

Merchant 851

Chapter 851: Iron Prison's Standard for Disciple Acceptance

The sight of the Dimensional Light Moth and Blade Queen Bee made most people's hairs stand on end.

Although the disciples of veteran and top factions were well-experienced, they had never seen a spirit qi professional command carcinoma feys in battle.

The Dimensional Light Moth and Blade Queen Bee Liu Jie had summoned on the Martial Stage along with the Dead Soul Demon Insect meant that Liu Jie had at least three carcinoma feys.

As such, Liu Jie's existence seemed to be a disaster in itself.

However, the crowd could not understand how Liu Jie had obtained the 30 Shield Ladybugs.

Liu Jie was clearly controlling them, or else there was no way that they would be lining up in front of Liu Jie military-style like they were doing now.

The 30 Shield Ladybugs' shells had started to vibrate at an increasing pace.

This vibrating movement made the goosebumps rise on the spectators' skin, but nothing strange seemed to be happening to the Shield Ladybugs.

It was as though the vibrations were not directly happening to them.

Suddenly, the heads of the 30 Shield Ladybugs cracked open like watermelons, and purplish-black worms with coarse fur crawled out.

Almost immediately after, the 30 Shield Ladybugs all died.

The worms that had crawled out of the Shield Ladybugs' bodies started to quickly consume the Shield Ladybugs' corpses.

Less than two minutes later, the Shield Ladybugs, which were about as large as a table each, were completely eaten by the worms.

When the worms were done eating, 30 startling cries erupted in unison.

The bodies of the worms started to expand until each became six meters long, two meters tall, and three meters wide. They became Blade Worms that had black blades jutting from all over their bodies.

Lin Yuan frowned because the Blade Worms that the Blade Queen Bee birthed from the bodies of other feys would be several grades weaker than the host feys' had been.

However, these Blade Worms that had grown from the Shield Ladybugs not only did not decrease in grade, but they became even more intimidating.

Lin Yuan used True Data to check on the Blade Queen Bee resting on Liu Jie's palm.

[Fey Name]: Blade Queen Bee

[Fey Species]: Stinging-bee species/ancestral-bee species

[Fey Grade]: Diamond (10/10)

[Fey Type]: Insect-species/spiritual-type

[Fey Quality]: Legend

Abilities:

[Flash Wings]: Flap the wings at the target while flashing away to dodge.

[Cursed Bee Venom]: Every additional injection of poison into the enemy will increase the effectiveness of the curse. The cursed target will start to age, and the weakened skin will lower the target's defense.

[Merciful Cry]: The Blade Worms that heard the Blade Queen Bee's special sound will become bloodthirsty, and the protein in their bodies will rapidly turn into black blades to increase the Blade Worms' attacking power.

[Dissolution Infection]: The lethally injured Blade Worms will enter a state of dissolution and start releasing psychotoxins. The Blade Worms will double their power for five seconds and die immediately afterward.

[Faster Hatching]: Energy will be injected into eggs before they are planted in a target's body to quicken the hatching of the insects.

[Queen's True Self]: The queen will be subsumed into a Blade Worm, and the dormant fighting model inside the queen will be engaged into fighting mode.

Exclusive Skill:

[Vicious Poison Queen Bee]: Allow a batch of hatchlings to kill each other, and the final surviving hatchling that grows into the Blade Worm will not have a decreased grade.

Lin Yuan could not help but let out a sigh of amazement.

Once a carcinoma fey was nurtured by a spirit qi professional and left its previous messy state behind to gain intelligence and exclusive skills, it would become so terrifying that its wild versions would not be able to hold a candle to it.

Liu Jie's Insect Queen was the leader of the insect colony, while the Blade Queen Bee was the general.

Most of the Blade Queen Bee's abilities could increase the Blade Worms' combat power. Now, Lin Yuan also knew why the 30 Blade Worms' grades had not fallen.

If Morbius was not still sleeping, Lin Yuan would have complained about the name of the Blade Queen Bee's exclusive skill to it.

Vicious Poison Queen Bee sounded a little odd.

The Blade Queen Bee could also use its psychotoxin to its full potential, and it enabled it to have a curse factor.

Lin Yuan was most interested in the Queen's True Self because it would give the Blade Queen Bee immense solo fighting power.

He felt that it was similar to Chimey's Radiant Body.

When he witnessed Liu Jie instantly building his battle formation and the 30 savage Blade Worms, Gao Feng could not help but gulp and retract his feys.

Gao Feng turned to Zuo Ming and said, "Lord Zuo Ming, I admit defeat."

Zuo Ming did not find this strange at all and allowed Gao Feng to exit the stage after getting a nod from Liu Jie.

Gao Feng stepped off the stage, but no one dared to step up after seeing Liu Jie's formation.

Everyone present knew that Liu Jie was Chief Guard Ye's disciple, and the time was not right for them to unleash their full powers.

Besides the 30 Blade Worms, Liu Jie had yet to summon the Orchid Petal Knife Mantis that the Dead Soul Demon Insect controlled.

The Dead Soul Demon Insect was a carcinoma fey that could injure souls.

Moreover, since Liu Jie was Chief Guard Ye's disciple, it was impossible for him not to have contracted a sacred source lifeform.

Thus, an interesting scene emerged.

After three minutes, no one dared to step onto the Martial Stage to face Liu Jie.

Zuo Ming raised his head to look into the palace. It was clear that he was waiting for Night Leaning Moon to issue instructions.

At that moment, the formal voice from the other end of the phone said, "Leaning Moon, your disciple has a really interesting combat style. It's raising my spirits. However, it won't do if no one steps up to challenge him."

Night Leaning Moon nodded slightly.

The Arts Stage, Martial Stage, and Martial Arts Stage were being held to witness the power of the disciples of top factions and veteran factions.

If no one entered the stage, they could not see any display of abilities.

Just as Night Leaning Moon was about to issue an instruction to Zuo Ming, Iron Prison spoke first.

Iron Prison circulated his spiritual power while speaking, causing his voice to travel through the radyx crystal wall to reach the ears of the people outside the palace.

“I’m not a Creation Master, and it would be a mistake for me to accept a Creation Master as my disciple. As such, I’ve decided to pick my disciple from the Martial Stage.. Whoever beats Chief Guard Ye’s disciple shall become my disciple.”

Chapter 852: The Moon Empress and Iron Prison’s Bet

When Iron Prison projected his voice to the area outside the Midnight Palace using his spiritual power, Cicada Song’s smile vanished.

He turned to look at Iron Prison with an expression of speechlessness.

Cicada Song had always wondered what was going on inside Iron Prison’s head.

Half a year ago, he had incited the Moon Empress to step in in the area outside the Royal Capital because of a pinnacle Class 4 Creation Master.

Now, he announced that the person who could beat Night Leaning Moon’s disciple would become his disciple.

Cicada Song did not even know where to begin to criticize Iron Prison’s impulsive actions.

Given Cicada Song’s understanding of Iron Prison, he knew that Iron Prison had no intention of going against Night Leaning Moon.

However, others would see his simple-minded behavior as provoking Night Leaning Moon.

How could the disciple that had been trained by Night Leaning Moon be so easily defeated?

Cicada Song had nagged Iron Prison numerous times in vain to not be so impulsive and to think about the consequences before he acted.

Unfortunately, Iron Prison would only nod while allowing Cicada’s song to go in from one ear and exit from the other.

