

Humanity 1261

Chapter 1261 Who Is It, Really?

Thinking it over carefully, it's actually not surprising. The Dragon Throne is entirely crafted from dragon scales, so its quality must be extremely high and not something easy to master.

In the public eye, it's not appropriate to reveal the true face, so the armor of the Dragon Throne serves as the best camouflage.

Lu Ye's task now is very simple: to block these people for at least ten breaths of time. This way, the escaping treasure gourd can get far enough away, and the doppelganger on the other end has already started moving towards the treasure gourd. With this two-pronged approach, barring any surprises, ten breaths should be sufficient for the doppelganger to capture the treasure gourd.

To confront hundreds of formidable cultivators from various large domains alone, even with the previous impact of the Fire Phoenix and the current deterrence of the Dragon Throne, is an extremely daunting task!

A single slash to kill a person undoubtedly had a significant effect because even Nan Xiong, present among them, admitted he couldn't kill so cleanly and swiftly.

The sudden appearance of this guy, covered in armor, has made his attitude very clear: anyone daring to chase the treasure gourd will not be spared.

But...why?

If it's said that he wants to fight for the treasure gourd, that would be understandable, such a valuable treasure would tempt anyone. But since he appeared, all his actions have been to cause chaos; first, he activated a powerful spell to break through everyone's encirclement, allowing the trapped treasure gourd to escape, and now he's intercepting in front of everyone, preventing them from chasing.

This is entirely harming others without benefiting oneself, leaving many puzzled.

Time suddenly dragged on incredibly slowly.

A full three breaths passed before an angry shout rang out: "Those who block my path shall die!"

As the words fell, three cone-like spells were blasted towards Lu Ye, and following right behind them was the figure of Nan Xiong from Yaotian World.

He, being a magic cultivator, shouldn't have acted so rashly. As a magic cultivator, staying at a distance to cast spells was his forte. But he vaguely sensed something was off; this guy clad in cover armor probably had companions assisting from outside. If he caused turmoil here to let the treasure gourd escape, his companions could intercept the fleeing treasure.

If everyone present continued to stalemate with him here, it would only be playing right into his hands.

There was no time to explain the stakes to others, so he could only take the lead. He believed those present weren't fools. Many could see this point; the reason they didn't act hastily wasn't entirely because of fear, but because they needed someone to set the example.

So he stood out, showing his stance with direct action.

Indeed, after he made his move, followers gathered. Various attacks and figures swiftly advanced behind him, charging towards Lu Ye's location.

Lu Ye sighed in his heart, knowing things wouldn't go smoothly. But at least he managed to delay for a few breaths, which wasn't entirely useless.

Facing the sudden torrent of attacks, he didn't opt to dodge. With such a dense offensive, evasion was futile; he could only face it head-on!

The Dragon Spine Saber swung fiercely; the several-zhang-long saber cut and spun, exuding a sense of violence and aggression. Many attacks were shattered before they could approach.

However, many more still fell upon him, causing loud clattering sounds.

The protection of the Dragon Throne, crafted from dragon scales, was incredibly astounding, not something Divine Sea Realm cultivators could easily shake, but the impact of the attacks couldn't be neutralized, so Lu Ye had to bear it himself.

Within just two short breaths, Lu Ye felt as if his bones were on the verge of breaking, with his internal organs vibrating incessantly.

The only consolation was that not all cultivators chose to attack him. More were already bypassing him, chasing after the treasure gourd.

There was nothing he could do about those people; one person, no matter how formidable, couldn't intercept everyone here.

He focused only on those causing the most trouble!

Suddenly, Nan Xiong felt a chill because he sharply sensed a murderous aura locking onto him!

Seeing a blade light slashing towards him, he dared not advance any further but instead turned sideways to evade, avoiding the fierce slash. However, the blade light clung to him relentlessly.

In the face of mortal danger, the strong foundation of his elite domain background emerged. Even though he was a magic cultivator, when faced with such a crisis, he didn't panic but remained calm. While counterattacking with spells, he cast layer upon layer of protections upon himself, dodging and maneuvering within a very confined space. At first glance, it seemed like he was dancing on a knife-edge; it was thrilling beyond words.

Meanwhile, Lu Ye continued to endure attacks from all directions, the sound of bombardment on the Dragon Throne never ceasing.

But soon enough, the number of attackers dwindled significantly.

For the cultivators gathered here, killing each other wasn't the main objective, especially not this armored guy who clearly wasn't easy to kill. Since there were no deep personal grudges, there was no reason for anyone to entangle pointlessly.

They were more interested in the treasure gourd.

So after a brief clash, having broken through Lu Ye's defense line, more and more people bypassed him, pursuing the treasure gourd.

A few breaths later, there were only less than ten people left in the battlefield! The rest had all fled away.

The ones remaining can all be considered allies of Nan Xiong, including the squad members he privately recruited, as well as the prodigies from domains friendly with Yaotian World...

The advantage of being from a top-tier domain is that one never lacks friends, because many large domains are under the protection of such top-tier domains to some extent.

Take the team of three led by Yuk Yaorao, for instance; they formed an alliance here because the Jiuxuan World, where Yuk Yaorao hails from, and the Xuandu World, home to Ding You, are nominally affiliated with the Dominant Star, the domain of Zhao Yunliu.

Of course, because of the vast distances in stellar space, such affiliations are merely nominal without any real jurisdiction.

But if the Jiuxuan World or Xuandu World were to face a crisis that their home world could not handle, these two domains could seek aid from the Dominant Star, which would send strong warriors to assist as far as they can.

The relationships among the major domains in stellar space are exceedingly complex, and the cultivators from the Nine Provinces have only just set foot into this stellar expanse, not yet fully realizing this fact.

The dozen or so people did not want to leave, but were unable to!

Nan Xiong was being targeted!

This guy had thwarted Lu Ye's plans twice, so who else would Lu Ye target? While Lu Ye's plan this time may not have been perfect, without Nan Xiong stepping up, he certainly could have created a longer time gap.

But because Nan Xiong repeatedly jumped out, first leading a group to break his Fire Phoenix, then breaking the stalemate single-handedly, the delay time greatly reduced, and now it's uncertain if the doppelganger can acquire the treasure gourd.

Since he jumps the most joyfully, he should take the hardest hits!

Nan Xiong has always danced on the blade's edge, never having experienced such a stifling situation since beginning his cultivation!

He is the most outstanding cultivator in the Divine Sea Realm of his generation in Yaotian World, and even looking across stellar space, among his peers, he has few adversaries.

His opponents are only other prodigies from top-tier domains, so he never imagined he would one day find himself in such an embarrassing position.

A state where he could only take hits and not retaliate, and this was even happening with others assisting him.

Right now, he just wants to know one thing: who on earth is inside this cover armor?

And this cover armor... its quality is way too high, which domain's person brought such a valuable treasure into the Taichu Realm without fear of losing it here?

Though his situation is dire, his insight is still sharp; he knows that their prowess is not just due to their strength but also enhanced by this cover armor. Without such powerful protection, being besieged by so many, they would have subdued him long ago.

But precisely because of the strong protection from the cover armor, the other party can completely ignore attacks from others and focus solely on him.

While Lu Ye himself was relentlessly pursuing Nan Xiong, the doppelganger raced forward and finally caught up with the treasure gourd flying towards them.

As expected, the just-matured treasure gourd was in a bewildered state with no set destination. Its senses, being mysteriously connected to the sword gourd from the same source, explained why it flew towards the doppelganger.

Following the treasure gourd's path were continuous streaks of light, the cultivators rushing in pursuit.

The nearest one was already thirty miles away; this person, of unknown domain origin, excelled in escape techniques with incredible speed, believing the treasure would be theirs, but upon seeing someone appear ahead, they were outraged!

The treasure gourd flew directly to that person!

Enraged, this person shouted, "If you don't want to die, don't touch the treasure; otherwise, I'll chase you to the ends of the earth!"

The doppelganger paid no heed to the threat, but the situation wasn't as they expected, causing some distress.

The treasure gourd initially flew towards the doppelganger as anticipated, but when they reached out to grab it, the gourd deftly dodged, seemingly reluctant to be caught.

However, it did not fly away; instead, it circled around the doppelganger repeatedly.

Meanwhile, the sword gourd on the doppelganger's waist vibrated more intensely, as did the approaching treasure gourd.

It was as if the two gourds were whispering, communicating something...

The doppelganger tried twice more but still failed to succeed, not daring to use too much force lest the treasure gourd gets startled, as it was quite sentient.

Time was running out, and more cultivators flooded in, witnessing the situation.

If they continued to delay, chaos would inevitably ensue, making it difficult to acquire the treasure gourd.

Unable to collect it and unable to just stand idle, the doppelganger turned and traveled through air along the path they came, simultaneously channeling spirit force to gently wrap the treasure gourd.

Fortunately, the treasure gourd did not exhibit any sign of rejection, still hovering leisurely around the doppelganger.

Chapter 1262 So You're Afraid of Force Too

The situation became bizarre. Within the Taichu Realm, the doppelganger flew ahead using Sword Control, while numerous figures behind him pursued relentless as if chasing stars. Amidst the pursuit, threats and intimidation were incessantly shouted.

The doppelganger turned a deaf ear.

This made the cultivators in pursuit furious. They had been guarding against this happening, afraid that someone would appear out of nowhere to take advantage. But despite their precautions, it still happened. Now they don't know who the guy fleeing ahead is. If he escapes, they won't be able to find him later. Judging from certain external features, he appears to be a sword cultivator of the human race.

Some with keen eyes noticed something amiss: although the treasure gourd circled around the person, it didn't seem to be subdued, giving people hope.

During the pursuit and escape, time passed, some fell behind, but most remained like maggots in the bones, unable to get rid of. Moreover, nearby cultivators were drawn by the noise, making the number of people chasing the doppelganger not decrease, but gradually increase.

Several times, people intercepted from the front and sides, forcing the doppelganger to take evasive action, resulting in life-threatening situations.

The delay is getting a bit long. Successful treasure acquisition usually involves grabbing it quickly and then disappearing, with others not even knowing who got it. From this perspective, the doppelganger's treasure acquisition is very sluggish. If not for his speed, he would have been surrounded long ago.

If this continues, the situation will only get worse. The activity range within the current Taichu Realm is getting smaller, and the probability of being intercepted is increasing.

The sword gourd and the revolving treasure gourd beside him maintained a rhythmical vibration, showing no signs of stopping, like long-lost brothers pouring their hearts out to each other endlessly.

The doppelganger wants to ask them if they've talked enough. But asking is pointless. Although the treasure gourd has some spirituality, it is ultimately just an affiliated treasure of the supreme treasure, still lacking spiritual intelligence.

Hard measures are the only option!

Previously, he dared not rush to collect it, afraid of startling the treasure gourd. The doppelganger had inherent advantages, attracting the treasure gourd, already holding a significant advantage. However, the situation now shows that further delay brings too many variables.

With his mind set, the doppelganger mobilized his spirit force. The sword gourd trembled gently, preparing to unleash Sword Qi and initiate the Sword Array.

To forcibly collect, he must ensure that the treasure gourd, once startled, cannot escape. The doppelganger follows the path of a sword cultivator, and therefore can only use the Sword Array to block all directions.

However, in doing so, his speed will inevitably decrease significantly, leaving the doppelganger with little time, perhaps only a few breaths, before the pursuers catch up.

But just as the doppelganger was about to infuse his spirit force into the sword gourd, before he could act, the treasure gourd's vibrations suddenly stopped. It ceased rotating around him and instead hovered not far from his side.

