

Humanity 211

Chapter 211 Mirage Realm

Lu Ye didn't go to his own exclusive training room, but after a brief moment of discernment, he walked to the door of another training room and directly used his governor privileges to open the door.

A young girl cultivating inside jumped in shock, "Fifth Senior Brother, have I done something wrong?" She seemed to remember something and squatted down with her hands over her head. "I won't bother Sixth Senior Sister anymore. I'm not trying to compete with you for women; please don't hit me!"

"Hmm?"

Had he heard something unbelievable?

Moments later, Lu Ye left a Spirit Energy Gathering Spirit Rune covering one wall inside the training room, then turned and walked out, leaving the girl whose eyes had lost focus.

With so many training rooms, it was difficult for Lu Ye to install Spirit Energy Gathering Spirit Runes in every single room at once; he could only find time to install them when he could.

His initial goal was to set up one Spirit Energy Gathering Spirit Rune in each training room, then gradually add a second and a third.

After setting up a few rooms, Lu Ye entered his own exclusive training room, used the little spirit force remaining inside him to build a small funnel in his spiritual orifice, switched to the Bestial Gluttony Feast Technique, and threw two Spirit-Nurturing Pills into his mouth.

While cultivating, he read books brought from Madam Yun, occasionally constructing Yin Origin and Yang Origin on his fingers to strengthen his practice.

The spent spirit force quickly recovered, and with the area's richer spirit force, both recovery and cultivation efficiency increased more than twofold than before.

Lu Ye felt that if he dedicated himself entirely to cultivation, he could ascend to Level 7 in less than twenty days.

However, rapid advancement in cultivation might not always be a good thing; Li Baxian had warned him before to focus on consolidation. As cultivation progressed, one must improve holistically; merely advancing in level without corresponding strength was inadequate.

Lu Ye wasn't too worried about insufficient consolidation, but currently learning the Path of Spirit Runes and constructing the Yin-Yang Dual Origins required consuming spirit force. He also occasionally needed to install Spirit Energy Gathering Spirit Runes in other training rooms, which delayed his cultivation progress.

As he read through each book, Lu Ye fervently absorbed the knowledge within; constructing Yin-Yang Dual Origins became simpler and easier. However, he still fell short of the proficiency Madam Yun required to switch them effortlessly.

A day later, a somewhat weary Lu Ye set down the book in his hands and stretched lazily.

While studying the Path of Spirit Runes was fascinating, it could become dull over a long period.

Lu Ye thought for a moment, then took out the Breath Fruit Core from his storage sack. Just as he was about to activate his spirit force, he hurriedly drew the Boulder Mountain Saber and held it in his hand.

He wanted to test if he could bring the Boulder Mountain Saber into the Mirage Realm with him. During his last visit without the saber, he had nearly wasted fifty merit points, a substantial loss.

With his spirit force activated, his consciousness entered that peculiar little room; Lu Ye quickly looked down and found the Boulder Mountain Saber in his hand, bringing him great relief.

Using his previous experience, Lu Ye walked to the sole door and pushed it open.

As before, twisting script appeared on the door, stating that entering the Mirage Realm would cost fifty merit points.

Now wealthy and unflinching, Lu Ye effortlessly pushed the door open, felt a slight warmth from his seal, and fifty merit points were deducted.

Behind the door was a mist-filled expanse. Only about thirty meters around him was visible, the rolling, surging fog seemingly containing endless danger.

Lu Ye looked back but could see no trace of any door; the small space he had been in seemed merely a transitional area.

Strange noises emanated from the mist ahead, and he could faintly sense something rapidly crawling.

Immediately, Lu Ye staggered his feet slightly, crouched down, and pressed his hand on the handle of the Boulder Mountain Saber!

The fog ahead tumbled and surged as if something was about to break through.>Here it came!

Lu Ye's spirit force secretly surged, and the next moment, a bizarre creature leaped high from the mist, lunging straight at him.

The attacking creature resembled a praying mantis; its four feet moved quickly, and its front limbs, like slashing machetes, flickered with sharp, cold light.

This was a mantis not in the least smaller than Lu Ye, with a color that was greenish-black. Its wings flapped behind it, lending it the ability to glide through the air.

Lu Ye had never seen such a huge mantis before. He had been startled by it the last time he entered this eerie place, and without a weapon then, he hadn't been able to stay here for long.

As the mantis lunged, its mouthparts constantly opening and closing, its serrated, sharp, and ferocious teeth seemed to promise a dire fate if bitten.

The distance between them rapidly closed, two mantis arms swinging, aimed at cutting off his head from the center.

Such a strike was not inferior to the full force of a combat cultivator at Level 6, making Lu Ye feel that it was linked somehow to his own strength, for he was also at Level 6.

When the mantis saber slashed towards him, Lu Ye had already ducked and slid out from under the mantis, slashing out a beam of saber light with the Boulder Mountain Saber in his hand.

Green insect blood splattered, innards scattered, and with a thud, the menacingly approaching mantis fell behind Lu Ye, its body almost split in half by a single strike.

This was the lethality of Lu Ye's strike enhanced with Sharpness, sure to be fatal to anyone of the same cultivation level if hit.

Before he could steady himself, though, movement noises came from the crawling within the mist to both sides, and shortly after, two mantises charged out of the mist, almost simultaneously pouncing toward Lu Ye.

Intent on testing the power of his new spirit runes, his legs suddenly flashed with light as he boosted with Move-Like-The-Wind, abruptly increasing his sprinting speed and quickly getting face to face with one mantis, raising his saber and chopping downward, this strike dodging the opposing mantis saber's block, shattering its head.

The second one was already upon him; he immediately turned around and cleaved with his saber, which was directly blocked by that mantis's mantis saber.

The Hefty Weight Spirit Runes silently enhanced the Boulder Mountain Saber, overpowering the already less strong mantis making its body stagger before Lu Ye took the opportunity to thrust a direct stab, burying half of the saber blade into the mantis's mouthpiece. When he drew the saber out, the mantis was twisting and wriggling on the ground as a hissing sound came from its mouthpiece.

Lu Ye, panting, heard more movements from within the mist and soon, three mantises emerged from three different directions...

The fight had never stopped since the beginning, and the number of mantises Lu Ye had to deal with incremented by one every time.

Everything here felt extremely real; as Lu Ye slashed those mantises, he could smell the pungent scent of their fresh blood, feel its very realistic touch when it splattered on him, and even the crimson blood would flow from his own wounds when injured.

Lu Ye didn't know exactly what place his Breath Fruit Core connected Mirage Realm was, but everything here seemed no different from the outside world.

The only difference was that here, one would not truly die after dying in battle, and the bodies of the mantises he killed would disappear in a very short time.

This place seemed solely meant for cultivators to temper their combat skills.

He had tried it with Shui Yuan, who also agreed it was something.

Being able to temper his combat skills in such an environment was nothing short of a dream come true for Lu Ye. His cultivation had advanced too quickly and his training time too short, which meant his experience in crossing hands with other cultivators was limited, despite having fought his way here, a deficit that combat here could help compensate.

With the Mirage Realm, although his opponents were mantises and not cultivators, the feeling of treading on the edge of life and death was the same, as was the pain of being wounded.

Here, Lu Ye could fully exert all he had learned, seeking out his deficiencies amidst fervent battle.

The mantises gradually increased to nine, and Lu Ye felt he was approaching his limit. In such a confined area, even if he varied the usage of his spirit runes, he inevitably faced being overwhelmed. The sharp

mantis sabers left deep, bone-visible wounds on him, even slicing open his abdomen, causing his organs to spill out.

Eventually, after killing three out of the nine mantises, a mantis saber pierced right through Lu Ye's head!

The sensation of death in that moment was exceedingly real.

Back in his private training room, Lu Ye suddenly opened his eyes, gasping for air. Even with the experience of previous times knowing that death in the Mirage Realm wouldn't truly kill him, the intense palpitations were still overwhelmingly strong.

Simultaneously, his mind throbbed unbearably, as if a needle was poking inside it.

This was also why Hua Ci looked at him with such resentment after testing the Breath Fruit Core.

The sensation of death was too terrifying for anyone to want to experience.

He checked himself; the injuries from the Mirage Realm were not present, but his spirit force had been greatly depleted. It seemed that in the Mirage Realm, everything else may be illusory, but the depletion of spirit force and accumulated fatigue were real.

Also, after dying there, the mind would ache, probably due to some depletion of mental energy.

Therefore, after entering the Mirage Realm, it was not possible to re-enter a second time soon after; it required a day to recuperate.

The effects of the Breath Fruit Core were myriad and unpredictable; Lu Ye's Breath Fruit Core might not have connected to any rich Spirit Vein or increased his cultivation efficiency, but the enhancement of his combat skills through feeling deaths repeatedly was a benefit not interchangeable with any other.

Elder brother really had an eye for this; at that time, of the nine fruits on the Breath Fruit Tree, he just chose this one.

Continuing his cultivation, recovering his spirit force, he took out food from his storage sack to replenish his physical energy.

Days passed by, and apart from occasionally returning to his sect headquarters to enjoy the delicacies made by sister Shui Yuan, Lu Ye stayed in the training room, studying the tomes brought back from Madam Yun, building up the Yin-Yang Dual Origins, and hewing mantises daily in the Mirage Realm, living a truly fulfilling life.

After gradually getting familiar with the mantises' combat techniques, Lu Ye quickly improved. He managed to kill those large creatures in the shortest time with the least consumption, and in these fierce battles, he gradually mastered the use of his newly acquired spirit runes.

It wasn't until five days later that Lu Ye left the training room as usual, inquired about the current affairs at Heaven's Augury Hall from a junior brother, confirmed that his post was undisturbed, and returned to the sect headquarters.

He fetched Amber and rode it straight to Bright Heart Peak.

He had finished reading those dozen or so tomes, and the building and switching of the Yin-Yang Dual Origins had met Madam Yun's requirements; it was time for the next step.

Chapter 212 Disassembling Spirit Runes

Atop Bright Heart Peak, within the library room, Lu Ye knelt before Madam Yun, spreading his palm open. Under the slight surge of spirit force in his palm, a Yin Origin smaller than a grain of rice swiftly formed, then transformed into a Yang Origin before reverting to Yin Origin again.

In just a few breaths' time, it changed more than a dozen times, transitioning smoothly with the basic element stable.

Madam Yun was inspecting his progress in front of him.

"That will do," Madam Yun spoke.

Only then did Lu Ye dispel the spirit force.

"I must say, there is a reason you received the inheritance of that spirit runes master. You possess a high degree of talent in this path," Madam Yun remarked appreciatively as she looked at him.

When the sect master first brought Lu Ye here, Madam Yun simply didn't want the predecessor's inheritance to be wasted in Lu Ye's hands, thus she decided to guide him, encouraging him to visit Bright Heart Peak whenever he could, hoping to maximize the use of that inheritance.

However, following these couple of visits, she was surprised to find that although their ancestor had perished, his discernment in choosing a successor was still evident.

Lu Ye, a beginner, had only taken one incense stick's time to achieve what had taken her two days in her own early years, and this time was even more outrageous—managing to switch between Yin Origin and Yang Origin to meet her standards within just five days.

It had taken her a full month to reach this level, and compared to him, she realized Lu Ye's talent in the Path of Spirit Runes far surpassed her own by no small measure.

The youth before her was worth the effort to carefully cultivate. For a moment, the gaze she cast upon Lu Ye softened considerably.

Perhaps... maybe... she could consider snatching this youth from that old thing to become her own successor? She imagined that the old fellow wouldn't dare to complain much.

This matter should not be rushed, best to proceed slowly.

Setting aside her thoughts, she flipped her wrist and a transparent crystal the size of an egg appeared in her palm. The crystal was flat, clearly carved intentionally in that shape, and its surface had many openwork areas. From those hollows, the pattern resembled a combination of Yin and Yang Origins.

Madam Yun tossed the transparent crystal to Lu Ye.

Lu Ye caught it and examined it: "Is this spirit runes?"

"This is spirit runes," Madam Yun nodded sluggishly, "Anything that can be constructed and stabilized with Yin and Yang Origins qualifies as spirit runes."

Lu Ye immediately recalled this statement; he had read it in a book two days earlier, authored by someone named Muh Xiaoyao.

This Muh Xiaoyao must surely be a remarkable spirit runes master.

According to what Muh Xiaoyao wrote, whether something could be called a spirit rune depended on if it could remain stable once constructed.

Yin and Yang Origins could not be arranged arbitrarily, they required adherence to a mysterious principle. Randomly arranged basic elements were nearly always unstable for formation, and if they somehow managed to form, element conflicts could happen, potentially causing a violent burst of spirit force in severe cases.

