

Humanity 1071

Chapter 1071 Requesting Leave

"Since you could come back, is it possible to return again?" the sect master asked.

Lu Ye shook his head: "There's no path for now, but I believe that since I could go the first time, surely I can go the second time. It's just that the time isn't right. So in the coming years, I plan to focus on improving my cultivation, hoping to return before the Blood Race army besieges the Righteous Blood Sacred Land again, and lend a hand to First Senior Brother."

Returning might involve factors beyond his worries; when the time is right, he will naturally find his way back.

Heaven's Augury sent him there to witness various aspects of the Blood Refinement World and then brought him back. The intention behind this was quite clear.

The key now is to improve his strength as much as possible and also to gather as many usable people as he can — otherwise, when the Blood Race army attacks again, the Righteous Blood Sacred Land would be in peril.

Enhancing his strength is simple enough for him; as long as there's sufficient battle merit, and now that he's crafting Explosive Fire Spirit Stones and As-Close-As-Siblings Array Discs, he's acquiring a substantial amount of battle merit daily, with no shortage of gold-hued spirit fortune sticks.

The tricky part lies in gathering people, which is one reason he chose to disclose matters of the Blood Refinement World to the sect master, who is better connected than him.

After discussing First Senior Brother, Lu Ye mentioned another matter: "Sect Master, two years ago I was captured. The one who seized me was named Yu Daiwei, but there was another instigator behind her, whom Yu Daiwei referred to as the Venerable Lord. At that time, I didn't know who this Venerable Lord was, but later in the Blood Refinement World, I mentioned this matter to First Senior Brother, and he recognized the connection, saying the Venerable Lord was named Mount Tai, once a highly trusted subordinate under him!"

"Mount Tai?" The sect master was shocked: "Wasn't he supposed to be dead..."

Halfway through the sentence, he suddenly realized, if even the supposedly dead eldest disciple is still alive, then Mount Tai being alive shouldn't be surprising.

Steadying himself, the sect master spoke: "Mount Tai indeed was a trusted subordinate under your First Senior Brother. Back in the day, Mount Tai and Nian Yuexian were your First Senior Brother's left and right arms, fighting alongside him across regions, making a considerable name for themselves."

Nian Yuexian once served under First Senior Brother — that Lu Ye knew. He had heard Second Senior Sister speak of this before, though he hadn't expected these two to be so heavily relied upon by First Senior Brother.

Nowadays, one has become a Venerable Lord of a mysterious organization, and the other can single-handedly hold a pass — doing justice to their past fame.

"So why did he capture you?"

"Mount Tai probably felt deeply about First Senior Brother's death and was weary of the endless conflict between the two large factions. So he wanted to create a third-party faction to harbor those cultivators who, like him, were tired of the faction conflict. He captured me to help him establish this faction; he had an item, seemingly a token for establishing the third-party faction, which supposedly only I could use."

Lu Ye remembered the token — a stone disc. At the time, he hadn't known what it was for, but through conversations and exchanges with First Senior Brother in the Blood Refinement World, he gradually figured out the backstory.

The sect master nodded: "Mount Tai always had a decent disposition, so having such an idea is reasonable. In fact, are there not many cultivators on the Nine Provinces weary of the conflict between the two factions? If he can truly rally a flag, he's bound to garner substantial support."

"There's certainly quite a number who secretly communicate with him, under his control."

"What do you mean by this?"

Lu Ye glanced around, displaying a mysterious manner. The sect master understood, and with a wave of spirit force, an invisible barrier enveloped the courtyard, preventing external surveillance.

Only then did Lu Ye wave his hand, revealing a corpse before the sect master.

"This is..."

"Two years ago, I led a team to Mount Mi Fog Cliff on a mission, where we encountered a Chen family. We were invited in, but without warning, the Chen family erupted into hostility. Forced into a corner, the disciples retaliated heavily. Later, it was confirmed that the Chen family was secretly controlled by Mount Tai. We suspected they acted under Mount Tai's instruction, aiming to capture me, which they failed. Afterward, Yu Daiwei appeared."

After Lu Ye's disappearance, the Chen family's incident was reported by Xiao Xinghe to the Justice Department, which dispatched Divine Sea Realm cultivators to investigate the site, but almost all Chen cultivators had perished, leaving only ordinary people, with no substantial clues uncovered.

"Upon my return, Yu Daiwei was immediately aware and attempted to capture me again. Before she appeared, this person blocked my path, whom I fought intending to capture alive, but he suddenly died mysteriously, akin to the Chen family cultivators' deaths. Sect master, the Chen family was under Mount Tai's control, and so was this person, utterly loyal to Mount Tai — ready to self-destruct when things go awry. This speaks to Mount Tai's cunning methods."

As Lu Ye spoke, the sect master inspected Zhang Song's corpse but found nothing, then stood and said: "So you think Mount Tai secretly controls more forces."

"Certainly, though I don't know who they are."

Only two have surfaced publicly, but the extent of forces hidden remains known only to Mount Tai.

The sect master pondered briefly: "In this time of chaos across the Nine Provinces, an unseen force surely causes concern."

Although the current clues suggest that Mount Tai's aim is merely to quell the endless conflict between the two factions, rather than disrupt the Nine Provinces entirely, some precautions are necessary. The Nine Provinces are chaotic enough as is — more turmoil cannot be afforded. If Mount Tai uses his forces to stir the pot further, the situation will become uncontrollable.

"You don't need to worry about these matters; I will investigate covertly." The sect master waved his hand to gather Zhang Song's corpse.

Giving Lu Ye some earnest advice, the sect master then departed.

His visit was initially to see Lu Ye, yet he acquired many shocking insights from Lu Ye, causing him to reflect. This disciple in the sect has access to many unknown secrets, already a testament to the enhanced strength.

After bidding farewell to the sect master, Lu Ye returned to his room to continue his work.

Every three days, Cheng Xiu would deliver a large amount of fire spirit stones and materials, and Lu Ye would fervently refine them. Although the output of the As-Close-As-Siblings Array Disc couldn't be increased quickly, the Explosive Fire Spirit Stones were supplied continuously.

Previously, when he was refining Explosive Fire Spirit Stones for the Justice Department, it all had been calculated at a rate of 1,000 pieces per day. But to him, what was 1,000 pieces of Explosive Fire Spirit Stones per day? If he wished, he could refine tens of thousands in one day.

Continuous refining meant continuous accumulation of battle merit. Lu Ye no longer cared about how much battle merit he had accumulated because his battle merit had reached heights that many couldn't achieve in a lifetime.

This meant that he could freely exchange them for gold-hued spirit fortune sticks for cultivation.

No one in the history of the Nine Provinces had ever been as wealthy as he was.

On this day, Lu Ye pushed open the door and rose swiftly, heading towards the Justice Department hall.

Moments later, inside the hall, Lu Ye sat face-to-face with Qian Wudang. Qian Wudang frowned, "You're asking for leave?"

He came here for no other reason than to ask Qian Wudang for leave.

"Yes, sir. I've had an epiphany and need to go out for a while," Lu Ye explained what he had planned.

Qian Wudang looked at him deeply, "Since you've had an epiphany, you should engage in closed-door cultivation. Why the need to go out? The outside isn't safe nowadays."

"Cultivators cultivate; can it always be safe everywhere?" Lu Ye replied impatiently, "Just tell me if you agree or not."

Qian Wudang smiled slightly, "What if I don't agree?"

Lu Ye looked troubled, "Sir, I've been refining Explosive Fire Spirit Stones and array discs for three months now, even my cultivation has increased by a level. You can't expect me to keep refining non-stop, not even prisoners in a cell don't get some time outside, and I'm not even a prisoner."

The cultivation advancement happened a month ago. In the Divine Sea Realm, every level advancement requires tremendous resource consumption. It would have been impossible for others to progress so quickly, but during this period, Lu Ye's gold-hued spirit fortune sticks were unending. With the terrifying power of the Talent Tree, his advancement speed was naturally unmatched.

And this was under continuous refining circumstances.

It's important to note that whether refining Explosive Fire Spirit Stones or the As-Close-As-Siblings Array Disc, both consumed his spirit force.

In other words, he was advancing while simultaneously cultivating and consuming his foundation.

If he simply cultivated without refining, his advancement speed would be even quicker.

Qian Wudang's demeanor turned serious, speaking with emphasis, "The As-Close-As-Siblings Array Disc is very helpful to the current situation, not just now, but it will be critical in the future as well. And you're the only one who can produce it in large quantities, so your safety is a concern..."

"I'm already at Divine Sea Level 2, not a child, sir!"

"If it were anyone else, I wouldn't bother, but since it's you, these considerations are necessary." Though Pang Zhen had issued a gag order at the council meeting, ensuring that none of the Divine Sea Realm members present would reveal Lu Ye's ability to refine the As-Close-As-Siblings Array Disc, one must always be cautious.

"Why don't you send some people to secretly protect me?" Lu Ye suggested, though he knew it was not possible.

As expected, Qian Wudang snorted, "Given the current state, there's no extra manpower to protect you."

"What should I do then?" Lu Ye looked at him hopefully.

"Stay quietly in Haotian City." Qian Wudang tapped the table, "You're not allowed to go anywhere."

Lu Ye stood up and walked away.

Qian Wudang continued to threaten from behind, "If you dare to run around, I'll have someone break your legs."

Lu Ye treated his words like nonsense.

After leaving the Justice Department hall, he directly soared into the sky.

Sensing Lu Ye's aura growing distant, Qian Wudang couldn't help but sigh. He knew he couldn't stop Lu Ye, but as his superior, he had to express his stance. However, if his subordinate didn't listen, what could he do?

He couldn't possibly go out and catch him back, as Lu Ye said, he was already at Divine Sea Level 2, no longer a child.

Chapter 1072 Red River City

Leaving Haotian City, Lu Ye pulled out the ten-part map for reference and headed in one direction, paying no mind to Qian Wudang's threat.

Words spoken in anger cannot be taken seriously.

Three months of cultivation passed like a single day, continuously refining Explosive Fire Spirit Stones and As-Close-As-Siblings Array Discs during this period. The days were incredibly monotonous and dull.

Unlike those long-renowned senior Divine Sea realm cultivators, who could settle down in one place and meditate like a stone, after all, he was just a twenty-something young man. Young people have their vitality, and if he truly lived like the elderly Divine Sea realm cultivators, he wouldn't be young anymore.

It's not that he had to do something specific, even just getting out for a walk, changing the environment, could lighten his mood.

The advancement in the Divine Sea realm is not only reflected in one's spirit force reserves but also in the expansion of the Divine Sea, representing a holistic growth. Each level's advancement significantly boosts a cultivator's strength.

Compared to the previous Level 1 of the Divine Sea realm, the increase in his spirit force reserves goes without saying. The consumption of so many gold-hued spirit fortune sticks wasn't for nothing; the Divine Sea had evidently broadened, meaning his Mental Consciousness strengthened.

Lu Ye flew onward, gazing down at the land below.

Desolation was everywhere.

The once-glorious Nine Provinces, rich in talent and fertile landscapes, had barely any greenery visible since the Insect Race's rampage.

For cultivators who have succeeded in cultivation, these impacts aren't much, but for those with low cultivation and especially commoners, such changes are unbearable pain.

For commoners to survive, they must eat grains, but under the current circumstances, even the best farmlands have turned barren. No one dares to come out to farm, even if they would, there's no guarantee the Insect Race won't ravage them.

If this continues, once the foundation of commoners is shaken, it will ultimately affect the entire cultivation world.

It can be said that this insect disaster is the greatest calamity the Nine Provinces have ever faced, yet the cultivation world has yet to find an effective solution.

Countless cultivators guard the four directions, indeed they killed countless insects, but without cutting off the source, the insects keep coming.

On the way forward, one can often see groups of cultivators fighting the Insect Race, especially around those ground fissures where battles erupt frequently.

Because the Insect Race crawls out from the ground fissures.

Near ground fissures of a certain scale, silhouettes of Divine Sea realm cultivators are often present, but even with numerous Divine Sea realm cultivators in Bingzhou, there are more ground fissures than they can cover.

Many small ground fissures have no one guarding them, relying only on Cloud River realm and True Lake realm cultivators to kill the insects, which is why manpower is scarce everywhere in the Nine Provinces now.

Lu Ye occasionally made a move, achieving some successes, but they were just a drop in the ocean.

A day later, a city appeared in the distance.

The city wasn't large, just a small city, which could be found everywhere in the Nine Provinces.

Red River City!

The city where the D-9 squad is currently stationed.

