

Nine Star 4011

Chapter 4011: A Gamble

“Senior, what are you doing?!”

Long Chen’s dragon scales were blocked by some mysterious energy, and he found himself unable to summon them. This sudden setback was dire, as his physical body alone was unable to block that sharp Sword Qi.

After all, unlike the challenges he faced on the seventh and eighth levels, the attacks here were ruthless and aimed directly at taking his life.

The dragon expert’s voice suddenly became heavy and grave. “To refine the will requires the threat of death. Long Chen, let me put it to you this way. The power of your enemies far exceeds your imagination. The nine stars have helped you accomplish your goals, but they have also drawn you into a giant storm. Sooner or later, you will face your true enemy. But with your current cultivation speed, even if you were given ten thousand years, you wouldn’t be able to fight your enemies. So, I decided to gamble. In any case, if you really cannot grow past this point, your father and mother will die. Rather than just watching as they die miserable deaths, why not be more straightforward and skip to the end?”

“Senior, what are you saying?!” Long Chen’s expression suddenly changed. He had a bad feeling.

“If you are unable to pass this trial, you will not be able to escape the demonic claws of fate. I have gambled my hopes on you. Since that’s the case, let’s be direct. Let’s see if you have the qualifications to keep me gambling on you. If you really are the son of destiny, you naturally won’t die here. If you aren’t, you will die a terrible death sooner or later, so dying now might actually be a kind of release for you,” sighed the dragon expert.

“Senior!”

Long Chen suddenly found that he couldn’t move his body at all. A mysterious energy had sealed his movements, leaving him unable to even blink.

Just then, he was horrified to sense a ray of Sword Qi condensing behind him.

The next moment, a fire-red sword pierced out of his back and through his chest. Its violent power almost blew apart his body.

In his sealed state, he couldn’t heal nor defend, thus, he could only watch as that sword pierced his body.

“Senior, are you trying to kill me?!” Long Chen roared. But he was unable to speak, so this was a spiritual roar.

“Even if I don’t kill you, someone else will. Whether you are a dragon or a serpent will be seen right now. If you cannot activate your will, all your cultivation will be meaningless anyway, so let everything come to an end here! This is fate.” The dragon expert sighed helplessly.

Just then, Long Chen was horrified to sense space twisting in front of him. The invisible blade's target was his head.

Sensing this, Long Chen grew frantic. He crazily struggled, but he had no idea what the dragon expert had done to him. He couldn't move.

"No! I can't die!" Long Chen roared.

However, the dragon expert ignored everything Long Chen said. After that, the invisible sharp sword condensed and shot at his head, its aura of death enveloping Long Chen. He knew that if this attack landed, he would definitely die.

The next moment, Long Chen's vision turned dark as he descended into endless darkness. Within that darkness, he saw Meng Qi, Chu Yao, Tang Wan-er, Yu Qingxuan, Zi Yan, Dong Mingyu, Ye Zhiqiu, and the others' faces. Their faces were full of worry and fear, as if they could see him dying but were powerless to help him.

He also saw Guo Ran, Xia Chen, Gu Yang, Li Qi, Song Mingyuan, Yue Zifeng, Wilde, and the other Dragonblood warriors roaring, crazily rushing to him.

He saw the faces of his father and mother and heard the cries of his biological parents. Their voices were full of pain and unwillingness.

"I can't die!"

With a heaven-shaking roar, the darkness dispersed and his vision returned. But at this time, the sword was already right on his forehead. Even if he could move, he couldn't dodge it.

The next moment, blood sprayed as the sharp sword sliced through the air, leaving a long gash on Long Chen's cheek.

Long Chen's head remained immobilized; he still couldn't move. However, to his astonishment, the sword suddenly veered away from its original trajectory, as if forced off course by some unseen power, sparing his forehead from the deadly blow.

Just then, another sword condensed and shot at his head again, giving Long Chen no time to think.

When the sword was about to pierce his head, it came to an abrupt halt, as if an invisible hand had caught it, preventing it from moving even an inch forward.

In an instant, Long Chen felt the mysterious energy that had sealed his movements dissipate, and he found himself able to move again. However, he remained rooted in place, his gaze fixed on the sword in front of him, not daring to make a single move.

"It seems that we won our gamble."

The dragon expert sighed with relief. Clearly, it had also been nervous.

