

Humanity 471

Chapter 471 Cruel War

The Ten Thousand Beasts Domain was a world that had already perished, refined into a secret realm by Heaven's Augury through inexplicable means, allowing Nine Provinces cultivators to enter and temper themselves.

As it was a world that had shattered, in its original history, Two Worlds City was inevitably doomed.

But now, with the addition of the Nine Provinces cultivators, the situation had slightly changed. No matter what, there were at least eight hundred, if not a thousand, Nine Provinces cultivators who had entered the secret realm, and each of them was from the Cloud River Realm. Such a force was certainly not weak.

At this moment, the cultivators from the Nine Provinces had already mounted the city walls, cooperating with the cultivators of the Ten Thousand Beasts Domain to fend off the enemy.

On Section A-3 of the city wall, there was another roar of booming sound that shook the entire wall violently.

A dazzling beam of light pierced through miles of land, hammering into the most densely packed area of demon beasts, turning them into a mist of blood that evaporated in an instant.

Thunder Roar had unleashed its power again.

The cultivators from the Ten Thousand Beasts Sect and Crimson Fire Camp were also bravely fighting the enemy. Under the flashing lights of weapon control and magic and spells, one demon beast after another fell on the charging path.

Beneath the city wall, the bodies of demon beasts piled up like mountains, with more of them stepping over this mountain of corpses, charging fearlessly towards the Section A-3 of the city wall.

Lu Ye swung his sword until he was numb while Lan Ziyi and Shen Xiaomao beside him were both gasping for breath, their faces pale.

This kind of intense combat, even for those in the Cloud River Realm like them, could not be sustained for long. Yet, the intensity of the demon beasts' siege did not decrease at all. The swarms of demon beasts seemed endless, as if they could never be fully eradicated.

Even Xia Qianqian, who was in the Cloud River Level 9, did not exhibit the same ferocity as before.

Every defender from the Cloud River Realm was almost at the end of their tether. If the situation did not change, within half an hour, the defense line of this section of the wall would undoubtedly be breached.

On this matter, Two Worlds City had already made arrangements early on.

A moment later, an inexplicable roaring sound suddenly came. Fang Zhun's voice rang nearby, "Everyone, hold on, it's time to merge the formations!"

Lu Ye looked up and saw that the protective array, which had opened a gap at the Section A-3 of the city wall, was now slowly closing. Clearly, someone was controlling the Formation.

As the Formation continued to close, the area where the demon beasts could charge became progressively smaller, and it was much simpler for everyone to defend.

Eventually, after a moment, the big array completely closed, a sturdy layer of protective light screen guarding in front of everyone. All the demon beasts charging towards it were blocked, unable to advance even an inch.

On Section A-3 of the city wall, the tightly wound expressions of the cultivators relaxed, everyone slumped to the ground, exhausted, but they didn't have time to rest. They quickly took out elixir pills to consume and restore themselves.

Meanwhile, on another section of the city wall adjacent to Section A-3, a flawless protective array slowly opened a gap. On that section of the wall, many cultivators were already waiting. As the army of demon beasts charged into the gap, a bloody battle commenced!

Faced with such a scale of demon beast siege, Two Worlds City well understood the principle that blocking was worse than sluicing, but they couldn't fully open the protective array. If they did, Two Worlds City would likely be flattened by the demon beast army in an instant.

Thus, they could only maneuver the protective array, intermittently opening gaps on sections of the wall, guiding the direction of the demon beasts' siege. In this way, the defense could be more targeted.

While the cultivators of Section A-3 were fighting tirelessly, the cultivators on the adjacent wall were conserving their strength. Now they were striking forcefully, and it was time for the cultivators from Section A-3 to rest and recover.

With this rotational defense, not only was the margin for error higher, but the ability of the cultivators to sustain combat was also greatly enhanced. It must be said that the person who made these arrangements had a strong sense of overall strategy.

On Section A-3 of the city wall, almost everyone was sitting down to recover, except Lu Ye, who sat in front of Thunder Roar, curiously examining the Formation arranged around it.

The array cultivator who had set up this Formation clearly had much greater expertise in the Array Path than him. Although Lu Ye could arrange such a Formation with his current skills, he would not handle some of the details as well as his peers.

Moreover, he was quite interested in this kind of assault magic array that used a spirit treasure as the array's focus. He had witnessed the potency of Thunder Roar's several bursts; it could be said that Thunder Roar accounted for at least thirty percent of the credit for holding off the demon beast attack on Section A-3 of the wall.

As he was studying, Xia Qianqian suddenly came over and sat down beside him. "Why aren't you focusing on recovering? What are you busy with here?"

"Just looking around."

While others needed to concentrate fully to assimilate the medicinal effects of the elixir pills and absorb nature's spiritual energy, Lu Ye had never needed such trouble; he simply needed to consume the elixir pills.

"Save some strength for yourself; don't overdo the killing," Xia Qianqian advised.

"How so?"

"This city can't be held. It's going to fall sooner or later. Have you thought about what to do after the city is breached?"

"Fellow Daoist Xia, do you have anything to share?"

Xia Qianqian shook her head, "I don't have anything to share, but once the city is breached, we will probably have to flee."

Lu Ye frowned, "But now, this entire Ten Thousand Beasts Domain is a world of demon beasts. Even if we flee, where can we go?"

"So we have to leave before the city falls!" Xia Qianqian sighed, "I have been through many secret realms, but this time, the realm feels unsolvable."

The human race across the entire world was about to be annihilated, and in such a trend, individual power was truly minuscule.

"What are other secret realms like?" Lu Ye asked eagerly. Unlike Xia Qianqian of the Cloud River Level 9, he was only Level 2, and he would continue to mix in the Cloud River battlefield in the future. Gaining some experience from Xia would better equip him to handle crises in the future.

"Each secret realm is different, and none of the realms I had experienced before involved the entire world heading towards destruction."

"I remember you initially mentioned that training in such realms involves solving the problem from its root. The ultimate goal is to resolve the crisis this world faces and thus save it?"

"That's what I said, but now, the Ten Thousand Beasts Domain is facing a rampage of demon beasts. I've observed before, and we still don't understand why these demon beasts are going mad. How can we solve the problem?"

Why would demon beasts go mad? Everything had happened too quickly, in just one year, countless demon beasts of the Ten Thousand Beasts Domain suddenly went mad, attacking the human race.

This madness that most demon beasts could not resist certainly had a source. To mitigate the problem, finding this source was essential.

But where was the source?

The cultivators of the Ten Thousand Beasts Domain had not figured it out, so the domain was destroyed, becoming history, turning into a secret realm.

The only certainty now was that the madness was highly contagious, yet not immediately upon contact, because all members of Ten Thousand Beasts Sect had their demon beasts with them in battle, and so far, their beasts were fine, showing no signs of the disease.

Amber, too, felt nothing unusual.

"Don't overthink it. Given the current situation, we can only take it one step at a time. Focus on recovering first," Xia Qianqian added and then closed her eyes to rest.

Lu Ye tossed two Origin Spirit Pills into his mouth, slowly chewing on them.

More than two hours later, Fang Zhun's hoarse voice rang out, "Everyone, prepare for battle!"

The not fully recovered cultivators of Crimson Fire Camp and Ten Thousand Beasts Sect stood up, awaiting battle readiness. Those specifically responsible for the Thunder Beasts quickly took their positions, mobilizing the array's power.

The hum of the big array sounded.

On the neighboring wall, the breach in the big array slowly closed. At the Section A-3 wall spot, the tightly closed big array gradually opened a gap, and the nearby demon beasts swarmed towards it.

The great battle erupted once again!

With this defensive strategy, every two to four hours, people like Lu Ye had a chance to rest and recover. Yet even so, the cultivators' energy and power were constantly being depleted. Two to four hours of recovery time was simply too short, barely enough for the cultivators to fully recuperate.

The demon beasts had been attacking the city from noon, continuing through the night, and from night until dawn...

The cultivators of Section A-3 and the nearby walls had rotated about five or six times, yet the intensity of the demon beasts' siege never changed.

The Thunder Roar couldn't be utilized effectively for the time being, as Lu Ye was urgently maintaining the array on this side.

The long duration of use not only exhausted the cultivators but also damaged the array. Fortunately, Lu Ye had observed the operation of the array before; otherwise, he wouldn't have known where to begin immediately.

It had taken him half an hour to repair the Thunder Roar's array before it could once again emit roars of anger.

Moments later, the big array closed again, and it was the turn of the cultivators on the neighboring walls to defend.

Lu Ye collapsed on the ground, feeling the acute danger from the brief period when the Thunder Roar array was non-functional; the defensive line was almost breached by the swarming demon beast army. Thankfully, the cultivators fought desperately to stabilize the front.

He hadn't heard the voice of the cultivator named Fang Zhun, who usually shouted during every rest period, urging his brothers to recover quickly.

Lu Ye looked around, his gaze settling on a demon beast's corpse about fifteen meters away. Just before its death, its blood-filled mouth had bitten through half a head. Underneath its body lay none other than Fang Zhun!

This leader of the Crimson Fire Camp had died in battle!

He wasn't the only casualty. Until now, the ranks of the Crimson Fire Camp's cultivators had been reduced by half, and only six from the Ten Thousand Beasts Sect had survived.

Although Lu Ye and his three companions were not in mortal danger, each was injured, particularly Shen Xiaomao. Her abdomen was soaked in blood that stained her clothes red, and she was pale. She was now leaning weakly against Lu Ye, staring blankly at a spot, motionless.

She had survived many dangers, having cultivated up to the Cloud River Level 5 Realm, but she had never experienced such a fierce battle like this one.

The cruelty of defending the city far surpassed any scenario she had ever experienced before.

Amber, perched on Lu Ye's shoulder, suddenly twisted impatiently and let out a low, indistinct growl. The amber-colored beast's eyes flashed crimson, and it quickly leaped down from Lu Ye's shoulder.

With swirling Demon Origin, Amber revealed its true form, crimson eyes staring closely at Lu Ye.

Chapter 472 The Source of the Madness

"Young Master, be careful!" The Great Elder, who was resting not far away, leaped up and struck at Amber with a single palm.

From his perspective, Lu Ye's natal demon beast was undoubtedly struck with a crazed disease. Faced with such a situation, the only option was to quickly kill the demon beast, otherwise, it would certainly turn and devour its owner.

A fiery red sword light flashed by, and the Great Elder hastily withdrew his hand, staring at Lu Ye, the one who had drawn the sword, in astonishment, "Young Master?"

"Wait!" Lu Ye called out sternly, his expression grave.

He had never expected that Amber would be contaminated with the madness, especially since it had been fighting alongside him and had never left his side, nor did it show any signs of injury. How had it caught this affliction?

However, unlike other demon beasts that would go berserk immediately upon contracting the disease, Amber's eyes occasionally flickered with a blood-red hue and it continuously let out threatening growls from its throat, but one could see, it was desperately trying to maintain its sanity, suppressing the urge to attack everything around it uncontrollably.

After all, it was a pet beast that had shared life and death with Lu Ye for more than two years, bound by a pet contract bestowed by Heaven's Augury. Even though it was afflicted with the frenzy, it retained its last shred of rationality, unlike other demon beasts that completely lost their minds.

There was a message from the battlefield marking, and Lu Ye quickly checked it – it was from Yiyi.

After reading Yiyi's message, Lu Ye suddenly looked up, and Amber, standing in front of him, lowered its head towards him.

Lustrous light flickered on the Boulder Mountain Saber as Lu Ye thrust out with it, the sword accurately piercing Amber three inches behind its neck, an action so sudden that Xia Qianqian and the others

watched in shock, unable to understand why he, who had just stopped the Great Elder, would now take action himself.

But the next moment, they realized something was amiss because, had Lu Ye truly intended to take Amber's life, he would not have struck at that particular spot.

A faint and peculiar chirping sound ensued, similar to that of cicadas, but the clamor of the battlefield made it hard to hear clearly.

The sword, lodged in the back of Amber's neck, was levered up, blood splattering, drawing everyone's gaze to Lu Ye's Boulder Mountain Saber.

At that very moment, on the tip of the saber, something resembling a cicada that had been pierced and lifted out was struggling and writhing. However, before the observers could make out what it was, the cicada suddenly burst open, turning into a puddle of black liquid!

Lu Ye hurriedly mobilized his spirit force to envelop the cluster of black liquid, preventing it from spreading.

Everyone stared at the mass of black liquid encased by spirit force with indescribable expressions.

As for Amber, from whose neck the cicada-like creature had been extracted, it had now calmed down; it shook its head, and the blood-red color in its eyes had already vanished.