Night Leaning Moon was slightly kinder than the Moon Empress, but she was far from good-tempered.

While Cicada Song was thinking, Night Leaning Moon coldly snapped, “Hehe, Iron Prison. I had no idea that you have such high expectations for accepting disciples. Sorry to disappoint you, but I don’t think you’ll be able to find a disciple from the Guard Ye Banquet after all.”

Night Leaning Moon raised an eyebrow and did not look at Iron Prison despite clearly addressing him.

She was clearly derisive of Iron Prison.

Night Leaning Moon did not think that someone like him who could not think before he spoke should not even be allowed into the Midnight Palace.

However, he was a member of royalty, and she could not kick him out.

Iron Prison was slightly stunned, and a wary look appeared on his grumpy countenance. He did not understand why Night Leaning Moon was suddenly targeting him.

Usually, it was the Moon Empress who targeted him instead of Night Leaning Moon.

When he heard Night Leaning Moon say that he would not be able to find a disciple from the Guard Ye Banquet, Iron Prison replied without much thought, "Since I'm intent on finding a disciple, there's no way I'll fail."

Cicada Song kept his gaze locked on Iron Prison the entire time while he spoke.

He knew that Iron Prison was not intentionally affronting Night Leaning Moon and was only providing a natural response to Night Leaning Moon.

However, his words sounded like a provocation.

Night Leaning Moon also knew about Iron Prison's flaws and usually spoke up for him in front of the Moon Empress.

She normally would have ignored him, but she had only recently accepted her disciple. Yet, Iron Prison was calling him incapable, as though he would be defeated easily.

It was despicable for Iron Prison to obtain a disciple from her disciple's defeat.

Night Leaning Moon frowned to think before easing her brows and saying, "If so, I would like to make a bet with you. If someone beats my disciple on the Martial Stage, I'll gift you a material worthy of creating a valuable weapon. It'll also be my congratulatory gift to you for accepting a disciple. However, if no one is able to defeat my disciple and you fail to find a disciple, you'll have to give me the Disaster Insect Nest's body."

Although Iron Prison did not have a shred of emotional intelligence, he now knew why Night Leaning Moon was targeting him.

Alas, he also cared about his pride.

If they were in an imperial court meeting, he might have given in because he would not have felt any shame in front of his friends.

After all, he always gave in after clashing with the Moon Empress.

Unfortunately, they were now in the presence of so many leaders of veteran and top factions. Thus, Iron Prison did not have it in him to give in this time.

However, he was reluctant to part with the Disaster Insect Nest's body.

It would be fine if he won, but if he lost, he would be losing a 6 Stars sacred source lifeform material that could be made into a precious weapon.

Iron Prison contemplated before saying, "A bet has to be fair. Since you want to take the Disaster Insect Nest's body from me, you'll also have to offer a material from a 6 Stars sacred source lifeform."

Night Leaning Moon scoffed and nodded.

With that, the bet was official.

Cicada Song looked at Iron Prison and wondered if he was truly an idiot.

The Martial Stage was not as prestigious as the Martial Arts Stage, and Night Leaning Moon was definitely well aware of her disciple's powers.

It would have been fine if Iron Prison had been the one to initiate the bet, but Night Leaning Moon had been the one to suggest it instead.

Iron Prison must be recklessly fearless to accept such a bet.

Iron Prison was wondering which fellow would be powerful enough to help him win his bet when the Moon Empress said to him, "Iron Prison, since you're in a gambling mood, let me join in too. I heard that you recently gained a sacred source lifeform. How about using that as the stake for our bet?"

The Moon Empress' words made Iron Prison's face fall. The value of an uncontracted sacred source lifeform could not compare to that of a dead 6 Stars sacred source lifeform.

A dead sacred source lifeform was still dead and could only provide value when it was made into a precious weapon.

However, an uncontracted sacred source lifeform was like an empty canvas, and Iron Prison dared not use it as a stake.

Additionally, he had only agreed to Night Leaning Moon's bet because of his pride.

As such, he could reject the Moon Empress' bet without any qualms.

Just as Iron Prison was about to reject her, the Moon Empress said, "I also know that you have two feys that are stuck at a certain level. If I lose, I can help them break through. I'll use my own resources to do so."

The Moon Empress' words unnerved Iron Prison.

Although both Iron Prison and the Moon Empress were members of royalty, he would never say something so bold.

The only people in the Radiance Federation that were bold enough to say such words were the Moon Empress, Bamboo Monarch, and Chef Supreme.

Bamboo Monarch was trapped by a woman's bad luck now and could no longer say such words with confidence.

At Iron Prison's level, his feys should have already formed a perfect combat system. Hence, if his two weakest feys could break through and transform, his entire system would become united.

No matter how slim the chances were, Iron Prison could not reject this opportunity.

Chapter 853: Attrition Battle

Iron Prison knew that even if he approached Moon Empress for help and provided his own resources, she would normally never agree to help him evolve his feys.

As simple-minded as he was, Iron Prison knew that the Moon Empress was annoyed by him.

“It’s a deal!”

All the veteran and top faction leaders behind the members of royalty shivered.

Was this the world of the bigshots? What a boring and unpretentious world!

The stakes for casual bets turned out to be things like precious weapons and sacred source lifeforms!

Veteran factions would never be able to get their hands on sacred source lifeforms, and only the strongest experts in the top factions had sacred source lifeforms.

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While Iron Prison, the Moon Empress, and Night Leaning Moon were making their bets, the uncertain disciples participating in the Martial Stage were immediately motivated by Iron Prison’s words.

Liu Jie frowned slightly under his mask on the stage because he knew that a mad clamor to challenge him would soon ensue thanks to what Iron Prison had stated.

However, he was not nervous about this. Rather, the chaos was exactly what he wanted.

It was only through facing strong opponents that Liu Jie would be able to discover the true extent of his power.

Shortly after, someone stepped onto the Martial Stage.

Zuo Ming immediately announced the start of the third match.

The third person to enter the Martial Stage looked at the 30 ferocious Blade Worms in front of Liu Jie and felt that he had jumped the gun.

However, Iron Prison’s words had been an effective motivator for impulsion.

The young man summoned his feys.

Lin Yuan used True Data to check on the three tiger-species feys that the young man had summoned.

Tiger-species feys had similar potential to dragon-species feys, but compared to dragon-species feys that had a variety of types, tiger-species feys were much rarer.

Two of the three tiger-species feys summoned by the young man had reached Fantasy Breed, and the strongest one had reached Diamond I/Fantasy I.

It was clear that he was much stronger than Wang An. In fact, he would even be able to beat three Wang Ans.

Technically, the three tiger-species feys were as strong as Liu Jie’s 30 Diamond X Blade Worms.

The Blade Queen Bee’s Vicious Poison Queen Bee could prevent the Blade Worms’ grades from falling, but every transformed Diamond X Blade Worm would become Flawless quality.

This meant that every Diamond X Blade Worm had the power of a Platinum III/Fantasy I fey.

The moment the three tiger-species feys were summoned, the 30 Platinum III/Fantasy I Blade Worms immediately clashed against them.

The Diamond I/Fantasy I tiger-species fey was undoubtedly much stronger than Zhou Luo's Lava Dragon Lizard.

However, the Lava Dragon Lizard was a defense-type fey that relied on its armor to defend against the Blade Worms' attacks.

