

Carefree 571

Chapter 571: Vow of Alliance

"No...impossible!"

Cao Qiu lowered his head and stared incredulously at the two swords embedded in his chest.

His own sword had been destroyed in the clash of the three swords. The two divine swords had thrust themselves into his body and were eroding his insides.

"Cough cough..."

He struggled and spit out a few mouthfuls of visceral blood. Suddenly, he thought he could see a human figure and immediately understood.

"This...is not...your power! You will face retribution for utilising these unorthodox objects. You will never...attain the highest level of sword dao..."

After Cao Qiu had spat out his curse, his eyes closed forever.

Once the Sword Sage, one of the most famous swordsmen in the world, Cao Qiu now lay dead on the floor. Nevertheless, he had faced his end bravely.

"The highest level of sword dao? Pooh!"

Hei Zhong spat in indignance. He was a barbarian and had never intended to devote his life to sword dao. The more reactive the divine sword was, the happier he would be.

Ge Nie, however, stared pensively at the sword of water, which radiated a blue chill from its blade.

Not too far away, Mo Ge peeked out from the ground and looked at this scene with horror.

'Impossible...Cao Qiu is one of the foremost swordsmen of his generation and yet he couldn't match the sword moves of these two servants?'

At this point, he no longer dared to push through with the assassination attempt and left immediately.

The Five Elements Escape Technique was his speciality and was a definite lifesaver in situations like these. Without Cao Qiu to drag him down, he shot away from the army camp to the outside world at the speed of lightning.

"Kaboom!"

Suddenly, Mo Ge felt a violent tremor. It was like a dragon had flipped on its back.

A strong sense of danger assailed Mo Ge's senses and cause him to shudder.

All at once, the fluid soil layers around him had turned into steel plates. He could feel the pressure closing onto him from all directions, making him feel like an insect trapped in amber.

'Impossible... how could my Five Elements Escape Technique fail me? '

Although he could not move his mouth, he let out an internal scream.

Unfortunately, no one would ever answer his question.

Mo Ge was trapped in the darkness. He could no longer gauge the passage of time, nor see and hear anything from the outside world. He could not even move his hands and feet.

This was the kind of torture that was more than capable of driving a person insane.

Mo Ge would never get the chance to ask for mercy.

"Step! Step!"

Fang Yuan stamped his feet on the ground.

"That's another bug dealt with...even after hundreds and thousands of years, no one would ever know that there is a person buried here. Indeed, no matter how good you are at something, take burrowing for example, accidents do happen!"

It was Fang Yuan who had intervened by activating the swords to save the life of Prince Pan.

Hei Zhong and Ge Nie were a long way from being able to tap on the power of the swords of water and fire, much less face Cao Qiu in a fight.

"This was supposed to be a close shave for Prince Pan, Nevertheless, thanks to assistance from the War God Chi, there was no doubt that he would have survived that!"

Fang Yuan looked at the dark energy of destiny gathering within the Shang army camp. It was taking the shape of a flying bird with a body that shimmered like the stars.

"The aura of the Shang army is skyrocketing. The Dongyi coalition is in trouble!"

Fang Yuan nodded quietly as he observed the scene. Suddenly, he looked towards the northwest.

Fang Yuan learnt a lot from just one look with his Fiery Golden Eyes.

"Prince Pan must defeat the Dongyi tribes quickly and regain his strength. Otherwise... the imperial capital will be plunged into a crisis! Chaos would reign!"

...

Western Zhou.

The Marquis of Western Zhou was ruddy-faced and in high spirits. The sword formed from the penta-coloured rock hung from his waist as he received the feudal lords who had come forth to offer their congratulations.

Ever since he had acquired the god-given sword and armour while the phoenix appeared over Qi Mountain, the Marquis had launched a successful propaganda campaign to spread the word about his miraculous encounter throughout the neighbouring states.

Now, the Marquis planned to convince the feudal states to join his anti-Shang cause by invoking the heavenly will.

The feudal lords sat on a high tower and watched the military procession take place below. Many of these lords grew uncomfortable as the chariots and soldiers moved past them.

After all, the Marquis of Western Zhou had spared no expenses in putting up this show as a display of strength.

Western Zhou's military strength could only be matched by the Shang Dynasty's. The other feudal lords shuddered to think about what might happen to their territories if they did not agree to an alliance with Western Zhou.

"My lords, do you think my soldiers are strong?"

The Marquis drained his wine vessel and asked suddenly.

"They are!"

The feudal lords feared his wrath and could only agree.

"What about my weapons? Are they sharp?"

"They are..."

Some of the feudal lords had already guessed at the Marquis's intentions and they felt a chill in their bones.

Sure enough, the Marquis stood up and unsheathed his sword in the next moment.

"The Shang Dynasty has become immoral, with the Shang King persisting in his cruel and lustful ways. The Shang King has also been oppressing the feudal lords and the populace have suffered under his rule for a long time. Now, the Western Zhou state has received the heavenly mandate and possesses a powerful army. The time has come for us to crusade against tyranny. My lords, will you join me in my fight against the despotic Shang Dynasty?"

The Marquis had placed all his cards on the table!

At that moment, nearly all of the feudal lords were regretting their decision to accept the Marquis's invitation. They had all wanted to see the sword made out of the penta-coloured rock for themselves.

Some of the feudal lords were trembling as they looked at the heavily armed soldiers around them.

"Yes!"

One of the feudal lords stepped out and bowed down to the Marquis.

"I, Earl Lu, pledge my allegiance to the Marquis of Western Zhou!"

"Please rise, Earl Lu!"

The Marquis helped Earl Lu to his feet cheerfully.

"Earl Lu, I am comforted to know that you are a defender of justice! Please take your seat and we shall proceed with the war rally later on!"

'Damn it...Earl Lu was obviously in cahoots with the Marquis all along...'

The Lu state barely had an army. Their tiny force of 300 chariots and 5000 soldiers only served to make up the numbers in the coalition.

The other feudal lords had realised that Earl Lu was an accomplice of the Marquis.

Still, many of the feudal lords saw no other way out for themselves and fell to their knees before the Marquis.

"Yes!"

"Haha..."

The Marquis burst into laughter.

"I would like to invite all of you to join me in making a vow of allegiance to the anti-Shang cause. Please pass your military tallies to your aides. My men will escort them back to their respective states safely."

Suddenly, a dark-skinned and skinny feudal lord made a run for it with his sword in hand.

"It's Earl Qi!"

The feudal lords let out a collective gasp.

Surrounded by his personal guards, Earl Qi moved quickly towards the exit. It looked like he was going to escape.

'Earl Qi was said to have learnt his swordplay techniques from the Sword Sage. Cao Qiu was even claimed to have said that Earl Qi was qualified to become his heir. He certainly looks the part...'

A commotion erupted among the feudal lords.

The Marquis of Western Zhou simply stood by and observed blankly.

"Chirp! Chirp!"

Just as Earl Qi and his men broke out of the encirclement, an ear-splitting shriek rang out from the heavens.

A purple ray of light with a colourful tail descended from the skies.

In a flash, it extended its claws and swooped in for the kill.

Earl Qi screamed as he was crushed into the ground.

"Is this...a phoenix?"

The feudal lords kept their mouths shut upon witnessing the death of Earl Qi.

"That's right...Western Zhou has received the heavenly mandate and will rule over the world in the near future. We even have the protection of the Purple Phoenix. Who would dare to stand in our way?"

The Marquis chuckled.

"What do you all think, my lords?"

"We pay our respects to the leader of the alliance!"

The feudal lords were struck dumb by the sight of the large Five Elements Purple Phoenix and they fell to their knees.

"Great! However, we have no place for spies in our alliance!"

The Marquis turned his attention to three specific men and bellowed.

"Zou, Wei, Qu...the three of you barons have always been close to the Shang Dynasty. The Shang King has even enfeoffed the three of you among the western feudal states so that you can all serve as his spies, am I right?"

"Li, you are making groundless accusations!"

The barons were minor feudal lords and were enraged by the Marquis's words.

"You forget that I am well-versed in the art of divination and am the founder of the Yi Dao. How could I be unaware of your activities?"

The Marquis went on unblinkingly.

"Drag them away and kill them!"

"Yes, my lord!"

A group of soldiers rushed forward and took the three barons away together with their aides. A moment later, the other feudal lords heard a few ghastly sounds. The soldiers reappeared with freshly decapitated heads.

Many of the feudal lords felt nauseous upon seeing the companions that they had been talking to a while ago become reduced to bloody heads.

"The Western Zhou state will overthrow the Shang Dynasty so as to enforce heaven's will. We do not have designs on the other feudal states. My lords, you can divide the lands of Qi, Zou, Wei and Qu among yourselves! Western Zhou will not take these lands!"

The Marquis calmed down. He knew that he had managed to cow the feudal lords.

"Really?"

A few of the feudal lords became bright-eyed when they learnt about the chance to expand their territories.

"Of course, we will include this in the vow after we form our alliance!"

The Marquis agreed readily.

He did not care for minor benefits like these. What the Western Zhou state wanted was to become the provider of these benefits!

After all, only the King had the authority to commission the feudal lords and task them with keeping the borderlands safe.

"Yes!"

The feudal lords included some who feared the military power of Western Zhou, some who were deeply respectful of heaven's will and others who craved for more land and people. They shared looks among themselves before agreeing to the Marquis's proposal.

"Haha...men! Set up the altar so that we can pay our respects to the heavens! After the vow of alliance, we will plan our attack on the despotic Shang Dynasty!"

The Marquis was overjoyed at how everything had turned out. He walked over to the altar with the feudal lords and offered three animals as sacrifice. After that, the Marquis drew blood from a cow's ear and emptied a drop of blood each into the cups of the feudal lords.

The person who had taken the knife to the cow was the leader of the alliance.

"We pay our respects to the leader of the alliance!"

The feudal lords drained the cups of blood wine and bowed to the Marquis on their knees.

"Good!"

The Marquis raised his sword.

"Activate your people and declare war on the Shang Dynasty. The Shang capital will be empty considering how most the Shang army has marched off in the southward direction. We might be able to conquer it while the capital city is defenceless!"

"Yes, my lord!"

The feudal lords nodded their heads. One of the reasons they had submitted so quickly to Western Zhou was the apparent decline of the Shang Dynasty.

At that moment, high up above the altar to the heavens, the clouds shifted about in a brilliant display of colours. This was a good omen and many of the feudal lords were left in awe at the sight. The Marquis was pleased. His resolve to set off for war had been strengthened!

Chapter 572: Victory

The Shang army was in the south.

After several times of probing and skirmishing with the enemy on the plains, Prince Pan had finally managed to force the King of Dongyi to activate his main host. The final battle had begun.

There was a total of 20000 men on the battlefield and as they clashed, they became a fluid black mass.

'We have 10000 of the Shang Dynasty's finest soldiers on one side and 60000 to 70000 scruffy barbarians on the other. Prince Pan does indeed have a good grasp of the art of war...'

A green hurricane revolved around Fang Yuan as he floated high up in the air and looked down at the battle taking place beneath him.

The 3rd sword of the Creation Sword Array that he had created was not the Sundering Thunder Sword, but the Modest Wind Sword!

Fang Yuan had digested the secret manual for the 8 Gates Sword Array a long time ago. Thus, he only used the modus of the sword array to expound on the art of creation and did not bother to follow the original procedure.

In fact, he had even greater ambitions!

"Dream masters become many times more powerful after recasting their foundations...according to my estimations, a dream soldier master of the 2nd sword now is similar in prowess to a dream soldier master of the 3rd or 4th sword from the past! In that case, the level of the 4th sword might be comparable to that of the 7th Tier of the Illusionary Divine stage?"

The levels of the 4th sword and 7th sword were the bottlenecks of the Illusionary Divine stage. Overcoming them would allow one to enter into a whole new world.

Hence, Fang Guan had chosen to create the Modest Wind Sword as his 3rd sword. His 4th sword, which was in the midst of restoration, was the previous Earth Sword!

Thus, as he neared the 4th Tier of the Illusionary Divine stage and the four classical elements of earth, fire, wind, water gathered, he would be able to exert the higher abilities of an Illusionary Divine of the 7th Tier and form the Chaos Sword Array!

"The new path of dream masters is definitely stronger and more overbearing than before!"

Fang Yuan based his cultivation method on his personal experiences. He incorporated the research findings of dream masters from every school and targeted Original Energy. After Fang Yuan made his deductions, the arrows pointed at something horrifying!

"If we go on, the 7th Tier of the Illusionary Divine stage will be similar to the Sage state from before...what would happen if we go beyond that?"

Fang Yuan was filled with renewed confidence in the future of the path of dream masters.

"Attack!"

Tens of thousands of Dongyi men roared and charged towards the Shang army.

They were physically large and had savage looks on their faces, giving them the appearance of ferocious beasts.

As the battle progressed, the aura of the Dongyi army rose into the air and took the form of a hydra.

"The hydra probably represents the disunity among the Dongyi tribes. It seems that the Dongyi army has some hidden problems of their own..."