The doppelganger furrowed his brow, staring at the treasure gourd, and tentatively reached out to grab it.

Without any evasion or resistance, the treasure gourd was grasped easily in his hand!

So you fear hard measures too, don't you?

...

Nan Xiong continued to dance on the knife's edge, accumulating an unprecedented feeling of frustration in his heart, almost making him vomit blood. Undeniably, this guy clad in cover armor is surprisingly powerful. If not for the group assisting him, he would have long been cut down.

He understood vaguely that he was targeted for being the one who stood out, but the opponent being relentless even when gaining the upper hand also truly angered him. He secretly vowed that one day he'd strip off that cover armor and see who this guy really is inside!

Suddenly, the furious assault receded, and the tall, crimson figure transformed into a streak of light, swiftly retreating, attacks landing on its back, echoing loudly, yet unable to cause the slightest harm.

After a moment, Nan Xiong gasped for breath, calming his mind, his eyes filled with grateful relief of narrowly escaping death.

He didn't know why the opponent suddenly left, as he felt his strength about to falter. If the opponent's assault had continued for another half a cup of tea's time, he likely would have faced dire consequences.

The opponent's assault was unreasonable, completely ignoring others and solely focusing on him. If not for his ample foundation, he couldn't have lasted this long.

Perhaps the opponent reached their limit too?

Wearing such cover armor surely places a significant burden on anyone in the Divine Sea Realm, making it hard for a common cultivator to maintain for long, hence the opponent retreated?

"Brother Nan!" Someone looked toward him, eyes filled with inquiry, asking about the next course of action.

The formidable enemy had retreated, presenting a dilemma for the gathered group. Should they pursue the cover-armored guy or go after the treasure gourd? Neither seemed wise.

The prior confrontation had shown the opponent's might, leaving them uninterested in another bout with him. As for chasing the treasure gourd... so much time had passed; who knows if the gourd had already been claimed? Pursuing now might be a mere waste of time.

Nan Xiong calmed himself, tidied his clothes, and spoke, "I will recuperate for a few days; you all can do as you wish. I, Nan Xiong, will remember your aid this time."

Everyone nodded, satisfied with his acknowledgement, without needing to say anything further. They scattered in groups of two or three, though most chose still to follow the direction of the treasure gourd, clearly unwilling to give up.

On the other side, the doppelganger was still escaping. Many people had witnessed the treasure gourd being taken, causing pain in their hearts, and threats and intimidation words became more frequent, especially from the cultivators at the forefront, each shouting incessantly.

Some demanded that the doppelganger obediently hand over the treasure gourd; otherwise, they would leave him with no place to be buried.

Some wanted the doppelganger to leave his name so they could have a good chat with him.

Others used the domain as a threat...

The doppelganger originally did not want to cause further trouble. Now that he had obtained the treasure gourd, he only needed to wait for the real body's response and could teleport to him at any time, leaving no trace behind, and no one would know where the treasure gourd went.

But these guys were too chatty, their noise was unbearable.

Moreover, Lu Ye thought that teleporting away so openly in front of everyone's eyes did not seem very appropriate, as it might reveal one of his trump cards. It would be best to have some cover when teleporting.

With this thought, a plan was formed.

A moment later, the cultivators at the forefront of the chase were delighted to find that the human race sword cultivator who had seized the treasure gourd was slowing down.

They couldn't help but rejoice, knowing that this was unmistakably a sign of severe spirit force depletion.

This would be unusual for a magic cultivator, but if it was a sword cultivator, it was understandable. As everyone knew, sword cultivators were the sharpest in combat, but correspondingly, they had the weakest endurance. In conflicts with other factions, sword cultivators often reached a conclusion or life-and-death outcome in a very short time, and rarely engaged in prolonged battles. When this happened, it indicated that the sword cultivator had fallen into a disadvantageous position.

This was a situation every qualified sword cultivator sought to avoid.

Now, the sword cultivator's increasing slowness was undoubtedly an indication of struggling to continue.

This gave the chasing cultivators hope. They were spurred on as if on performance-enhancing drugs, channeling all their energy into the pursuit.

As time passed, the distance between them closed, gradually reaching within attack range, and thus, magic spells began to fly toward the sword cultivator.

The sword cultivator's situation looked increasingly dire, his figure darting left and right like a flickering lantern.

The forefront of the pursuers consisted of three figures: two human and one Winged Race. The two human cultivators were in the lead due to their exquisite escape techniques, while the Winged Race relied on their natural ability. This guy had a pair of gray wings and was naturally adept at flying, ranked among the fastest in flying speed across the stellar space races.

Seeing the sword cultivator staggering without falling, the Winged Race member gritted his teeth and said, "Fellow Daoists, this isn't working. We need a decisive method."

The two humans were well aware of this principle, but the power of the spells they could cast during the chase was limited. High-powered spells required time to build momentum, and currently, there was no time to do so.

"What does this Winged Race Fellow Daoist suggest?" one of the humans asked.

The Winged Race said, "I have a technique that can be decisive. I ask for your help." Saying so, he quickly transmitted a message regardless of their consent.

Although they were unfamiliar with each other, there was a basis for cooperation at this moment. Settling the sword cultivator came first; the ownership of the treasure gourd could be decided afterward!

This needed no explanation; everyone understood.

The two humans exchanged a glance, nodding to each other, and shortly after, they released wonderful techniques aimed at the sword cultivator, this time attacking from left and right, restricting the sword cultivator's maneuverability.

Almost simultaneously as they acted, the Winged Race member's body shuddered; under one wing, a black feather shot out, breaking through the air in an instant.

The single black feather swiftly split in flight, suddenly filling the sky with traces of black feathers, covering a vast area and tightly surrounding the sword cultivator's region from view.

Every black feather contained immense lethality. The feedback from the feathers allowed the Winged Race to accurately sense that the sword cultivator ahead had been struck into a thousand holes!

A shrill scream emerged, abruptly cut off.

He couldn't help but laugh loudly, "Many thanks to both of you!"

Saying so, he transformed into a black streak, dashing into the area covered by black feathers at an unbelievable speed.

The two humans saw this and immediately cursed loudly, knowing they had been used. No one expected that the Winged Race member would have such a trick; with this wonderful technique, he could have caught up to the sword cultivator long ago. However, lacking the assurance to capture him, he had kept it hidden, seeking the chance to deceive them into assisting, then snatching the opportunity himself.

The sword cultivator was likely doomed considering that scream; it was hopeless. The treasure gourd was probably going to be snatched by the Winged Race.

This angered them beyond endurance, and fueled by rage, they attacked once more, aiming forward.

Chapter 1263 - All Together Now

Under the chaotic storm of spirit force, a large mass of black feathers melted away like snow under the scorching sun, revealing the disheveled figure of the Winged Race. He stood there, dazed and lost, searching for something all around.

The situation... seemed somewhat wrong!

His secret technique had evidently left the sword cultivator riddled with holes. The feedback he received was unmistakable; logically, that sword cultivator should be dead by now. But as he rushed forward to seize the treasure, the sword cultivator was nowhere to be seen!

The opponent disappeared magically, like an invisible wind, leaving no trace behind.

He had no time to continue the search. Following closely behind him were two figures flying swiftly. One on the left, the other on the right, encircled him, and one shouted angrily, "Leave the treasure gourd behind!"

The Winged Race looked up to see that the two Fellow Daoists, with whom he could join forces earlier, now surrounded by abundant spirit force, wore fierce expressions. Their gaze full of brutality, beyond these two were more streaks of light, more figures...

"..."

The Winged Race couldn't help but curse in anger, realizing the seriousness of the situation. He knew he could not linger here; he was decisive, immediately flapping his wings to escape into the distance.

Though knowing it might be useless, he still unwillingly explained, "I ask you both to calm down. If I say the treasure gourd is not with me, do you wish to believe me?"

One of them nodded repeatedly while chasing him, "I believe you! So Fellow Daoist, please stay, let's discuss this carefully!"

The Winged Race understood his explanation was indeed weak, placing himself in such a situation; he wouldn't easily believe anyone's words; he'd only trust his own eyes.

Thus, he fled even faster. When a Winged Race excels in speed, determined to escape, there's basically no risk of being caught.

Only one thing left him puzzled — how did a lively sword cultivator suddenly vanish? Moreover, his secret technique clearly hit the opponent, causing such a devastating injury that a Divine Sea Realm couldn't withstand.

Full of unanswered questions, the Winged Race only knew this Divine Sea battle seemed doomed for him. As time went on, news of him acquiring the treasure gourd would spread wider, and as the Taichu Realm's active range shrunk, he might face enemies from all sides. After all, the Winged Race's features were too distinctive to be hidden no matter how hard he tried.

At this moment, Lu Ye was leisurely traveling through the air.

The doppelganger had been retrieved. Although during the previous escape, the doppelganger did some concealing, including activating Pseudo-Might Spirit Runes to disguise as Divine Sea Level 9 cultivation and using Thousand Faces Spirit Runes to alter his appearance, for safety's sake, it was better not to show the doppelganger to the public for now.

The treasure gourd was also stored away in the storage sack.

The emergence of the treasure gourd triggered chaos, a chaos likely to persist for several more days, ensuring the Taichu Realm wouldn't be peaceful in the short term.

Currently, it wasn't suitable to study what powers the newly acquired treasure gourd possessed. Investigating later when there's time would not be too late; after all, with the treasure in hand, no one could take it away.

Lu Ye continued collecting precious herbs within the Taichu Realm. Things produced here were rare treasures not found elsewhere, a chance that naturally couldn't be missed.

Those born in top-tier domains had luxurious resources to rely on, not needing to worry about these things. Many cultivators born in large domains didn't have to fret about the source of spirit jade, but cultivators from the Nine Provinces were different, currently in a self-sufficient state.

Later when ascending to Constellation, traveling through the stellar space, it's imperative to have some spirit jade.

During his collection, a thunderous sound echoed, and Lu Ye sensed a repelling force being pushed from a certain direction. However, given his deep location, the feeling wasn't clear.

Thus, he knew the Taichu Realm's active range had once again shrunk. After this shrinkage, cultivators' activities were confined to the Core Circle, which would only become smaller in the future.

Calculating time, the Divine Sea battle had lasted two months until today, with only one month remaining.

In these two months, he had killed plenty, mostly from the Blood Race, nearly twenty of them, contributing significantly to his gains. And killing them wasn't much trouble, but regrettably, there were no more Blood Race left.

Viewed in the stellar space, the Blood Race might seem like a major race, but compared to other races, they weren't much of a large race, especially compared to the enormous size of the human race.

He hadn't precisely counted his gains or knew his current ranking.

But the only thing he could be certain of: based on the existing gains, he could ensure a pretty good rank even if he did nothing in the next month, as long as he survived.

Yang Qing set the goal of being in the top ten, which he was likely to achieve.

Thus, he maintained a relaxed attitude, feeling no rush to find targets to hunt. In the last month, the conflicts would be extremely fierce, when the time comes, even if he didn't seek others, others would come to find him.

Seizing the brief calm before the storm to gather more spirit flowers and rare herbs that can't be found outside is the right path.

But even with such a laid-back attitude, he inevitably encountered two battles. Without exception, seeing his cultivation was weak and he was alone, they tried to take advantage, only to crash into a wall, thus increasing his spoils.

Several days later, Lu Ye passed through a place and observed the peculiar scene ahead, slightly focusing his mind.

It was because he unexpectedly saw an insect hive in the Taichu Realm!