Zhou Luo had been able to use the Lava Dragon Lizard to defeat so many Blade Worms because its ability Unbreakable Iron Bones allowed it to increase its defense after sustaining each attack and because Lin Yuan had given Zhou Luo many fire-type and earth-type heavenly-maiden-grade elemental pearls.

These allowed Zhou Luo to use the pure elemental energy through the Lava Dragon Lizard's Shield Regeneration to increase its endurance during battle.

The tiger-species feys were power offense-type feys that had a relatively weak defense.

Every time that the tigers' claws slashed toward the Blade Worms, the claws would shatter upon contact on the black blades protruding from the Blade Worms' bodies.

Such damage was insignificant to the Diamond I/Fantasy I tiger-species feys.

But because of the Blade Queen Bee's Cursed Bee Venom, the tiger-species feys were cursed by the psychotoxins every time damage was dealt to the blades.

As he watched the battle unfold, Liu Jie waved his hand, and five more Shield Ladybugs emerged from the Dimensional Light Moth's body.

The Shield Ladybugs joined the battle to protect the Blade Worms against the tiger-species feys' attacks.

The violent tiger-species feys were slowly losing their edge to the insect colony.

When Liu Jie instructed the Blade Queen Bee to use Dissolution Infection on a heavily injured Blade Worm that could no longer fight, a large amount of psychotoxins sprayed all over the tiger-species feys.

Under the burden of the psychotoxins and layers of curses, the tiger-species feys' bodies had started to weaken.

Soon, the tiger-species feys crashed to the ground under the Blade Worms' attacks.

When the young man saw that his feys could no longer fight and had nothing else that would threaten Liu Jie, he chose to surrender.

After the young man stepped off the Martial Stage, one of the Blade Worms was dead while seven were lying on the ground in a severely injured state, and the remaining 22 had also sustained damage.

The five Shield Ladybugs that had entered the battle at a later time had been torn to shreds by the sharp claws.

Liu Jie was not frazzled after the battle and continued to stand calmly behind the Blade Worm.

This scene excited the rest of the disciples of veteran and top factions who were participating in the Martial Stage.

A few young men who Du Shuo led exchanged looks with each other. They had all witnessed the battle that had just concluded.

Although the weaker disciples of veteran and top factions did not have the power to defeat Liu Jie, they could cause damage to Liu Jie's colony of Blade Worms.

Judging from the state of Liu Jie's feys, the Blade Worms' injuries could not be healed by the Blade Queen Bee, and the latter would need a long time before it could produce eggs again.

There would not be any more chances for the Blade Queen Bee to produce a second batch of eggs. Hence, an attrition battle was the best choice for defeating the Blade Worms.

The young men that Du Shuo was leading dispersed and walked toward different participants.

These young men came from a high-ranked top faction, and they were quickly able to persuade the other participants of the Martial Stage to ally with them.

The weaker participants stood no chance of beating Liu Jie, so they were the best choice of people to wear down the Blade Worms.

Chapter 854: Hypha Tapeworm

The stronger participants would be able to step up to challenge anytime to claim victory over Liu Jie.

It had been easy to convince them because all of the strong young disciples wanted to be the disciple of a member of royalty.

Most of the weaker disciples were from veteran factions and could be convinced as long as they were promised enough benefits for it to be a win-win situation.

Zuo Ming looked displeased when he noticed this but did not comment on it.

Although they were clearly ganging up on Liu Jie like how a group of gamers would team up to beat a Boss in a game, such actions were not against the Martial Stage's rules.

As Chief Guard Ye's left-hand manager, Zuo Ming had the tolerance that was befitting of his position.

He could not go after the other disciples just because they were ganging up on Liu Jie.

Soon, the disciples of veteran factions that had been on the fence started to muster their courage as, one by one, they stepped onto the Martial Stage.

Liu Jie ordered the Blade Queen Bee to use Merciful Cry and Dissolution Infection on the Blade Worms on the ground that had not died but had lost all their fighting power.

Usually, Liu Jie would have to use about three to four Blade Worms against each opponent.

Now that he was faced with an endless stream of opponents, the number of Blade Worms dropped precipitously, and the eyes of the watching participants lit up.

However, this did not hinder Liu Jie in the least.

By the time he beat the eighth fighter, all 30 Blade Worms had died.

The corpses of the Blade Worms littered the Martial Stage and made it look like the scene of a brutal massacre.

When the ninth challenger stepped onto the Martial Stage, Liu Jie gave a thumbs up, and a black ball appeared by his feet.

The ball looked like it was formed from a long insect that was currently in peristalsis.

This shocked the participants who had just entered the Martial Stage and caused the hearts of the watching hopeful disciples of veteran factions to sink.

When Zuo Ming announced the start of the battle, Liu Jie lowered his head to say to the writhing black ball, "Use Fluid Hypha, Long Body Split, Degeneration Control, and Decaying Bacteria."

Liu Jie issued four commands in a row, and the black ball immediately spat out a large amount of purple fluids.

The sticky purple fluid was like a living creature that also seemed to be able to stretch endlessly. In a second, the purple fluid covered the entire Martial Stage.

Soon, numerous small black threads grew out of the thin, sticky layer.

The black threads were like furry veins that transported the purple sticky fluid around.

While the purple sticky fluid was stretching and expanding, it covered the dead Blade Worms and Shield Ladybugs.

The 30 dead Blade Worms and Shield Ladybugs immediately started to change after the sticky fluid covered them and the black threads tunneled into the bodies of the dead Blade Worms and Shield Ladybugs.

A moment later, an armor made of the sticky purple fluid and black threads grew on the bodies of the Blade Worms and Shield Ladybugs.

The armor made the bodies significantly larger.

Next, black bubbles grew on the armor, and when popped, they formed fluid that looked like small flowers and emitted the stench of decay.

At that moment, the writhing black ball by Liu Jie's feet disappeared while the 30 Blade Worms and 5 Shield Ladybugs shakily got to their feet and resumed their military-like line up in front of Liu Jie.

These terrifying- and gruesome-looking Blade Worms and Shield Ladybugs were now much stronger than when they were alive.

As such, Liu Jie's opponent did not even have the time to retaliate against the insect colony and was kicked off the Martial Stage in a few minutes.

The challenger that had just been kicked off the Martial Stage's feys was in a sorry state. The large terrifying dragon-species fey barely had an uninjured patch of flesh on its body, and the wounds made by the blades were decaying.

The two healing-type spirit qi professionals wearing the standard Spirit Guards mask took a while before they managed to heal the decaying terrifying dragon-species fey.

At that moment, Du Shuo, who was at the center of Liu Jie's opponents, said, "That's the Hypha Tapeworm!"

Du Shuo's words dashed all the challengers' hopes.

The veteran and top faction disciples all knew what kind of fey the Hypha Tapeworm was.

With the Hypha Tapeworm in action now, the battle attrition plan had been reduced to a joke.

Lin Yuan used True Data to check on the Hypha Tapeworm.

[Fey Name]: Hypha Tapeworm

[Fey Species]: Hooked-mouth species/roundworm-species

[Fey Grade]: Diamond (10/10)

[Fey Type]: Insect/Dark

[Fey Quality]: Legend

Abilities:

[Fluid Hypha]: A sticky fluid will be produced that can cover an area. The bacteria pockets in the sticky fluid will break apart quickly to form webs of hypha.