A Divine Sea realm cultivator guards the city. When Lu Ye arrived, he didn't hide his presence. The other party noticed, and their Mental Consciousness reached out, to which Lu Ye responded in kind, both withdrawing after contact.

This was the way unfamiliar Divine Sea realm cultivators greeted each other.

A figure soared up from within the city, standing in mid-air, looking towards the direction Lu Ye came from. Shortly after, Lu Ye flew over the skies and halted twenty meters in front of him.

The Divine Sea realm cultivator stationed here was a middle-aged man with a cultivation at Level 4 of the Divine Sea realm, not high, yet not low. For a small city like Red River City, it was adequate.

His main duty was akin to Li Taibai's, and there was nothing much needed from him usually. Many Cloud River and True Lake realm cultivators helped defend here, enough to handle most situations. What he needed to do was to deal with some Divine Sea realm bugs.

Of course, if an unbeatable situation arose, he could only call for assistance.

There were many top-tier Divine Sea realm cultivators in Bingzhou, ready to help at any moment and would rush to offer aid upon receiving a call.

"Lu Ye from the Justice Department, greets Senior Brother!" Lu Ye first saluted and stated his identity.

The middle-aged man returned a salute, "Shie Yuan from the Long River Sect."

The Long River Sect, a 3rd grade sect nearby, governs Red River City. Now that the insect disaster is sweeping through, it's only natural for the Long River Sect to deploy a Divine Sea realm cultivator to guard Red River City.

The defense and garrison in Bingzhou adhered to a nearby principle. Within the jurisdiction of big sects, they sent their people to guard independently. Only in areas with middle three grades and lower three grades sects without Divine Sea realm cultivators did the provincial guard allocate Divine Sea realm cultivators.

"Are you Lu Yiye from the Righteous Blood Sect?" Shie Yuan suddenly realized.

"Indeed."

"I've long admired your great name." Shie Yuan said courteously, though internally he was quietly shocked. A few years ago, Lu Ye shook the Spirit Stream battlefield and Cloud River battlefield, making a name for himself. His name spread widely in Ten Thousand Demons Ridge, while many in Haotian Alliance were taking notice.

What shocked Shie Yuan was that it only took a few years for Lu Ye to advance to the Divine Sea realm, and not just at the beginner level. Judging by his aura, he was already at Divine Sea Level 2.

It is said that even a dead tiger from the Righteous Blood Sect retains its might, and now it seems that those words are indeed true.

"Junior Brother Lu, what brings you here?" Shie Yuan steadied his mind and asked.

It was certainly not to switch defenses with him. Red River City was under the jurisdiction of the Long River Sect, and any change of defense would be handled by Divine Sea Realm cultivators of their own sect; there was no need to trouble others.

"I have a few relatives serving under your command. I was passing by and thought I'd stop for a visit," replied Lu Ye, turning his head to glance at the city wall nearby.

A few figures scrambled up the city wall, clearly having sensed something. They eagerly looked over, and when Lin Yinxiu saw Lu Ye's gaze, she jumped up and waved, as if afraid he wouldn't see her.

Shie Yuan understood, smiling slightly, "I see, then off you go, Junior Brother Lu, I won't keep you from your reunion."

With those words, he descended, and Lu Ye adjusted his direction, darting towards the city wall, arriving in front of the group in the blink of an eye.

Amber leaped from Giant Armor's head, diving straight into Lu Ye's arms. Quick-eyed and swift, Lu Ye caught hold of Amber by the scruff of its neck, holding it in his hand, as Amber whimpered with helpless eyes.

Holding Amber, Lu Ye looked at the familiar faces in front of him, smiling brightly, "Third Senior Brother, Fourth Senior Brother!"

Xiao Xinghe's expression was complex, full of emotion, "We've been outdone. In the two years we haven't seen each other, you've reached the Divine Sea, while we're still lingering in the True Lake Realm."

Back when they first met Lu Ye, their cultivation was on par, yet now he remained in the True Lake, while Lu Ye had ascended to the Divine Sea. Though the specific cultivation levels weren't vastly different, there was still a gap in realms.

Li Baxian laughed heartily, "Once the youngest junior, always the youngest junior. Divine Sea or not, our little junior walks ahead, and we'll catch up soon enough."

To be honest, their cultivation progress wasn't slow, given their excellent aptitude—especially in the past two years, when earning battle merits became easier, the overall strength of cultivators in the Nine Provinces has steadily risen. However, when compared to Lu Ye's advancement, their progress seemed insignificant.

Lu Ye laughed, "Fourth Senior Brother is right, I'll go ahead and pave the way for you, Senior Brothers."

The brothers, long apart, had endless words to share, but it wasn't the right place, so they could only exchange a few greetings.

Lu Ye turned to look aside when Lin Yinxiu bounced out, calling sharply, "Captain!"

Lu Ye chuckled, "I'm not the captain anymore, your captain is my Third Senior Brother."

Lin Yinxiu thought for a moment and changed it to, "Old Captain!"

Lu Ye was speechless and then looked at Feng Yuechan, "Senior Sister Feng."

Feng Yuechan smiled gently, "Your two junior brothers have been talking about you all the time. You've been back for so long and still haven't come to see them, finally you're here today."

Lu Ye explained, "Some things came up."

Inwardly, he had a peculiar feeling. In terms of seniority, Feng Yuechan was his junior niece, but he had gotten used to calling her Senior Sister... On his part, it didn't matter, but what to do about Fourth Senior Brother then?

Everyone assumed the eldest brother had long since passed, so no one delved too deeply into certain matters. Childhood friendships couldn't be hindered by seniority.

But now that the eldest brother was alive and well... If they ever meet again, who knew if Fourth Senior Brother might get a beating.

"What's wrong?" Feng Yuechan looked at Lu Ye, puzzled, sensing something strange in his gaze.

"Nothing, just remembered something," Lu Ye replied.

Lu Ye could explain the situation regarding the eldest brother to the sect master but couldn't afford to tell others, not even Feng Yuechan.

What would be the point? The distance between the two domains was unfathomably vast, only serving to disturb peace of mind. If there was ever a chance to return to the Blood Refinement World, he could take Feng Yuechan along to reunite firsthand.

Looking up at the towering figure of Giant Armor, Lu Ye reached up, tiptoeing to pat his shoulder.

Giant Armor grinned broadly.

"Wasn't the Team D-9 supposed to have more members by now? Why are there only a few of you?" Lu Ye asked.

A squad was usually fully manned at six members, but only five were present here. Of course, if Yiyi hidden inside Amber was counted, there were indeed six.

"Another is preparing a welcome for you, little junior," Li Baxian smiled mysteriously.

Lu Ye had an inkling, "Someone I know?"

"Whether you know them or not, you'll see soon enough."

With that, they flew towards the city.

The city bustled with throngs of people. When the Insect Disaster broke out, all the common people within about 30 miles were gathered in Red River City, so now the city was slightly crowded. Fortunately, the city's order was held by the cultivators of the Long River Sect. Yet, most people were pale and thin, evidently lacking sustenance.

As they landed in a small courtyard, Lu Ye's mental consciousness swept over, immediately understanding who the sixth squad member was.

A perfectly expected outcome.

Their eyes met, and the bright-eyed, graceful woman smiled warmly, carrying herself with the demeanor of a cultured young lady, yet her words were the usual familiar tone, "Not lured away by fox spirits in the wild, and still remember to come back, good."

Chapter 1073 Garden Flowers and Wildflowers

Hua Ci returned from the Cloud River battlefield.

This means that the Five Poisons Pond can no longer provide her with cultivation support, and this forbidden land might end up becoming as insignificant as the Ten Thousand Poisons Forest in the Spirit Stream battlefield.

"Out in the wild, there are nothing but ghouls and ghosts, where are the alluring foxes?" Lu Ye said with a smile, looking at her.

Since they parted ways after returning from the Unparalleled Continent, they hadn't seen each other for almost three years.

For a young man like Lu Ye, such a separation period is quite long. However, this is the life of cultivators; unlike ordinary men and women who can cling together all day, they each have their own matters to attend to. A sudden encounter doesn't diminish the feelings they have for each other despite the passage of time; instead, the mutual longing and yearning only make those feelings richer and more intense.

"Besides, wildflowers can't compare to the fragrance of home flowers."

Hua Ci was amazed: "Isn't it supposed to be the other way around?"

Lu Ye replied earnestly, "Beauty is in the eye of the beholder; I like the flowers at home."

Hua Ci lifted her hand to shade her eyes, pretending: "Where is this home flower? Why can't I see it?"

"It's in my eyes."

Hua Ci's face suddenly turned red, and she softly muttered, "Smooth talker!"

Nearby, the third and fourth senior brothers showed expressions of disdain, watching these two flirt publicly, while Feng Yuechan and Lin Yinxiu were entertained by the scene.

Yiyi peeked her small head out from behind Hua Ci, making faces at Lu Ye.

Lu Ye laughed out loud, waving her over, "Look, this is my little flower at home."

Yiyi gave a cheerful cry and leapt into Lu Ye's arms, hugging him tightly before giving a pinch to the flesh at his waist, "Next time, don't leave me and Amber behind!"

Lu Ye felt the pain but didn't show it, nodding, "Won't happen again, won't happen again."

Only then was Yiyi satisfied and let go.

A moment later, they each took their seats. Hua Ci served tea, and Xiao Xinghe raised a cup, "Let's toast first to the safe return of our little junior brother, second to his ascension to the Divine Sea, and third, may we all keep up with his pace. Everyone, drink this cup together."

Lu Ye was curious, "Why only tea, no wine?"

Li Baxian smacked his lips, "Given the times, we can barely guarantee food, let alone spare grain for brewing wine. Little junior, don't mention wine; I haven't tasted it for over half a year and I really miss it."

Lu Ye laughed heartily, taking out several jars from his storage space and placing them on the table.

Li Baxian's eyes lit up immediately.

They opened the jars and refilled everyone's cups, even Amber got a bowl. Xiao Xinghe raised his cup again, and they all drank together, the atmosphere lively.

Without snacks to accompany the wine, everyone was still in high spirits, especially Li Baxian, who drank three bowls in a row and finally let out a satisfied breath.

After a long separation, there was much to discuss, freely chatting without constraint over various topics.

After a while, Xiao Xinghe asked, "Little junior brother, where were you trapped these past two years?"

This question immediately piqued everyone's interest, all eyes turning to him.

Lu Ye pondered for a moment before speaking, "I can't say exactly where for now, but I promise, when there's an opportunity, I'll take everyone to see it."

When he returns to the Blood Refinement World, he will definitely gather a group of helpers, and Team D-9 is inevitably included.

He could lie to others, saying he was trapped in a small secret realm, but with these close companions, he couldn't deceive them. However, the specifics about the Blood Refinement World couldn't be disclosed yet, so he could only offer this guarantee.

No one pressed him further. Since Lu Ye said so, they would know in time; there was no urgency. The question was simply out of concern.

Lu Ye then inquired about everyone's experiences here, and Xiao Xinghe and Li Baxian took turns answering.

The drinking lasted from dusk till dawn, and Lu Ye's reserve of alcohol was entirely consumed.

Amber lay sprawled on the ground, snoring thunderously.

The faces of the ladies were flushed, especially Hua Ci, whose neck also radiated a pink hue.

At dawn, a sharp whistle suddenly sounded from within the city, followed by a mass of cultivators rising into the air.

Xiao Xinghe stood up tall and announced, "The Insect Plague is here!"

Although cultivators have been eradicating the Insect Race from all directions, large-scale insect invasions are now rare, but they still occasionally occur.

Especially when a strong Divine Sea Realm insect rises from the ground fissure, leading a large number of insects to assault human settlements.

Red River City had experienced several such Insect Plagues, none too large; united efforts managed them every time.

This time would be no different.

"Junior Brother, let's stop drinking for today. Once the situation stabilizes, we'll have a proper gathering again with the brothers."

"Alright!" Lu Ye responded.

Everyone stood up, raising their last cup of wine and downed it in one gulp.

"Go!" With Xiao Xinghe's command, they soared into mid-air, and the others followed suit, including Hua Ci, the healing cultivator. As she flew, she waved her hand, and a massive gold toad appeared out of thin air with imposing ferocity. She stood atop the toad's head and smiled at Lu Ye, "Don't die."

Lu Ye was still looking at her golden toad, not sure where Hua Ci had found such a thing, but it seemed likely it came from a perilous land like the Five Poisons Pond.

Hearing Hua Ci's words, Lu Ye quickly nodded.

Though the reunion was short and there were many things left unsaid, and despite not wanting to part, Lu Ye knew this was how it had to be.

Friends had their paths, and he had his own matters to attend to.