The insect hive is a large structure, ninety-nine percent of it is buried deep underground, especially the core of the insect hive, which must be at the deepest location. So what can be seen is just the small part of the insect hive standing on the surface.

Taichu Realm is a very primitive space, a treasure land where the Reincarnation Tree is nurtured. Apart from being opened once every century for Divine Sea Realm prodigies from various domains to compete, it is usually closed.

How could such a space have the existence of an insect hive?

What is certain is that this insect hive didn't originally exist; it was very likely constructed by the Insect Race here.

After observing for a moment, Lu Ye suddenly understood.

Two months have passed since entering the Taichu Realm, yet I haven't seen a single Insect Race cultivator. Relatively speaking, the Insect Race is considered a major race in stellar space, with nearly twenty Blood Race individuals participating in the Divine Sea. The number of Insect Race participants surely wouldn't be much less.

There's no reason not to see a single one for such a long time. Lu Ye originally thought the Taichu Realm was too big, making it hard for everyone to meet, but now it seems that's not the case.

These Insect Race guys... they gathered early in the Core Circle to build an insect hive here!

Two months ago, when prodigies from various domains were thrown into this domain, some chose to hide and lurk, moving along the edges as the Taichu Realm's range shrinks, while some, like the Blood Race, gathered and set up defenses at the junction between the inner circle and outer circle, and surely some headed straight towards the Core Circle.

Each choice has its pros and cons. Compared to moving with the shrinking range of the Taichu Realm, going straight to the Core Circle is likely to encounter enemies, leading to battles.

But the Insect Race made this choice, clearly with prior strategy. They spent two months here to construct an insect hive, allowing them to defend by taking advantage of the terrain. As long as they don't leave the insect hive, they can occupy an absolute advantage geographically.

If others want to deal with them, they'd have to risk venturing into the insect hive. At that time, unless they muster forces several times those of the Insect Race, it would be hard to achieve anything significant.

In such a scattered environment where most are on their own, the Insect Race establishing their base at the insect hive practically places them in an invincible position!

In a way, this tactic is somewhat shameless, but in such competition, using any means is inevitable, and no one can really criticize it. The Insect Race has this capability, which is their advantage, just like how the Blood Race can gather through the Blood Resonance Technique, all other races cannot imitate it, and the Reincarnation Tree won't prohibit such actions.

Outside the insect hive, there are traces of the Insect Race scattered about, but judging from their size and might, they seem insignificant, probably just scattered outside as sentinels, while the real Insect Race cultivators must be hiding inside the insect hive.

Lu Ye still remembered, back in the Insect Race Tree World, that Loathsome Aphid said the Insect Race and Blood Race are natural allies, as the characteristics of these two major races are primarily invasive, making them compatible.

The Blood Race guys have been taken care of by Lu Ye before, now having stumbled upon the Insect Race... it seems I can't discriminate between them?

In Lu Ye's cultivation journey, he had the most encounters with the Blood Race and Insect Race, and his impressions of these two races were the worst.

Being natural allies, they must be dealt with uniformly!

But dealing with the Insect Race is not as simple as dealing with the Blood Race. The Insect Race cannot be suppressed through saintliness, causing their power to plummet and mind to shake. So even though he had a plan, before truly deciding to act, some preparation is necessary.

At the very least, leave himself a retreat. If others are numerous and formidable, and he's unable to face them, he must ensure he can escape at any time.

He looked around for a while and found a hidden place, setting up a Teleportation Array as a contingency. Only then did Lu Ye leisurely fly towards the insect hive.

Midway, blood Qi surged around, transforming into a small blood cloud enveloping his body to hide his appearance.

Landing at the entrance of the insect hive, several scattered insects around immediately emitted intimidating hisses, but Lu Ye ignored them, instead shouted towards the entrance: "Li Taibai from the Blood Malice World visits, wondering which fellow Daoist of the Insect Race is here?"

After waiting for a moment, Mental Consciousness surged from below, and a Mental Consciousness transmission reached his ears: "Oh, it's a fellow Daoist from the Blood Race, please enter quickly!"

As the words fell, the small insects that were hissing intimidatingly nearby immediately quieted down and scattered to the sides to maintain vigilance.

Within the blood cloud, Lu Ye casually tidied his clothes, his figure swaying, he followed the entrance downwards.

Chapter 1264 - Finally, You've Arrived

Following the intricacies of the Insect Path, Lu Ye ventured deeper, progressing smoothly.

As Lu Ye spread his Mental Consciousness, he could sense that this worm nest was not vast. After all, this was a temporary construction by the Insect Race cultivators, only meant to provide a territorial advantage for likely incoming battles. Naturally, it wouldn't be too elaborate, and the Insect Race cultivators hiding here probably neither had the inclination nor the time.

Compared to the Blood Race's prior strategy of forming an alliance and laying ambush, the approach of the Insect Race undoubtedly seemed somewhat rigid, yet it had both advantages and disadvantages.

The benefit was that they could remain hidden here, with nobody daring to provoke them randomly. Generally, the inside of an insect hive was easy to defend and hard to attack, forming a rather remarkable defensive force without needing too many people. To conquer this place, one would need to deploy several times the manpower, and the narrow Insect Path wasn't conducive to many people getting entangled in combat.

As a result, the Insect Race cultivators would remain in a safe state for a long time once the Divine Sea Battle started.

However, the drawbacks were also apparent; they were ill-equipped for offensive action. Once they left the worm nest, they would lose the territorial conveniences. Without taking the initiative to attack, it would naturally be challenging to achieve anything fruitful, detrimental to their final ranking. Even if they were lucky enough to survive until the end, their ranking would inevitably be at the bottom.

Yet the Taichu Realm is constantly shrinking. Even if this area is now the Core Circle, nobody can ensure this region will endure until the end. If during one of the shrinkages, this area is excluded, then the worm nest built here by the Insect Race will no longer be functional, and the Insect Race cultivators will be forced to leave here and participate in the final battles.

The Insect Race is obviously gambling! They're betting that the location of this worm nest can persist until the final stage of the Divine Sea Battle, allowing them to maintain a territorial advantage. By then, they could win without fighting, easily securing a reward spot.

Since they're gambling, they certainly wouldn't put all their eggs in one basket. In other words, there's undoubtedly more than one such worm nest, and the entire Core Circle might have several. The strength of the Insect Race cultivators must be dispersed, and as long as any worm nest location remains until the end, it's a victory for the Insect Race.

Compared to the Blood Race's tactics, the approach of the Insect Race is undoubtedly more passive but also safer.

To prevail in this battle, which gathers prodigies from various domains across the stellar space, every race with some ability is exhausting their resources, sparing no effort.

While Lu Ye ventured deeper, his mind turned over these thoughts, quickly piecing together the Insect Race's plan. Of course, whether things were indeed as he imagined still needed confirmation.

As far as he was concerned, encountering the Insect Race here meant he couldn't let go of the opportunity. However, before that, he needed to figure out the overall strength of the Insect Race here.

The most crucial point: Can he handle them all in one go?

As he ventured deeper, the situation gradually became clearer as dozens of powerful auras converged from the depths underground.

Lu Ye found the situation seemed somewhat different from what he anticipated. Could it be that all the Insect Race cultivators were gathered here? How else could there be so many?

Yet upon careful sensing, he discovered that only a few of those auras were exceptionally powerful; the rest were formidable but merely ordinary Divine Sea Level 8 or Level 9 cultivators.

Understanding dawned that those gathered here weren't solely Insect Race cultivators but likely consisted more of Insect Race bodyguards!

These Insects were quite formidable, constructing a worm nest here in just two months and even summoning dozens of Insect Race bodyguards.

With such a force gathered here, which cultivator from other races participating in the Divine Sea Battle could break in? Who dared to break in?

Anyone braving an intrusion was likely simply offering up their head.

The Blood Cloud drifted down, landing in the core space of the worm nest, and immediately a figure welcomed him with hearty laughter, "Fellow Daoist of the Blood Race, it's been a long journey, but we were eagerly awaiting your arrival."

Within the Blood Cloud, Lu Ye lifted his brows, what's this supposed to mean?

The implication in the other's words suggested some prior agreement between the Blood Race and the Insect Race. These two races had long been in cahoots in the stellar space, so if there was some earlier collusion, it wouldn't be surprising.

While doubts stirred in his heart, he remained calm and poised on the surface, responding steadily, "There were various combats along the way, causing some delays."

The Insect Race cultivator nodded repeatedly, "That's to be expected, but why have you come alone, where are the other members of your noble tribe?"

Lu Ye answered offhandedly, "It's still early, and my fellow Daoists are still out hunting, letting me come ahead to scout the situation here."

Another Insect Race cultivator said admiringly, "The Blood Race sure knows how to act leisurely. If you ask me, we should imitate them, charging out to cause mayhem is better than waiting idly here, speaking of which might end in vain."

The first to speak among the Insect Race immediately admonished solemnly: "Silence, the Blood Race can act that way because they have the Blood River Technique to rely on. What do we have, as the Insect Race? If we recklessly charge out like scattered sand, we will inevitably be targeted by the combined forces of the major races. Constructing the insect hive and waiting for the right opportunity is the strategy set by our elders across various domains of the Insect Race. We need only follow orders. If you have grievances, bring them up with your elders once we're out of the Taichu Realm. Do not speak recklessly here and disrupt the morale of the army!"

The rebuked Insect Race cultivator felt reluctant but knew better than to argue, so he muttered awkwardly, "I was just saying."

"You're not even allowed to say that!" Turning his head, he looked towards Lu Ye's Blood Cloud: "I apologize for letting you witness such a scene, Fellow Daoist."

Lu Ye simply responded, "What do I need to do?"

The Insect Race cultivator said, "For now, there's nothing required from you, Fellow Daoist, because it's still uncertain whether this place will hold until the end. So, you just need to stay here and wait. If this place survives till the end, there might be some blind fools coming to provoke us; at that time, your assistance will be needed to join us in killing the enemies. If this place doesn't hold, then we can only fight our way out to seek a chance of victory, and at that time, we'll rely on the power of your Blood Techniques."

Lu Ye nodded; the situation was almost as he had expected. The Insect Race building insect hives like this was indeed a gamble, betting that the location of the insect hive would remain until the end. Thus, with the help of the Blood Race, they could win effortlessly.

"How many insect hives has your race built?" Lu Ye asked, knowing that since this was a gamble, there would be more than one hive. The number of Insect Race cultivators gathered here was also off, as it was impossible that only a few cultivators participated in the Divine Sea contention.

"There are four!" the Insect Race cultivator replied.

"Understood." Lu Ye nodded, "Then I'll handle the defense here. With me around, if this place remains till the end, no outsider will break in!"

The Insect Race cultivator was greatly encouraged, "With your assistance, Fellow Daoist, we will definitely succeed with half the effort." Then expressing some concern, he added, "But you are only one person, and this space is vast, I fear you might be overwhelmed..."

The implication was that Lu Ye should summon more Blood Race cultivators to help.

Lu Ye could summon a ghost; most of the Blood Race participants in the Divine Sea contention had been killed by him, so there probably wasn't even one left alive.

Without speaking, he urged the Blood Cloud, and with a crashing sound, the Blood Sea rapidly spread out, radiating in all directions.

In just two breaths' time, the massive core of the insect hive was enveloped by crimson color, causing dozens of insect bodyguards to instinctively screech in unease. Several Insect Race cultivators, however, were amazed. Although they all had some understanding of the Blood Race, it was their first time personally experiencing the wonders of the Blood Technique. They immediately felt the immense power contained within this Blood Sea. With such a Blood Sea as protection and concealment, plus their own power, who could invade this Taichu Realm?