Thus, creating new spirit runes was not an easy task, and could end disastrously if not careful.

"However, spirit runes are divided into two categories, useful spirit runes and useless spirit runes."

"There are useless spirit runes?"

"This spirit rune in your hand is one of them," Madam Yun explained, "Useful spirit runes produce various miraculous effects, while useless spirit runes do not perform any function; they simply exist once formed. Try to deconstruct this spirit rune, then tell me how many basic elements it contains, and how many of those are Yin Origins and how many are Yang Origins."

"Yes," Lu Ye responded and examined the transparent crystal in his hand seriously, mentally simulating the construction of this spirit rune.

To him, this was not an easy task, as the patterns of spirit runes looked incredibly similar, and the combinations of Yin and Yang Origins seemed to blend seamlessly—making some patterns look like they're made of two basic elements when they are actually made of three or even four elements intertwined.

This not only tested his eyesight but also his intellect.

However, for Madam Yun to start his education by deconstructing spirit runes undoubtedly made it easier for him to grasp this spirit rune; only by accurate deconstruction could the complete structure of the entire spirit rune be clearly understood.

In Lu Ye's memory, many prestigious people rose from merely deconstructing.

One incense stick's time later, after Lu Ye's repeated confirmations, he looked up and said, "Madam, this spirit rune consists of thirty basic elements, including twelve Yin Origins and eighteen Yang Origins."

Madam Yun smiled and nodded, "Good, this is one of the simplest spirit runes in the Path of Spirit Runes. The first step in a spirit runes master's training of a disciple is to construct this Spirit Rune Thirty."

"Spirit Rune Thirty?"

"Useless spirit runes are only named with numbers," she explained.

"I see, the predecessor who created this Spirit Rune Thirty must indeed have been a prodigy."

It's not that having more basic elements is better in spirit runes; though more elements bring more variations, perhaps allowing the construction of extremely powerful spirit runes, creating a stable rune with just thirty basic elements truly tests one's skill.

This is much like the ultimate test of a cook's skill in stir-fried shredded potatoes—as complicated and time-consuming as Buddha Jumps Over the Wall may be delightful, a chef who can make it might not necessarily be able to stir-fry a dish of shredded potatoes that everyone unequivocally praises.

"It is rare for you to think this way," Madam Yun said.

In the subsequent time, Madam Yun inquired about the contents of the books Lu Ye had read previously. Lu Ye also took the opportunity to ask some questions he found perplexing, and then Madam Yun went on to explain some basic knowledge of the Path of Spirit Runes.

As time passed, the library witnessed one earnestly teaching and the other earnestly learning, their joy blending harmoniously.

Unwittingly, it had grown dark outside.

Madam Yun stood up and said, "Let's stop here for today. Given that your cultivation is still low, you should prioritize enhancing your own cultivation. The Path of Spirit Runes is profound and cannot be learned in just a day or two. Go back and thoroughly study the Spirit Rune Thirty, and come back to me once you can construct it smoothly."

With those words, she waved her hand again, bringing over a dozen books for Lu Ye to take with him.

A moment later, Lu Ye walked out under the escort of the maid.

He turned around, thanked her, and then asked, "May I know how to address the young lady?"

Every visit, he saw this maid, yet Lu Ye still did not know her name. Expecting to interact with her in the future, Lu Ye wanted to ask her name.

Unexpectedly, the maid just smiled at Lu Ye without responding.

Lu Ye looked at her for a while and then bowed with his hands clasped, "I take my leave!"

A fine young girl, yet deaf, quite pitiful indeed.

Riding Amber back to Righteous Peak, the sect master was standing in the plaza, looking up at the flag with golden flames on a blood background, symbolic of the Righteous Blood Sect.

"Sect Master," Lu Ye approached and saluted.

The sect master seemed to notice him then, turning around, "Coming from Bright Heart Peak?"

"Yes."

"Hmm, studying the Path of Spirit Runes isn't a bad idea," the sect master nodded, looked around, and lowered his voice, "Did Madam Yun ever mention me in front of you?"

Lu Ye was immediately in a dilemma, not knowing how to answer, but ultimately responded honestly, "Not at all."

The sect master's face showed a clear sense of disappointment.

After exchanging a few more words with the sect master, Lu Ye finally departed.

Upon entering his quarters and secluding himself in the training room, Lu Ye first constructed a small funnel in his spiritual orifice, switched his Cultivation Technique, and swallowed an elixir pill.

Only then did he begin constructing the thirty spirit runes.

Spirit runes surged in his palm, forming the first Yin Origin, then merging with a Yang Origin...

Constructing spirit runes demanded completion in one go without interruption, else it was bound to fail, and it required extremely precise control over one's spirit force or it wouldn't be successful.

Although Lu Ye had previously switched between Yin-Yang Dual Origins with ease, that was only with single basic elements. Now that he began constructing these thirty spirit runes, he immediately felt the difficulty.

It was different from the spirit runes he had constructed before; those he obtained from the Talent Tree formed instantly at the thought, because all the mysteries of those spirit runes had been imprinted in his mind through the leaves.

This was also the reason he could quickly accomplish the tasks set by Madam Yun. He had an advantage that other spirit runes masters did not have; he had successfully constructed many spirit runes and had a very unique foundation in the Path of Spirit Runes.

In his first attempt, he only managed to construct three basic elements before failing due to unstable spirit force.

He then attempted a second time.

A third time...

...

One hour later, Lu Ye exploded.

Even though he kept comforting himself to stay calm and not to rush, he still felt an urge to strike someone amidst those repeated failures.

He reluctantly persisted for another hour, but his mentality completely collapsed.

Taking a deep breath, he pulled out two items from his storage sack, one being a Breath Fruit Core and the other, a Boulder Mountain Saber.

Little bugs, daddy's coming to see you!

Spending fifty merits to enter the Mirage Realm, he began a slaughter!

These days, Lu Ye entered almost daily, refining his combat skills through relentless battles, and he noticed that the monsters in the Mirage Realm weren't limited to just mantises; there were humanoid ants, locusts half the height of a man, spiders, and other strangely shaped creatures whose names he couldn't pronounce.

Every entry brought different monsters, and each initial contact came with setbacks because each monster had its unique abilities. For instance, the ant-like creatures bled a highly corrosive acid upon death, and the wounds inflicted by the locusts were even more troublesome as parasitic eggs would deposit there and soon hatch into small locusts.

There was also a creature that could spray venom and another covered in bone spikes like a porcupine, which, when provoked, had deadly offensive capabilities.

This typically resulted in Lu Ye dying surrounded by nine monsters. In his best attempt, he killed five, only to be mercilessly slaughtered by the remaining four, dying a gruesome death.

This time, he faced the porcupine-like bugs. At the end, with nine monsters attacking all at once, a sky full of bone spikes flew at him, and even with his active Defense Spirit Runes, he couldn't block them.

Nevertheless, he managed to kill six monsters before his death.

He was improving bit by bit. Lu Ye felt that if he gave it a couple more tries, he should be able to get past this challenge.

Upon exiting the Mirage Realm, though his head ached, his depressive mood had significantly improved.

The best way to vent frustration, to hit someone, or to be hit.

Chapter 213 Spirit Stream Level 7

In the Mirage Realm, Lu Ye, with a Boulder Mountain Saber in hand and drenched in blood, had finally slain the last monster. The ground was littered with emerald green blood and the severed limbs and innards of the creatures. After spending many days, he had at last killed all nine monsters that had appeared simultaneously!

Though his injuries were severe enough to leave him feeling dizzy, he did not let his guard down, for he didn't know whether ten monsters might suddenly leap out at him next. If that were the case, he would have no choice but to stretch out his neck in surrender.

The fog ahead roiled and surged, and from within it, a figure stepped forth.

Lu Ye focused his eyes and was startled; he had not expected to encounter not only strangely shaped insect monsters in the Mirage Realm but also a person!

It wasn't quite accurate to call it a person, since the newcomer was shrouded in fog, their features unclear, and their gender indiscernible.

This was clearly not a real person, but rather the mystical nature of the Mirage Realm itself.

As Lu Ye was still sizing up the figure, the shadow wrapped in fog had already lifted a hand and pointed. A Liu Guang shot toward him swiftly— it was the might of weapon control!

This fellow was undoubtedly a Level 7.

Shortly thereafter, in the training room, Lu Ye opened his eyes, pale-faced and with a headache as if his brain had been pricked with needles. Despite feeling utterly exhausted, his expression was one of exhilaration.

After passing the nine challenges set by the insect monsters, the appearance of a cultivator was unforeseen, but it was a welcome surprise to him.

While slaying those insect monsters could hone his combat skills, it ultimately didn't hold much significance. In the Spirit Stream battlefield, all his opponents were cultivators from Ten Thousand Demons Ridge. The change from insects to a cultivator was undoubtedly more in line with his needs.

He silently prayed he wouldn't need to kill more insects next time he entered, as that would be rather troublesome. It would be best if he didn't need to, he thought to himself.

Rather than killing insects, he was more willing to cross hands with that misty cultivator, because the strength that the latter displayed was indeed that of a Level 7 cultivator, and even one of the best among them.

He would have to wait until tomorrow to verify this.

He popped two elixir pills into his mouth and took out books he had obtained from Madam Yun to study.

After half a day, his exhaustion dissipated, and his spirit force was replenished.

He began to construct the thirty spirit runes.

Whether it was because he was in a good mood or had a skilled hand, he managed to form them successfully in one go today!

After dispersing the spirit runes and attempting to construct them again, he failed.

But with one successful attempt behind him, things became simpler, and he succeeded on his third try, failed on his fourth, succeeded on his fifth, succeeded on his sixth...

Lu Ye kept practicing, seeking the right touch in success and accumulating lessons and experience in failure. After dozens of attempts, his success rate was around seventy percent.

This success rate was quite high already, presumably meeting Madam Yun's expectations. In other words, he could proceed to the next phase of learning with her.

Although constructing spirit runes consumed some of his spirit force, the effect of the Spirit Energy Gathering Spirit Runes and the Bestial Gluttony Feast allowed the total amount of spirit force within him not only to maintain but also to keep increasing.

At this moment, he was at full saturation.

He inspected his own spiritual orifice and spurred his spirit force to strike at the spiritual orifice barrier.

In just about half an hour, the barrier of the spiritual orifice was breached, and he now had a total of one hundred and eight spiritual orifices within him.

And this number corresponded exactly to the Spirit Stream Level 7!

He stimulated his spirit force to link these disparate spiritual orifices into a circulation of the Minor Circumambulation; as the wave of energy swept through, he had reached the Spirit Stream Level 7!

Discovering the subsequent use of the Mirage Realm, succeeding in constructing the thirty spirit runes, and advancing to the Spirit Stream Level 7, his day was filled with three pieces of excellent news.

It had been a month since he returned from the Chess Sea, which showed the rapid pace of his orifice-opening progress.

Not continuing with his cultivation, he stepped out of the training room and, while his spirit force was abundant, went to construct a few Spirit Energy Gathering Spirit Runes for other training rooms.

Thanks to his continuous efforts over the past days, nearly all the training rooms now had at least one such spirit rune, a few had two, and for Disciple Hua Ci and others, their rooms even had three, complemented by the Spirit Gathering Arrays already present within the training rooms, greatly enhancing the efficiency of the disciples' cultivation.

Two hours later, Lu Ye appeared on Bright Heart Peak, sitting opposite Madam Yun.

After inspecting Lu Ye's achievements in constructing the thirty spirit runes, Madam Yun took out a handful of thin crystal plates. Each of these crystal plates represented a spirit rune named after a number. They had no practical use but played an indelible role in the transmission of knowledge between spirit runes masters and their disciples.

Before Madam Yun's eyes, Lu Ye flawlessly deconstructed each of the basic elements within these spirit runes.

Then, Madam Yun taught him several techniques for constructing spirit runes, including the methods of embedding Yin-Yang Dual Origins. Lu Ye asked about the doubts in his heart and received thorough answers.

As dusk approached, Madam Yun took out two of the crystal plates, "These are spirit runes eighty-three and one hundred sixty-five. Come back to me once you can successfully construct these two."

She handed over dozens of books to Lu Ye as well.

Lu Ye carefully stored these away and bade farewell to Madam Yun. Escorted by a maid, he left Bright Heart Peak.

He returned to Righteous Peak and found Senior Sister Shui Yuan.

"You've reached Level 7?" Shui Yuan looked at Lu Ye in surprise, astonished at the speed of his cultivation, "Indeed, now that you are at Level 7, you can start practicing the Weapon Control Path."