Fang Yuan looked to the other side of the battlefield and saw that the Black Bird figure hovering above the Shang army had spread its wings and was several times larger than the hydra. At that point in time, the Black Bird was pecking at the snakeheads viciously. Fang Yuan smiled lightly.

"We have a winner!"

Unity makes strength, strife wastes!

The organisation of the Dongyi army was never as good as that of the Shang army. The quality of their weapons and armour was a joke. The only thing that they could be proud of was the individual courage of the Dongyi soldiers.

It was a pity that individual qualities were insignificant in the face of war!

"Archers, fire!"

Prince Pan raised his sword and yelled at his men.

"Swish! Swish!"

Dozens of archers loosed their arrows towards the skies in unison. The arrows rose then fell like a wave of locusts upon the Dongyi army.

"Poof! Poof!"

There were explosions of bloody mists as the frontline warriors of the Dongyi army became human porcupines.

"Chariots! Move!"

Prince Pan issued another order and the thousands of Shang chariots led by thousands of frisky war horses began to rumble across the plains. From afar, it looked like a dark mass was spreading across the plains and decimating everything in its path!

"Over there!"

Er stood on one of the chariots and egged the charioteer on. He wielded his dagger-axe like he was a windmill and roared.

"Attack!"

"Bang!"

The speeding chariot mowed down all the Dongyi soldiers standing in its path without resistance, leaving a trail of screaming men and crushed body parts in its wake.

"Die!"

Er brandished his dagger-axe and tore open the defences of the Dongyi army. He became an arrow that pierced its way into the heart of the Dongyi army formation.

"Hmm? Is that the King of Dongyi?"

As Er butchered his way through the Dongyi soldiers, he caught sight of a retinue with a burly man at its head. He flew a flag adorned with feathers of five colours behind him.

"The royal flag? The King of Dongyi?"

Er could feel the warm blood surging through his veins as he yelled.

"Traitor! Don't even think about running away!"

Er began to fight his way up to the retinue.

"The King of Dongyi...will surely die today!"

Fang Yuan observed the scene quietly as he rested among the clouds. He could feel the War God Chi beginning to act.

Although the War God Chi had suffered a great deal, he retained his influence among the Dongyi tribes. Even though this King of Dongyi had unified all the tribes and had reduced the power of the tribal leaders, priests remained influential among the Dongyi people.

At this point, it was the priests who were secretly holding the King of Dongyi back and slowing down his retinue so that Er and his men could reach him.

"Die, you false king!"

Er's charioteer had been shot down by arrows and he had to take over the reins of the chariot. His mind whirled as he charged at the royal flag.

"Ding! Ding!"

Er was assailed by Dongyi archers and blowgunmen but the arrows and darts simply ignited sparks as they bounced harmlessly off his body.

"That is...the power of the gods!"

"This man is under the protection of the War God Chi. We cannot fight him!"

Although personal guards of the King of Dongyi were soldiers from the Jiuxiong Division, they began to panic when faced with this incredible sight. The priests only exacerbated their fears with their pessimistic utterings.

"Kill! Kill! Kill!"

As Er charged forward, he threw a spear at the mount of the King of Dongyi.

"Smack!"

Er's own war horse could no longer keep up with the dizzying pace at which it was running at and collapsed onto the ground. Er's chariot was smashed into smithereens as well.

Er did not seem to mind as he rolled on the ground before breaking into a run towards the King of Dongyi with a halberd in his hand.

"Protect the King!"

Dozens of Dongyi soldiers pounced onto Er and all kinds of weapons and poisonous arrows fell upon his body.

"Ding! Ding! Dang! Dang!"

The weapons all broke upon contact. The arrows and darts all fell away harmlessly.

Er was going on a rampage as he sent several men flying off his back. Before long, he had arrived before the King of Dongyi.

"Die, you barbarian!"

"Smack!"

Suddenly, there were brilliant flashes of colourful lights. Er was thrown to the ground forcefully and trapped by a large net that had appeared out of the blue.

"Nuwa!!!"

Fang Yuan could hear the frustrated roars of the War God Chi from where he was.

A layer of blood-red clouds materialised in the sky.

Seeing that things had taken an abrupt turn, the King of Dongyi took the opportunity to jump onto a getaway horse.

"Die!"

Er's eyes bulged in anger as he saw the barbarian king making his escape. Using all his strength, Er managed to tear the net apart and hurled the halberd at the King of Dongyi.

"Swoosh!"

The halberd flew through the air in a flash of black and ran through the back of the Dongyi King before passing out from his chest and running deep into the ground in front of him.

"Bump!"

The horse ran for a distance before the dead body of the barbarian king fell off its back.

"The King...is dead?!"

The warriors of the Jiuxiong Division looked stunned. They could not believe their eyes.

The soldiers from the other tribes were more decisive.

Seeing that the King of Dongyi had fallen and egged on by the priests, the Dongyi soldiers simply abandoned the weapons and fled. Some of them even surrendered to the Shang army.

A wave of panic spread throughout the Dongyi army and before long, the battlefield had descended into a rout for the barbarians.

"The defeat of an army is like the collapse of a mountain..."

Fang Yuan went over to the War God Chi and they faced the colourful lights shimmering before them together.

"Nuwa...how dare you interfere in the affairs of my people!"

The War God Chi roared with indignance. Nuwa had tested his limits by aiding the King of Dongyi several times.

The colourful lights suddenly condensed into an elegantly dressed woman who was extremely beautiful and had a snake tail in the place of legs.

"Is this the goddess Nuwa?"

Fang Yuan looked at her with a dazed expression.

Legend has it that while the Tai God had created heaven and earth, Nuwa was the creator of life!

The status of a goddess like her exceeded those of the Sages among dream masters or even the Superior Wu Zun and Qian Huanyi from before the Battle of the Jade Capital!

Nuwa did not speak but she took a hard look at Fang Yuan.

Colourful lights flashed across her eyes.

"Buzz!"

The colourful lights suddenly dissipated and the goddess disappeared along with them.

"Hmm?"

Fang Yuan found it slightly strange. He had been prepared to face Nuwa together with the War God Chi and yet the goddess had simply walked away. It was as if she had appeared just to take a look at Fang Yuan.

"She actually refrained from making her move!"

Fang Yuan stared pensively into the real dream world where he was in the process of creating the Earth Sword.

"Hmph! I had wanted her to make her move!"

The War God Chi huffed coldly in disdain.

Several thoughts whirled through Fang Yuan's mind.

'That's right...Nuwa might be more powerful than the Sages but she lacks the freedom enjoyed by the Sages among dream masters in the Da Qian world. This is because she is being worshipped throughout the world and is a goddess formed from the combined powers of heaven and earth. She could even be considered the most closely related entity to the incarnation of dao itself!'

The Tai God was the incarnation of the heavenly dao.

Although Nuwa possessed human traits, she was also a representative of the heavenly dao and her actions were thus restrained by it!

The higher the level of the being, the greater the constraints placed on them!

This was why Nuwa was speechless when she had been called out by the War God Chi for intervening in Dongyi affairs.

If she had disregarded the rules and fought them, she would most likely lose her current elevated status and become demoted to a common deity! This explained why the War God Chi did not fear retaliation from Nuwa.

"It seems that the battle of Shangyi is going to become very troublesome..."

Fang Yuan could not help but let out a long sigh.

"I agree."

The War God Chi had become solemn.

"Nuwa was more than capable of allowing the King of Dongyi to escape. She could even help the Dongyi army to win this battle...however, the heavenly will has decreed a Shang victory for this encounter and Nuwa does not have the power to go against it. We might have the upper hand for now but when the heavenly will finally favours her side, you will never meet any other deity with powers as terrifying as hers!"

'Well, in fact, I must have seen it all before. She is probably on the level of the Superior Wu Zun and Qian Huanyi!'

Fang Yuan frowned as he settled into a thoughtful silence.

Chapter 573: Return of the Victors

It was not apparent who the heavens had favoured in the Battle of Dongyi.

According to what Fang Yuan knew about the general trend, the Shang Dynasty had exhausted all of its brilliance and luck to secure in this battle what would be the regime's final victory.

When the Western Zhou state begins its assault on the Shang Dynasty, the fall of the Shang would become irreversible.

Fang Yuan and the War God Chi has planned to weaken the strength of the other party while it was not yet clear who the heavenly mandate was with. They had wanted to trick Nuwa into altering the course of nature personally, which would have resulted in divine retribution for Nuwa and increased their chances of victory in the future.

However, Nuwa had only made a small move to test the firmness of heavenly will and did not act at all after that. Fang Yuan and the War God Chi felt like their efforts had all been for nothing.

At the same time, they felt the chills.

An enemy that practised self-restraint was formidable indeed!

Nuwa's inaction now meant that they would have to deal with Nuwa in her peak condition during the final battles between Zhou and Shang!

"Of course...things don't have to be this way. We should continue being passive observers no matter what. Let the mortals struggle for power and go along with the general trend. We'll only intervene as a last resort and even so, we might not have to do it ourselves..."

Fang Yuan pondered silently. He was beginning to come to a realisation about this sort of conflicts.

"Conflicts between deities are but extensions of the conflicts between mortals...what I should be doing now is to rush Prince Pan into returning to the capital and strengthen Shang's energy of destiny such the heavenly will might be changed!"

Ever since Fang Yuan had begun to plot, although the general trend remained the same, many of the little details had undergone large changes.

For example, not only had the Battle of Dongyi been a glorious victory for the Shang army, but the victors also did not suffer huge losses.

If this large number of elite soldiers could make it back to the Shang capital in time and reinforce the strength of the Shang army involved in the coming war between the Shang and the Zhou, there was no saying what the result might be.

Fang Yuan turned his gaze to the battlefield.

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The setting sun bathed the plains in a golden light. Corpses and other remains littered the battlefield.

The Shang soldiers cheered their hearts out as they bundled their captives with rope.

These captured soldiers were now their slaves, their loot, their personal property!

The Shang army camp revelled in song and dance as a large amount of food and wine were being served to the tables. Prince Pan and his officials offered toasts to each other in the commander's tent and made merry together.

Suddenly, Ge Nie stepped forward on the pretext of offering Prince Pan a toast and whispered into his ear.

"Prince Pan, according to my teacher, the Western Zhou state has already become a fully developed threat and is marching on the Shang Dynasty as we speak. He advises you to return to the Shang capital immediately or there will be dire consequences!"

"What?"

Prince Pan did a double take.

"My lords!"

He slammed a fist on the table and put down his wine vessel before turning to the officials present.

"I propose...that we pack up and make our way back to the capital immediately!"

"What?"

The announcement caught everyone in the tent by surprise and they quietened down.

"Pardon me for being rude!"

A gentleman-minister frowned as he stood up to speak.

"Why the sudden proposal, my Prince?"

"I have information that the Western Zhou state has dishonourable intentions and has already launched an invasion on the Shang Dynasty!"

Prince Pan gritted his teeth and shared the news with everyone present.

"Impossible!"

"No such news has arrived from Shangyi!"

The officials were all engaged in frenzied discussions among themselves.

"If these are Ge Nie's words alone, we seriously doubt the credibility of this message!"

Prince Pan could feel a rising anger as he observed the scene.

He was more than aware of why these people were so unwilling to leave immediately for the capital.

After all, the spoils of this victory included the lands surrounding the battlefield, the nearby city as well as the slaves.

Prince Pan might be the commander-in-chief, but if he forced the army to give up their loot and rush back to the Shang capital, there was bound to be disobedience or even defection on a large scale!

However, Prince Pan's eyelids had twitched upon hearing Ge Nie's warning. His sixth sense told him that Ge Nie's information was reliable.

'Damn it... a bunch of fools! If Shangyi falls into trouble, of what use would all the gold and slaves in the world be?'

Prince Pan was seething with rage but he knew that he could not fall out with his subordinates.

If Fang Yuan had been present at that moment, he would have understood that the heavenly will had begun to take effect.

The Battle of Dongyi was supposed to be the Shang Dynasty's last victory. After this battle, they would immediately lose the heavenly mandate.

The five aggregates of the nobles had been placed under a spell. They were all no longer able to make rational decisions in the face of greed.

"The Prince has spoken and we will obey his orders!"

A gentleman-bureaucrat slammed his table with a hand and shouted.

"So many excuses. Are you people going to rebel?"

It was Gentleman Lian who had spoken. Er stood behind him silently. He was holding a halberd and glared at everyone else in the tent.

Although Lian was only a gentleman m-bureaucrat of the first class, he had contributed much to the Shang victory over the Dongyi tribes and would definitely receive a promotion to gentleman-minister upon his return. Additionally, his son Er had demonstrated tremendous courage in battle and had even killed the King of Dongyi personally.

After Gentleman Lian had spoken, the selfish tendencies of the other officials somewhat cooled down.

It was indeed a tough choice between the acquisition of wealth and avoiding potential dangers.

"How about this?"

Prince Pan had considered his options for a moment and arrived at a decision.