They were all very satisfied, and the Insect Race cultivator who first greeted Lu Ye was full of admiration, "I've long heard of the Blood River Technique's unsurpassed brilliance, and seeing it today, it truly lives up to its reputation. Fellow Daoist, your skill in this technique must be unmatched in the Divine Sea Realm level."

That was obviously flattery, as he didn't know how other Blood Race cultivators performed the Blood River Technique. But since they needed his help, saying a few good words wouldn't hurt.

"Fellow Daoist, you can retract your wonderful technique and only display it when needed," he suggested, mainly because the Blood Sea's cover was somewhat uncomfortable, though since the Blood Race was on their side, there was no worry about any harm coming to them.

"No problem," Lu Ye replied while swiftly condensing his doppelganger and unsheathing the Boulder Mountain Saber at his waist, then disappearing from the spot.

Amidst the sea of red, a sharp blade light flashed by, accompanied by the eruption of violent spirit force and a sharp, brief cry of alarm.

"What happened?" an Insect Race cultivator shouted, but there was no response. Another brief scream rang out, which the other Insect Race cultivators clearly felt. With the emergence of that sound, it was obvious that a life was extinguished.

"Enemy attack!" the shout resonated, and the core space of the insect hive was suddenly a chaotic scene, with the Blood Sea surging and flashes of blades and swords continuously erupting, the situation a complete mess.

What frustrated the Insect Race cultivators was that they had no idea where the attack came from. Without a sense of the attack's origin, there was no way to defend against it.

An Insect Race cultivator shouted, "Rally to me!"

With the situation unclear, it was unwise to spread out. Gathering together was the only way to have enough power to counterattack. However, when the other Insect Race cultivators tried to move, they were shocked to find that the Blood Sea had become extremely viscous, and there was a vague confinement force holding them in place, making their movements exceptionally difficult.

"Fellow Daoist of the Blood Race, what is the meaning of this?"

If they couldn't discern who was manipulating things in the dark by now, they were unworthy of being considered talents of their home world. The Insect Race cultivators couldn't understand why, despite being natural allies and having some agreements already, this Blood Race individual would come here to attack them.

The binding and obstruction of the Blood Sea were the most obvious evidence!

Lu Ye remained indifferent, utilizing Void Spirit Runes to move stealthily through the Blood Sea, continuously constructing numerous Formations within the Blood Sea to entrap his foes. With the efforts of his true self and doppelganger combined, he systematically targeted and eliminated the Insect Race cultivators.

Chapter 1265 - Who Are You Calling Trash?

Having had the experience of contending with the Loathesome Aphid from the Insect Emperor World, Lu Ye naturally knew that the individual strength of these elite Insect Race cultivators was very strong, far beyond that of the large insects with little spiritual intelligence, especially their innate bone carapace, which provided extremely tough protection.

But when he actually engaged them in battle, he found that the strength of these Insect Race cultivators was significantly inferior to Loathesome Aphid, making the killing much smoother than he had anticipated.

On reflection, the Insect Emperor World is a top-tier domain, and the Loathesome Aphid from there must be an elite among the Insect Race, so it's natural that Insect Race cultivators from other domains would be somewhat inferior by comparison.

In any case, the progress was very smooth. Lu Ye was originally considering how to spread his Blood Sea without arousing the suspicion of the Insect Race, but unexpectedly they feared "partial strength," so he could only reluctantly demonstrate.

This demonstration resulted in the death of several Insect Race cultivators.

In the great battle, under the manipulation and control of several Insect Race cultivators, those Insect Race bodyguards kept charging through the Blood Sea, searching for Lu Ye's whereabouts, obviously trying to pressure him, but it was completely ineffective.

Once several Insect Race cultivators were slain, these Insect Race bodyguards became like headless flies. Despite their great numbers, for Lu Ye, taking them down was just a matter of time.

One incense stick's time later, the chaos subsided, the turbulent Blood Sea gathered, leaving only Lu Ye standing in the vast core space of the insect hive, even his doppelganger was retrieved by him once again.

Casually cleaning up the battlefield, he set the corpses of the Insect Race ablaze.

Lu Ye silently descended and sat cross-legged to recover.

While recovering and resting outside, one had to worry about being ambushed, but here there was no need to worry, as no one in their right mind would dare to run into the Insect Race's insect hive to cause trouble.

The Insect Race themselves probably didn't expect that anyone would dare to storm in and massacre them single-handedly. Mainly, there had been an agreement between the Insect Race and Blood Race's powerhouses earlier, and Lu Ye's cover with a layer of Blood Cloud was terribly deceptive, who could know that the one hiding inside the Blood Cloud was not some Blood Race but rather a malicious human?

While Lu Ye was recovering here, on the Baiyu Platform, expressions among the strong of the Insect Race began to grow solemn!

Because they chose a different strategy than the Blood Race, the names of Insect Race prodigies remained on the left pillar, because they had no achievements, naturally, they couldn't break into the top hundred ranks.

However, as long as the names remained, it meant they were still alive. In the contest of the Divine Sea, surviving was the most important thing, because even without any achievements, one could still enjoy the fruits of victory if they survived to the end.

Since the Taichu Realm opened two months ago, none of the Insect Race's prodigies had died, but just now, several suddenly died, causing the strong of the Insect Race to be shocked!

They couldn't understand how anyone could manage to storm into the Insect Race's insect hive and massacre under the set strategy!

Soon they locked onto a name.

Nine Heavens World, Lu Yiye!

Although they couldn't know specifically what happened inside the Taichu Realm, before and after the deaths of these Insect Race cultivators, the rank of Lu Yiye from Nine Heavens World once again skyrocketed, and it was a fact he climbed to the top again!

The Blood Race had determined their cultivators died at Lu Yiye's hands through such changes before. They even speculated that Lu Yiye had some method to specifically counter the Blood Race cultivators, otherwise, how could he repeatedly slaughter Blood Race cultivators?

By stepping over the bones of those Blood Race cultivators, Lu Yiye was able to top the list, overshadowing all giants; his top position was built on the lives and blood of Blood Race cultivators.

Initially, over this period, Lu Yiye's rank had already fallen somewhat, with Gu Yulou from Yellow Dragon World and Youping from Northern Underworld Land of Specters surpassing him, but just now, this guy actually surpassed the two before him and climbed to first place again!

The expressions of the strong Insect Race were extremely grave, initially feeling some schadenfreude from the Blood Race's total annihilation, but since it hadn't happened to them, they couldn't deeply feel it.

Only now... the strong of the Insect Race truly experienced the previous feelings of the Blood Race's powerhouses.

What on earth was with this Lu Yiye? If it were said he had a method to counter the Blood Race, it might be plausible, but surely he couldn't have a method to counter the Insect Race too?

Several Insect Race cultivators had set up an insect hive, there was no reason for it to be destroyed by just one person, such a thing shouldn't happen at the level of the Divine Sea Realm.

Could it merely be a coincidence? Or was something unexpected happening within the Taichu Realm?

However, a day later, this faint hope was shattered.

Because within an extremely short time, several names of Insect Race cultivators disappeared again from the left pillar of the Taichu Realm's portal!

With the Divine Sea contest underway until now, there weren't many names on the left pillar, any noticeable change would attract attention from those concerned.

The disappearance of several Insect Race prodigies' names yesterday had already attracted the attention of many powerhouses, and unexpectedly, it happened again today.

There was no doubt that it was Lu Yiye of the Nine Heavens World behind this, because if it were someone else, there would have been a slight rise in the rankings with such results, but looking at the top hundred list, the changes in rank were minimal.

There is only one possibility for this — the person who acted was ranked first from the beginning, so naturally there would be no change.

The Blood Race's previous strategy was loathed by the powerhouses of various domains, so when the Blood Race prodigies were killed one after another, until the entire army was wiped out, countless domain powerhouses clapped and cheered, secretly gloating.

Now it was the Insect Race's turn, and it was no exception.

These two major races had always been notorious in the stellar space, and now meeting such an end really was gratifying.

Powerhouses from all domains became increasingly curious about Lu Yiye of the Nine Heavens World. They thought a cultivator at Divine Sea Level 8 entering the Taichu Realm would struggle to survive, not lasting long; yet observing his actions, first annihilating the Blood Race, and then turning to the Insect Race, wiping out their prodigies in droves — what kind of method was this?

Another day passed, and the faces of the Insect Race powerhouses were as dark as the bottom of a pot, because yet again, some Insect Race prodigies had died, in other words, another insect hive was destroyed!

In the Insect Race's strategy, there were only four hives in total, and now three had been destroyed successively, leaving only one solitary hive, its endurance unknown.

A group of Insect Race powerhouses wore expressions of earnest disappointment, eager to rush into the Taichu Realm right now to see what was happening inside, why with the advantage of position and numbers, they were bullied by a mere Divine Sea Level 8 like this.

Derisive and gloating gazes from all directions enraged the Insect Race powerhouses, but in such a setting, losing their temper wasn't an option, leading them to comfort themselves that at least there was the Blood Race as their unfortunate brethren, and unlike them, they still had one surviving hive...

In the Taichu Realm, Lu Ye continued collecting herbs while searching for insect hives.

The insect hives were actually not hard to find; the main bodies standing outside were the best guide. When the Insect Race cultivators built the hives here, they didn't think to hide them particularly well.

Because they knew generally speaking, as long as one's mind was functioning properly, discovering a hive wouldn't lead to a rash intrusion, which would only lead to an ambush by Insect Race bodyguards and cultivators.

Three of the four hives had already been dealt with, all using the same tactic, disguising himself as a Blood Race, sneaking into the hive interior, and then unleashing the Blood Sea to massacre.

With only one left, he was in no rush, as it was something he could do while gathering herbs.

Intense spirit force fluctuations came from upfront; obviously, a battle was happening.

Though the number of people surviving was getting smaller, the area one could move in was shrinking too, which increased the chances of encountering others, leading occasionally to such ongoing battles between two sides.

However, under normal circumstances, Lu Ye would walk away without getting involved.

Before entering the Taichu Realm, Yang Qing encouraged him to contend where possible and set a relatively high target for him, but over time, Lu Ye felt his achievements were adequate, likely enough to secure him a decent ranking, so unless someone showed hostility first, he generally wouldn't initiate trouble.

But this time, Lu Ye found himself unable to avoid it because he sensed a somewhat familiar aura from the direction of the conflict.

Feeling rather intrigued, a streak of light rushed swiftly towards him, appearing extremely flustered and distressed, vaguely enclosing a graceful and exquisite figure.

Upon closer inspection, he indeed saw a charming and flamboyant face; who else could it be but Yuk Yaorao of the Jiuxuan World?

What a coincidence, Lu Ye hadn't expected to encounter her here.

Her current situation was clearly bad, her aura faint, clearly heavily injured, with Ding You and Zhao Yunliu, who were with her, nowhere in sight, their whereabouts unknown.

Behind her trailed two more silhouettes, fiercely pursuing without end!

When Lu Ye noticed her, she also saw Lu Ye's figure, briefly stunned, then immediately veered off to the side.

Such an action clearly was not to prevent Lu Ye from blocking her way but rather to consciously avoid him, to avoid bringing trouble to him; otherwise, if she rushed directly towards Lu Ye, whether he was willing or not, he would be dragged into the conflict.

Her kind thought proved futile in the end.