Just like water flowing in a river, when it leaves the source, it embraces and protects, but as it flows, it inevitably faces many tributaries and streams. Yet, as long as it keeps flowing, it'll eventually meet in the sea.

The Insect Plague was imminent, and as the only Divine Sea Realm cultivator in the city, Shie Yuan was coordinating his forces. From the current situation, it looked like this Insect Plague wasn't very large, and Red River City's defenses could withstand it. What troubled him was that there were about a dozen Divine Sea Realm Insect Races in this event.

Although, due to the Insect Race's low spiritual intelligence, a human race cultivator with the same cultivation could easily handle multiple opponents, once their numbers reached a certain point, they were still hard to deal with.

The Insect Race may have low spiritual intelligence, but they have their own strengths, namely various strange abilities, especially the solid defense provided by their thick carapaces.

In the past two years of the insect disaster sweeping the Nine Provinces, many human Divine Sea cultivators lost their lives due to various reasons. Shie Yuan didn't want to follow in their footsteps.

He was hesitating whether to request support when he suddenly saw a stream of light shoot up from somewhere in the city, followed by a bold and fearless turn in mid-air, heading directly towards the direction of the Insect Plague.

Shie Yuan was startled, but quickly realized that the figure rushing out was Lu Yiye, who had arrived at Red River City just the day before.

Indeed, the young are full of vigor, though a bit reckless in action.

Before he could warn against it, the stream of light had already plunged into the swarm, and then Shie Yuan witnessed an awe-inspiring scene.

With the blade flashing, a path of blood and carnage was carved through the swarm like a plow sweeping through, creating a vacuum in the Insect Plague. Neither the Cloud River Realm nor the True Lake Realm Insect Races could withstand it.

In mere moments, that figure reached the center of the Insect Plague, where the Divine Sea Realm Insect Races were gathered.

The blade light remained furious, and with Shie Yuan's eyesight, he couldn't even grasp the trajectory of that figure's movements. In his vision, one Divine Sea Realm Insect after another was being dismembered, their blood staining the ground, severed limbs flying through the air.

After several swift maneuvers, the massive swarm was directly split apart, and all those dozen Divine Sea Realm Insect Races were completely vanquished.

The stream of light quickly receded, and a voice echoed from afar: "The mountains are high and the waters long, brothers and sisters, let's gather again another day!"

Shie Yuan gazed steadily for a long time, only then exhaling a breath: "Under a great name, there are no empty men!"

Some years ago, Lu Yiye of the Righteous Blood Sect caused quite a stir, but that was all within the tier of the Spirit Stream Realm and Cloud River Realm. Frankly, except for those Divine Sea Realm cultivators who kept a close watch on him, most Divine Sea Realm cultivators didn't pay much attention.

A person who could display such sharpness at the Spirit Stream and Cloud River Realms might not necessarily achieve anything at the True Lake or Divine Sea, let alone the Divine Sea Realm.

Cultivators' growth is always accompanied by various unexpected events, and someone like Lu Yiye, who shows initial sharpness, might not necessarily go far.

In fact, in recent years, Shie Yuan hadn't heard of Lu Yiye doing anything significant, and for the inquisitive, this was a sign of potential exhaustion.

But upon seeing him today, Shie Yuan realized that some people are destined to shine, even if silent for a while, they have times of intense bursts.

He was at Divine Sea Level 4, his cultivation two levels higher than Lu Ye's, but even if given ten times the courage, he couldn't dare to strike Yellow Dragon directly like Lu Ye did. If he really did that, he'd likely not return alive.

The rise of Lu Yiye of the Righteous Blood Sect had already started to feel unstoppable.

Composing his mind, Shie Yuan shouted loudly, "Open the formation and kill the enemy!"

His original plan was to rely on Red River City's protective array to fend off the enemy outside, which was a safe and secure method, minimizing their losses. But after witnessing Lu Ye's sweeping victory, the

many cultivators in the city were all excited and eager for battle, and following the original strategy would only dampen their morale.

Since that was the case, they might as well charge out.

A swarm without Divine Sea Realm Insect Races was not worth fearing.

At his command, the protective array was lifted, and numerous cultivators, like a torrent, charged at the disrupted Insect Race, and a small-scale battle broke out immediately.

Lu Ye was already several hundred miles away.

He hadn't annihilated all those Insect Races, not because he didn't want to, but because it wasn't necessary.

To the current Nine Provinces cultivators, the Insect Race were walking battle merits. If he killed too many, the others would reap fewer benefits.

But since he encountered them, he couldn't just stand by.

Striking down the Divine Sea Realm Insect Races in the plague was the best response, and as for the remaining Insect Races, they could be left to the cultivators of Red River City to handle.

Chapter 1074 Tail

In mid-air, Lu Ye traveled at a leisurely pace.

This trip leaving Haotian City had two purposes. The first was to visit his Third Senior Brother and Fourth Senior Brother in Red River City and to retrieve an item.

That task was already completed.

The second task was to visit the frontline where the two major camps were confronting each other.

His main body had already advanced to Divine Sea Level 2, but his doppelganger remained the same as before. Therefore, Lu Ye needed to refine his doppelganger anew, so that it also reached Divine Sea Level 2; only then could it exert greater power.

The prerequisite for gathering the doppelganger was to reclaim the original one, so no matter what, Lu Ye had to make the trip.

Fortunately, now that he had advanced to Divine Sea, his speed was very fast, so it wouldn't take too long.

A day later, Lu Ye had crossed the frontline of the Haotian Alliance's mountain pass and reached the central area between the Jinglan Lake Pass and the Dark Moon Forest Pass.

Going further was not wise; beyond that was the defense area of the Dark Moon Forest Pass. After all, he was a member of the Haotian Alliance. Although the two major camps hadn't explicitly ceased hostilities, they were tacitly stopping their disputes to focus wholeheartedly on combating the insect crisis.

If he recklessly intruded into the defense area of Ten Thousand Demons Ridge, it could easily lead to unnecessary misunderstandings.

He found a ground fissure, dove inside, killed the nearby Insect Race, and quietly lay in wait.

A sword light flashed in the sky, and doppelganger Li Taibai stood atop it, rushing towards the main body.

One must say, among all the schools, the Sword Control flight of sword cultivators is the most elegant and dashing, a feature no other faction can match.

Along the way, some Ten Thousand Demons Ridge cultivators hunting the Insect Race outside occasionally halted and saluted him respectfully.

During these past three months, Li Taibai had made quite a name for himself at the Dark Moon Forest Pass. Whenever he acted, he was always victorious. Many cultivators of the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge owed him their lives.

To this new young Mountain Pass Chief, the cultivators at the Dark Moon Forest Pass admired him from the bottom of their hearts.

Lin Yue was also very satisfied with his performance. Ever since Li Taibai arrived, her burdens lightened considerably, and she no longer appeared as weary and desolate as before. Nowadays, she seemed full of life.

Mental Consciousness spread out, monitoring the surrounding movements.

After confirming no one was around, he plunged into the ground fissure below.

A moment later, the doppelganger stood in front of the main body. Lu Ye raised a hand, pressing it on the doppelganger's chest. The roots of the Talent Tree extended, probing into the doppelganger's body. In the blink of an eye, doppelganger Li Taibai vanished, leaving only a Crimson Dragon Battle Suit and the sword gourd worn over it.

The instant Lu Ye caught them, spirit force suddenly surged around him, turning him into a stream of light as he dashed sideways. While still in mid-air, several streaks of sword Qi shot out from the sword gourd, slashing towards a specific spot. Simultaneously, he drew the Boulder Mountain Saber at his waist, his form following the sword light, and slashed down.

Where the sword light ravaged, the space twisted, and a figure appeared out of thin air.

Suddenly attacked, coupled with a psyche-shattering shock, the figure responded chaotically. Barely managing to block the many sword light assaults, he then faced a sharp saber light.

In desperation, a surge of violent spirit force transformed into a massive impact, meeting the saber light head-on.

With a thunderous crash, spirit force reverberated. Lu Ye's figure uncontrollably retreated back, while the abruptly appearing figure also stepped back over a dozen paces before stabilizing.

Separated by several dozen yards, Lu Ye held the saber in hand, eyes lowered, staring ahead expressionlessly.

He was careless!

When the doppelganger arrived, it was actually being trailed.

No one else but Liew Yuemei from the Jinglan Lake Pass!

Lu Ye didn't know what method Liew Yuemei used to conceal her presence and aura, but it was clearly not her own skill. To his knowledge, Liew Yuemei was a magic cultivator. Even if her cultivation far surpassed the doppelganger's, it would have been impossible to conceal herself so perfectly.

When the doppelganger came over, it had been monitoring the surrounding for any movement, but there was nothing unusual; otherwise, the doppelganger would not have rushed down to merge with the main body.

As for why Liew Yuemei was trailing the doppelganger... need one ask, she naturally intended harm.

This woman bore a grudge against Li Taibai. To avenge the murder of her son, she had not hesitated to marshal the forces of the Jinglan Lake Pass for an assault, and during the battle, she recklessly attacked only Li Taibai, all in order to slay him by her own hand.

In that battle, she unleashed her Divine Soul Power on Li Taibai and struck with ferocity. She thought Li Taibai was doomed, and her great vengeance could thus be considered fulfilled.

Afterward, news indeed spread from the Dark Moon Forest Pass that Li Taibai had fallen in battle, and the matter concluded.

But in recent months, Li Taibai frequently took action, rescuing those Ten Thousand Demons Ridge cultivators from dire situations and occasionally encountering some Haotian Alliance cultivators.

With Liew Yuemei stationed at the Jinglan Lake Pass, unless blind and deaf, she would naturally receive some news about Li Taibai.

The enemy who had originally killed her son had come back to life, how could Liew Yuemei tolerate this? From the day she got the news, she began plotting how to kill Li Taibai.

A blatant attack was not a wise move. It wasn't about considering the current trend of the two major factions. The hatred for killing her son couldn't go unavenged. For a woman like her, the trend of the two major factions was irrelevant. As long as she could kill Li Taibai and avenge the blood feud, even if it meant igniting a conflict at the two major mountain passes again, it was worth it.

But there was only one Divine Sea cultivator at Jinglan Lake Pass, which was her. The original small Mountain Pass Chief, Cher Zixiong, had been transferred, whereas Dark Moon Forest Pass still had Lin Yue. If she couldn't kill with one strike, Lin Yue would definitely intervene. By then, if she had to face two opponents, she might not succeed.

Moreover, Li Taibai's activity range had always been small, not giving Liew Yuemei many opportunities.

Until today, Li Taibai crossed the midline of the two territories' defense, and Liew Yuemei secretly followed, seeing an opportunity; she quietly sneaked into the ground fissure, ready to strike.

In such an environment, coupled with her cultivation far exceeding Li Taibai's, she was confident she could settle the fight in less than half a stick of incense. As for what problems would arise after killing Li Taibai, she couldn't be bothered to think about it.

The plan was well thought out. To avoid detection by Li Taibai, she even used an extremely precious exotic treasure to follow Li Taibai smoothly into the ground fissure.

However, before she could make a move, she witnessed something incomprehensible.

That Lu Yiye was actually waiting here. Li Taibai approached, Lu Yiye raised his hand, and Li Taibai vanished...

Even though Liew Yuemei was in the Divine Sea Level 7, she was greatly shocked by this scene. Her mind was in turmoil, and she accidentally leaked a trace of her aura.

Then came the events that had just occurred.

Their eyes met, and countless thoughts flashed through Lu Ye's mind. Though he didn't know exactly how things had come to this point, he could guess the general situation.

It wasn't that he wasn't cautious enough, but more like there's no such thing as a thief for a thousand days without a thousand days of defense against a thief.

Liew Yuemei was from the Tianyuan Sect, with deep family roots and likely had some rare treasures. Combined with her high cultivation, if she really wanted to conceal herself, the doppelganger would find it difficult to detect her.

As many thoughts flashed by, Lu Ye already felt the murderous intent rising within.

It's not that Li Taibai's identity couldn't be exposed. If it was, it was; at worst, the doppelganger wouldn't go to the Dark Moon Forest Pass again, and there wouldn't be any substantial loss.

However, given the current situation, even if he was willing to reconcile, Liew Yuemei wouldn't agree. Besides, the doppelganger Li Taibai had a blood feud with her for killing her son; Liew Yuemei wouldn't rest easy, and with his main body, there was also some enmity between them.

In the past, when he had drafted his third senior brother out of the Dark Moon Forest Pass, Liew Yuemei had pursued them ruthlessly during their return. If not for the timely arrivals of the sect master and Qian Wudang, the consequences would have been unimaginable.