"I will take 50000 men along with me. The remaining soldiers will focus on guarding the captives and reclaiming the lost lands. However, there will be no more advancement into the lands of the Dongyi. What do you all think of this!"

Practically speaking, given the scale of defeat suffered by the Dongyi army, they were in no shape to resist a Shang invasion into their lands.

However, Prince Pan wished for stability to be maintained before the Shang army made any further advancements.

"So? Who is willing to follow me back to Shangyi?"

Prince Pan had taken on a cold demeanour and flaunted the majesty of a royal prince, causing many of the officials to hang their heads.

"I am!"

Gentleman Lian was the first to step out, followed by Er and a few of the Prince's personal aides.

Upon seeing this, a few of the generals began to consider.

"What about our battle merits and the slaves we've captured..."

"Don't worry. All of these things will be recorded. None of you will be shortchanged!"

Prince Pan waved a hand.

"I swear it by my name!"

"If that's the case, we will follow your orders!"

These generals had made up their minds and bowed down to the Prince.

"We are all at your service, my Prince!"

Another gentleman-bureaucrat had stepped out and went on a long sycophantic rant. Prince Pan was growing more uncomfortable by the minute.

'Do they...think that I am going make use of my control of the army to usurp the throne? What...'

Still, the sudden return of a general to the capital at the head of a large army was a big deal.

Prince Pan suddenly got a chill to the bone.

"If this turns out to be a false alarm and Shangyi is safe....I..."

For a prince with military authority to end up in such a situation was political suicide. He would definitely face imprisonment by the Shang King and lose his claim to the throne!

Prince Pan was beginning to reconsider his decision.

'Is this a counterstroke from the heavenly will? It is powerful indeed!'

Fang Yuan entered the airspace directly over the camp and sighed as he watched the goings-on in the tent.

"War God Chi...let's see what you've got."

The War God Chi did not speak but let a blood-red ray of light descend upon the earth.

"Remember your promise!"

He glanced at Fang Yuan as his figure faded a little. It was apparent that he had exerted a large amount of effort.

"Don't worry!"

Fang Yuan nodded.

The aforementioned promise was to let Er's descendants attain the realm's kingship.

In actual fact, although the descendants of the Black Bird managed to regain the imperial throne, the Qin monarchs were descended from Er's brother and not directly from Er in the original course of history.

However, the War God Chi wanted the witch race to rule the world and supported Er's ascension to the throne. For Chi to alter Er's original fate, he had to join Fang Yuan's side.

At this moment, Prince Pan's heart was beating rapidly.

'If news of the invasion turns out to be real, my rescue of the King would be a legendary accomplishment. If it is a false alarm, why shouldn't I take the opportunity to launch a coup? Father's reign has incurred much displeasure from the general populace. With me in charge, we would be able to put an end to the unrest so that we can strengthen the hold of the Shang Dynasty over the world!'

An idea burned brightly within Prince Pan.

Of course, this was his greatest secret. No one could ever know about this.

Prince Pan waved a hand decisively.

"Alright, pick out 50000 men and we will leave for Shangyi first thing in the morning!"

...

"It is done!"

Fang Yuan nodded and landed in the middle of a forest.

Beneath a rotting tree, the two foxes looked slightly depressed instead of their usual lively selves.

"Big White and Little White, what's wrong?"

Fang Yuan threw them a glance and asked.

"Big brother..."

The two foxes had grown attached to Fang Yuan after they had gotten to know him better over time.

Crouching on the ground, the white foxes took on their human forms.

"We have received a message saying that we members of the demon race must do our best to aid the Western Zhou state and accumulate merit. This is a decree from the Lady Nuwa!"

"The demon race?"

Fang Yuan nodded his head. Nuwa was the creator of life and it was not surprising that she had established a command over the demons of the world.

Although the greater demons had decreased drastically in numbers after the final Xia war, the re-emergence of any one of them was enough to wreak havoc over the world.

"The demons of this world have affinities with water...many of the floods during the Xia period were caused by them...I have to say that this brings me to an interesting thought."

Fang Yuan turned to the direction of Shangyi with a strange look on his face.

As recorded from the Battle of Muye: "In the Battle of Muye, the frontline Shang soldiers turned on the Shang army. Batons floated on blood."

The battle had turned out to be so brutal that the aforementioned idiom was associated with it -- Batons floated on blood.

The baton was a weapon used on the chariot and even if it was made out of wood, it would require blood to flow like a river before it could float. It was not supposed to be literal!

However, what if one reinterpreted this saying?

"With the help of the demon race, Western Zhou might cause a flood. In that case, it would be possible for the flood to be stained red with blood and for batons to float on the rushing water..."

Fang Yuan had grasped the key ideas in an instant.

"Will Western Zhou attack with water?"

Chapter 574: Muye

In the imperial palace of Shangyi.

The grandeur of the palace halls was enhanced by the faint sounds of bells and drums. It was the Shang King Xin luxuriating in the singing and dancing of beautiful performers.

In the Shang ancestral temple.

The old man who was the Great Witch of the Shang examined the burnt tortoise shells in his hands and jumped up in shock.

"A crisis looms overhead. No, I must inform the King immediately!"

The Great Witch jogged to the palace, ignoring the strange looks that people gave him as he passed them. Before long, he had arrived before the palace.

"Halt!"

Two gentleman-bureaucrats stopped the Great Witch at the gates to the palace.

"The King is enjoying himself. Do not bother him!"

"Get out of my way!"

The Great Witch felt a rising anger and pushed the two men aside forcefully.

"My King, the Great Witch from the ancestral temple requests an audience with you!"

The Great Witch rushed into the palace hall and saw that musicians lined both sides of the hall while scantily-clad women gyrated to the music in the middle.

His arrival had somewhat ruined this beautiful scene.

"Ah, it's the Great Witch..."

The Shang King put down his wine cup and sat up straight. He held this man, who ran his ancestral temple and had the authority to reprimand him in the name of his ancestors, in high regard. At the same time, the Shang King was displeased with him, especially after the Great Witch had dissuaded him from personally leading the troops to war previously.

"What brings you here, Great Witch?"

"My King...there is trouble!"

The Great Witch bowed and presented the tortoise shells to the King.

"I have consulted the heavens about the future of the Shang Dynasty by burning these tortoise shells and ominous cracks have appeared on them. They tell of a threat approaching from the northwest that could destroy the Shang Dynasty and forever deny the past generations of Shang Kings their sacrifices and offerings!"

"What?"

The Shang King lost his temper.

"How is this possible? The Great Shang is descended from the Black Bird and is favoured by the heavens. We have tens upon thousands of chariots. Who can overthrow me?"

"Calm down, my King, calm down!"

The two gentleman-bureaucrats who had been pushed aside by the Great Witch staggered their way into the palace hall while crying.

"The Great Witch shows disregard for the rules and is spouting nonsense. Don't be angry, my King!"

"Get lost!"

The King roared with anger when he saw that the two men were fanning the flames. He threw the aside the woman lying in his arms and swept the wine vessels and plates off his table in a fit of rage.

"Plink! Plank!"

The dinnerware fell to the floor and the sounds echoed throughout the hall.

All the women and musicians fell to their knees. None of them dared to say a word.

"Great Witch...you speak of a threat coming from the northwest. Of whom do you speak of?"

King Xin turned his fiery gaze to the Great Witch.

"If there is really a traitor, I will have his head. However, if the results of your divination are erroneous, I will have you roasted over a fire!"

"It's too late! Too late!"

The Great Witch began to bawl his eyes out.

"The trouble lay at Western Zhou but now, the evil star has reached Muye. It will be difficult for the Shang Dynasty to escape this calamity!"

"Muye?!"

King Xin was taken aback and remained sceptical.

"Haha...Muye is only a short distance away from Shangyi. What haven't I heard anything yet? Great Witch, you are too much of an alarmist!"

At this moment, a soldier rushed into the hall and fell to his knees.

"My King, we have urgent news from the northwest. Marquis Li of Western Zhou has formed an alliance of feudal lords and is marching on the Shang Dynasty with a host of 10000. Their army has already reached Muye!"

"What?"

King Xin suddenly felt faint and swayed slightly on his feet. He never would have expected the obsequious old Marquis to pull off something like that.

"Li...you got me good!"

A savage look came over his face.

"Men...arrest Young Master Wu and cut him into pieces!"

"My King...Young Master Wu has disappeared!"

The soldier braced himself as he gave the reply.

"My King...do you still not understand? You have been leading a hedonistic lifestyle and keeping despicable people by your side. People like Yu Zhong and Kun Guo will only tell you what you want to hear and conceal important news from you. They have even received bribes in return for helping Young Master Wu make his escape!"

The Great Witch looked at the two gentleman-bureaucrats coldly.

"Spare us, my King, spare us!"

The two gentleman-bureaucrats were frightened out of their wits. They crawled over to King Xin piteously and tugged on his robe while pleading for their lives.

The King would no longer show any mercy.

"Argh..."

King Xin roared as he aimed kicks at the two gentleman-bureaucrats, making them fly and crumple against the wall. Then, he unsheathed his sword and cut them down before bowing deeply to the Great Witch.

"Thank you for enlightening me, Great Witch. I am deeply remorseful for all that I have done before!"

The Great Witch took a long and hard look at the Shang King. As an old man who had lived his life in the palace, he could remember a time when King Xin was young and brave, humble and wise. Early in his reign, King Xin had been one of the most brilliant rulers the Shang Dynasty had ever seen.

However, in his middle age, King Xin gave himself over to drinking and women. He placed his trust in unscrupulous officials and ignored almost all affairs of state.

Now, King Xin looked like he was determined to turn over a new leaf.

"Since the enemy has already reached Muye, we shall face them head on..."

The Great Witch took in a deep breath.

"How many people are there still left in the capital?"

"..."

King Xin was silent for a while. When he finally spoke, it was with anguish.

"My son has taken with him the most elite soldiers as well as most of the able-bodied men in the city...if we have to deploy another army, the only conscripts available are the old folk, minors and slave..."

"Within Shangyi, we have enough equipment to arm a 20000-strong army!"

The Great Witch went on calmly.

"My King, are you not going to mobilise the new army and send an urgent message to Prince Pan?"

"That's exactly what I'm going to do!"

King Xin nodded as he turned to the Great Witch.

"Can you be the one to send the message to my son, Great Witch?"

In fact, they were all aware that there was no way the large Shang army could return in time from their southern expedition unless they had won an overwhelming victory over the Dongyi army and was already on the way back.

Having lost most of its elite soldiers, Shangyi was virtually defenceless and would most definitely lose!

However, King Xin was intent on letting the Great Witch survive the onslaught so that he could go on to assist his son in the future. Thus, he had proposed that the Great Witch become his messenger.

"I am old..."

The Great Witch shook his head.

"My disciples will assist Prince Pan to the best of their abilities."

It seemed that the Great Witch had decided to stick it out with the Shang Dynasty!

"Haha...Great Witch, you live up to your name indeed. I have taken you for granted all these years!"

King Xin felt sober for the first time in a long time and adjusted his crown before sounding the large palace bell to mobilise the population.

"Everyone..."

King Xin looked at the officials who were rushing to gather before him. He had a fire burning in his eyes.

"The Western Zhou state has launched an invasion on us and has already arrived at Muye...we will have to engage them in a fight to the death! By royal decree, induct the slaves into the army and arm them from the weapons vaults. We'll fight that traitor until the end!"

"Yes, my King!"

The nobles of the Shang Dynasty had not yet been completely corrupted by wine and women, and they immediately went into action. There was a flurry of activity as they put on their suits of armour, armed themselves with their trusty weapons and committed their slaves to the fray.

Before long, more than 10000 men had been conscripted.

"Well done!"

King Xin finally broke out into a smile.

"Follow me! We shall face the enemy beyond the city walls!"

Although the new army was made up of slaves, the old folk and other unfit personnel, it possessed a raw power of sorts and aroused a sense of pride in King Xin.

It might even be able to resist the enemy and buy more time for the Shang Dynasty.

"My King...we should focus on defending the city behind its walls!"

The Great Witch advised King Xin earnestly.

"Behind the city walls?"

King Xin shook his head.

"How can I appear to be weak?"

The Great Witch sighed internally. He knew that this King of his was a proud and reckless one.

Just as the Great Witch was about to offer another word of advice to the King, he felt a chill spreading throughout his entire body and saw colourful lights dancing before his eyes.

'What...kind of power is this?'

The Great Witch was astounded at the expansiveness and strength of this power. Also, he had been frozen to the spot.

At the same time, King Xin rode at the head of his army and led them on a charge out of the city gates towards Muye.

"This is...the power of the heavenly will!"

The Great Witch found that he was only able to move after the Shang army had left the city. He began to cry.

"Indeed...has the heavenly mandate been passed on to a new regime?"

The Great Witch finally understood that the warnings from the ancestors, the ominous results of his divination as well as the paralysis he had experienced earlier, all pointed to one conclusion.

The Shang Dynasty has lost the heavenly mandate!

The odds favoured the enemy now!