Of the two cultivators chasing her, one switched direction to continue chasing Yuk Yaorao, while the other charged straight at Lu Ye, laughing, "Why, another worthless Level 8?"

As he spoke, he was about to unleash the power of a spirit treasure before him to casually dispose of the suddenly appearing trash.

However, before he could truly make a move, a weapon attack came his way, followed by a blur as the figure ahead unexpectedly disappeared.

Vaguely, a sharp blade light swept past, accompanied by the metallic sound of a long blade being drawn, and in the next instant, a chilling voice reverberated behind his ears, "Who did you call trash?"

Chapter 1266 - Courtesy Demands Reciprocity

While fleeing, Yuk Yaorao discovered Lu Ye's presence and had the fleeting thought of seeking his help, but that thought was quickly dismissed.

Firstly, she didn't have any deep connections with Lu Ye to justify asking for his assistance in her predicament.

Secondly, even if she did swallow her pride to ask for help, whether he was willing to assist was uncertain.

Even if Lu Ye was willing to help her, whether he could contend with these two pursuers was another issue.

She knew Lu Ye's strength wasn't weak, she had even thought about recruiting him before the treasure gourd matured. However, in the Divine Sea struggle up to now, which one of those still alive was weak? She herself was severely injured and could offer little assistance. Dragging Lu Ye into this conflict would only cause him trouble, so after a brief consideration, she changed direction and continued her escape.

One of the two pursuers behind her split off to deal with Lu Ye, and Yuk Yaorao could feel it, feeling somewhat apologetic in her heart, though it wasn't her intention, she had inevitably dragged him into this.

Just as she was contemplating whether to turn back and cooperate with Lu Yiye for a desperate fight, a violent wave of spirit force suddenly erupted from behind, followed closely by a sudden scream.

Yuk Yaorao was startled. She was all too familiar with this kind of abrupt scream, usually made by cultivators at the brink of death.

Sure enough, along with the scream, there was a palpable sound of a life's end.

Who was it?

In the panic of escape, Yuk Yaorao didn't even have the time to turn back and look, because once she looked back, her fleeing speed would inevitably be delayed.

But the subsequent commotion from behind made her curiosity unbearable, and she quickly turned her head to look, what she saw made her freeze in place!

The pursuer behind her was now engaged in a fierce fight, their spirit weapons clashing with clanging sounds, sparks flying.

And the one fighting this pursuer was indeed that Lu Yiye from the Nine Heavens World, while the other pursuer that had gone after Lu Yiye earlier was nowhere to be seen.

Thinking back to the earlier scream and the life's end, Yuk Yaorao immediately realized the pursuer's fate.

She slowly stopped moving, staring in stunned disbelief, because she was shocked to find that the seemingly intense battle was actually one-sided, and rather than being an entanglement between two equals, it was an outright suppression.

Lu Yiye had taken the absolute upper hand! With nimble movements and a long blade swinging down, the pursuing combat cultivator could only defend against Lu Yiye's storm-like attacks.

This fellow who was so arrogant when pursuing her with another now was utterly pitiful and miserable.

Yuk Yaorao couldn't help but be entranced. She had been part of the Divine Sea struggle for over two months, witnessing countless clashes among prodigies of various realms, and had personally battled against others as well. However, even when one side held an advantage, it was rarely substantial, and it was hard to see anyone with an overwhelming upper hand.

Especially at this stage, those who survived were the elite of the elite, and no cultivator was easy to deal with.

So when she saw the situation in the battlefield clearly, she couldn't help but feel a sense of unreality.

This was simply a beatdown, like an adult handling a child. Both were combat cultivators, yet the pursuer lagged far behind Lu Yiye in terms of strength, speed, spirit force explosion, and combat experience. It was the nexus of all these factors that placed him at a complete disadvantage.

This guy... is he really that strong?

Yuk Yaorao always knew he was formidable, but she never imagined he could be this strong. Even Zhao Yunliu paled in comparison.

To have such strength at Divine Sea Level 8, what kind of scene would it be if he ascended to Level 9? Yuk Yaorao couldn't imagine. Having spent some time with Zhao Yunliu, she thought she had seen the level of power from a top domain's prodigy, but she now realized that her perceptions had been very limited. In this world, there's always someone better.

The tense and fearful emotions slightly relaxed; she knew this calamity was over.

The breath she'd been holding fell away, and she could no longer stay conscious. Her vision went black, and she plummeted straight down from midair.

Falling with her was the corpse of the second pursuer, but unfortunately, Yuk Yaorao didn't see it.

Before she hit the ground, Lu Ye had already flown over, enveloped her with a surge of spirit force, and upon scanning her with his mental consciousness, he noticed her severe injuries. He had no idea what she had encountered earlier, nor where her two companions had gone.

Gazing at the unconscious Yuk Yaorao, Lu Ye frowned, feeling that he had a tricky situation on his hands.

It's not quite appropriate to leave it alone, after all, we are not complete strangers with no intersection. Whether in the Fairy Tree World or earlier at the Creation Vine, Yuk Yaorao has enlightened him quite a bit, which can be considered a favor. Having received a personal favor, naturally, one should think of ways to return it.

If she is left unchecked in such a state and discovered by someone, she will surely meet a tragic end, especially since this woman possesses extreme allure and charm. Should she encounter someone with ill intentions, she might suffer a fate worse than death.

Yet carrying an unconscious person in the Taichu Realm is somewhat inconvenient.

After a brief consideration, he could only take her temporarily and discuss it further once she awakened.

Yuk Yaorao's injuries were far more serious than Lu Ye imagined. After being wounded, this woman seemed to have experienced several battles, causing damage to her vital energy, so her recovery was exceptionally slow.

Lu Ye knew next to nothing about the way of healing cultivators and naturally couldn't provide effective medical treatment, at most feeding her a few healing pills.

After being unconscious for several days, Yuk Yaorao slowly awakened.

Upon opening her eyes, she seemed quite bewildered but quickly recalled various occurrences before her coma, swiftly getting up and vigilant against all directions with spirit force ready to erupt, extremely cautious.

Then she saw Lu Ye sitting not far away, looking lost in thought.

Noticing the movement, Lu Ye leisurely turned to glance at her, nodded slightly, did not say a word, and continued his contemplation.

Seeing him like this, Yuk Yaorao let out a sigh of relief, checked her condition slightly, finding her injuries still severe but in recovery. Her mouth still carried the taste of healing pills, seemingly fed to her while unconscious.

Her clothing was intact with no signs of being undressed, and her body showed no abnormalities anywhere, causing a slight embarrassment as she secretly scolded herself for using the heart of a villain to suspect a gentleman. But as a woman, especially one as beautiful as she is, such self-check is indeed the first thing to do upon waking from unconsciousness, which is understandable.

Such actions made her inevitably feel weakness from inside out, even making her complexion pale, as she lightly coughed and said: "Thanks to Junior Brother Lu for the previous situation. Without your rescuing, I fear I wouldn't have survived. I am immensely grateful."

Lu Ye waved his hand: "Senior Sister Yuk exaggerates. I've also received many kindnesses from Senior Sister before, let's just see it as mutual courtesy."

"It's different." Yuk Yaorao shook her head. She hardly owed any kindness to Lu Ye other than answering some questions, but Lu Ye indeed saved her life. Back in that situation, without Lu Ye's intervention, she would definitely have no chance of survival. And although Lu Ye might not care about this, she cannot ignore it, as it concerns principles, kindness must be remembered, as for how to repay...she doesn't know, certainly not in this place with a pledge, which would belittle herself and others.

She still wanted to say more, but Lu Ye didn't want to linger on the matter. To him, it was just a trivial effort, plus he gained two unexpected rewards.

"What about those two companions of yours?" Lu Ye asked.

Yuk Yaorao's eyes slightly darkened, sighed, and said: "Fellow Daoist Ding died in battle, and Fellow Daoist Zhao got separated from me. I don't know his whereabouts, nor whether he's alive."

Even though their trio was not weak, even though Zhao Yunliu hailed from a top domain as a prodigy, it was still tough going in the Taichu Realm. Previously, their trio encountered another team, unfortunately led by someone whose domain had unresolved grievances with the Dominant Star, naturally leading to a fierce battle.

In the heated battle, Ding You was struck down, she got separated from Zhao Yunliu, later pursued with nowhere to go, and then met Lu Ye.

This is indeed a microcosm of the current environment within the Taichu Realm; at this stage, even the prodigies from top domains cannot guarantee they will laugh to the end.

Reflecting on it now, amidst heartache, Yuk Yaorao felt deeply regrettable. She had intended to recruit Lu Ye at the Creation Vine but was obstructed by Zhao Yunliu.

Looking back now, if she had succeeded in recruiting Lu Ye, given the strength he exhibited previously, their group of four would not have been so fragmented with casualties and wounds.

But during such circumstances, Zhao Yunliu had his own considerations, as members of the same team, Yuk Yaorao couldn't possibly oppose him.

Unfortunately now, such regret has no meaning, given outcomes, it can only be said to be bad luck.

Saying this much, Yuk Yaorao gasped for breath, clearly exceedingly weak physically.

Lu Ye said: "What plans does Senior Sister have next?"

In his view, Yuk Yaorao's best choice now was to leave the Taichu Realm. Her injuries required time to heal, during which she couldn't exert her full strength. Now within the Taichu Realm, the activity scope was becoming increasingly smaller; encountering an enemy in her current state she would be at their mercy.

The reward for victory is indeed enticing, sought after by every Divine Sea Realm cultivator, but relatively speaking, life is most important. As the saying goes, keep the green hills; they won't fear lacking firewood.

Chapter 1267 - Far Ahead of the Pack

Moreover, even if one withdraws from the Taichu Realm, it does not mean the path to ascend to the Constellation is cut off. For these prodigies from large domains, the road to ascend to Constellation has always been there, and opportunities abound. It's not necessary to fight for that one chance within the Taichu Realm.

The Shenhai Competition has been ongoing for more than two months. It's unclear how many have died in battle, but there are certainly some who have voluntarily quit.

Of course, these are just Lu Ye's considerations. How Yuk Yaorao will consider things is her own business.

Lu Ye estimates the opponent won't withdraw so easily.

For prodigies from various domains, those still persisting in the Shenhai Competition within the Taichu Realm have motives not solely for the final winning opportunity; it's more likely for their own tempering.

As expected, Yuk Yaorao spoke, "Let me rest for a few days first... Junior Brother Lu, don't worry. I won't be a burden to you. Once I recover slightly, I'll leave here." Previously, when she was with Zhao Yunliu and Ding You, she was willing to gather Lu Ye, but under the current circumstances, it's not suitable to act together, lest she becomes a burden.

The kindness of saving her life cannot be repaid yet, so how could she drag others down?

Lu Ye remained silent. He wasn't worried about Yuk Yaorao being a burden to him; he was instead worried that he might implicate Yuk Yaorao.

This woman had been in a coma and hadn't awakened, so she didn't know the situation in the Taichu Realm had changed again.

Of the three-month period, only the last twenty days remain, and the Reincarnation Tree's insight arrived with the tremor of heaven and earth half an hour ago.

Yang Qing had previously informed him about this, and Lu Ye had been waiting for this moment because he really wanted to know what rank his achievements over this long time would give him, as this would determine his subsequent actions.

Even though he had expectations, when that cryptic insight arrived, Lu Ye couldn't help but be surprised because his name was at the top!

Nine Heavens World, Lu Yiye, two hundred and eight!

Lu Ye was not surprised by this rank; he knew his rank wouldn't be too low. Being at the top wasn't impossible, but he was surprised at the number.