Blood streamed from its neck, but such a wound was merely superficial for a demon beast of its caliber; it lifted its eyes and warily circled around the mass of black liquid now wrapped in spirit force, then took cover behind Lu Ye.

Lu Ye turned to look at Xia Qianqian, and their eyes met.

"We've found the reason why the demon beasts go mad!"

"What?" Xia Qianqian hadn't yet recovered from the sudden turn of events, instinctively replying before suddenly grasping the implication, "You mean, the thing you just extracted?"

"It's not the demon beasts that are going mad; something is parasitizing inside them, controlling them!"

Parasitism, control...

Xia Qianqian was taken aback, "Are you sure?"

"Positive!"

If it had been just him, Lu Ye would not have been able to detect the root cause of Amber's affliction so quickly because the parasite in Amber's neck had completely blended with its aura. Even if he had scrutinized every inch of Amber with spirit force, he might not have found anything unusual.

This was why the cultivators from the Ten Thousand Beasts Domain had not been able to understand the cause of the demon beasts' frenzy, despite having captured some and examined them closely, to no avail.

But inside Amber, there was still Yiyi!

Since entering this secret realm of the Ten Thousand Beasts Domain, Yiyi had remained unseen. Before Amber had shown signs of illness, she hadn't been too concerned, but as soon as Amber fell ill, she immediately began examining its body and quickly discovered the odd parasite, promptly informing Lu Ye.

The parasitism was silent and stealthy, and even Lu Ye didn't know when Amber had been infected. What was certain was that the parasite must have been very small when it infected Amber, so tiny that even Lu Ye hadn't noticed it until it grew rapidly after living inside. By the time Lu Ye exposed it, the parasite had already grown to the size of a cicada.

Unfortunately, after being extracted by Lu Ye, the creature immediately burst open. This could have been an innate mechanism to remain hidden, preventing cultivators from detecting it.

Now, the burst black liquid was enveloped by Lu Ye's spirit force, and upon closer inspection, everyone was horrified to discover tiny worms moving within it; indeed, these parasites were so small that they could have easily been overlooked without careful examination.

Lu Ye's spirit force intensified, the fiery red spirit force incinerated the liquid until nothing was left.

"Aow!" Amber, now back to the size of a house cat, jumped onto Lu Ye's shoulder and started growling softly.

While Lu Ye checked the information from Yiyi in the battlefield marking, he nodded as if in agreement.

Since Yiyi and Amber had been born together, Yiyi was the first to know what Amber was thinking – a detail not even Lu Ye, as the owner, could match.

Despite the pet contract endowed by Heaven's Augury, and the bond forged with the Life Origin Method and Beast Seal, Lu Ye could at most manage simple communication with Amber and could not discern details as precisely as Yiyi could.

"What's it saying?" Xia Qianqian watched in wonder, having never seen a demon beast so intuitively human.

Lu Ye kept nodding incessantly...

Moments later, after probing the information transmitted by Yiyi, Lu Ye said, "It mentioned that when it was being controlled by that insect, it faintly sensed something in that direction!" Saying this, he pointed in a direction.

"Sensed what?"

"Not sure, but there is definitely an invisible connection deeply related to the insect that controlled it."

"The source of the madness?" Xia Qianqian's eyes lit up.

The demon beasts went mad not of their own accord, but because there were insects parasitizing inside them, controlling them, and these insects were somehow related to an entity far away; naturally, she would make such an association.

If this were true, then all that had been previously elusive was now startlingly clear.

"Do you know exactly where?" Xia Qianqian pressed on.

"Only the direction..."

"That direction..." said the Great Elder, who had stood silently to the side, deep in thought.

Lu Ye looked at him: "Great Elder, did you think of something?"

"That's the direction of Black Tortoise Sect." The Great Elder furrowed his brows: "The demon beasts' madness began with the outbreak at the Black Tortoise Sect and then swept across the entire Ten Thousand Beasts Domain."

Hearing him say this, both Lu Ye and Xia Qianqian couldn't help but think the same thing; it was very likely that the place Amber sensed was where the Black Tortoise Sect was located.

"But the Black Tortoise Sect has already been wiped out. We have all gone there to investigate, and there's nothing left."

"You also investigated the mad demon beasts, didn't you? And just the same, you did not find the insects," said Xia Qianqian.

The Great Elder immediately looked ashamed.

From his perspective, if it hadn't been for their Young Master and his natal demon beast sharing a telepathic link today, the matter with the insects might still have remained undiscovered.

The cause for the demon beasts' madness was found, and although the source wasn't yet confirmed, it was close to being certain. Lu Ye and Xia Qianqian exchanged glances, both recognizing the other's thoughts.

Two Worlds City was no longer tenable. Judging by the demon beasts' assault on the city, even if they went all out here, they couldn't hold out for more than a few days. Once the city fell, the Ten Thousand Beasts Domain would still proceed on its predestined historical path. If it really came to that, whether it was the native cultivators of the Ten Thousand Beasts Domain or the visiting cultivators from the Nine Provinces, none would meet a good end.

Therefore, for Lu Ye and others, there was only one way to survive now.

They had to go to the origin of this incident and try to solve the problem from there. Only then might there be a chance for survival.

"We need some help," Lu Ye said gravely.

"I'll contact people," said Xia Qianqian, as she began to send out messages.

As a Cloud River Level 9 cultivator, naturally, her network wasn't comparable to that of a fledgling like Lu Ye. Among the Nine Provinces cultivators who came this time, there were certainly some she knew.

"Young Master, what are you..." The Great Elder was puzzled.

Lu Ye thought for a moment and then said, "Great Elder, we are going to the Black Tortoise Sect! There should be a way to solve the problem there."

"To the Black Tortoise Sect now?" The Great Elder's face changed. It was the time of the demon beasts' attack on the city; leaving now meant breaking through an encirclement, which was extremely dangerous.

"If we don't go now, there won't be another chance. Staying here is just waiting for death!"

The Great Elder seemed ready to argue, but upon further thought, wasn't what Lu Ye said the truth? He nodded immediately: "The Young Master is right. Staying here is indeed waiting for death! I'll go see Liew Wuzhai, that old scoundrel, and see if he can send some people to go with us!"

Lu Ye was pleased: "That would be best!"

The more people they had for this trip to the Black Tortoise Sect, the better. The greater the number, the more they could achieve.

"Just wait a moment, Young Master!" said the Great Elder, soaring into the sky and streaking towards the City Lord's Residence.

Moments later, a beam of light shot straight towards them, descending in front of the group. Following closely was a lazy voice: "Xia Qianqian, do you know that leaving your post at such a critical moment could get your battle merits deducted?"

Upon hearing the voice, Lu Ye was startled because it sounded... somewhat familiar!

He turned his head to look and immediately saw a round and plump figure with a chubby face, squinty eyes reduced to mere slits, a prominent belly, and a genial smile.

Lu Ye was taken aback, not having expected to encounter this person here! Moreover, when he first entered the Ten Thousand Beasts Domain secret realm, he hadn't noticed this person's presence at all.

Seemingly noticing Lu Ye's gaze, the plump man glanced at Lu Ye, and a glint of sharpness flashed through the narrow slits of his eyes, his smile growing even more hearty.

Chapter 473 My Name is Pang Dahai

"Xia Qianqian, what on earth is going on?" Pang Dahai didn't show any abnormality towards Lu Ye, withdrew his gaze, and looked towards Xia Qianqian.

"I'll explain in a moment."

Pang Dahai frowned, took out his inscription tablet to check it, and his face twitched with distress as he said, "They deducted five hundred points of battle merit from me!"

Just as he had said, at such a critical moment of defending the city, leaving one's post without permission would result in the deduction of battle merits. Five hundred points of battle merit was not a small amount, enough to buy two spirit fortune sticks.

Another streak of sword light whistled in, and once the light dispersed, a majestic figure appeared. It was a sword cultivator.

Pang Dahai greeted him enthusiastically, "Brother Zhou Hai!"

Zhou Hai nodded slightly in greeting, landed, stood to one side, took out an elixir pill and popped it into his mouth, then started to silently regulate his breath.

People kept arriving and in a short while, there were already seven or eight people who had rushed here from different directions, obviously all summoned by Xia Qianqian. What was noteworthy was that Pang Dahai seemed to be familiar with everyone; no matter who arrived, he managed to exchange a few words with them.

Lu Ye observed from the side and although he couldn't precisely determine these people's cultivation, he could still roughly gauge it. Among those who came, not one was below the Cloud River Level 5 realm, especially the earlier-arrived Pang Dahai and that sword cultivator named Zhou Hai; both of them should be at the Cloud River Level 9 realm, just like Xia Qianqian.

After waiting for a moment longer, no one else came.

Pang Dahai said, "All who should be here have arrived, and those who aren't here probably can't make it now. So what's really going on?"

A pair of eyes turned towards Xia Qianqian.

Xia Qianqian spoke calmly, "We've found the reason for the demon beasts' madness!"

As soon as these words were spoken, the eyes of the Nine Provinces cultivators gathered here lit up.

Since entering the secret realm of the Ten Thousand Beasts Domain and learning about the situation the domain was facing, everyone had been investigating the cause of the demon beasts' madness. The cultivators from the Nine Provinces, much like the local cultivators of the Ten Thousand Beasts Domain, had captured many mad demon beasts for research, but no progress had been made until now.

Now that they heard Xia Qianqian say this, they were all naturally intrigued.

Because in the eyes of Nine Provinces cultivators, only by knowing why the demon beasts went mad could they take targeted actions.

Lu Ye could tell that Two Worlds City would not hold; could others fail to see it? If they only fighting to defend the city, it would ultimately be a dead end.

All had cultivated to the Cloud River realm, and no one wanted to die here.

"What reason?"

"An insect!" Xia Qianqian replied, sharing the discoveries they had made before.

Upon hearing this, Zhou Hai, without uttering a word, dashed off. In a brief moment, he returned by Sword Control, but this time he was holding a struggling, roaring demon beast in his hand. The beast resembled a blood fox, with blood-red fur like a burning flame, extremely beautiful.

"Three inches behind the neck?" Zhou Hai looked at Xia Qianqian.

The latter nodded, "It was in this position before!"

When the sword light flashed, the blood fox held in Zhou Hai's hand let out a pitiful cry as blood splattered.

All eyes turned towards Zhou Hai's longsword, only to see a cicada-like creature struggling and squirming on its tip.

However, the next moment the insect burst into a clump of black fluid. Zhou Hai, with quick reflexes, incited his spirit force, enveloped the black liquid, and eradicated it into nothingness.

"There really was an insect!"

Everyone, now seeing with their own eyes, confirmed the accuracy of Xia Qianqian's information.

Someone spoke, "Strange. If those demon beasts were controlled by parasite insects, why couldn't we find these insects in the beasts' carcasses? We especially studied many demon beast carcasses before, but didn't find anything."

"There's only one explanation then," said Pang Dahai gravely, looking grief-stricken, "the insect must have burst open at the moment of the host's death, just like what happened just now! I hate insects!"

Most of the others wore expressions of agreement.

"However, such an insect capable of parasitically controlling demon beasts is unique; never seen before. Could it be that there is an insect hive somewhere?"

"The question now is where is the insect hive? If we could locate the insect hive, then it would be easy to handle."

"Fellow Daoist Xia, since you've summoned us here, you must have some clues, right?"

All eyes once again turned to Xia Qianqian. "There are indeed clues, but the clue wasn't found by me," Xia Qianqian said. "It was discovered by our Fellow Daoist Ye Liu. He has a beast pet with an exceptional sense of perception. It was parasitized by one of those insects, and it was he who found out about them. Moreover, when his pet was parasitized, it sensed some peculiar connections in a certain direction. If we are not mistaken, that direction might lead us to the location of the insect hive!"

Following the direction of Xia Qianqian's finger, everyone looked towards Lu Ye.

The chubby man said with interest, "You're called Ye Liu? What a coincidence, I have a friend with the same name. Let me introduce myself, my name is Pang Dahai!"

"Fellow Daoist Pang!"

"Let's talk about the insect hive."

"I'm not too clear about the insect hive, but when my pet beast was parasitically controlled, I did sense something in one direction. And according to some clues we obtained later, that direction points to the site of the Black Tortoise Sect, which is precisely where the madness outbreak started!"

Everyone's eyes lit up upon hearing this, and Zhou Hai said, "Then there's no mistake, the insect hive is at the Black Tortoise Sect!"

"There's no time to lose, let's set off now and deal with the insect hive quickly, then everything will be resolved!"

"Wait a moment, someone hasn't arrived yet!" Xia Qianqian called out.