The Shang tribe had been able to rise to its current place as hegemon of the world because luck had once been on their side! Now that the Shang Dynasty was no longer favoured by the fates, what kind of future lay in store for them?

"The heavenly mandate! Heavenly mandate!"

A change came over the Great Witch's face as he ran after the Shang army.

A real man dies along with his country!

Since King Xin had made his decision, the Great Witch would not shun his destiny either!

If Fang Yuan had been there, he would have seen a wretched Black Bird flapping northwards with all its strength, carrying with it the remaining energy in Shangyi...

...

Muye.

The army of the anti-Shang alliance looked vast and mighty.

The Marquis of Western Zhou had donned his colourful suit of armour and carried a sword at his waist. He gave off an impressive aura.

"Father!"

Young Master Wu approached the Marquis and whispered into his ear.

"Prince Pan has already defeated the Dongyi army and is in the midst of returning to the Shang capital!"

"Where is the recce party?"

The Marquis looked around him furtively and asked in a low voice.

"I've detained them and kept them imprisoned in the camp!"

"Kill them!"

The Marquis issued the order coldly.

After all, the leakage of this piece of news might affect their army's morale in the face of such a major battle.

The Marquis was well aware of the true strength of his army. At face value, the host was 10000 men strong, but about half of them were made up of the rabble. These hastily conscripted soldiers were barely trained and probably would not be able to handle a complex and protracted battle!

"Yes, Father!"

Young Master Wu retreated.

A few feudal lords looked over at the Marquis questioningly.

"Haha...my son has brought me some news. The Shang King is preparing to make a final stand with the leftover warriors and slaves in the city!"

The Marquis took care to only reveal some of the acquired information.

"Tell the men to take up their positions in the formation and prepare to face the Shang army! Don't worry, the heavens told me that as long as we fight them at this very location, we will definitely win!"

The feudal lords had been submissive to the Shang Dynasty for too long. There was no saying how their armies might match up against the Shang army.

Still, the Marquis was confident that as long as the anti-Shang alliance conquered the Shang capital, the feudal lords would have no choice but to support his ascension to the throne!

Chapter 575: Flood

Many things were happening at Muye.

The soldiers of the anti-Shang alliance were standing in phalanxes. The main body was made up of the warriors of Western Zhou while thousands of chariots were lined up at the fore.

These were the essentials of feudal wars. According to the messengers, most of Shang's chariots had followed Prince Pan to battle in the lands of the Dongyi.

The feudal lords were all reassured to know that.

However, they took a collective double take when they caught sight of the Shang army.

"Roar!"

A flag depicting the Black Bird flew up high on its mast. A dark mass formed over the horizon and surged ahead like a wave. It was the Shang army with its soldiers all dressed in black. From the looks of it, they numbered more than 10000?

"Dum! Dum!"

The war drums let out thunder-like rumbles as the frontlines of the Shang army stirred.

"The aura of the Shang Dynasty lives on even now...this is obvious from the way King Xin was able to arm 10000 citizens and slaves so easily!"

The Marquis stood on a hill and gazed down upon the scene. He let out a sigh and broke out into laughter immediately after.

"Father, what are you laughing about?"

Young Master Wu felt his palms become sweaty as he observed the tight-knit formation of the Shang army.

"I'm laughing because even though the Shang Dynasty possesses some energy remnants, the Shang King is going to ruin everything."

The Marquis continued to chuckle.

"If the Shang King had decided to defend Shangyi from behind the walls, we would actually have a hard time laying siege to the city. They might even be able to drag on the battle until reinforcements arrive. Now, however, the Shang army is courting destruction by bringing the battle to the open country!"

There was a clear difference between trained soldiers and farmers as well as slaves!

The Marquis knew that even though the slaves looked impressive in their tough suits of armour with sharp halberds in their hands, they mostly had blank looks on their faces.

They might be able to win a straightforward clash but when battle strategies were factored in, they probably would not even stand a chance against a motley crew assembled from the anti-Shang alliance army.

"Wu, pass on my orders. I want the Western Zhou soldiers to move up to higher ground at the rear of the formation. The other feudal lords will attack with their respective units!"

The Marquis raised his sword and said authoritatively.

"Yes, Father!"

Young Master Wu went off to deliver his orders. Before long, the war drums from both sides boomed. Thousands of chariots from the anti-Shang alliance charged towards the Shang army like a spearhead.

The Shang soldiers began to panic when they saw the enemy chariots approaching.

"No one is to retreat! Anyone who attempts to retreat will die!"

Kim Xin roared as he led a charge on a chariot.

"Descendants of the Black Bird, charge!"

The Great Witch followed close behind the Shang King. He slit his wrists with a knife and let his blood drip to the ground.

"Warriors, receive my blessings! The energy remnants of the Shang Dynasty is with you!"

The chants of the Great Witch imbued the Shang men with a sudden courage and even the most cowardly slaves shouted ferociously as they all prepared to clash with the enemy chariots.

At the same time, the Great Witch began to age rapidly. He had transformed into a feeble old man in the blink of an eye and passed away while kneeling in prayer.

Even though he was the Great Witch of the Shang Dynasty and had only used a simple psychological suggestion technique, the burden of utilising it in a battle with divine stakes had caused him to die immediately.

Besides, there was no guarantee that the psychological suggestion technique would have worked. The key to its effect lay in the fact that the Shang soldiers had the intention to fight in the first place. Their morale was also boosted when they saw that their King was leading the charge personally.

If these conditions had not been met, such an effect would not have been possible even if the Great Witch sacrificed himself.

"Whoosh!"

The wheels of the chariot thundered on as the two waves of soldiers clashed violently with each other.

"Die!"

King Xin hollered in a fury as he brandished his golden dagger-axe and decapitated the enemy soldier in front of him.

As they watched the Shang King cut down all the soldiers that lay in his path, the Shang soldiers charged towards the chariot formation of the enemy with a renewed vigour. After a while, it actually looked like the Shang foot soldiers were gradually pushing the enemy chariots back. It was incredible.

"Fighting in a war requires courage!"

Fang Yuan stood among the clouds and observed the battle taking place below him. The Shang Dynasty was making its last stand.

No matter what, the Shang King will die!

This was a prerequisite for nature to run its course. Even Fang Yuan was powerless to alter the fate of the Shang King.

'To alter the course of nature is the same as dealing with a flood. Facing it head-on would cause one to be overwhelmed by its power. The only way was to discharge it layer by layer and to reduce its strength gradually until the course could be reversed!'

Fang Yuan's eyes shone with a golden light. It was as if he had been enlightened and had already seen the truth behind the fates.

"Father!"

Young Master Wu felt a chill as he watched the battle rage on.

"Don't worry!"

The Marquis cast a sweeping glance at the battlefield with a cold smile.

"The Shang Dynasty is immoral. I shall call upon divine retribution to help me punish them!"

"Divine retribution?" Young Master Wu looked at his father warily. Had his father been possessed?

"Kaboom!"

In the next moment, a thunderous sound burst out from the edge of the battlefield. It sounded like the gallop of 10000 horses.

"Whoosh!"

A vast body of water had been released into the battlefield.

King Xin, who had been busy butchering one of the enemy generals, was stunned by the sight.

The flood crashed into the Shang army and the units of the feudal lords. Screams filled the air as even the bravest warriors were cowed by the forces of nature.

The Shang army, who had gained the upper hand, was smashed into pieces.

King Xin barely managed to escape with his life under the protection of his personal guards.

Behind him, the Western Zhou soldiers who had avoided the flood by moving to higher ground walked along the path of the water flow and gave vicious beatings to Shang soldiers who had fallen into the water.

"The heavens are out to get me!"

King Xin spat out a mouthful of blood as he retreated back to Shangyi with a group of soaking and bedraggled Shang soldiers.

"Tsk tsk...this is the work of humans and demons acting in collusion!"

Fang Yuan could see that it was the Five Elements Purple Phoenix who had assembled a group of demons to manipulate the water source. This had caused the spectacular flood.

"Charge into Shangyi and capture King Xin alive!"

The Marquis unsheathed his sword and shouted out his command red-faced.

"Charge into Shangyi and capture King Xin alive!"

"Charge into Shangyi and capture King Xin alive!"

The morale of the Western Zhou soldiers was greatly boosted and they charged towards Shangyi.

Young Master Wu observed the events with his heart feeling as cold as the winter snow.

'The flood not only destroyed the Shang army but many of our allied soldiers drowned as well. Father had used them as bait and sacrificed them in order to reduce the future threat of the feudal lords...'

The Western Zhou army was riding on the waves of their victory and advanced into the city of Shangyi virtually unopposed. They charged straight into the palace.

Unfortunately, they were too late.

Thick black smoke rose from the inside of the imperial palace. At his wits' end, the Shang King had decided to self-immolate!

The military discipline of the armies in the past paled in comparison to that of the modern armies.

Whether it was the royal armies or rebel forces, they all had the tendency to loot conquered cities.

It didn't take long for plumes of smoke to rise from everywhere in the wealthy city of Shangyi. The city had become hell on earth.

"Wu!"

The Marquis had entered the city only to see the extent of the destruction. He frowned.

"Restrain the soldiers immediately. The remnants of the Shang army have not been wiped out yet. How can we let our guard down?"

What the Marquis meant was that even in looting and pillaging, there must be rules and discipline.

"Yes, Father!"

Young Master Wu bowed.

"Also...bring me King Xin's body. If you can't find it, then at least give me a charred corpse so that I can offer a sacrifice to the heavens and officially receive the heavenly mandate!"

The Marquis had somewhat changed his tone of speech.

"Sigh..."

Fang Yuan watched on silently.

Amidst the thick smoke, the wretched Black Bird that had been guarding Shangyi with its last breath had finally faded away into green smoke.

"The heavenly mandate..."

Fang Yuan closed his eyes.

Even though he had detached himself from these affairs, he felt a sense of loss.

...

Southwards from Shangyi.

"Father...Shangyi!"

The Shang host of 50000 was approaching the city. Prince Pan immediately noticed the ruined state of the city and his eyes bulged.

They had received a confirmation of Western Zhou's invasion along the way back which had led in an acceleration of the return march. Still, they had been too late.

"My Prince! It isn't too late. Please launch a counterattack as soon as possible!"

Ge Nie reminded the Prince.

"One more thing...the Western Zhou army is aided by the demonic Phoenix. Other than my master, no one else can match its power!"

"Alright!"

Prince Pan wiped the tears from his face and ordered that the incense burner that Fang Yuan had given to him be lit up on the table.

"Pan sincerely begs you to intervene, Mister Fang!"

After that, without caring whether Fang Yuan had responded or not, Prince Pan looked towards Shangyi with bloodshot eyes.

"Charge into Shangyi! Revenge! Revenge!"

"Attack!"

The 50000 soldiers he had brought along with him were the able-bodied men of Shangyi. Upon seeing their home up in flames, they went berserk.

"Dum! Dum!"

The war drums sounded and the world seemed to shake.

Young Master Wu felt his heart sink and broke out into a cold sweat when he saw the approaching host.

"Prince Pan and his army have returned from their southern expedition...in such a short time! Prepare for engagement now!"

Unfortunately, his orders were disseminated too slowly.

The Western Zhou army had expended its energy in the recent battle and had already splintered into a disorderly mess as they sacked the city.

Even if Sun Tzu[1] came back to life to lead this army, he would have been of no help.

"Kill! Kill! Kill!"

The Shang army charged into Shangyi and went after the Western Zhou soldiers.

They had lived in Shangyi all their lives and were familiar with every nook and cranny. They were also supported by the survivors in the city. As a result, they swept throughout the city virtually unopposed.

"Father! We can't hold them back any longer. Let's retreat out of the city!"

Young Master Wu ran back in a windblown state and saw that the Marquis was gripping tightly onto the railing of his chariot. His knuckles had turned white.

"Impossible...the heavens were supposed to favour Western Zhou. Why is this happening..."

The Marquis muttered and ground down on his teeth so hard that blood seeped out of his mouth.

"Let's leave now, or it'll be too late!"

Young Master Wu made a decision on the spot and led the bedraggled Western Zhou army out of the city.

At the same time, the flag of the Black Bird flew up on the ragged city walls once more. The people of Shang cheered.

"Great!"

Fang Yuan was heartened at the sight.

King Xin had paid for the previous crimes of the Shang Dynasty with his life.

The course of nature could not be reversed but it could be altered slightly by making minute changes to the details.

The death of King Xin represented the peak of Western Zhou power. Now, the only way for them was down.

Prince Pan now possessed a powerful army, the support of the populace as well as the advantage of being in his home ground. If he still managed to fail at the end of the day, Fang Yuan would have nothing left to say.

"I've won my gamble...the impact made on this world by the heavenly will is subtly ever changing. Nothing is definite!"

Fang Yuan lifted his head to see that a new Black Bird had been reborn in the fire. The Black Bird let out a long shriek.

[1]: Ancient Chinese military strategist who wrote the Art of War

Chapter 576: Reverse

"The Black Bird has been baptised in flames and will now rise from the ashes?"