Back then, his cultivation wasn't high, and he had no power to fight back against Liew Yuemei. He could only be used as a sandbag for beating. If not for the Golden Body Token protecting him, he would have met a grim fate long ago. But now, with the passage of time, he had enough strength to compete against her.

As he felt a deadly intent rising, Liew Yuemei was similarly filled with murderous intent.

After all, she was well-informed; though she was momentarily shocked by the strange scene she witnessed, she quickly realized that Li Taibai was Lu Yiye's doppelganger!

Although she couldn't understand how Lu Yiye, a combat cultivator, could cultivate such an exquisite Clone Technique, a mysterious secret technique generally mastered only by the top-tier magic cultivators, even she hadn't entered that level, let alone performed it.

But this didn't hinder her resolve to eliminate Lu Ye right here.

To her, this was an unexpected delight.

Li Taibai, who had a blood feud with her for her son's death, had to be eliminated, and Lu Yiye was also no good. She had already damaged their relationship during the previous fruitless pursuit, with no chance of reconciliation.

Lu Yiye's cultivation had advanced rapidly. In just two or three years, he had reached the Divine Sea Level 2. Given more time, his cultivation would surely surpass her.

By then, who could guarantee this barghest wouldn't settle scores with her?

If she could eliminate Lu Yiye now, it would be like removing a major worry from her heart.

To kill one for the sake of two was such a good deal; how could Liew Yuemei let it slip by?

Thoughts raced through their minds, all within a mere split second. In the next moment, Lu Ye charged toward Liew Yuemei with his saber, moving like lightning.

Meanwhile, Liew Yuemei raised her hand and released a series of Dao techniques, launching them at Lu Ye, while quickly retreating backward.

There were no verbal exchanges; they both understood each other's intent. This was destined to be a fight to the death.

Liew Yuemei, born into a prestigious family with excellent aptitude and rich combat experience, naturally knew that, as a magic cultivator, the last thing she should fear was getting close to a combat cultivator, even if this combat cultivator's cultivation was far inferior to hers.

As various exquisite techniques blossomed, her heart sank.

In her expectations, with such a vast gap in their cultivation levels, Lu Yiye would surely be in disarray dealing with her technique offensives. But to her surprise, Lu Ye's saber skills were impenetrable and airtight. The oncoming techniques were all slashed apart mid-air, causing a disturbance in spirit force as his figure swiftly closed in.

How could this be just a Divine Sea Level 2? Judging by the strength Lu Yiye was showcasing now, calling him a Divine Sea Level 5 cultivator wouldn't be an exaggeration.

Chapter 1075 Going All Out

As the spells were cast, Liew Yuemei's intent to kill became increasingly fierce.

Lu Yiye was always renowned for being able to defeat enemies across realms, and judging by this brief exchange, his reputation was not exaggerated. Therefore, he must not be allowed to grow further, or in a few years, he would not be a match.

With this thought, Liew Yuemei's attacks became more ruthless, completely devoid of hesitation, each spell aimed with the intent to swiftly take the enemy's life. In an instant, within the ground fissure, spells flooded the scene, especially the several massive thunderbolts roaring in force.

The Tianyuan Sect was known for producing magic cultivators, particularly those of the lightning type, possibly because of their sect-guarding treasure, the Destructive Lightning Spear.

Among the various spells, the lightning-type ones were the most savage and terrifying in destructiveness, and faster than other element signs.

When these thunderbolts burst forth, they exploded like a thunderclap in clear skies, immediately thwarting Lu Ye's offensive. As the Boulder Mountain Saber cleaved the thunderbolt, his entire body froze momentarily, as lightning flickered swiftly across his surface.

Such an opportunity, how could Liew Yuemei miss it? More thunderbolts were unleashed, directly charging towards Lu Ye, aiming for a lethal blow.

Lu Ye's hair stood on end, not from the lightning, but instinctively sensing danger. Rarely did he suffer before magic cultivators, not even in his previous confrontation with Yu Daiwei, where he did not fall much behind. But that battle was different from this one.

Yu Daiwei never intended to kill him; she was under Mount Tai's command to capture Lu Ye alive. So while she fought intensely with Lu Ye, there was no intent of a life-and-death struggle, nor did Lu Ye have such intent at that time; that battle was simply to test his strength.

But this time, both he and Liew Yuemei harbored thoughts of killing each other, making their attacks ruthless beyond comparison.

Loud thunder approached, and Lu Ye's movements were still stiff. Facing such an offensive, evasion was impossible. In that moment of urgency, Amber crouched on his shoulder roared, leaping forward, its small body expanded in the wind, revealing its true form, with demonic power rolling, intimidating might unrestrained.

As the thunderbolt struck Amber, it instantly scorched its hide, causing it to shrink back to its cat-size, plummeting straight into the fissure below.

A hand reached out, catching it. It was Lu Ye, who had managed to recover, lifting it and placing Amber back on his shoulder, once more advancing towards the storm of spells.

Having suffered once, Lu Ye became more cautious as he proceeded, dodging Liew Yuemei's spells where possible, and using saber light to counter those unavoidable, never touching the lightning-type spells.

Indeed, lightning-type spells were savage, with immense power, but they had a major flaw—difficulty in control.

Unlike other spells, where magic cultivators could exert some control after casting, once the lightning-type spells were unleashed, they were gone due to their speed, making them impossible to control, giving Lu Ye room for evasion. Naturally, his eyes must be sharp and actions quick, otherwise, he would still be struck.

The environment below the fissure was complex; for True Lake Realm cultivators, it might greatly affect their movements, but for Divine Sea Realm cultivators, who could monitor with their mental consciousness, the impact was less significant.

Two figures quickly darted from the fissure, one chasing the other, leaving behind chaotic spirit forces in their wake.

Lu Ye increasingly felt the absence of means to quickly approach an enemy. He had felt this in his last confrontation with Yu Daiwei, but it was more pronounced this time.

If he could rapidly close in on the enemy, not to mention a Divine Sea Level 7 like Liew Yuemei, even a Level 9 wouldn't withstand a few cleaves from him if she was a fragile magic cultivator.

If facing a same-level magic cultivator, given Lu Ye's skills, getting close wouldn't be too difficult, as magic cultivators' speed is greatly affected when casting spells, giving Lu Ye an opportunity to approach.

However, since returning to the Nine Provinces, he had encountered two female magic cultivators—one a Divine Sea Level 8, the other a Level 7—whose cultivation far surpassed his. This disparity in cultivation cannot be bridged, making it difficult to close in.

Lu Ye initially considered feigning weakness and then launching a sudden attack to settle matters decisively, but after less than ten breaths of exchange, he abandoned the plan.

Although Liew Yuemei was a woman, she was also an experienced combatant, and as a magic cultivator, would not easily give him the opportunity to get close.

Moreover, during their fierce combat, Lu Ye distinctly felt powerful presences awakening below the fissure. These were undoubtedly Divine Sea-grade Insects, likely stirred by the battle above.

What made things even more uncomfortable was that these powerful insects were rapidly approaching from below.

If the Insect Race intervened in their battleground, the situation would inevitably become chaotic, making it difficult to kill Liew Yuemei.

Should Liew Yuemei escape today, the fact about Li Taibai being his doppelganger would surely be exposed.

They can't continue fighting like this; no retreat can be left for Liew Yuemei, nor for himself.

With so many things to avoid, it was time to go all out!

Lu Ye raised his hand, took out an object, infused it with spirit force, and launched it directly at Liew Yuemei.

Liew Yuemei noticed Lu Ye's subtle movement and saw a ball of light swiftly coming towards her, hastily casting spells to intercept it. Though she didn't know what Lu Ye had thrown, she was still guarded against it.

To her surprise, none of the spells could intercept it effectively; hitting that ball of light felt like missing entirely.

Within the mystical realm, an inexplicable force descended from the sky, landing upon her, resonating with the ball of light.

Only then did Liew Yuemei see clearly what was within that ball of light.

Combat arena!

How could she be unfamiliar with this? Back then, when Lu Ye came to Jinglan Lake Pass to recruit Xiao Xinghe, he had used the combat arena, resulting in the death of one of her capable subordinates, thwarting her plans.

Unexpectedly, after two or three years, Lu Yiye once again summoned the combat arena, and this time it was against her.

In the combat arena, it's a fight to the death, and only one person can walk out alive.

Liew Yuemei was filled with furious anger. She admitted that Lu Yiye was formidable, with the ability to defeat enemies beyond his level, evident from their brief encounter. However, surpassing one's level also has its limits!

What gives him such confidence that he dares to summon the combat arena against her!

There was no time for deep thought, as a flash of light came and went, and the figures of Lu Ye and Liew Yuemei simultaneously disappeared from where they stood. The intense spirit force fluctuations slowly subsided, but beneath the ground fissure, the rustling noises grew louder, until moments later, a large number of Insect Race crawled out from the deep underground, led by several Divine Sea Realm insects, swarming outward.

In the space of the combat arena, the moment Liew Yuemei appeared, she spread her Mental Consciousness and quickly locked onto Lu Ye's position, just a few dozen feet away, with little change in distance from before they entered the combat arena.

But the scene that met her eyes startled her, for Lu Ye's appearance had changed dramatically. His entire being was enveloped in dense blood Qi, radiating a blood-red glow.

His figure had noticeably grown taller, becoming more slender, and his aura had become quite peculiar, with traces of demonic power intermingled, but undeniably, his aura had become extremely fierce and oppressive at this moment.

Upon closer examination, Lu Yiye had a tail made of spirit force behind him, and the character for "king" faintly appeared on his forehead.

This appearance would make those unaware think he was an incompletely transformed member of the Demon Race.

But Liew Yuemei knew this was the Beast Transformation Secret Technique of the beast-taming faction!

Among the Nine Provinces, there are numerous factions, and the beast-taming faction is just one. However, the status of the beast-taming faction has always been awkward because their strength depends entirely on the quantity and quality of the demon beasts they control. And because they rely too much on external force, like the cover armorer faction, they can't progress far in cultivation, though there are many cultivators, truly powerful ones are few.

But this situation changed a few years ago.

Within the Heaven's Augury treasure vault of the Nine Provinces appeared some jade slips about the supreme secrets of the beast-taming faction, which became the scriptures revered by many cultivators of the beast-taming faction.

There are also beast-taming cultivators within the Tianyuan Sect, so Liew Yuemei wasn't completely ignorant of these matters. She knew that the beast-taming faction's strongest secret was the Beast Transformation Secret Technique, which involved merging with one's natal demon beast.

Lu Yiye actually also practiced the beast-taming faction?

This guy always had a demon beast with him, and moments ago, that demon beast even sacrificed itself to protect him, blocking one of her Thunderbolts with its own body.

It was within reason that Lu Yiye practiced the beast-taming faction as well.

But what Liew Yuemei didn't expect was that this guy could actually perform the Beast Transformation Secret Technique! This was something many cultivators primarily focused on beast-taming couldn't achieve. Those secret techniques had been in the Heaven's Augury treasure vault for several years, and almost every cultivator of the beast-taming faction would buy a copy to study. Yet, to this day, how many have truly merged with their natal demon beast?

At the very least, Liew Yuemei had never heard of anyone accomplishing this.

Today was the first time witnessing such a sight.

Incredible, for a combat cultivator to have developed a doppelganger secret and mastered the strongest secret of beast-taming, what a monstrous aptitude.

Though many thoughts flashed through her mind, it didn't hinder her from raising her hand to kill the enemy. Continual volleys of magic and spells, sustaining a relentless offensive, was always the unfailing method for a magic cultivator to kill their foes.

An enemy might withstand one or two spells, but as long as the tempo of the attacks remained in the magic cultivator's hands, the enemy would invariably make mistakes amid the chaos.

But as Lu Ye moved, Liew Yuemei's heart jolted with a shock.

In the instant the red light flickered, she nearly lost track of Lu Ye.

Compared to before, Lu Ye's current speed could be described as skyrocketing, far more agile in maneuvering and dodging than just moments ago.

It wasn't solely the result of Beast Transformation; the Bloodstain Spirit Runes also provided their enhancement.

Having decided to go all out, there was no need for reservation, so the moment he entered the combat arena, Lu Ye exploded a drop of Essence Blood, using its might to activate Bloodstain and spur Beast Transformation.

Everything was just as he had envisioned in the Blood Refinement World. The power of Essence Blood saved him a lot of time, allowing him to unleash his trump card without having to gradually accumulate power.

During his charge, his body moved like a Wandering Dragon.

Amber's childish voice echoed in his mind, "Use me in the great battle, use me to be invincible!"