The purpose of Lu Ye's visit to Shui Yuan was straightforward. In the Chess Sea, he had encountered too many cultivators at Level 7, and he had long envied those who could command weapons to kill their enemies. Now that he had finally reached Level 7 himself, he naturally rushed over to seek her guidance.

"However, I'm not actually that skilled at the Weapon Control Path," said Shui Yuan as her eyes brightened, "You should send a message to your Fourth Senior Brother. His mastery on this path is profound, and he would be the most suitable to instruct you."

"Fourth Senior Brother, huh... I'll ask him then."

After getting a feast from Second Senior Sister to replenish his strength, and allowing Amber to absorb a bloodline from a piece of Scale Armor, Lu Ye hurried back to his assigned training room.

He practiced while sending a message to his Fourth Senior Brother.

Li Baxian was also a bit surprised that Lu Ye had reached Level 7 so quickly, but upon hearing that he was seeking teachings on the Weapon Control Path, he spared no effort in sharing his knowledge.

Although he couldn't teach in person, exchanging messages like this didn't make much difference actually.

Li Baxian explained all the key points of controlling weapons with great care. Finally, he said, "Little Junior Brother, you just practice for now. If there's anything you don't understand, feel free to ask me any time."

"Thank you, Senior Brother!"

He took out the Boulder Mountain Saber, placed it on his knees, and began channeling spirit force into it.

According to Li Baxian, Spirit Stream Realm cultivators primarily use spirit force to control weapons, so there were high demands on a cultivator's spirit force. The purer the spirit force, the greater the power and speed of the controlled weapon. Additionally, the distance one could control a weapon was also an issue.

Generally, a Level 7 cultivator could control a weapon within about 30 zhang, but with purer spirit force, the distance could be increased. This undeniably offered an advantage during confrontations with enemies.

Additionally, weapon control placed extreme demands on a cultivator's mastery over their own spirit force, which also affected the speed and distance of the controlled weapon.

Speed and distance were the two crucial elements of killing enemies with controlled weapons, while the purity and control of spirit force were the two significant requirements of weapon control.

When cultivators of the same cultivation level fought each other using controlled weapons, the one with an advantage in speed and distance was undoubtedly stronger—of course, there was also the weapon's inherent lethality to consider.

Lu Ye wasn't worried about the purity of his spirit force. His Talent Tree burned away all pill poison, keeping his spirit force always pure and flawless. And as for the control of spirit force—there was even less need to speak of that.

He could freely construct and transform even the tiniest Yin-Yang Dual Origins, not to mention anything else.

In this world, if it came down to controlling spirit force, there was no one better than a spirit runes master!

Cultivators only begin practicing the Weapon Control Path upon reaching Level 7 primarily because only cultivators at this level could control spirit force that had left their bodies to a certain extent.

Unlike those below Level 7, where the spirit force would become uncontrollable once it left the body.

This reminded Lu Ye of a problem that had always troubled him—his use of the Fire Phoenix Technique. Until now, unless in certain specific environments, Lu Ye hardly ever activated this technique against enemies because aiming it was a significant issue.

Exerting spirit force to cast a magic spell only for it to miss its target was not only a waste of spirit force but could also give the enemy an opportunity.

However, when Dong Shuye chased him, Dong Shuye cast a huge Fireball that could turn corners, relentlessly pursuing Lu Ye and Amber and leaving them in a very sorry state.

Looking back, this was the difference between a Level 7 cultivator and those below Level 7. Dong Shuye could control spirit force that had left his body; hence, his Fireball Technique could turn corners.

And now, Lu Ye had reached Level 7.

To verify this, Lu Ye stepped out of the training room and activated a Fire Phoenix Technique, shooting it upwards. In an instant, blazing spirit force surged, and a plump bird fluttered its wings, flying skyward.

Previously, once the plump bird was released, Lu Ye would have had no control, hitting the enemy was left to fate.

But now, he could clearly feel the spirit force that formed the Fire Phoenix Technique still under his control. With a mere thought, the plump bird flying towards the sky immediately changed direction, fluttering merrily in midair. However, as time passed, the spirit force making up the technique started to dissipate quickly, and it seemed it would vanish completely after a few moments.

"Pfft!" A laugh came from beside him.

Lu Ye turned around and saw a young girl using her hand as a shade, looking up at the sky, her gaze following the flight path of the plump bird.

The girl looked familiar...

Feeling Lu Ye's gaze, the girl quickly averted her eyes, looking around restlessly.

"What's your name?"

The girl stood up straight in an instant, swallowed awkwardly, and said loudly, "Answering to Fifth Senior Brother, my name is He Xiyang!" Her eyes quickly shifted, giving Lu Ye a weak glance before adding, "And, I wasn't laughing at you just now."

"Then what were you laughing at?"

Swallowing again, He Xiyang said, "I don't really know what I was laughing at, I just felt like laughing... Fifth Senior Brother, I really wasn't laughing at you..." As if feeling her words lacked any persuasive power, she squatted down and held her head, "I was wrong, Fifth Senior Brother, please don't hit me!"

With her heart in her throat for quite a while, she finally looked up only to find that Lu Ye had already left. She patted her chest and breathed a sigh of relief.

Chapter 214 There's Still Hope for My Weapon Control

In the training room, Lu Ye stimulated his spirit force to pour into the saber blade, and with a thought, he controlled the Boulder Mountain Saber.

Initially, it didn't go very smoothly, but soon he mastered some techniques based on the teachings of his Fourth Senior Brother. Wrapped in fiery red spirit force, the Boulder Mountain Saber floated up unsteadily like a toddling child.

Before Lu Ye could rejoice, the spirit force wrapped around the long saber dispersed and it fell heavily.

He quickly collected himself and continued to practice.

This process was very slow and consumed a great deal of his own spirit force. Had he not been in the training room, Lu Ye would not have lasted very long.

In the training room, the consumption and replenishment of spirit force could basically maintain a balance, so Lu Ye was always able to keep his spirit force ample and even had the spare energy to open the next spiritual orifice.

His days were now more fulfilling than before.

In the past, aside from his cultivation, Lu Ye would study the books brought back from Madam Yun, absorbing all sorts of knowledge about spirit runes and constructing them, and would spare time each day to fight in the Mirage Realm. Now, in addition to these activities, he had to practice the Weapon Control Technique as well.

Not only that, but after reaching Level 7, Lu Ye could also start practicing the second Dao technique listed in the Red Lotus Soaring to Sky Technique.

The first Dao technique was the Fire Phoenix Technique, which he practiced at Level 4, the second was the Fire Dragon Technique...

Perhaps because he was used to constructing spirit runes, picking up these magic and spells wasn't difficult for Lu Ye. That was also a reason why people often mistook him for a magic cultivator; his spellcasting speed was not inferior to that of true magic cultivators, only lacking in versatility, as true magic cultivators wouldn't master just one or two techniques.

Lu Ye managed to perform the Fire Dragon Technique in less than half a day, which was far simpler than mastering weapon control.

The techniques he could use at Level 7 were undoubtedly much stronger than the Fire Phoenix Technique, but they also consumed more energy. After testing the power of the Fire Dragon Technique in an uninhabited area of his residence, he didn't dwell on it anymore.

For him, having chosen the path of a combat cultivator, it was natural to stick to it to the end. As for magic and spells, a few would suffice; there was no need to delve too deeply into them.

He now focused primarily on the Weapon Control Technique. At Level 7, how could he fight others without mastering weapon control?

He continued to enter the Mirage Realm daily, even though each entry cost fifty points of merit. However, the life-and-death experiences accumulated there were worth much more than any amount of merit.

What saddened Lu Ye was that after advancing to Level 7, upon entering the Mirage Realm, he again had to deal with bizarrely shaped insects. However, this time, the insects that emerged from the mist were not comparable to Level 6 cultivators as before but matched his cultivation level—each one as formidable as Level 7!

This indicated that the creatures he encountered in the Mirage Realm were indeed related to his own cultivation level.

Considering his previous experiences, Lu Ye might need to fight through nine barriers in one go before encountering cultivators in the mist to fight against.

He had only just advanced to Level 7, still mastering weapon control, so breaching nine barriers in one go was extremely difficult. He could only progress slowly.

Time flew by, and after five days, Lu Ye couldn't take it anymore, mainly because his progress in weapon control was very slow.

He wasn't someone who couldn't handle setbacks. However, after seeing Chen Yu's Weapon Control Technique the day before, he couldn't help feeling somewhat discouraged.

Now at Level 7 in the residence, apart from him, there was only Chen Yu. Lu Ye naturally wanted to see how others controlled weapons, so he contacted Chen Yu to come and demonstrate. Chen Yu's control was so smooth, the Spiritual Artifact turned into flowing light, moving back and forth within thirty yards, light as a flying bird.

In the end, Chen Yu even commented that his display of Weapon Control Technique was hardly refined, and he had embarrassed himself in front of Lu Ye.

If Chen Yu considered his skill embarrassing, then Lu Ye felt his own was downright humiliating. After asking Chen Yu, it turned out that upon advancing to Level 7, it had taken him only three days to roughly master the technique, while looking at himself...

He returned to the residence and went to his Second Senior Sister to grab a meal.

Feeling depressed, what better cure than to eat one's fill?

Seemingly noticing something, Shui Yuan asked him while serving him food, "Is there something bothering you back at the residence?"

"Yeah, there is," Lu Ye responded vaguely.

"What's the matter?" Shui Yan asked softly, puzzled.

After swallowing the food in his mouth, Lu Ye sighed and said, "I've realized I don't have much talent in the path of weapon control. What others can achieve in three days, I fear I might not achieve in a month."

Shui Yan said, "Every individual has their strengths and weaknesses; everyone excels in different areas. Little Junior Brother, you have such high talent in the path of spirit runes that Madam Yun can't stop praising you, and you're able to fight above your level.

No one can be good at everything; don't worry too much about it." Although there were many more disciples in the sect now, Shui Yuan still referred to Lu Ye as 'Little Junior Brother,' a term holding a special meaning for her, as it was this junior brother that enabled the Righteous Blood Sect to continue.

"I understand that, but I still can't help feeling frustrated."

"How about this... after we finish eating, I can give you some tips? Though my talent in weapon control is not as high as your Fourth Senior Brother's, it's still not bad."

Being a True Lake Realm cultivator herself, her skill in weapon control could hardly be lacking. The reason she had previously asked Lu Ye to consult Li Baxian was not out of laziness, but because Li Baxian's innate talent for weapon control was frighteningly high.

Normally, cultivators who had just advanced to Level 7 would control one Spiritual Artifact, and as their cultivation and control over their spirit force improved, the number of controlled artifacts might gradually increase.

However, after advancing to Level 7, Li Baxian was already capable of controlling nine. His control over his own spirit force had reached an inconceivable level, which was one of the reasons the sword master of the Beixuan Sword Sect valued him so highly.

Li Baxian's Way of Weapon Control, supplemented by his identity as a sword cultivator, was the reason he could secure the tenth position on the Spirit Stream Ranking within the 8th Heaven level of cultivation. The last time Yan Xing fought with him, he was directly hit by over a hundred blades of sword light, making him doubt his own existence.

After the meal, Shui Yuan accompanied Lu Ye to the square, stood thirty feet apart, and said with a smile, "Little junior brother, go ahead and attack with your weapon control."

Lu Ye looked around, and seeing no one else, he took out his Spiritual Artifact from his storage sack.

Seeing that he had taken out the Boulder Mountain Saber, Shui Yuan's eyebrows slightly knitted together, and her expression became a bit solemn.

Meanwhile, Lu Ye had already started to channel spirit force into the blade and said, "Please give me your guidance, senior sister."

He wasn't worried about injuring Shui Yuan; not only was there a huge gap in their strengths, but with this thirty feet distance...Lu Ye couldn't reach her.

As spirit force climbed the saber, and with a thought from Lu Ye, the saber unsheathed and transformed into a streak of fiery red light flying toward Shui Yuan.

Surprise appeared in Shui Yuan's eyes.

The speed of the light wasn't too slow, but certainly not fast; it was much slower than what Lu Ye had seen others perform in the Chess Sea. If a Level 7 cultivator's weapon control was of this standard, it posed no threat whatsoever to him. Even if dozens of weapons attacked simultaneously, he could easily dodge them.

The light stopped ten yards away from Shui Yuan, meaning Lu Ye's weapon control could only cover a distance within twenty yards.

He controlled the saber to fly around in the air a few times before the spirit force he had channeled into it was depleted, then returned it before placing it back into the scabbard.

"That's roughly it," Lu Ye scratched his head.

This was the result of five days of practicing the Weapon Control Technique.

Short, the distance was much less compared to others; using weapon control like this against someone else would surely be a big disadvantage.

Plain, the speed was slow, and the killing power was weak.

