

Humanity 1091

Chapter 1091 Twin Heroes of Bingzhou

"What brings someone from the Military Supplies Department here?" Lu Ye frowned and asked. He had been immersed in comprehending the third form of the Tyrannical Saber Technique these past few days, with his mind full of those exquisite saber skills, making his reactions just a bit slow.

Yooi Huang said with a wry smile, "Didn't we just apply for resource allocation a few days ago? Someone from the Military Supplies Department must have come to deliver the supplies."

Only then did Lu Ye realize, "If that's the case, then you can handle the handover. There's no need to report this to me."

Yooi Huang said, "Sir, since they have come to our territory, you, as the Pass Chief, should at least make an appearance to entertain them." If the visitor hadn't mentioned Lu Ye, it would be dismissed. However, since Manager Foo had mentioned Lu Ye, it wouldn't seem right if Lu Ye didn't show up. After all, they're here to deliver goods.

Lu Ye was puzzled, "Entertain them? I'm stationed here at the pass to guard the frontlines of Bingzhou, and the Military Supplies Department manages material allocation and transportation to ensure logistics. Everyone has their duties, so what's there to entertain?"

Yooi Huang pulled a bitter face, "Sir, you may not realize, the people from the Military Supplies Department... are not to be offended lightly."

Lu Ye couldn't help but recall his experience carrying Qian Wudang's token to the Military Supplies Department to collect resources. He had gone there twice in Haotian City; although he wasn't deliberately troubled, no one gave him a good look, as if he was there to carve up their supplies. Realizing this, he frowned, "What's this problem? Should I find some beautiful female cultivators to accompany them as well?"

"That's not necessary." Yooi Huang explained with an awkward smile, "The people from the Military Supplies Department aren't the type to abuse their public office. They just have this demeanor, so-called those below follow the example of those above. From what the humble me understands, these are the rules passed down by Department Chief Chow Ye, Lord Chow."

Lu Ye frowned, "Alright then, let's go meet him!"

Yooi Huang hurriedly led the way, not forgetting to remind Lu Ye, "There is one more thing you should be prepared for, sir."

"What's that?"

"The amount and type of resources we applied for last time are too vast. The Military Supplies Department will definitely not approve everything. The supplies they've brought this time may be just a fraction of it, but it's enough for the pass to use. Please don't think the Military Supplies Department is targeting us. The provincial guard here is large, and the Military Supplies Department has the authority over resource management. Nothing is easy for them, and they have to be frugal; otherwise, if they give too much, they can't explain it to those above or below."

"You're speaking for them now." Lu Ye chuckled.

Yooi Huang sighed, "Though I'm not in their position, I somewhat understand their actions. It's said they put on a cold face to prevent anyone too close to the Military Supplies Department from embezzling funds. To some degree, while they may seem unpleasant faced with it, they are all dedicated to their duty."

"Hmm, hmm." Lu Ye remarked casually, soon arriving at the visitors hall with Yooi Huang.

He immediately saw two people sitting there. Upon Lu Ye's arrival, the two stood up together. Lu Ye first cupped his fists towards the Divine Sea Level 5 cultivator, "Greetings, Fellow Daoist Liu."

He didn't know the person's exact name, only that from Yooi Huang, he learned the person was surnamed Liu and was the escort sent by the Military Supplies Department this time.

Though this wasn't his primary task, considering the person's high cultivation, Lu Ye found it natural to exchange pleasantries first.

Cultivator Liu sized up Lu Ye and smiled warmly, "I've long heard of Fellow Daoist Lu's renown, and today I finally meet you. Among the Twin Heroes of Bingzhou, indeed, you are exceptional."

Lu Ye was momentarily taken aback, "What Twin Heroes of Bingzhou?" Since when did he gain such a title? Moreover, since it's 'twin,' then the other person is...

Cultivator Liu laughed, "Fellow Daoist Lu may not know, but the incident a few days ago where you and Fellow Daoist Li Taibai from the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge slew numerous giant insects has been spread by Senior Brother Wan. Senior Brother Wan said that the battle that day was so pleasing that it just made him feel the years are fleeting, but this land delivers new talent, thus the Twin Heroes of Bingzhou — Taibai and Yiye. This Twin Heroes of Bingzhou is Senior Brother Wan's affirmation of both yourself and the one from Ten Thousand Demons Ridge."

Old Wan really is a big gossip...

Lu Ye was speechless, but upon thinking, these Twin Heroes of Bingzhou sounded far better than nicknames like Lu Ye the Sect Destroyer or Three Calamities of Spirit Stream.

He modestly replied, "Veteran Wan overstated. There was much fortune involved in that battle that can't be conclusive."

Cultivator Liu smiled, "Don't be modest, Fellow Daoist. I've known Senior Brother Wan for a long time and asked him in detail about the scene that day. I admit if I were in that situation, I could hardly perform well. Just from that, although your cultivation might fall short of mine, if it were truly a life-and-death battle, I couldn't match you. Senior Brother Wan has a keen eye for people, recognizing talent well. Since he named you two the Twin Heroes of Bingzhou, it won't be mistaken. Otherwise, he wouldn't have vigorously recommended you to oversee a pass. Liu, here, volunteered to come firsthand to see the new talents of Bingzhou and can say today my wish was fulfilled. Frankly, at your age, I had just barely entered the True Lake Realm myself. Ashamed, truly ashamed."

The man was so courteous, Lu Ye could only continue to be modest, "A hundred boats strive forward with sails competing in cultivation matters; who can really declare their future? While I may run faster a ways ahead, who knows if Fellow Daoist Liu cannot borrow the winds of the sea to ride seamlessly later?"

Cultivator Liu laughed heartily, "Then I'll take your applauding words."

Lu Ye then turned to the other True Lake Realm cultivator, "And this must be Manager Foo?"

Foo Yao quickly saluted, "Manager Foo from the Military Supplies Department greets Pass Chief Lu." As he spoke, he unhooked a sizeable batch of storage sacks from his waist, selecting five to present, along with two jade slips, "One details this allocation from Jinglan Lake Pass, approved by the Military Supplies Department. The other is the list of materials instructed by Department Chief Chow to be delivered to you. Please, Pass Chief Lu, verify it's correct, examine, and acknowledge the receipt."

Lu Ye nodded slightly and accepted the two jade slips. He first looked at the one for material requisition and, after a moment, nodded indifferently. Then he checked the other one, which, unsurprisingly, was for a large number of fire spirit stones and other materials for refining array discs.

Yooi Huang stood beside him, watching with a heart full of anxiety, fearing that Lu Ye would fly into a rage if the amount of materials was incorrect. His concern was not unfounded; Lu Ye's age suggested he was in the prime of youth, with little finesse in handling matters smoothly. If he were to be angered over a discrepancy in the material count, it would be troubling for the Military Supplies Department.

If Jinglan Lake Pass tries to request material allocations in the future, they will only face more cold shoulders.

To his relief, Lu Ye showed no signs of getting angry. After checking the material list, he nodded and said, "Everything appears to be in order. How do I sign off on this?"

Foo Yao laughed and said, "Pass Chief Lu just needs to leave his aura imprint on these two jade slips."

Following the method, Lu Ye handed the two jade slips back to Foo Yao.

Foo Yao took them back, "With this, I can report back to the Military Supplies Department. Pass Chief Lu, before I left, Chief Chow instructed me that if there is anything Pass Chief Lu needs in the future, feel free to contact the Military Supplies Department. Anything that can be allocated will be prioritized to Pass Chief Lu's side, rest assured."

Upon hearing this, Lu Ye did not have much of a reaction, but Yooi Huang almost popped his eyes out in surprise.

If he didn't know Manager Foo, he might have suspected that the other party wasn't from the Military Supplies Department.

Since when were the people from the Military Supplies Department so accommodating? Even a miser turns generous?

Back when Liew Yuemei was stationed at Jinglan Lake Pass, she tried to establish a good relationship with the Military Supplies Department but was unsuccessful. Every time this Manager Foo came to deliver supplies, Liew Yuemei would personally accompany him for the handover, but Manager Foo always maintained a business-like demeanor. Although he wasn't rude to Liew Yuemei, he was truly impervious to coaxing and coercion. Once the delivery was completed, he would leave immediately without delay.

What's going on today?

Manager Foo wore a smile from start to finish and even made such a statement.

I've never heard of Chow Ye having any connections to the Righteous Blood Sect, and someone like Chow Ye would never do anything dishonest.

"In that case, I thank Chief Chow in advance." Lu Ye was just as puzzled. Originally, Yooi Huang had told him a lot of things beforehand, making him truly believe that there would be a shortage in the supplies allocated by the Military Supplies Department, and he was mentally prepared for it. But now, it seemed this wasn't the case at all.

"Now that this matter is settled, we'll take our leave." Foo Yao said.

"You two must be tired from the journey. Why not take a rest here before you go? Let me fulfill my duties as a host."

Foo Yao replied, "I appreciate Pass Chief Lu's kindness, but I really have official duties to attend to." He patted his waist, which was bulging with storage sacks. "Besides Jinglan Lake Pass, I have another seven or eight mountain passes to visit. Material allocation is of great importance, and I dare not neglect it."

Hearing this, Lu Ye did not insist further and gestured politely, "Then let me see you off."

After a while, when Lu Ye returned to the visitors' hall after sending off Foo Yao and the other person, he saw Yooi Huang looking at him excitedly, holding several storage sacks in his hands, "Sir, what is your relationship with Chief Chow?"

"Chow Ye?" Lu Ye shook his head, "I've only heard of him, never met."

"Then why were all the supplies we requested fully approved?" Holding the storage sacks in his hands, Yooi Huang felt the weight heavily.

He had drafted the application list for the supplies at Lu Ye's order, knowing exactly how much of each thing they requested. It was, frankly, a lion's share, never hoping for the Military Supplies Department to approve all of it. He even thought someone from the department would come to scold them for it.

But now, every bit of it was approved without a hitch.

And earlier, Foo Yao had such an attitude towards Lu Ye, repeatedly saying that Chief Chow had instructed that should there be any need in the future to contact the Military Supplies Department, whatever could be allocated would be prioritized to Jinglan Lake Pass.

In all these years at the mountain pass, he had never seen the Military Supplies Department act so understanding.

This treatment was akin to that of a parent to their beloved child!

If Lu Ye weren't a man, Yooi Huang would have suspected there was something going on between him and Chow Ye.

Chapter 1092 Negotiation

"In the mortal world, there's a saying: before a major battle, the supplies must go first. We're diligently defending against the Insect Plague here, so ensuring the supply of resources is naturally not a problem." Lu Ye stepped forward and took the two storage sacks containing the fire spirit stones and materials for crafting the array disc.

He thought for a moment, then spoke again: "Has the list of the deceased from the previous battle been compiled?"

"It has been compiled; their bodies have already been transported back to Haotian City," Yooi Huang replied.

"Find a way to check whether they have any surviving relatives. If they do, provide compensation from the mountain pass here."

Yooi Huang was amazed: "Compensation? There has never been such a rule before."

Although the soldiers are under orders to fight on this frontline and face many dangers, cultivators in cultivation inherently face risks. As cultivators fight here, they also earn cultivation resources for themselves. If they die in battle, it's due to insufficient power or bad luck.

"From now on, add this rule. Anyway, these resources will not be entirely used at the mountain pass; you handle this personally."

"Understood!" Yooi Huang responded with a deep bow: "I, on behalf of all the brothers at the mountain pass, thank you for your generosity, Mountain Pass Chief!"

Lu Ye waved his hand, put away the two storage sacks, first went to Heaven's Augury treasure vault and exchanged for a batch of gold-hued spirit fortune sticks from the Hall of Battle Merits. Then he returned to his sleeping quarters, where he cultivated using the spirit fortune sticks and crafted the Explosive Fire Spirit Stones and As-Close-As-Siblings Array Disc.

With the doppelganger helping craft them over at Dark Moon Forest Pass, efficiency was greatly enhanced.

At the mountain pass, many tedious matters were handled by Yooi Huang and several other True Lake Level 9 cultivators. They typically didn't trouble Lu Ye, except in situations where the soldiers encountered Divine Sea Realm insect races that they couldn't handle, they would contact him for support.

The days passed uneventfully, and three months quickly went by like this.

Three full months of nearly uninterrupted cultivation finally allowed Lu Ye's cultivation to progress another level, reaching Divine Sea Level 3.