Two hundred and eight, without a doubt, is the number of enemies he has slain recently, but this number is clearly unreasonable.

Unless... when he was eliminating insect hives, the Insect Race bodyguards he killed were also counted!

He has destroyed three insect hives in succession, aside from killing the dozen or so Insect Race cultivators hiding within, he didn't spare the Insect Race bodyguards either, eradicating every one of them. Each insect hive had dozens of Insect Race bodyguards. If these Insect Race bodyguards are included, it's possible to reach over two hundred achievements!

Looking at it now, only this possibility exists, but Insect Race bodyguards are concocted by Insect Race cultivators within the insect hives, not considered as participants in the Shenhai Competition. Would killing them count too?

No one has told him this. In fact, no one has ever done such a thing before, so there is no precedent to follow.

But upon closer inspection, the Insect Race bodyguards are not weak in strength, and they gather in the core of the insect hive, directed and maneuvered by Insect Race cultivators. An ordinary cultivator wouldn't gain any advantage against them. In such an environment, killing Insect Race bodyguards counts as achievements, seemingly without any unjustification.

The rules of the Shenhai Competition are set by the Reincarnation Tree. If it thinks it's reasonable and counts as achievement numbers, probably no one can argue.

But now, Lu Ye's achievements seem somewhat astonishing.

Looking at the second-ranked achievement of Gu Yulou from Yellow Dragon World, it's merely fifty-three.

The third-ranked achievement of Youping from Northern Underworld Land of Specters is just forty-nine...

In comparison, the number two hundred and eight is simply unrivaled, leaving others far behind.

Lu Ye doesn't know what kind of commotion arose among the surviving cultivators within the Taichu Realm when the Reincarnation Tree's insight arrived, but the gap in the number of achievements is undoubtedly despairing to all who aspire to be number one. The number two hundred and eight is destined to be an insurmountable mountain.

Only twenty names are revealed in the insight, the top ten and the last ten. When cultivators immerse their minds to probe a particular name, they will immediately know this person's location and roughly judge the distance from themselves.

This change in insight was originally made by the Reincarnation Tree to prevent someone from taking advantage by hiding using special Secret Techniques until the end to reap rewards without effort.

Lu Ye doesn't know what impact this insight will have on others, but for himself, it certainly will not be beneficial.

Not to mention anything else, just consider those other guys ranked in the top ten; every one of them is from top domains, all renowned, famous throughout the stellar space. Only Lu Ye's Nine Heavens World is obscure. Even though the number two hundred and eight is intimidating, there will probably be someone who can't resist wanting to test his mettle.

Therefore, with the insight from the Reincarnation Tree's arrival, whether Lu Ye likes it or not, he will instantly become the most conspicuous target.

Additionally, for the few cultivators ranked high, they certainly hope to climb to number one for the greatest benefits. Originally, they could achieve this by killing enemies and continually accumulating achievements to surpass their opponent, but now the gap is so large. The number two hundred and eight is a bit excessive and cannot be easily surpassed, leaving them only one choice — to eliminate the one ranked first.

As long as Lu Ye is taken out, then even if he has two hundred and eight kills, it would be meaningless compared to two thousand and eight.

So Lu Ye could fully anticipate that at this very moment, there were undoubtedly many people probing his location, and some had even started converging towards him from all directions, and definitely not just one!

He also considered whether he should relocate.

The insight from the Reincarnation Tree doesn't last perpetually; it would persist for about one incense stick's time, then vanish, only to have new insights descend after a while, continuing in such cycles.

Therefore, if Lu Ye moved promptly, he still had hope of avoiding those who came to trouble him.

But in such matters, escaping this time doesn't mean escape next time. So after a brief contemplation, Lu Ye simply decided to stay put.

Whatever comes, let it come. With twenty days left until the end of the Divine Sea struggle, having such an opportunity to temper himself at the last moment isn't bad after all!

While Lu Ye was contemplating this, Yuk Yaorao was quietly recovering nearby, without disturbing each other.

Until a certain moment, Yuk Yaorao suddenly felt a surge of violent spirit force, followed by the ringing sound of a long knife being drawn. Instantly, a spiritual force tempest whipped up like a whirlwind, making her clothes flap fiercely.

As she hurriedly looked up, she was astonished to find that Lu Ye had already sheathed his knife and was still sitting there peacefully. But not far behind him, an unexpectedly short figure had appeared at some point. This silhouette was now wide-eyed, clutching its throat, staggering backward, before it could retreat a few steps it fell to its knees with a thud, and toppled straight down, the ground beneath soon dyed a shocking red with blood.

Yuk Yaorao was shocked to realize that someone had attempted to assassinate Lu Ye, only to be slain by him instead.

What startled her even more was that she hadn't detected anyone approaching before Lu Ye made his move, which undoubtedly related to her current poor state and dull senses, yet it also showcased the other's masterful concealment techniques.

This was undoubtedly a ghost cultivator with remarkable prowess.

Although she had witnessed Lu Ye's deadly techniques once before, seeing it again still left her with a surreal feeling.

In the past, when she traveled with Zhao Yunliu and others, any kill they achieved often came after grueling battles, gradually turning the tide before amassing a winning edge. Yet for Lu Ye, killing a person seemed as easy as slaughtering a chicken!

It's worth knowing that the cultivators entering the Taichu Realm are the top generation of the Divine Sea Realm from every domain, and even if ghost cultivators are not skilled in close combat after their presence is exposed, they shouldn't be so easily slain.

Yuk Yaorao realized that she might have underestimated Junior Brother Lu's capabilities.

However, there was one thing she couldn't understand—why would this ghost cultivator attack Junior Brother Lu? It seemed more logical to attack her instead. Clearly, anyone could see that she was in a bad state, making her the perfect target for an ambush.

She couldn't figure it out. The man was dead, after all, so there was no way to ask him.

The smell of blood hung in the air, and Yuk Yaorao forced herself to move toward the corpse.

Lu Ye looked up at her, "Senior Sister Yuk, what are you doing?"

"To deal with the corpse. Some folks have sharp noses, and the scent of blood might draw their attention," Yuk Yaorao explained, panting.

"No need for that trouble; Senior Sister just rest," he replied.

Upon hearing this, Yuk Yaorao did not insist and sat back down quietly.

In no time, she suddenly looked up in a certain direction, with a grave expression: "Junior Brother Lu, I think something is coming for us."

Lu Ye nodded, "I see it."

In that direction, demon Qi surged to the skies, demon clouds rolled, linking heaven and earth, creating an awe-inspiring sight.

A massive demon cloud stopped at less than three miles from Lu Ye, and within it, a powerful and savage aura pervaded. Inside, sounds of beast roars and wolf howls echoed, shortly after a gigantic head poked out from the demon cloud.

Judging by its appearance, it was clearly a wolf head, menacing and terrifying.

That wolf head looked down at Lu Ye condescendingly, its wolf eyes filled with cold and venomous intent, making them intimidating to behold. Then the wolf head spoke, its voice booming like thunder, "Are you Lu Yiye of the Nine Heavens World?"

Lu Ye looked up, squinting at the wolf head, remaining silent.

Instead, Yuk Yaorao appeared slightly nervous, secretly transmitting to Lu Ye: "Junior Brother Lu, be careful, this is likely from the Celestial Wolf clan of the Demon Race, probably attracted by the scent of blood, their Demon Origin is peculiar and has maddening effects, if you must fight it, do not come into contact with its Demon Origin."

Chapter 1268 - Bao Shi

As Yuk Yaorao finished speaking, the ground suddenly trembled, and amid the swirling airwaves, Lu Ye's figure was seen soaring into the sky, directly crashing into the enormous demon cloud.

"This..." Yuk Yaorao was stunned. She had clearly warned Lu Ye to be cautious of the opponent's sinister Demon Origin, but Lu Ye obviously didn't take it to heart. It was unclear whether he was overconfident or arrogant.

But Yuk Yaorao quickly realized it wasn't arrogance, because fierce sounds of a battle soon emanated from within the demon cloud. Initially, the Cerulean Wolf Race's roars were full of power and might, but in just three breaths, they turned into exclamations and low cries, followed by mournful wails.

A few breaths later, the vast demon cloud dispersed with a bang, leaving a figure standing in mid-air, holding a knife in one hand and a giant wolf head in the other. The wolf's eyes were wide open, brimming with terror, displaying a look of death with unclosed eyes.

Drip, drip, fresh blood trickled down from the wound, the sound was light yet struck Yuk Yaorao's heart like a heavy hammer.

Lu Ye flew back, casually tossing the wolf head aside, his expression unchanged, as though he'd merely picked a wild flower instead of severing a wolf head.

Yuk Yaorao's heart was shaken. Such swift and efficient killing, no matter how many times witnessed, was hard to adapt to. Originally, she had some confidence in her own abilities, having repeatedly proven her skills alongside Zhao Yunliu and Ding You, but now she realized that in front of a true prodigy, someone like her from the home world domain was no different from an ordinary Divine Sea Realm cultivator.

Zhao Yunliu came from the top-tier Dominant Star domain, and even in this cohort entering the Taichu Realm, he was considered impressive, yet compared to Junior Brother Lu before her, there was still a significant gap.

Yuk Yaorao gradually realized that the problem wasn't the cultivation level of this Divine Sea Level 8 Junior Brother Lu, who might become the most dazzling star within Taichu Realm, and anyone who underestimated him due to his cultivation level was bound to pay a very heavy price.

She needed to accelerate her recovery speed. Junior Brother Lu clearly remained to care for her injuries, but she couldn't keep him here indefinitely. She needed to recover quickly, then leave, to avoid becoming a burden to him.

With this thought in mind, Yuk Yaorao swallowed a precious healing pill, silently refining it.

But she quickly realized things were becoming problematic, because less than two hours after Lu Ye killed the Celestial Wolf Race cultivator, someone else came looking for trouble. After a brief and intense confrontation, they were unsurprisingly slain by Junior Brother Lu.

Afterwards, people kept coming from various directions at intervals, engaging in battle with Junior Brother Lu, but regardless of their race or domain of origin, without exception, they either died or were injured.

Quick-reacting ones would escape after a few moves to preserve their lives, while slower ones, if the encounter dragged on beyond ten breaths, had virtually no path to survival.

Beside their resting place, more and more corpses with oozing blood accumulated, and in just under two days, as many as seven or eight bodies lay sprawled here.

Yuk Yaorao didn't know whether it was intentional or accidental on Junior Brother Lu's part, but those slain cultivators' bodies were placed neatly to the side, making it clear for anyone arriving.

This was undoubtedly a form of deterrence, a warning.

After two days of recuperation, Yuk Yaorao's injuries had recovered significantly. Originally, she planned to leave Lu Ye and act independently, but the development of the situation over the two days made it impossible for her to leave.

Because she could clearly perceive lurking presences from all directions.

In other words, her and Lu Ye's location had already been surrounded! The seven or eight corpses lying on the ground provided strong enough deterrence and awe, so no one dared to act rashly for fear of repeating those people's mistakes.

Why is this happening? Yuk Yaorao couldn't understand, but she knew she had definitely overlooked something; otherwise, these scattered demonic cultivators wouldn't have gathered here, and those previously slain by Lu Ye had all specifically sought him out.

Yuk Yaorao soon realized what she had missed when the Reincarnation Tree's second revelation came.

A large chunk of information appeared in her mind out of nowhere, containing twenty names, including the names of the top ten and the last ten ranked individuals at the current stage.