Quick, he could only maintain it for a few moments before he had to retrieve the Boulder Mountain Saber, or else, if the spirit force channeled into the saber was depleted, he would lose control over it, which might then be captured by the enemy.

Shui Yuan walked towards him and reached out her hand, "Let me see your saber."

Lu Ye drew the Boulder Mountain Saber and handed it over; Shui Yuan channeled spirit force into it, and a gentle glow enveloped the blade as she examined it.

Shortly after, her face twisted oddly as she asked, "Little junior brother, have you been using this saber to practice weapon control all along?"

"Yes."

Shui Yuan laughed and then sighed, "This saber's restrictions are completely unsuitable for weapon control. Why would you use it to practice? Besides, this saber is too heavy. Didn't your fourth senior brother tell you to pick a more suitable Spiritual Artifact for weapon control before starting?"

Lu Ye thought for a moment, "No."

Li Baxian had taught him many tips and key points about weapon control, but he never mentioned anything about the choice of Spiritual Artifacts.

Shui Yuan slapped her forehead, "That guy is really irresponsible."

"Is it the saber's fault?" Lu Ye felt somewhat anxious yet hopeful, as if someone gravely ill suddenly heard there might still be a chance for recovery.

"The issue is with the saber; it lacks appropriate restrictions for weapon control, it's significantly heavy, which is why your weapon control has such short range and slow speed. And... when you were in Chess Sea, you saw other people using weapon control; didn't you notice the difference from yours?"

"I noticed, but I thought it was my own fault."

Shui Yuan sighed, "It's impressive that you could control a weapon like this saber successfully."

"What kind of Spiritual Artifact is suitable for weapon control?"

"It should be lightweight, that's the first thing. Of course, it shouldn't be too light, or else it won't have enough killing power. It depends on your personal choice. Secondly, you should look at the restrictions within the Spiritual Artifact.

At the very least, it should have a spirit energy storage restriction, otherwise, just like what happened just now, the Spiritual Artifact will only be able to maintain weapon control for a short moment before needing to be retrieved. How could one manage weapon control like that?

A spirit energy storage restriction lets you store spirit force within the Spiritual Artifact, allowing for more sustained control."

Lu Ye took a deep breath, "So that's how it is."

Shui Yuan looked at him apologetically, "Ultimately, it's our negligence as your senior brother and sister." Mainly, it was because the Righteous Blood Sect hadn't taken in disciples for many years, and Shui Yuan hardly knew how to guide someone in cultivation anymore.

As for Li Baxian, he was only focused on teaching Lu Ye the knowledge of weapon control, completely forgetting about the Spiritual Artifact issue, perhaps assuming that Lu Ye had a suitable one.

She then detailed suitable restrictions for weapon control to Lu Ye.

Lu Ye memorized them in his heart, and with excitement, he headed towards Heaven's Augury Hall, "I'm going to find a suitable Spiritual Artifact."

Heart uplifted, there was still hope for my Weapon Control Technique!

Chapter 215 The Right Way to Control Weapons

Lu Ye was not buying something from Heaven's Augury treasure vault for the first time, so he naturally knew how to quickly find what he needed.

Just a moment later, he stood inside the Heaven's Augury treasure vault, surrounded by shelves filled with Spiritual Artifacts, searching through each one.

The types of Spiritual Artifacts here were numerous, meeting the needs of any cultivator.

As his Second Senior Sister had said, the Spiritual Artifacts for weapon control and those for direct combat were actually different. The former needed at least three types of restrictions – spirit energy storage, foundation fortification, and Sharpness.

The spirit energy storage restriction ensured the endurance of weapon control, storing the cultivator's spirit force within it and gradually consuming it during weapon control.

Without this restriction, one would encounter the situation Lu Ye had before, needing to recall the Spiritual Artifact after just a few moments of control.

As for foundation fortification and Sharpness, these were present in every Spiritual Artifact; the former reinforced the artifact itself so it wouldn't break easily, while the latter increased its lethality.

After browsing around, Lu Ye found it difficult to choose. The prices of the Spiritual Artifacts here were generally higher than ordinary ones. For example, his Boulder Mountain Saber with nine spirit runes was already the limit for a low-grade spirit artifact, costing only one hundred and thirty-five points of merit.

Yet, the price of a similarly restricted artifact suitable for weapon control was close to two hundred points.

By this measure, the Boulder Mountain Saber he initially bought was quite a bargain.

Just as he was about to make a purchase, he suddenly remembered that he didn't need to buy from Heaven's Augury Hall at all, as Hua Ci should have many Spiritual Artifacts.

In the Chess Sea, she didn't kill many people, but with her help, the cultivators of the Haotian Alliance slew countless enemies. Out of gratitude for her contribution, Hua Ci would always receive a share of the spoils after the battlefield was cleared.

When she returned last time, her mechanical wolf was loaded with storage sacks, and that was after some of the contents had been consolidated. If not for that, there would have been even more storage sacks.

Exiting the Heaven's Augury treasure vault, Lu Ye sent a message to Hua Ci, and in no time at all, she walked over from the training room.

"You've reached Level 7?" Hua Ci looked at Lu Ye in surprise. Since their return from Chess Sea, everyone had been diligently cultivating, and there were few opportunities to see each other. If Lu Ye hadn't sent her a message, she wouldn't have known that he had reached Level 7.

"Yeah, do you have any Spiritual Artifacts suitable for weapon control?"

"Oh yes, I've kept some aside, but they're not on me," Hua Ci said and then, turning around, beckoned, "Come with me."

She headed straight for the training room.

Before long, the two of them walked side by side into Hua Ci's exclusive training room. Lu Ye looked and saw a large pile of storage sacks in one corner of the room, all brought back from Chess Sea.

"You haven't dealt with them yet."

"I kept them for you," Hua Ci replied.

"For what?"

"Second Senior Sister said you've made quick progress on the Path of Spirit Runes, and you might need these storage sacks before long."

Lu Ye didn't understand; what did his progress on the Path of Spirit Runes have to do with these storage sacks? After a moment of thought, he had a sudden realization: "That's thoughtful of you."

Hua Ci selected three sacks from the pile and handed them to Lu Ye, "The Spiritual Artifacts are inside. Look for yourself. I don't know exactly what you're looking for."

Lu Ye took them, sat down cross-legged, and started searching.

Hua Ci didn't disturb him, busying herself with her own cultivation.

The Spiritual Artifacts obtained from Chess Sea were varied and numerous. Toward the end, Hua Ci couldn't carry any more storage sacks, and the cultivators from the Haotian Alliance gathered the Spiritual Artifacts left behind by the defeated Ten Thousand Demons Ridge cultivators all into one storage sack and gave it to Hua Ci.

Among them were many suitable for weapon control.

The Spiritual Artifacts in these three storage sacks numbered several hundred, covering all types. If all these Spiritual Artifacts were sold to the Heaven's Augury treasure vault, the amount of merit Hua Ci could earn would be an enormously large number.

However, she wasn't lacking in merit points at the moment and decided to keep these Spiritual Artifacts, which could later be used as rewards for disciples.

Now the Deputy Governor of the Righteous Blood Sect, she was accustomed to and accepting of her new identity. Her Second Senior Sister treated her very well. As a healing cultivator guided by her Senior Sister, she was able to avoid many detours and naturally wanted to contribute to the Righteous Blood Sect.

After a long search, Lu Ye chose a dagger about a foot long.

The weight and length of the dagger were just right, and at first glance, it was clearly intended for weapon control because it didn't have a handle—just sharp points at both ends.

This Spiritual Artifact, left behind by some Ten Thousand Demons Ridge cultivator after death, had nine spirit runes. A Spiritual Artifact like this would cost at least one hundred and eighty points of merit or even more in the Heaven's Augury treasure vault.

Among the nine spirit runes, two were for spirit energy storage, three strengthened the blade, two increased the lethality of the Spiritual Artifact, and the remaining two Lu Ye couldn't identify, but they were certainly enhancements for weapon control.

"Pick a few more. I've heard that if one has enough control over one's own spirit force, it's possible to control several Spiritual Artifacts at the same time," Hua Ci advised Lu Ye as he made his selection.

"I'll practice with this one first. If I need more, I'll come back to you."

"Sure, it's not like I'm going anywhere," Hua Ci replied.

"Why do you make it sound like someone has you tied up?"

"Well, who knows."

...

After leaving Hua Ci's training room, Lu Ye entered his own training room and began to channel spirit force into the dagger.

This hiltless dagger was different from the Boulder Mountain Saber. The Boulder Mountain Saber was bought by Lu Ye from the Heaven's Augury treasure vault and was an unowned object, ready to use as soon as he got it.

But this hiltless dagger originally belonged to a Ten Thousand Demons Ridge cultivator. Even though that cultivator died, he left many traces of his own spirit force within the dagger. Simply put, the dagger had already adapted to its former owner's spirit force, and if someone else tried to use it hastily, they might not be able to unleash its full power.

What Lu Ye needed to do now was to nurture it with his own spirit force, to make it adapt to him so that he could fully utilize the dagger's power.

Previously, Lu Ye had acquired a tiny bell, a Spiritual Artifact from the Young Master of the Nine Stars Sect, which he had initially been unable to wield to its full potential. It was only after getting guidance from a locksmith of the Heaven's Augury Mercantile Union that he gradually figured it out.

Therefore, in battle, picking up someone else's Spiritual Artifact haphazardly would be useless—only those that belonged to oneself were the best.

With his current Level 7 cultivation and such pure spirit force, it wouldn't take too long to nurture a Spiritual Artifact. After just half a day, the hiltless dagger turned into a streak of light under Lu Ye's control and flew around the training room with extreme agility.

Lu Ye was in tears...

After several bumps and knocks, he finally found the correct way to control the weapon.

The training room was too small for him to maneuver freely, so Lu Ye stepped outside. Soon after, there were sounds of breaking air from outside the training room.

Lu Ye discovered that the range of his weapon control reached about thirty-five zhang, which surprised him, as usually a Level 7 cultivator would not be able to control a weapon beyond thirty zhang.

Don't underestimate these extra five zhang. If Lu Ye faced off in a weapon control battle with an enemy, having five zhang more in attack range would allow him to strike first and seize control of the battle rhythm.

Moreover, the speed of his weapon control seemed much faster than that of an average Level 7 cultivator. Having seen many Level 7 cultivators using weapon control to defeat enemies in the Chess Sea, he quickly discovered his own advantages after a comparison.

With longer range, faster speed, and even stronger power than others in weapon control, Lu Ye could kill his opponents without lifting a finger when facing off against cultivators of the same level.

Many disciples were attracted by the commotion here and ran over to watch, admiring the streak of light flying through the air and loudly cheering.

There was a sudden rumble from the edge of the sky as clouds gathered and lightning cracked.

Lu Ye retracted the streak of light and waved his hand, "It's thundering and about to rain; let's disperse."

He turned and walked back into the training room.

His weapon control had just made minor achievements, but to truly test this method of killing enemies, he had to verify its effectiveness in actual combat. It was useless if all the flashy weapon control he practiced didn't work in real battle situations.

Lu Ye planned to enter the Mirage Realm.

He took out the Breath Fruit Core, went into the small room, spent fifty merits, opened the door, and walked into the fog.

As soon as he steadied himself, the fog began to churn, and a large insect, comparable to Lu Ye in cultivation, burst out of the fog.

However, as soon as it revealed itself, a streak of light had already shot towards it, effortlessly piercing through its body and spraying green blood.

The formidable insect had just appeared and was already knocked to the ground.

Lu Ye raised an eyebrow. The Path of Weapon Control was indeed useful; this was much easier than wielding the Boulder Mountain Saber to slash at it.

As the fog churned again, two insects rushed out. One was killed just like before as soon as it emerged, while the other only took two steps.

The streak of light swept by, and one insect after another was slain. By the time he reached the 5th Checkpoint, relying solely on weapon control was no longer sufficient. Even with its incredible speed, there were limits, and these insects were not slow. Lu Ye, with the power of the Boulder Mountain Saber, killed the insects that approached him.

Upon reaching the 8th Checkpoint, the spirit force within the dagger was exhausted. Before it was completely depleted, Lu Ye withdrew it and fought bloodily in all directions with the Boulder Mountain Saber in hand.

Moments later, back in the training room, Lu Ye opened his eyes, pale faced. Just now, he had only made it to the 8th Checkpoint before being overwhelmed by the insects.

The Level 7 insects were quite different from the Level 6 ones, showing a significant increase in strength. The same was reflected on cultivators; not to mention that having an additional weapon control technique greatly enhanced a cultivator's overall strength.