Just then, a streak of light rapidly approached, it was the Great Elder who had volunteered to go to the City Lord's Residence earlier. At this moment, the Great Elder's expression was quite ugly. As soon as he landed, he cursed, "Liew Wuzhai, that old fool, is senseless and unreasonable! How can he still play

political games with me at a time like this?" Saying this, he cupped his fist towards Lu Ye, "Young Master, I have failed in my task!"

"What did the City Lord say?"

The Great Elder angrily said, "That old dog not only ignored my advice, but he also wouldn't allow us to leave Two Worlds City. He has declared that if we dare desert in the face of battle, we would be considered criminals of Two Worlds City and henceforth forbidden from setting foot inside it ever again!"

The surviving cultivators of the Ten Thousand Beasts Sect listened with righteous indignation, their expressions filled with anger.

Lu Ye said, "There's no need to care about that, we will act on our own!"

It was then that the Great Elder realized there were seven or eight more people on this side. He asked in confusion, "Young Master, who are these...?"

"Fellow Daoists who came to help after hearing the news," Lu Ye casually explained.

The Great Elder was overjoyed, "That's wonderful!" His heart sighed with emotion; his Young Master had indeed grown tremendously and was no longer the pampered young lord who was oblivious to the suffering of the common people.

While the two were conversing, Pang Dahai and the other Nine Provinces cultivators were taken aback. Pang Dahai leaned over to Xia Qianqian and whispered, "This old man is from the Ten Thousand Beasts Domain, right? Why is he calling Ye Liu Young Master? What's Ye Liu's status here?"

"Young Master of the Ten Thousand Beasts Sect."

"Ten Thousand Beasts Sect?" Pang Dahai was initially stunned, and then exclaimed in surprise, "This guy is that lucky? I've been in and out of various secret realms so many times, yet I've never seen anyone with such a high status."

A bitter feeling arose in Xia Qianqian's heart, "Neither have I."

"This guy must be someone with astounding fortune, otherwise, he wouldn't be so favored by Heaven's Augury. Plus, he was the one who discovered the issue with the bugs, tsk tsk, impressive... And what about you? What's your status?"

"It's none of your business!" Xia Qianqian snapped, annoyed. How could she admit to being a Young Master's maid? After all, wasn't she also a cultivator of the Cloud River Level 9? Didn't she have any pride?

Pang Dahai snickered, he seemed to have realized something.

Xia Qianqian kicked Pang Dahai in the calf, causing him to stagger before she said, "Everyone's here now, let's set out."

No one had any objections.

The protective array at Section A-3 of the city wall wasn't activated, leaving them to exit the Two Worlds City through a nearby breach. A group of people immediately brought out their Flying Spirit Artifacts and shot up into the sky, vanishing in the blink of an eye.

The remaining Crimson Fire Camp cultivators were left dumbfounded, and the survived deputy camp head quickly sent a message to the City Lord's Residence to report the situation.

Xia Qianqian had gathered around seven or eight cultivators, and although their numbers weren't large, their overall strength was formidable. Especially Pang Dahai and Zhou Hai, both of whom were at Level 9 cultivation. Including Xia Qianqian, the Ten Thousand Beasts Sect's Great Elder, and the old woman, there were altogether five cultivators at Level 9 in this team.

The rest were mostly above the Cloud River Level 5.

Only Lu Ye and Lan Ziyi were at Level 2, but their Level 2 was different from the ordinary; they had once been ranked first and second on the Spirit Stream Ranking. The strength they could exhibit was far more than typical for their level, so they wouldn't be a drag on the team.

A group of less than twenty people broke out of Two Worlds City with two physique cultivators leading the way. The rest killed their enemies using weapon control or magic and spells. When this group charged into the overwhelming demon beast swarm, multicolored glows began to blossom, as powerful magic and spells annihilated waves of demon beasts. Wherever the team passed, bodies of demon beasts fell like dumplings to the ground below.

Located in the middle of the team, Lu Ye, with the Great Elder of the Ten Thousand Beasts Sect and others behind him, didn't face too much pressure. Even so, the continuous onslaught of demon beasts still wore him down. The number of demon beasts was too overwhelming; it seemed like all the demon beasts from the Ten Thousand Beasts Domain had converged around Two Worlds City. The swarms of demon beasts in the sky were dense enough to obscure the sun's light, and those rampaging on the ground were like an unstoppable torrent.

Even though their team was powerful, by the time they had spent a full half-hour breaking out of the encircling demon beasts, they had experienced some casualties.

Three figures had vanished, two from the Ten Thousand Beasts Sect and one was a Nine Provinces cultivator; Lu Ye vaguely remembered that one was a short-statured ghost cultivator.

The fates of these three was unknown; they had been separated from the group by the demon beasts during the breakout.

Even after they had broken out of the encirclement, a large number of demon beasts continued to pursue them from behind. These avian demon beasts had no special talents except for one: their exceptionally fast flying speed, which made shaking them off no easy task.

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A group of more than ten people fought and advanced, continuously eliminating the flying demon beasts that pursued them, until after a little less than half a day, all of the pursuers had been wiped out.

Suspended in mid-air, as far as the eye could see, the vast territory of the Ten Thousand Beasts Domain lay open to view. However, everywhere bore the marks of devastation wrought by demon beasts, and the entire world seemed to exude an aura of ruin.

The leading Xia Qianqian, together with Zhou Hai and Pang Dahai, briefly discussed before she sharply commanded, "We will rest for one hour!"

More than a dozen streaks of light descended straight toward the mountains below, and moments later, everyone found their own spot to adjust their breathing and recover.

Lu Ye tossed two elixir pills into his mouth and held a mid-grade spirit stone in each hand, pretending to recuperate. A figure sat down next to him, and it turned out to be Pang Dahai.

Compared to their meeting over two years ago in Evil Moon Valley, this fellow had clearly put on quite a bit of weight, and it was a mystery why a cultivator of the Cloud River Realm couldn't control his own physique.

Seeing him reminded Lu Ye once again of that man named Yue Shan, as it was from his mouth that the name Lu Yiye had spread.

"Fellow Daoist Ye has quite a remarkable beast pet," Pang Dahai said with a chuckle.

"If Fellow Daoist Pang likes it, after this matter is resolved, you might consider capturing one for yourself. The Ten Thousand Beasts Domain, if nothing else, is most abundant in demon beasts."

"I've kept some before, but as I did, they ended up in my stomach," he said while patting his big belly. Drawing closer to Lu Ye, he whispered, "I see those from the Ten Thousand Beasts Sect have some special techniques in the Path of Beast Taming. It seems they can merge their blood Qi with their beast pets to enhance their combat strength. If Fellow Daoist Ye is interested, you could learn a thing or two from them. It's just the kind of thing that would suit your status."

Along the way, he had clearly seen something that upended his understanding, for, in the Nine Provinces cultivation world, cultivators of the beast-taming faction simply couldn't do such a thing.

"I've already got it," Lu Ye responded quietly.

Pang Dahai's eyebrows lifted, and he gave Lu Ye a thumbs up.

Lu Ye then said, "There's something I'd like to ask Fellow Daoist Pang about."

"Go ahead."

"Why did everyone mention the insect hive the moment insects came up?" This puzzled him, and from the conversation at the time, it seemed unanimous among those called over by Xia Qianqian that there existed an insect hive somewhere within the Ten Thousand Beasts Domain.

It wasn't a good time to ask detailed questions, so Lu Ye didn't speak further.

Moreover, Pang Dahai had also said he detested insects, as if he had been greatly afflicted by them.

"Have you experienced an Insect Plague at the Spirit Stream battlefield?" Pang Dahai asked.

Lu Ye nodded.

"Then that will make things easier to explain. Since you've experienced an Insect Plague at the Spirit Stream battlefield, you should know that those of the Insect Race aren't born out of thin air, but are spawned from within an insect hive. It's the same here. Those parasites controlling the demon beasts aren't born out of thin air either, they come from a certain insect hive," Pang Dahai explained earnestly. "You must have only arrived at the Cloud River battlefield not long ago and haven't experienced much. In time you'll understand that many secret realms harbor traces of the Insect Race, and the most fundamental way to deal with the Insect Race is to find and deal with the insect hive first. Otherwise, no matter how many insects you kill, it's futile. Not only does the Cloud River battlefield's secret realms have them, but even within the Nine Provinces, they exist."

Lu Ye listened in amazement.

"Before Xia Qianqian gathered us, none of us expected this secret realm to be related to the Insect Race. Mainly because these insects have never been encountered before and were too well hidden to be discovered. If it weren't for you, we still wouldn't know how to start tackling the issue," Pang Dahai said.

The likelihood was they could only continue to hold the fort in Two Worlds City, and if that were the case, it would be a dead end.

Pang Dahai raised his hand to pat Lu Ye's shoulder, saying with heartfelt gravity, "If you encounter something similar in the future, first consider whether insects are behind it. Once you find the insects, follow the trail to the insect hive, eliminate the hive, and everything else will fall into place."

Lu Ye nodded, indicating he had taken the lesson to heart.

"How much farther is the Black Tortoise Sect?"

Lu Ye looked up at the Great Elder next to him, and the Great Elder answered, "Given our current pace, at least four to six hours."

"That's not too far away then."

Lu Ye silently estimated based on the direction and speed previously given by Amber, confirming everything was correct.

After one hour, the group set off once again having recovered considerably during the rest.

On their way, they encountered no obstacles, not even a single demon beast.

It seemed as if all the demon beasts of the Ten Thousand Beasts Domain had gathered at Two Worlds City.

More than four hours later, a continuous mountain range came into sight. Only after passing several spirit mountaintops did the Great Elder in the group suddenly point ahead: "There lies the Black Tortoise Sect!"

Everyone looked in the direction pointed, seeing a landscape of rolling hills that, when viewed from high above, resembled a giant Black Tortoise sprawling across the land.

The back of the tortoise was filled with buildings that were now but ruins and rubble.

It was evident that the Black Tortoise Sect had once been a sect with formidable depth. However, after experiencing the transformation wrought by demon beasts, the entire Black Tortoise Sect had fallen into decay.

To everyone's surprise, within this dilapidated Black Tortoise Sect, a large number of demon beasts had gathered!

This unusual situation brought joy to the group, feeling that their journey had been worthwhile.

Now, practically all the demon beasts of the Ten Thousand Beasts Domain had converged at Two Worlds City. On their way there, aside from the demon beasts that had chased them from Two Worlds City, they hadn't come across a single one.

The Black Tortoise Sect gathered so many demon beasts here, which undoubtedly indicates that the insect hive is most likely in this area, and the demon beasts gathering here are all guarding the insect hive.

"There are quite a lot of them!" Pang Dahai looked down with full Ocular Power, his expression grave.

Although the number of demon beasts here was less than in Two Worlds City, it was not something a team of about a dozen people could handle. The current problem was how to search for the insect hive without alarming these demon beasts.

The location of an insect hive is generally deep underground, difficult to find by ordinary means.

Fortunately, each insect hive has an entrance and exit, so if one wants to find the hive, the entrance extending to the surface is a good starting point. However, finding such an entrance in such a vast area is certainly not an easy task.

"How many ghost cultivators do we have?" Pang Dahai looked around. In this environment, ghost cultivators were undoubtedly the best choice to search for the entrance.

Xia Qianqian glanced around with an embarrassed expression, "We originally had two..."

One was lost along the way, and now there's only one left.

The people from the Ten Thousand Beasts Sect were all from the beast-taming faction, clearly lacking the means of ghost cultivators. As for the others gathered by Xia Qianqian, two were physique cultivators, most were combat cultivators, and Pang Dahai was a magic cultivator...

Everyone turned their gaze to the sole remaining ghost cultivator, a petite woman with some peculiar patterns on her neck. The female cultivator said with a stiff upper lip, "I'll give it a try."

Having said that, she flashed and descended toward the area below, soon disappearing from sight.

"I'll go look as well," Lu Ye volunteered.

Xia Qianqian was extremely surprised, "What faction are you exactly?"

At first glance, Lu Ye was accompanied by a beast pet, so she thought he was from the beast-taming faction, but he fought enemies entirely like a combat cultivator and could cast magic and spells. Now, volunteering like this, he was undoubtedly skilled in the methods of a ghost cultivator.

"I brought some concealment talismans!" Lu Ye explained.

Ordinary concealment talismans might not be as effective as the ghost cultivators' techniques for hiding their forms, but what Lu Ye intended to use was not concealment talismans, but Concealment Spirit Runes, which were nearly as good as the tactics of the ghost cultivators.

"Be careful," Pang Dahai cautioned.