He immediately recalled his doppelganger and condensed a new one. Then, he had the doppelganger put in an appearance in front of Lin Yue, and upon seeing Li Taibai's cultivation improved again, Lin Yue couldn't contain his delight and relied even more heavily on him.

With the thorn of the Blood Refinement World stuck in his heart, Lu Ye knew he had to expedite the advancement of his cultivation.

Last time, the Nine Provinces Heaven's Augury sent him to the Blood Refinement World, allowing him to witness its various facets firsthand, and after the blood race's failure to conquer Righteous Blood Sacred Land, returned him here, clearly intending for him to elevate his cultivation quickly.

Although Heaven's Augury never says anything, basically leaving Lu Ye to figure things out himself, many matters have patterns to follow.

For instance, why was Lu Ye sent to the Blood Refinement World at that particular time? During the blood race's assault on Righteous Blood Sacred Land, without Lu Ye's contribution of the As-Close-As-Siblings Array Disc, the sacred land would have been in peril.

From this, one can see, the Nine Provinces Heaven's Augury desires to protect the human race, both in the Nine Provinces and in the Blood Refinement World.

Therefore, before the next blood race assault on Righteous Blood Sacred Land, he must return, not only by himself but also with a group of allies, only then will there be a chance to preserve the Righteous Blood Sacred Land, the only Pure Land for the human race in the Blood Refinement World.

As for how to get back, he needn't worry about that. Heaven's Augury has its own plans; he merely needs to wait.

But the current situation in the Nine Provinces is tumultuous and unstable; with the Insect Plague unchecked, there is constant chaos, and manpower is scarce everywhere. Where would he find extra allies to take to the Blood Refinement World?

The best scenario would be to resolve the Nine Provinces' Insect Plague before heading to the Blood Refinement World, but is such a feat truly achievable?

In all his dealings, Lu Ye adheres to a principle: do everything possible and leave the rest to fate. No matter what, he strives to exert his utmost effort.

Currently, his main self is the Mountain Pass Chief of Jinglan Lake Pass, and his doppelganger is the Minor Mountain Pass Chief of Dark Moon Forest Pass. It can be said, he essentially controls this area spanning about a thousand miles.

Not to mention solving the Nine Provinces' Insect Plague, first addressing the insect plague problem within this thousand-mile radius is the sensible approach.

Three months later, Lu Ye emerged from his sleeping quarters without bringing Amber or Yiyi. Both the spirit lion and spirit tiger have been continuously cultivating in seclusion during this time, with an unending supply of gold-hued spirit fortune sticks, their cultivation has advanced rapidly.

He swept his Mental Consciousness around, located Yooi Huang, gave him a few instructions, telling him to stay and hold the fort at the mountain pass, while he soared into the sky, streaking towards the north.

Over the past three months, while cultivating, he had many considerations and was ready to try a few things. If successful, it won't mean solving the insect plague here but stabilizing the situation, which will allow him more time to attend to his affairs.

He sped along the way, imposing and magnificent, quickly arriving before the Dark Moon Forest Pass.

Without intending to hide himself, Lin Yue noticed and immediately flashed to the top of the mountain pass wall, with Li Taibai's doppelganger following closely behind.

Hovering in the air a hundred feet away from Dark Moon Forest Pass, Lu Ye's gaze swept over, feeling awkward inside, but he still cupped his fists in salute to the doppelganger: "Brother Taibai!"

The doppelganger returned the gesture: "Brother Yiye!"

In the eyes of outsiders, these two had a history of joining forces against enemies, and now the name of the Twin Heroes of Bingzhou had spread, so addressing each other this way was natural. Were others to do this publicly, they might immediately be accused of collusion with the enemy.

Lu Ye then looked at Lin Yue: "Lu Ye from Jinglan Lake Pass, greetings to Fellow Daoist Lin."

Lin Yue smiled slightly, bowing gracefully: "To what do we owe the pleasure of Fellow Daoist Lu's visit?"

"There is something I wish to discuss with Fellow Daoist Lin and Brother Taibai. May I come in for a chat?"

Lin Yue was momentarily stunned, then immediately nodded: "Please, Fellow Daoist Lu, come inside."

Without hesitation, Lu Ye flashed into Dark Moon Forest Pass under the watchful eyes of the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge cultivators.

This might well be the first time since the two camps started opposing each other that a cultivator openly walked into the enemy's mountain pass like this.

Lin Yue reflected that young people indeed have boldness in their actions. Replacing him with any older Divine Sea Realm Haotian Alliance member, it would be impossible to walk in like this.

But speaking of it, due to the insect disaster, the relationship between the two camps has slightly eased, and with the coexistence of mutual threats, she had no ill intentions towards Lu Ye.

Soon, in the visitors hall, host and guest took their seats as a female cultivator served tea, getting up close to admire the legendary demeanor of Lu Ye the Sect Destroyer.

Lu Ye took a sip of tea. Having his doppelganger serve under Lin Yue for half a year, he was familiar with her, and didn't beat around the bush: "Fellow Daoist Lin, our mountain passes are divided into the northern and southern ends, guarding the frontline. Past conflicts are driven by circumstances and beyond our control. Currently, we face a common enemy, so why not join forces to defend against them?"

Lin Yue asked, "How do we join forces?"

"The Insect Race in this thousand-mile radius basically crawls out from the ground fissure at the centerline between us. That's the source. So if we can seal the source, the insect disaster in this area will naturally be contained. Doing so spares our soldiers from running around killing insects, and there would be no need for you, me, and Brother Taibai to spread our efforts over various support operations, saving time and effort."

Lin Yue reflected thoughtfully: "Fellow Daoist Lu means to deploy forces at the ground fissure?"

"Exactly." Lu Ye nodded.

"It's indeed a method." Lin Yue smiled, "To be honest, the higher-ups in Ten Thousand Demons City have considered this, but there are many obstacles to implementation, so they ultimately gave up."

"Obstacles? I must ask Fellow Daoist Lin to enlighten me."

"Firstly, we've been in opposition for many years with individual grievances on both sides. Although the greater situation under the insect disaster has slightly alleviated tensions and no one openly declares hostility, most cultivators, when encountering each other in the wild, merely pass by without conflict. But this is limited to chance encounters. If we truly deploy forces at the ground fissure, both sides will involve all their cultivators together, spending time daily, and discord is unavoidable."

Lu Ye nodded: "It's not hard to solve; we each issue orders, and I trust our cultivators are mature enough to discern the bigger picture."

Lin Yue smiled: "This point is indeed more easily resolved. But if we proceed, how should the forces be divided? Our Jinglan Lake Pass presently has about three hundred soldiers, and we cannot send them all to the ground fissure; some must stay to guard the pass. The distance between the ground fissure and the pass is several hundred miles, and the forces are already insufficient; dividing them is a strategic taboo. If a crisis occurs at either the fissure or the pass, it will be hard to support in time."

Lu Ye nodded lightly: "That's a fair concern, Fellow Daoist Lin, is there more?"

Lin Yue urgently replied: "If a giant insect appears at the ground fissure that the soldiers cannot handle, what should we do? At least leave defenders at the pass, they can use the geographical advantage to hold off attackers. The ground fissure, however, lacks such advantages. Considering all these factors, the current defense, although imperfect, guarantees the soldiers' safety better than hastily massing troops at the fissure."

Lu Ye responded: "The current method indeed has its merits, but also its shortcomings. Without surveillance at the ground fissure, we can't know when a giant insect emerges. Over recent months, our soldiers often encounter Divine Sea Realm insects in the wild. Although they can signal me for support, it still requires time, and sometimes I'm late, endangering their lives. I don't know how the situation is at your pass, but at ours at Jinglan Lake Pass, more than a dozen people have been lost over three months."

The situation at Dark Moon Forest Pass was similar. Cultivators hunted the insects in groups, but if unlucky, handling tough ones was dangerous.

Even if Lin Yue responded immediately upon receiving news, she sometimes arrived late.

Just think of when Ying Wuji's team almost faced annihilation. If Lu Ye hadn't arrived in time, Lin Yue could only have handled their aftermath.

"So stationing troops at the ground fissure is the best response. As for Fellow Daoist Lin's concerns... I can arrange a teleportation array directly to the fissure here at Dark Moon Forest Pass. This way, if there's a crisis, neither you nor Brother Taibai would take long to get there. Additionally, with a teleportation array, forces at the pass and the fissure can support each other, ensuring mutual aid if either faces danger."

Chapter 1093 Joining Forces

"Additionally, Fellow Daoist, as for the geographical advantages you mentioned, it's true that there are many defensive constructions at the mountain pass, but we can completely set up numerous formations at the ground fissure. This way, even if a large insect really appears, the power of the formations will at least entangle them temporarily, and the three of us can provide support at any time. Are we really afraid of these insects?"

Lu Ye spoke eloquently. The issues Lin Yue raised had all been considered by him.

The solution is actually quite simple; a Teleportation Array perfectly addresses most of Lin Yue's concerns.

In this world, it's not only Lu Ye who can set up a Teleportation Array. There are many array cultivators in the Nine Provinces. Especially for Divine Sea Realm array cultivators, setting up a Teleportation Array, although not easy, is not an impossible task.

The reason why there hasn't been a precedent of two camps jointly deploying forces at the ground fissure on this front line is simply that there hasn't been a good communication bridge.

Not every Mountain Pass Chief can, like Lu Ye, openly go to the opposing mountain pass and sit down to have a good discussion with the opposing Mountain Pass Chief.

Lu Ye felt that if this matter could be accomplished, it would set a good precedent. With the alliance between Jinglan Lake Pass and Dark Moon Forest Pass resisting the enemy, other mountain passes could follow suit.

By that time, the pressure on the front line here would be significantly reduced, allowing the provincial guards to reallocate more personnel to handle issues in their territories. Such momentum, even if it can't completely solve the insect disaster, is surely able to stabilize the situation.

Lin Yue was lost in thought.

Lu Ye didn't wait for her answer. Such matters are difficult to respond to immediately, and she would certainly need to discuss it with her doppelganger to make a decision.

Furthermore, since this matter was proposed by himself, it's only natural to set an example.

Standing up, he said, "Fellow Daoist Lin, please consider this on your own. However, regardless of your decision, we at Jinglan Lake Pass will act accordingly. I specially came today to inform you, in hopes of gaining your assistance."

Lu Ye took his leave.

Lin Yue was unsure, and Li Taibai, the doppelganger, naturally had a biased stance, so he urged, "I have observed that Lu Yiye conducts himself with integrity and openness. This proposal should be free of selfish intentions. If this endeavor truly succeeds, it would benefit both our soldiers and ourselves."

Lin Yue said, "I certainly understand that, but there has never been a precedent for such a matter."

Li Taibai said, "If Senior Sister does it, then there will be a precedent to follow. If you can't decide now, you might as well wait and see. Let's see whether Lu Yiye talks the talk but doesn't walk the walk. If he does indeed act, it won't be too late for us to join in."

Lin Yue agreed, saying, "This also seems suitable." Inwardly sighing, she noted how Lu Yiye's cultivation speed astonishingly matched that of Junior Brother Taibai, as both had already reached Divine Sea Level 3. She could hardly believe it.

Li Taibai's cultivation advanced to Level 3, and she thought he could leave Lu Yiye behind, yet the speed at which their cultivation improved turned out to be the same.

Moments later, at the Jinglan Lake Pass, Lu Ye gathered his subordinates. Here at the mountain pass, the number of cultivators was not many, similar to Dark Moon Forest Pass, only a little over three hundred people. In the past, there wouldn't have been so few, but too many had been redeployed, leaving only this force behind at the pass.

After all, this place is merely the frontline of the two major camps' confrontation. Even if the Insect Race were to occupy it, it wouldn't have a major impact, unlike Bingzhou's interior, where numerous cities gathered with mortals that need strict defense.

Lu Ye had been here for several months, and this was the first time he summoned all the cultivators. The gathered soldiers had no idea what was happening, only faintly feeling that their Mountain Pass Chief might be planning a major initiative, making them feel eagerly anticipatory.

Standing on the central training ground at the mountain pass, Lu Ye scanned the surroundings. Though young, he possessed an air of commanding presence.

Despite being a temporarily appointed Mountain Pass Chief, after a major battle months ago and these months of interaction, more than three hundred soldiers held him in respect. Without mentioning other matters, just the fact that the mountain pass compensated the family members of slain cultivators was an unprecedented act that won hearts and support.