The Marquis of Western Zhou looked at the tortoise shell in his hand and muttered. Suddenly, he felt sick to his stomach and nearly fell into a swoon.

"Father!"

Young Master Wu held onto the Marquis immediately and steadied him.

"We still have the army. We have not failed completely!"

"You are right!"

The Marquis looked around them.

"What is the current strength of our army?"

"The Shang army had swept in too rapidly and many of us did not manage to escape in time. We have around 20000 men left!"

Most of the casualties of this onslaught were Western Zhou soldiers, the iron pillar of the anti-Shang coalition army. More than half of them had perished in Prince Pan's counterattack, which pained Young Master Wu greatly.

"20000...is enough!"

The Marquis gritted his teeth.

"Bring out the incense burner. I will summon our protector beast and call on it to destroy Shangyi!"

"Yes, Father!"

In fact, the incense burner was only an excuse.

The Purple Phoenix had witnessed the Western Zhou defeat and could no longer hold back anymore. It rushed out of the clouds and flew towards the Shang territories.

The Purple Phoenix was a large bird with bright and beautiful feathers. With a flap of its wings, a section of the Shangyi city walls collapsed.

"The Phoenix called over Qi Mountain. Western Zhou is the rightful successor of the heavenly mandate!"

Young Master Wu and the other soldiers looked on bright-eyed.

The Phoenix seemed like it was not satisfied with the damage it was causing and screeched. This drew in a powerful wind that rushed towards and threatened to swallow up the citizens of Shangyi.

Behind the Phoenix was a motley crew of demonic creatures. They were steering floodwater towards Shangyi in an attempt to drown the city.

"Ancient One, you dare Attack the mortals?!"

Fang Yuan had been waiting for this.

"You are a demon but yet you dare to intervene in the affairs of humans and their civilisations. You must be tired of living!"

"Swoosh!"

With a wave of his hand, four rays of sword light representing the classical elements of earth, fire, air and water stretched between heaven and earth. They formed the boundaries of an enclosure that had the Phoenix trapped within.

The Chaos Sword Array!

After focusing on his training for a time, Fang Yuan had finally completed his cultivation in the 4th Tier of the Illusionary Divine stage. His skills were now comparable to the 7th Tier Illusionary Divine higher beings from before! He had regained his peak level of cultivation!

Fang Yuan now displayed his alarming prowess as a higher being.

The soldiers from both camps of Shang and Zhou were stunned. They saw a looming giant, who looked like he had just emerged from the wilderness, using the Chaos Sword Array to snare the Phoenix.

"It's you!"

The Five Elements Phoenix let out a pained shriek. It sounded devastated.

"You just won't let me off!"

The Phoenix knew that this was a matter of life and death. It shook its tail feathers which led to an explosion of colourful light that formed a wheel of light. It was an artistic conception of the Five Elements Cycle and managed to fend off the first wave of attack by the sword array.

"He is at his full strength!"

The Ancient One was finding it difficult to express the burgeoning despair in his heart.

"This world was supposed to increase the intensity of its rejection and suppression after that watershed incident..."

Although the Ancient World had once been a place suited for the development of dream masters, it was the work of the Ancient One. After the destruction of the Xia Dynasty, dream masters would no longer receive preferential treatment but would be handled in a harsher manner.

The Purple Phoenix body of the Ancient One had been planted during the battle between the Xia and the witch race. Not even his closest disciples knew of it. This was similar to how the Leader of the Hidden Dragon Guards had left aside the physical forms of Xiang Liu and Wu Zhiqi for future utilisation.

The Ancient One had taken a gamble by giving his body to this world and fusing his destiny with that of the future line of kings in the Ancient World. In this way, he had managed to recover his powers of a True Divine spiritual knight at a great cost.

Even though the Ancient One had been a Sage among the dream masters, he had no idea how Fang Yuan had managed to regain his full strength.

"You don't have to know that. All you have to do is to die compliantly!"

Fang Yuan let out a booming laugh. In his giant physical form, he manipulated the sword array and caused a huge disturbance.

"Chaos Sword Array, reactivate the powers of the earth, fire, air and water!"

"Whoosh!"

Lights of the yellow, red, green and blue colours combined into a chaotic green mist that spread towards the Purple Phoenix.

The defensive capabilities of the Five Elements Cycle failed in the face of this chaotic power and the Ancient One had no choice but to beat a hasty retreat.

"Hmph...you deserve to die for choosing the evil side!"

Fang Yuan would not let the Ancient One off, must less the demons trailing in his wake.

"Kaboom!"

The green mist descended upon the demons.

"Whoosh!"

Many of the demons turned to dust instantaneously upon contact with the mist.

Some of these demons barely escaped the battlefield with their lives by disappearing into puffs of smoke.

"Retreat!"

The Marquis and Prince Pan looked at the penta-coloured circle in the skies as well as the chaotic sea beneath it and moved far away.

It would be folly to go anywhere near these phenomena.

They never would have thought that such a combination of beautiful colours could possess such terrifying powers!

"Is this the power of divine beasts and Sages?"

Prince Pan stared at the sight with his mouth agape. He suddenly turned to Ge Nie.

"I've made my decision. If the Shang Dynasty makes it through this crisis, I will build temples dedicated to your master all over the world! He will be worshipped forever!"

Prince Pan now regarded Fang Yuan as an ancient god.

In truth, Fang Yuan's strength was not that far off from that of ancient gods.

At the same time, the War God Chi materialised on the other side of the battlefield.

"The affairs of mortals are self-determined. The heavenly will merely exerts a subtle influence. The more beings at my level interfere in mortal affairs, the greater the chance they have of incurring divine retribution!"

The War God Chi muttered as his gaze pierced through the heavens and allowed him to see the goddess Nuwa standing passively in the heavenly palace.

"Even the goddess Nuwa is remaining inactive despite seeing the rout of the Western Zhou army. You were too careless, Ancient One, and now you will be played like a fool..."

Still, Chi was aware that the Ancient One had no choice but to act in the way he did, for his fate was tied to that of Western Zhou.

"Hehe...to think that such a fate would befall you one day!"

Chi smirked as he witnessed the suffering of the Ancient One.

Although he was a new incarnation of the War God, he had inherited Chi's mark and possessed all of Chi's memories and feelings.

Chi had no friendly feelings towards the Ancient One, who had defeated him before and sabotaged the course of nature as dictated by the heavenly will.

"However...did Nuwa manage to see through him as well?"

The War God Chi gazed at the battlefield and smiled coldly.

"This is a battle between the two aliens. Let them fight it out...besides, the Ancient One has based his powers on the Five Elements and obviously covets Nuwa's status...it would be a surprise if Nuwa did not already expect this!"

The Ancient One was still a True Divine spiritual knight. It would be very difficult for him to reattain his cultivation level at the Sage state.

He was once a Sage and knew how difficult it was to achieve that feat.

The only plan with a high chance of success was to for the Ancient One to make his move on Nuwa, whose powers were based on the five elements.

They might be on the same side but Nuwa would be happy to see the Ancient One become weakened.

The scariest thing was the other outsider Fang Yuan.

He seemed to have a good understanding of how things worked in this world. He had acted with impunity under the constraints of the heavenly will and exercised the right amount of restraint when displaying his power.

'However, you will be helpless in the end. Nuwa will stand on the side of Western Zhou.'

The War God Chi looked at Fang Yuan worriedly.

"Earth, fire, air and water. The four swords, combine! Chaos...go!"

Fang Yuan did not hold back on the battlefield.

The four rays of sword light converged into one and unleashed the power of chaos. The ground gave way and formed a black hole that swallowed up everything.

"Smash!"

The Five Elements light wheel was unable to withstand the power of this attack and broke into pieces. Fang Yuan extended a giant hand and held the Purple Phoenix by the neck while his other giant hand grabbed onto the Phoenix's wings. Fang Yuan pulled hard with his might!

"Rip!"

The Purple Phoenix, supposedly an auspicious creature to the people of the world, was split into two.

The mortals felt their blood run cold as they witnessed the gruesome sight. Even Ge Nie and Hei Zhong found it to be too cruel.

"Chirp! Chirp!"

A clear shriek rang out suddenly.

The torn remains of the Purple Phoenix exploded into colourful lights and gave rise to a perfectly whole Purple Phoenix.

"Fang Yuan...you can't kill me!"

The Ancient One had not only made his secret preparations in this world, but he had also taken on the incarnation of the Purple Phoenix and intertwined his destiny with that of Western Zhou. Thus, he had gained the support of the fates.

There were many limitations, but at least it was not all in vain.

At the very least, Nuwa had no way of dealing with him. Until the Western Zhou state had been destroyed, his true aura would never be compromised no matter how many times he fell and he would always be revived.

"Success or failure, it is all up to fate! The Western Zhou state is destined to receive the heavenly mandate! They will become the future overlords of heaven and earth!"

Fang Yuan bellowed in reply.

"However, the heavenly mandate isn't set in stone...just how many times do you think the energy of Western Zhou's fate can protect you?"

The Ancient One immediately turned pale upon hearing Fang Yuan's words.

"Prince Pan, if you are not going to attack now and wipe out your enemies, then when?"

Prince Pan heard a voice speak into his ear. He issued an order to his troops at once.

"Destroy the despicable men of Western Zhou!"

"Attack!"

The 50000-strong army, led by Lian and Er, charged in the direction of Western Zhou. The time had come for them to avenge their losses!

Upon clashing with the Shang army, the Western Zhou army suffered defeat after defeat.

It was now apparent from the circumstances of mortal conflicts that the heavenly will could undergo changes.

The Ancient One was taking it especially hard!

The Western Zhou army was falling back. At the same time, the Five Elements Purple Phoenix was becoming weaker and its tail feathers fell off one by one. The aura surrounding its body was dimming. Fang Yuan did not even have to lift a finger.

"No..."

The Ancient One let out an anguished scream.

"I'd spent so much time and effort to divine that Western Zhou would triumph and rule the world. Did I get it wrong?...No! Fang Yuan, you are ruthless!"

"Bang!"

Before the Ancient One had finished speaking, Fang Yuan threw a punch at him. The Purple Phoenix exploded.

This time, the colourful lights struggled to no avail. Only a remnant of the Phoenix's true aura was absorbed by the shaky heavenly pillar of Western Zhou.

"My true opponent approaches!"

Fang Yuan had an imposing look on his face.

The divine retribution for his attempt to reverse the heavenly will had been unleashed!

Chapter 577: Bet

"Fang Yuan..."

Nuwa observed the goings-on of the mortal realm up in the heavenly palace. She muttered to herself.

"I can feel that the heavenly mandate is still with Zhou. Even though Zhou experienced a decline after conquering Shangyi and forcing King Xin to self-immolate, they are still capable of gaining the submission of the other feudal lords and feeding off the energy of these feudal states. They will live on for about 800 years!"

As the premier deity, she was aware that the heavenly mandate followed its own laws!

Heaven and earth were neutral entities. There was no way that a family would be fated to rule the world for 800 years! The fates could never afford to give such a thing.

Whether it was the witch race, the Shang or Western Zhou, the so-called 'heavenly mandate' was like starting capital that allowed a chosen family to rise quickly and place them in a good position to achieve dominion over the world. Only when they themselves work towards building up infrastructure and gaining popular support would they be able to ensure the longevity of their dynasty. A state that relied entirely on the grace of heaven to survive would be a complete joke!

The witch race was an example of an entity that failed despite being favoured by the heavens.

The Shang Dynasty performed better. It rose at a time when the Xia Dynasty was declining. Later, it won overlordship of the world following an epic battle with the Xia and sustained their power for 500 years by absorbing the energy of their vassals.

Now, it was Western Zhou's turn.

If external forces had not interfered, Western Zhou would have been able to dominate the other feudal states and create a tributary system that would have kept them nourished for a long time.

However, things were falling apart.

In fact, if Western Zhou had lost the heavenly mandate, Nuwa would have washed her hands of their affairs.

It was because Western Zhou remained in heaven's favours that Nuwa had to stay on.

Of course, this was a precarious situation.

'If the heavenly will was still on the side of Western Zhou, I would have been able to destroy King Xin openly when he received the help of external forces...now, however, it seems like I must proceed with caution!'

Nuwa pondered on. Suddenly, her face took on a shocked expression.

"Also...his enemy seems to be the Ancient One, which benefits me to some extent. Could it be...that everything that had happened had been part of his plan?"

If this was the case, it would be truly horrifying.

This meant that the other party was not only scheming but he also had a firm understanding of the workings of this world and how the heavenly will operated.

"Most importantly...he is different from the Ancient One, who is easily manipulated. This person's original body isn't in this world. Even if he dies here, his true aura would most likely get away and become a future threat..."

The current situation had been caused by the accumulation of minor alterations developing into a new trend. Even the goddess Nuwa was at a loss.

"Be it as it may, I'll have to do something!"

Nuwa was the premier deity after all. Determined, she waved a hand and sent colourful lights shooting up into the skies.

"Ding! Ding! Dang! Dang!"

The soldiers of the retreating Western Zhou army found that layers of colourful lights had enveloped their bodies like suits of armour. They were rapidly regaining their energy.