[Long Body Split]: The Hypha Tapeworm will tunnel into the Fluid Hypha and start to split itself. Each split section can be planted in any small insect.

[Degeneration Control]: Flesh that is dead due to bacterial infection will be covered in bacteria pockets that contain vicious poison. When the bacteria covers a degenerating surface, the tapeworms that have been created from the split sections can enter the dead host to control it.

[Decaying Bacteria]: The bodies of the hosts being manipulated will be covered in strong corrosive bacteria that will spread to the cells of healthy flesh that it comes into contact with and cause the cells of the healthy flesh to start to decay.

[Degenerating Body Integration]: When a degenerating body is damaged, the ladybugs that are produced will sacrifice their body as nutrients to feed and integrate the bacteria. The tapeworms produced from the split sections will control the degenerated body.

[Double Parasite]: When in the presence of other parasitic-type lifeforms and insects, the degenerating body, bacteria, and tapeworms formed from split sections can be sacrificed to increase the parasitic-type lifeform's power. If the parasitic-type lifeform is injured, it can draw energy from the sacrificed entities to heal itself.

Exclusive Skill:

[Degenerating Body's Reproduction]: The bacteria will alter the reproductive and gender cells in the degenerating body to allow the degenerating body to produce new creatures through splitting its sections.

Lin Yuan's eyes widened, and he felt that Liu Jie had yet to demonstrate the Hypha Tapeworm's true power.

Liu Jie looked down from the Martial Stage and spoke in a booming voice.

Chapter 855: Retreating From Battle

"The next battle will involve my soul, and I won't be able to control my powers. Once you're hit, you'll still end up suffering even after being treated."

A faint silhouette appeared on Liu Jie's shoulder.

The flower-like silhouettes formed an elegant small orchid-shaped praying mantis.

When the elegant small praying mantis appeared, the faces of the other participants of the Martial Stage fell.

Liu Jie had already summoned three carcinoma feys during his fights—the Dimensional Light Moth, Blade Queen Bee, and Hypha Tapeworm.

However, from the earlier confrontation, the crowd already knew that the Hypha Tapeworm was actually the fourth carcinoma fey that Liu Jie had revealed.

During the confrontation, Liu Jie had revealed the Dead Soul Demon Insect, but he had yet to summon it during battle until now.

The Dead Soul Demon Insect's attacks mainly targeted souls. Hence, it was extremely difficult to defend against its attacks.

Not everyone could handle the pain of a soul injury. As such, the challengers who were about to launch an attrition battle now wanted to back out.

The Hypha Tapeworm's appearance proved that it would be useless to try the tactic of an attrition battle to take down Liu Jie.

The challengers assessed their own powers and determined that it would be a struggle for them to defeat the revived insect colony.

Moreover, they did not know if Liu Jie still had other carcinoma feys that he had yet to summon.

The gazes of the remaining challengers of the Martial Stage were grim, while the disciples who planned on participating in the Martial Arts Stage also had amazement in their eyes.

The participants of the Martial Stage were mostly not Creation Masters. Those that were were only Class 2 at best.

It would be difficult for them to use that level of power to check on the Diamond X/Legend Hypha Tapeworm.

Meanwhile, the Creation Masters who were participating in the Martial Arts Stage were all Class 3 and above. Thus, they were able to check on the Hypha Tapeworm's abilities and exclusive skills.

They realized that the Hypha Tapeworm's abilities could be used in conjunction with the Dead Soul Demon Insect to create a mutually supporting relationship.

The Dead Soul Demon Insect was currently controlling the Orchid Petal Knife Mantis, but the Dead Soul Demon Insect had yet to bind itself to the Orchid Petal Knife Mantis' body.

In other words, the Orchid Petal Knife Mantis' body was just a set of clothes for the Dead Soul Demon Insect that could be switched out at any time.

The Hypha Tapeworm's Double Parasite allowed the Dead Soul Demon Insect to implant itself in any Blade Worm or Shield Ladybug that had been infected by bacteria.

Additionally, the Dead Soul Demon Insect's Parasitic Dead Soul Seed allowed the Dead Soul Demon Insect to shuttle through every insect in the insect colony.

During any clash during a battle, the Dead Soul Demon Insect would be able to materialize on a target at any time to suck out its soul.

Moreover, there was no way to defend against the Dead Soul Demon Insect's Exploding Dead Soul Bullets.

Even if the damage from the explosion could be defended against, it was likely that a soul seed could be implanted in the opponent's body or even the spirit qi professionals' brains.

Since the Dead Soul Demon Insect was a carcinoma fey, its potential to create terror could not be scoffed at.

Once a soul seed was implanted in the brain, the lifeform's life would be in the Dead Soul Demon Insect's hands.

Miao Zhuo may possess an item to protect his soul, but the Dead Soul Demon Insect's bite meant to suck out his soul had not been deterred at all.

Clearly, the Dead Soul Demon Insect had a powerful grip on souls.

None of the challengers wanted to end up with an injured soul like Miao Zhuo.

Besides the spirit qi professionals who admitted that they could not beat Liu Jie's insect colony, even those who had the power to fight against Liu Jie did not have anything to protect their souls. Thus, all their motivation was quashed, and they shriveled into despondence.

Gao Feng walked to Lin Yuan's side after leaving the Martial Stage. When he saw Liu Jie's increasingly strong insect colony, he patted Lin Yuan's shoulder and said, "Lin Yuan, the Young Liege is way too powerful! I can't imagine anyone being able to defeat him."

As he heard Gao Feng's tone of marvel, Lin Yuan smiled. He was glad for Liu Jie's increasing power.

Lin Yuan knew that Liu Jie had eight carcinoma feys under his control, and he had already summoned half of them.

Liu Jie had sealed off the Insect Queen's abilities from the beginning of the battles and hid it in the Dimensional Light Moth's body.

He had only instructed the Insect Queen to produce the 30 Shield Ladybugs to act as the Blade Queen Bee's hosts for the Blade Worms.

Later, he had instructed the Insect Queen to produce 5 Shield Ladybugs to increase the Blade Worms' defense.

If Liu Jie released the Insect Queen and used it in conjunction with the Hypa Tapeworm and Dead Soul Demon Insect, his power would be multiplied to an unimaginable level even if the Blade Queen Bee could no longer produce eggs.

The Insect Queen had reached Diamond X/Fantasy, and every insect-type fey that it produced would be Diamond X/Flawless.

Just the thought of a sea of Diamond X/Flawless insects was horrifying.

However, Lin Yuan could not agree with what Gao Feng had said.

As strong as Liu Jie was, he was not at an invincible level.

If Lin Yuan stepped onto the Martial Stage, one blast of the Spirit Essence Explosion would destroy Liu Jie's insect colony.

Lin Yuan's use of Spirit Essence Explosion only used a small amount of spirit qi and did not use up much spiritual power.

The Dead Soul Demon Insect's attacks on the soul would also be useless on Lin Yuan because he had contracted a sacred source lifeform.

The sacred source lifeforms that had formed marrow contracts with spirit qi professionals usually went on to live in the spirit qi professional's soul and acted as the best wall of defense for the soul.

Moreover, Lin Yuan also had the Myth III Vicious Poison Law that could perfectly counter the Hypa Tapeworm's Decaying Bacteria.

Liu Jie had not displayed his full power yet, and Lin Yuan did not know how strong Liu Jie's sacred source lifeform was.