The path of cultivation is first and foremost to strive for personal advancement, but many reach their potential's limits with no further improvement possible. Their thoughts naturally turn to their descendants and family. In past battles with the Insect Race, they often held back, fearful of mishaps. But now they fight more valiantly because even if they tragically die in battle, a significant amount of compensation would remain for their offspring.

Yooi Huang stepped forward, cupped his hands and said, "Sir, Jinglan Lake Pass with three hundred thirteen people is gathered; we await your orders!"

Lu Ye clasped his hands behind him and nodded slightly: "I intend to deploy forces at the ground fissure 30 miles away to ambush the Insect Race there. Therefore, I need all of you to work together. Yooi Huang, select fifty people to stay and hold the fort; the others, come with me."

"Yes!" Yooi Huang responded, darting into the sky and looking at everyone, "Are there any volunteers to stay and hold the line?"

The group laughed and joked; not a single person volunteered readily.

Knowing their temperament well, Yooi Huang knew that the soldiers were usually eager to venture out to kill insects and earn battle merit. Some had even considered the ground fissure before but didn't dare due to insufficient strength. Now, led by Lu Ye himself, it was a rare opportunity not to be missed.

He scolded them, "The Lord Mountain Pass Chief is watching. Be conscientious, especially those whose cultivation levels are not high!"

A cultivator in the Cloud River Realm immediately shouted, "So what if our cultivation level isn't high? We all grow step by step; we want to follow the Mountain Pass Chief to kill insects too!"

At this, many Cloud River Realm cultivators echoed in agreement.

Yooi Huang felt overwhelmed for a moment and fiercely glared at the Cloud River Realm cultivator who spoke first: "Then let's draw lots! Whoever gets picked stays, and there's no blaming anyone."

Everyone cheered in unison.

Yooi Huang began to prepare, and Lu Ye did not rush him.

A moment later, Yooi Huang finished his preparations and came over with a large jar, shouting: "Line up, one at a time, make your draw and no takebacks!"

The cultivators lined up in two rows and stepped forward one by one.

The cultivators who drew the lot for staying behind couldn't help but show a bitter expression, yet they couldn't blame others, while those who drew for accompanying the expedition were naturally overjoyed.

Once everything was ready, Lu Ye called out and took the lead, flying outward, followed by a dense mass of flowing light.

Along the way, they occasionally encountered the Insect Race, which were all slaughtered on the spot.

It was about 30 miles, and it took them a full four hours to reach their destination, mainly to accommodate the Cloud River Realm cultivators in the group.

Upon reaching the ground fissure, the cultivators immediately formed teams, using the As-Close-As-Siblings Array Disc to form an array, and began clearing the bugs that crawled out from the ground fissure one after another.

Lu Ye did not intervene; instead, he selected a suitable location nearby to set up the Teleportation Array.

Before setting out, he had already left a corresponding Teleportation Array in the Heaven's Augury Hall at Jinglan Lake Pass. By setting up another one here, they could respond from both sides. In this way, even if changes occurred at the ground fissure, the soldiers could return to Jinglan Lake Pass via the Teleportation Array.

Therefore, the Teleportation Array had to be set up immediately.

Near the ground fissure, spirit force surged as soldiers continued to fight, constantly drawing out more of the Insect Race.

The activity here quickly attracted nearby Ten Thousand Demons Ridge cultivators, who watched from a distance and relayed what they saw back to Dark Moon Forest Pass.

Upon receiving the news, Lin Yue was amazed. Lu Yiye truly acted decisively. He had just informed her, and then immediately began his actions. It seemed he wasn't just making idle talk but was determined to follow through.

She summoned Li Taibai to inform him of the news.

The doppelganger said, "If you are concerned, Senior Sister, should I go take a look?"

Lin Yue shook her head, "You stay here. I'll go see for myself." It wasn't that she distrusted Lu Yiye; there would be no advantage in deceiving her under these circumstances. But she needed to inspect the situation to determine if Lu Yiye's earlier proposition was feasible. If it was workable, integrating Dark Moon Forest Pass would naturally be no problem. If not, she wouldn't risk her soldiers' lives.

Shortly thereafter, Lu Ye, having just set up the Teleportation Array, sensed Lin Yue's presence. She landed beside him without hesitation, looked at the Teleportation Array in front of her, and praised, "I've long heard of Fellow Daoist Lu's notable achievements in the Array Path. Seeing it today, it truly lives up to the reputation."

As far as she knew, among many arrays, the setup of a Teleportation Array was extremely difficult due to the complexity of the core Void Spirit Runes. Even many Divine Sea Realm array cultivators couldn't necessarily create one, but Lu Yiye managed to set one up in such a short time, which clearly showed his profound expertise in the Array Path.

"Fellow Daoist Lin flatters me," Lu Ye smiled slightly. "Things are a bit busy here. Feel free to look around, Fellow Daoist Lin."

Saying this, he had Yooi Huang find someone to guard the array, and then he went to the vicinity of the ground fissure to set up other arrays, creating defensive fortifications.

Lin Yue quietly followed beside him, watching him keep busy, occasionally assisting the cultivators of Jinglan Lake Pass in alleviating their pressure.

One by one, arrays were set up successfully. Each array had personnel stationed, and with the help of arrays, the pressure in defending against the Insect Race gradually decreased.

After being busy for a long time, Lu Ye finally spoke: "How has Fellow Daoist Lin decided? To be honest, while the strength of Jinglan Lake Pass is basically sufficient to hold the ground fissure, there's always the worry of unforeseen circumstances. If the Insect Race's power slightly increases, defending here would be quite strenuous, so assistance from your pass is very much needed. Fellow Daoist Lin is a wise person; in the current situation, only by working together can our two sides stabilize the situation. This is also in consideration for the soldiers under our command."

Seeing his sincerity, Lin Yue nodded and said, "I naturally understand what Fellow Daoist Lu is saying. If your Jinglan Lake Pass can act in this way, my Dark Moon Forest Pass will not lag behind. I'll gather my people and bring them over to help."

"That would be great!"

"However, Fellow Daoist Lu, I remain puzzled by one matter and would like your guidance."

"Feel free to ask, Fellow Daoist Lin."

"I've observed that your pass's soldiers can form arrays to resist enemies. This isn't coincidental, is it? Are they using some sort of external force?"

Chapter 1094 Deep into the Ground Fissure

After several months of crafting, the As-Close-As-Siblings Array Discs have become widespread in the Haotian Alliance camp across Bingzhou. Not only Bingzhou, but other provincial states are also gradually benefiting, though because the number is still insufficient, the spread in other provincial states is not as high as in Bingzhou.

After all, these are crafted by Lu Ye, so naturally Bingzhou's needs are prioritized before providing to other provincial states.

It is believed that in a few more months, the situation will improve, as both Lu Ye's real self and doppelganger are working together, doubling the number of As-Close-As-Siblings Array Discs crafted each time.

The Ten Thousand Demons Ridge is not blind, and they naturally noticed the changes in the Haotian Alliance camp. Besides, both camps have long since planted insiders in each other's camps.

The Ten Thousand Demons Ridge has actually been aware of the As-Close-As-Siblings Array Disc's existence for a while, and even tried various ways to obtain a few discs for research, intending to imitate them.

However, this is not something that can be imitated easily. Back in the Blood Refinement World, even an Artifact Crafting Master like Ouyang Zi couldn't do much about it. Truly, if he were to craft it, he could only bet on a pitifully low success rate amidst repeated failures.

Thus, even if the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge obtained the As-Close-As-Siblings Array Discs, they couldn't mass-produce them, leaving them envious.

Lin Yue's status in the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge camp is not very high, but at least she's a Mountain Pass Chief and has heard of the As-Close-As-Siblings Array Discs before. She has also mentioned this matter to doppelganger Li Taibai.

Now, by bringing it up, the deeper meaning is self-evident.

Lu Ye was prepared and casually threw a storage sack to Lin Yue.

Lin Yue took it, suppressed her inner doubts, opened it for inspection, and soon showed astonishment. Inside were exactly one hundred As-Close-As-Siblings Array Discs.

Lu Ye spoke, "Since we want cooperation between the two sides, I think we should be open and straightforward, and not keep things hidden or overly calculative against each other, wouldn't you agree, Fellow Daoist Lin?"

Lin Yue was silent for a moment, then sighed slightly, "Fellow Daoist Lu, your actions are straightforward, I am ashamed."

She initially intended to use this cooperation between the two sides to ask Lu Ye for some benefits, specifically these As-Close-As-Siblings Array Discs. Otherwise, she wouldn't have brought up such a topic at this time, but who would have thought no further word was necessary, as the other party was already prepared.

A moment later, Lu Ye watched Lin Yue leave, and continued working on setting up the defensive structures.

The As-Close-As-Siblings Array Disc is a strategic resource, generally not to be given away freely, but since it was crafted by him, giving away one hundred is no big deal; it also enhances the overall strength of the Dark Moon Forest Pass and aids in defending the ground fissure.

Lin Yue acted swiftly, and in just half a day, she led more than two hundred Ten Thousand Demons Ridge cultivators to the ground fissure, joining the ranks against the Insect Race and fortifying the front lines.

With the addition of these manpower, the situation at the ground fissure stabilized quickly.

Several days passed, and once everything was arranged, whenever any Insect Race crawled out from the ground fissure, they'd be immediately exterminated by the cultivators from both mountain passes, even if Divine Sea Realm insect races emerged.

No large insects were seen; the lineup of over ten large insects in the previous Insect Plague is a rare encounter.

Lin Yue approached Lu Ye, "Fellow Daoist Lu, we need your assistance to travel to the Dark Moon Forest Pass and set up a Teleportation Array."

"It should be done," Lu Ye nodded; it was part of their prior agreement, of course he wouldn't refuse.

Without delay, he set off flying towards the Dark Moon Forest Pass.

Simultaneously, Lin Yue communicated with doppelganger Li Taibai about this matter, instructing him to find a suitable spot for the Teleportation Array, while also being wary of any tricks Lu Yiye might pull.

Just because the two sides temporarily cooperate doesn't mean they should drop their guard—after all, they belong to two major camps. If the insect disaster is solved, the situation will revert to its prior state.

Lin Yue wanted to trust Lu Ye, but human nature is unpredictable, and it's always best to prevent any unforeseen circumstances.

From this perspective, Lin Yue is quite a competent Mountain Pass Chief.

Arriving at the Dark Moon Forest Pass, he united with the doppelganger, chose a location, and set up a Teleportation Array connected to the ground fissure. Through the array, Lu Ye directly returned to the ground fissure; the entire process took more than two hours, swift as the wind.

With the source of the Insect Race, the ground fissure, contained, no new insects emerged within a thousand-mile radius. Perhaps a few stray insects from other ground fissures wandered here, but those were few. At this time, the defense at the two mountain passes truly reached an impregnable level.

The soldiers no longer needed to go out in groups to hunt insects; they could just remain at the ground fissure and wait for insects to fall into their trap, saving much time and effort.

A month later, once the situation here was completely stabilized and no major errors surfaced, Lu Ye found Lin Yue.

"You want to venture deep into the ground fissure?" Lin Yue looked at Lu Ye in surprise.

"Indeed, I want to go in and have a look, so I'll have to trouble Fellow Daoist Lin to take care of things here."

"The depths of the ground fissure are unsafe. Not to mention that they are swarming with Insect Races, but also the deeper you go, the more intense the origin magnetic field becomes, very unfriendly to us cultivators. Over the past few years, many strong cultivators from both Haotian Alliance and Ten Thousand Demons Ridge ventured into the ground fissure to investigate, with minimal gains and often injuries and casualties."

"I have to see it for myself; maybe there will be some discovery."

"Fellow Daoist Lu trusts me that much?" Lin Yue asked perplexedly, "If you leave, your Jinglan Lake Pass will be leaderless on this side."

Lu Ye glanced at her, "What could Fellow Daoist Lin do? Kill them all? What benefit would that bring you or Dark Moon Forest Pass? It would only create unnecessary blood feuds and increase the pressure of defending against the Insect Race. I believe that since our two sides have had a good start, we can also end well."

Lin Yue paused for a moment and slightly nodded, "I am just a woman and do not dare as much as you do, so I can only wish you to turn calamities into blessings and may your path be smooth. As for the ground fissure here, please be assured, Fellow Daoist, I dare not promise absolute safety, but should danger arise, I shall treat all equally."

"Thank you."