Chapter 1076 Life or Death Struggle

In the midst of the blood-red glow, Lu Ye's figure dashed wildly, dodging one spell after another that came at him head-on, quickly closing the distance between him and Liew Yuemei. As he charged, saber lights like crescent moons slashed through the void, striking the enemy from various angles.

Liew Yuemei gritted her teeth, furiously channeling her spirit force. She unleashed several exquisite spells to both attack Lu Ye and impede his advance while also fending off the incoming saber lights, going all out from the very start.

She hadn't expected this before the fight. She initially thought the disparity in their strengths was significant enough that, despite Lu Ye's reputation for overcoming superior opponents, defeating him would at most require some effort. But soon after the battle began, she was forced to give her all without holding back.

The depth of Lu Ye's abilities made her have to treat him as an equal-level opponent.

Both were on the defense and offense simultaneously, yet their figures alternated between retreating and advancing. In the place between them, spells and saber lights intertwined, creating a lively spectacle.

But Liew Yuemei knew that such an environment was extremely unfavorable for her because this was the combat arena's space.

Though this area was barely sufficient for her to maneuver and display her learned skills, it ultimately was limited in scope, unlike the vastness of the outside world.

Faced with an opponent five minor levels beneath her, Liew Yuemei could typically use her Mental Consciousness to disrupt and interfere, possibly securing victory through such mental assaults, crushing her adversary.

But at the moment, she couldn't afford any distractions because even though she was giving her all, the distance between them was rapidly closing. Lu Ye's movements were so swift, she almost couldn't lock onto his presence with her Mental Consciousness.

As he charged, he was like a frenzied ferocious beast, exuding a violent aura that made even her, with her higher cultivation, tremble at the sensation of impending devourment.

She could only gamble, bet that Lu Ye couldn't maintain this state for long, as it mirrored the weakness of some explosive techniques cultivators used. While these allowed for stronger output in a short time, they couldn't endure for extended periods.

In front of her, Lu Yiye flashed past and was already close.

From entering the combat arena till now, only 5 breaths had elapsed.

She, a Divine Sea Level 7 magic cultivator, had actually been closed in on by a Level 2 combat cultivator...

Though she anticipated it, the speed was astonishing. Seeing Lu Ye raise his saber to strike, Liew Yuemei showed no intention to dodge. At such close range, she might not evade it, and even if she did, she would lose the upper hand in momentum, likely leading to relentless pursuit.

So she quickly summoned an object, while simultaneously raising one hand, with Thunderbolt weaving between her five fingers, a loud crack sounded as lightning surged.

As the Boulder Mountain Saber slashed down, Liew Yuemei was enveloped in a brilliant layer of light, activated by her protective spirit treasure.

This is an essential defensive measure for magic cultivators, as their physical attributes are generally more fragile compared to other factions. Thus, aside from relying on their spells for defense, they also depend on externals.

The items held by a cultivator of Liew Yuemei's level are naturally of a spirit treasure tier.

Lu Ye's right arm holding the saber slightly bulged momentarily, the color of the blood Qi in that arm became richer than elsewhere, and the Boulder Mountain Saber slashed down in an instant.

It appeared to be a single strike, but in fact, slashed seven or eight times.

Repeated Slashing!

In such a scenario, this simple technique proved to be the most practical, even more so than the Tyrannical Saber Technique.

As the blade descended, a massive Thunderbolt simultaneously struck head-on.

Having already suffered once, Lu Ye naturally knew the power of this lightning type technique, but at such proximity, evading was impossible. Thus, as the Boulder Mountain Saber fell, several Defense Spirit Runes layered over his chest.

As the crackling sounded, Liew Yuemei's expression changed.

Because the protective glow on her surface was severely dented, darkening instantly.

Heavy, extremely so! Unmatched Sharpness!

This was Liew Yuemei's most direct perception as the saber descended. One could imagine, if not for promptly activating her protective spirit treasure, this single strike could have split her fragile body in two.

What fell on her was a saber, but it felt as if a mountain with sharp edges was crashing down!

This was an extremely contradictory feeling.

The two figures parted as soon as they collided, each flying back. Though Liew Yuemei's protective spirit treasure blocked this violent strike, the force it carried was still irresistible, while Lu Ye was blasted by the might of the Thunderbolt, and the hastily constructed Defense Spirit Runes shattered layer upon layer, showcasing the terrifying power of this strike.

Not yet fully recovered, Lu Ye's body, still cloaked in a bloody glow, was coursed through by lightning serpents in midair, causing all his hair to stand on end.

Ducking lower, he slid back more than a dozen yards before barely stabilizing, without a pause, he charged at Liew Yuemei again, the air behind him exploding visibly.

At the same time, a multitude of magical attacks suddenly came raining down on Liew Yuemei, startling her greatly. She had no idea where these magic and spells originated. At this moment, she was unsteady, and with the massive force impacting her, her chest churned with blood Qi. She could only activate the power of her protective spirit treasure.

The various spells landed on her, all blocked by the protective spirit treasure, leaving her unharmed, and even the light surrounding her body remained undimmed. This text was acquired from

Finally steadying herself, Liew Yuemei glanced around and saw a delicate and ethereal-looking girl standing at one corner of the combat arena, casting spells toward her.

Who is this?

Where did she come from?

It wasn't Liew Yuemei's fault for being caught off-guard; after entering the combat arena, all her attention was occupied by Lu Ye. Moreover, she hadn't expected that, in this combat arena, there would be a third party present.

It was utterly unreasonable; the combat arena is an exotic treasure. Only the person who activated it and those dragged in would be brought into this space. Others simply couldn't enter, as it was a battlefield opened by the profound and mysterious Heaven's Augury.

In the Nine Provinces, who could have skills surpassing Heaven's Augury?

To her, the girl's cultivation wasn't high, only around the True Lake Level 6-7. Under normal circumstances, such an enemy could be easily crushed by her, and their attacks would pose no threat.

But here and now, her enemy was Lu Ye. Suddenly having such a variable was truly frustrating.

It was reasonable for Yiyi to appear in the combat arena. Lu Ye activated the Beast Transformation Secret Technique, merging with Amber, and naturally, Yiyi separated from Amber's body. She was clever enough to hide immediately, remaining hidden until the critical moment to disrupt Liew Yuemei.

The effect was significant. Although the magic she cast did not harm Liew Yuemei, merely diverting Liew Yuemei's attention at such a moment was greatly helpful to Lu Ye.

The most apparent outcome was that Lu Ye suddenly closed the distance to within ten meters of Liew Yuemei.

The same scenario repeated as before, both their skills and saber light being activated, Lu Ye's figure shifting swiftly while Liew Yuemei retreated rapidly. Yet she could only watch helplessly as the distance between them closed, this time faster than before.

Though the battle hadn't lasted long, Lu Ye was already slowly adapting to his dramatically increased speed and strength and was gradually getting accustomed to the rhythm of Liew Yuemei's attacks.

This was deadly for a magic cultivator.

While he pursued, Yiyi wasn't idle either, continuing to cast spells at Liew Yuemei from afar, not seeking to achieve much but only to distract Liew Yuemei a bit and exhaust her strength.

Once again, being approached closely, another identical slash descended, and the glow protecting Liew Yuemei's body grew dimmer. Even though it was a spirit treasure, it was ultimately an inanimate object with limits to its endurance. Lu Ye's current strike was terrifyingly powerful. Such a treasure might withstand once, twice, or even three times, but it could not resist his relentless attacks indefinitely.

The two figures flew apart once more.

Panic flashed in Liew Yuemei's eyes, no longer holding her former certainty and confidence. She suddenly realized that if the situation continued to develop in this way, the outcome would be unfavorable for her.

Her protective spirit treasure wouldn't last much longer; perhaps it would shatter with the next blow or the one after. Once the spirit treasure broke and Lu Yiye got close again, the consequences would be unimaginable.

She had other protective spirit treasures she could use, but how many slashes from Lu Ye could they withstand? Those terrifying slashes could not come from a Divine Sea Level 2 combat cultivator.

She had to break the deadlock before that, preventing him from continuing to play to his strengths.

A tinge of sadness welled up deep inside her. She never thought she'd one day be forced to this extent by a combat cultivator with a cultivation five minor levels lower than hers.

They were both cultivators; how could one be so monstrous?

Before the battle, she realized that she couldn't let Lu Ye continue to grow, for one day, he would possess the power to threaten her. With his terrifying speed of cultivation improvement, that day wouldn't be far off.

But after the battle began, she understood that he already possessed the power to threaten her.

If they were outside, she would have surely fled; even the slightest risk would make her prioritize self-preservation. But here in the combat arena, the enclosed environment and the life-and-death rules shattered all her fantasies.

In that case, it would be a fight to the death!

Liew Yuemei's aggression suddenly weakened considerably, making Lu Ye's advance much easier.

He instinctively felt something was amiss because, after only thirty breaths, Liew Yuemei, a Divine Sea Level 7, couldn't have weakened so quickly.

This change clearly meant she was intentionally showing weakness.

He could almost tell what cunning plan Liew Yuemei was up to, but he didn't know what exactly she intended.

No time for overthinking; in a life-and-death battle, hesitation was the worst. Using both his trump cards simultaneously was immensely draining for him as well, so this fight must be swift. The longer it dragged on, the worse it was for him.

Chapter 1077 Soul Struggle

Lu Ye no longer acted as he did before. Having detected that Liew Yuemei was deliberately showing weakness, he naturally remained vigilant.

He raised his saber and thrust it forward.

The entire combat arena seemed to dim for a moment, followed by a shower of dazzling starlight, each beam of starlight a sharp blade light.

As the stars fell, the protective spirit light around Liew Yuemei fluctuated violently and shattered suddenly. However, she clearly anticipated this, as a different layer of protective spirit light appeared the moment the first one shattered.

She had already used a second protective spirit treasure.

As the glow filled the air, threads of Thunder Power suddenly traveled across her body, and in the blink of an eye, formed a massive lightning orb. The orb exploded with a booming sound, spreading outward at lightning speed.

A radius of thirty zhang instantly transformed into a Lightning Pool, where lightning intertwined like a swarm of writhing serpents.

When Lu Ye saw the Thunder Power surging from Liew Yuemei, he sensed trouble. Prepared for it, he intended to retreat after releasing the starlight strike.

However fast he was, he couldn't keep up with the Thunder Power.

The Lightning Pool expanded, engulfing him within.

His whole body shook violently as if he were a sieve, and he almost lost his grip on the Boulder Mountain Saber. Though he intended to escape the Lightning Pool's range, his movements were hampered by the invasive Thunder Power, turning him into a stiff marionette.

Liew Yuemei's activation of the Lightning Pool Secret Technique was far less lethal than before, but the continuously roaming lightning snakes significantly hindered movement, giving Lu Ye the sensation of being stuck in a quagmire.

Clearly, the opponent aimed to limit his speed, soon to follow up with an onslaught.

Yet what he saw next made Lu Ye squint.

Because Liew Yuemei's movements mirrored his own, jerky and halting, as if she were another marionette.

Lu Ye immediately understood that the Lightning Pool Secret Technique affected both himself and Liew Yuemei equally, no wonder she had concealed it; it wasn't due to her lack of cultivation, but rather the peculiarity of the secret technique itself.

Then he saw Liew Yuemei's eyes flash with a fierce gleam, and suddenly, her psyche force fluctuated wildly.

In his field of vision, Liew Yuemei transformed into a beam of light, charging toward him with incredible speed, colliding headfirst into his mind, as if an invisible sledgehammer had smashed into his skull, causing Lu Ye to involuntarily reel backward.

Lu Ye quickly steadied himself, slightly lowering his body, rooting himself in place, and a realization dawned upon him.

He finally understood what Liew Yuemei intended to do.

This woman actually intended to engage him in soul warfare!

She clearly realized that if they continued fighting as before within the combat arena, she would likely meet with disaster, so she aimed to exploit her strengths while avoiding her weaknesses, forcing a showdown on the psyche level.

The Lightning Pool was simply to restrain his movements, making it easier for her to unleash her Psyche Secret Technique.

The figure of Liew Yuemei he saw earlier wasn't her physical body, but her soul body, which is why it collided into his mind.

One has to admit, Liew Yuemei made a highly intelligent choice, and with remarkable decisiveness, showcasing the cunning of a seasoned combat veteran.

In the contest of physical prowess, Liew Yuemei was at a clear disadvantage, even showing signs of defeat. Continuing to battle this way, her chances of victory were slim.

She naturally wouldn't take such a risk. Since the physical encounter wasn't working, she decided to engage on the soul level.