To determine who would win between Liu Jie and Lin Yuan, it would depend on whether Liu Jie was able to handle Lin Yuan's secret weapon, the Dark Death World's Night Crow Wither Attack.

While Gao Feng marveled at Liu Jie's power, he watched the reactions of the other challengers.

Suddenly, a strange idea struck him.

Chapter 856: 50 Surrenders

If Liu Jie continued to win and emerged as the final victor of the Martial Stage, Gao Feng would be able to win second place with his one win.

Gao Feng could not help but start giggling with glee.

It was impossible to surrender the chance to challenge the Martial Stage without fighting. Otherwise, Gao Feng would not have been so nervous in the beginning.

The 10th challenger took one step onto the Martial Stage and surrendered without even summoning any feys.

After admitting defeat, the 10th challenger looked anxiously at Liu Jie as though he was afraid that Liu Jie would not agree to the surrender.

Liu Jie was not a cruel person, so he did not object to the surrender.

Once the first challenger admitted defeat, a string of challengers clambered to step onto the stage to surrender as well.

A total of 75 disciples of veteran and top factions were participating in the Martial Stage. After the wave of surrenders, less than 10 challengers were left.

Among those who were left was Du Shuo, who had insulted Liu Jie but ended up being saved by Liu Jie.

Du Shuo was like the head of the remaining challengers.

Du Shuo took a deep breath as he looked at Liu Jie on stage and walked onto the Martial Stage.

When Zuo Ming saw Du Shuo step onto the stage, he scoffed and announced, "The 61st battle of the Martial Stage shall begin."

Liu Jie had not had to move a muscle for the past 50 matches. All he had done was nod in agreement to the challengers' surrenders.

This made Liu Jie feel like he was just standing on the stage like a silly block.

Liu Jie was slightly taken aback when he saw his current opponent because he not only knew this opponent but also had a prior confrontation with him.

As good-natured as Liu Jie was and even though he had told Zuo Ming not to do anything to Du Shuo, Liu Jie had still been left with a bad impression of Du Shuo.

Just as he was about to instruct his insect colony to strike, Du Shuo shouted across the Martial Stage, "Young Liege, please stay your hand. I would like to take this opportunity to apologize to you. I should

not have run my mouth and insulted you. You were kind enough to forgive me and did not punish me for my transgression, but I still feel that it's necessary for me to apologize to you."

Du Shuo maintained his bow the entire time he was speaking and only lifted his head once he was done, with a look of sincerity in his eyes.

He was truly grateful that Liu Jie had decided against punishing him. Otherwise, he would have already been chased out of the Midnight Palace.

Moreover, Du Shuo also knew that the confrontation outside the Midnight Palace had taken place in front of many veteran and top factions. There was no way he could hide the incident, and his elders would eventually find out that he had spoken out of turn against Chief Guard Ye's disciple.

Rather than waiting to receive punishment from his elders when they found out about his mistake, it was better for him to admit it now and take responsibility for the entire incident so as to not implicate Fang He.

If he was lucky enough to receive Liu Jie's forgiveness, his punishment would be lighter when he returned to Furnace Stone Metal.

Liu Jie's masked face was composed after he heard what Du Shuo said.

"No problem. I didn't take the matter to heart, and there's nothing to forgive. I hope we'll have more opportunities to interact in the future."

Du Shuo clenched his fists and looked at Liu Jie with gratitude.

From Liu Jie's words, it was clear that Liu Jie did not hold any grudges about the confrontation, so it was as though the confrontation had never happened.

Essentially, there would be no need for Du Shuo to receive punishment from his elders when he returned home.

Liu Jie's last words had been an olive branch, meant to express his hope of turning from enemies to friends.

However, Du Shuo knew that despite being a main member of one of the ten top factions, his status was far below Liu Jie's.

Du Shuo admired Liu Jie's magnanimity, and he thought back to how he had come up with the attrition battle tactic to gang up on Liu Jie.

"Young Liege, I was planning on using the attrition battle tactic to attack your Blade Worm colony and reduce their numbers, but I didn't expect that your insect colony only grew stronger," said Du Shuo awkwardly.

Liu Jie gave a nonchalant smile. Without the attrition battle, he would not have been able to build his battle formation as easily as he had.

Zuo Ming had been annoyed when he noticed Du Shuo and his peers persuading the other challengers to use the attrition battle tactic against Liu Jie.

However, Zuo Ming did not expect Du Shuo to be so honest as to tell Liu Jie about the attrition battle tactic.

This slightly changed the way that Zuo Ming viewed Du Shuo.

At that moment, Zuo Ming saw Gu Lang walking out of the long corridor leading to the Art Stage's location.

Zuo Ming was utterly astonished.

He knew better than anyone how difficult the Art Stage was because he had checked through every topic being tested.

The topics were meant to be tedious so as to test the Creation Masters' overall skills, and none of the questions should be completed with ease.

In order to ensure that the Arts Stage and Martial Stage ended at the same time, the Arts Stage's topics also necessitated a large final production quantity.

The Martial Stage was about to end, but that was because Liu Jie had been the second person to enter the Martial Stage and had been dominating it since then.

Moreover, 50 of the challengers had surrendered immediately, and it had only been half an hour since the Martial Stage began.

This meant that Gu Lang had only taken half an hour to complete his topic for the Arts Stage.

This speed was unimaginable!

No wonder Gu Lang was Lord Bamboo Monarch's disciple!

The Bamboo Monarch did not look surprised at all to see Gu Lang finish the Arts Stage first.

Nonetheless, the Bamboo Monarch still felt it was a shame that Gu Lang was not participating in the Martial Arts Stage.

The Bamboo Monarch was the one who had set the rules for the Martial Arts Stage, and he had made it so that it would be suitable for his disciple's fighting style of fighting with waves of attacks.

Gu Lang made a beeline for Zong Ze.

When he saw the way that Zong Ze was staring intensely at the Martial Stage, Gu Lang could not help but knock on Zong Ze's half-armor.

Gu Lang sighed when he realized that his knocking had not woken Zong Ze up from his trance at all.

Although Zong Ze was strong, his battle fanaticism would likely be a disadvantage to him in the future.

Gu Lang knew that he would not be able to change Zong Ze's personality, but he truly hoped that someone who could would appear.

Otherwise, the impulsive Zong Ze would never be able to work in a team and would never be able to become a Radiance Envoy.

Chapter 857: The Last Battle

Everyone had noticed that Gu Lang had returned after completing the Arts Stage.

The disciples of veteran and top factions who were participating in the Martial Arts Stage let out sighs of relief when they saw Gu Lang.

Gu Lang's participation in the Arts Stage was bad news for the other participants of that stage but a blessing to the participants of the Martial Arts Stage.

Lin Yuan looked at Gu Lang and thought, *Long Tao should also be out soon.*

When they had been chatting, Long Tao had told Lin Yuan what his secret weapon as a Creation Master was. It was the Dragon Gall Three-Leafed Insect that he had contracted when he was young.

After consuming the gallbladder of a dragon-species fey, the Dragon Gall Three-Leafed would secrete oil that could increase the speed of spirit fluid concoction but could not increase the homogeneity of the spiritual ingredients.

The Dragon Gall Three-Leafed Insect was a great asset in such competitions.