"Lady Nuwa is here!"

The Marquis of Western Zhou and Young Master Wu were overjoyed.

"Kill them! Counterattack!"

"Sigh..."

Fang Yuan exhaled. He knew that even though his methodology had been effective, it was unable to prevent Nuwa from intervening.

'In truth...even in my original plan, I had expected Nuwa to act anyway. This is already one of the better case scenarios!'

Fang Yuan waved a hand. Sword essence descended to the ground and carved out a deep gully, putting a halt to the charge of the Western Zhou army.

"Lady Nuwa, may we request an audience with you!"

The War God Chi appeared beside Fang Yuan in a flash of flames. They levitated high up in the air and stared at the rich and colourful lights.

"Buzz!"

In a flash of light, elegantly-dressed and beautiful goddess Nuwa appeared.

"Greetings, Lady Nuwa!"

She was a Sage after all. Fang Yuan and the War God Chi respected her power and they bowed first.

"Gentlemen, is there a need for this?"

Nuwa returned their bows and asked in a perfectly neutral voice.

"The battle between the Shang Dynasty and the Western Zhou state had been destined to happen anyway. Let us leave the mortals to settle it among themselves. What do you say?"

Fang Yuan smiled. Western Zhou had lost their final chance to overthrow the Shang Dynasty. There was even a huge possibility that they might be defeated. Nuwa would never agree to this arrangement.

"No way!"

Fang Yuan had barely finished speaking when Nuwa rejected his suggestion with a frown.

"In that case, I'll compromise!"

Fang Yuan could tell that even with her powers, Nuwa was unwilling to involve herself with human military conflicts -- they were rich in blood and hatred!

Fang Yuan thought for a moment before speaking.

"You, I and the War God Chi won't intervene. If the Western Zhou army can overcome my array, they would be in a good position to defeat the Shang Dynasty! If not, then we will take it as heaven's will! Whatever follows will be self-determined by the mortals!"

"In that case...fine!"

Nuwa rolled her eyes and agreed.

The War God Chi sighed in relief.

They would be lucky to survive a clash with Nuwa. This opportunity to settle their differences through a bet was greatly appreciated.

Of course, Fang Yuan had begun to set this up a long time ago. His little preparations combined to form a major developmental trend!

After all, even though Fang Yuan might have recovered his peak prowess and was now a higher being, having to face a Sage did not bode well for him.

Fang Yuan and Nuwa took up their positions in their separate arrays.

"Mister..."

Prince Pan advanced uneasily. Even though he had already gained the upper hand, the prospect of fighting Nuwa was terrifying.

"Don't panic!"

Fang Yuan waved his hands and explained the bet with Nuwa.

"Go get Hei Zhong, Ge Nie, Er and Lian!"

"With you around, the Shang Dynasty will be safe!"

Prince Pan calmed himself down and tasked someone to fulfil Fang Yuan's orders.

"Greetings, teacher!"

Fang Yuan examined the four men before him who were standing at attention, and spoke in a low voice.

"I know of an array called the Chaos Sword Array! I will use four divine swords for the eyes of the array. No one beneath the Sage level will even stand a chance of countering the array!"

"With this array, we will be fine!"

Lian and Er were excited.

"Mm, the four of you are worthy of being the wielders of these four swords!"

Fang Yuan summoned the four swords. They materialised in the air and shimmered brightly.

"Lian, take the Wind Sword. Er, take the Earth Sword...Hei Zhong and Ge Nie, take the Water and Fire Swords respectively!"

The four swords had been given out.

"Yes, teacher!"

The four sword wielders bowed down with different looks on their faces.

Ge Nie looked at the Water Sword in his hand. It had disappeared mysteriously and only reappeared now. He could not help but remember Cao Qiu's words.

'External objects can't be trusted indeed. When will I finally reach the peak of sword dao cultivation?'

Fang Yuan knew what Ge Nie was thinking about and shook his head.

The two opposing armies retreated and left a large piece of no man's land between them.

The four sword wielders appointed by Fang Yuan stepped forward to set up the array.

"Swoosh!"

In a short while, an imposing sword array appeared. Lights of four colours danced within it and evolved into a green energy. It was definitely not to be underestimated and even the clouds in the skies had been scattered by its power.

"Very impressive! Very powerful!"

Even the War God Chi had to take a step back.

"This array...can be considered the fiercest array of the ancient era!"

"My lady!"

The Chaos Sword array had frightened both the Marquis and Young Master Wu. They fell to their knees before the cloud that Nuwa was mounted on.

"Set your minds at ease. Although I won't intervene personally, I will still help you! This array is based on the power of earth, fire, air and water, and will unleash a chaotic power when activated. To counter it, you will have to break through the four doors at the same time and take down the respective sword wielders!"

"My lady...Western Zhou is a small and poor state. We don't have many people with special talents!"

Young Master Wu replied distressedly.

"Don't worry!"

Nuwa's eyes were on the four sword wielders that had been appointed by Fang Yuan.

'These are men who have risen to the occasion. I must take down at least two of them!'

Nuwa spoke aloud.

"The four people who will attempt to break into the array will be as follows, the Marquis, whom I have given a special sword and suit of armour to. Two greater demons that I have summoned. As for the last person..."

She waved her hand and sent colourful lights shooting across the skies.

The heavenly pillar of Western Zhou had appeared and the Five Elements Purple Phoenix within let out a long wail. It flew down to the ground and spoke.

"Thank you for saving my life, Lady Nuwa!"

'Another troublesome fellow!'

Nuwa's facial expressions did not change.

"In our attack against the array, you will bring up the rear."

"Yes, my lady!"

Although the Ancient One had once coveted the Sage status of Nuwa, he would not have been able to take on a physical form, much less keep his status as a True Divine spiritual knight if not for Nuwa's help!

He had to revise his plan.

"Dum! Dum!"

The war drums had sounded again. The four people tasked with destroying the array led soldiers through the four doors of the sword array.

"Tsk ts...it seems like Nuwa has the same idea as we do!"

There was a gleam in Fang Yuan's eyes as he looked at the men who were attempting to counter his array.

His mindset had long changed. He now saw himself as a chess player and all the people in the world as his chess pieces.

The bet with Nuwa had high stakes in the form of human civilisation. In fact, neither of them cared very much about the results.

If they actually did, Nuwa and Fang Yuan would have battled it out personally and turned things into a bloodbath.

Nuwa did not mind because as a Sage, she was invincible in this world!

Fang Yuan did not mind because if he failed, he could always leave this world and come back whenever he felt he was ready.

Since both of them had misgivings about the whole thing, compromise became a key part of their negotiations.

Of course, as the weaker side, Fang Yuan did pay some prices. For one...the problem with the Ancient One had been a giant loophole!

"If I had direct control over this operation, the Ancient One would have been soundly defeated by the Chaos Sword Array. However, things are slightly trickier now..."

Fan Yuan looked at the Western Zhou army stream into the grounds of the array and chuckled coldly.

"Of course...this is the only way to destroy this person completely!"

Actually, why did it matter to him whether or not the Shang Dynasty was overthrown? He was only their founder in name and after the aura of the

Black Bird became severely weakened after 500 years, he had lost his sense of attachment to them.

Fang Yuan's main objective of coming to this world was still to seek out and kill the Ancient One!

Chapter 578: Overcoming the Array

Within the Chaos Sword Array was a profusion of different atmospheres. Light reflected off the swords flashed majestically. The setup gave off an indescribable sense of danger.

"Roar! Roar!"

A three-headed demonic tiger roared as it entered the Earth Door of the array.

The tiger's body was covered in black fur and split into three human heads up his neck. The two heads at the side were that of an old man and a young boy while the head in the middle was that of a robust man. It was the head in the middle that spoke.

"Lady Nuwa has ordered me to overcome this array. Where is the guardian?"

The two heads at the side opened their mouths wide and spat out poisonous flames and fumes.

"Hey! Quit the arrogance, demon! I'll make you pay!"

Er flew out and brandished the Earth Sword in his hand.

"Buzz! Buzz!"

In the next moment, there were flashes of light in the surroundings as the sword essence assailed the demonic tiger like countless needles.

"Zap! Zap!"

Blood spurted from the numerous wounds on the three-headed demonic tiger's body as it collapsed in a heap.

"Impossible...my demonic physique is supposed to be indestructible! How can I die here...roar! The divine souls of us heavenly demons will always stay intact when we reincarnate!"

A mass of dark energy emanated from the body of the demonic tiger and diffused throughout the surroundings. It formed the vague outline of a huge tiger.

"I intend to cultivate myself so that I can reach the level of Wu Zhiqi and Xiang Liu, or even become a Sage. How can I die here?"

"You talk too much!"

Although Er was not the true master of the sword array, he was one of the sword wielders and thus understood the powers of the Chaos Sword Array.

Er threw out an attack with his sword.

A spiritual territory had fallen and carried with it the stoicism of the earth.

The divine soul of the demonic tiger which had been struggling was instantly suppressed and disintegrated when the sword radiance pierced through it.

"This is a formidable sword array indeed!"

Er let out a sigh. He had witnessed the quick death of a powerful demon. He turned his gaze to the other three directions.

"I wonder how Father and the others are doing?"

At the Fire Sword Door of the Array.

A scholarly-looking old man strolled about in the array and exhaled nervously.

"Sigh...I've never heard of this array before. I'm probably going to perish here today."

"Haha...good that you know. Hurry and die at my hands so that you will add on to my battle merits!"

Hei Zhong laughed and rushed forward with his Fire Sword in hand.

"I intend to keep my life. Forgive me for not being able to agree to your demands!"

The old man bared his teeth and transformed into a large six-tailed white fox.

"Hmm!"

Hei Zhong felt his eyelids twitch when he saw the transformation and attacked hastily.

"Zap!"

The sword essence of the Fire Sword grew in strength within the sword array and stabbed the white fox. The white fox crumpled to the ground.

"You are a fox from Tu Mountain? Do you know a fox named Sang Qing?"

"I am Sang Qing!"

The old fox was stunned and spoke.

"How do you know my name?"

"It's you!"

Hei Zhong broke out into laughter.

"Forget it...I'll spare your life for the sake of Big White and Little White! Get lost!"

Hei Zhong aimed a kick at Sang Qing and the old fox was sent flying out of the Chaos Sword Array.

"This is so strange! Who are Big White and Little White?"

The white fox reduced the size of its body to that of a mouse and proceeded to lick its wounds. When it had regained enough strength to move, it ran off with its tail between its legs, not daring to take one more look at the sword array behind him.

Sang Qing was relieved beyond measure. He guessed that it was thanks to one of his past good deeds that he was able to keep his life this time around.

...

At the Water Sword Door of the Array.

Ge Nie looked on as the Marquis of Western Zhou led his army on a charge. He was unsure of what to do.

"The Marquis is a mortal man. It would be rather unfair if I made use of a divine weapon and array to deal with him. Besides...the Sword Sage Cao Qiu once mentioned that a reliance on external items would deny one of the chance to attain the peak of sword dao one day..."

"But still, this is an all-out battle. I have been entrusted with a heavy responsibility. How can I give it up?"

While Ge Nie considered his dilemma, the Marquis was approaching him rapidly on his horse.

Although the Marquis was already an old man, he was still fit and healthy. His skills had also been enhanced by the penta-coloured suit of armour that he wore. Ge Nie could feel an invasive energy coming in his direction. The Water Sword attempted to wriggle itself out of his hand.

'Oh no!"

In a flash, Ge Nie suppressed his mixed emotions and parried the blow.

"Zap!"

The sword essence surged forth like frost and froze everything that it came into contact with.

The soldiers following close behind the Marquis turned into ice statues instantly and exploded into bursts of white powder.

"Bang!"

Colourful lights danced on the Marquis's body and fended off the cold energy. The Marquis struck out a blow with his sword.

"Watch the sword!"

"About time!"

Ge Nie saw that the attack was well-executed and could not help but be impressed. It was apparent that the Marquis was a master swordsman.

Nevertheless, they were fighting in Ge Nie's element. No matter how good the Marquis's swordplay was, Ge Nie would be able to counter it easily.

Ge Nie attacked with some hesitation.

The Marquis, seeing an opportunity, began to force Ge Nie backwards with his swordplay.

"Watch my Zhou Yi Swordplay!"

"Zhou Yi? A swordplay technique derived from the Classic of Changes?"

Ge Nie's eyes were gleaming. The Marquis was within his reach and Ge Nie could easily finish him off with a blow. However, Ge Nie felt inclined to let the Marquis finish displaying his skills so that he could see the swordplay technique in its entirety.

With this in mind, Ge Nie hesitated to make his move once more, which was one of the largest taboos as a swordsman.

The Marquis did not hold back.

Although he had the protection of the penta-coloured armour and had resisted the power the sword essence so far, he could feel himself tiring out. There was no time to lose.

Spotting Ge Nie's indecisiveness, the Marquis quickly thrust his sword towards Ge Nie's torso from an impossible angle.

"Buzz!"