Having reached an agreement, Lu Ye called Yooi Huang and informed him of his decision. Yooi Huang hurriedly tried to dissuade him, "Master, venturing deep into the ground fissure is no joke, its inner origin magnetic field is everywhere, the deeper you go, the more your cultivation gets suppressed, why take this risk."

Lu Ye summoned him merely to relay a few instructions, asking him to follow Lin Yue's arrangements after he left, not to hear his attempts at dissuasion, naturally pretending not to hear, he continued to give his instructions.

Yooi Huang was secretly anxious, but knew it was futile to dissuade him.

After a little while, under the gaze of both groups of cultivators, Lu Ye leapt into the ground fissure, quickly disappearing from sight.

As he delved deeper, Insect Race creatures would occasionally sense his presence and attack, but Lu Ye dispatched them. With his current cultivation, dealing with these ordinary Insect Race creatures was

effortless; even those of the Divine Sea Realm could be easily slain by him, only the larger insects posed any real disturbance.

It was merely a disturbance; as long as their numbers weren't overwhelming, he could handle them.

The deeper he went, the darker it became, until no light was visible.

Fortunately, now that he had reached the Divine Sea, as long as his Mental Consciousness remained, it didn't matter even if he closed his eyes.

Regarding the situation beneath the ground fissure, he had previously asked the sect master, as the sect master had once explored deeply into it before, so he wasn't entirely in the dark. He simply wanted to see for himself because he had some unique methods that others didn't, which might have unforeseen effects.

At a depth of a thousand zhang, he moved without hindrance. Once he reached a thousand zhang depth, Lu Ye sensed a slight obstruction in the flow of spirit force within him, but it was so minor that it was almost unnoticeable without careful detection.

Such situations typically occur due to pill poison accumulated in the body, which can be resolved by finding a way to cleanse the pill poison.

However, Lu Ye naturally had no pill poison in his body, the cause of this was the mild origin magnetic field already enveloping this depth.

The origin magnetic field, an invisible and intangible existence, could almost be considered a cultivator's nemesis. When Lu Ye hadn't yet opened his spiritual orifice, he used it to cunningly kill a manager from Evil Moon Valley, thus embarking on his cultivation journey. If you're not on *, you're viewing a copy.

It was due to the effect of the origin magnetic field that this person's entire spirit force became obstructed, leading to their demise. Of course, that manager was not strong enough, or if his cultivation had been higher, the outcome might have been very different.

As he continued downward, the origin magnetic field grew denser, and the obstruction within Lu Ye's body gradually deepened. He could sense it clearly, like an invisible force hindering the circulation of his spirit force.

This reduced the strength he could exert, but it wasn't too severe yet.

At about a depth of three thousand zhang, Lu Ye's entire cultivation was suppressed to merely the level of an initial Divine Sea Realm.

If he continued further, he would inevitably fall below the Divine Sea Realm level, which would undoubtedly be very dangerous for him.

It was at this depth that Lu Ye finally discovered a massive tunnel.

According to the sect master, this was an Insect Path where the Insect Race emerged from unknown depths underground, crawling along the Insect Path, then breaking into the Nine Provinces through the ground fissure to wreak havoc.

Virtually every ground fissure has an Insect Path below it, although their depths vary, most are around three thousand zhang.

Logically, by following the Insect Path deep enough, one would inevitably find the insect hive location, and by eliminating the insect hive, the Insect Plague could be resolved at its source.

Unfortunately, to date, none of the two major camps' numerous strong cultivators in the Divine Sea Realm in the Nine Provinces have managed to penetrate to a sufficient depth.

This is a deadlock because the deeper one goes, the less strength a cultivator can exert. Even a strong cultivator like the sect master, upon reaching the location of the insect hive, could hardly exercise much power.

This is the fundamental reason why the Insect Plague has plagued the Nine Provinces for several years without resolution.

If the insect hive were in an easily accessible location, it would have been eradicated by the Nine Provinces cultivators long ago.

Lu Ye did not rashly plunge into the Insect Path. At this point, the Insect Race's numbers were already considerable, including many Divine Sea Realm insects. He had fought his way to this place, and while his spirit force could recover quickly, his physical exertion was very real.

So he needed to ensure that he had means to protect himself when danger arose.

Chapter 1095 Insect Path

Standing at the entrance of the Insect Path, Lu Ye directly summoned the Dragon Throne. Amidst the crackling explosions, a towering figure appeared, the Dragon Throne draped over his body.

The obscure feeling of spirit force circulating within him instantly vanished, returning to smooth operation, and his suppressed cultivation also immediately restored.

Lu Ye felt greatly relieved!

The reason he insisted on delving into the ground fissure to investigate was not on a whim but with a certain confidence, which came from the Dragon Throne.

The origin magnetic field, something invisible and intangible, affects the flow of a cultivator's spirit force internally, simply because the field invades the cultivator's body, forming an unseen obstruction.

If the spirit force within a cultivator is likened to flowing river water, then the blocks formed by the origin magnetic field are akin to dams that hinder the flow of the spirit force.

Solving it is straightforward; just block the field's erosion on oneself.

But while it's easy to say, it's hard to do; cultivators generally lack such means.

The Dragon Throne can! This full-body cover armor envelops Lu Ye completely, thoroughly isolating the origin magnetic field's erosion, thereby naturally preventing any impact on him.

However, Lu Ye couldn't maintain the Dragon Throne's covering all the time as it consumes too much of his energy. Summoning it now was merely a brief test.

Ensuring his idea was feasible, Lu Ye quickly retracted the Dragon Throne. It was his assurance for delving into the Insect Path, not to be used lightly unless absolutely necessary.

Moreover, the Dragon Throne's aura was too fierce; its activation caused spirit force fluctuations, greatly attracting the Insect Race. Wearing the Dragon Throne in a place like the Insect Path was like lighting a beacon in the dark, inevitably attracting nearby insect creatures.

Take this moment, for instance; a large number of insect creatures had already been drawn, with rustling movements coming from deep within the Insect Path, assorted auras pressing closer.

Lu Ye blocked the exit of the Insect Path, wielding the saber to slay enemies, creating an intense scene for a while.

Half a day later, the incoming insect creatures gradually dwindled.

Lu Ye found an opportunity and tried to invoke the power of the Talent Tree.

The Talent Tree is a profoundly mystical entity. He had previously relied on the power of the Talent Tree to resist the scorching energy's intrusion but wasn't sure if it could ward off the erosion of the origin magnetic field.

With a thought, his body surface was immediately covered by densely packed, invisible short roots, slightly improving the obscure state of his spirit force, yet not completely. Thus, it seemed the Talent Tree's power had some defensive effect against the origin magnetic field's erosion, but not as perfectly as the Dragon Throne.

This might also be related to the metamorphosis state of the Talent Tree. So far, the Talent Tree had only metamorphosed once, but Lu Ye felt this was not its limit. Given sufficient energy, at a certain time, the Talent Tree would undergo further metamorphosis.

Perhaps after a few more metamorphoses, the Talent Tree's power could completely isolate the origin magnetic field's erosion, but for now, it couldn't.

He wasn't too disappointed; he was already quite satisfied with such findings.

Having a means of self-preservation, it was time to get to the main subject.

Lu Ye fixated on a particular insect creature.

This creature looked like a Sacred Beetle, except its body was extremely large, and its aura was quite strong. Since venturing deep into the ground fissure, it was the most formidable insect creature he had encountered, just a step away from a major insect.

He didn't kill it not because he couldn't but because it had another use.

The insect race's attack methods were fairly simplistic, generally relying on their physical advantages. Like this Sacred Beetle, it only knew how to bite with its mandibles and stab with its sharp limbs.

Lu Ye dodged the attacks from other insect creatures and flipped onto the back of the Sacred Beetle, raising his hand to press against its head, his Soul Power surging fiercely.

An invisible force swept across all directions, causing the forms of all nearby insect creatures to stiffen slightly, with the weaker ones falling unconscious directly from the impact.

In an instant, the scene cleared.

Yet Lu Ye sensed resistance emanating from the Sacred Beetle's side.

The insect race did have low spiritual intelligence, but each living being is inherently equipped with Soul Power. Even a newborn baby has its own Soul Power, let alone this insect comparable to the Divine Sea Realm. Its Soul Power wasn't weak; they just didn't know how to utilize it.

The resistance was the Sacred Beetle's psyche's natural defense. What Lu Ye had to do now was tear through its psyche's defense in the shortest time possible.

The impact of Soul Power surged like waves, one after another. After three full impacts, Lu Ye finally felt the resistance from the Sacred Beetle dissipate.

This indicated the dispersal of its psyche's natural defense.

Lu Ye immediately invoked the Soul Taming Psyche.

A moment later, this Sacred Beetle gradually calmed down, and the surrounding recovered insect creatures also slowly settled, instinctively moving outward.

Only the Sacred Beetle reversed its direction, retreating back along the Insect Path.

On the Sacred Beetle's back, Lu Ye utilized Concealment and Breath-concealing Spirit Runes to cover himself, curling under the Sacred Beetle's wings without revealing a trace of aura.

The Insect Path is pitch dark, as long as he doesn't reveal his aura, hiding like this, he won't be discovered by other insects.

He doesn't know if the strong cultivators of the Divine Sea Realm who explored the ground fissures in the past ever thought of this method, but to implement it, one must first have the means to control the insect race, and just this alone would stump ninety-nine percent of people.

Even if some cultivators of the beast-taming faction can control the insect race through special means, they can't perfectly hide their form and aura for long periods.

Therefore, Lu Ye estimates that in the entire Nine Provinces, he might be the only one who can explore the insect hive using this method.

The responsibility is significant, and Lu Ye can't help but feel a heavy weight on his shoulders.

All the insect race are crawling outward, making the reverse course of the Sacred Beetle seem a bit strange. Fortunately, these insects lack spiritual intelligence, so no one pays attention to the oddity.

If it were humans acting this way, they would surely be stopped and questioned.

The Insect Path does not lead straight to the depths underground; it's winding and twisting, with spaces inside varying in size. In spacious areas, a dozen insects can pass through together, while in narrower spaces, only one or two insects can squeeze through.

Lu Ye maintains only the minimum level of Mental Consciousness to sense the surroundings, mainly to find the path; otherwise, who knows where the Sacred Beetle might lead him if left to its own devices.

There are many branches within the Insect Path, obviously made by the insect race, who are particularly adept at creating tunnels underground. Most insects are born with this ability.

However, by following the principle of exploring downwards, he doesn't get lost despite the many paths.

Lu Ye has a vague sense that if followed upwards, these branching paths might correspond to different positions of the ground fissure.

There's not a speck of light around; in such a pitch-black environment, even the passage of time becomes obscured. The only sounds are the rustling of crawling insects and the peculiar noises from their mouthparts, along with the various auras of the insect race filling the entire Insect Path.

Lu Ye initially thought that apart from being boring and tedious, this action wouldn't encounter any aberrations. But as the saying goes, walk enough night roads and you'll eventually encounter ghosts.

A hound, passing by the Sacred Beetle, suddenly stopped, turned its head to stare at the Sacred Beetle, and then let out a low beast-like growl from its throat.

The surrounding insects seemed to receive a command, and they all stopped, converging towards where the Sacred Beetle was.

Lu Ye immediately understood that he was exposed.

Without any hesitation, he leaped from the back of the Sacred Beetle, and before he even landed, the Dragon Throne was already summoned.

He doesn't know how deep he is now, because of the winding path that makes it difficult to calculate depth, but the origin magnetic field in this area is already very dense, dense enough that his strength is suppressed to only half.

With such strength, in such an environment, naturally, relying on the Dragon Throne is the only way to fight.

In the instant the Dragon Throne enveloped him, his figure blurred, directly charging to the side of the hound, and the Dragon Spine Saber cleaved downwards.

This hound clearly didn't expect such a sudden change. By the time it wanted to dodge, it was too late; the sharp saber split the hound's body into two halves, spraying out green insect blood.

After all, it was a big insect. If fought head-on, Lu Ye would have to expend some effort, but with a sudden strike like this, he easily took its life.

In the darkness, two scarlet streaks trailing from his eye sockets were erratic, wrapping him in a deathly whirl.

In just 5 breaths, the streaks vanished, and all around were the corpses of insects, except the Sacred Beetle stood still in its original place.

Lu Ye quickly withdrew the Dragon Throne, rushed to the hound's body, and with a surge of spirit force, covered himself in a large quantity of insect blood.

He ultimately overlooked something: form and aura can be masked by spirit runes, but scent cannot be hidden.