Lu Ye nodded and descended in a different direction.

A moment later, in a part of the jungle, Lu Ye looked up and saw no sign of Pang Dahai and the others. To avoid being discovered by the demon beasts gathered at the Black Tortoise Sect, they were currently positioned very high.

With the boost from Concealment Spirit Runes, Lu Ye concealed himself before he gently called out, "Yiyi."

Yiyi's figure dashed out from within Amber, leaving the words, "Leave it to me," before she flashed into the underground.

The Black Tortoise Sect covered a vast area, and without enough manpower, it would be difficult to find any clues here. With only one ghost cultivator in the team, it was uncertain how long it would take to find the entrance leading to the insect hive.

Fortunately, Lu Ye had Yiyi.

Yiyi's special Spiritual Body traits allowed her to move freely underground, outmatching any ghost cultivator. As long as she didn't stray too far from Amber, there wouldn't be much of a problem, making the search much easier.

As for Lu Ye... he didn't need to do anything but quietly wait here.

If things went smoothly, Yiyi might even be able to destroy the insect hive directly, as her strength was not weak now.

Time slipped by until about an hour later, when Lu Ye received a transmission from Yiyi; the insect hive had been found a hundred zhang underground, which explained why the cultivators from the Ten Thousand Beasts Domain had previously investigated the Black Tortoise Sect and found nothing.

Such a depth was beyond the reach of Cloud River Realm cultivators.

After finding the insect hive, Yiyi was now attempting to see if she could destroy it.

But soon, she sent another message to Lu Ye, informing him that there were quite a few demon beasts guarding inside the hive, and with her strength, she couldn't destroy the huge insect hive in an instant.

Having delved into an insect hive during his time at the Spirit Stream battlefield, Lu Ye knew what the inside of the hive was like. He immediately transmitted back, telling her not to act recklessly.

Yiyi acknowledged and began to trace the internal passages from the insect hive, searching for an exit in reverse.

This was much simpler than searching for an entrance within the vast Black Tortoise Sect.

About half an hour later, Yiyi transmitted a message that the entrance had been found, located in a dry well behind the Black Tortoise Sect's mountains.

Once Yiyi returned safely, Lu Ye soared into the sky and went to meet with Xia Qianqian and the others.

Upon seeing Lu Ye's return, the group of people quickly looked over.

"Found it!" Lu Ye nodded.

Everyone let out a sigh of relief!

After informing them of the entrance leading to the insect hive, Xia Qianqian frowned, "How should we deal with the demon beasts here? If we remove them bit by bit, it's too time-consuming. But if we don't, the moment we rush in, we will definitely be ambushed from both sides."

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"The entrance is actually a dried-up well. Once we enter, we can collapse it to block the exit," someone suggested.

"Too dangerous, if it goes wrong, we might all be buried inside," another expressed concern.

"Why not lure them away?"

"That might work, but these demon beasts are guarding the insect hive, so it would probably be hard to draw them away. Even if we could lure some, it's not possible to lure them all."

"We still have to try," said someone else.

"Who will go?"

Everyone looked around at each other, nobody spoke up, not because leading the demon beasts away was extremely dangerous. There were many demon beasts here, but not more than at Two Worlds City, and everyone had fought their way out of Two Worlds City, so they weren't afraid of the chase from the demon beasts here.

It was just that if someone were responsible for leading away the demon beasts, they wouldn't be able to participate in the subsequent destruction of the insect hive.

For the Nine Provinces cultivators, this was a golden opportunity to earn battle merit. If they could really destroy the insect hive here and thereby resolve the crisis in the Ten Thousand Beasts Domain, there would certainly be a lot of merits to be gained.

A moment later, everyone looked towards Lu Ye, the implication was clear.

Lu Ye understood what they were thinking, turned to the Great Elder, "Great Elder, you all try your best to lead the demon beasts away!"

The Great Elder responded, "Alright, but I need to remain with the Young Master."

There were six people left from the Ten Thousand Beasts Sect, excluding the Great Elder, that left five. Although having more people would be better for leading the demon beasts away, the difference between five and six people wasn't significant.

Moreover, with the Great Elder, a Cloud River Level 9 cultivator, staying by Lu Ye's side, he could provide a certain degree of protection.

Lu Ye immediately agreed, "No problem."

The old lady said, "Young Master, be careful."

With that, she led a few cultivators from the Ten Thousand Beasts Sect downwards. Soon, there were intense fluctuations of spirit force and booming sounds below, and everyone looked down to see several Ten Thousand Beasts Sect cultivators transforming into streaks of light, sweeping across the sky above the Black Tortoise Sect ruins, repeatedly making moves.

Soon, a large group of densely packed demon beasts followed behind these few people. The cultivators didn't rush to escape but instead circled above the Black Tortoise Sect a few times before leading the beast horde away into the distance.

The number of demon beasts gathered around the Black Tortoise Sect was instantly cut by half.

The situation was not too optimistic, but it was within expectations.

Now, splitting forces again was not very feasible. There were still many demon beasts inside the insect hive. If they split their forces to lure away the demon beasts on the surface, then only a few people entering the insect hive would be left, making it hard to accomplish much.

"Fellow Daoist Ye, you lead the way!" Zhou Hai said.

Without a word, Lu Ye transformed into a streak of light and swooped downward, the others closely followed.

The fluctuations of spirit force soon drew the attention of the demon beasts. A large group of flying bird-like demon beasts actively came to meet them. Those following Lu Ye immediately acted together; their magic and weapon control techniques wrapped in a lethal aura, slammed into the beast horde, blasting a path through it.

They plunged straight down, and a dried-up well came into view. Lu Ye was the first to descend into it, followed closely by the Great Elder who always protected him, then Shen Xiaomao and Lan Ziyi, followed by Xia Qianqian and her gathered allies, with two physique cultivators at the rear.

As they fell, the two physique cultivators at the rear continuously struck the surrounding well walls. When the group's figures finally landed, what followed were massive falling rocks.

The well was not too deep, measuring less than ten Zhang. The moment Lu Ye landed at the bottom of the well, Amber leaped down from his shoulder and dashed to one side; Lu Ye hurriedly followed.

Yiyi had previously explored the underground passage, and with her secret guidance, Amber would not lose her way.

The ongoing booming sounds behind them were incessant; the well walls were completely collapsed. The entrance through which everyone had entered was now sealed, so they no longer needed to worry about being pursued and attacked from behind.

However, such actions seemed to have alarmed the demon beasts underground, as roars from the beasts continuously emerged from all directions, echoing the roars from the beasts on the surface.

The underground passage was not a single path, but rather a complex network of bending and branching paths. Without Yiyi's secret guidance, even if the group had entered this place, finding the location of the insect hive would have taken a lot of effort.

Periodically, demon beasts attacked from the branch paths, their crimson eyes particularly visible in the darkness.

With the Great Elder guarding his side, given his Cloud River Level 9 cultivation, very few demon beasts could come within three Zhang of Lu Ye. Any that did were immediately annihilated by the Great Elder's punches.

Honestly, having such a loyal Cloud River Level 9 cultivator as a protector provided a great sense of security.

The journey deeper was smooth to the extreme.

Among the team, there were not only the Great Elder with Cloud River Level 9 cultivation but also Xia Qianqian, Pang Dahai, and Zhou Hai. Especially Zhou Hai, a sword cultivator, who was highly proficient in the Sword Control Technique. Often it was only a flash of sword light, and a demon beast would be slain. With Lu Ye's eyesight and cultivation level, he couldn't even see how Zhou Hai made his moves.

The disparity in cultivation level was after all too great, especially since sword cultivators were known throughout the world for their killing techniques.

Going straight a hundred Zhang underground, the area suddenly opened up, a huge chamber came into everyone's view.

The insect hive was there!

It was very similar to the insect hives Lu Ye had seen in the Spirit Stream battlefield. This place was probably an underground cavern which now was completely encased by a layer of flesh walls. Those flesh walls had many swollen flesh nodes that continuously wriggled as if some creatures were hiding inside them, possibly ready to burst out at any time.

The group stood on the flesh wall, feeling as if they were in the stomach of a living creature, the air filled with a pungent odor.

In the darkness, pairs of crimson eyes opened, dense like fireflies.

Inside the insect hive, a large number of demon beasts gathered to protect it.

After a brief standoff, the roar of the beasts suddenly erupted, and with their roars, the demon beasts guarding this place launched an attack on Lu Ye and his uninvited group.

The sword light covered the sky and illuminated the entire insect hive, along with the violent glows of magic and spells and weapon control.

Although it was their first collaboration, the coordination of the Cloud River Realm cultivators was incomparable to those from the Spirit Stream Realm. Two physique cultivators immediately teamed up to stand in front of everyone, their blood Qi boiling and surging. Each summoned a spirit artifact big shield to withstand the frenzied attack of the demon beasts.

Combat cultivators were behind, and magic cultivators even further behind, and the fierce battle ensued without cessation.

One by one, the attacking demon beasts were slain, and the smell of blood began to permeate. The demon beasts' frenzied attacks made the big shields of the two physique cultivators flicker wildly, and their defensive line was momentarily breached.

Having endured the most challenging early stage, as the number of demon beasts decreased, the pressure on everyone gradually lessened until they completely stabilized their formation.

Though people were injured from time to time within the team, overall, there was no worry for their lives.

With hope in sight, they fought the enemies with increased vigor.

After half a Shichen later, every demon beast within the insect hive had been killed, leaving the ground around them piled high with their bodies.

"Something's not right!" Xia Qianqian suddenly spoke up.

"I also feel something is a bit off!" Pang Dahai gasped heavily, tossing an Origin Spirit Pill into his mouth as he spoke.

Zhou Hai, though silent, had a sword light floating beside him that never extinguished, showing he was always on guard.

Even the Great Elder continued to stay close to Lu Ye, not leaving his side, his expression tense.

Several Cloud River Level 9 cultivators also noticed something unusual.

Everything had been too smooth.

Since they had ventured underground and fought their way into this insect hive, killing every demon beast until none was left, there were some twists, but overall, it was too smooth.

The excessive smoothness stirred a sense of unease among them, as if something had gone unnoticed.

"The way back is cut off!" Lu Ye said.

The group quickly turned to look, only to discover that the entrance they had come through was gone, completely enveloped by the omnipresent flesh walls.

Nobody had noticed when the exit was cut off; everyone had been focusing intensely on fighting the enemy and hadn't paid attention to the entrance behind them.

At this moment, the insect hive could be considered completely sealed off.

Zhou Hai's sword light flashed, and a flying sword slashed toward the location of the entrance, but its sharp sword light only managed to break the surface of the flesh wall, cutting a notch but not completely through. As the sword light retracted, the flesh wall quickly wriggled, and in the blink of an eye, it was restored to its original state.

Seeing this, everyone's expression turned grave. This insect hive was different from any other they had encountered before.

The Insect Race they faced this time in the Ten Thousand Beasts Domain was also unlike any they had seen before.

If the flesh walls of this insect hive had such powerful regenerative and protective capabilities, how would they be able to destroy it?

"I have another question," Pang Dahai stepped forward to a spot and stomped on a flesh sac below, "If the insects in this world's Insect Plague are tiny like cicadas, then what's inside these flesh sacs?"

In other insect hives, flesh sacs incubate large-bodied members of the Insect Race, obviously, this world's insect nests didn't require such large flesh sacs.

Moreover, since the beginning, these flesh sacs had been constantly wriggling, as if something alive was about to break out from inside.

Zhou Hai drew his sword and stepped toward the center of the insect hive: "No matter what it is, let's destroy the core of this hive first!"

Every insect hive has its core, where a huge flesh sac resides, containing a vitality core formed by the insect hive absorbing various energies. Destroying this core would deprive the hive of its ability to incubate the Insect Race.

This hive naturally had a core, but until now, everyone had been obstructed by the demon beasts and hadn't been able to get close.

Zhou Hai stepped up to the towering flesh sac at the center, wiping his longsword, which immediately lit up with a dazzling light.

As his spirit force surged, his longsword turned into a stunning sword flash, slashing toward the core.

This all-out strike from him couldn't smoothly cut down because just as the longsword was about to strike, a beast claw suddenly reached out from the core flesh sac, grabbing Zhou Hai's sword. The claw was tougher than refined iron. The longsword striking it produced a metallic ding, sparks flying, showing its solidness.

Zhou Hai's eyes narrowed.

The group, witnessing this scene, was equally shocked by this sudden development; no one had expected that there would be a living creature inside the core flesh sac.