The one ranked first was unmistakably Lu Yiye from the Nine Heavens World, with the dizzying number two hundred and sixteen next to the name.

Two hundred and sixteen! On its own, the number meant nothing, but it signified the cultivators' harvests in Taichu Realm; each increase in number represented the bloody accumulation of a domain's demonic prodigy.

The haul Yuk Yaorao herself achieved so far was merely four, which is practically nothing compared to the two hundred and sixteen.

How... did this come to be?

Yuk Yaorao stared in a daze at Lu Ye not far away, utterly unable to comprehend how such a seemingly reticent young man, lacking any particularly compelling aura, could have killed so many people!

Finally, she understood why everyone had come over here; the revelation from the Reincarnation Tree must have descended once, and the two hundred plus haul was truly extraordinary. Coupled with the low profile of Junior Brother Lu from the Nine Heavens World, it naturally drew people's attention.

Some, confident in their strength, came thinking they could trample over him to rise. Others were driven by curiosity to watch the excitement, thus turning this place into a gathering center for cultivators.

"Junior Brother Lu..." Yuk Yaorao couldn't help gently calling out, having many things she wanted to ask but at a loss where to start, couldn't possibly ask about the matter of Lu Ye's more than two hundred haul.

Lu Ye probably guessed her thoughts and gave no explanation. Since the Reincarnation Tree counted the insect race bodyguards as his haul, it was rightly his. There was another insect hive; if anyone was dissatisfied, they were free to try to remove it.

"Senior Sister Yuk, you'd better stay here."

If it were earlier, Yuk Yaorao leaving wouldn't matter much. Even though her injuries hadn't healed, she still had some strength left and wouldn't be powerless in the face of danger. But under the current situation, she was no longer fit to leave. Now, cultivators concealed in unknown numbers in all directions were watching Yuk Yaorao with Lu Ye. If she left at this moment, she'd easily become a target. In her current state, she couldn't withstand too many attacks.

Lu Ye could roughly guess the mentality of the cultivators hidden around.

Perhaps not all were here to give him trouble; many might just be here for the spectacle. After all, his haul was astonishing, and anyone would want to see if he had three heads and six arms.

But simply watching the spectacle, doesn't mean they wouldn't hit someone when they're down. The current situation being temporarily stable is due to the precedent set here. The seven or eight bloody corpses on the ground undoubtedly formed an enormous visual impact and deterrence. Those intending to give him trouble needed to weigh whether they're stronger than the deceased.

The current situation maintained a strange balance. Those intending to test his mettle didn't dare act rashly, those watching were waiting for others to make the first move, and so overall, the situation appeared calm.

Yet such calm would inevitably be broken. Lu Ye didn't believe he could remain at ease until the Taichu Realm closed. Not to mention others, among those ranked ahead, there must be individuals seeking to claim the first spot. These true formidable figures among them aimed for the top spot would need to bring him down.

Lu Ye was waiting, waiting for a truly formidable opponent. Only then could problems be resolved once and for all; otherwise, those with malicious intentions lurking around wouldn't disperse easily.

During such waiting, the earth suddenly began to tremble lightly. Initially, the tremors weren't evident, but as time passed, they became increasingly clear, as if some monstrous being were advancing step by step towards this place.

Lu Ye raised his gaze, looking towards the source of the sound, indeed catching sight of a bulky figure approaching unhurriedly.

That figure appeared abnormally burly, even more than Lu Ye donned upon the Dragon Throne, and might not be as tall. The approaching figure was bare-chested, with only simple beast skin wrapped around his lower body. His skin gleamed with a bronze hue, with blood and flesh distinctly outlined, resembling a heap of rocks when viewed at a glance rather than flesh.

His body seemed incredibly heavy, as each step left deep imprints on the ground, causing the earth to tremble lightly.

Yuk Yaorao's voice sounded by his ear, exuding some gravity: "It's the Stone Race, should be Bao Shi!"

Lu Ye nodded slightly, recognizing the approaching individual—not because they had met before, but because in the Reincarnation Tree's revelation, Bao Shi from the Five Colors Territory was ranked seventh.

Lu Ye wasn't sure if the Five Colors Territory was a top domain, but being ranked seventh in this Divine Sea contention meant Bao Shi wasn't comparable to the cultivators he'd encountered before. Indeed, Lu Ye felt some pressure from the other's aura.

Lu Ye discovered he'd made some mistakes.

He initially thought those most likely to come for him would be from the Yellow Dragon World's Gu Yulou or the Northern Underworld Land of Specters' Youping. Because if these two were determined to claim the top spot, they'd have to find a way to eliminate him. As for others... even if they sought trouble, it wouldn't amount to much, since even if they luckily eliminated him, it would only raise their rank by one, without substantial benefit.

He'd been waiting for those ranked behind him, but hadn't encountered them, instead facing Bao Shi ranked seventh...

Chapter 1269 - The Unbeatable Physique

Lu Ye suddenly realized that for these top-tier rivals, such opportunities to confront each other are rare, and missing this one would mean there won't be another chance. Before the Reincarnation Tree's revelation came, they couldn't accurately find each other's positions, but after the revelation, they could follow its signs to explore, making confrontation between top-tier rivals possible.

Their aim might not necessarily be to kill the opponent; it's highly likely they simply want to engage in a duel to see where they stand compared to others.

In this case, Lu Ye, who has impressive achievements at the top of the list, has become the best touchstone and the most suitable target. No matter what the actual strength of other high-ranked individuals is, the background of their strong domains is there, making them not so easy to provoke.

Bao Shi should have come with such a mindset, which is why he didn't bother concealing his presence, walking over openly.

Of course, it might also be due to his lack of skill in concealment.

He is not the first, nor will he be the last.

Under Yuk Yaorao's tense attention, Lu Ye slowly rises, with his long saber resting in front, both hands overlapped on the saber's handle, waiting silently.

The earth continues to tremble slightly with each footfall, and the atmosphere in the air turns somber and murderous. A clear sense is felt that the lurking presences around are starting to retreat.

For the cultivators hidden around, such a scene is also what they anticipate. They have gathered here for various reasons, and apart from a few who have witnessed Lu Ye's methods of killing enemies, the others have no idea what kind of foundation this temporary top from the Nine Heavens World possesses. Even those who have seen Lu Ye kill enemies haven't really seen clearly, because Lu Ye's speed in killing was too fast, almost to a level of complete crushing each time, with such a demeanor of easily slaying invaders, it easily gives rise to the illusion that "If it were me, I could do it too."

Lu Ye is waiting for a worthy opponent, and aren't they also waiting?

Bao Shi's arrival can be said to be timely and anticipated, ranked first and seventh, a colossal clash is definitely expected between them. It's a perfect chance to observe and see what foundation and methods others indeed possess.

The tall and sturdy figure stops at a position just three hundred feet from Lu Ye. Up close, the pressure that figure exudes becomes unmistakably stronger. Bao Shi's face appears very honest, his head bald, and his entire head resembles a round stone ball, with facial features sprouting from it, having thick eyebrows and big eyes.

He looks at Lu Ye standing with his saber, then raises his large fan-like hand to rub his slick head, speaking in a muffled voice: "Nine Heavens, Lu Yiye?"

Lu Ye nods slightly: "Yes!"

Bao Shi grins widely, sticking his thumb at his nose and saying: "I am Bao Shi! Bao Shi of the Five Colors Territory! Today's contest is without personal grievances, purely out of excitement to see a worthy prey, so Fellow Daoist, please do your utmost, otherwise... I might accidentally kill you!" By the time he finishes the last sentence, his smile widens further, and his mouth becomes quite menacing.

Almost at the moment his words fell, his figure suddenly charged forward.

Anyone who saw him walking like that earlier would subconsciously think this guy's physique was heavy and his movement was inconvenient, but once he moved, the cultivators secretly observing were shocked to find that all of it was just a disguise. Although his physique might be really heavy, his speed in rushing forward was in no way inferior to anyone else.

It was clearly intentional, deliberately moving that way to mislead others, allowing him to catch them off guard during a real attack.

This made many secretly curse in their hearts; this guy with thick eyebrows and big eyes, who looks honest, turns out to be no good either.

With a loud boom, a large pit appeared in the spot where Bao Shi was initially standing, and his tall figure almost turned into a grey blur.

On the other side, a fiery red light rushed forward to meet him, and no one saw exactly how Lu Yiye moved. Only Yuk Yaorao, who was secretly observing him, clearly saw that as Bao Shi made a move, Lu Ye also reacted immediately, with hardly any difference in timing. This proves that Lu Ye wasn't misled by the opponent's previous actions at all, he was fully prepared for the opponent's attack.

The two different colored rays of light were manifestations of the explosion of their respective spirit forces, and after one breath, they suddenly collided together.

The rapidly charging rays of light turned into a light halo upon collision, revealing two figures, one burly and the other small, the taller one punching, the smaller one holding a saber. The moment of collision was silent, but quickly followed by a violent surge of spirit force and an earth-shattering roar.

Lu Ye's body was sent flying backward, and Bao Shi's figure staggered slightly backward as well. His honest face clearly showed a surprised expression because he didn't expect that such a little person could unleash such powerful strength.

In the Taichu Realm, he has killed many so-called rivals from various domains, including some known for their strength, but those so-called powerful races in front of him are like children in front of adults; he could easily crush them.

Because in the realm of strength, the Stone Race has always had a natural advantage, not inferior to any race in the stellar space.

Though Lu Yiye from the Nine Heavens World is still not his equal in strength, he did make Bao Shi feel some pressure. Frankly speaking, among all the opponents he has encountered so far, Lu Yiye's strength is the strongest, barely reaching the level of being able to compete with him.

This made him very surprised, marveling that the human race is indeed a magical race. Clearly, they possess no special talents, yet always manage to have eye-catching abilities.

While thinking this way, Bao Shi's actions were quick. He lunged forward to steady his stance, thrusting out his arms, flattening his palms, and suddenly slapped them together, as if he were swatting a fly.

Lu Ye was the fly being swatted!

Upon seeing Bao Shi's physique and features, he realized that this fellow's strength might be strong, but after truly engaging in combat, he discovered the opponent's immense power completely exceeded expectations.

This was the first pure opponent he had encountered in a long time who completely outmatched him in strength. The disadvantage of the initial collision immediately put him in a tough spot. Faced with the

opponent's combined palm strike, he had no choice but to sink along with the motion, narrowly avoiding the blow.

A resounding boom resonated from above, as the two palms snapped together with an ear-splitting sound akin to mountain collapses and ground fissures. It was a sound that hurt the eardrums. Without giving Lu Ye any chance to react further, Bao Shi had gripped his fists tightly and slammed them down, the change of moves swift and smooth, with no apparent pattern.

Not only that, Bao Shi's knee suddenly lifted, aiming directly at Lu Ye, swift as lightning.

It was foreseeable that whether Lu Ye was hit by Bao Shi's fists or his knee, there would be no promising outcome. Every strike from this guy was immensely powerful, dealing either death or severe injury.

The instant clash was so dangerous that it left all the cultivators secretly watching covered in cold sweat. They too had experienced many life-and-death struggles, but in comparison to their own experiences, what they saw seemed to be on a completely different level.

Each considered how they would deal with such deadly moves, only to find no feasible solution.

But in the next moment, Lu Ye demonstrated how to respond to such a crisis with actual actions. Ignoring Bao Shi's knee coming at him, instead, he forcefully stepped down with both feet, simultaneously wielding the long saber in his hand, clashing with the opponent's fists.