Although he hadn't reached the 9th Checkpoint, Lu Ye was not dissatisfied. He had only advanced to Level 7 a few days ago, and his Weapon Control Technique had just been mastered. Before this, he had only reached the 5th Checkpoint. With an extra Spiritual Artifact for weapon control, he managed to push to the 8th Checkpoint, which was a significant improvement.

If he had two or even three Spiritual Artifacts, Lu Ye felt he might be able to break through the 9th Checkpoint. Then, he could face off against cultivators in the fog.

Still, he needed to visit Hua Ci to obtain a few more Spiritual Artifacts suitable for weapon control. During the control session just now, he had felt quite at ease and believed he could manage one more Spiritual Artifact—a benefit of having an adequate command over his spirit force.

Outside, the thunder kept rumbling, as if a heavy downpour was imminent.

The battlefield marking suddenly stirred. Lu Ye checked and saw a message from his fourth senior brother. It was only a simple line: "Junior brother, be careful – the Insect Plague is coming!"

Chapter 216 Insect Plague

Ten miles away from the campsite, there lies a flat valley in the wilderness. At the center of the valley is a giant hole, its mouth measuring ten zhang in diameter, plunging straight down into the unknown depths. Anyone standing at the edge of the hole would also hear the howling of the wind.

The Spirit Stream battlefield is indeed a curious place, filled with many unknown adventures and opportunities for those who come across them, as well as dangers that are beyond the imagination of ordinary people.

At this moment, Lu Ye was riding Amber, standing on an elevated point next to the valley, looking down. In his view, centered around that hole, the valley was swarming with various kinds of insects—spiders, mantises, grasshoppers—identical to those he had encountered within the Mirage Realm, only much smaller in size.

These peculiar insects were covered with a layer of black, giving off an extremely solid impression. They also exuded an extremely uncomfortable aura that wasn't purely demonic Qi, but rather seemed like an aura of destruction that would devour everything.

Right now, the dense sounds of chewing could be heard emanating from the valley. The once lush and vibrant valley now lay withered, a desolate place where no grass grew wherever the insects had passed, even the ground was scraped bare. Conservatively estimated, there were no fewer than tens of thousands of these insects gathered here, and more were continuously crawling out of the hole.

As time went on, their numbers would only increase.

"So it is indeed an Insect Plague!"

By Lu Ye's side, Chen Yu was also riding his beast pet, a creature resembling a leopard. However, standing next to Amber, the demon beast had lost its usual majestic presence, now appearing dejected and subdued.

Last night, the thunder pillar that had descended from the sky was clearly visible even from ten miles away at the Righteous Blood Sect camp, prompting Chen Yu to report the situation promptly, surmising that it might be the sign of an Insect Plague.

At that time, Lu Ye had just finished inquiring about the Insect Plague from Li Baxian.

The Insect Plague is a great disaster of the Spirit Stream battlefield, occurring sporadically. The interval between plagues is not fixed—it could be a few months, a year or two, or even longer.

The thunder pillar from the sky is a sign of the Insect Plague's arrival.

Along with the appearance of those thunder pillars are the holes that emerge in the valleys. The Nine Provinces cultivation world calls these the insect caves, and the insects that crawl out are known as the Insect Race.

The Insect Race and the Demon Race are not the same concept. Although there are insect demons within the Demon Race, they do not have the destructive aura that the Insect Race possesses.

Overall, the Demon Race is considered a normal race within the Nine Provinces cultivation world. Many demons have taken human form, joined human race sects, and have even become sworn brothers with human race cultivators.

This is entirely different from the mindless, destructive Insect Race.

The reason the Insect Plague is termed a natural disaster is that each time it occurs, the entire Spirit Stream battlefield is affected. Outside of the sect residences within the battlefield, more insect caves will appear.

If not dealt with in time, and the Insect Race is allowed to grow, flattening a sect's camp would not be difficult.

Whenever an Insect Plague occurs, many sects suffer misfortune. This time, it's unknown which sects will become victims.

The Insect Race is dangerous largely because they devour all life in their path. The greatest trouble with an Insect Plague is their incredibly fast growth and reproduction rates.

One member of the Insect Race can achieve in just a few days the growth progress that would take a cultivator several months, so once an Insect Plague arises, it must be dealt with immediately, or disaster will ensue.

However, with danger comes opportunity.

When cultivators slay these insects, they can also earn merit! Moreover, the corpses of these insects can be sold to Heaven's Augury treasure vault, albeit for a low price. But with accumulation, the rewards can be substantial.

Hence, for many cultivators, an Insect Plague, while bringing crisis, is also a feast.

There have been Insect Plagues outside the Righteous Blood Sect camp before, but since the camp was unmanned, no one attended to them, resulting in the Plague developing to the point where nearby sects were helpless, even affecting several big sects nearby. In the end, it was the powerhouses from the Core Circle who stepped in to deal with it.

After every Insect Plague, the outskirts of the Righteous Blood Sect camp would be barren and desolate. Fortunately, with the rich spiritual energy of the Spirit Stream battlefield, it wouldn't take long for vitality to be restored.

"You stay here. If there are any abnormalities, contact me immediately," Lu Ye instructed.

"Yes!" Chen Yu responded.

Amber turned around and swiftly swept towards the camp.

On the way, Lu Ye sent a message to Hua Ci.

After exchanging words with the Fourth Senior Brother the night before and now having seen the Insect Plague for himself, he had gained some understanding of the Plague. If it had occurred two months earlier, there really would have been no way to handle it—the Righteous Blood Sect had no people.

But now, things are different.

Sect disciples always practicing in isolation isn't ideal, and this Insect Plague offers a good opportunity for the Righteous Blood Sect to train its disciples.

As the fourth brother mentioned, in the Spirit Stream battlefield, all sects with garrisons must face their own Insect Plagues, though the severity varies. Perhaps this is orchestrated by Heaven's Augury; the outskirts sects won't face a severe Insect Plague initially, and as long as they manage it in time, they can cope.

Unlike the Core Circle, where cultivators are already fighting against the Insect Race with heaven-shaking, earth-shattering intensity.

Hurrying back to the station, outside Heaven's Augury Hall, Hua Ci had gathered everyone here after receiving Lu Ye's message, waiting solemnly.

Currently, apart from Hua Ci's few official disciples, there are only a hundred named disciples previously taken in by the sect. However, the number of independent cultivators affiliated with the Righteous Blood Sect has risen to more than six hundred, an increase of more than a hundred from the beginning.

This is the benefit of having independent cultivators affiliated with the sect; if anything happens at the station, Lu Ye has a large group of people at his disposal. Otherwise, relying solely on a hundred named disciples would probably not be enough to cope with this Insect Plague.

Lu Ye dismounted from the tiger's back, and pairs of eyes turned towards him. Over seven hundred people had gathered here, yet there were no sounds of idle chatter; the atmosphere was solemn.

Standing before them all, Lu Ye said in a deep voice, "I'm sure everyone has heard by now, the Insect Plague has arrived! This is something every sect on the entire battlefield must face; no one can avoid it. Previously, our sect was in decline and powerless to face the Insect Plague, but now we have the capital to resist."

"During this time, everyone has been making an effort in their cultivation, which I have seen. Many people have improved their cultivation, which is great. As a cultivator, cultivation is the foundation of

one's self. But cultivation alone is not enough; you also need experience in life-and-death battles with enemies. This Insect Plague is an opportunity.

I just went to Insect Valley with your Brother Chen Yu to take a look; there are already a lot of insects there. But rest assured, they have numbers but not strength. Even a Level 2 cultivator can take on ten of them alone!"

"This is an opportunity, not just to temper your enemy-killing skills but also to earn merit by killing those insects. The function of merit needs no explanation from me; the insects in Insect Valley are merit waiting to be claimed. Do you want it?"

"We do!" The crowd shouted in unison, their voices resonating to the skies.

"If you want it, then go and take it! Our Righteous Blood Sect is different from the other sects; other sects have protective arrays. Even if they struggle to hold off the Insect Plague, they can retreat to their stations and rely on the big array to ensure temporary safety. But what about us? We don't have any big array, nothing at all.

So, if we cannot hold back this Insect Plague, the station will be flattened by the Insect Race, and the spirit fields you have painstakingly cultivated, as well as the Spirit Plants you've carefully planted, will all become food for the Insect Race. Thus, we have no way out. If we want to win in this Insect Plague, our only option is to take the initiative to strike!"

"There's no need to defend the station— all named disciples and affiliated independent cultivators, listen! You have half a Shichen to form squads of five to ten people, select a squad leader for each team. The squad leader will be responsible for counting the merits of the team members.

After the Insect Plague, the top ten squads in terms of merit earned, regardless of whether you are a named disciple or an independent cultivator, will each receive varying amounts of Spirit Stones as a reward. The top three will each receive a Restriction Level 9 spirit artifact as a reward!"

The crowd buzzed; rewards of Spirit Stones were one thing, although the quantity was unknown. This was the first time the Righteous Blood Sect had taken such an action since taking in disciples, so the rewards would certainly not be meager.

The top three receiving a Restriction Level 9 spirit artifact was incredible; these were spirit artifacts with 9 spirit prohibitions, the best among low-grade spirit artifacts. Any one from Heaven's Augury treasure vault was worth more than a hundred merits.

"Furthermore, if any squad performs exceptionally well, there will be special rewards. Every member of that squad can make one request of me, and as long as it's within my power, I will not refuse."

In the crowd, a little white hand suddenly shot up, followed by a voice asking, "Fifth Brother, I have a question!"

Lu Ye turned his head to look and saw that it was the girl called He Xiyi who had raised her hand.

"Speak up!"

"I have a friend who wants to ask if that special reward can be used on Sixth Sister?"

"Your friend sure loves to meddle!" Lu Ye glared at her. This girl seemed to have an inexplicable admiration for Hua Ci, but she was one of the few powerful individuals the Righteous Blood Sect currently had to flaunt, as she was a Level 6 cultivator.

Currently, within the Righteous Blood Sect, Lu Ye and Chen Yu were Level 7 while aside from Hua Ci and He Xiyi, there were only three other Level 6 cultivators.

Lu Ye turned his head to glance at Hua Ci, who nodded gently with a gracious smile.

"Yes," Lu Ye declared with a loud voice, adding, "but only for you."

He Xiyi's expression immediately brightened, her little fists clenched tightly, suddenly filled with determination and vigor.

"Let's get moving! You have half a Shichen; in half a Shichen, we set out for Insect Valley!"

As Lu Ye's words fell, the square instantly became bustling. The cultivators familiar with each other gathered to form squads and elected their leaders.

Meanwhile, Lu Ye began to take out blank jade slips one by one, activating his spirit force to inscribe information into them. He had received plenty of useful intelligence from the fourth brother, things like the characteristics and weaknesses of different types of insects, and having killed so many insects in the Mirage Realm, he naturally had his own experiences to share.

This information was extremely valuable to cultivators facing the Insect Plague for the first time; it might come in handy at any moment. He intended to disseminate this information before the battle began.

Chapter 217 Insect Cave

One hour later, the site of the Righteous Blood Sect, which had just regained a lot of energy, suddenly quieted down as all the Disciples in name and independent cultivators rushed to the Insect Valley, ten miles away.

Although there was no one left to guard the site, there was no need to worry about it being occupied by cultivators from Ten Thousand Demons Ridge, as Little Gray was still there. With it present, no cultivator from Ten Thousand Demons Ridge would dare to come; that would be akin to seeking death.

Moreover, with the Insect Plague catastrophe sweeping across the entire Spirit Stream battlefield at the moment, it was unlikely that any sect had the spare energy to stir up trouble during such times.

Ten miles away, in the Insect Valley, a battle had already erupted.

Compared to one hour before, the number of insects in the valley had increased. The main reason the Insect Plague was considered a catastrophe was the rapid reproduction and growth rate of the Insect Race. Given enough energy, they could transform into an army capable of annihilating everything in an exceedingly short amount of time.

Therefore, to defeat the Insect Plague, the early stage was critical. It was necessary to curb the number of insects and not allow them to grow.

Seven hundred cultivators formed teams amounting to one hundred squads in total. Under the leadership of their respective squad leaders, they dispersed to all parts of the Insect Valley, slaughtering the insects and steadily advancing towards the insect cave.

The insects that crawled out were not very strong. Compared to cultivators, most of them were only equivalent to Level 1 or 2 of the Spirit Stream, and a few were equal to Level 3. Their size wasn't very large either, unlike the insects Lu Ye encountered in the Mirage Realm, many of which were almost his size.

The smallest insects here were only as big as a fist, and the largest about the size of a washbasin. Additionally, their method of attack was simple, making them not too difficult to kill.

The only difficulty was their sheer number; tens of thousands of insects swarmed the entire valley, having gnawed away several layers of the soil.