"Senior, are you really trying to kill me?" asked Long Chen darkly as he stared at the sword right in front of him.

"No. If you were unable to awaken this power in front of death, I would save you. I'd then send you to your brothers and lovers so you could have your reunion, then you could face death together. You would no longer have any chance of winning, so you might as well have some joy before dying. You can enjoy your final time together," said the dragon expert.

Hearing that, Long Chen felt much better. Just now, he really had almost died, causing fury and resentment to swell up within him. He didn't like that feeling. Even if it was for his own good, he would not allow anyone to control his life or death.

However, after hearing these sincere words, Long Chen's fury instantly vanished like smoke in the wind. The dragon expert's origins were mysterious, and it knew countless secrets that Long Chen was unaware of. Deep inside, Long Chen always remembered everything that it had done for him.

It could be said that his life had been saved by the dragon expert on multiple occasions. Long Chen had even admitted that he owed the dragon expert this life.

"Senior, I'm sorry."

Long Chen apologized for his anger. This life of his was saved by the dragon expert, so even if it wanted his life, Long Chen shouldn't complain. His outburst of anger was akin to forgetting the gratitude he owed to the dragon expert.

"There is no need for courtesy between the two of us. I know that you don't like being controlled by others," said the dragon expert.

Long Chen nodded. He really hated that feeling, as it drew out his most hated memories. That feeling of powerlessness was worse than death.

Those memories seemed to be the painful ones of when he was bullied in the Phoenix Cry Empire. However, they also seemed to stem from the Pill Sovereign's memories. In any case, it was very difficult to endure.

Just then, space quivered and two swords shot toward Long Chen from different directions, enveloping him with a sensation of death once more.

Chapter 4012: Heavenly Collapse Manifestation

BOOM!

Long Chen didn't move, but those two swords suddenly veered away from him and crashed into each other.

The two swords had appeared at almost the exact same time and had come from different directions, but a strange force suddenly changed their trajectory, causing them to clash in front of Long Chen and destroy each other.

"Why don't you tell me now what kind of power this is?" asked the dragon expert.

Hearing this, Long Chen was stunned. He found that even with all the books that he had read, he was unable to explain this power.

Just as the dragon expert said, it was something between the power of the soul and mind. But it was a very vague concept.

This power had to have a source and a point to be unleashed from. But Long Chen was unable to find it.

Just then, another sword pierced toward him. Facing it, Long Chen suddenly formed hand seals, and a vortex appeared on his forehead.

That sword was then drawn into the vortex and crushed to smithereens.

“The source of the six spirits, the foundation of the six senses, the collection of the six feelings, merge two into one. Incorporeal but corporeal, tangible but intangible. Formless on the inside, controlling the six spirits. Tangible on the outside, controlling the six senses. Merge two into one, inner and outer. Feel the changes of the mysteries known only to the heavens, sense the cycle of the Six Daos. Heaven and earth in the palm of your hand, wrap your hand around the sun, moon, and stars...”

Suddenly, a mesmerizing mnemonic chant escaped Long Chen's lips, unbidden and beyond his control. The moment it happened, the world shifted and changed before his eyes.

The celestial dance unfolded as the stars above the nine heavens began to swirl, their cosmic choreography enthralling all who saw it. The sun and moon, once steadfast in their courses, now rocked in an otherworldly rhythm. As a result, day turned to night, and the once radiant sun and moon lost their light, casting the world into an eerie darkness.

But amidst this celestial upheaval, a wondrous sight unfolded. The stars, instead of being scattered, linked together in such a mesmerizing display, forming a celestial dragon that weaved its way above the very dome of the heavens.

In that instant, no matter which race and species, all creatures within the nine heavens and ten lands looked up at the starry sky.

Within the High Firmament Academy, countless disciples stared at the starry sky in terror, feeling like the heavens would collapse.

Meanwhile, an elder clad in hemp robes remained deeply engrossed in sweeping the ground, as though nothing else in the world held any significance to him but this simple task

Yet, as the stars began to shift in the night sky, he paused briefly. Behind his turbid eyes, there seemed to be a glimpse of the primal chaos essence that gave birth to all existence. It was then, when he saw the majestic manifestation of a dragon, that a faint smile slowly emerged on his ancient face. Without uttering a word, he lowered his head once more and resumed his sweeping.