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Within the flesh sac, two crimson glows burst forth, which were, shockingly, a person's eyes. However, like those demon beasts struck with madness, these eyes also displayed an abnormal glow, devoid of any emotion, filled only with madness and ferocity.

Zhou Hai, who was very close, felt all the hairs on his body stand on end as a massive sense of crisis surged from within him. Without thinking, he drew his sword and swiftly retreated.

However, it was ultimately a step too late. A huge foot, resembling an iron hoof, suddenly kicked out from the flesh sac, striking Zhou Hai in the abdomen. The swift speed was like thunder and lightning, and the violent force directly shattered Zhou Hai's protective sword light.

This Cloud River Level 9 swordsman was sent flying back like a broken sack, crashing into the crowd and causing chaos.

Everyone was stunned by this sudden event.

With a clatter, the flesh sac completely burst open, two large hands resembling iron claws clung to the broken walls of the sac. With a slight effort, a tall figure emerged, draped in a viscous fluid that dripped down its body onto the ground.

This person was as tall as a tower, with two bull horns on his head, claw-like hands, hoof-like feet, and a short tail flickering behind him.

At first glance, one might assume he was a demon cultivator.

But this demon cultivator felt somewhat different from normal demon cultivators.

Standing beside Lu Ye, the Great Elder suddenly widened his eyes and exclaimed in shock, "Niu Meng?"

"What?" Lu Ye frowned.

"This is the Black Tortoise Sect Master, Niu Meng!" the Great Elder explained.

The situation became bizarre. The people had come here to destroy the insect hive, and now that they had located it, no one understood why the Black Tortoise Sect Master would emerge from the flesh sac of the hive in this form.

What puzzled Pang Dahai and the other Nine Provinces cultivators was that despite the flesh sac being destroyed, which should have led to the rapid withering of the whole insect hive, the hive seemed unchanged by the destruction of itself.

What alarmed everyone even more was that Niu Meng, who was clearly not easy to mess with, exhibited a vitality that was excessively robust, certainly not something that a Cloud River cultivator should possess.

"Be careful, he's very strong," Zhou Hai said, clutching his abdomen. He turned his head and spat out a mouthful of blood water. The force and speed of that kick had left him deeply shocked; had he not sensed it in advance, he might have been killed by that kick.

"He's been parasitically controlled by the Insect Race!" Xia Qianqian said in a serious tone.

This was what truly terrified everyone.

The most obvious sign of madness in demon beasts was the turning of their eyes crimson; the source of this madness was controlled by an unknown Insect Race.

It had never been heard that the Insect Race, which parasitically controlled demon beasts, could also control cultivators.

Because so far, within the Ten Thousand Beasts Domain, there had been no precedent of cultivators being parasitically controlled. Everyone initially assumed that only demon beasts could suffer from madness.

But now, the symptoms of Niu Meng clearly fit those of parasitic control.

This instilled a sense of crisis in every cultivator present: if the Insect Race here could really control cultivators, might they themselves already be infected without knowing it?

Immediately, everyone felt endangered.

There were no signs before complete control by the Insect Race, as could be observed from the behavior of the demon beasts. The insects residing inside could exhibit the exact same aura as the hosts, making it impossible for the cultivators to detect any clues, so if the Insect Race could indeed control cultivators, it was very possible that they already had parasites inside them, just not yet mature enough to take control.

"Don't lose your composure; we haven't been disrupted by the Insect Race!" Lu Ye said gravely. While others might not be sure about this, Lu Ye had the Talent Tree by his side, which could incinerate even the pill poison from medicines. If there were indeed any parasites in him, the Talent Tree would have reacted.

But in fact, since entering the Ten Thousand Beasts Domain, the Talent Tree had shown no unusual behavior.

"How can you be so sure?"

Lu Ye remained silent. This was not something easy to explain.

As the people turned, a sudden clatter resounded from all around. Everyone's spine chilled as they saw that each flesh sac in the insect hive burst open, pouring out virus-liquidated figures from inside.

Every one of them had crimson eyes, some with the features of demon cultivators and others completely resembling cultivators. In an instant, the hive was swarmed with over twenty new figures.

Everyone felt their scalps tingle.

They had thought the mission would be straightforward: find the insect hive, destroy it, and the crisis would be resolved. However, only at this moment did they realize that the greatest danger was actually within the hive itself.

"They are all from the Black Tortoise Sect," the Great Elder said gravely, a native cultivator of the Ten Thousand Beasts Domain and a Great Elder of the Ten Thousand Beasts Sect, he naturally recognized the cultivators of the Black Tortoise Sect.

No matter why these Black Tortoise Sect cultivators had been parasitically controlled by the Insect Race, from the evidence gathered so far, the parasitic control of cultivators by the Insect Race was not as straightforward as imagined and probably required strict conditions, such as confining the cultivators within the insect hive. Otherwise, the Ten Thousand Beasts Domain would have fallen long ago.

Like the controlled demon beasts, every one of these Black Tortoise Sect cultivators displayed an extremely violent and crazed demeanor.

Now that the insect hive was completely sealed off, unless they killed all these people from the Black Tortoise Sect, there was no way out for anyone.

There was no time for discussion, as the cultivators from Black Tortoise Sect burst out of their cocoons and launched an attack on the crowd without saying a word.

The battle erupted instantaneously.

Blood Qi surged, spirit force swirled, and the Nine Provinces cultivators huddled tightly together, backed against a flesh wall, resisting attacks from three other sides.

Two physique cultivators stood at the very front of the group, their spirit artifact big shields continuously flashing with light, with the thudding sounds unceasing in their ears.

To everyone's shock yet relief, even though the Black Tortoise Sect's numbers were nearly double their own, after being controlled by the Insect Race, they seemed to lack much thought and rationale, acting purely on instinct, making it difficult for them to utilize their original techniques and strength.

They charged like wild beasts, using their spirit force to punch, kick, or even bite.

This diversity slightly steadied the hearts of the Nine Provinces cultivators.

In terms of numbers, Black Tortoise Sect held the absolute advantage, and in average cultivation, they still had superiority. If these controlled individuals could have leveraged their original skills and strength, the battle would have been hopeless.

The banging sounds were ceaseless, and colorful lights burst continuously in the dim insect hive. Using their tight formation and varied tactics, the Nine Provinces cultivators, despite being at an absolute disadvantage in numbers and cultivation, managed to hold their defensive line.

Blood splattered periodically, but those Black Tortoise Sect cultivators seemed impervious to pain, completely disregarding even if they lost arms or legs, or had their midsections split open, continuing to attack the Nine Provinces cultivators furiously.

If the situation continued like this, eradicating these Black Tortoise Sect members was merely a matter of time.

However, what was noteworthy was that Niu Meng, after kicking Zhou Hai away, had been standing still all this while, without any intention of joining the ongoing attack by other Black Tortoise Sect cultivators.

But the abnormal vitality emanating from his body was still as unmissable as a ben in the night, demanding careful attention.

When a blinding sword light flashed, a head flew high up. A Black Tortoise Sect cultivator, even though mangled, hadn't continued his ferocious assault until, with a thud, he fell to the ground, lifeless.

"Go for the head!" Zhou Hai shouted.

Controlled by the Insect Race, it was uncertain whether these Black Tortoise Sect cultivators were alive or dead, but their apparent insensitivity to pain meant that no injury would stop them, only by decapitating them would they be thoroughly killed.

Hearing this, people aimed for the heads of the Black Tortoise Sect cultivators and moments later, another head was smashed, the body tumbling to the ground.

As everyone collaborated closely, Niu Meng, who had been stationary, suddenly moved.

His towering frame burst forth with unimaginable speed. In an instant, he charged to the forefront of the crowd, forcefully opening a path through any Black Tortoise Sect cultivators in his way.

With a thunderous crash.

A physique cultivator at the front of the crowd was directly blown away, spewing a mist of blood mid-air, his face turning pale, and his spirit artifact big shield dimming and cracking.

As this physique cultivator was blown away, the tight defensive line immediately showed a breach.

Standing before that gap was the fiercely charging Niu Meng, slightly raising an iron hoof, which had just kicked that physique cultivator away.

At this moment, he lifted the kicked iron hoof and struck out again.

Facing this new attack was a Level 6 martial cultivator from Cloud River, who had been shielded behind the physique cultivator while fighting. Once the physique cultivator was blown away, it was his turn to face the brunt of Niu Meng's assault.

If even a physique cultivator couldn't withstand such a kick, how would a martial cultivator?

As the kick came down, the martial cultivator attempted to dodge, but couldn't escape. Zhou Hai's sword slashed down, striking precisely on the iron hoof, blood splattering as the sharp sword broke through Niu Meng's skin and hit his leg bone, making a sound like metal striking metal.

A burst of blood mist exploded, covering the nearby cultivators head to toe.

Where the martial cultivator had been standing, there was no one left.

A Level 6 martial cultivator was obliterated by a single kick from Niu Meng!

Everyone felt a chill run down their spine, directly feeling the terrifying power of that kick.

That was not the end; Niu Meng completely ignored Zhou Hai's sharp sword, letting the sword cultivator stab him repeatedly, causing multiple bloody holes. With a swift grab, he seized another martial cultivator's head, crushing it with his beast claw like a smashed watermelon!

After killing two people, Niu Meng then waved his hand, sending Zhou Hai flying.

The originally tight formation was instantly shattered by Niu Meng's intervention.

Shen Xiaomao's eyes widened, her blood turning cold, as Niu Meng's blood-red pupils fixed on her, raising a foot to kick towards her.

If this kick landed, given Shen Xiaomao's Cloud River Level 5 cultivation, survival would be impossible.

Chapter 477

At the moment of life-and-death crisis, Shen Xiaomao unleashed all her power, her ribbon Spiritual Artifact snapping straight, layer upon layer, transforming into a shield before her.

Iron hooves struck on this ribbon-made protection, the light of the Spiritual Artifact instantly dimming. Despite Shen Xiaomao desperately stimulating her spirit force, she still couldn't stop it a bit and could only watch death inch closer.

A plump figure suddenly slid from the side, directly knocking her away—it was none other than Pang Dahai.

Shen Xiaomao flew out, the despair in her eyes turning into astonishment. She hadn't expected that at such a critical moment, the one to save her would be a magic cultivator.

In fact, only Pang Dahai and another magic cultivator had the chance to save her because they were the closest to Shen Xiaomao.

However, magic cultivators are not known for their physical toughness. Even if Pang Dahai was at Cloud River Level 9, after taking such a ferocious kick straight on, his chances of surviving were slim.

With a boom, as spirit force surged, Pang Dahai's plump body suddenly shook violently, his face flushing an unnatural red while all his fat quivered intensely.

Yet, what astonished everyone was that Pang Dahai, who took the kick head-on, was not sent flying. He remained firmly standing in place.

Instead, it was the shockwave that erupted from behind him that sent everyone tumbling.

Niu Meng's iron hoof seemed to have stepped into a quagmire; it sank into Pang Dahai's big belly. With a furious shout from Dahai and a thrust of his belly, the towering Niu Meng was unexpectedly flung away.

At this moment, Pang Dahai didn't look like a magic cultivator at all. His blood Qi surged like boiling water, his entire body enveloped in blood-red waves of Qi, so vigorous it was almost outrageous.

"I'll hold him off, you lot hurry up and kill!" Pang Dahai dropped these words, stomped on the ground with both feet, his body floating into the air as he leaped towards Niu Meng again. His hefty figure gave an unprecedented sense of security.

In a blink, two figures there tangled into one, instant collisions sounding out. Accompanied by a strange shout from Pang Dahai, he flew back heavily, landing on the ground.

Scrambling up and wincing in pain, he shouted, "No good, this guy's too strong, I can't hold him off alone, Zhou Hai brother, assist me!"

After saying that, he charged towards Niu Meng again.

Zhou Hai was well aware that Pang Dahai would not call for help unless he truly couldn't hold on. Not daring to delay, he merged with the sword light, breaking through the encirclement and rushed to attack Niu Meng.

Only by joining forces did the two at Cloud River Level 9 manage to barely entangle Niu Meng.

With the strongest of the Black Tortoise Sect, Niu Meng, being entangled, Lu Ye and the others also quickly engaged the enemy. However, their formation was now in disarray, and two combat cultivators had already fallen in battle. The situation was exceedingly grim; almost everyone was fighting their own battles and facing multiple opponents at once.

Although there were only three cultivators from the Black Tortoise Sect facing Lu Ye, the fluctuations of spirit force they emitted showed that each of their cultivations was not below Cloud River Level 5. One of them was even at Cloud River Level 7. Fortunately, they had lost the tactics inherent to cultivators and were only acting on instinct. Otherwise, Lu Ye would have no chance of fighting them.