Earlier, when the hound passed by the Sacred Beetle, it apparently sniffed, which exposed him. The hound detected his human scent.

The insect blood is thick, and it feels uncomfortable smeared all over, but he can't afford to care about that now.

Once Lu Ye quickly returned to the Sacred Beetle's back, hiding under its wings, more insects gathered from both ends of the Insect Path.

Evidently, they sensed the previous wave of spirit force and came to investigate.

But all they saw were the corpses of their fallen companions. Their low spiritual intelligence couldn't comprehend what had transpired here.

After a brief moment of rustling, the insect race gradually dispersed.

The Sacred Beetle had already left the battlefield and continued deeper inside.

Lu Ye discovered something interesting: after covering himself in the hound's insect blood, the suppression of the origin magnetic field on him seemed to lessen slightly.

Previously, he felt that half of his strength was suppressed, but now this oppression is visibly diminished to some extent.

This unintended discovery exhilarated Lu Ye.

Could it be that insect blood can block the erosion of the origin magnetic field? Although it can't completely block it, the weakening effect is evident.

Chapter 1096 Great Secret Realm of the Insect Race

This is very valuable information, especially crucial for the present situation in Nine Provinces.

Covered in insect blood to mask the scent of the human race, using Concealment and Breath-concealing Spirit Runes to hide his form and aura, and now also concealed beneath the wings of the Sacred Beetle, the disguise is finally perfect.

The journey proceeds smoothly with no traces of exposure, although some larger insects still cast puzzled glances at the Sacred Beetle moving in the opposite direction. Their spiritual intelligence is, after all, a bit higher, so they are confused by the beetle's actions, but that is the extent of it.

This kind of activity is rather tedious and boring, and there is little Lu Ye can do other than occasionally guide the Sacred Beetle at each junction to prevent it from heading the wrong way.

Fortunately, he has other ways to pass the time, such as checking on the situation with his doppelganger.

The doppelganger is now stationed at the ground fissure, having taken over for Lin Yue.

Just as Lin Yue would be wary of him, so too would he be wary of Lin Yue; however pleasant the words spoken, when faced with danger, it is unlikely Lin Yue would remain impartial given her allegiance to Ten Thousand Demons Ridge.

Thus, the doppelganger volunteered to switch places with Lin Yue, and she agreed without objection, swiftly returning to the Dark Moon Forest Pass.

With the doppelganger Li Taibai stationed at the ground fissure, along with nearly five hundred cultivators from both sects and various arrays constructing the defensive line, they dare not claim an impregnable fortress, but unless they encounter another large-scale Insect Plague like before, they should be able to cope.

Both sects' cultivators have tasted the benefits.

Previously, they needed to venture out in groups to search for traces of the Insect Race, earning battle merit in this way; not only was it inefficient, but they also risked encountering danger, such as facing Divine Sea Realm insect creatures, at which point they would need to call for their Mountain Pass Chief to intervene.

If the chief were available and arrived in time, lives could be saved, but if unavailable or delayed, casualties would be inevitable.

Now, these worries are gone, as they can simply wait at the ground fissure, occasionally overwhelming any Divine Sea Realm insect creatures that emerge with the collective focus of numerous cultivators.

When the Insect Race is not attacking, they can meditate and cultivate.

However, due to the ongoing struggle, the cultivators from the two sects have not yet fully merged, remaining distinctly separate on opposite sides of the ground fissure.

This level of cooperation is already a significant achievement.

The higher levels from both camps have noticed this model of collaboration here, with each sending strong cultivators to assess the cooperation at the two mountain passes. It is said they are considering promoting this cooperative model, but that will ultimately require time.

Deep within the Insect Path, life for Lu Ye passes in dull monotony, simply commanding the Sacred Beetle to continue onwards.

As the distance increases, his strength is continually suppressed. Now, his abilities are reduced to only Spirit Stream Realm standards.

This suppression is alarming; Lu Ye even suspects that if he continues deeper, his spirit force might become completely sealed.

If that happens, the Concealment and Breath-concealing Spirit Runes augmenting him will lose effect, making further infiltration impossible.

He is silently anxious, having descended to an unknown depth underground, and aside from discovering that insect blood can weaken the erosion of the origin magnetic field, no other valuable findings have emerged. He is uncertain if it is worth continuing, but having reached this point, he can only persist.

At the very least, he must persist until it truly becomes impossible to proceed.

A faint glimmer suddenly appears in view, dazzlingly bright in the darkness.

Lu Ye is taken aback.

He has been deep within the Insect Path for over ten days, always in a pitch-black environment, so how could there be light in these profound depths of the earth?

Surrounded by the Insect Race, he dares not peek out to investigate, for fear of revealing his location, and so he commands the Sacred Beetle to continue forward.

The light becomes increasingly evident.

Once the Sacred Beetle reaches the source of the light, Lu Ye finally sees the scene before him.

And he is astonished.

What meets his eyes is an oval-shaped luminous object nearly ten feet tall and several feet wide, silently standing at the deepest part of the Insect Path. Its surface is a blurred reflection, reminiscent of an uneven mirror, with insect creatures continuously emerging from within, joining the army crawling out of the Insect Path.

Each time an insect creature crawls from the mirror, a slight ripple undulates across the mirror's Void reflection.

A portal!

There is unexpectedly a portal at the deepest part of the Insect Path!

Having frequently traveled in and out of various small secret realms, Lu Ye naturally recognizes such a structure immediately.

But how could there be a portal here?

He initially thought the deepest part of the Insect Path would surely lead to an insect hive, but to his surprise, there is a portal instead of an insect hive.

The question remains, where does this portal lead?

Most perplexing to Lu Ye is how this portal came into being.

Was it always there? That seems unlikely, for if that were the case, the insect disaster would have long since overrun Nine Provinces, rather than erupting only a few years ago, implying the portal appeared concurrently with the upheavals that shook Nine Provinces in recent years.

Lu Ye is unsure what lies beyond the portal, yet the strongest possibility is the location of an insect hive, given the continuous emergence of the Insect Race creatures from the portal.

Behind that portal lies the source of the insect disaster.

Lu Ye suddenly felt as if he had touched upon the truth of a particularly hidden event.

Clearing the clutter from his mind, he issued a command to the Sacred Beetle, which then marched forward towards the portal.

He wanted to enter and see what kind of place this portal was connected to.

His vision transformed, the void fluctuated, seemingly crashing through an invisible membrane. Once Lu Ye regained his sight, a radiant light filled his eyes as he entered another world.

He made this judgment because ever since he entered the Insect Path, his spirit force, which had been eroded and obscured by the origin magnetic field, completely recovered at that moment.

In other words, there is no origin magnetic field here.

This was evidently not deep underground.

Looking around, his vision was filled with densely packed Insect Race, countless in number, even more terrifying than the largest Insect Plague he had ever seen—present both in the sky and on the ground.

Lu Ye concealed himself even deeper.

In the Insect Path, if he exposed himself, he might still have a chance to fight his way out using the Dragon Throne to return to the surface. But if exposed here, his fate would surely be grim.

He now faced two choices.

One was to retreat through the portal, as it was right behind him, a step back would return him to the original Insect Path.

The second was to continue to explore.

Lu Ye naturally would not retreat, having come this far, only to give up halfway seems unreasonable. So many strong cultivators of the Divine Sea Realm in the Nine Provinces had been searching for the source of the insect disaster to no avail; finally arriving here himself, he must take a clear look.

However, he didn't act immediately but began inspecting the condition of his doppelganger.

With a thought, he could still perceive everything on the doppelganger's side without any barriers.

Examining the battlefield marking, he could also contact others.

This means he was likely still within the Nine Provinces, but of course, he could also not be in the Nine Provinces, as long as the portal remained open, his connection to the doppelganger would not be interrupted, and the battlefield marking would still function.

The only certainty was that this place was enveloped by the Nine Provinces Heaven's Augury.

Unlike the Blood Refinement World, where even the battlefield marking could not be detected.

This slightly comforted Lu Ye; as long as he remained within the range covered by Heaven's Augury, there shouldn't be significant issues.

The surface held too many Insect Race, seemingly filling the entire world, although the Sacred Beetle was quite large, the world was filled with even larger Insect Race, colliding back and forth, the Sacred Beetle's form staggered.

Lu Ye hurriedly directed the Sacred Beetle to fly, to avoid the numerous Insect Race and gain a higher vantage point to see farther; he was eager to discover what kind of world this really was.

Ascending higher, the shadows of the Insect Race around him became fewer and fewer.

Until the Sacred Beetle could no longer ascend, Lu Ye quietly peeked out to observe.

First looking at mid-air, there were many flying Insect Race in his view, each exuding a fierce aura, yet fewer in numbers compared to those on the ground.

Moreover, the Sacred Beetle was flying high enough to largely avoid exposure; additionally, the Concealment and Breath-concealing Spirit Runes were continuously maintained, as long as Lu Ye didn't cause too much commotion, he wouldn't attract the Insect Race's attention.

Looking down, there was an endless sea of Insect Race, densely packed throughout this world, and in the far distance, there seemed to be a hill standing, with even more hills looming further out.

Lu Ye saw a colossal, hideous creature on the ground, thrashing about and shrieking incessantly.

This was an Insect Race he had never encountered before, even from afar it exuded a strong sense of oppression, indicating its considerable power.

Lu Ye suddenly recalled when he returned from the Blood Refinement World to the Nine Provinces, he saw floating lands scattered around the perimeter of the Nine Provinces. At that time, he speculated those floating lands were gateways to the secret realms within the Nine Provinces, including places like the Ten Thousand Beasts Domain and the Soaring Dragon World he had visited.

He had glimpsed formidable Insect Race figures on one of the larger floating lands, although he quickly entered the Nine Provinces and couldn't see them clearly.

Was he not mistaken then?

The location he was in now might just be that giant floating land he saw back then?

This should also be a secret realm of the Nine Provinces World, but its scale is so vast it can hardly be described as a mere small secret realm—It's a major Insect Race secret realm!

There have always been Insect Race in the Nine Provinces. Lu Ye had encountered an Insect Plague during his time in the Spirit Stream battlefield, puzzled about the origins of those Insect Race.

In retrospect, the source should be this place.

The Spirit Stream battlefield's Insect Plague, a trial of Nine Provinces Heaven's Augury for Spirit Stream Realm cultivators, doubled as a reward since slaying Insect Race could earn merit.

It stands to reason that the emergence of the Insect Plague in the Spirit Stream battlefield is likely under Heaven's Augury control.

If so, what about this insect disaster in the Nine Provinces?

Chapter 1097 Coincidence?

The truth behind the insect infestation is worth pondering over. Perhaps some things are not as simple as they appear on the surface.

At the very least, for an Insect Race of this scale to hatch, it would require extremely astonishing energy and resources. Where does this energy come from? Where do the resources come from?

This world hardly has any life to speak of. At least from Lu Ye's current perspective, there is nothing of use to the Insect Race.

With a thought, he urged the Sacred Beetle to fly along the edge of this world.

Since it's a secret realm-like world, it naturally has edges, unlike the Nine Provinces, which is a massive celestial body that one can eventually circle back to the starting point regardless of the direction taken.

Just like the various small secret realms Lu Ye had visited before, the edge of this Great Secret Realm was also chaotic and void, giving an extremely ominous feeling, even the Insect Race was unwilling to approach it easily.

He had observed earlier that the portal he came through stood at the edge.

The flight speed of the Sacred Beetle was still quite fast, as its own strength was not weak either. Lu Ye clung tightly to the Sacred Beetle's back, occasionally peering down.

Soon, his gaze was attracted to a hill standing to the left.

He had seen this hill when he first came in but only realized at this moment that it was not a hill at all but a gigantic insect hive!

Lu Ye had never observed an insect hive from this angle before. Although he had entered insect hives in the Spirit Stream battlefield, that was deep inside them, and he had no idea what they looked like from the outside.

The entire structure of the insect hive resembled a hill-shaped fleshy lump. On that lump were countless holes of various sizes, making it look like a beehive.

Insects continued to crawl out of this beehive-like lump.

And in Lu Ye's field of vision, there was more than one such beehive-like lump. Looking up, blurry hill-like structures came into view, which were undoubtedly insect hives standing on this land.

These insect hives created the vast numbers and scale of the Insect Race and are the root of the insect disaster.

If the Nine Provinces cultivators could find a way to break into this Great Secret Realm, they could naturally resolve the insect disaster. But the key problem now is that entering here is extremely difficult.