Spirit force surged as each squad cleansed their designated areas, slaughtering the insects. The verdant green blood soon filled the valley, imbuing the area with a pungent smell of blood.

Differing from the squads that methodically exterminated the insects from the outside in, Lu Ye, armed with nothing but a saber, single-handedly carved a straight line through the army of insects, leaving a trail of insect corpses wherever he passed.

In dealing with enemies that were numerous but small in size, the effectiveness of the Boulder Mountain Saber was somewhat limited. Even though he could kill one insect per strike, there was a limit to how many he could kill.

However, Lu Ye's methods of killing enemies were not limited to the Boulder Mountain Saber—he could, to some extent, be considered a counterfeit magic cultivator.

Alternating between the Fire Phoenix Technique and the Fire Dragon Technique, his blazing spirit force engulfed the area, killing large swathes of insects with each attack. Particularly, the Fire Dragon Technique, which was a part of the Red Lotus Soaring to Sky Technique and could only be practiced by cultivators of Level 7, had a much greater power and range than the Fire Phoenix Technique.

Naturally, its powerful effect came with greater energy consumption.

Between the two techniques, Lu Ye was undoubtedly satisfied with the Fire Dragon Technique, as this technique did not present any quirks.

The Fire Phoenix Technique, for some reason, had turned into a fire quail with a rather peculiar appearance.

The Fire Dragon Technique, on the other hand, was extremely visually appealing. When used, it looked like a real fire dragon was dancing, with even the dragon scales faintly visible on its body.

The valley was actually not very large, and it didn't take long for Lu Ye to reach the insect cave at the front. Looking downwards, it was dark and seemingly bottomless. Various differently shaped insects continued to climb up the walls of the cave. Sensing Lu Ye's vitality, several insects even jumped towards him, but were bisected by his saber light before they could reach him.

After a brief contemplation, Lu Ye leaped downward, throwing himself into the pit. Midair, insects lunged at him from all directions. His surrounding spirit force vibrated intensely, repelling all incoming insects.

Boom...

Lu Ye landed at the bottom of the pit, looked up to gauge its depth—it was not too deep, about ten feet or so, which was good news.

Sounds of creeping approached from all sides as the Insect Plague surrounded him.

Spirit force began to surge. Without pausing, Lu Ye continued onward, holding the Boulder Mountain Saber in one hand and the hilt of the saber held high in the other.

A glint of light from the hilt illuminated the surrounding area.

This was due to the Sun Blaze Spirit Runes he had imbued into the hilt of the saber. Though not very useful in combat, it was perfectly suited to this situation.

Conserving his spirit force, Lu Ye did not overly harness the power of Sun Blaze, allowing only enough radiance to cover a radius of thirty feet.

One hour later, Lu Ye soared out from the pit, a pair of fiery red wings conspicuously behind him.

He flew across the Insect Valley and landed beside Hua Ci, covered in fresh green blood.

Several low-level independent cultivators of Level 1 immediately approached, bringing clean water to wash him.

Hua Ci had not participated in the battle. As the only healing cultivator in the base, she needed to stay to treat injured disciples, though at the moment, due to the short duration of the battle, virtually no one was injured.

She was surrounded by about a dozen individuals, ten of whom had cultivations too low, only at Level 1. With such cultivation, participating in the battle would be too dangerous, risking death, so they stayed with Hua Ci acting as assistants.

The others were keen on developing towards becoming healing cultivators and were learning medical techniques from Hua Ci.

This was quite beneficial. A sect always needed different factions to thrive, especially the healing cultivator faction. Although the current strength of the Righteous Blood Sect was generally low, they were well-rounded with representatives from various factions within the sect.

"Did you find it?" Hua Ci approached, picking up a severed limb of some insect from Lu Ye's head and tossing it aside.

Lu Ye shook his head.

"The passages inside were too many, I didn't dare to venture too deep."

He ventured alone into the insect cave because he wanted to locate the insect hive.

These Insect Race members aren't baseless; deep within every insect cave, there lies an insect hive, which is the breeding ground for these creatures.

To resolve the Insect Plague, one must find the insect hive, for only by destroying the hive at its source can the plague be eradicated.

This information was obtained from Li Baxian.

The insect hives are deep underground and protected by powerful insects, making it difficult for Lu Ye alone to achieve this. Hence, whenever the Insect Plague arrives, all the big sects go all out. While they may not deploy to the extent that the Righteous Blood Sect does, they do send a significant number of people to first pinpoint the location of the hive before making any further plans.

These sects face the Insect Plague every now and then, so they are experienced. They understand the underground terrain and know where the passages lead.

On the other hand, this was the first time in decades that the Righteous Blood Sect had enough manpower to handle the Insect Plague, with no one knowing the underground terrain, so everything had to be started from scratch.

Thus, the urgent task was to quickly clear out the insects in Insect Valley, and then explore underground further.

The formation of the Insect Plague remains a mystery because, even though it gets thoroughly wiped out after each appearance, it isn't long before it returns with force.

Before every plague, there are unmistakable signs like thunderbolts falling from the sky.

The endless swarms of Insect Race, and even the Insect Plague itself, seem to materialize out of thin air.

So, whenever the time is about right, and as soon as it starts thunderstorming at the Spirit Stream battlefield, all the big sects begin to be on alert.

This was also why Li Baxian sent a message to Lu Ye as soon as possible.

Soon, the first injured cultivator came, and though the insects in Insect Valley weren't powerful, their sheer numbers inevitably led to injuries during the battle.

Hua Ci, of course, took great care in treating him, and simultaneously explained medical principles to the few disciples who were interested in becoming healing cultivators.

Lu Ye didn't take further action; killing those insects had been easy for him, but he hadn't earned much merit. With his current strength, he estimated needing to kill twenty to thirty insects to earn a slight amount of merit.

Unlike the low-level cultivators, who earned merit for every insect they killed, their numbers might not be large, but the accumulated gains were substantial.

The Righteous Blood Sect disciples currently had no suitable way to earn merit, so the Insect Plague was an opportunity for them.

Given the Righteous Blood Sect's resources, clearing the insects from Insect Valley was not a difficult task, so Lu Ye decided not to get involved in that matter anymore.

The real need for Lu Ye's effort would be when they entered the insect cave.

The battle continued, with more people getting injured and coming to Hua Ci for treatment before rejoining the fight.

After half a day, the Righteous Blood Sect cultivators had reduced their encirclement by half, and progress was quick since the sect was narrowing the perimeter from the outside in, making the later stages smoother.

Another four hours passed, and the insects in Insect Valley were slain to extinction, eliciting cheers of jubilation from the disciples.

The entire Insect Valley was now littered with insect corpses, their bright green blood flowing like rivers.

"Clean up the battlefield, squads restore and recover, after six hours, follow me into the insect cave," Lu Ye commanded, and the disciples immediately sprang into action, with some teams guarding the entrance of the cave, slaying insects crawling out, while others collected the insect corpses.

The insect corpses could be sold to Heaven's Augury treasure vault.

For the cultivators of the Nine Provinces cultivation world, Heaven's Augury treasure vault was a treasure trove indeed, offering anything for purchase, as long as one had enough merit, and buying virtually anything, though valuing such items could be challenging.

For instance, the insect corpses the disciples were gathering right now might only earn them a minor amount of merit after selling dozens, but any amount of merit was better than none.

Six hours flashed by, and seven hundred cultivators gathered at the cave entrance, all filled with high spirits.

Lu Ye, with his hand on the hilt of his saber, walked from behind, with Amber at his side and Yiyi riding on Amber, the crowd parting to make way for them.

He reached the entrance and leaped down in one step, with Amber not hesitating to follow with Yiyi, while the Level 7 Chen Yu jumped down next, followed by teams led by Level 6 cultivators.

Sounds of intense battle came from below, accompanied by the death screeches of the insects.

Moments later, Chen Yu's voice rang out from below, "It's clear now!"

The waiting teams at the entrance then orderly descended, groups converging at the bottom of the cave and led by their captains, moved forward to explore, and one by one, torches were lit...

Chapter 218 Insect Hive

The bottom of the cave had been cleared out, leaving a clean space, and even the ground had been baked by Lu Ye using the Fire Dragon Technique.

Ropes were dangling from above, allowing those cultivators with lower cultivation levels to climb down with their help, of course, the main purpose was to facilitate an escape...

Squads holding torches were heading deep into the insect cave.

It was the first time that the Righteous Blood Sect had faced an Insect Plague, so the main tasks at the moment were twofold: one was to find the location of the insect hive, as everything else would be easy once the hive was found.

The other was to explore the underground environment and draw a map of the underground space.

The Insect Plague would not be a one-time occurrence, and it would happen again, although the location of the hive would certainly change. By spending more effort on map drawing now, reference to the map next time would save a lot of time and effort.

Lu Ye had noticed when he came down earlier that the underground was crisscrossed with many forks, nearly comparable to the mine veins of Evil Moon Valley, and it was unknown how such a complex terrain had formed.

Exploring such a complicated environment definitely wouldn't work with too few people.

Lu Ye genuinely felt fortunate that after the Spirit Stream Defense Battle, he had recruited many disciples and independent cultivators for his garrison; otherwise, he would have no one at his disposal now.

Suddenly, he remembered that Shui Yuan had mentioned before that since the Righteous Blood Sect had already started recruiting disciples, it might as well go even bigger, asking Lu Ye to recruit as many disciples and independent cultivators as possible, which was related to the future development of the sect.

Looking at it now, Shui Yuan must have considered the Insect Plague when giving Lu Ye such advice.

Lu Ye once again mobilized his spirit force, constructing a huge set of Spirit Energy Gathering Spirit Runes here, which would become the place for the named disciples and independent cultivators to heal and recover.

Hua Ci and others would also stay behind here.

After finishing these tasks, Lu Ye did not rush to leave, but first took some time to recover, refining a few elixir pills to ensure an abundance of spirit force, then set off towards the interior.

Along the way, emerald green insect blood was everywhere, but insect corpses were nowhere to be seen, having been collected.

Soon, he reached the second fork and randomly chose a path to move forward.

The farther he went, the more forks he encountered.

One incense stick's time later, he arrived at a deserted fork, took out the Boulder Mountain Saber, and while killing insects, pushed forward, exploring the terrain while searching for the location of the insect hive.

At this very moment, inside the myriad passages of the underground labyrinth, the disciples and independent cultivators of the Righteous Blood Sect were engaged in fierce battles with the Insect Race within the numerous forks.

The deeper they progressed, the larger the Insect Race they encountered, and correspondingly, the stronger their strength. As a result, it was inevitable that the disciples would get injured. Those injured would immediately retreat along the original path to the cave entrance, where, while being treated by Hua Ci, they would take out the maps drawn by their squads and hand them over to her.

Hua Ci was responsible for compiling all the fragmentary maps and then drawing a complete map of the underground.

Progress was fairly smooth; aside from not yet finding the location of the hive, every squad had made rewarding advances. However, as the strength of the Insects encountered increased, casualties were inevitable.

The life of a cultivator was like this, full of danger at every turn. Comrades who had just toasted to their bright future yesterday might become cold corpses today.

One day later, while slaughtering his way through a fork, Lu Ye received a message: the insect hive was found—a lot of people meant high efficiency!

He immediately turned back, heading towards the way he came.

One hour later, at the entrance of the insect cave, Lu Ye arrived covered in green blood.

Hua Ci cleaned the blood for him, and Lu Ye used his spirit force to dry off the dampness on his body. Illuminated by the torches around, he joined Hua Ci at a table.

On this table lay a map, the result of one day's exploration by seven hundred cultivators of the Righteous Blood Sect.

From the map, it could be seen that the number of forks underground was extremely large, winding around with no discernible pattern, with many forks interconnected with each other.

The map was not complete, as many areas had not yet had time to provide feedback and updates.

Hua Ci pointed at a location on the map, "The hive is located here, but that place is very dangerous. Chen Yu has already led a team over, and Amber and Yiyi are with him."

Lu Ye stared intently at the map before him, gradually forming a clear route in his mind.

He then looked at other routes on the map, speaking, "As the fourth brother said, the hive is a very large underground space that connects to many passages. These passages will all converge towards the exit, that is, our current location. Conversely, if we start from here, no matter which fork we take, the final direction will also point to the location of the hive!"

So, if the entire map were to be completed, the lines representing the forks would form a spindle shape. At the two ends of the spindle, one would be the exit of the insect cave, and the other the location of the hive.

Now, this spindle shape had been mostly drawn, representing the progress of the Righteous Blood Sect's cultivators. However, so far, only one line had connected the two ends of the spindle, which was the line representing the team that found the hive.

The other lines were still progressing. Some were advancing slowly because of the overall low strength, while others were doing well, almost reaching the underground space where the hive was located.