Even so, Lu Ye was chased to the point of a desperate escape. After losing their customary cultivator's tactics, the speed and explosiveness of these Black Tortoise Sect cultivators dramatically increased. They were like wild beasts gone mad, eager to tear apart all the enemies before them.

The Boulder Mountain Saber swung with flames swirling around it, bringing with it a spray of blood. However, the enemy struck by the long saber showed no sign of retreating. At the same time, as a huge gash appeared on its neck, its claws gripped onto Lu Ye's shoulder, tearing pain spreading through him. As his sleeve was ripped off, deep, bone-visible wounds appeared on his shoulder, blood profusely oozing out.

That wasn't all; the other two figures had already leaped high, pouncing down on him like fierce tigers making a kill.

Lu Ye hurriedly rolled, barely dodging in disarray. Before he could steady himself, another gust of wind assaulted him. He quickly turned, blood Qi gathering in his saber-wielding right arm. With spirit force wildly urged, he slashed down with the might to split mountains and crack stones.

Single Flash!

The saber light flashed, and two halves of a body flew out from his left and right, blood and entrails scattering everywhere. Under his ferocious saber skills, one of the Black Tortoise Sect cultivators charging at him was split in two.

There was no time to catch a breath; the remaining two enemies were already attacking from both sides.

Amber growled lowly, perched on Lu Ye's shoulder, its blood Qi mingling with Lu Ye's. The bond of their Beast Seal was working, contributing to the power behind every strike Lu Ye made. This allowed him to sustain longer in combat and deal more significant damage than before.

The long saber reversed grip; amidst the approaching enemies, Lu Ye's hand became a blur of afterimages. The Boulder Mountain Saber slashed down at an incredible speed, stabbing out continuously.

The melding of Qi between man and beast became increasingly fierce and clear.

Every person was embroiled in a grueling battle. Lu Ye saw Lan Ziyi being chased and fleeing from the Black Tortoise Sect cultivators, Shen Xiaomao, already injured, drenched in crimson blood, and the two physique cultivators—one flopped on the ground, life or death uncertain, the other besieged by four Black Tortoise Sect cultivators, tearing off chunks of flesh from his body.

Even the situations of the most powerful Xia Qianqian and Great Elder were far from optimistic. Although they were the strongest, their opponents were also formidable—clearly at Cloud River Level 8-9.

As for Zhou Hai and Pang Dahai... thenstant strange cries from Pang Dahai were indication enough that things were not going well. Although the two togetheruld temporarily entangle Niu Meng for a short time, they had no chance of killing him.

The situation had deteriorated to the point of no return. If thisntinued, it was likely that everyone would be defeated one by one.

Lu Ye was still in a desperate flight, having killed one Black Tortoise Sect cultivator, there were only two left to deal with. With his foundation and strength, heuld stillpe to some extent, and with the right strategy, he might even be able to kill the two remaining Black Tortoise Sect cultivators one by one.

However, just moments ago, two more Black Tortoise Sect cultivators appeared out of nowhere and joined the ranks of those besieging him—it was very likely the opponents of the physique cultivator who had pounced to the ground.

Being just a Cloud River Level 2 cultivator, howuld he possibly fend off four enemies? Without a snd thought, he enhanced his speed with Move-Like-The-Wind, nstantly fleeing around the outside of the insect hive.

Yet, fleeing was never a long-term solution. Seeing the hopelessly terrible situation in front of him, Lu Ye gritted his teeth and took something out from his storage space.

It was a bead the size of a longan, entirely green inlor.

As soon as it was in his palm, there was an immediate burning, stinging sensation, and his Talent Tree also exhibited abnormalities—vast swathes of grey mist rose from the Talent Tree, a phenomenon that usually only occurred when Lu Ye was inflicted with severe poison...

This bead was the Ten Thousand Poisons Pill that Hua Ci had given him.

When Hua Ci gave him the pill, she had said that if he encountered an unbeatable enemy, he should just stimulate his spirit force into it and throw it out.

However, during the time in the Spirit Stream battlefield, Lu Ye was invincible and never had a chance to use it, so it had remained with him until now.

He did not know what effect using this pill would have, especially since the enemies he faced were from various levels of the Cloud River Realm. The efficacy of Hua Ci's Ten Thousand Poisons Pill against Cloud River Realm cultivators was uncertain.

But now, he had no choice but to give it a try, even if it might not be very effective. After all, it was a poison pill and was bound to have some effect.

As for whether it would kill both friends and foes... that was certain, but the current situation would hardly get any worse. And since cultivators always carried some Detoxification Pills, those who were poisoned should be able to neutralize the poison by consuming more Detoxification Pills.

The Black Tortoise Sect cultivators had already lost their rationality, acting purely on instinct, and did not have Detoxification Pills to consume.

So using this pill, no matter what, would create some advantage for his side in the situation...

Without hesitation, he channeled his spirit force into the Ten Thousand Poisons Pill in his hand, and with a soft 'pop', the pill burst open.

A thick green fog billowed out from where Lu Ye was at the center, instantly sweeping across the entire insect hive!

The fog was so dense that it almost felt tangible. Within the fog, visibility was reduced so much that one couldn't see their own hands.

Such concentration of poison was unprecedented even in the Ten Thousand Poisons Forest.

The Ten Thousand Poisons Pill was, after all, the essence that Hua Ci had condensed by expending her own cultivation level. The toxicity it released was several times more ferocious than the worst parts of the Ten Thousand Poisons Forest, exacerbated by the confined space of the insect hive adding to the pill's potency.

Xia Qianqian and her companions, who were in battle, were startled by the sudden turn of events. As the poisonous fog enveloped them, their vision blurred.

Xia Qianqian immediately exclaimed, "Be careful, it's poisonous!"

Quickly holding their breath and concentrating, they stimulated their spirit force to protect themselves.

What horrified everyone was that the omnipresent poisonous fog could erode their protective spirit force, seeping into their bodies and intensifying the symptoms of their poisoning.

Within just a brief moment, everyone began to feel dizzy and disoriented.

A sense of impending doom rose in everyone's hearts—as they were already in a critical situation, being poisoned only increased the likelihood of dying there.

However, it soon became apparent that not only had they been poisoned, but the Black Tortoise Sect cultivators they were fighting against were poisoned as well. The rhythm of the enemy's attacks had noticeably slowed down, with both their strength and speed significantly weakened.

Not daring to delay, they each took out Detoxification Pills to consume and stimulated their spirit force to refine them, which brought a slight relief to the symptoms of poisoning.

After all, they were Cloud River Realm cultivators from various levels, and Hua Ci's Ten Thousand Poisons Pill, though condensed at the Spirit Stream Realm level, was still effective against them, but not to the extent of being completely unstoppable.

Meanwhile, Lu Ye noticed that the steps of the four Black Tortoise Sect cultivators pursuing him had become unusually heavy, and even the spirit light on their bodies had turned a sickly green...

Immersing his consciousness, he inspected his Talent Tree, seeing dense grey mist rising endlessly from it in thick clouds.

It seemed he had underestimated the potency of the Ten Thousand Poisons Pill!

He wondered if Hua Ci still had any more of these pills. If she did, he would have to ask for a few more the next time they met.

Chapter 478 The Heart of the Matter

In the Spirit Stream battlefield, within the Ten Thousand Poisons Forest, inside a wooden hut, Hua Ci counted the Ten Thousand Poisons Pills in her hand with nothing else to do: "Eight, nine, ten..."

Her cultivation was different from everyone else's. Ever since she obtained that inheritance, consuming and refining poisons became her primary method of enhancing her cultivation. The Ten Thousand Poisons Forest was undoubtedly a suitable place for her cultivation, thanks to its extremely dense poisonous fog. However, after reaching Spirit Stream Level 9, she temporarily had no way to advance to the Cloud River Realm, so she could only deplete her own cultivation over and over to condense the Ten Thousand Poisons Pills. In this way, she accumulated more and more pills in her hand, each one a condensation of her cultivation level, ready to be absorbed back into her once she advanced to the Cloud River Realm one day.

Lu Ye thought the Ten Thousand Poisons Pills he had offered were simply Hua Ci's means of killing enemies, not knowing that they were, in fact, a concentration of her own cultivation.

After the condensation of that particular Ten Thousand Poisons Pill, Hua Ci had fallen straight from Spirit Stream Level 9 to Level 8. Such an outburst of an entire cultivation level was something even Cloud River Realm cultivators could not withstand against this severe poison.

Luckily, all those present were from the Cloud River Realm. If a Spirit Stream Realm cultivator were enveloped by such a poison fog, they would likely be decimated in an instant.

Among those present, Lu Ye was the only one unaffected by the poison fog.

Sounds of heavy, disorderly footsteps reached his ears. Halting his forward motion, he turned around and swiftly made his way toward the source of the noise.

The Black Tortoise Sect cultivators, who had found themselves trapped without escape, were finally met with his counterattack.

He had only taken a few steps when two crimson glows appeared through the dense fog ahead.

Enveloped by the fiery glow of the Boulder Mountain Saber and with the Double-Sharpness spirit runes enhancing its blade, his own blood Qi merged with that of Amber, making the saber more powerful and quicker than usual. He unleashed a ferocious slash downwards.

There was a thud, followed immediately by the sound of blood gushing. The two crimson eyes, along with the head they were attached to, were sent flying and had dimmed completely before even hitting the ground.

After being poisoned, the Black Tortoise Sect cultivators' strength was greatly reduced and their reaction speed had slowed considerably. They were utterly incapable of dodging Lu Ye's returning slash.

With a single strike, Lu Ye dispatched a formidable enemy and bore down on the remaining three, skillfully dodging enemy attacks while his Boulder Mountain Saber severed another head.

Yet another head soared through the air as the body without it staggered and collapsed to the ground.

Just as he was about to kill the third person, Lu Ye was struck hard in the waist, forced to slide back over a dozen yards.

Next to him was Shen Xiaomao's battlefield; the woman danced with a multicolored ribbon in her hands, bursting with spirit light. Wielding her ingenious strength, she flung her nearby enemies away. However, just like her, they were all affected by the severe poison, rendering them unable to exert even half of their true power. Moreover, her kind of Spiritual Artifact was hardly lethal to enemies like the Black Tortoise Sect cultivators; it served more to immobilize them.

Seeing Lu Ye appear not far from her, Shen Xiaomao's eyes lit up. With a flick of her ribbon, she wrapped up an enemy, shook her wrist, and the ribbon danced in the air, tossing her bound foe directly towards Lu Ye.

Lu Ye, having just stopped himself from sliding further, saw what was happening and immediately knew Shen Xiaomao's intention. He swiftly brought his saber down, spattering blood as a head was thrown into the air.

"Come!" Lu Ye shouted lowly as he charged toward Shen Xiaomao.

Though there was no detailed exchange between them, at that moment, they seemed to have a telepathic understanding of each other's intentions.

The ribbon danced more nimbly, entwining another person and holding him firmly in place. As Lu Ye passed by, his saber light flashed, and without looking back, he brushed past Shen Xiaomao to confront another enemy attacking her from behind.

Their figures instantly intertwined and maneuvered, with enemies occasionally being delivered to Lu Ye by the ribbon.

Moments later, Lu Ye stood with his saber in hand, taking a light breath while the crimson blood slid down the blade of his Boulder Mountain Saber. Beside him, Shen Xiaomao's face bore a layer of greenish tint, her eyes filled with relief at having survived the ordeal.

In this series of operations, the two had swiftly killed off all their enemies.

Without pause, they both rushed to the nearest battlefield together. Upon arrival, they discovered it was the battlefield of a physique cultivator from their team.

This physique cultivator was not weak, possessed of Cloud River Level 7 strength. He was currently holding his spirit artifact big shield, fending off the frenzied attacks of the enemies.

Like Shen Xiaomao, the physique cultivator's skin also shimmered with a greasy green light, a sign of being poisoned.

However, he was strong and durable with rich blood Qi, which meant his symptoms were lighter than Shen Xiaomao's. Moreover, there was already a corpse of an enemy at his feet, seemingly killed by him. Hence, even if Lu Ye and Shen Xiaomao had not come to assist, he would have been able to hold on.

As the ribbon whirled and the long saber fell, Lu Ye and Shen Xiaomao tore into the enemy ranks, while the physique cultivator seized the opportunity to counterattack.

After a short while, several mutilated bodies were left behind, and three silhouettes moved on to the next battlefield...

Like a snowball rolling downhill, their advantage grew greater and greater as more Black Tortoise Sect cultivators were killed, until the scattered mages regrouped once again.