Lu Ye managed to get in because he harnessed the Insect Race using Soul Taming Divine Runes, coupled with his excellent Concealment skills.

However, bringing others in is not an easy task.

Moreover, given the environmental conditions here, bringing too few people would be futile. At least an army is needed to deal with the Insect Race here.

In the Nine Provinces, Lu Ye had rarely seen Insect Race engage in fratricide. At most, they devoured the corpses of their fallen companions. But in this Great Secret Realm, the Insect Race did not coexist peacefully. Fighting and conflict were ubiquitous, and the corpses of dead insects were devoured by survivors, becoming the strong capital of the survivors.

This is presumably also why the Insect Race can produce many formidable existences. They continually grow stronger by devouring their companions or becoming the food of even stronger beings.

In the Nine Provinces, the lack of fratricide is probably because there are better things that attract them, suppressing their innate drive to kill each other.

For instance, fluctuations of spirit force, or the vitality of the human race...

During this time, the Sacred Beetle was targeted by a ferocious Insect Race. This Insect Race was absolutely a major insect, in both size and strength superior to the Sacred Beetle.

Frightened, Lu Ye quietly cast a Move-Like-The-Wind Spirit Rune on the Sacred Beetle, thus managing to escape.

It was a close call. In a place like this, without the cover of the Sacred Beetle, once exposed, it would undoubtedly lead to a fate of no burial ground. Even deploying the Dragon Throne would be futile.

He continued flying along the edge, not daring to delve deeper. The further into the center, the more numerous the Insect Race became. Conversely, at the edge, because of their instinctive fear of the chaotic void, there weren't many Insect Race nearby, making Lu Ye's situation safer.

During this period, Lu Ye observed as many as a dozen gigantic insect hives and several terrifyingly ferocious giant insects. Such giant insects possessed the power to stir the seas, and even the most advanced Divine Sea Realm cultivators of the Nine Provinces would likely be no match.

To defeat such giant insects, one could only rely on strength of numbers to win!

After a few Shichen, a point of light caught Lu Ye's attention from below.

Upon closer look, he was taken aback.

For the source of that light was none other than another portal!

Though unfamiliar with this Great Secret Realm, Lu Ye, having a sense of direction, was sure that this portal was not the one he entered through but another.

He was slightly surprised but quickly understood upon thinking it through.

The Nine Provinces is vast, and within its realm, there are countless fissures, insect paths, and the deeper one goes, more insect paths converge. However, they ultimately cannot connect to a single place, meaning this Great Secret Realm has more than one portal leading to the Nine Provinces.

The exact number is unknown.

Lu Ye was very curious about what place this second portal connected to.

Thinking for a moment, he directed the Sacred Beetle to fly downwards. Moments later, he squeezed through the portal amidst the swarm of insects.

The familiar feeling of being suppressed by the origin magnetic field descended upon him once more, causing Lu Ye's spirit force to become sluggish.

Fortunately, he was prepared, otherwise, his aura would have been exposed just from this alone.

Lu Ye quickly took out the ten-part map to compare his current location, and soon determined that he was now in the Leizhou region.

However, because he was too deep underground, the markings on the ten-part map were not very distinct, and he didn't know precisely where in Leizhou he was.

He hastily put away the ten-part map and directed the Sacred Beetle to re-enter the Insect Race's Great Secret Realm through the portal. Going in reverse like this took quite a bit of effort, but he finally returned.

As before, he ascended to the sky immediately, sneaking along the edges to continue his exploration. Sure enough, after several more Shichen, Lu Ye found the third portal.

In the following days, Lu Ye commanded the Sacred Beetle to explore this area.

This Great Secret Realm, when viewed from afar upon returning to the Nine Provinces from the Blood Refinement World, didn't seem particularly large; it was merely one of the larger floating lands. But being within it made him realize its vastness.

It was approximately the size of a provincial state, meaning the scale of this Great Secret Realm was almost comparable to that of a Spirit Stream battlefield.

The number of portals was intriguing, exactly nine in total.

Each time Lu Ye passed through a portal, he would enter and exit once to determine his position.

The nine portals corresponded exactly to the Nine Provincial States of the Nine Provinces!

If this was a coincidence, it was too much of a coincidence. Lu Ye faintly saw some profound and mysterious handiwork in it.

But he couldn't fathom why this was the case for the time being.

Several days after entering the Insect Race's Great Secret Realm, Lu Ye returned to the portal where he first came in.

The situation within this Great Secret Realm had basically been surveyed, and he had gained immense rewards. Lu Ye never intended to single-handedly destroy those insect hives to resolve the current predicament of the Nine Provinces. That wasn't realistic, as individual power is ultimately limited. In this calamity sweeping through the Nine Provinces, only when all cultivators unite can they overcome the crisis.

In a sense, this event was a crisis but also an opportunity to change the thousand-year-old pattern maintained by the two major factions of the Nine Provinces.

At the very least, the two major factions have temporarily ceased their conflicts.

With this in mind, Lu Ye seemed to understand something.

He commanded the Sacred Beetle to walk into the portal and left the Insect Race's Great Secret Realm, finally breathing a sigh of relief.

Being in the Insect Race's Great Secret Realm meant truly walking on the edge of life and death. Any exposure would surely lead to a bad end. Now that he was out, he could finally control his own fate.

However, Lu Ye couldn't reveal himself yet and could only continue to hide under the wings of the Sacred Beetle, allowing it to crawl outward along the Insect Path.

He originally intended to retrace his steps, but with so many branching paths on the way, it was impossible to return by the original route. As long as he avoided wandering into the territory of the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge, it would be fine. Although the two major factions are not antagonizing each other currently, their lines are distinct, and appearing in the territory of the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge could cause misunderstandings.

For this reason, he often had to take out the ten-part map to estimate his general position.

After another period of arduous trekking, by the time his cultivation had recovered to about seventy percent, Lu Ye finally flashed out from under the wings of the Sacred Beetle.

With a thought, the Sacred Beetle suddenly fell silent, crouching on the spot. Lu Ye raised his hand and unleashed a Fire Phoenix, engulfing the Sacred Beetle in blazing flames, quickly reducing it to ashes.

He charged forward with his blade, slicing through the Insect Path. Any insects perceiving the spiritual power fluctuations and attempting to hinder him turned to dust.

Charging and slashing all the way, until he no longer felt the suppression of the origin magnetic field on himself, he finally burst out of the Insect Path, entering the ground fissure.

He shot skyward, the blade light swept wildly, and the light above his head grew ever clearer. Finally, at a certain moment, he broke free from the darkness and saw the light.

Lu Ye exhaled deeply.

Though this journey through the Insect Race's Great Secret Realm had no perilous moments per se, from the time of going underground, his nerves had remained taut throughout. Especially after truly entering the Insect Race's Great Secret Realm, a month-long journey took its toll on even him, leaving him mentally exhausted.

The main issue was that the Sacred Beetle's crawling speed in the Insect Path was not fast enough, especially when moving against the Insect Race's movements, being occasionally knocked back by stronger insects. Otherwise, it wouldn't have taken so long.

Nonetheless, he gained substantial rewards from this journey. The most important was understanding the various situations inside the Insect Race's Great Secret Realm.

Now, as long as the problem of weakening due to the suppression of the origin magnetic field can be solved, the Nine Provinces cultivators can assemble their forces to invade the Insect Race's Great Secret Realm. By then, using the strong foundation of the Nine Provinces cultivation world, resolving the insect disaster wouldn't be a difficult task.

Chapter 1098 The Sect Master's Shock

There were no cultivators guarding the vicinity of the ground fissure.

A cultivator qualified to guard a ground fissure must at least be in the Divine Sea Realm, and preferably at Level 3 and above, because only cultivators of this level have a chance to escape when encountering a large insect.

If a True Lake Realm cultivator were to guard the fissure, and if a large insect appears that they can't handle, they wouldn't even have a chance to flee, resulting in a needless loss of personnel.

Therefore, although there are quite a few Divine Sea Realm cultivators in the Nine Provinces, not every ground fissure is guarded by a strong cultivator of the Divine Sea Realm. Only at those fissures of larger scale are cultivators of the Divine Sea Realm dispatched. For smaller fissures like this one, they are simply left alone.

This is unavoidable.

Lu Ye took out the ten-part map to check his position. It was not bad; he didn't appear on the territory of the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge and was still within Bingzhou.

The current location wasn't too far from Haotian City, and at his speed, he could reach it in less than two hours.

Confirming the direction, Lu Ye flew toward Haotian City while simultaneously messaging the sect master.

This time, delving deep into the Insect Race's Great Secret Realm, he had gathered quite a bit of useful intelligence and needed to report it to the sect master. As far as he knew, the task currently burdening the sect master was to probe deep into the ground fissures. The old man had ventured into the ground fissure and charged into the Insect Path a few hundred times over the past few years, but unfortunately, he returned empty-handed each time.

Soon, he received a response. The sect master wasn't in Haotian City but was pursuing a few large insects that had fled from the fissure; however, the battle was nearing its end and would conclude soon.

"Wait for me in Haotian City." The sect master didn't know what he was up to, but he knew that his disciple wouldn't randomly message him unless it was something particularly important.

Upon this command, Lu Ye continued flying towards Haotian City.

An hour later, he entered the city. Instead of returning to his own courtyard, he went to the sect master's place and quietly waited.

After another half hour, a streak of light darted in from outside the city and landed in the courtyard, revealing the figure of the sect master.

Lu Ye stepped forward to greet, "Sect Master."

The sect master stroked his beard with a gratifying look, a bit nostalgic. To think that the disciple he accidentally took in back then had grown to this level, arguably the fastest-growing disciple since the founding of the Righteous Blood Sect. Even looking across the entire history of the Nine Provinces, there's almost none comparable.

And some of the particularly unique experiences he had were that even an old Divine Sea Realm cultivator like himself found extraordinary.

Indeed, chaotic times certainly breed talent, and especially under the current situation, the rapid rise of his disciples undoubtedly revealed some truths.

Standing higher, his view was broadened, and he could faintly detect things that Lu Ye couldn't perceive.

He led Lu Ye into the house, where Lu Ye skillfully retrieved the tea set and brewed tea.

Only then did the sect master ask, "How is everything at the mountain pass lately?"

"Quite good." Lu Ye nodded. The doppelganger stood guard at the fissure, with the cultivators from the two mountain passes working together somewhat. But whenever the Insect Race crawled out of the fissure, they were immediately slain. During this period, there were even two instances where large insects appeared, but they were exterminated instantly by countless attacks without causing any trouble.

This was the advantage of being stationed at the fissure entrance, resolving some hard-to-handle Insect Races immediately. Otherwise, allowing those large insects to break through the fissure would inevitably require sending Divine Sea Realm cultivators for a hunt, which would be laborious and resource-consuming.

"No one has been looking for trouble with you, have they?" the sect master asked again.

"No, I'm an honest person, never causing trouble with others. Who would come looking for trouble with me?"

The corner of the sect master's eye twitched.

There are indeed many doubts surrounding Liew Yuemei's death.

After all, being at Divine Sea Level 7, she wasn't weak. How could she die without a reason? Even if she met an opponent or Insect Race she couldn't defeat, she would at least send a message before dying.

But in reality, before Liew Yuemei died, no one received any messages, which is the biggest doubt.

Whether or not it was this disciple of his who killed her... the sect master neither knew nor intended to ask.

But, the fact that Lu Ye was near Jinglan Lake Pass shortly after Liew Yuemei's death remained true. The enmity between Lu Ye, Li Taibai, and Liew Yuemei was also evident. The Twin Heroes of Bingzhou, working together seamlessly, is another fact...

If they could jointly slay several large insects, they might have been able to kill Liew Yuemei. But how they managed to prevent her from sending out a message was unknown.

Of course, from the sect master's perspective, Liew Yuemei's death was irrelevant as she was no good. That's why he immediately sent a message to Nian Yuexian to warn Yu Huajin. The result was that with one move, Nian Yuexian almost took Yu Huajin's life.

These matters need not be shared with this disciple, in order to avoid stirring up unnecessary trouble.

"Now that you are a mountain pass master, it wouldn't be appropriate to wander around, and you still hold the responsibility of refining Explosive Fire Spirit Stones and array discs. Bingzhou has already popularized the array discs, but the other Eight Great Provincial States still need them. Since the Haotian Alliance is a whole, it wouldn't be right to favor one over the others. Pang Zhen has been under a lot of pressure lately, and now that you have the capability, you should relieve some of the burdens for the alliance."