"I'll go check out the insect hive first."

After Lu Ye had said that, he turned and entered deeper into the insect cave.

Along the way, torches were lit on the walls of the cave at intervals. Such common means of illumination were something almost every cultivator carried plenty of in their storage sacks, because no one knew when they might be needed, better to be safe than sorry.

He moved quickly, and in just half an hour, he could sense the sounds of intense battle up ahead, including Amber's roars.

Looking up, he saw the flashes of light from various magic and spells, alongside the fierce roars of a girl!

"Level 7 Insect Race, Yiyi, hurry and block it!" Chen Yu's voice sounded.

There was now a rough understanding among everybody regarding the strength levels of the Insect Race—the so-called Level 7 Insect Race was equivalent to a Level 7 cultivator.

"I'm a girl, Senior Brother Chen Yu, you're being too much! Ah, I'm going to fight you!"

Lu Ye turned a corner just in time to see He Xiyi covered in a valiant aura of blood Qi, holding a big shield as tall as herself at the forefront. In front of her was a mantis taller than her, swinging its mantis sabers and striking the shield, making a clanging noise. With each strike, He Xiyi's body would shudder.

Despite He Xiyi's soft and cute appearance, she was actually a physique cultivator!

When Lu Ye found out about this fact, he was quite shocked; he couldn't fathom how such a small frame harbored such vigorous blood Qi.

With her blocking the Level 7 insect, Chen Yu and Yiyi, among others, could let loose, casting their magic and spells and wielding their controlled weapons. In an instant, the mantis was sliced apart.

But what followed were even more enormous insects.

"Retreat, there are too many!" Chen Yu bellowed. The commotion here had obviously alarmed the inhabitants of the insect hive, as several Level 7 and many Level 6 and Level 5 insects swarmed out.

Before Lu Ye arrived, they had already been retreating while fighting, having made quite some distance from the original point.

"A physique cultivator only dies standing, never lives in retreat, I can still hold on!" He Xiyi gritted her teeth, then suddenly felt lighter as she floated backward, "Huh?"

Just at that moment, she felt someone grab her collar and fling her backward.

Landing lightly, she looked only to see that where she had been standing, an additional figure appeared with red streaks of Liu Guang flickering through the tunnel. One by one, the insects fell with shrieks as they succumbed to the might of the spirit force imbued saber.

When a gigantic Level 7 insect leapt up at him, the saber sliced down, splitting it cleanly in two...

"Lu Ye!" Yiyi's excited voice rang out.

"Fifth Senior Brother!"

As calls echoed, Lu Ye flicked the insect blood off the Boulder Mountain Saber, nodded slightly and said, "First, we kill!"

With his reinforcement, the tide of the battle, which was on the brink of collapse, immediately stabilized. Under the influence of the weapon control's gleam, one insect after another perished as the group made their way forward.

Lu Ye didn't need to use his saber again, for weapon control was enough. He even had time to observe Yiyi and Amber.

Amber had grown tremendously since coming to the Righteous Blood Sect, treated well with ample food and countless elixir pills, and would come to Lu Ye every few days to claim a line of blood from his Scale Armor.

Amber's exact strength wasn't easy to quantify because it wasn't a cultivator itself; however, in battle, the fluctuations of its demon Qi were in no way inferior to a Level 6 cultivator. Enveloped in golden demon Qi, it shone with a golden luster, majestic and imposing.

With a bite of its jaw, it could crush the hard shells of the insects, and with a swipe of its massive paw, their bodies would sport a new dent.

As for Yiyi... Initially, she wished to study healing under Shui Yuan because Lu Ye got injured often, so her greatest dream was to become a healing cultivator. This way, she could heal Lu Ye whenever necessary.

Yet dreams are just dreams, and hers were shattered by harsh reality. After a heavy dose of disillusionment, her dreams lay in ruins, causing her to be deeply distressed for several days.

Afterward, when Shui Yuan saw Yiyi's despondency, she recommended that Yiyi learn magic and spells from the sect master. Yiyi didn't have much hope at first, but this led to the opening of a new world...

Lu Ye had never asked about how Yiyi was progressing with her studies of magic and spells, but she spent most of her time with the sect master.

It was only at this moment, as he saw the various techniques and their glows blossoming in Yiyi's hands, that he understood...

Privately, the sect master had praised Yiyi's talent for magic and spells more than once, suspecting that Yiyi must have been a magic cultivator before becoming a minion spirit. Often, after being taught a new spell only two or three times, Yiyi would be able to cast it.

Being Amber's congenital minion spirit, Yiyi's strength was contingent on Amber's—whatever strength Amber had, Yiyi could match. Therefore, the strength she displayed now was equivalent to that of a Level 6 magic cultivator.

Furthermore, since she had a Spiritual Body void of any affinity toward the Five Elements, Yiyi could cast spells of any element sign.

The major issue for her was recuperating her strength. Being a Spiritual Body, she couldn't ingest elixir pills. To recover, her only option was to hide within Amber, refining Amber's blood Qi.

The duo of Amber and Yiyi derived their strength solely from Amber itself, which hastened Amber's depletion.

Chapter 219 Be Strong

The battle had been raging since it began, as any fluctuation of spirit force here would attract the Insect Race, with only the number in question varying.

Unless one could eliminate all the bugs within the insect hive in one go.

But that was clearly unrealistic.

In the midst of fierce combat, Lu Ye pushed into the hive under the cover provided by He Xiying, took a quick look around, and was forced back by the overwhelming number of bugs.

It was a vast underground space, conservatively estimated to be even larger than the plaza in front of Heaven's Augury Hall in the garrison, too dark for Lu Ye to see clearly.

Everywhere he looked was covered with odd flesh walls, the walls studded densely with flesh sacs bulging out, constantly birthing Insect Race members.

This was the insect hive!

The entire hive felt like the stomach of a living creature, nurturing an enormously potent life force, the source that enabled the rapid proliferation of the Insect Race.

As the fourth senior brother had said, the Insect Race was a peculiar existence; once hatched, they would devour everything with life force and energy. A small part of these would make the bugs stronger, while the rest fed back to the hive, which then used the energy to spawn even more powerful members.

There was an extremely close connection between the hive and the Insect Race, mutually beneficial to each other. Some had calculated that even with just one such insect hive, if unchecked, in just ten years, the entire Spirit Stream battlefield would be destroyed, and the Insect Race would become the overlords here.

No one dared to imagine how strong the Insect Race, nurtured by the life force and energy of the entire Spirit Stream battlefield, would become.

Of course, such a scenario would never occur; every outbreak of the Insect Plague was suppressed with full force by the big sects and then eradicated at the early stages.

By now, the Righteous Blood Sect had almost completed the clearing of the periphery. Without sufficient numbers of the Insect Race collecting life force and energy, the scale of the Insect Plague was essentially contained. There must still be plenty of life force and energy stored in the insect hive, and what the Righteous Blood Sect needed to do was to kill as many of the Insect Race as possible.

As long as they waited for all the life force and energy in the Insect Plague to be depleted, they would win this battle.

This was the standard procedure for dealing with the Insect Plague at the big sects' garrisons, having accumulated experience over countless years.

There would certainly be casualties in this process, even the big sects in the Core Circle couldn't avoid it. The Insect Race there were not so easily killed; Lu Ye had encountered a type in the Mirage Realm that could merge with their surroundings, almost to the point of invisibility, striking silently and lethally.

Such was the Insect Race in the Core Circle! The sects in the outer circle didn't have to deal with this, clearly a result of Heaven's Augury's modulation—Heaven's Augury wouldn't let the sects in the outer circle suddenly face such catastrophic disasters.

But if the insect hive were allowed to develop, such bugs would certainly appear.

One particular point of caution was to never let the Insect Race get their hands on the bodies of cultivators; once they obtained the bodies of cultivators, the insect hive would grow significantly, and the resulting Insect Race would become much stronger.

Currently, the Righteous Blood Sect only had one passage that led to the location of the insect hive, and with Lu Ye stationed there, holding it became virtually no issue.

What remained was to wait until the other passages also reached the insect hive. This way, the periphery would be completely worry-free, allowing for the concentration of forces on the hive.

Considering the varied pace in different areas, Lu Ye instructed Chen Yu and Yiyi to leave and assist elsewhere.

He would stay and guard this place.

Before long, he was left alone here.

But he was not idle, provocatively using weapon control again and again to lure out insects from the hive and kill them.

He didn't dare to recklessly rush in; the hive housed too many bugs, and Lu Ye even sensed a hint of threat in that dark depth—in other words, there were definitely bugs inside that could threaten his life.

Soon, the passage was clogged with the bodies of dead bugs. At first, Lu Ye still attempted to clean up, but as his slaughter continued and the numbers grew too great, he couldn't keep up.

He quickly sensed something was amiss because the more bugs he killed, the less the number of bodies seemed to change.

On closer inspection, he found that some bugs were actually transporting bodies back into the hive, which made him both angry and amused.

Without any other choice, he had to repeatedly use his storage sack to transport the bodies away and then return to the killing.

Half a day later, several passages had been breached, and a complete map of the underground was drawn. From the sole entrance of the insect cave, through various forks, it converged on the hive, leaving only nine passages.

During this time, many were injured and over a dozen died, including an entire squad who had the misfortune of encountering a Level 7 Insect Race.

With the current average cultivation of the Righteous Blood Sect, only a few teams with a Level 6 cultivator could deal with a Level 7 Insect Race, and most other squads would meet their end if they encountered one.

Now that passages were breached from all sides, the situation became clear; as long as the Righteous Blood Sect could block off the nine passages, they would fully control the situation.

This was not a simple task, as each passage was only so large, scarcely allowing two or three people to fight side by side. With nearly seven hundred cultivators from the Righteous Blood Sect, if they all crowded at the passages, only a few could confront the Insect Race head-on—others could only provide support from behind...

The right strategy was to break into the hive, creating an area at each passage where dozens could fight, leveraging the advantage of having more people.

What concerned Lu Ye were the dangers lurking in the darkness. If he wasn't mistaken, there were definitely Level 8 Insect Race members there.

If not handled carefully, the Righteous Blood Sect would surely suffer tremendous losses.

One or two Level 8 bugs on their own were not something he needed to worry much about, the concern was if there were many of them.

The Insect Plague was known as a natural disaster because many cultivators perished every time it arrived. This wasn't something that could be avoided by mere strength— even a powerful person like Li Baxian could die if not cautious in handling the Insect Plague.

The only good news for Lu Ye at the moment is that the Insect Race is very sensitive to the fluctuations of spirit force and to light sources, with the more powerful members of the Insect Race being even more so.

Perhaps this could be used to do something...

In front of the nine passageways, the sound of fierce battle was incessant, but because the holes were not large, the intensity of the fight was also not strong. Cultivators exchanged places in turns, supporting the defense.

Lu Ye lifted his hand and tapped on his battlefield marking, sending out messages with identical content: "Confirm status!"

Quickly, replies came in.

Yiyi: "Ready."

Chen Yu: "All set."

He Xiying: "Fifth Brother, if I die, you must have Sixth Sister bury me, or I won't rest in peace."

Zhu Wenbo: "Ready here, just waiting for Fifth Brother's command."

Yinn Haoran: "Ready at any time."

Luo Qisheng. "In good shape."

Guk Yang: "People are in place."

Kong Niu: "Good!"

Good, there were no issues with anyone.

The individuals who replied, except for Kong Niu who was at the Level 5 realm, the rest were at least Level 6. With each of them in charge, alongside several dozen cultivators securing a battlefield close to

the passageways, there should be no major problem, as the pressure would be distributed evenly due to attacks coming from nine directions simultaneously.

As for Kong Niu's side, Lu Ye had increased the manpower; their group had the most number of cultivators, nearly a hundred.

Of course, this was an ideal situation. Once the battle truly began, there would certainly be unexpected events, and Lu Ye himself was there to respond to all kinds of emergencies.

"I am a healing cultivator, Lu Ye. Shouldn't I be treating the wounded at the back?"

The gentle voice of Hua Ci sounded from behind.

Just before, Lu Ye had called Hua Ci over. He was not unaware of her fear of insects. Previously, in the Chess Sea, she had slapped a mechanical spider onto Lu Ye's face, and that was merely an artificial creation. Now facing the Insect Plague, just the thought of it was enough to make Hua Ci's heart crawl and her body uneasy.

The insects she feared were actually only of two types: those without legs and those with many legs.

But there was no other way. All nine passageways needed someone to guard them, and even counting Yiyi and Kong Niu, there were only eight people.

The foundations of the Righteous Blood Sect were still too thin.