Her thinking was simple, no matter how profound Lu Yiye's foundation was, he was ultimately just a Divine Sea Level 2. She couldn't overwhelm Lu Ye physically, but surely she could on the soul front, right?

This stemmed from the confidence of a Divine Sea Level 7 cultivator.

Of course, making such a decision also displayed her boldness. Direct psyche confrontation between major Divine Sea Realm cultivators is extremely rare, as this type of battle is far more dangerous than normal combat. A slight mistake could result in soul damage or even dispersal.

Just as she anticipated, Lu Yiye's psyche defense wasn't particularly strong, and she didn't expend much effort before breaking through, her soul body rushing into Lu Ye's Divine Sea.

One look around surprised her, for the scale of this Divine Sea far exceeded what she knew of Divine Sea Level 2 standards.

What a monster, it's enough that his physical foundation is so powerful, but his Divine Sea is also way beyond the same level.

Suppressing her chaotic thoughts, Liew Yuemei raised her hand, unleashing sharp attacks one after another upon the Divine Sea, causing immediate waves to rise amid the previously calm sea, billowing waves enveloping everything.

Fighting soul warfare in someone else's Divine Sea has its pros and cons. The advantage is that she can act with impunity, as any Psyche Secret Technique unleashed directly damages the opponent's Divine Sea.

The downside is her own psyche force can't be effectively replenished, whereas the enemy holds the home advantage. As long as their Divine Sea remains intact, their Psyche Force is inexhaustible.

Liew Yuemei has cultivated for many years and ascended to the Divine Sea Realm long ago. Although she hasn't experienced many such psyche confrontations, she undoubtedly has more experience than Lu Ye.

So, from the start, she focused on destroying the Divine Sea, knowing that the more ferocious her offensive, the more uncomfortable it would be for her opponent.

Amidst the turmoil she caused, at the center of the Divine Sea, a soul body suddenly appeared; it was Lu Ye, immersed in his psyche, manifesting his psyche spirit body.

With one glance at Liew Yuemei's actions, he was furious, immediately rushing toward her. As he advanced, his mind moved subtly, and pillars of water surged from the Divine Sea, striking at Liew Yuemei as a counterattack from his own Divine Soul Power.

Liew Yuemei made no intention to dodge, continuously channeling her Divine Soul Power, transforming it into slashes to cut down the water pillars.

Even Lu Ye himself was shaken, if not for the fact he was on home ground, able to replenish at will, his soul body might soon shatter.

Now this was the rhythm a battle should have. Liew Yuemei mocked with a laugh, "Lu Yiye, today you will surely die!"

Lu Ye said nothing, his face darkened.

To have his home ground treated with such impunity by an enemy was beyond outrageous, making him feel as if a bandit had broken into his house, not only wrecking his possessions but also mocking him.

But there was no helping it; ultimately, he had only ascended to the Divine Sea half a year ago and had never experienced a psyche battle before. Such encounters were inevitably unfamiliar.

Furthermore, in such a rivalry, he couldn't fully harness the depths of his physical body.

He could only keep charging at Liew Yuemei, simultaneously mobilizing the Divine Sea's power to transform into massive waves sweeping over her, hoping to make a difference.

All useless, whether it was himself or the massive waves from the Divine Sea, Liew Yuemei intercepted them all.

Although the situation was dire, he wasn't too flustered because within his Divine Sea stood the Soul Suppressing Pagoda. Thus, even if his Divine Soul Power was exhausted, he wouldn't face mortal danger, unless Liew Yuemei had the means to breach the Soul Suppressing Pagoda and utterly destroy his Divine Sea.

But the Soul Suppressing Pagoda was a Soul Device, not something easily broken.

Moreover, Liew Yuemei, fighting on foreign ground, couldn't replenish her Divine Soul Power. Once her offensive slackens, this crisis can be resolved.

However, the struggle was truly suffocating.

He was ultimately a combat cultivator, battling barehanded was frustratingly impotent. If only he had a saber in hand right now.

A thought crossed his mind, and Lu Ye suddenly remembered something. His charge toward Liew Yuemei halted, stopping in place.

Liew Yuemei noticed, and with a lift of her hand, numerous slashes aimed at Lu Ye's soul body.

But they were all blocked along the way by layers of water curtains, failing to accomplish their task; these water curtains were manifestations of Divine Soul Power.

Each broken layer meant the consumption of Lu Ye's Divine Soul Power, which, if overly consumed, posed a serious disadvantage to him.

In their attacking and defending, a sudden unease emerged within Liew Yuemei, but the source of this feeling was vague.

Moreover, in the heat of battle, she couldn't afford to ponder deeply.

Her continuous psyche slashes broke through the ascending water curtains, then Liew Yuemei sharply sensed disharmony as the newly formed closest water curtain split voluntarily from the sides.

The next moment, Lu Ye's soul body lunged forth from within.

Liew Yuemei snorted coldly, psyche slashes instantaneously unleashed, each connected end-to-end, aggressively surging.

She had just used this method against Lu Ye's soul body, each time causing him unbearable suffering, forcing him to retreat.

However, this time, Lu Ye changed his tactics, neither dodging nor avoiding.

A flash of blade swept out abruptly, shattering all of Liew Yuemei's psyche slashes.

Where did this blade come from! Liew Yuemei's heart sank into shock as she fixed her gaze, overwhelmed with astonishment.

Because Lu Yiye at this moment held a saber in his hand, one that seemed so familiar, startlingly it was his Magic Artifact long saber.

How could a Magic Artifact long saber be brought into the Divine Sea, or was the long saber inherently a Soul Device? This seemed absurd, Magic Artifact and Soul Device are entirely distinct.

Numerous thoughts flashed through Liew Yuemei's mind, she truly couldn't fathom the explanation for the changes before her.

Of course, she was confused because what Lu Ye now held was not the Boulder Mountain Saber, even though the Boulder Mountain Saber was now a supreme-grade magic artifact, it couldn't be brought into the Divine Sea.

Lu Ye held the Soul Severing Saber in his hand!

But due to the Soul Severing Saber's unique nature, it manifested as the Boulder Mountain Saber's appearance, which was the blade Lu Ye was most familiar with, allowing him to maximize his strength.

Earlier, he lamented the absence of a saber in his hand, then promptly recalled the Soul Severing Saber.

Only upon acquiring the Soul Severing Saber, he merged it with the Boulder Mountain Saber, elevating its grade, thus misstepping into a mental lapse, never thinking to bring the Soul Severing Saber into the Divine Sea.

Once the idea emerged, with slight experimentation, he smoothly brought the Soul Severing Saber into the Divine Sea.

Chapter 1078 The Death of Liew Yuemei

Now that he had a blade in hand, Lu Ye felt his entire being become smooth and complete, no longer would he have strength with no place to exert it like before.

In the home ground of his own Divine Sea, taking advantage of the time and place, his soul body almost instantly charged to Liew Yuemei's face.

The shock on Liew Yuemei's face hadn't even had time to subside before a slash of blade light swept down on her. In a hurry, she could only muster her power to protect herself.

She had practiced the Psyche Secret Technique, possessing not just offensive means, but defensive techniques as well, manifested as a barrier in front of her.

The long blade sliced down, and the barrier shattered like a bubble.

Liew Yuemei's face changed drastically, finally confirming that the long blade in Lu Ye's hand was indeed a Soul Device, and a remarkable one at that, otherwise it wouldn't have such a substantial impact on psyche defense.

Gritting her teeth, full of unwillingness, Liew Yuemei knew her strategy was without flaw. With no advantage in physical strength, even at a disadvantage, the only comparison was with the psyche, where she was indeed much stronger than Lu Ye.

But she never expected that Lu Yiye, at Divine Sea Level 2, would possess such an extraordinary Soul Device.

That was a Soul Device!

Even she, of noble origin and at Divine Sea Level 7, did not have something like this.

How could Lu Yiye have it?

But considering the Righteous Blood Sect's heritage and current circumstances, receiving a Soul Device from Thang Yifeng as protection doesn't seem strange?

She naturally attributed the origin of the Soul Severing Saber to the Righteous Blood Sect, which made sense.

With her psyche defense broken, the Soul Severing Saber still fell straight down. Liew Yuemei hastily retreated, yet the streak of blade light clung to her unshakably like a shadow.

Moreover, in Lu Ye's home ground, she could never be faster than Lu Ye in terms of speed, which is the biggest disadvantage of battling on foreign grounds.

The Boulder Mountain Saber struck Liew Yuemei's soul body, a scream burst forth as if she was enduring immense pain.

Simultaneously, a Psyche Strike also landed on Lu Ye.

It was indeed painful, such a direct attack on his psyche spirit body immediately gave rise to a tearing sensation of the psyche. No blood flowed from the wound, as they were both soul bodies, only Divine Soul Power was leaking from the wound.

But Lu Ye could replenish his Divine Soul Power at any time, so in a moment, the wound healed. Liew Yuemei did not have such convenience.

She had just recovered from the intense pain when Lu Ye once again lifted his blade to slash at her.

There was no defense possible, no escaping possible. Having endured a second slash, Liew Yuemei's screams grew more shrill; the pain in the psyche was truly beyond what ordinary people could endure.

And this time, Liew Yuemei's instinctive counterattack barely missed Lu Ye, not harming him in the slightest.

Hit twice in succession, Liew Yuemei knew she couldn't continue like this anymore, and she couldn't help but feel the urge to retreat. She turned swiftly to flee away.

Lu Ye saw her actions, how would he let her have her way.

She had arbitrarily barged into his Divine Sea causing havoc, and now wanting to escape upon realizing the bad situation, how could there be such an easy way out in this world.

He raised his hand, pressed down, then suddenly lifted it, murmuring aloud: "Rise!"

The seawater below, already churning, boiled up abruptly, and then a high tower soared into the sky, suspended above the Divine Sea.

Under the impetus of Divine Soul Power, the body of the tower quivered, expanding suddenly, spreading outward.

In an instant, the enormous high tower passed over the figures of Lu Ye and Liew Yuemei, encompassing the entire Divine Sea, turning the place of the Divine Sea into a cage.

Liew Yuemei collided head-first into the tower wall, despairing as she realized she couldn't break through the tower's defense—in other words, she was trapped.

Her eyes trembled intensely, gazing upon the gigantic tower that covered the Divine Sea world. Liew Yuemei's heart was filled with utmost bitterness.

Another Soul Device!

And a defensive Soul Device at that!

The Righteous Blood Sect... truly, even a tiger dead remains intimidating.

Only now did she realize she had made an extremely wrong choice. If she had only clashed with Lu Ye using magic and spells without triggering a soul conflict, there might have been hope for a comeback, but her fate was sealed when she decided to risk initiating a soul conflict.

What a sly little thief. Clearly armed with such a defensive Soul Device, yet he did not activate it when she invaded his Divine Sea, only using it when she tried to escape.

If this high tower had been protecting him when she attempted to invade his Divine Sea, there was no way she could have succeeded.

This was actually a misunderstanding on Liew Yuemei's part regarding Lu Ye.

Although he had obtained the Soul Suppressing Pagoda for a long time, because he was only in the True Lake Realm at the time of acquiring it—despite having a soul body—it was ultimately different from being in the actual Divine Sea Realm. He wasn't too clear on the full extent of the Soul Suppressing Pagoda's powers, only assuming it was for suppressing and protecting the Divine Sea.

This encounter with Liew Yuemei let him realize another ability of the Soul Suppressing Pagoda, which is to seal the Divine Sea.

With the Soul Suppressing Pagoda turning into a cage on the outside, and Lu Yiye wielding a blade on the inside, Liew Yuemei knew her chance of survival was slim. Instead of panic, a calm settled over her face.

Thud, thud, thud...

The rhythmic sound echoed deep within her heart. She looked up to see Lu Ye walking toward her step by step, unhurriedly. The thumping sound was the echo of his footsteps.

Lu Ye held the Soul Severing Saber level, pointing it at Liew Yuemei, and calmly said, "Come, let's decide a life and death!"

As soon as he finished speaking, Liew Yuemei launched her Psyche Strike.

Lu Ye advanced, slashing away numerous incoming attacks, and landed a strike on Liew Yuemei's soul body.

Having been struck by two slashes before, Liew Yuemei had screamed miserably, but now, faced with certain death, she became resilient. With only a muffled grunt, she didn't cry out.

This struggle would end with only one survivor, so any form of pleading or showing weakness was meaningless. This was destined the moment Lu Ye unleashed the combat arena.

Although she knew she couldn't sway her fate, at the very least, she wanted to face it with dignity.