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“Heavenly manifestation covering the nine heavens! A peerless cultivation technique has been born.” Within endless darkness, a short-haired beautiful woman stared up at the sky, murmuring to herself.

She looked to be in her thirties. With her skintight black leather armor hugging her curves tightly, she was just like a leopard in the night.

Her hands clasped behind her back as she stood atop a cliff. A trace of shock appeared in her deep eyes.

This woman was the peerless assassin that caused countless experts in the nine heavens and ten lands to quiver, Ye Wusheng.

She was the master of the Shadow Sect and also Dong Mingyu's master. She was a legendary existence in the nine heavens and ten lands.

"Oh?"

Suddenly, Ye Wusheng frowned. A touch of surprise appeared on her face. After a moment, she said, "Alert Mingyu. Her mission is starting."

"Yes."

A voice responded in the darkness. From start to end, the speaker never revealed themselves.

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"Hahaha!" The dragon expert laughed crazily, seemingly overwhelmed with excitement. "Good, good! Long Chen, I really didn't misjudge you! My Dragon Soul Body Forging Art can finally be passed down, hahaha!"

Long Chen was still lost. What had just happened? He had spontaneously spouted a mnemonic that seemed to emerge from the depths of his mind, but even he wasn't certain of its origin or meaning.

"Senior, I don't understand what you're saying..."

"A cultivation technique can be passed down without words or diagrams, but it cannot be lacking a mnemonic. This mnemonic is like the path for people to follow. With this, others can walk the same path, and no matter how difficult the path is, people can still reach the end of it. As for myself, I simply flew over the path, so the actual process was vague to me, and I was naturally unable to explain the profound mysteries within it. But you are different. You walked to this point step by step, leaving footprints along the path. My path was not recognized by the Heavenly Daos, so I could not pass it down. But you comprehended the mnemonic yourself. That proves that the path can be walked. Furthermore, it has received the acknowledgment of heaven and earth. My Dragon Soul Body Forging Art can finally be passed down to future generations! Hahaha, Long Chen, do you know that in this lifetime, I feared nothing except the loss of my self-created peerless divine technique after my departure? It was this desire that fueled my determination to endure the humiliations of existence.." Suddenly, the dragon expert stopped speaking and switched topics. "In any case, you've accomplished my heart's greatest desire. Long Chen, thank you!"

"Senior, don't be like that. I'm the one who should be thanking you. You're making me feel bad," said Long Chen.

After learning a peerless divine technique, he was even being thanked? Despite not considering himself thin-skinned, he couldn't help but feel a sense of embarrassment.

"Hahaha!"

The dragon expert laughed with delight and gratification. It was its first time feeling such happiness in countless years.

“Keep going. Refining the will is the step that makes one a peak expert. After this trial, you will be completely transformed. I’m already brimming with anticipation to see you at full power with the Dragon Soul Body Forging Art,” said the dragon expert.

Long Chen nodded and continued onward. When he reached the second step of the level, the tempo of the attacks increased, but he was fully capable of dealing with them.

Based on Long Chen’s understanding, the dragon expert’s so-called will was using thought as a guide. In fact, this was something that Long Chen had done back in the Phoenix Cry Empire. The qi gathering realm was the entry into cultivation, and it was to use the will to mobilize the circulation of true qi.

However, after cultivating for a while, people could easily sense the circulation of true qi, so they no longer thought of the will. They no longer needed it.

Long Chen didn’t expect that after his cultivation base had reached the Immortal King realm, he would actually return to the most basic thing of all. This could be considered returning to the essence.

When released outside, the will’s foundation lay in sight, hearing, taste, smell, touch, and perception. This kind of energy was truly profound, impossible to explain clearly.

Currently, it was like Long Chen was grasping tiny acupuncture needles with a numb hand. His movements were clearly clumsy and awkward, but having found the trick, Long Chen was no longer anxious. As time passed, his control got better.

While Long Chen walked forward, Huo Linger followed behind him, absorbing the flame energy here. She was like a dragon returning to the sea. This flame energy was an endless feast for her.

When Long Chen reached the sixth step, a ferocious beast suddenly attacked him.

Chapter 4013: Immemorial Vermilion Bird

This wild beast was a flame tiger, and its sharp claws smashed down toward Long Chen.

BOOM!