Long Tao was already a pinnacle Class 3 Creation Master, but he could not compete with Gu Lang even with the Dragon Gall Three-Leafed Insect.

It was clear how strong Gu Lang was, evidence of the level that Class 4 Creation Masters were at.

Lin Yuan felt a stone of pressure land on his shoulders when he remembered that he was going to compete against Zong Ze's Creation Master powers later.

He knew that given his Creation Master powers, he would not be able to compete with a Creation Master even with Genius helping him in various ways.

As such, he would just have to try his luck to see if he would be able to pick a topic that was suitable for him.

Du Shuo had already summoned his feys on the Martial Stage, which were the Diamond VII/Fantasy II Radium Sea Lion and Diamond III/Fantasy I Dragon Horned Blowfish.

Du Shuo had definitely contracted more than two feys, but any fey below Diamond grade would immediately be infected by the sticky fluid that the Hypha Tapeworm released.

Lin Yuan used True Data to check on the Radium Sea Lion and Dragon Horned Blowfish and immediately knew why Du Shuo had the courage to take on Liu Jie in a fight.

Du Shuo had also used the Starlight Intelligent Dark Clouds' pollen to roll grades as it was impossible for someone his age to become an A-rank spirit qi professional.

The Radium Sea Lion lived up to its name and spent its day eating radium, which even Myth Breed feys could not make a scratch on.

It took a long time to absorb the radium to increase its defense.

Although the Radium Sea Lion was a power offense-type fey, it had a light layer of radium on its skin that provided it with greater defense than the other feys of the same grade had.

Lin Yuan was more familiar with the Dragon Horned Blowfish.

If the Dragon Horned Blowfish could evolve to Myth Breed and unlock its ancient-whale bloodline, there was a high chance that it could evolve into the Jade-Gray Whale.

Three laws on the Sacred Sword Wielding Queen's skirt came from Jade-Gray Whales.

The Diamond VII/Fantasy II Radium Sea Lion was undoubtedly stronger than the Diamond III/Fantasy II Dragon Horned Blowfish.

However, Du Shuo would be relying on the Dragon Horned Blowfish's exclusive skill.

[Protection of Water]: By sacrificing its horn, the power of the bloodline within can call to water elements to create a protective layer that will protect a target from spiritual and soul attacks.

While the Protection of Water was in effect, Du Shuo would not have to worry about the Dead Soul Demon Insect's threat and could use brute strength to fight against the insect colony.

When Lin Yuan was using True Data to check, Du Shuo loudly ordered, "Dragon Horned Blowfish, use Protection of Water!"

The slightly gray Dragon Horned Blowfish turned into the color of the ocean, and its large horn turned from dark brown to brilliant gold.

Two gold and blue shields appeared around the horn, and one of the shields flew over to cover the Radium Sea Lion that was charging toward the insect colony while the other shield sheltered the Dragon Horned Blowfish and Du Shuo.

The Dragon Horned Blowfish focused on activating the Protection of Water, and Du Shuo started instructing the Radium Sea Lion during the battle.

At that moment, the Orchid Petal Knife Mantis that was initially on Liu Jie's shoulder landed on his palm.

The Dead Soul Demon Insect turned into a shadow of a soul and vanished without a trace from the Orchid Petal Knife Mantis' body and went into either one of the Blade Worms or Shield Ladybugs.

Liu Jie gave a thumbs-up and said to the Dimensional Light Moth, "Dimensional Light Moth, spit out all the Shield Ladybugs in your stomach."

The Dimensional Light Moth flew in front of the Blade Worms and Shield Ladybugs and contracted its abdomen once before releasing 10 Shield Ladybugs.

The Dimensional Light Moth contracted its abdomen ten times in total, and 100 Shield Ladybugs immediately surrounded the charging Radium Sea Lion, which halted its steps.

This development stunned Du Shuo, who felt that this method of defending using an insect colony seemed familiar.

There were now a total of 135 Shield Ladybugs.

He had no idea where these Shield Ladybugs came from.

Although Liu Jie was not a Creation Master and did not know how Protection of Water worked, he had already ambushed the Radium Sea Lion using the Dead Soul Demon Insect.

The ambush had not been successful due to the Radium Sea Lion's protective layer.

Liu Jie looked crestfallen when he saw this.

If the Dead Soul Demon Insect's attack was unsuccessful, Liu Jie would have to summon more insect-species carcinoma feys or even the Insect Queen in order to defeat Du Shuo.

But with his abundance of combat experience, Liu Jie had noticed that a small portion of the Dragon Horned Blowfish's horn had turned into powder.

Liu Jie smiled behind his mask and circulated the spiritual power in his body before issuing a final order to the insect colony, "Hypha Tapeworm, use Double Parasite. Dead Soul Demon Insect, use Demon Soul Training and Exploding Dead Soul Bullets."

After Liu Jie issued his order, one of the Blade Worm's bodies expanded, and the black hypha started to move wildly while intermittent soul shadows appeared around it.

The Blade Worm that was transforming charged toward the Radium Sea Lion and exploded right before it made contact with the Radium Sea Lion.

Chapter 858: Settling the Debt

A flood of soul shadows lunged at the Radium Sea Lion, but it seemed to be unbothered.

However, the Dragon Horned Blowfish let out a wail of pain, and its golden horn became 10% shorter.

Even without Liu Jie's continued orders, the battle proceeded.

More Blade Worms underwent the same changes as they clashed against the Radium Sea Lion.

The Shield Ladybugs that were killed after they had surrounded the Radium Sea Lion had been infected by the hypha and rose to their feet once again.

The continuous self-explosions gave Du Shuo zero time to react.

By the time Du Shuo realized what was happening, the Dragon Horned Blowfish's horn was only 10% of its original length, and it looked as though it would be completely gone after one more attack.

Du Shuo hurriedly shouted, "I admit defeat!"

When the last word left Du Shuo's lips, the Blade Worms stopped short right in front of the Radium Sea Lion, and the insect colony stopped fighting.

The insect colony's chaos and sacrifice had secured another victory for Liu Jie.

Du Shuo had been thinking about becoming Iron Prison's disciple, but now that he had experienced Liu Jie's power first-hand, he gave up on that pipe dream.

He called back the Dragon Horned Blowfish and Radium Sea Lion, grinned at Liu Jie, gave a thumbs-up, and said, "Young Liege, your strength is astounding."

Liu Jie did not reply. Instead, he looked down at his chest.

After Du Shuo stepped down from the Martial Stage, the remaining nine participants of the Martial Stage looked relieved.

The remaining nine people realized how weak they were when they witnessed the battle between Du Shuo and Liu Jie.

Hence, they immediately gave up after stepping onto the Martial Stage.

After the last person admitted defeat, Zuo Ming looked at Liu Jie with pride.

Zuo Ming did not immediately announce Liu Jie as the winner of the Martial Stage, but everyone knew that the proud young man standing in the middle of an army of insects was the winner.

All the disciples who were present either came from veteran factions or top factions. They were also the favorite disciples of their elders and usually saw themselves as above others.

They were regarded with respect wherever they went and were accustomed to being waited on hand and foot.

At that moment, the image of that invincible young man standing on the Martial Stage was burned into the hearts of all the other disciples and taught them the true meaning of what it took to be the disciple of a member of royalty.

A blinding smile was under Night Leaning Moon's black veil. This beam seemed out of place on her emotionless features, but it perfectly represented her current feelings.