To be seen weeping and wretched in front of a young Divine Sea Level 2 was too disgraceful!

Slash after slash fell, and Liew Yuemei's soul body grew increasingly dim, until, as Lu Ye passed by her, her once solid soul body had become extremely phantom-like, like a candle in the wind, ready to extinguish at any moment.

She clenched her teeth, uttering a final venomous curse: "Even in death, I won't let you go!"

The remaining power surged, and the phantom-like soul body showed signs of collapse. She would die, but she refused to fall at the hands of a mere junior like Lu Yiye.

Self-destruction was her final dignity and defiance.

As Lu Ye turned his back on her, he spun around swiftly, and the Soul Severing Saber sliced across the Fox Fairy, creating a subtle fissure on the neck of the soul body.

Liew Yuemei's expression twisted in surprise, not having expected Lu Ye to deny her even this final dignity.

Her face contorted with malice, as if trying to say something more, but her soul body had already shattered, transforming into specks of light that vanished.

Lu Ye gazed quietly in the direction of her dissipation, feeling no joy in vanquishing a formidable foe. After all, Liew Yuemei and he were cultivators of the same faction...

Not to mention of the same faction, after two years in the Blood Refinement World, he no longer harbored a strong urge to kill even Ten Thousand Demons Ridge cultivators with whom he was unaffiliated.

Why must it always end in such life-and-death struggles?

In the Blood Refinement World, there were many old seniors from different factions who coexisted peacefully, striving together for a common goal without constant fighting.

Though these thoughts lingered in his heart, he couldn't agree with Mount Tai's perspective. To his mind, Mount Tai's view was unreliable; centuries-old animosities couldn't be resolved just by creating a new faction. Perhaps many in the world, like him, were indeed weary of the endless conflict between the two major factions, but being in the midst of it, they had little choice.

Of course, although there was no joy in Liew Yuemei's death, there was no sorrow either. This accidental encounter was destined to end with either his death or hers.

One could only say it was a confused mess. He had come only to refine a new doppelganger, only to end up caught by Liew Yuemei.

After learning that Li Taibai was Lu Ye's doppelganger, Liew Yuemei harbored a kill intent.

If others wished to kill him, he would naturally retaliate, unable to sacrifice his life for their benefit. If he was to retaliate, he had to do it thoroughly; thus he lived, and Liew Yuemei died—simple as that.

This was barely considered a settling of the grudge.

Previously, when he returned from requisitioning his third senior brother, Xiao Xinghe, at Jinglan Lake Pass, Liew Yuemei disregarded status and pursued him fiercely. If not for him activating the Golden Body Token for protection, he would surely have met a grim fate—this incident was etched in Lu Ye's heart.

As the thought crossed his mind, Lu Ye swiftly freed his consciousness.

In the next moment, his awareness returned, and the combat arena space was rapidly disintegrating.

The battle having decided life and death, the combat arena space could naturally no longer sustain.

Liew Yuemei stood not far away, but she was now lifeless.

Lu Ye hastily deactivated the Beast Transformation Secret Technique and called out, "Yiyi!"

Yiyi quickly slipped into Amber's body.

Amber looked somewhat weary, a consequence experienced every time after using Beast Transformation. Not just Amber, even Lu Ye himself was heavily depleted, not only physically but also in his soul. However, as long as the foundation wasn't harmed, rest would restore them.

As the space collapsed, in the next instant, Lu Ye found himself back in the fissure from before.

His brows furrowed because his surroundings were teeming with the Insect Race, including a few formidable Divine Sea Realm insects.

Before unleashing the combat arena, Lu Ye had sensed the unusual activity of the Insect Race beneath the fissure, which prompted him to quickly release the combat arena to prevent their interference with his battle against Liew Yuemei.

Now that the fight was over, although little time had passed, a vast number of insects had emerged.

Once he appeared, he was immediately surrounded by a dense perimeter of the Insect Race.

The low-intelligence insects had no concept of a human suddenly appearing here, but by instinct, they launched attacks on Lu Ye.

Holding his blade, Lu Ye prepared to break through. At this point, he was too exhausted to remain here.

However, before he could act, a voice called from afar: "Li Taibai, where are you?"

Lin Yue had found her way here!

Chapter 1079 Insect Plague Assault

Lin Yue wouldn't appear here for no reason; since she can call out Li Taibai's name, she clearly received some news.

It's not surprising. When Lu Ye initially clashed with Liew Yuemei in the ground fissure, there was quite a commotion; otherwise, it wouldn't have attracted the underground Insect Race. If any cultivators were passing nearby, they might have noticed.

Probably some Ten Thousand Demons Ridge cultivators noticed the disturbance of the fight here and passed the news to Lin Yue, who became concerned about his safety and came to investigate.

She does care.

But this situation is awkward for Lu Ye. He doesn't know how to face Lin Yue since they belong to different factions. If they meet, should they fight or not? If it were a usual time, he could just hide and wait for Lin Yue to leave, allowing him to escape safely.

But now, surrounded by the Insect Race on all sides, he simply can't hide.

The only option is to activate Thousand Faces, transforming into Li Taibai's appearance. Amidst the fierce battle, he donned the Crimson Dragon Battle Suit, hung the sword gourd at his waist, sheathed the Boulder Mountain Saber, and stored Amber into the spirit beast sack.

After these consecutive actions, the Insect Race densely surrounded him from all directions, with several Divine Sea Realm insects watching aggressively nearby.

The sword light trembled, with Sword Qi radiating, clearing a vast vacuum area instantly; insect blood and severed limbs scattered as Lu Ye rushed upward, blasting out of the ground fissure within a few breaths.

Not far from there, a figure was being besieged by the Insect Race; surprisingly, it was Lin Yue.

Although she has Divine Sea Level 7 cultivation, equal to Liew Yuemei, the Insect Race appearing this time far exceeds in both quantity and quality than before.

This is also why she finds it difficult to delve into the fissure to search for Li Taibai.

Fortunately, relying on her own cultivation, she can still hold her ground.

Hearing the swords singing, she turned her head and saw the familiar figure immediately, exclaiming joyfully, "Li Taibai."

Lu Ye headed towards her and soon joined her.

"Let's go!" Lu Ye urged; he was too depleted and didn't want to continue fighting fiercely with the Insect Race here. He should focus on quickly recovering and regulating his breath.

Lin Yue accepted readily, and the two immediately turned to run towards the direction of the Dark Moon Forest Pass, breaking through the encirclement in no time. The swarm of insects followed behind, but they quickly shook them off.

The path ahead still had insect blockades, but they posed no significant threat.

Flying through mid-air, Lu Ye glanced downwards, frowning as he saw densely packed Insect Race of various shapes emerging in his vision. It's already a considerable-scale Insect Plague, and from the fissure he escaped, more insects continuously swarm out, expanding the plague's magnitude.

In the Nine Provinces over the past couple of years, small and large insect plagues have crawled out from various ground fissures, and the Insect Race is extremely sensitive to spirit force fluctuations, hence once they gather into a plague, they inevitably swarm toward human race gathering spots.

The current location is roughly between the Dark Moon Forest Pass and the Jinglan Lake Pass, slightly closer to the Dark Moon Forest Pass. It's predictable that this Insect Plague will pose a certain degree of impact on both mountain passes.

The cultivators at the two mountain passes must fend off the Insect Plague and annihilate these insects.

Lin Yue is already arranging for the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge cultivators outside to return. With such a large-scale insect plague, individual power is utterly inadequate to withstand, not even the Divine Sea Realm; they can only steadfastly defend the pass and repel enemies using the pass's fortifications.

Dark Moon Forest Pass has experienced this many times already, so they know well how to handle it.

Messages were sent out one after another, after which Lin Yue finally had the time to speak with Lu Ye, "Junior Brother Taibai, were you battling with that Liew Yuemei earlier?"

Lu Ye knew she would ask this, and having already thought it over, he replied plainly, "Yes."

It's unavoidable to acknowledge. Within a thousand-mile radius, only the three of them are Divine Sea Realm, and some Ten Thousand Demons Ridge cultivators detected the turmoil among the Divine Sea Realm and reported it to Lin Yue. Lin Yue isn't foolish; naturally, she had her suspicions, otherwise, she wouldn't have specially come to find him.

Moreover, the death of Liew Yuemei ultimately needs to have a reason.

Lin Yue couldn't help but be startled, "Where is she?"

Earlier, she saw Lu Ye emerge from the fissure and didn't notice any trace of Liew Yuemei.

"Dead!" Lu Ye replied concisely.

Lin Yue was even more shocked; her expression changed, "How did she die?"

It's not that she had any ties with Liew Yuemei; it's just that both were Divine Sea Level 7, and her strength was slightly inferior to Liew Yuemei. If any danger could kill Liew Yuemei, it could also end her life; she must remain vigilant.

Naturally, Lu Ye wouldn't admit to killing her, and regardless of whether Lin Yue would believe it, even if she did, many things couldn't be explained. He simply pushed it off saying, "She was ambushed by the Insect Race during the fight and died."

After all, Liew Yuemei indeed perished in the fissure, with so many insects present; attributing her death to the Insect Race is quite fitting.

Over the past two years, Divine Sea Realm cultivators have indeed fallen into the hands of the Insect Race, and the number is not small; even Divine Sea Level 8-9 cultivators have not been spared. Within the Insect Race, there indeed exist powerful beings!

Lin Yue couldn't help feeling a bit absent-minded.

She had been stationed at the Dark Moon Forest Pass for over a decade, and Liew Yuemei's tenure at Jinglan Lake Pass wasn't short either. Both were female cultivators, similar in age and strength. It's fair to say they had crossed paths overtly and covertly many times, each viewing the other as a rival.

This was one reason why the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge left Lin Yue at the Dark Moon Forest Pass while the Haotian Alliance stationed Liew Yuemei at Jinglan Lake Pass. Through years of rivalry, they came to know each other well, and with each guarding one side, both factions felt assured, minimizing the chance of significant errors.

Yet unexpectedly, her longstanding opponent had died just like that. Lin Yue suddenly felt a sense of lament, wondering what the point of their years of rivalry had been.

On her way back, she didn't encounter a single soul; those from the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge, guided by Lin Yue's transmission, had already returned to the Dark Moon Forest Pass early, making preparations for its defense.

On the pass's walls, numerous defensive fortifications were fully prepared, awaiting the Insect Race attack to unleash a slaughter.

"Junior Brother Taibai, you should rest first. I estimate that within a day, the insect plague won't spread this far," Lin Yue spoke, primarily because she could sense that Lu Ye was greatly depleted. With an imminent battle, they must take good care of their sole Divine Sea Realm subordinate.

Lu Ye said no more and headed toward his residence. Once inside, he sat cross-legged and swallowed an elixir pill to restore himself.

Though forced to return to the Dark Moon Forest Pass once more, with previous experience, it wouldn't be difficult to escape again when an opportunity arises.

However, he had another concern: whether Jinglan Lake Pass could withstand this insect plague.

After he killed Liew Yuemei, Jinglan Lake Pass was now leaderless. What's crucial is that they probably didn't even know yet that their Mountain Pass Chief was dead!

Currently, only some Cloud River Realm and True Lake Realm cultivators were left to guard Jinglan Lake Pass. If the scale of the insect plague was too immense, without a Divine Sea Realm powerhouse to hold the fort, Jinglan Lake Pass might not hold.

Additionally, while at Dark Moon Forest Pass, Lin Yue had transmitted a message to recall all the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge cultivators who were outside, preparing for defense. But no one had reminded those at Jinglan Lake Pass.

He was aware of the approaching insect plague, yet he couldn't rush over to warn them.

He could only hope they would sense it soon and respond promptly.

These were cultivators with achievements, not children. Many things couldn't solely rely on superiors; each must bear some responsibility.

Time flowed on, and Lu Ye gradually recovered.

Suddenly, intense spirit force fluctuations accompanied by a humming sound came from outside, causing the entire pass to tremble. Lu Ye urgently opened the door and stepped out, his figure swaying as he swiftly reached the pass's walls.

Looking out, his heart sank.

His field of vision was filled to the brim with the silhouettes of the Insect Race, both crawling on the ground and flying in the air, densely packed. The scale of this insect plague was even larger than he had imagined.

The nearest insects were only about three miles from the pass. At this moment, numerous defensive fortifications at the pass were unleashing their might, firing attacks activated by formations into the insect swarm. Each time, it cleared a vacuum path, but it was soon filled again by new insects.

"Little Mountain Pass Chief!" Nearby, a few cultivators saw him appear and saluted in unison.

Lu Ye glanced over. Among them, Ying Wuji forced a smile, inexplicably nervous.