Seeing this, Long Chen formed hand seals, and an invisible shield appeared in front of him, causing the tiger’s claws to smash into it. The shield then shattered, but the tiger was also blown back.

Using the will to block enemies. Long Chen needed hand seals to do such a thing, but the dragon race’s experts did not. But in this aspect, no one could help him. Long Chen would need to grope around in the dark by himself when it came to this.

The next moment, Long Chen’s hand seals changed, and an invisible sword shot toward the tiger.

To his surprise, the tiger reacted very quickly. It opened its mouth, unleashing a wave of fire that struck the sword, destroying it.

Seeing this, Long Chen snorted and his hand seals changed again, forming eighteen swords that pierced toward the tiger.

BOOM!

The tiger was struck by the eighteen swords and exploded. But as soon as it did, it transformed into runes that reformed once more into the tiger, attacking Long Chen again.

Using only his will to defend and attack, he then killed the tiger over ten times, but it still refused to die. Time and time again, it reconstituted itself, its power not diminishing in the slightest.

After fighting for an hour, Long Chen's head started to hurt. This was a symptom of using up too much of his will energy.

As a result, Long Chen retreated to the first step to recuperate. After resting, he returned to fight the tiger again and found that the power of his will was no longer invisible. Instead, golden spots already appeared on it.

Luckily, his will grew even stronger with these golden spots. Originally, his range was only three hundred meters, but when those golden spots appeared, the range instantly spread to hundreds of miles.

To Long Chen's surprise, refining his will didn't require the energy of his blood, qi, bones, spirit, and soul. After reaching a certain level, their energies were actually linked, mutually assisting each other.

At this moment, a golden sword pierced through the flame tiger's body, blasting it apart. This tiger, which could originally endure dozens of attacks, was now unable to endure even a single blow.

Long Chen was pleasantly surprised. This power was essentially giving him a domain that others couldn't sense. With his will, he could definitely kill his opponents without them being aware of it!

The power of his will was extremely bizarre. It was like the power of a domain or pressure yet also like a completely different concept.

If Long Chen summoned a lightning domain or a flame domain, he could control everything within it. But switching to one of them took time, and in a battle, experts could sense the fluctuations of the domain to deduce the objective of the opponent.

But a domain with the power of will? The power was based on what the heart willed, so they couldn't possibly defend against it.

The drawback was that it was exhausting a great deal of mental energy. With Long Chen's mental energy, he could only fight using it for two hours.

However, Long Chen was delighted to find that as this golden energy appeared, the power of his will rapidly grew. It was like the power of his soul was merging into it.

The power of his Yuan Spirit and soul was originally intangible, but it had become tangible through cultivation. As for the power of his will, it was something that existed between the tangible and intangible. There was a miraculous connection between the three of them that couldn't be explained with words.

When Long Chen reached the ninth step of this level, he saw various flame beasts that were incredibly powerful. They gave Long Chen immense pressure.

But the greater the pressure, the stronger his will grew. As he constantly formed hand seals, thousands of golden swords appeared in the air, forming a sharp sword formation that forced back those beasts. They repeatedly exploded.

Currently, Long Chen's will could spread for three thousand miles. In other words, within this domain, he could kill people with just his will.

However, getting to the tenth step with just this power was very difficult because the ninth step's latter half was filled with beasts.

Furthermore, every time he went back to rest, returning to his original location took a great deal of his newly recovered energy. Getting halfway through the ninth step already caused him to run out of this power, forcing him to go back and recuperate.

After several attempts, Long Chen finally reached the tenth step. But as soon as he stepped onto it, before he even got a good look at his surroundings, he was already blasted away by a terrifying force.

Just as Long Chen was forced back to the first step to recuperate, Yu Qingxuan and the others managed to reach the ninth level. Their speed was astonishing.

After the tempering on the seventh and eighth levels, they were sharpened even more. Their gazes were as sharp as a sword now.

Even Yu Qingxuan's aura had changed. She was still warm and gentle, but there was now a firm sharpness deep within her eyes.

She was like a sheathed sword. However, once this sword was unsheathed, its sharpness could cut down the river of stars. Furthermore, Long Chen could sense particularly powerful flame fluctuations from her. That was the aura of the Heavenly Rainbow Flame.

It seemed that this trial had caused the Heavenly Rainbow Flame to start displaying the divine power possessed by the rank nine Heavenly Flame.