Although she already knew how powerful Liu Jie was, she was still happy that her disciple had emerged victorious on the Martial Stage.

She was even happier than when she had achieved all that glory in her youth.

Her smile slowly faded as she turned to say to Iron Prison, "Iron Prison, I will visit you after the end of the Guard Ye Banquet to collect the Disaster Insect Nest's body."

Iron Prison's face looked as grumpy as ever, but his heart was aching.

He had not managed to obtain a disciple.

Moreover, as much as it made his head ache to give the Disaster Insect Nest's body to Night Leaning Moon, it was not much use to him anyway.

It was likely that Night Leaning Moon would give the Disaster Insect Nest's body to her disciple because it would greatly benefit her disciple's insect-species carcinoma feys.

It would allow the insect-species carcinoma feys to temporarily increase their power.

However, losing the bet with the Moon Empress that involved the sacred source lifeform felt like a stab to Iron Prison's heart.

Iron Prison usually resided in the imperial court and led the royal guards.

Although he possessed overwhelming power, the royal guards belonged to the imperial court.

Despite being a member of royalty, Iron Prison did not manage his own private faction and lacked the resources that the Moon Empress, Bamboo Monarch, Chef Supreme, Chief Guard Ye, and that old man from Ostrich Logistics had.

He had not even acquainted himself with the sacred source lifeform, yet it had now become the Moon Empress's property.

Iron Prison turned to look at the Moon Empress suspiciously.

He wondered if the Moon Empress had been gunning for his sacred source lifeform all along.

If so, the Moon Empress would have used another method to take the sacred source lifeform from him even if they had not made a bet.

"Thank you, Iron Prison. Please personally deliver the sacred source lifeform that I won to me at the Radiant Moon Palace after the Guard Ye Banquet."

Iron Prison furrowed his brow.

It's bad enough that I lost the sacred source lifeform! How dare the Moon Empress ask me to deliver it to the Radiant Moon Palace personally? She has crossed a line!

Just as he was about to object, the Moon Empress looked at him with a complex gaze.

"When you deliver the sacred source lifeform to the Radiant Moon Palace, I'll take a look at your stuck feys. However, you'll have to supply your own creation crystals."

The Moon Empress turned her head away from Iron Prison.

Her words made Iron Prison relax his brow as a look of disbelief came over his face.

His expression of surprised delight made his grumpy face soften significantly.

As the leader of the royal guards, Iron Prison had accumulated a lot of experiences.

However, at that moment, he felt like an oblivious child and wondered if he was dreaming.

Since when did the Moon Empress start to give him gifts of her own accord? Could she be acting?

He had sought her out eight years ago with creation crystals in hand and asked her to help his feys break through.

But as he had been climbing the steps to the Radiant Moon Palace, brimming with sincerity, he was met with four moonbeam chains that chased him down Leaning Moon Mountain without even giving him the chance to reveal his intentions.

Chapter 859: Li Xuan Are You Jealous?

Iron Prison's heart was aching, and it greatly displeased him that the Moon Empress had taken his sacred source lifeform. However, the Moon Empress was willing to look at his feys and had asked him to prepare creation crystals.

This meant that the Moon Empress was willing to help his stuck feys break through.

Compared to an increase in his own powers, losing one sacred source lifeform did not seem that important anymore.

Iron Prison did not know how he exactly felt about the Moon Empress, but he did know that he was grateful to her.

Behind the screen of the phone on the center seat of the 13 seats, an elderly man sat on a lounge chair in the imperial court.

His calm expression turned into one of surprise when he heard what the Moon Empress said. But soon, the surprise turned into gladness.

The Zhao Xiyue who had continued to do things her way even after becoming a Radiance Envoy was now a Master and was starting to take others' feelings into consideration.

Although the elderly man had yet to see the Moon Empress' disciple, he had heard from Cicada Song that the disciple's name was Lin Yuan.

He also knew which disciple standing outside the Midnight Palace Lin Yuan was.

The elderly man looked at Lin Yuan curiously to see what was so special about this young man that he had managed to subtly change the Moon Empress' personality and temperament.

All the veteran and top faction leaders outside the Midnight Palace were disappointed.

The Martial Stage had ended with Chief Guard Ye's disciple as the winner.

The members of royalty's promises were gold, and Iron Prison would not be accepting any disciples from the Guard Ye Banquet.

All the veteran and top faction leaders looked at Gao Pei furiously.

Gao Pei's son had received Night Leaning Moon's praise, the Moon Empress' recommendation, and Cicada Song's admission that they were fated. Hence, it was all but certain that Gao Feng would become Cicada Song's disciple.

At that moment, an excited voice suddenly shouted from the area outside the Midnight Palace, “Yay! I’m the second-place winner of the Martial Stage!”

All the surrendered challengers shared looks when they heard Gao Feng’s voice.

Those challengers did not want to congratulate Gao Feng at all, and they agreed that he had just been lucky.

When Wang An heard Gao Feng’s voice, he almost slapped himself.

If only he had not been so eager to demonstrate his power, he would have been the second-place winner of the Martial Stage.

You Zhe walked out from the area where the Arts Stage was being held, followed by Long Tao and a girl with average features.

The girl looked to be about 24 years old, just like Long Tao.

She was holding a thick book and had a serious expression on her face. She looked like a nerd that had lost herself in her books.

However, no one was looking down on this average-looking girl.

The girl and Long Tao followed You Zhe out of the Arts Stage, meaning that she and You Zhe had finished their topics and had passed the Arts Stage.

Along with Gu Lang, who had returned to the area outside the Midnight Palace some time ago, three people had already completed the Arts Stage.

This meant that the Arts Stage was over.

However, they did not know who between Long Tao and the average-looking girl had attained second and third place.

After You Zhe led Long Tao and the average-looking girl out of the long corridor, the disciples of the veteran and top factions who had not managed to complete their topics walked out of the area where the Art Stage was being held with long faces.

Once the Arts Stage ended, the challengers who had yet to finish their topic lost their chance.

Long Tao immediately saw Gu Lang smiling and chatting with Zong Ze when he stepped out of the long corridor.

Long Tao’s expression faltered, but he did not look surprised at all.

He had already predicted early on that Gu Lang would finish before him, and he was anxious to find out how long it had taken Gu Lang to finish his topic for the Arts Stage so that he could know how much it differed from his own time.

You Zhe turned to walk towards Zuo Ming after he led Long Tao and the average-looking girl to the area outside the Midnight Palace.

Zuo Ming and You Zhe were only in charge of hosting the Arts Stage and Martial Stage, but they did not have to announce the results.

When the Guard Ye Banquet started, the challengers who had won would receive the honor of personally receiving their prizes from Chief Guard Ye.

The average-looking girl was about to find a place to sit to read the thick book she was carrying when Long Tao grabbed her hand.

She was flustered and looked at Long Tao in confusion.

Nonetheless, she stopped walking and remained standing by his side.

Although she did not speak, her expression seemed to be asking Long Tao why he had stopped her.

Gao Feng had been excitedly waiting for Long Tao to ask him what his topic for the Arts Stage had been.

The Martial Arts Stage would be carried out in the same way as the Arts Stage and Martial Stage had been.

The Martial Arts Stage was the combination of both the Arts Stage and Martial Stage.

Lin Yuan was going to participate in the Martial Arts Stage, and asking Long Tao about his topic would give Lin Yuan some sort of assurance.