Although the Little Mountain Pass Chief had been at Dark Moon Forest Pass for over three months and they had frequent contact, for some reason, every time Ying Wuji saw the Little Mountain Pass Chief, he felt somewhat anxious and uneasy.

Even though the Little Mountain Pass Chief had never made things difficult for him, and they were about the same age, with Ying Wuji even being slightly older... he couldn't understand where that invisible pressure came from, attributing it to the unique aura of a Divine Sea Realm.

"Carry on with your work," Lu Ye said.

They felt as if pardoned and hurriedly collaborated to activate the formation, unleashing the spirit treasure's power in the array eye.

Lin Yue appeared quickly, smiling, "Haven't yet congratulated you, Junior Brother, on advancing to Level 2."

She had sensed Lu Ye's advancement when they returned yesterday, but with her mind on the pass's defense, she hadn't the opportunity to mention it.

"It's just Level 2; there's still a big gap compared to you, Senior Sister." Lu Ye nodded slightly in acknowledgment.

Lin Yue chuckled, "You've not been cultivating for long, yet you're already at Divine Sea Level 2. I fear it won't be long before your cultivation surpasses mine. When that time comes, don't hold it against your senior sister for being slow-witted."

"Oh, don't say that, Senior Sister."

Ying Wuji and the others focused intently on their tasks, the conversation between the two Divine Sea Realm entering one ear and leaving the other.

"What do you think of this insect plague, Senior Sister?" Lu Ye shifted the topic.

"The scale is immense, the largest we've encountered in the past two years," Lin Yue's expression turned serious. "If the pass were at its peak, resisting such an insect plague wouldn't be difficult. But as you know, many have been redeployed elsewhere, not just at Dark Moon Forest Pass; all major passes in both factions are the same. So, to withstand this plague, you and I need to work together."

At the very least, we should find a way to eliminate a batch of Divine Sea Realm insects to reduce the pressure on the pass.

"I understand," Lu Ye nodded.

Lin Yue hesitated, "Actually, I'm not too worried about our side; my concern is more with Jinglan Lake Pass."

Chapter 1080 Cleaning Up One's Own Mess

This kind of thing was impossible in the past. The two major camps were opposing each other, each holding deep-seated hatred. The more unfortunate the enemy, the happier our side would be. But now that the situation has changed with time, to the point where there is a day to worry about the enemy's situation, it shows how unpredictable life can be.

The two mountain passes are separated by about thirty miles, being like two bright lights in this wilderness. The Insect Race is attracted to them like moths to a flame. If one light goes out, the pressure on the other becomes immense. Their relationship is indeed like lips and teeth: if one is lost, the other is exposed to the cold.

Lu Ye, concerned about this, shared Lin Yue's worries. He didn't know if the situation at the Jinglan Lake Pass had discovered Liew Yuemei's death, or if they had reached out to higher authorities for reinforcement.

It's completely different for a mountain pass to have a Divine Sea Realm cultivator overseeing it compared to not having one.

Currently, Lu Ye, transformed into Li Taibai as a Ten Thousand Demons Ridge cultivator, naturally couldn't openly show bias, thus he said, "Each person sweeps the snow from their own doorstep. Junior Sister, you needn't worry too much. The Haotian Alliance cultivators are not children; if the situation turns bad, they will naturally call for aid."

"Let's hope so." Lin Yue nodded slightly.

While a large number of the Insect Race attacked Dark Moon Forest Pass, Jinglan Lake Pass was facing the same situation. The ground fissure lay at the center slightly right of both mountain passes. The Insect Race poured out and split into two groups, one surging north towards Dark Moon Forest Pass, the other south towards Jinglan Lake Pass.

The Haotian Alliance cultivators at Jinglan Lake Pass, though not forewarned, reacted quickly. Realizing the massive scale of the Insect Plague, they sent out messages in all directions, swiftly returning to the pass to prepare for defense, each assuming their duties and remaining vigilant.

But soon, the many cultivators at the mountain pass were embarrassed to find that their Mountain Pass Chief was nowhere to be found. Even using the guard token to send messages, they received no response.

It wasn't until a cultivator from the Tianyuan Sect examined the markings on the battlefield markings that they horrifically discovered Liew Yuemei's mark had disappeared!

The Mountain Pass Chief was dead!

No one knew how she died, nor where. The only certainty was that her death was within these two days, as she had been seen at the mountain pass just the previous day.

The cultivators of the Tianyuan Sect were grieved deeply.

The current situation allowed them no time for sorrow; they could only hastily send a message upward, reporting both Liew Yuemei's death and the impending onslaught of the Insect Plague on the pass.

Jinglan Lake Pass was under the jurisdiction of the Sky Gate Checkpoint, one of the 12 Checkpoints of Bingzhou. Upon receiving the message, Sky Gate Checkpoint was also shocked. After verifying Liew Yuemei's mark, confirming her death, they could only figure out how to dispatch a Divine Sea Level 6 cultivator from nearby to rush to Jinglan Lake Pass and urgently take over the position of Mountain Pass Chief from Liew Yuemei.

Chen Xiao arrived at Jinglan Lake Pass in this tense situation.

It wasn't that the Haotian Alliance didn't want to send more Divine Sea Realm cultivators; it's just that manpower was tightened everywhere at the moment, and more Divine Sea Realm cultivators simply couldn't be mobilized quickly.

Finding even one Level 6 cultivator was no small feat.

A Divine Sea Level 6, with considerable cultivation, arrived at Jinglan Lake Pass just as the Insect Race launched its assault. From a distance, the entire mountain pass was no longer visible, replaced in his vision by an overwhelming number of various shapes and forms of the Insect Race.

He forged a path with his lightning technique, a booming force, cutting a bloody path through the swarm and headed towards the Jinglan Lake Pass.

The Insect Race's attack was without hesitation — acting purely on instinct, they launched with full force, without strategy, relying on sheer numbers for victory.

Across the thirty miles, the mountain passes of the two major camps, Haotian Alliance and Ten Thousand Demons Ridge, erupted almost simultaneously into great battles. Within the passes, numerous defensive constructs unleashed their power, killing countless Insect Race.

At Dark Moon Forest Pass, Lu Ye and Lin Yue repeatedly fought their way out of the pass, striking down those Divine Sea Realm Insect Race to ease their side's burden.

After half an hour of fierce exchange, Lu Ye charged out once more. The Sword Qi in his sword gourd wantonly transformed into delicate strokes, reaping lives, and none of the Insect Race below the Divine Sea could withstand its edge.

The many sword flashes seemed intelligent, weaving through the swarm and harvesting lives, only to swiftly gather again and strike as a Heaven-shocking Sword Aura, each time claiming a Divine Sea Realm Insect Race.

Lin Yue stood on the pass's wall, recovering her spirit force as she quietly observed, deeply astonished.

She's encountered many sword cultivators, each orthodox sword cultivator unrivaled in their killing power, a trait of sword cultivators, yet rarely had a sword cultivator achieved Lu Ye's level — exuding a pleasing aesthetic even amidst the brutal killing.

He seemed not to be killing, but painting vigorously with his sword as his brush.

Lin Yue had, for the first time, witnessed the true strength of Li Taibai.

Though Li Taibai had been at the pass for over three months, the two had never had the experience of fighting side by side. Usually, their missions were alternated, leaving Lin Yue unaware of how Li Taibai fought.

Until today.

It's now certain that Li Taibai still possessed the ability to kill beyond his rank, as he did in the True Lake Realm. She couldn't help but ponder whether to bring her niece Tong Shuyao back to the pass. Her niece had quite the appearance, and if she could marry Li Taibai, it wouldn't be a bad story. If so, Li Taibai would truly become one of their own.

But soon, she gave up on the idea in her heart.

If Li Taibai were still in the True Lake Realm, this matter might be achievable, but now he is in the Divine Sea Realm, with a bright future. No matter how attractive her niece might be, how much of an appeal could she hold for him?

Not to mention, in the past three months, many female cultivators at the mountain pass have shown considerable interest in the new Junior Mountain Pass Chief, seeking to get close to him, yet there's no word of him getting close to any of them, or even speaking to anyone.

This kind of person seems easygoing, but in fact, deep down, he is extremely proud. Not to mention her not-so-promising niece, even if she personally offered him her bed, it might not move him.

Various strange thoughts crossed her mind, and Lin Yue's expression suddenly changed as she shouted, "Junior Brother Taibai, come back quickly!"

It turned out that Li Taibai, in the heat of battle, had gone deep into the insect swarm. At this moment, only countless Sword Qi was rampaging within the swarm, leaving trails of Insect Race corpses falling like raindrops, and Li Taibai's figure was nowhere to be seen.

There was no response at all, and in an instant, even the shining lights of the Sword Qi could no longer be seen.

Lin Yue's expression slightly changed. She wanted to help but dared not act rashly. She was the backbone here; even if something happened to Li Taibai, as long as she remained, the mountain pass would not fall into chaos. However, if both she and Li Taibai got trapped, then it would be a big problem.

As time ticked away, after a moment, the streaking sword light came back into view, and Lin Yue took a long breath, her heaving chest rising and falling.

Finally, back.

The sword dragon swirled like a spinning top, tearing a gap in the dense swarm and quickly breaking out of encirclement, landing beside Lin Yue. The chilling Sword Qi retracted, revealing Li Taibai's figure.

Lin Yue reproached, "Junior Brother, how could you be so reckless? You scared me to death."

Lu Ye chuckled heartily, "I got carried away with the killing, sorry to worry you, Senior Sister."

"Don't let there be a next time!" Lin Yue looked at him with a hint of reproach in her eyes. She had worked hard to get a strong helper from the outside, and his capabilities greatly satisfied her. Over the past three months, he had shared much of her burden, and it would not do to lose such a good ally to the insect swarm.

"There won't be a next time." Lu Ye nodded repeatedly.

Realizing her expression was off, Lin Yue quickly composed her face and said, "Junior Brother, hold the fort; I'll go take a turn killing them." Saying this, she charged out of the mountain pass.

She didn't go too deep, not because she was timid, but as the Pass Chief, she had to consider the entire pass's safety. She couldn't act as recklessly as Li Taibai, so she kept within one hundred feet of the pass, seeking out stronger targets within the swarm to strike quickly.

On the ramparts, the doppelganger took out two top-grade Spirit Stones, holding one in each palm to replenish her own consumption.

There was no choice. The main body could burn impurities with the Talent Tree and replenish consumption by consuming a large number of elixir pills, but the doppelganger couldn't. Although the doppelganger had a section of a Talent Tree's root, it lacked fuel storage. Using Spirit Stones for replenishment allowed maintaining the purity of her spirit force as much as possible, ensuring her strength wasn't compromised.

At this moment, Lu Ye's main body was swiftly gliding across the sky, heading towards Jinglan Lake Pass.

He was still somewhat uneasy, and of course, this was also an opportunity to extricate himself from Dark Moon Forest Pass, something he had planned long ago.

The intensity of the Insect Race's attack was strong, and this time, the scale of the Insect Plague wasn't small, mainly manifested in the number of Divine Sea Realm Insect Races. With both Li Taibai and Lin Yue stationed at Dark Moon Forest Pass, there wasn't much concern, but if the same intensity of attack happened at Jinglan Lake Pass, which didn't have someone of the Divine Sea Realm guarding it, the pass might not withstand it.

A thousand miles was nothing to him now.

Continuing on, it wasn't long before he reached a point about one hundred miles from Jinglan Lake Pass, and looking from a distance, he furrowed his brow.

The number of Insect Races at Jinglan Lake Pass was evidently greater, with a more massive swarm.

This could be the natural scale of the Insect Plague, or more likely, a result of Jinglan Lake Pass's inadequate defense.

Did the Haotian Alliance not send a Divine Sea Realm here? No matter how tight their resources were, the fall of a mountain pass should prompt sending a strong cultivator. By this point, the Haotian Alliance should have heard of Liew Yuemei's death.

With a sigh in his heart, the mess he had made, ultimately, he had to clean up himself. It's the cycle of the heavens, the consequences inevitable.

He felt no remorse for killing Liew Yuemei. At that moment, only one could survive between them. Even if he wished otherwise, Liew Yuemei wouldn't spare him.

But if this implicated other Haotian Alliance cultivators, Lu Ye would feel guilty.

If he could wholeheartedly assist in defending even the Dark Moon Forest Pass of the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge, then certainly he should do even more for the Jinglan Lake Pass of the Haotian Alliance.

Taking Amber out from the spirit beast sack and placing it on his shoulder, their auras instantly merged, and they rapidly dashed towards the direction of Jinglan Lake Pass.