enough to be etched into their memories forever, making them hesitant to easily violate guard discipline in the future.

"Five more lashes!" Zhou Kui was almost drenched in sweat, his back a bloody mess, yet he still gritted his teeth.

Qian Wudang laughed sardonically: "What, are you becoming addicted to punishment?"

"Xiaoling is a girl, and it's inconvenient for her to be punished in public, so I'll take it for her. I beg you, my lord!" Zhou Kui spoke.

Xiaoling was the female cultivator in his team.

At these words, Zhang Cheng's face instantly turned pale.

No wonder, there was only one female cultivator in Zhou Kui's team, but in his team, there were two. In other words, if he wanted to help others take the punishment, he'd have to endure twenty lashes, which could be deadly.

"Permitted!" Qian Wudang said, giving Old One-eye a signal.

Another five lashes later, Zhou Kui was finally untied. The female cultivator called Xiaoling quickly rushed over to support him back, even though Zhou Kui was a physique cultivator, he seemed barely breathing at this moment.

Zhang Cheng was still contemplating the issue of twenty lashes, but before he could react, Lu Ye and Warlord Geng reached out from either side, hoisting him by his arms, slight pressure, throwing him below the punishment rack.

Qian Wudang chuckled coldly: "I didn't see it earlier, but my boys under the law are quite keen on being punished. If so, Old One-eye, fulfill his wish."

Old One-eye nodded seriously: "Since Lord Department Chief has spoken, there's surely no issue."

"No, I..." Zhang Cheng was speechless with anger, turning to glare at Lu Ye and Warlord Geng: "I won't let you off!"

Warlord Geng looked up at the sky, while Lu Ye stared down at his feet, both wearing expressions as if it had nothing to do with them.

Zhang Cheng's cultivation was lower than Zhou Kui's, and his physique was even weaker. After the punishment, he fainted three times altogether, and by the fifteenth whip, Zhang Cheng ceased to respond, not even waking up with Old One-eye's wine spray.

"Department Chief, if we keep going, someone might die." Old One-eye looked towards Qian Wudang.

Qian Wudang didn't actually intend to kill; he just wanted to use this punishment to teach these unruly people a lesson. He then spoke: "Record the remaining five whips and let him receive double once he's healed!"

The members of Team D-7 felt as though they were granted amnesty and hurried forward to carry their captain away.

"Let me do it." Warlord Geng stepped forward; Lu Ye didn't contest him. There was nothing worth competing over, as sooner or later they'd have to experience this themselves.

He stepped up, took off his shirt, grabbed the Magic Artifact ropes on the punishment rack, steadied himself, and spoke calmly: "I'll take Muk Zheng's five whips for her."

Moments later, Warlord Geng's ordeal ended.

Among the three who were punished, he handled it the best. Though he screamed miserably, he didn't faint, and even walked back on his own. However, seeing the blood-soaked horror on his back, with bone almost visible, Muk Zheng couldn't help but shed tears.

Four captains had been dealt with, leaving only Lu Ye.

Lu Ye took off the Crimson Dragon Battle Suit, revealing his upper body, and quietly approached the punishment rack, with a resigned posture.

Qian Wudang coughed lightly: "Lu Yiye, is there anything you want to say before your punishment?"

Lu Ye thought for a moment and said: "Today's incident, we were wrong. Lord Department Chief upheld the law impartially, which we should emulate and engrave upon our hearts."

That's it?

Qian Wudang stared at him, while Lu Ye faced him calmly.

Slowly, a hint of plea appeared in Qian Wudang's eyes, prompting Lu Ye's sudden realization: "Oh, right, I'll take Lin Yinxiu's five whips for her!"

Qian Wudang let out a long breath, his heart relieved, knowing that this kid was deliberately teasing him, yet powerless to do anything about it.

"Carry out the punishment," Qian Wudang ordered.

Old One-eye immediately swung down a whip.

Lu Ye felt a blazing pain on his back, as if Thunderbolt rolled over him. Yet compared to the last time's psyche pain, he barely noticed this time.

Sensing under the impact of Reversed Dragon Spike on the Divine Pool, it was blocked by Twin Dragons Guarding the Sea.

Within the Divine Pool, a tranquil scene.

After a brief moment of stupefaction, he immediately screamed miserably, and louder than the previous three.

Pa-pa-pa...

The rhythmic slashes continued, each of Lu Ye's screams getting louder and louder.

Yet what surprised everyone was that despite Lu Ye's dreadful cries, he showed no signs of fainting.

Lu Ye had no desire to faint; Old One-eye's method of reviving the punished was to spray wine in people's faces, which he wanted to avoid.

After a full fifteen whips, Lu Ye grimaced, his back seriously injured, yet his condition was far better than the other three.

Qian Wudang slightly frowned, looking inquisitively at Old One-eye, implying that even if he showed leniency for Yinxiu's sake, it didn't need to be so obvious.

Old One-eye felt quite innocent.

Compared to the previous punishments, he indeed went a bit easy, but he maintained proper control. In his view, Lu Ye should have fainted two or three times minimum after fifteen whips.

Curiously, Lu Ye remained conscious.

Recalling the scenes from Lu Ye's last punishment further convinced Old One-eye that this Lu Yiye had a psyche far more resilient than average, otherwise there's no reason he could withstand the Reversed Dragon Spike's might.

All four captains had been punished, and each sat aside swallowing elixir pills, silently tending their wounds, yet still distinct from one another.

Lu Ye and Warlord Geng naturally formed one group, while Zhou Kui and Zhang Cheng paired together.

The remaining were their respective team members.

Regarding the team members' punishment, Old One-eye sped up considerably, whipping one after another, leaving them all wishing for death, with many fainting on the spot.

Until more than half an hour later, this round of punishment finally concluded.

Among the numerous cultivators entering the prison, aside from a few unscathed female cultivators, all others were left with mangled backs.

Zhang Cheng suffered the most, with the five recorded whips doubled against him... whenever his thoughts surged, he was consumed by pain.

Qian Wudang gazed at his subordinates, inhaling sharply, suppressing their pain, lamenting their lack of improvement: "As members of the Law Enforcement Hall, you should set an example. This is merely a first offense; I offer minor punishment as a deterrent. Are you convinced?"

Who dares not be convinced?

"If there's a next time, I'll personally execute the punishment!" Qian Wudang declared, waving his hand: "Get the hell out!"