"Yes," Lu Ye responded respectfully, "that's why I went to the depths of the ground fissure a few days ago to investigate the situation."

"Cough cough..." The sect master almost choked on his tea, set down the teacup, and reprimanded with a stern face, "Nonsense, the depths of the ground fissure are fraught with dangers. Even I dare not venture in recklessly. How could you act so rashly?" As if realizing his tone was a bit harsh, he continued more gently, "Yiye, you are still young and have a bright future ahead of you. Do not carelessly venture into places that are too dangerous. We old folks will handle the exploration of the ground fissure depths, you must not go in."

Lu Ye kept nodding, agreeing verbally.

The sect master could tell from his demeanor that Lu Ye hadn't really taken the words to heart, but he thought that if this disciple truly listened to every word of advice, he wouldn't have achieved his current accomplishments.

Cultivators inherently are not a content group, the more capable they are, the less content they seem to be.

"Did you make any discoveries?" the sect master asked casually.

Lu Ye hastily took out a few image message stones and handed them to the sect master. "I made some discoveries, I ask the sect master to take a look."

The sect master took them, casually picked one, and immersed his mental consciousness to investigate.

He hadn't thought much of it since Lu Ye's capabilities were visible, and even if he ventured deep into the ground fissure, what valuable discoveries could he bring back? But these were brought back at the risk of a disciple's life, and as the sect master, he felt obliged to take a look.

However, as he began to investigate the images within the stones, his expression changed instantly, and he sat up straight.

Because those shocking scenes were ones he had never seen before.

A sky-covering swarm of insects, shadows of insect hives resembling hills, and oval-shaped glowing portals; each scene brought tremendous shock to the sect master's heart.

He looked up abruptly, staring at Lu Ye with surprise and doubt: "Yiye, this is..."

Lu Ye's expression was solemn: "I call this place the Insect Race Great Secret Realm, and these scenes are from within it."

"Insect Race Great Secret Realm?"

"Yes," Lu Ye nodded.

The sect master looked incredulous, "You found the source of the insect disaster? How did you manage that?"

In recent years, he had been venturing deeper into the ground fissure, trying to locate the source of the insect disaster, but had never succeeded. The deeper he went underground, the more his cultivation was suppressed. Encountering powerful insect races forced him to retreat, yet here was his disciple who had managed what he could not.

This achievement not only outshone him but also overshadowed many old explorers of the ground fissure across the Nine Provinces. Yet, there was no jealousy—he felt only comfort seeing his disciple achieve so much.

If Lu Ye could achieve this, his method might be worth learning from. If it could be made widely known, the biggest problem in the Nine Provinces would be resolved.

Lu Ye explained, "I have some unique methods that allow me to control the insect race. I managed to control a Divine Sea realm insect and hid on its back. It carried me all the way to the end of the Insect Path. Sect master also knows I am a spirit runes master, so I used Concealment and Breath-concealing Spirit Runes on myself and covered myself with insect blood to mask my aura. It was thrilling but without incident."

The sect master immediately understood that Lu Ye's method was not something others could imitate.

Currently, there were three primary groups exploring the ground fissure in the Nine Provinces.

First were the physique cultivators, second were the ghost cultivators, and third were the beast-taming faction cultivators.

No need to mention physique cultivators, the interference and erosion of the origin magnetic field made the spirit force in a cultivator's body dull and unclear. Physique cultivators could at least rely on their physical robustness to endure longer in the underground depths. But a magic cultivator couldn't accomplish anything there; it might even cost them their lives.

As for ghost cultivators, although they don't have the robust bodies like physique cultivators, they excel at hiding themselves and can act stealthily. But this approach relies heavily on luck because the Insect Path is sometimes narrow. If they encounter the insect race, there's a risk of exposure.

The beast-taming faction uses insects to explore paths, but their cultivators are not particularly strong, so their ability to protect themselves in the Insect Path is weak. The main issue is that their taming techniques are less effective on the insect race and cannot make them fully obedient.

Lu Ye's method combined the best of the beast-taming faction and ghost cultivator strategies. Who could emulate it?

There were cases where ghost cultivators and the beast-taming faction attempted to collaborate like Lu Ye. But once the controlled insects strayed too far from their master, they couldn't be controlled anymore, resulting in the ghost cultivator's death in vain.

"At the end of the Insect Path, I encountered a portal. Entering it led to the Insect Race Great Secret Realm."

As Lu Ye spoke, the sect master continued to quickly investigate the image message stones. For a cultivator of his strength, multitasking was second nature.

Although the images in the stones took Lu Ye days to compile, the sect master's mental consciousness quickly absorbed them in moments.

What he saw and heard exceeded imagination.

The prevailing belief in the Nine Provinces was that there was a gigantic insect hive deep underground, serving as the source of the insect disaster.

But now it seemed otherwise, the situation was worse than anticipated.

Chapter 1099 Protection

The end of the Insect Path is not some insect hive, but an entrance to a Great Secret Realm, where numerous insect hives and Insect Races stand, terrifying and shocking.

If this information spreads, it will inevitably cause a tremendous shock to the entire cultivation world of the Nine Provinces.

However, the intelligence revealed within these scenes is not entirely negative.

Since the Nine Provinces have always been planning, if it is possible to explore what to do after discovering the insect hives, at least one thing is certain: the underground space would not be too large. Therefore, not too many people can be dispatched, and at that time, only the top group of Divine Sea Realm cultivators can join forces to eradicate the insect hives.

But if it is the Great Secret Realm of the Insect Race, then there is no such concern. From the images, the scope of the Insect Race Great Secret Realm is vast. As long as a defensive line can be constructed immediately upon entering, reinforcements can be continuously sent in, utilizing the enormous advantage of the Nine Provinces cultivators, to engage in a human wave tactic.

The sect master suddenly thought of many things and quickly asked a crucial question: "Is there an origin magnetic field within this Insect Race Great Secret Realm?"

"No." Lu Ye shook his head, "According to the disciple's investigation, this Insect Race Great Secret Realm is a miniature world, not deep underground."

"Good!" The sect master's eyes gleamed brightly; this information couldn't be better. His mind turned rapidly, and he remembered another question: "I observed that there are nine gates within this Great Secret Realm. Have you investigated where these gates lead to?"

Lu Ye said, "I was just about to report this. I have entered and exited each of these nine gates once. Based on the positioning of the ten-part map, the positions of the nine gates generally correspond to the Nine Provincial States of the Nine Provinces. In other words, if one goes deep enough downward through a ground fissure in Leizhou, they will inevitably reach the gate connected to Leizhou. If one goes deep from a ground fissure in Wuzhou, they will reach the gate connected to Wuzhou."

"Such a coincidence?" The sect master was astonished.

Lu Ye responded with a meaningful tone: "The disciple also thinks it's quite a coincidence."

The sect master's gaze flickered, comprehending the implications; some things don't need to be spoken clearly as long as everyone understands them in their hearts.

"By the way, sect master, the disciple discovered that the insect blood of the Insect Race seems to have a certain degree of disruption against the origin magnetic field."

The sect master nodded: "We noticed this a long time ago."

With so many Divine Sea Realm cultivators from both major camps delving deep into ground fissures for years, it would be impossible not to notice such obvious intelligence, but while awareness is one thing, utilizing it is not easy.

The insect blood of the Insect Race does indeed have some level of disruption against the origin magnetic field, but its efficacy is limited. Without being able to completely block it, it cannot play a decisive role.

"Currently, whether it is us, the Haotian Alliance, or the Ten Thousand Demons Ridge, both are working from this angle, hoping to utilize insect blood to develop something that can entirely block the origin magnetic field. Unfortunately, there has been little success."

"Wouldn't Ten Thousand Demons Ridge keep it to themselves?" Lu Ye asked.

The sect master chuckled: "In the current situation, what good would keeping it to themselves do? Certainly, they can't handle the insect disaster alone. If something like this is actually developed, it will definitely be used by members from both major camps to fight the enemy together, so there's no worry about them keeping it. If they really manage to develop it, they would undoubtedly share it with us right away. Haotian Alliance would do the same."

Lu Ye thought for a moment, realizing this made sense. The insect disaster is an issue concerning the entire Nine Provinces, not a single camp. In the end, everyone has to contribute together, so no one can afford merely to watch.

Not only would they not keep it to themselves, but any major discovery would be shared with the other camp immediately.

"Yiye, I must take credit for this massive achievement," the sect master said, holding several image stones, his expression serious, "Do you understand?"

Lu Ye nodded: "The disciple understands."

In a few years, so many old cultivators haven't managed to uncover any valuable information, yet Lu Ye has presented the image of the Insect Race Great Secret Realm. If this were to spread, how would those veterans feel, and it would only push Lu Ye into the limelight.

The saying that "the tree that stands out is more likely to be destroyed by the wind" holds true.

Back when Lu Ye made a major stir in the Spirit Stream Realm and Cloud River Realm, becoming a thorn in the eyes of the top sects of Ten Thousand Demons Ridge, it was hard enough to calm down for a few years, so it'd be unwise to seek attention now.

Especially since this spotlight concerns the future of the entire Nine Provinces.

The sect master does not intend to steal credit but is instead protecting Lu Ye in this way.

Just as veteran Thang imposed a gag order in the grand assembly when Lu Ye was able to refine the As-Close-As-Siblings array disc.

As a well-known top Divine Sea Realm cultivator, who has long been exploring the depths of the ground fissures, producing such results at this moment, while inevitably surprising, it does not appear abrupt.

Lu Ye obviously understood the sect master's intention.

"I need to convene a session with the Elder Council. Yiye, you should return to the mountain pass for now, and don't wander around for a while."

"Yes!"

Moments later, Lu Ye left Haotian City, heading in the direction of Jinglan Lake Pass.

A day later, in Harmony Light Hall, numerous figures gathered together.

It had been less than half a year since the last grand council meeting, and ordinarily, it shouldn't be so soon to convene again, not even for a minor council meeting.

But upon receiving the communication, everyone hurried to Haotian City to gather, knowing that something significant must have happened; otherwise, they wouldn't have been summoned at this time.

As usual, Pang Zhen presided over the meeting, sitting at the head of the oval table, with the senior members of the Haotian Alliance of Bingzhou seated on either side.

No one was absent, making this one of the most well-attended gatherings of the leadership.

Everyone looked at Pang Zhen.

Since he was the one to call them together, naturally only he knew what had transpired.

Pang Zhen did not waste words; he simply raised his hand and waved, sending a stream of light towards each attendee—an image stone: "The reason for this urgent gathering is that Veteran

Thang has made some special discoveries. Please take a look."

Everyone raised their hand to catch the image stone flying towards them, immersing their consciousness, activating their Mental Consciousness to investigate.

In an instant, the atmosphere within Harmony Light Hall became exceedingly chaotic.

Just as the sect master was shocked upon seeing the image in the stone, everyone present felt the same. Although the location in the image was unknown, everyone could guess it was the source of the Insect Plague!

Suppressing the shock in their hearts, they continued their investigation. Moments later, people finished looking, their gazes heavy, yet no one asked any questions because they knew Pang Zhen would explain.

When everyone had finished, Pang Zhen began to speak: "Since the outbreak of the Insect Plague, many Divine Sea Realm cultivators from the two great camps have endeavored to investigate the depths of the ground fissure. Unfortunately, after years, little progress has been made. The information brought by Veteran Thang this time is immensely valuable and has clarified many doubts for us."

"The information we previously had suggested that by penetrating deep into the ground fissure, one could find the Insect Path, with the end of the Insect Path likely being the insect hive. However, it now seems this assumption was incorrect; the end of the Insect Path is not the insect hive but rather a portal, leading to this Great Secret Realm of the Insect Race!"

"Currently, the Nine Provinces have countless ground fissures, but no matter which fissure one penetrates from, they all eventually lead to a portal. There are nine such portals throughout the Nine Provinces, and as you must have seen, the portals in this Great Secret Realm of the Insect Plague also number nine, corresponding to the nine provincial states of the Nine Provinces."

"The bad news is that the situation at the source of the Insect Plague is worse than we imagined. This Great Secret Realm of the Insect Race is not small, and within it are countless insects, including giant ones surpassing the large insects. The might of those few giant insects, as you must have sensed, is something no individual cultivator could withstand. To be honest, in all my years of cultivation, I've never seen such insects."