Amidst the flying sparks, Lu Ye's figure soared straight toward the sky, forcibly breaking through the deadly strikes to carve out a path to survival.

This moment of change left the audience awestruck. Such reactive ability wasn't something everyone possessed. More importantly, it required absolute confidence in one's own strength. Otherwise, the slight misstep would lead to death on the spot.

Bao Shi shook his head, clearly dissatisfied with his previous performance. As he raised his eyes, he saw Lu Ye in the sky, swooping down like a hawk, with spirit force surging, and the saber stance erupting.

In a daze, Bao Shi seemed to see a sky full of Myriad Stars rising behind Lu Ye. In the next moment, as the blade stabbed straight, those Myriad Stars all plunged down upon him as if intending to engulf him like a hurricane.

Tyrannical Saber 1st Movement, Myriad Stars!

As the saber light cut through the air, a continuous sound "thud-thud-thud" echoed, and Bao Shi remained motionless, merely punching back to counter.

The saber light gradually dimmed but quickly lit up once more. Attacks like Crescent Moon swept in from all directions, each possessing the power to shatter gold and break jade.

Tyrannical Saber 2nd Movement, Crescent Moon!

Yet the Crescent Moon-like slashes merely left insignificant marks on Bao Shi's body, unable to harm him in the slightest.

Just as the Crescent Moon ended, a dazzling Lotus Sun rose. Its bright light nearly made all the cultivators secretly watching unable to open their eyes.

That big sun exploded like a blossoming lotus flower, each petal an icy saber light, with none other than Lu Ye holding the saber at the center of the lotus.

Tyrannical Saber 3rd Movement, Lotus Sun!

When this astonishing scene caught their eyes, the spectators finally realized what it meant to have a top-ranked foundation. Needless to say, just these three saber movements alone left the cultivators present without confidence to block, if any among them were on stage, they would surely face a dire situation.

On the contrary, Bao Shi remained indifferent and not only showed no signs of injury but was instead provoked into ferocity. Almost at the moment the Saber Lotus bloomed, he roared as he charged towards Lu Ye.

Looking at that massive figure, nearly all felt deep despair. The Stone Race's monstrous physique was simply unbeatable.

This shows that Bao Shi ranked seventh not because his strength only warranted seventh place, but because he had fewer achievements than others, which led to his current position. If those ranked in the top ten were all brought out for a real fight, his ranking would surely be much higher.

Chapter 1270 - Playing Dirty

The intense battle allowed the cultivators observing from the shadows to experience the might of the Stone Race up close, and it left them in awe of the profound foundation of Lu Yiye from the Nine Heavens World.

If they hadn't seen it with their own eyes, they couldn't have believed that a cultivator at the Divine Sea Level 8 could unleash such terrifying power. Each of them had ascended from the Level 8 themselves, being able to defeat enemies beyond their level within their respective domains, with pride in their hearts. Yet, upon comparison, they realized they had been viewing the world from the bottom of a well.

Before coming here, they carried a hint of doubt, questioning whether there had been some error with Lu Yiye's astonishing feats. After all, there were only a few thousand cultivators participating in the struggle for the Divine Sea, and yet he had slain over two hundred by himself, which seemed somewhat unreasonable.

It wasn't until witnessing Lu Yiye's explosive power did they understand there was reason to his achievements.

But who would emerge victorious in today's battle remained unseen by anyone, for from all appearances, neither side had a noticeably distinct advantage. Each clash was earth-shattering, full of imposing might.

The formidable physique of the Stone Race was breathtaking, and Lu Yiye's ferocious saber skills were equally terrifying, with the sense of aggression from his slashing long blade conjuring the feeling of an ancient ferocious beast in a fit of rage. Even those watching from the shadows felt their skin prickle, as if tusks and claws loomed overhead, ready to strike at any moment.

Each slash of the long blade shimmered with radiant brilliance, each maneuver of his body was an extreme response, every inch exuding danger.

The only feeling Lu had towards Bao Shi was: hard!

This was undoubtedly the advantage brought by his opponent's physique. The layered muscles on this guy's body didn't just look like rock; the feedback from the Boulder Mountain Saber told Lu Ye that what he was cutting through was solid stone.

And it was a stone as hard as they come.

Thus, Bao Shi only needed limited defense to completely neutralize his frenzied onslaught. Conversely, facing Bao Shi's counterattacks, Lu Ye found himself constrained, after all, he was but flesh and blood, and enduring an attack from Bao Shi wasn't without consequence.

The Tyrannical Saber 3rd Movement had failed to secure a hit, so Lu Ye simply ceased employing any complex blade techniques, resorting instead to the simplest chopping, stabbing, and swinging, occasionally supplemented with small tricks like Repeated Slashing and Single Flash. His speed and strength sufficed; even without employing blade techniques, every chop wielded immense impact and lethality.

Against an opponent like Bao Shi, solely relying on the sharpness of the Boulder Mountain Saber was unrealistic. The Boulder Mountain Saber wasn't known for sharpness anyway, and even with the Sharpness Spirit Runes, the effect was negligible.

Creative strategies were necessary.

He firmly believed in one principle: there's no defense that can't be broken. Bao Shi was still just a Divine Sea cultivator. However great his physique advantage over other races, his defense, provided the attack strength was enough, could still be shattered.

So his current task was simple: find a way to control the tempo of the battle, to make the opponent dance to his tune. Only by doing so could he swiftly eliminate this foe.

For a spirit runes master, especially Lu Ye, who was most familiar with close combat, controlling the pace of the battle wasn't very difficult.

"Exhilarating, exhilarating!" Bao Shi was evidently fighting passionately, continually throwing punches to counter Lu Ye's long blade while shouting out. In the Taichu Realm, he had encountered many opponents, but never had any been able to persist for long under his attacks. The few with strength simply avoided entanglement altogether. This led to over two months without a satisfying battle.

Today's encounter with Lu Ye undoubtedly filled the void in his heart, and made him even more grateful for following the guidance of the Reincarnation Tree to arrive here.

Yet, his elation didn't dampen his fighting intent and killing spirit, but rather intensified them. Such a worthy opponent naturally called for all his effort to slay right here and now, ensuring the duel would end in Perfection.

In his cultivation journey, he adhered to one principle: a dead opponent is the best opponent!

A piercing flash of the saber passed by, another swift slash descended, so fast that Bao Shi had nearly no time to respond. Yet still, he instinctively raised an arm to block the ferocious strike.

The sound of metal against metal rang out, accompanied by an intense glow erupting with the surging spirit force. Bao Shi was about to counterattack leverage, but suddenly realized something was off, as the weight carried by this strike was far greater than before.

The heaviness of the blade strike made even one from the Stone Race widen their eyes, and Bao Shi's body sank sharply, nearly forced to one knee.

What was happening? A flicker of uncertainty passed through Bao Shi's eyes. Although the time spent exchanging blows wasn't long, he thought he had already gauged Lu Ye's strength. Undeniably, this human kid possessed power mismatched with his size, yet not enough to exert genuine pressure. But suddenly, the overwhelming weight of this strike was peculiarly formidable.

It wasn't just suppression from physical strength, but seemed like an outburst of another kind of mysterious energy.

It must be said, Bao Shi's senses were incredibly sharp, because as Lu Ye struck with his saber, it wasn't just his power erupting; he also incorporated the Hefty Weight Spirit Runes into the Boulder Mountain Saber following the motion.

To ensure a successful strike, Lu Ye evolved the Hefty Weight Spirit Runes into three layers, which was his limit to evolve in an instant. Any more would destabilize the restriction formed by the spirit runes.

His strength was already overwhelmingly fierce, and with the explosion of the Hefty Weight Spirit Runes, Bao Shi suffered a hidden disadvantage.

Exclamations of surprise echoed from all sides. Since the battle began, Lu Ye had been suppressed in terms of power comparison, but now the cultivators watching saw Bao Shi being suppressed, which was truly inconceivable.

Bao Shi was furious. To a race that prided itself on great strength, being suppressed like this was intolerable. With a roar, he suddenly stood up.

However, at that instant, the immense pressure suddenly vanished without a trace; his planned counterattack struck only air, leaving Bao Shi feeling incredibly frustrated, stumbling despite forcing himself upright.

Lu Ye was already prepared, advancing swiftly, and his aura abruptly heightened significantly, surrounded by a faint red mist on his side.

On his chest, the Bloodstain Spirit Runes had already spread out, and as a drop of Essence Blood exploded, the Boulder Mountain Saber wrapped in continuous blade light bore down on Bao Shi.

Sounds of sharp intakes of breath came from various locations, as everyone was stunned by this scene. They thought Lu Yiye's previous performance was his limit, but unexpectedly, he had hidden tricks.

The situation changed in an instant, breaking the balance of the previously evenly matched battle, with no one expecting the Stone Race to be at a disadvantage.

For Lu Ye, once he had control of the combat rhythm, Bao Shi was merely a target to be struck; despite his physique being terrifyingly strong, his shortcomings were equally apparent - not agile enough.

Each race has its own advantages, but not all advantages can be concentrated in one race. While the Stone Race possesses an almost indestructible physique, their agility is inevitably compromised, albeit only relatively.

True combat warriors need to find ways during battle to avoid the enemy's strengths and magnify the enemy's weaknesses.

Lu Ye managed this by employing the evolution of the Hefty Weight Spirit Runes and relying on his own rich combat experience.

A round of frenzied offensives pushed Bao Shi back step by step; despite his exceedingly powerful body, it certainly had its limits. He couldn't withstand Lu Ye's relentless slashes indefinitely.

When Bao Shi finally steadied his stance and wanted to regroup, Lu Ye evolved the Hefty Weight Spirit Runes again, immediately disrupting Bao Shi's rhythm, causing him extreme vexation.

He suddenly realized that this Nine Heavens World's Lu Yiye was no good person. He thought he was encountering an opponent worthy of excitement, allowing full exertion, but found himself facing numerous crafty tricks from his adversary, showing no martial ethics.

Yet he understood that this was Lu Yiye's skill; in life-and-death battles, anything goes. Just as Bao Shi could leverage his physical advantages, Lu Yiye utilizing some ingenious tricks in combat was no fault of his own. If he couldn't adapt, it was Bao Shi's own inadequacy.

The more this happened, the angrier Bao Shi became, and the more furious he was, the more stretched his responses were. Often, what he thought was a powerful strike was merely a feint, and what he deemed to be a harmless slash was, in fact, Lu Ye's all-out burst.

Hence, no matter how he defended, he couldn't block a single slash; he completely became a target for strikes.

The cultivators secretly observing the battle were dazzled, each intrigued by the spectacle. It must be said, watching such a battle benefited almost everyone greatly, making them acutely aware of the vast gap between themselves and these leading geniuses.

Originally, many had come with skepticism, believing there must be some problem with Lu Yiye's achievements, but after witnessing this stunning fight firsthand, they realized his ranking was well-deserved, even if there had been issues.

The fierce battle raged on, with Bao Shi already thoroughly defeated, despite his strenuous resistance being futile; everyone could see he was fighting desperately like a trapped beast.

At this moment, his entire being appeared like a porcelain doll that had fallen to the ground, covered in spiderweb-like cracks, even his bald head seemed somewhat shattered.

If this continued, he feared being smashed to pieces, but he still refused to retreat, relentlessly entangled in combat with Lu Ye, swinging his fists and turning every part of himself into a deadly weapon, indicating he wouldn't make things easy for Lu Ye even in death.

This tenacity and perseverance commanded the respect of all cultivators watching!