Colourful lights exploded from the Marquis's sword as it plunged deep into Ge Nie's heart. Ge Nie's eyes were wide open in shock.

"Cough cough..."

Ge Nie coughed out blood and fell onto the floor. He thought back to when Fang Yuan gave him his first lesson in swordplay. Fang Yuan had said: 'Sword dao involves the art of clearing the mind and swordsmen fear indecisiveness the most. Thus, swordsmen must kill anyone who tries to cloud their judgement!'

"So...it seems that I'm not a real swordsman after all!"

Ge Nie laughed bitterly. His eyes widened and he was no more.

"Huff..."

The Marquis exhaled and picked up the Water Sword lying on the ground like it was a rare treasure.

"This sword is one of the eyes of the array. Now that I've taken it away, what is going to happen?"

The Marquis could already feel a change coming over the sword array.

At the Wind Sword Door of the Array.

A gale surrounded Lian as he sparred with the Five Elements Purple Phoenix. Suddenly, there was a disturbance to the elemental energy of heaven and earth as it deteriorated from its previous state.

"The array is not working properly. Could it be that one of the array eyes has been overcome?"

A chill came over Lian as he thought about the dangers faced by the Shang Dynasty. He tried his utmost to activate the powers of the array.

"The realm of the winds descends!"

"Whoosh! Whoosh!"

Another territory had fallen along with the rise of the green hurricane.

"The Five Elements Cycle!"

Colourful lights revolved continuously around the Ancient One. They provided a layer of defence against Lian's wind attack.

"If Fang Yuan was here, I'd probably stand back. You, however, are an insignificant mortal relying on the power of the sword array to fight me. How dare you pit yourself against me? You must be looking to die!"

The Ancient One chortled and shook his tail feathers.

As the colourful lights flashed on, the power of the hurricane began to die down. The huge figure of the phoenix loomed over Lian.

"The Chaos Sword Array with its four array eyes intact is rather hard to deal with. However, now that an array eye is down, you are out of luck!"

"Swish!"

A phoenix claw clamped down onto Lian.

Lian had a resolute expression on his face as he held up the Wind Sword in an attempt to stave off the attack.

"Dang!"

The Wind Sword flew out of his hands into the air.

After all, Lian was only a mortal man. He had only been able to fight the Five Elements Purple Phoenix by relying on the power and protection of the Chaos Sword Array.

Now that the sword array had been compromised, its strength was greatly reduced as a result. No matter how sharp the Wind Sword was, it would not help matters at all.

"Thump!"

The phoenix claw descended upon Lian and ended his life.

The Five Elements Phoenix let out a jubilant shriek.

Fang Yuan sat cross-legged outside of the sword array, his face expressionless. Suddenly, he felt a tug on his heartstrings.

"Two of the sword wielders are dead. Ge Nie and Gentleman Lian? Fine!"

Heaven and earth are indifferent and consider all creatures dispensable. The sages as well.

Both he and Nuwa were chess masters. Whether it was the Shang King, the Marquis of Western Zhou, Er, Lian or even the humblest soldier, they were all the same. They were all weak and fragile and died easily.

The people from the lower classes were dying incessantly as the war between the Shang and the Zhou raged on. Why shouldn't people from the upper classes die as well?

No one could live forever!

"If the Shang King's death served to atone for the past crimes of the Shang Dynasty, then Lian's death would serve to usher in a new era..."

Fang Yuan looked up into the clouds at Nuwa with a smile playing on his lips.

"Kaboom!"

Another change had come over the Chaos Sword Array.

The four divine swords transformed into flowing rays of light and disappeared. The surrounding mist slowly dissipated. Following the convergence of space, a newer and larger sword array had been created.

The Marquis, the Ancient One and company convened.

"What's going on? Haven't we already overcome the Chaos Sword Array?"

"No! I'm afraid that the array has adopted a different form!"

The Ancient One shook his head and stared at Er and Hei Zhong.

"As long as we can kill the both of them, we will achieve victory!"

Ever since the Ancient One had killed the sword wielder, he felt a growing unease. Nevertheless, he tried his best to suppress it.

"Father..."

Er had noticed the mangled flesh and blood under the claw of the Five Elements Purple Phoenix. His eyes bulged with hatred.

"I will kill you!"

"Haha...a mortal man brags shamelessly!"

The Ancient One chuckled as the colourful lights on his body grew brighter.

"Chirp! Chirp!"

At this moment, the Ancient One saw the energy of a Black Bird rise into the air from Er's body. It looked to be full of vitality and carried with it a sort of enigmatic power.

"The heavenly mandate? How can this be? Zhou is supposed to be the favoured one!"

The Ancient One was shocked.

"Something's wrong...this doesn't seem like the current heavenly mandate. It is a projection of the future! Have I been tricked?!"

He suddenly came to his senses and flapped his wings in a frantic attempt to escape.

Unfortunately, he was too late.

"Kaboom!"

The four rays of sword radiance rushed into the skies and converged, forming a green mist.

The Black Bird screeched within the everchanging Chaos Sword Array. The world exploded and time passed in a blur until the dust settled upon a scene during the Warring States era.

Suddenly, a mysterious energy surged forth aggressively from a country in the west!

Chapter 579: Deal

"The King of Qin unified the realm and watched it succumb under his tiger-like glare. He clears the skies with a wave of his sword and the feudal lords pay homage to him in the west."

Fang Yuan was outside of the sword array and recited these verses with a faint smile playing on his lips.

The heavenly mandate of Western Zhou ran counter to the Shang Dynasty's fate. Likewise, the heavenly mandate of Qin ran counter to Western Zhou's fate. The Chaos Sword Array was trying to adjust the conditions within the array such that fate energy from the future would gather and make the Zhou state lose its heavenly mandate!

"The Ancient One and the Western Zhou state are one. He is the heavenly mandate!"

Fang Yuan's gaze seemed to penetrate the sword array. He could see a dark energy coming together to form a majestic black figure who swung a sword.

The Chaos Sword Array let out a deafening sound. The array's power was concentrated on the sword.

"Chirp!"

The Ancient One, still in his form as the Five Elements Purple Phoenix, let out an aggrieved shriek before he was decapitated by the sword.

"Very clever!"

Nuwa had observed the entire proceedings among the clouds. She shook her head.

"Making use of the future heavenly mandate of Qin to curb Zhou's can indeed be quite effective. Still, what's the point in that since the Ancient One can always come back to life after he dies?"

"Kaboom!"

Another change had taken place within the sword array.

After the Five Elements Purple Phoenix had been destroyed, a pillar of energy rushed up into the skies. It was the heavenly mandate and fate energy of the Western Zhou state.

Prince Pan suddenly experienced a pain in his chest and spat out a mouthful of fresh blood.

"Chirp! Chirp!"

The newly revived Black Bird, the representative of Shang's heavenly mandate, flew in circles above Prince Pan and excreted a black substance from within its body. This substance gathered to form a heavenly pillar that was absorbed into the Chaos Sword Array.

At this moment, in the chaos within the sword array stood three heavenly pillars. They were standing side by side and represented the respective destinies of Shang, Zhou and Qin.

"What are you doing?"

The War God Chi looked at Fang Yuan solemnly. Even Nuwa had an imposing look on her face.

"The fates are supposed to be impartial towards all living creatures. If this should be the case, then why does the heavenly mandate favour the people of a chosen surname, a chosen family and a chosen state?"

Fang Yuan chuckled.

"I shall make a prayer for all living creatures. May the heavenly mandate be based on nothing else but accumulated virtue. Wouldn't it be great if every living creature gets to experience free will?"

"Kaboom!"

As Fang Yuan spoke, the three heavenly pillars were encircled by the chaotic energy and came together as one. The resultant pillar of energy rushed up into the skies and exploded into hundreds of thousands of shooting stars that fell to the earth.

"Every living creature will get to experience free will?!"

Nuwa shuddered. She could almost visualise the future.

"If the general population becomes enlightened, the regimes of the world would no longer be under hereditary rule nor would they continue to place their faith in deities. Is this what equality for mankind entails?"

A deep fear came over Nuwa's heart. She somehow knew that this was the trend of development for the future and that there was no way to alter its course.

She looked at Fang Yuan with mixed emotions.

This alien actually had a better understanding of how this world works than she did. His grasp of the past, present and future developments of the Ancient World even exceeded that of the Tai God!

"Kaboom!"

The sword array blew apart, leaving behind a company of dazed men which included the Marquis.

"Now, whether it is Western Zhou, Shang or the future Qin, they have all lost their heavenly mandates..."

Nuwa let out a sigh.

With the heavenly mandates gone, the Ancient One would no longer be able to engineer the return of his true aura. He was most definitely dead.

This was what Fang Yuan had planned to do!

He had used the future fate energy of the future Qin to deal severe damage to Zhou's heavenly mandate. Then, he had scattered the heavenly mandate all over the world. From now onwards, it would all be down to natural selection. Only the fittest would survive!

"Dragons rise up all the time. Perhaps Western Zhou, Shang and Qin could be content with surviving as feudal states for now. If future members of these families prove to be competent, they might unify the world one day. Anyway, none of this matters anymore."

Fang Yuan exhaled.

Now that the Ancient One was dead, Fang Yuan's mission in this world was nearly complete. He could leave with no regrets.

"Lady Nuwa...please help me!"

The Marquis bowed down before Nuwa.

"If the sword array has been destroyed...the Shang Dynasty will fall!"

"Yes! The Zhou can destroy the Shang and the Shang can destroy the Zhou as well. It is all up to evolution!"

Nuwa nodded slightly and ascended to the heavens without looking back at the Marquis.

Now that the heavenly mandate no longer existed, Nuwa was no longer compelled nor motivated to act. As the premier deity, why would she want to involve herself in mortal affairs?

"Ah?"

The Marquis was stunned.

"Could it be that the sword array hasn't been overcome yet...and that I've lost the bet?"

The Marquis tried to divine the situation but ended up more confused than ever. He spat out some blood.

"Crack!"

Cracks extended across the penta-coloured suit of armour and sword that he carried before they shattered.

"Father..."

Young Master Wu felt like he had been plunged into freezing water.

Even the Sage had abandoned them. At this point, if Western Zhou was to pit their military strength against the Shang Dynasty in a fair fight, they would most certainly lose!

...

"Mister!"

Prince Pan looked at Er. There was a sort of ambivalence on his face.

Anyone who had witnessed the happenings of a moment before would definitely have much to mull over.

"Are you going to ask me about my plans?"

Fang Yuan smiled.

In truth, after he had dealt with the Ancient One, he could not care less whether the Shang Dynasty survived nor if the Qin Dynasty managed to rise in the future.

'However...I have faith in the radiation and influence from that civilisation of a higher dimension!'

It was obvious that Fang Yuan had achieved victory because of his superior grasp of the world's developmental trends. In other words, he could see the embodiment of fate and destiny!

'The heavenly will of this world was but a puppet under the radiation from the high-dimensional civilisation!'

This realisation gave Fang Yuan a jolt.

The radiation and influence from the high-dimensional civilisation might have been let out unintentionally, but there was no disputing the effects that they had on the Ancient World.

'This entity must be of the same level as the fellow from the Demonic Heart Realm who had stripped the path of the dream masters! Is it at the level of Original Energy?'

Fang Yuan was slightly troubled, yet he felt the elation that came with being able to see the path to a higher plane.

"Yes!"

Prince Pan had no idea of the thoughts that had gone through Fang Yuan's mind in that split second. He bowed deeply to Fang Yuan.

"Following the rise of several dragons, the Shang Dynasty will no longer be the legitimate regime."

Prince Pan's face turned as white as a sheet when he heard Fang Yuan's words.

"The heavenly mandate favours no one now and will only be guided along by accumulated merits! Your ancestors came from humble beginnings. Could it be that you are afraid of the challenges that lie ahead?"

"No, I wouldn't dare!"

Prince Pan laughed bitterly. He knew that the Shang aristocracy had almost been completely corrupted by centuries of living opulently.

"There is something else. You could work towards educating the people!"

Fang Yuan smiled playfully.

"When you win over the hearts of the people, you win the mandate to rule!"

In fact, the Shang and Zhou Dynasties were the last golden ages of the royal bloodlines.

During the Spring and Autumn and Warring State periods, the feudal lords hungered for talent and recruited officials from the peasantry. This led to a reduction in power of the blue-blooded nobles.

In the end, the Qin state implemented legal and military reforms that marked a shift towards meritocracy and destroyed the hereditary reward system for the nobility. This allowed the Qin state to become an efficient war machine and finally conquer the world.

Still, whether Prince Pan had the resolve to push through with this plan was another matter.

These would be Fang Yuan's parting words to him.

...

Having said his piece, Fang Yuan took his leave.

"I wonder what this place will look like a few centuries down the road...will the Spring and Autumn period still surface?"

Fang Yuan stood among the clouds and looked down at the world with a sigh.

He had gone against the heavenly will of the world and was lucky to have been able to kill the Ancient One. As for his harvesting of the world's energy? Hehe...Fang Yuan would have to see if the Tai God and Nuwa agreed.