Left with no choice, he had to call Hua Ci over. Although she was a healing cultivator, she still had a Level 6 cultivation. It wouldn't be a problem for her to take charge of a passageway, but in such an environment, it would be difficult for her to utilize her unique mushroom-growing method.

Lu Ye turned his head to look at her, their eyes meeting.

"Be strong!"

Hua Ci: "?"

"It's starting!"

Lu Ye turned around, and as he stooped, he laid his hand on the hilt of his blade. With a boom, an air wave swept through, and like an arrow released from its bow, he lunged forward. The blade light flickered, and several members of the Insect Race blocking the passageway were cut into pieces.

"Kill!" With a ferocious roar, one cultivator after another followed Lu Ye into the insect hive. In a moment, the already restless hive completely boiled over, and a huge throng of the Insect Race surged forward. In the darkness, all that could be heard were the soft sounds of creeping, and all that could be seen were the ferocious Insect Race.

The cultivators with higher cultivation levels stood at the front, forming a semicircle with their backs to the passageway. Those with lower cultivation levels stood in the back, with the glow of magic and Spirit Talismans beginning to shine brightly, striking down members of the Insect Race along their attack path.

Almost simultaneously, as Lu Ye made his move, the cultivators at the other eight passageways also charged in, the situation mirroring the one here, with the higher-level cultivators at the forefront.

A grand battle thus began.

During the fight, someone shouted a reminder: "Quick, collect the insect corpses, whether injured or low-cultivation. Don't let the hive absorb them."

The reason for collecting insect corpses during battle was out of necessity; the insect hive is a peculiar place. It could use the spawned Insect Race to collect vitality and energy, then give birth to even more members of the Insect Race.

The flesh wall inside the hive, meanwhile, had a very strong ability to absorb both vitality and energy.

If the corpses of the slain Insect Race weren't quickly collected, the vitality and energy contained within them would be absorbed by the omnipresent flesh walls within a very short time.

When Lu Ye was alone defending this place earlier, he discovered members of the Insect Race moving the bodies. Their intention was to increase the vitality and energy of the hive.

Chapter 220 Being Able to Fly is Willful

So, if insect corpses were not collected, the insect hive could continuously devour the vitality and energy of the dead members of the Insect Race and then hatch even more of them.

This intelligence came from Li Baxian, and before the battle began, Lu Ye had specifically instructed everyone to pay attention to collecting insect corpses. For this purpose, every cultivator had fiddled with their storage sack, ensuring that each team had several empty storage sacks.

The strength of the insect creatures inside the hive was generally strong, with numerous Level 3 and Level 4 insects, Level 5 and Level 6 insects also common, but not too many at Level 7, so the Righteous Blood Sect could just barely manage for the time being.

The Fire Dragon Technique was continuously deployed, and Lu Ye was now driving this Dao technique relentlessly, because only by doing so could he quickly slay his enemies. The faster he killed, the better the situation would be.

With him blocking in front, the situation on this side soon stabilized, but no one rashly pressed forward, as nobody knew how many dangers lurked in the darkness.

But him, a Level 7 cultivator, fiercely driving his spirit force, and especially since the Fire Dragon Technique would burst into fierce flames, brought another problem.

Less than thirty Shichen after the battle began, Lu Ye sensed a powerful aura rapidly approaching from the darkness ahead, a Level 8 Insect Race.

There was more than one coming, from the sounds of it, he preliminarily deduced that there were at least three.

The number was not many, and with Lu Ye's current cultivation strength, he completely had the opportunity to instantly slay one, and he could also join forces with the dozens of cultivators on this side to kill the remaining two.

However, just as he planned this, a shout from Kong Niu not far away came: "Danger!"

This was prearranged, as soon as any position was under too much pressure, an immediate alert would be issued, and then Lu Ye would rush over to help.

He had specifically arranged Kong Niu's post near his own, considering that Kong Niu was only a Level 5, and even with enough manpower arranged, he might not withstand the Level 7 of the Insect Race.

This arrangement indeed proved prescient.

Lu Ye couldn't afford to deal with those Level 8 Insects about to pounce out of the darkness, as he had already spread a pair of wings behind him, soared into the air, and at the same time, with one hand holding a dagger, the other holding the scabbard of the Boulder Mountain Saber, the dazzling light from that scabbard shone forth like a rising sun!

The bright light mapped out the entire insect hive in minute detail, and Lu Ye seized this chance to sweep his eyes across, instantly feeling his scalp tingle. Previously, it was too dark to see clearly inside the hive, but now, under the light of Sun Blaze Spirit Runes, he could take in the entire situation of the hive.

The number of insects gathered inside the hive exceeded his expectations, and moreover, the walls of the hive were also crawling with various types of Insects, attracted by the fluctuations of spirit force, heading towards where the cultivators were gathered.

"Everyone, watch your heads!" he shouted loudly, also paying attention to those few Level 8 Insects; if these did not follow, that would be a big problem.

Even with Hua Ci staying back there, she could not stop the slaughter of these few Level 8 insects.

Fortunately, the Insects had no reason, only following their instincts.

Thanks to Fourth Senior Brother, he provided many useful pieces of intelligence.

Lu Ye, wielding a sun, undoubtedly became the target of those few Level 8 insects. They moved rapidly on the ground, many insects in their path could not dodge in time and were sliced into pieces by their sharp limbs.

Moreover, at the very center of the hive, a few more Level 8 insects were drawn over.

A total of six Level 8 insects! Such a lineup could not be overcome by merely deploying full strength from the peripheral sects, because Level 7 cultivators were seldom seen in the peripheral sects, let alone Level 8.

Generally speaking, only a governor or Deputy Governor would be of Level 7 cultivation.

Soaring in mid-air, Lu Ye unleashed a Fire Dragon Technique downward, and the fire dragon, its scales even faintly visible, crashed into the crowd of insects, causing massive death and injury instantly.

Two fire dragons sent down greatly reduced the pressure on Kong Niu's side.

"Fifth Senior Brother!" Another shout rang out.

Lu Ye immediately rushed in that direction.

The standard procedure for peripheral sects in dealing with the Insect Plague was to locate the insect hive and then seal the entrances, constantly killing the insects until the stocked vitality and energy in the hive was exhausted, which would mean victory.

Although this method was slower, it was safer, and if there were any mishaps, they could be promptly remedied.

Lu Ye did not choose this method; the Righteous Blood Sect took the initiative to strike, allowing its cultivators to establish a battlefield inside the hive; it was riskier, but also more efficient.

And the reason he chose to do so was due to his strong mobility, allowing him to assist in various places at any moment.

Being able to fly is indeed capricious.

This is something that ordinary Level 7 cultivators can't compare with.

For a while, Lu Ye, holding up the sun, continuously drove the Fire Dragon Technique, leading those six Level 8 insects through the hive, darting back and forth, supporting everywhere, and the situation gradually stabilized.

And those six Level 8 insects, while chasing Lu Ye, also caused a lot of accidental injuries to their own kind. Although the corpses of those killed by them could not be collected, they inadvertently lightened the pressure on the Righteous Blood Sect.

After stabilizing the situation, Lu Ye then focused his attention on those few Level 8 insects that relentlessly pursued him; these few big fellows definitely needed to be dealt with swiftly, otherwise, they would become a hidden danger.

While flying, Lu Ye unleashed his handleless dagger, fire-red Liu Guang began to weave through the air, targeting one of the Level 8 Demon Race, piercing through its body, spurting out a pile of verdant green blood.

It has to be said, the vitality of the Level 8 Demon Race was extremely tenacious. Lu Ye had to attack it seven or eight times with weapon control before finally managing to slay it.

Liu Guang flew back, held at the tips of Lu Ye's fingers as he replenished his spirit force, and then he cast it out again.

Maintaining the Wings and Sun Blaze Spirit Runes, invoking the Fire Dragon Technique, and controlling weapons to kill enemies all consumed a tremendous amount of energy. In less than half the time it takes to drink a cup of tea, nearly 70 percent of Lu Ye's spirit force had been depleted, leaving only about 30 percent.

It should be noted that he was now in the Level 7 realm, with over a hundred spiritual orifices opened, and his reserves of spirit force had long since surpassed what they once were.

Had he been in the Level 5 realm, he would likely have been completely drained by now.

Yet, he did not panic. He took a jade vial from his storage sack, opened it, and drank all its contents in one gulp.

The taste was a bit strange, like fruit wine with a hint of bitterness.

Breath Fruit wine.

Previously, he had brought back Breath Fruit from the Chess Sea, and following the instructions of his fourth senior, handed it over to Shui Yuan to be processed.

Shui Yuan, with various precious medicinal ingredients, brewed this fruit wine, fully maximizing the effects of the Breath Fruit flesh.

When Shui Yuan gave Lu Ye the Breath Fruit wine, she had told him that, with his cultivation at Level 7, one portion of Breath Fruit wine could help him recover 50 percent of his spirit force within thirty breaths.

Unlike the powerful recovery effect of directly consuming the Breath Fruit flesh, the Breath Fruit wine took longer to work and its effect was reduced.

But it had the advantage of quantity.

The bottle that Lu Ye had just drunk was one portion, and Shui Yuan had given him and Sister Hua Ci more than thirty portions in total.

Without the foundation provided by the Breath Fruit wine, Lu Ye would not have been able to be so reckless in using up his spirit force in such a short time—doing so would have been suicidal.

Upon consuming the Breath Fruit wine, warmth immediately emanated from his stomach. Following the circulation of his Minor Circumambulation, vast spirit force filled his spiritual orifices, and thirty breaths later, Lu Ye, who initially had only 30 percent of his spirit force, was once again brimming with energy.

He continued to assist on all fronts, taking opportunities to slay a persistent Level 8 Insect Race that had been relentlessly pursuing him.

An hour later, the assault of the Insect Race had noticeably weakened a great deal. Even though the insect hive was still continuously hatching new members of the Insect Race, they couldn't keep up with the cultivators' speed of killing. The lines at each cave entrance were thoroughly secured, and the two Level 8 Insect Race members who followed Lu Ye were reduced to just two.

One of them was in agony under the torment of the controlled weapon's Liu Guang.

As one of the Level 8 Insect Race members fell, only one remained chasing Lu Ye.

The sun, which had been continuously shining on all sides, extinguished, and Lu Ye landed at the cave entrance where Kong Niu was, his front foot just touching down when the lone survivor of the Level 8 Insect Race charged at him.

Lu Ye drew his sword, enhanced by Sharpness spirit runes, and his Boulder Mountain Saber sliced through the long legs of the Insect Race.

Bright green blood splashed, and the insect shrieked as the meter-long Insect Race collapsed onto the ground, its black-colored carapace unable to withstand the sharp strike.

Almost simultaneously as it fell, Lu Ye was on top of it, his saber piercing through the insect's back and coming out the other side.

The Insect Race struggled, green blood spraying everywhere.

Red light surged on the Boulder Mountain Saber, creating a massive wound on its back, splitting it in half.

"Kill!" Kong Niu suddenly shouted loudly, and immediately, cries of killing echoed from all around the insect hive.

Two hours later, cultivators at all nine cave entrances pushed inward simultaneously, step by step compressing the remaining Insect Race's range of activity.

Lu Ye wiped the blood off the Boulder Mountain Saber, sheathed his weapon, and let out a light breath.

The situation was under control! There was no need for him to act any further, as the cultivators inside the sect had few opportunities to earn merits, and there was naturally no need for Lu Ye to compete with them.

"Sister Hua Ci, hang in there!" the voice of Ruan Lingyu suddenly came from the side.

Lu Ye walked over and, under the light of the nearby torches, saw Hua Ci kneeling on the ground, her long legs straight together, her calves splayed outward, her eyes devoid of spirit.

Ruan Lingyu was in front of her, shaking her shoulders.

"Are you injured?" Lu Ye asked anxiously.

Ruan Lingyu shook her head, her eyes tearful.

During the tense situation just before, Hua Ci had performed as usual, leading the juniors in combat. Now that the situation had stabilized, the tension released and she was overwhelmed.

Assured that Hua Ci was not injured, Lu Ye was relieved. He crouched in front of her, patted her shoulder, and said, "You'll get used to it gradually; the Insect Plague won't be just this once."

Hua Ci's gaze shifted, she looked at him steadily, her eyes brimming with despair...

"Stay with her and call me immediately if anything happens," Lu Ye instructed Ruan Lingyu and turned to leave.

Although the situation was under control, as long as the insect hive was not completely exterminated, they could not relax their vigilance. If someone were to die suddenly at this juncture, that would truly be a tragic loss.

Moreover, if the information provided by the fourth senior was correct, then there were at least two or three powerful beings inside this hive! They might only be Level 8 Insect Race members, but they were stronger than the typical ones.