Everyone was in a sorry state, with poisoning being just one aspect. After the previous skirmishes with the enemy, nearly everyone was injured, even the Great Elder and Xia Qianqian, who were the strongest among them.

Furthermore, as time passed, the symptoms of poison in everyone were gradually worsening. Although all had taken Detoxification Pills, in this enclosed environment, the effects of the Ten Thousand Poisons Pill were undoubtedly pushed to the limit. In any other place, even if Lu Ye had activated the full power of the Ten Thousand Poisons Pill, it might not have been this effective. At the very least, those at Cloud River Level 9 wouldn't have ended up so miserable.

By now, the originally dense poison fog had begun to thin.

Xia Qianqian suddenly showed a look of surprise and turned to look at Lu Ye because she realized that he showed no signs of poisoning.

When everyone gathered together, it was clear who was poisoned and who was not. Those who were poisoned had a greenish glow over their bodies, extremely conspicuous. Only Lu Ye was an exception. His spirit light was clear. Not only was he not poisoned, but even Amber, who had been crouching on his shoulder, wasn't poisoned either, because Lu Ye had been continuously using his spirit force to protect it.

What puzzled Xia Qianqian even more was the origin of the poison fog... who had released it? She had been pondering this question during the fight. At first, when the poison fog erupted, she thought it was a method of the Black Tortoise Sect cultivators or the Insect Race. But when the cultivators of the Black Tortoise Sect were also affected by the poison fog, she understood it wasn't the enemy's method but from someone among their own ranks.

Now, seeing that Lu Ye didn't possess the slightest hint of being poisoned, Xia Qianqian had already vaguely guessed—only those who would not be poisoned would release such poison fog!

This move was too sinister, a vicious tactic that didn't spare friend or foe. However, it was lucky to have this move; otherwise, looking at how the situation had been developing, it would have only been a matter of time before their own people were caught in one fell swoop. Now, although it looked embarrassing, they still wouldn't die for the time being. If they could leave this place in time and slowly recuperate, they would be able to recover.

At this very moment, in the very center of the insect hive, Zhou Hai and Pang Dahai were jointly attacking the Black Tortoise Sect's Sect Master, Niu Meng. However, the situation was not optimistic. Both Pang Dahai and Zhou Hai were covered in wounds, with Pang Dahai's one arm limply hanging by his side, apparently broken and unable to lift.

Zhou Hai's leg was also abnormally twisted.

On the contrary, Niu Meng, who was being attacked by both, didn't have any injuries on his body. His expression might have been dull, but the ferocity and savagery in his eyes didn't diminish in the slightest. His method of attack was simple and monotonous, yet it was extremely brutal. A casual punch or kick could put great pressure on Zhou Hai and Pang Dahai.

Even though they were all at Cloud River Level 9, Niu Meng's strength was not just a little bit stronger than Zhou Hai and Pang Dahai. Moreover, he was still in a state controlled by the Insect Race's parasitism, which was obviously quite abnormal.

What concerned Lu Ye even more was that Niu Meng didn't have a single injury on his body. If he remembered correctly, Niu Meng had already been injured by Zhou Hai when he first appeared.

But soon Lu Ye understood why. He saw Zhou Hai's flying sword strike out, hitting Niu Meng's arm and leaving a deep wound that exposed the bone. Yet incredibly, the wound began to wriggle and closed up quickly!

This sight made everyone's eyelids twitch. No one had ever seen such terrifying regeneration abilities. This kind of thing defied all logic.

"His vitality..." Xia Qianqian suddenly exclaimed in a low voice, beginning to understand, "He is there of the insect hive!"

Each insect hive has its core, and the simplest and most effective way for cultivators to destroy an insect hive is to destroy its core because it contains a tremendous amount of life force, even something called a vitality core. Without destroying there, the insect hive can continuously breed members of the Insect Race. Only by destroying there can the hive wither and lose its reproductive capability.

The core of the insect hive is usually found within the central flesh sac.

However, in this case, Niu Meng emerged from the flesh sac! So even though the flesh sac was gone, the insect hive wasn't destroyed.

Previously, they had directly experienced the surging vitality within Niu Meng's body, which was beyond what someone of the Cloud River Realm should possess.

Xia Qianqian's words finally made everyone realize why Niu Meng had such abundant vitality—he was there of the insect hive.

Having such exaggerated vitality, his body would heal instantly from injuries, which made perfect sense.

If Niu Meng was indeed there of the insect hive, then the trouble was significant.

Because if everyone wanted to escape from here, they would have to kill Niu Meng first; otherwise, they had no way out in this sealed insect hive.

But how would they kill an enemy who would recover instantly after being injured? Unless they had a chance to behead him, they would only erode his vitality slowly.

The only consolation was that Niu Meng was covered in a greenish sludge too; he was poisoned as well. Furthermore, the strength he showed now was much weaker than what it initially appeared to be.

Clearly, the intense poison had significantly affected him.

"I'll go help!" declared the Level 7 physique cultivator, picking up his spirit artifact big shield and rushing forward.

The Great Elder followed closely without a word.

The rest didn't dare to approach recklessly. Compared to physique cultivators, combat cultivators and magic cultivators were much more fragile. Everyone had seen the terrifying power of Niu Meng's attacks and knew too well that they wouldn't withstand a single punch or kick from him.

Chapter 479 Why Didn't You Say Sooner?

Within the insect hive, the fierce battle raged on. Zhou Hai, Pang Dahai, the Great Elder, and the Level 7 physique cultivator—they combined their strength and barely possessed the capital to contend with Niu Meng.

The rest of the people were scattered in all directions, each utilizing their weapon control and magic and spells to their full power, seizing opportunities to strike at Niu Meng. The tower-like body was continuously

shaken by the blows, wounds appearing one after another. However, Niu Meng's vitality was outrageously vigorous, no matter how many injuries he suffered, he would recover in the blink of an eye.

Moreover, the protection of his physical body was extremely shocking. Everyone present was already eroded by deadly poison, unable to exert half their strength, and the power of their techniques was significantly reduced. Many attacks landed on him, causing mostly superficial wounds. Even the weapon control used by Lu Ye, enhanced by the Double-Sharpness spirit runes, could only penetrate three inches into the flesh. Only Zhou Hai's flying sword could inflict bone-deep slashes.

But this was of no avail. Zhou Hai repeatedly tried to behead Niu Meng with his flying sword but never succeeded. Niu Meng indeed didn't dodge the lightning-fast flying sword, yet when the sword struck him, it was as if it had struck steel, unable to decapitate him.

A sense of despair enveloped everyone. Before this, no one had ever encountered an enemy with such an unreasonable healing ability. In front of such an enemy, all manner of techniques seemed helpless and weak.

Furthermore, as the poison that had invaded their bodies affected them, the situation only became more and more dire for everyone over time.

In contrast, Niu Meng's strong vitality and physical body could greatly weaken the poison's effect on him.

There are Overlords in the Spirit Stream battlefield, beings who stand above all Spirit Stream Realm cultivators. If placed in the Cloud River battlefield, Niu Meng at this moment would undoubtedly be an Overlord as well.

The difference is, he is an Overlord of the Cloud River Realm! Such a being cannot be brought down by a siege alone, not without dozens of people, especially since he is now at the insect hive, possessing abundant vitality.

Everyone felt bitter. Had they known they were going to face an Overlord of the Cloud River Realm, they would have never come here; at the very least, they would have sought more help before taking action.

A loud thud rang out as spirit force surged, and a spirit artifact big shield violently shattered—it was the big shield of the Level 7 physique cultivator.

Among the four gathered around Niu Meng, he was the weakest. Although Niu Meng was parasitized and controlled by the Insect Race, devoid of rationality and acting on instinct alone, he still knew to use him as a breakthrough point.

At the same time the big shield shattered, the Level 7 physique cultivator was sent flying like a tattered sack, his body curled up like cooked shrimp, spewing a cloud of blood mist mid-air before heavily crashing to the ground, motionless, with life or death unknown.

Then it was Pang Dahai who was sent flying, screaming miserably as if he were subjected to an intolerable torture. The cries were so heartbreaking and tear-inducing that they shook the listener's heart, after which he collided with a flesh wall on the side, and slowly slid down.

The line entangling Niu Meng was broken, and his tower-like figure turned into a blur. Calls of "Watch out!" resounded from all around.

Zhou Hai clenched his teeth, and his flying sword blocked the enemy. Yet, even though the sword drew fresh blood from Niu Meng, it didn't stop his charge.

In just an instant, Niu Meng charged next to Xia Qianqian. Various bursts of spirit light erupted behind her, a vast shadow descending, enveloping this tall female figure.

Spirit force surged wildly around Xia Qianqian, directly condensing a thick spirit force barrier in front of her, while her figure floated backwards.

Niu Meng launched a kick, the spirit force barrier shattering like foam. Xia Qianqian was sent tumbling through the air by the kick, heavily landing on the ground.

Then he reached out with a large hand, and without any visible movement, he appeared ghost-like next to Lu Ye, his clawed hand reaching for Lu Ye's head.

In that instant, Lu Ye felt his hair stand on end; death's breath, like a sea, overwhelmed him.

Almost instinctively, the Boulder Mountain Saber was slashed out, its sharp blade meeting the claws with a sound of metal clashing, sparks flying everywhere.

Niu Meng's claw grasped tightly, catching the Boulder Mountain Saber and with a sudden tug, his other fist thundered forward. When this punch was thrown, it even erupted with a buzzing sound, showing the ferocity of its force.

Thick Defense Spirit Runes appeared in front of Lu Ye. Lu Ye didn't know if his defense could block Niu Meng's punch, but it was his best response.

However, at that moment, a figure flashed in front of Lu Ye. Spirit force exploded, and crossed arms were put up in defense.

With a bang, that figure was slammed into Lu Ye, and immediately the two of them rolled away like tumbling gourds.

Lu Ye clambered to his feet, eventually realizing that the one who had blocked in front of him was the Great Elder.

The Great Elder also hurriedly got up, but he had only just steadied himself when he spat out a mouthful of fresh blood. Both his arms trembled violently, clearly that strike was not easy to bear.

"Young Master, quickly figure out how to break his Beast Seal! He's in a beast transformation state right now, only by breaking his Beast Seal and dispelling his beast transformation state do we stand a chance!" the Great Elder urged anxiously.

It was a moment of enlightenment.

Lu Ye had been puzzled before. Niu Meng, although the Sect Master of the Black Tortoise Sect, should not have become this powerful after being parasitized and controlled by the Insect Race.

He thought it was because he had bme there of the insect hive, and the great vitality brought on an enhancement, but now it seemed that was only one aspect of it.

The key lies in the fact that Niu Meng was in a beast transformation state.

He appeared to be a demon cultivator, but he was not; he belonged to the human race. The reason he displayed the state of a demon cultivator was that he had fused with his natal demon beast, executing the most powerful technique available to the beast-taming faction—a Beast Transformation!

Lu Ye had obtained the Life Origin Method and the Beast Seal Method from the Great Elder, so he naturally understood this most powerful technique. However, he and Amber had not yet reached this level, as displaying such a mighty technique required some time to build up, and moreover, the stateuld not be maintained for long. If it were, it would place an immense burden on both the cultivator and the demon beast.

Niu Meng somehow managed to maintain this state, but since it was a beast transformation state, breaking his Beast Seal should naturally dissolve it.

Lu Ye looked up to see Shen Xiaomaollapse to the ground, a pool of crimson blood beneath her. He saw Lan Ziyi with her spirit light shattered, leaning against the flesh wall, her swords drooping by her side, motionless.

The ground was littered with the injured, and only Niu Meng stood unharmed in the midst of the chaos, towering like a god, unchallenged and supreme.

"Such an important matter..." A somewhat weak voice arose from the darkness, full of helplessness and annoyance,

"Why didn't you say it earlier!"

Following the voice, a hefty figure slowly emerged from the darkness, wiping the blood from therner of his mouth, gasping heavily.

It was none other than Pang Dahai, previously sent flying by Niu Meng.

The fat man now looked so ragged that one couldn't help but feel pity, with disheveled hair and his body smeared with large patches of blood, only his eyes still shone brightly.

He knew he shouldn't blame the Great Elder; from his standpoint, they, as cultivators from the Ten Thousand Beasts Domain, should all have an understanding of the Beast Seal.

But in reality, how would the people from the Nine Provinces know anything about Beast Seals?

Before this point, they had no idea that cultivators from the beast-taming faction could be so powerful. In the Nine Provinces, the beast-taming faction was never mainstream, and its reputation was not exactly stellar—many people thought they lacked ambition, relying solely on external forces, hardly material for great success.