Once everyone arrived, Long Chen explained the situation here and brought them onward.

BOOM!

Zhu Yunwen slashed his sword, blasting apart an invisible sword that had just begun condensing. His movements were quick and at ease.

"Beautiful!" Long Chen praised him. Zhu Yunwen was now a true expert, and that one blow showed his true power.

Zhu Yunwen smiled when he received Long Chen's praise. Long Chen's acknowledgment was the greatest encouragement to him.

Although they hadn't seen Long Chen's display, the fact that he was constantly ahead of them showed that his power was unfathomable. No matter how strong they grew, they knew there was a gap between them and Long Chen.

Thus, Long Chen's praise was the greatest encouragement for them. Feeling reinvigorated by his praise, they continued to push onward.

When they reached the sixth step and encountered the flame beasts, the pressure instantly rose and their progress slowed down.

But by working together, they still managed to charge through. Of course, compared to when Long Chen advanced on his own, these flame beasts were much weaker, perhaps less than a tenth of when Long Chen fought them.

Just like that, over eight hundred thousand imperial disciples working together managed to reach the ninth step. But the endless army of flame beasts here was too strong for them and finally forced them back.

To their surprise though, as they all were about to fall back, a golden barrier blocked those flame beasts. No matter how the latter tore at the barrier, they were unable to get through.

"This is...?"

Everyone was startled by this. No one could use magical arts or channel the laws of the Heavenly Daos in this place, as it rejected all kinds of energy. Here, they could only use their most basic core flame energy to fight.

Thus, when they saw Long Chen form hand seals, they were dumbfounded. They couldn't even speak. Long Chen was able to ignore the laws here.

In truth, the will domain that he summoned came from within himself. He didn't need to draw energy from heaven and earth. Furthermore, this kind of energy was not restricted by this place, so it was only natural that he could use it.

Long Chen summoned a barrier that gave them time to rest. Once they were mostly recovered, he led them to the tenth step.

BOOM!

When they reached the tenth step, a deafening explosion reverberated and flames erupted, ascending skywards in a magnificent display. Gradually, an immense head materialized right before their eyes, taking shape in front of the entire group.

"Immemorial Vermilion Bird!"

Zhu Yunwen and the others instantly knelt on the ground when they saw that head.

Chapter 4014: Corroborate the Heart

This head was an embodiment of endless flames, its fiery essence coalescing into a majestic form. Within this magnificent display of flames, two eyes blazed like glorious suns, illuminating the entire sky with their brilliance.

At the same time, a sacred might shook the world, and an unbending will rose. It was the immemorial Vermilion Bird, the true Vermilion Bird.

Everyone knelt on the ground, leaving only Long Chen standing there. Right now, the immemorial Vermilion Bird looked at Long Chen, and Long Chen looked straight back at it.

He now understood why he had been forced back last time. Only those with faith in the Vermilion Bird could activate the tenth step and summon the immemorial Vermilion Bird.

Actually, it was just a heroic spirit, the spirit of the Vermilion Bird which the Vermilion Bird Empire worshiped. As long as their faith energy was not extinguished, the heroic spirit would live for eternity.

Suddenly, Long Chen saw a lithe woman figure on top of the fiery head. Her hair was tied up in a high bun, but he couldn't see her face clearly. However, he could feel her sacred and noble aura.

Flame energy swirled around her like mist, making her appear very mysterious.

"Senior, what do you need from me?" spoke that woman suddenly.

"Senior?"

Long Chen jumped in fright. This immemorial Vermilion Bird actually called him senior? Long Chen had no idea how to respond to this.

"I hope that you can use the will of the Vermilion Bird to help him corroborate his heart." The dragon expert's voice rang out. So the Vermilion Bird wasn't talking to Long Chen but to the dragon expert.

That shocked Long Chen even more. This woman could see the dragon expert? Furthermore, the dragon expert seemed to recognize this woman.

"I will follow senior's wish then."

The woman bowed slightly. Suddenly, this world quivered and the Vermilion Bird vanished. After that, the gate slowly opened.

"We've passed!"

The imperial disciples cheered. After so many trials, they had finally succeeded.

"Long Chen, we succeeded!" Yu Qingxuan held Long Chen's hand excitedly.