"The good news is that these giant insects are too massive in size to crawl out through the Insect Path to wreak havoc upon the Nine Provinces. This is perhaps why their presence has gone unnoticed until now."

"There is another piece of good news: the Great Secret Realm of the Insect Race... does not have an origin magnetic field!"

Upon hearing this, everyone was moved.

An elder spoke up, "Doesn't this mean that as long as we can enter the Great Secret Realm of the Insect Race, we won't be suppressed?"

"The key is how to enter the Great Secret Realm of the Insect Race."

"Since Veteran Thang has been there, he must know a way."

Everyone eagerly looked at the sect master, who shook his head: "The method I used to enter the Great Secret Realm of the Insect Race is only applicable to me and cannot be generalized or shared."

Everyone's faces showed disappointment; no one believed the sect master was hiding anything because solving the Insect Plague is the wish of all cultivators in the Nine Provinces, and the sect master's character is well known. If it were possible, he would certainly not keep it to himself.

"Could we ask Veteran Thang to set up a Teleportation Array at the portal? If we could do that, we could directly teleport there." Someone suggested.

Pang Zhen said, "Veteran Thang and I have considered this method before, but firstly, Veteran Thang is not proficient in formations and cannot set up a teleportation formation. Secondly, even with an existing Array Base Disc, it is difficult for Veteran Thang, alone, to maintain the operation of the formation while setting it up. Moreover, the distance is too great, and the suppression from the origin magnetic field makes it unlikely that even a completed formation would be effective."

He gently tapped on the table: "So what needs solving most urgently is how to block the erosion of the origin magnetic field. Only by resolving this can we talk about the future."

This situation is quite frustrating. It was one thing when we didn't know about the Great Secret Realm of the Insect Race, but now that we do, now that we clearly understand the enemy's situation, we still have no way to effectively strike over there.

Pang Zhen looked at Chow Ye: "Chief

Chow, the Military Supplies Department needs to speed things up. The Insect Plague has persisted for nearly three years. We cultivators are still relatively unaffected, but most ordinary people can no longer farm and are living off stored grain, which is not a long-term solution. If this situation continues without change, in a few years, I'm afraid nine out of ten households within the Nine Provinces will be empty."

Ordinary people are the foundation of the cultivation world. If their numbers dwindle too much, the cultivation world will be shaken. This is why in the Nine Provinces, it's forbidden for conflicts among cultivators to affect ordinary people.

The Military Supplies Department has now gathered a large number of healing cultivators and Pill Masters to study the protective effect of insect blood against the origin magnetic field. Unfortunately, there has been little progress.

Chapter 1100 A Different Image Message Stone

Chow Ye put on a pained expression and said, "I will intensify supervision."

In fact, not only has the Haotian Alliance in Bingzhou gathered many healing cultivators and Pill Masters to study the effect of insect blood on the origin magnetic field, but several other great provincial states have also taken similar actions. And the research results among them are not kept secret; any discoveries are shared. However, up until now, there hasn't been any substantial progress.

This left him sighing with helplessness. It's true that he is the head of the Military Supplies Department, and ensuring the supply of logistics is no problem for him, but he is not specialized in this field. Being put in charge unexpectedly is somewhat challenging for him.

Previously, they were not quite clear about the situation deep within the Insect Path, which was fine by him. But now, with many details about the Great Secret Realm of the Insect Race already explored, solving the problem of the origin magnetic field is all that's left before the Nine Provinces can mobilize their armies in full force and march onward.

He could only hope that his subordinates would be more promising.

After advising Chow Ye, Pang Zhen tapped the table lightly: "According to usual practice, when we make such significant discoveries, shouldn't we share the intelligence with Ten Thousand Demons Ridge? What do you all think?"

No one objected this time. Although such intelligence is precious and hard to come by, it's not a time to withhold it. Everyone was aware of this and unanimously agreed to pass the information to Ten Thousand Demons Ridge, trusting that they wouldn't think this side was deceiving them.

Mainly because the image messages within the shadow jade stones cannot be falsified. It's believed that once Ten Thousand Demons Ridge sees these images, they will understand the seriousness of the situation and the most pressing issues at hand.

Soon, the process was set, with someone assigned to copy the images from the shadow jade stone and carry the duplicates to Ten Thousand Demons City for delivery.

A grand assembly began hurriedly and ended quickly.

The discussions among cultivators are mostly like this, without continuous bickering over certain matters, especially with manpower shortages everywhere now, emphasizing efficiency.

The sect master walked out of Harmony Light Hall, where Qian Wudang was waiting for him.

The sect master looked at him, "Chief Qian, do you have something to discuss?"

Qian Wudang chuckled, "Nothing major, just a few questions to ask Veteran Thang about the Great Secret Realm of the Insect Race. Some things in the images weren't quite clear."

"Go ahead."

Qian Wudang then asked a few questions, and the sect master answered them one by one, finally sighing, "Chief Qian, just speak your mind. Why the pretense?"

He saw through it; Qian Wudang's questions were just a front, and he obviously had another purpose.

Qian Wudang chuckled, glanced around to ensure no one else was there, and transmitted via Mental Consciousness, "Did Lu Yiye come to Haotian City yesterday?"

"He did come," the sect master replied indifferently, though he sighed inwardly. As expected of the Justice Department Chief, with such keen intuition. Of course, it also had to do with him being Lu Ye's immediate superior; others wouldn't pay such close attention to Lu Ye's movements.

"That brat has no regard for the Venerable One," Qian Wudang was a bit annoyed, "No matter what, I'm still his superior in name. Since he came to Haotian City, why not pay his respects? But Veteran Thang, you have explored the ground fissure for years without much discovery, yet Lu Yiye makes one trip to Haotian City and such significant findings occur. It's hard for people not to make connections. If one investigates a bit, they would know that he happened to venture deep into the ground fissure a month ago and just returned yesterday."

The sect master said calmly, "So what if connections are made?"

"Achieving what others can't at such a young age and having reached the Divine Sea Realm with such cultivation. More astonishingly, even with such cultivation, he can still effortlessly cross levels to slay opponents. Veteran Thang, Righteous Blood Sect has accepted a good disciple, but some things still need caution."

"For example?"

"For instance, some people, alone and destitute, might feel disheartened yet filled with resentment, deciding to take desperate measures, like a cornered dog?"

The sect master's eyes flickered, "Then according to Chief Qian, what should be done?"

Qian Wudang chuckled, "How should I know? Veteran Thang, that's a difficult question for me. My Justice Department's style over the years mostly involves dealing with matters after they happen, focusing on concrete evidence that leaves no room for argument. Hence, I can't offer help on such matters." He sighed and added, "Veteran Thang, I'm not trying to startle you with alarmist talk. It's

mainly that when a person is old, with no support or hope, it's easy to become extreme in their thoughts and act outlandishly, fitting the description of 'incomprehensible.'"

The sect master recalled his own mental state back then and agreed, "You're not wrong."

Back then, he was somewhat disheartened, though not as severely as described by Qian Wudang. After all, he still had Shui Yuan accompanying him, being filial at his side.

But if back then, Shui Yuan hadn't been there either, would he have maintained his original intention? Such matters are uncertain and fearful to contemplate.

"I didn't realize that despite your young age, you have a keen understanding of the mindset of us old folks," he remarked.

Qian Wudang laughed, "In front of Veteran Thang, I may not be considered old, but if I were still a mortal, I should be playing with grandchildren by now."

After chatting for a while, Qian Wudang departed. The sect master stood in place, pondering for a moment, then raised his hand to send out a message.

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At Jinglan Lake Pass, the Teleportation Array in Heaven's Augury Hall lit up, and Lu Ye returned.

Yesterday, after leaving Haotian City, he went back to the ground fissure.

There's no need to linger there long. Now that his doppelganger is stationed at the ground fissure, he can naturally take good care of the cultivators from both sides. With the Teleportation Array connecting them, if any real danger arises, he and Lin Yue can support them at any time.

The pass here is no longer bustling as before; mainly very few people are stationed here, only about fifty at most, and even these fifty rotate on shifts.

Everyone knows that guarding the pass is an idle duty, and going to the ground fissure is where one earns battle merits. Naturally, everyone wants to stay at the ground fissure.

However, the pass still needs people to stay on guard, so they have to take turns.

As he walked out of Heaven's Augury Hall, Yooi Huang came up to him. It was his turn to guard the pass this half month.

"My Lord," Yooi Huang greeted with a bow.

"Hmm." Lu Ye responded, as usual, he asked, "Has there been any trouble at the pass lately?"

"No trouble." Yooi Huang replied, ever since Lu Ye focused the main defense direction on the ground fissure, not to mention the pass, but even within about 30 miles, the Insect Race was rarely seen.

Now this defense model has been imitated by the major passes on the Bingzhou front line, forming two major factions of small-scale cooperation, with a tendency to spread to other Eight Great Provincial States.

It is believed that it won't be long before all the passes on the front line will act in this manner.

But within the provincial states themselves, it's impossible to do so, as many ground fissures are unattended.

After offering a few words of encouragement to Yooi Huang, Lu Ye proceeded towards his own sleeping hall.

Exploring the ground fissure took him more than a month, which delayed his cultivation progress.

However, considering the gains, this expenditure was worth it, at the very least, he clarified the situation inside the Great Secret Realm of the Insect Race.

Standing at the door, Lu Ye did not rush to push the door open, but instead looked at an object on the door.

A storage sack was placed on the door knocker.

This was indeed strange.

Looking around, there was no one in sight, and sending out his Mental Consciousness, he found it was just a normal storage sack, nothing out of the ordinary.

Lu Ye raised his hand to take it down, then pushed the door and entered.

Yiyi and Amber were diligently cultivating; previously, Lu Ye had left her plenty of gold-hued spirit fortune sticks, enough for her to use for a long time.

Although there was a rule in the Hall of Battle Merits that certain items could only be used by oneself, Yiyi was Amber's minion spirit, and since Amber was Lu Ye's natal demon beast, Yiyi could also use the items Lu Ye obtained from the Hall of Battle Merits.

Upon hearing movement, Yiyi opened her eyes, happily saying, "Lu Ye, you're back?"

Lu Ye nodded slightly and asked, "Have you noticed anyone lingering outside the door recently?"

Yiyi shook her head, "No, why?"

"No reason."

If someone deliberately left him a storage sack, they surely wouldn't let anyone discover it. Currently, the pass here was saving the energy of the protective array, so it wasn't always active, and coupled with the sparse manpower, even someone with minimal skills could sneak in. However, from the current situation, the person didn't seem to have ill intentions.

Of course, the storage sack on the door knocker might also merely be a token of appreciation from a soldier at this pass!

With this thought, Lu Ye channeled his spirit force to investigate, discovering a restriction lock on the storage sack.

This confirmed that it wasn't a gift from a soldier from the pass; otherwise, there wouldn't be a restriction lock left behind.

In other words, someone had infiltrated the pass during Lu Ye's absence and left this storage sack.

What could it be?

Breaking the restriction lock was a piece of cake for Lu Ye; in just a moment, it was undone, sending out his Mental Consciousness to explore, he found it didn't contain anything peculiar, just an image message stone.

Just yesterday, he had given some image message stones to the sect master, yet today someone gifted him another one, what a coincidence.

Taking out the image message stone, he sent in his Mental Consciousness to investigate.

Soon, the image within the stone vividly imprinted itself into his mind.

With one glance, Lu Ye recognized that the scene inside came from the Great Secret Realm of the Insect Race!

Had someone found out about his infiltration of the Insect Race's Great Secret Realm?

But soon, Lu Ye realized something was amiss.

Though it was indeed a scene from the Insect Race's Great Secret Realm, it wasn't the same as what he had recorded, especially since the perspective was different.

Back then, he was perched on the back of the Sacred Beetle, so his vantage point was high, but the image in the message stone was clearly from the ground.

Besides himself, someone else had also infiltrated the Insect Race's Great Secret Realm!

Lu Ye's heart trembled.

Indeed, one should never underestimate the talent across the world; he had thought that his experience of infiltrating the Insect Race's Great Secret Realm was unique to him, with no other examples, but now it seemed someone might very well have accomplished it before him.

If that's the case, how come the sect master isn't aware? Such a significant discovery ought to have been made known to the high echelons of the two major factions immediately.

What was the purpose of this person deliberately delivering this image message stone to him?

The footage in the message stone was very brief, only a mere ten or so seconds. Despite scrutinizing it repeatedly, Lu Ye found no useful information.