Yet, today, an elite group from the Nine Provinces got a bitter lesson from Niu Meng, a member of the beast-taming faction.

As Pang Dahai stepped out, Niu Meng's attention was immediately drawn toward him. He turned his head, his blood-red eyes fixing on Pang Dahai, seemingly puzzled that the man he had beaten down could still stand up.

Pang Dahai turned his head, arrogantly spitting out a mouthful of Blood Water, and sneered with a twisted smile at Niu Meng: "What are you looking at? Come and hit me!"

Niu Meng's body blurred into an afterimage, and in the next instant, he appeared in front of Pang Dahai, his iron hoof striking out fiercely.

Pang Dahai roared as his blood Qi surged around him, the fusion of spirit force and blood Qi bursting forth with dazzling light, making the plump figure grow several inches taller and suddenly appear formidable.

Thud...

The dull sound echoed as Pang Dahai's body shook, the clothes on his back blew apart, and a fierce wave of air swept out, hitting the flesh wall behind him hard.

His belly retracted like a suction cup, latching onto Niu Meng's hoof planted on his stomach.

"That's all you've got..." Pang Dahai sneered, but before he could finish, a gush of fresh blood sprayed out.

Niu Meng seemed to want to withdraw his foot, but no matter what he did, he couldn't. Without hesitation, his fist hammered toward Pang Dahai's face.

Pang Dahai immediately raised his hand, catching Niu Meng's fist, and somehow injured a Spiritual Artifact, transforming it into a rope that bound their hands and fists together.

Another punch came thundering down. Pang Dahai tried to repeat his previous trick, but Niu Meng was noticeably faster, his punch heavily smashing into Pang Dahai's chest, eliciting a bizarre cry from him.

Bam bam bam, Niu Meng kept punching, shaking Pang Dahai violently with every hit, who alternately screamed and bellowed, "Zhou Hai, are you dead or what? Help me! If you don't do something now, I'm going to die!"

In the darkness, a sword light suddenly bloomed, like a flash of lightning, here and gone in an instant. The next moment, the sword light stabbed into Niu Meng's back, and Zhou Hai finally revealed himself, clasp his Longsword and desperately pumping in spirit force. However, the sword only penetrated halfway before it could go no further.

Niu Meng concentrated his surging life force and blood Qi to his back, making the flesh there incredibly protective and rapidly squirming to reinforce it.

After a brief stalemate, the Longsword in Zhou Hai's hand burst forth with blinding light, piercing another two inches deeper. But after that outburst, the light on the sword dimmed rapidly.

"Useless!" Pang Dahai roared in frustrated anger, "You're going to get me killed for real!"

As he spoke, a figure had already rushed to Zhou Hai's side—it was Lu Ye, leaving Pang Dahai stunned with amazement and bewilderment at seeing him there at such a moment.

Chapter 480 We're Incompatible

Lu Ye was only at Cloud River Level 2, a situation too difficult for him to intervene in.

The figure that had sprinted over suddenly halted behind Zhou Hai. Lu Ye slightly bent his body, inhaling gently as the spirit force around him surged. His blood Qi merged with that of Amber, and the Boulder Mountain Saber positioned in front of him glinted with spirit light. At the same time, massive blood Qi gathered on his right arm holding the saber, making the flesh ripple, and his entire right arm suddenly swelled.

In that instant, Zhou Hai felt as if a thorn was at his back, sensing an immense crisis about to strike from behind himself.

"Draw your sword!" Lu Ye shouted sharply.

Zhou Hai didn't hesitate. As he drew his long sword, he immediately crouched and slid to the side.

As he withdrew his sword, the wound on Niu Meng's back quickly wriggled, vital energies converged, and it began to heal immediately.

Just then, a dazzling flash of saber light streaked through, piercing through the blood-drenched wound.

Lu Ye's arm blurred into an afterimage, stabbing five times in that split second!

To him, Repeated Slashing was a type of saber skill, and by being able to perform Repeated Slashing, he naturally could perform Repeated Stabbing, another application of the same technique.

Each stab precisely targeted the original wound, and with each stab, brilliant light flashed on the long sword—the enhancement of the Double-Sharpness Spirit Runes made the Boulder Mountain Saber extremely sharp, each stab deeper than the last.

In the blink of an eye, five stabs were delivered. With a slight squelch, the long sword pierced through the chest, the tip protruding three inches out.

The escaping Zhou Hai and Pang Dahai, who was entangling Niu Meng, were both taken aback, clearly surprised that a Cloud River Level 2uld execute such a powerful killer move.

However, a simple stabbing wound clearly was not enough to destroy the Beast Seal on Niu Meng's chest. Others had previously inflicted wounds there as well during their attack, but those injuries had healed quickly. If Lu Ye were to withdraw his sword now, all his efforts would have been in vain.

So, the moment the sword pierced Niu Meng's chest, Lu Ye crafted Cactus Spirit Runes on the Boulder Mountain Saber.

As the spirit force surged explosively, invisible spikes burst forth inside Niu Meng's body, a deadly move capable of extinguishing any adversary's life force in an instant. However, Niu Meng merely shook, showing no signs of impending death.

Lu Ye then triggered the Explosion Spirit Runes. A muffled thud echoed from within Niu Meng, a gaping hole exploded in his chest, and flesh flew.

The defense of this Sect Master of the Black Tortoise Sect was indeed terrifying; ordinary methodsuld only inflict superficial wounds, not damaging his major structures. However, Lu Ye was using the Boulder Mountain Saber as a base to form spirit runes inside him, making the devastation truly fearsome.

"Moo!" Niu Meng, who had not made a sound since appearing and merely mechanically fought his enemies, suddenly tilted his head back and issued a cry that resembled aw's moo. As the flesh scattered from his chest, his enormous blood Qi suddenly became chaotic, clearly showing signs of splitting.

Before Lu Yeuld clearly understand what was happening, Niu Meng had already turned around and swung a punch at him.

Defense Spirit Runes blocked in front of him, yet under the impact of the punch, the defenses were immediately shattered. Lu Ye immediately felt as if a mountain had slammed into him. His body uncontrollably flew backward, striking hard against the insect hive's fleshy wall and slowly slid down.

Stars flickered before his eyes, his internal organs churned, and he nearly couldn't catch his breath.

By the time he regained his senses, more than a dozen moments had passed. Looking up, aided by the glow from the spirit force burst, his blurry vision caught the scene before him.

The Great Elder and Pang Dahai were jointly entangling Niu Meng, who still had Lu Ye's Boulder Mountain Saber stuck in his chest...

Meanwhile, unnoticed, a demon beast resembling a mythical beast had appeared on one side. Zhou Hainsecutively struck with his flying sword, forcing the beast to moan repeatedly and flee frantically.

Success! With his back against the flesh wall, Lu Ye relaxed internally.

This beast, resembling a mythical creature, was surely Niu Meng's natal demon beast. With Zhou Hai executing his techniques and him exerting all his might, they finally broke Niu Meng's Beast Seal. With the seal broken, the beast transformation state would be lifted, preventing the man and beast from merging again.

With the beast transformation state lifted, Niu Meng's strength was clearly much weaker than before. Now, except for his vigorous vitality, he was no different from a typical Cloud River Level 9 cultivator, and his abilities were greatly reduced due to the poison's effects.

Not far away, someone shakily stood up. The light of magic and spells flickered as they mobilized their spirit force—it was Xia Qianqian.

This woman wasn't dead!

Not only was she alive, but Shen Xiaomao, Lan Ziyi, and the Level 7 physique cultivator had also survived. Now, each of them, dragging their injured bodies, struggled to rise.

Everyone knew victory was close at hand; it was time to go all out.

Lu Ye still leaned against the flesh wall. He had been directly punched by Niu Meng. Although he had promptly activated the Defense Spirit Runes, the force of the punch still left him seriously injured. Now, any slight movement caused excruciating pain in his chest and abdomen—probably a bone had broken and pierced into his organs.

From his waist supplies box, a buzzing sound emerged as nine streams of light shot out, agilely attacking the mythical beast.

With everyone working together, this mythical beast, even if it was equivalent to a Cloud River Level 9 cultivator, would not escape death. In less than half an incense stick's time, the demon beast had collapsed on the ground, motionless and bleeding profusely.

On the other side, with Pang Dahai and the Great Elder fighting fiercely against Niu Meng, the lack of a decisive final blow meant no matter how much they injured Niu Meng, his vitality was swiftly restored.

It wasn't until Zhou Hai's flying sword arrived, swirling around Niu Meng's neck like lightning, that Niu Meng's large figure abruptly stopped moving.

The next instant, a blood light soared into the sky, a head ascended aloft, and Niu Meng's headless corpse collapsed to the ground.

The tense and fierce battlefield fell silent, with only the sound of everyone gasping for air.

Pang Dahai cursed under his breath and plopped down onto the ground. Never in his cultivation journey had he experienced a battle as tough as today. Such fighting was too exhausting; he swore never to go through it again in his life.

Most importantly, as a physique cultivator on the front lines, taking hits was very painful!

He hated pain the most, so he always preferred to be a magic cultivator who attacked enemies from a distance. If not for being forced, he would never have shown his abilities as a physique cultivator.

In the silent aftermath, a speck of gold suddenly burst forth, capturing everyone's attention.

Turning their heads, the gold light astonishingly originated from Niu Meng's headless corpse...

"Be careful!" Zhou Hai shouted sharply, a flying sword slashed toward the gold light which moved extremely fast. As soon as it appeared, it transformed into a golden line rushing towards Lu Ye, who was farthest from the battlefield.

Lu Ye had been leaning against the flesh wall nearby to catch his breath. He hadn't expected to face this unwarranted disaster after the fight had ended. Seeing the gold light approaching, the supplies box at his waist rattled and nine streams of Liu Guang intercepted it.

The gold light dodged nimbly, avoiding all attacks from the controlled weapons. It reached in front of Lu Ye, trembled slightly, and then suddenly disappeared.

The next moment, Lu Ye felt a slight stinging sensation at the back of his neck. He swung his hand back in a slap but only hit a bump on his neck.

Moreover, the swelling bump rapidly disappeared. Lu Ye distinctly felt something burrowing into his body, lying on his spine at the back of his neck.

It was from the Insect Race, and one of those capable of parasitically controlling cultivators!

Typically, when the parasitic Insect Race's host died, they would die along with them. This was the reason cultivators of the Ten Thousand Beasts Domain had been unable to find the root cause of demon beast illnesses.

Because the cultivators of the Ten Thousand Beasts Domain had never found any bugs, even after so many from the Nine Provinces killed numerous demon beasts and examined them, they diverged nothing.

It had remained unnoticed until Amber was parasitized by the Insect Race.

Niu Meng had been under parasitic control, evidently harboring Insects in his body too. However, this particular insect seemed different from the others; not only was it brilliantly gold, but even after its host died, it chose another host...

After such a strenuous battle, they had finally killed such a mighty enemy as Niu Meng. Everyone's guard was lowered, thoroughly unexpected the presence of a surviving insect.

In front of the flesh wall, Lu Ye felt as if struck by thunder; his initially limp body suddenly sat upright.

He abruptly sensed something inexplicable. He felt a vast amount of life from a specific direction and sensed untold lives...

That direction was where Two Worlds City lay!

Many unclear pieces of information emerged in his mind.

However, before he could sense more, a stinging sensation from the back of his neck, accompanied by the insect's hissing, indicated that the insect which had burrowed into his body was emerging again.

The gold light appeared once more, but this time, before it could escape, Lu Ye quickly caught it with a backhand slap.

Swish, swish, swish...

A series of figures suddenly appeared in front of him.

Lu Ye raised his head, observing the shocked and disheveled crowd around him. His eyes twitched as he said, "Don't panic!"

Pang Dahai wondered aloud, "How did itme out again?"

Everyone shared thisnfusion; having seen Lu Ye parasitized, they had all hurried over, only to find the insect emerging on its own, leaving everyone baffled.

At that moment, the insectntinued to struggle in Lu Ye's hand, but howuld such a tiny creature escape his grip?

"Perhaps I'm just impatible with it?" Lu Ye idly speculated.

Others might not know why the insect had emerged, but he was well aware.

Because the moment the insect entered his body, he felt a response from the Talent Tree. The Talent Treeuld burn away even the pill poison in his body, let alone an invading Insect Race.

If it hadn't fled quickly, it would have been incinerated by the Talent Tree in a moment.

It simply chose the wrong host. Among so many people present, Lu Ye was the farthest from it, yet it chose him. Ofurse, even if it had chosen someone else, the ounge would not have been favorable.