"I should go!"

Fang Yuan considered looking for a world without Sages so that he could harvest the world's energy unhindered.

"Wait up, Mister Fang!"

A gentle voice flowed towards Fang Yuan. Colourful clouds materialised.

"Ah, it's Lady Nuwa!"

Fang Yuan bowed.

"What brings you here?"

"You are knowledgeable and well-learned. I would like to consult you regarding a matter. I hope that you will agree to meet me!"

The colourful lights gathered to form a passageway.

"Sure!"

Fang Yuan's eyes flashed brightly as he stepped into the passageway fearlessly.

"Buzz! Buzz!"

The world around him fell away.

Fang Yuan was surrounded by a chaotic void. The power of faith gathered and revolved around a divine palace like a golden river flow.

Fang Yuan walked along a path of gold which led into the palace.

"Do forgive me for not fetching you in personally, esteemed guest!"

Nuwa appeared with an unfathomable look in her eyes.

"It wasn't solely your idea to ask me here, was it?"

Fang Yuan became serious. He could feel another approaching presence.

This presence did not have a physical form and was more of an idea. However, it was a vast entity, an assembly of conscious thoughts.

"The Tai God?"

Fang Yuan said the name grimly.

The Tai God was the heavenly will of the Ancient World!

Of course, it was extremely difficult for the heavenly will be personified. In all of Nuwa's years of existence, the Tai God had remained a symbol, a faith.

Nevertheless, the Tai God was capable of making independent decisions.

"The Tai God has a question!"

Nuwa spoke with a firm voice. She had become the representative of heavenly will.

"Where did you come from?"

Fang Yuan's expression changed.

There was no reason that Nuwa would not know, given that the Ancient One had sold himself to the Ancient World a long time ago.

They must have gotten suspicious.

"I know that you two deities must have been wondering about my perception of the future..."

Fang Yuan thought for a while and continued speaking.

"I have been to a world that was very similar to this world. That world experienced the Xia, Shang, Zhou Dynasties as well as the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods as well!" The most convincing lies had their roots in truth.

The heavenly will began to stir. Nuwa went on to ask her question patiently.

"Where is this world that you speak of?"

"I encountered it by coincidence. It will be hard for me to go back there again..."

Fang Yuan shook his head. Suddenly, he broke into a grin.

"Of course...I think we can make a deal, you and I!"

He was making this proposal to the Tai God! The Tai God who was tired of being a puppet to the influence of the high-dimensional world!

Chapter 580 Besiege

In Da Qian.

Fang Yuan woke up from his state of isolation and looked in front of him.

Jun Yianyi's body was straight and emitted a kind of mysterious, starlike glow.

"Time hasn't passed too slowly," he silently muttered. He smiled a little then slowly breathed in.

"Kaboom!"

In the dreamland, the swords of the four elements -- Earth, Fire, Wind, and Water-- were rare artifacts. Their center contained a large violet ball of the realm's energy. It was spectacular.

Before leaving the world, Tai Yi the Celestial Ruler and Nu Wodi the Chief God jointly went to look for Fang Yuan. He naturally felt indifferent about the four swords and agreed to trade. He used all the history his memory contained as information to be exchanged for a large amount of realm energy from Tai Yi.

Even though the Ancient Realm's heavens knew that Fang Yuan had held back a lot, the thousand years of historical force that he had given up was enough in exchange for that much realm energy.

"I want to know if in a situation where the heavens had time to prepare, would history still happen as it did? Especially concerning the Ultimate Sky and Earth connection..."

Fang Yuan considered this silently. He viewed the Ancient Realm as something he needed to observe in the future.

"Of course, with the help of the traits board, he was able to succeed. The Da Qian Empire had also recovered its full power."

He glanced at the four magical swords again and nodded, satisfied.

The state is the state. Power is power.

When he reached full power, with the help of the realm power he had gotten from the Da Qian Heavens, he would recover fully once he was back.

He was once a master of dreams. He had peaked at the 7th Tier of Illusionary Divinity. The Earth, Fire, Wind and Water swords that were reunited were now in a primeval state of chaos. They still possessed their great energy!

"A new path for the dream master. The four swords are the same as the seven swords from before. If the 7th Tier of Illusionary Divinity is achieved, won't I become a sacred dream master?"

Fang Yuan glanced at his stats:

"Name: Fang Yuan

Essence: 110

Spirit: 100

Magic: 100

Profession: Dream Master

Cultivation: Illusionary Divine (4th Tier), True Divine, Power Obtainer

Technique: Climb the Ancient Eagle's Body [Strengthen Zuwu pulse (one tier)], Create Sword Spell [Four swords (100%)]

Skill: [Medicine (Level 3)], [Botany (Level 6)(Peak)], [Fiery Golden Eyes (Level 3)], [Body Seal (Ultimate form)]"

"Strengthened bloodline of a Fire Witch - Activate the original bloodline of a Fire Witch, achieve the effect of strengthening the body. Currently at the first tier!"

"Aside from killing the ancient bodies, I didn't think that I would have other results."

Fang Yuan was a little surprised, "The improvements I make in every world are finally reflected in my stats? When I am finally able to travel to worlds like Heng Sha, I will become invincible..."

He was overwhelmed by emotions. Redefining what constituted a master pathway, he created a new path. With the help of the trait board, he could possibly avenge the Demonic Heart Realm, which was deprived of the master pathway.

"A master pathway is for creation! By assembling two swords, I will be able to break through the illusory stages. I can unveil my spiritual nature. By doing so, I will allow the four of them to become spiritual swords! This can parallel the original power we get from assembling the 7 swords!"

"Come out, the children of the sword!"

In the dreamland, the four magical swords transformed into boys. They wore clothing of various colors and all of them bowed, "Master!"

"You will follow me back to the 9 Extremes Mountain!"

With a wave of his hands, Fang Yuan tried to move the boys into reality. Suddenly, his face changed.

"Dang! Dang!"

In the Da Qian world, the four long swords fell from the air. The hard limestone was unable to prevent itself from fracturing. The sword pierced through the stone.

"It didn't work?"

He furrowed his brows, then, understood everything, "That's right! Aside from not being able to create a civilized race, the original 7th Tier Illusionary Divinity is not that different from a 'creator'. There is something unusual happening here!"

"The source of the problem is still the master pathway that's connected to the Demonic Heart Realm. That's where I was granted the sword... However, since this pathway was confiscated, my grant is bound to have vanished. Even if there were other dream masters able to attain the 7th Tier Illusionary Divinity, I'm afraid that they would find out that their power will have largely reduced."

If an object does not belong to you, it will depend on you after it is attained. If lost, it will instantly become trouble!

"The dream masters from before knew what the object looked like but did not understand it!"

Fang Yuan waved his hands and the four magic swords formed a U-shape in front of him. They were brightly aglow and their spiritual characteristics were extraordinary. "However, I need to know both the object's appearance as well as its characteristics in order to create a strong foundation for the path when I create it!"

He was already able to do so. Even within the dreamland, he was able to summon the swords' children. He felt that its obscure meaning had to be broken down in order to be analyzed and achieve secret to the art of creation!

"By using false comprehension, the dreamt master pathway used an illusion as a reflection of reality!"

Fang Yuan kept the Earth, Fire, Wind, Water swords and the Armillary Sphere, then walked out of the cave without looking back.

Fang Yuan urgently wanted to go to a deeper level of cultivation and research the secrets of the art of creation. Unfortunately, the deeper levels were closed to him.

Only when he had researched them could his dream master cultivation be said to be stable.

"The 7th Tier Illusionary Divinity's energy symbolizes this land. I have tried my best to give it life and was able to do so even in the dreamland. The only thing that was lacking is a gradual increase in realism!"

Thump!

A large stone broke into pieces. Bright sunlight glowed from behind the vast stretch of uninterrupted mountains that extended before him.

Fang Yuan did his closed-door cultivation in an area concealed deep within the wilderness. He was so powerful. He would be able to survive no matter how bad his surrounding environment was.

"I should go back now. I wonder how the 9 Extremes Mountain are getting along... If ever I get trapped in other worlds again and get killed by someone, there is nothing I can do..."

He thought for a while and brought an emerald green jade pendant to his eyes. When he saw that there were a lot more bright streaks of blood on it, he could not help but frown.

"This is the 'Thousand Miles' amulet. After the dream world collapsed, there was a limited quantity of spiritual objects that allowed long-distance communication. This caused more blood-like marks to appear. This means that someone has tried to contact me. The other piece of the amulet, I left at the 9 Extreme Mountains," he thought. Fang Yuan did not dare to neglect this and transferred an abundant of basic force into the jade pendant.

Buzz!

On the jade's surface, 5 brilliant colors swirled together. A surprised voice interrupted, "Mountain master, you have finally contacted us!"

"What happened?"

As the distance between Fang Yuan and his correspondents was relatively far, the sound from the jade pendant was irregular, fuzzy and veiled in background noise. However, Fang Yuan was still able to hear the extremely dark voice.

"It's the demon spirits... We're not sure why, but they suddenly had an interest in where we are. Even Ah Duo was unable to stop them!"

Ah Duo was a demon spirit that Fang Yuan had caught. After taming it, he used it to control an army that protected the 9 Extremes Mountain.

Normal demon spirits would retreat when they detect it. Even if it was a large demon spirit passing by the mountain, they would not kill their own kind in order to obtain a patch of territory. In theory, the mountain was in peace and nothing happened to it.

Despite that, problems still surfaced.

"The only way for demon spirits to go against their nature is if a demon spirit of a higher level... The 9 Extremes Mountain must have caught the eye of strong big demons! Why would they be interested in that place?"

Fang Yuan frowned slightly and thought of his own Green Element Grass.

It was obvious that the higher-level demon spirits were not fools. They had already started investigating the area and in the end, had found their way to the 9 Extremes Mountain.

"What the mountain master said was true, Ah Duo's big army had already been completely defeated. It had also escaped back to 9 Extremes Mountain and said that a demon general had attacked... Now, we can only depend on the mountain's defenses as well as the Green-Wood Sky Net Array to deal with this opponent!"

The extremely dark voice said wearily, "I understand. I will rush back!"

Fang Yuan ended the connection and sighed once, "The current situation of the 9 Extremes Mountain is too delicate. Apart from me, there are no expert martial artists to protect it. It could be destroyed once faced with a stronger power. I should train a few of them to stop worrying.

"Swoosh!"

While pondering silently, he took out a magic sword, stood up, and just like a sword god, he drove the sword into the sky to fly. He became a shooting star and rushed towards 9 Extremes Mountain, as fast as lightning.

...

The Nine Extremes Mountain.

The demon spirit army had more than a million in its ranks. They blocked all of the exits.

The 9 Extremes Mountain was very vast, and the defense that was left was very powerful as well. The demon generals were intelligent. They would not sacrifice their soldiers for nothing and hence only used them to seal the exits, as if they were sure it was a success.

"I can feel it..."

Within the black clouds, a 3-tailed Scorpion Lion roared, "The person who oppressed us is here! Attack them and destroy everything inside!"

"Mister Three-tails, we understand your cause, but the defenses here are very powerful. The range of protection is also very troublesome..."

A big snake spat, "Even if we are demon generals, it is also very challenging to break them. The humans inside are very smart. They even adopted a demon to create the illusion that this place had already been attacked to gain safety!"

"Exactly, the humans here are very cunning!"

The 3-tailed Scorpion Lion's voice boomed, shaking the ground, "This does not mean that they will survive!"

As it was talking, rich, black smoke rose from its body and almost enveloped the whole sky.

"Most respected 3-tails, this is not the time for greats like you to fight, leave it to me!"

A thin shadow appeared, peacefully warning, "Okay, be careful!"

The 3-tailed Scorpion Lion looked at the green shimmer gathering at the mouth of the 9 Extremes Mountain and felt a little fearful.

"I am the demon general, Ahmo Fanduo! You, all of you, will become our food"

The mirage exploded and became an enormous giant. Its body was majestic despite the many octopus-like tentacles protruding from its neck.

"Whoosh! Whoosh!"

Its huge tentacles brought a storm that hit the green screen.

"Kaboom!"

All the Green-Wood Sky Net Array vibrated, scattered things that looked like little spores.

"Hurry! Ask the others to move away! These are demon seeds!"

Ah Duo, who was wearing a cape, stood in the center of the array to remind the others.

Though the giant was trapped between the 9 Extremes Mountain and the invading army, and with the help of Fang Yuan, ate a lot of Demon Spirits, it was still far from becoming a demon general. After seeing how the army surrounded the mountain and attacked, it immediately abandoned its position and escaped into the 9 Extremes Mountain.

If only Fang Yuan did not have his reputation to uphold, he might have had to surrender to the enemy.

"Useless! With this parasite technique, the Green-Wood Sky Net Array is not that bad!"

Liu Mengmei was not disconcerted by the idea of facing death. She operated the array in a way that invited the enemy in. Veins appeared to wind around the seeds and with a green flash, the black seeds vanished in a blink of an eye.