However, Gao Feng did not expect Long Tao to grab the girl's wrist.

"Lin Yuan, do you think Long Tao is interested in the girl who came out with him?"

Lin Yuan did not know how to respond and opted to touch the stray hair on the back of his head.

When the almost unassuming Li Xuan heard what Gao Feng said, he started to sputter and cough violently before saying, "Don't worry, there's no way that Long Tao would be interested in her."

Li Xuan sounded so certain because he knew Long Tao well.

Long Tao had always placed emphasis on looks. One had to know that Li Xuan had been a chubby child. His looks had only improved to an acceptable level when he was six years old, and it was only then that Long Tao started to play with him.

Long Tao had always been strict about male's appearances, much less female.

Although Long Tao was no longer as appearance-orientated as he used to be, there was no way that the professional Long Tao would discuss personal feelings during such an event.

Hence, Long Tao had to have another reason for grabbing the girl's hand.

Li Xuan had a feeling that he knew why Long Tao had done so.

When Gao Feng heard Li Xuan's resolute response, he shot Li Xuan a suspicious look and thought, *?Is Li Xuan jealous?*

Chapter 860: The Martial Arts Stage Officially Begins

Before Gao Feng could ponder more on it, Li Xuan said, "From the icon on the girl's clothes, she should be from the veteran faction Heal Spirit Treatment. Heal Spirit Treatment's road will be smooth-sailing from now on."

Heal Spirit Treatment was a veteran faction that had a Creation Master role, but they did not do business related to nurturing feys.

They mainly focused on healing feys that had injured roots.

Their decision on what direction of Creation Master role to take was wise as it had immense potential.

But since Heal Spirit Treatment did not have any pinnacle Class 4 Creation Masters, they lacked the power of strong Creation Masters that other veteran factions had.

Thus, Heal Spirit Treatment had not expanded or improved themselves in almost 20 years.

It had already been more than 10 years since Dark Clouds Bird Shrine became a top faction.

Ever since Dark Clouds Bird Shrine was promoted to a top faction, they had been working with Coiling Dragon's Valley in equal capacities where neither had to depend on each other.

As such, Coiling Dragon's Valley could choose another veteran faction to support.

Given this girl's Creation Master powers, Long Tao had acknowledged Heal Spirit Treatment's potential.

Just like Li Xuan had predicted, Long Tao issued an invitation to the girl.

"On behalf of Coiling Dragon's Valley, I would like to officially invite Heal Spirit Treatment to come under our wing because I would like to work together to help Heal Spirit Treatment expand as quickly as possible."

Long Tao had not spoken softly to ensure that the girl would be able to hear him clearly.

Even most of the young disciples outside the Midnight Palace had heard everything that Long Tao had said.

The disciples looked at the girl with average features with jealousy.

Long Tao had done so to assert his authority and officially declare that Coiling Dragon's Valley wanted to support Heal Spirit Treatment.

The girl's eyes lit up when she heard what Long Tao said, but she remembered that she did not have the authority to agree to Long Tao's invitation.

She knew who Long Tao was. Although he was not the Young Leader of Coiling Dragon's Valley, he was Sequence #3 of the Radiance Hundred Sequence.

As the only young direct descendent of Coiling Dragon's Valley, he had the authority to represent Coiling Dragon's Valley. However, the girl had many siblings back at Heal Spirit Treatment, and her elders had only selected her to participate in the Guard Ye Banquet because of her exceptional Creation Master skills. She had only been hoping to catch the eye of a pinnacle Class 4 Creation Master that would accept her as their disciple.

But now, her talent had attracted the support of Coiling Dragon's Valley for her family. This was definitely better than if she had just found a pinnacle Class 4 Creation Master to be her Master.

Unadulterated excitement bloomed on her face, making her average features seem almost charming.

"I will need to inform the elders in my family of this. They are all inside the Midnight Palace. Is it possible to arrange a meeting between them and you after the Guard Ye Banquet to discuss your proposal?"

Long Tao smiled and replied, "Then let's exchange contact details. My father is the one leading Coiling Dragon's Valley at the Guard Ye Banquet. I will contact you after the banquet."

After exchanging contact details with the girl, Long Tao walked toward Lin Yuan.

Long Tao had used the Dragon Gall Three-Leafed Insect during the Arts Stage which he had instructed to consume the secretions of a fey with the main dragon-species fey bloodline. This allowed him to reach his maximum efficiency.

Although everyone had chosen a different topic, Long Tao had been second to step out of the breeding room after completing his concoctions at maximum efficiency. Immediately after, he saw the girl follow right behind him.

No matter what secret weapons the girl had, she had proven her talent as a Creation Master.

It was natural for Long Tao to want her on his side with such talent. Supporting her veteran faction would also help Coiling Dragon's Valley increase its overall power.

Long Tao arrived next to Lin Yuan and anxiously asked, "Brother, how long did that person take to complete the Arts Stage?"

Lin Yuan knew why Long Tao would ask this question. Hence, he had taken note of the time that Gu Lang had returned to the area outside the palace.

"Gu Lang finished the Arts Stage in 24 minutes and 36 seconds."

Long Tao looked utterly dumbfounded by Lin Yuan's response.

At his maximum efficiency, he had taken 47 minutes and 2 seconds. Moreover, he had used half the heart of a fey with main dragon-species fey bloodline.

Gu Lang had taken about half the time that Long Tao had taken.

This was a huge blow to Long Tao.

Although he was happy that he had achieved second place in the Arts Stage, he was leagues away from first place.

Long Tao did not know how strong Lin Yuan was as a Creation Master, but he did know that Lin Yuan was the Moon Empress' disciple.

There was no way that Lin Yuan would have weak Creation Master powers, and he had to have his own secret weapons.

As he thought about how Lin Yuan was going to participate in the Martial Arts Stage soon, Long Tao said in a low voice, "Brother, the topics for the Arts Stage were drawn from the bronze beast head in front of the breeding room. Lord Zuo Ming checked through all the topics, and all spirit fluids in the participants' fey storage boxes had to be handed to Lord Zuo Ming before we were allowed to enter the breeding rooms to look at our own topics. Next, we informed the Spirit Guard outside the breeding room of what our topic entailed and told him what materials we needed. My topic was to evolve three Gold X Freezing Water White Crocodiles to Platinum grade."

After listening to Long Tao's recounting, Lin Yuan immediately realized how difficult the Arts Stage's topics were.

It was not difficult for Class 3 Creation Masters to evolve Gold feys to Platinum. The issue was with the short time limit.

If Lin Yuan had chosen that topic and instructed Genius to concoct the spirit fluids, it would only need one Grade 3 Freezing Lake Potion to evolve three pinnacle Gold Freezing Water White Crocodiles to Platinum.

However, it would take Golden Lotus Brocade Pearls at least two hours to concoct one bottle of Freezing Lake Potion, even if it used Golden Lotus Brocade Pearls.

If Lin Yuan used spirit qi crystals to evolve one of the Gold X Freezing Water White Crocodiles to Platinum grade, he would need to use 10 of them.

If he only used spirit qi crystals, he would require 30, and he did not have so many on hand.

Thus, Lin Yuan would have to give up if he chose such a topic.

At that moment, You Zhe announced, "Since both the Arts Stage and Martial Stage have officially come to an end, the Martial Arts Stage shall begin now."