However, Long Chen's expression was odd. He felt like things couldn't be so simple. But everyone else was excited, so he didn't feel right extinguishing their hope. He simply followed everyone through the gate.

As soon as they passed through the gate though, everything turned black. This was not the imperial palace but a world where they couldn't even see their own fingers when they waved their hands in front of them. As they couldn't see anything, the fear of the unknown welled up within them.

"This is the little black room!" cried out Yu Qianxue in fright. This familiar feeling was instantly recognized by her. This meant that they hadn't passed the trial by fire; instead, they had entered an even more frightening trial.

Fear instantly enveloped everyone, triggering something primal from the depths of their soul.

Some people said that darkness was nothing frightening; it was death that was frightening. However, some also said that darkness was the most frightening thing, and that death was eternal darkness.

Darkness was an invisible oppressive hand that slowly stripped them of everything they had. Your family, your love, and even your life. In front of it, you had no ability to resist. You could only watch as everything you had was stripped away from you.

Perhaps it wasn't darkness that was frightening, but rather the feeling of utter powerlessness to fight against it. This overwhelming sensation was what could easily cause a person to crumble. To a cultivator who cultivated to protect themselves, this darkness rendered all that effort seemingly worthless.

"Take it slowly. I'll wait for you up ahead."

Just as everyone was overwhelmed by fear, Long Chen's calm voice rang out, still brimming with confidence. Just like that, it was like a lantern had been illuminated within this darkness, expelling the fear in their hearts.

They then heard Long Chen's footsteps continuing deeper, so they advanced steadily, without any panic. Their hearts stabilized.

"If big brother can do it, I can do it too! I will take the vanguard! Everyone, follow me!" Zhu Yifeng clenched his teeth. Summoning his courage, he stepped deeper into the darkness.

The path was still the same old path like the previous nine levels. The bricks on the ground guided them in the right direction, so there was no way they would get lost.

However, within this endless darkness and terror, within this place where countless negative emotions bloomed, every single step was difficult to take.

Only Long Chen felt no fear of this endless darkness. Instead, he felt a sense of peace akin to taking a stroll. He quickly reached the tenth step of the tenth level.

After passing through the gate, he found that the darkness here was even heavier, and he also heard various voices. It felt like he could hear people laughing and roaring angrily around him. All kinds of sounds came out to disturb him.

However, these sounds were unable to rattle Long Chen's heart. He was like a passerby, and whether those voices rang out right beside his ear or far off in the distance, he ignored them.

Long Chen knew that the eleventh level was a trial to people's wills. That was precisely what Zhu Yifeng and the other imperial disciples needed the most. But to Long Chen, it posed no difficulty at all.

His heart-devil was still sealed, so his heart was bright and clear without a hint of fear. Perhaps this environment was a terrifying trial for the others, but it didn't affect Long Chen at all.

He then passed the eleventh level and went straight to the twelfth level. From this point on, strange sights also materialized to test him.

Long Chen could vaguely hear his father and mother calling to him. At the same time, he saw various scenes in the Phoenix Cry Empire.

After that, the people that he had slain came back to demand his life in revenge. Some of them even cried and begged him to forgive them.

Long Chen suddenly paused and looked at these images. The formation here could actually peer into his heart and drag out memories hidden within him.

Long Chen smiled slightly, but his eyes welled up. He saw the old man, Qu Jianying, Ling Yunzi, Hu Feng, and the five Sovereigns.

Previously, Long Chen had sealed these memories deep within him, not daring to look through them. But now that they were dragged out by the formation, Long Chen felt a well of emotions surge within him.

If his heart-devil was still present, this would be the most dangerous state for him to be in. But now Long Chen viewed these memories like a diary.

Eventually, Long Chen sighed and continued onward. When he reached the tenth step, another gate appeared.

On the other side of this gate was the thirteenth level. Long Chen had a premonition that this would be the final level.

When Long Chen reached the gate, it slowly lit up and that woman once more appeared. She was wrapped in flames and exuded a sacred aura, illuminating this dark world.

When she materialized, the figures and voices within the darkness all vanished. This world once more became bright.

“Senior has asked me to help you corroborate your heart. That is overestimating me. Your heart is already clear and bright, so there’s no need for me to be so meddlesome. However, since senior has entrusted this task to me, I will ask you a few questions. You cannot take time to consider them and must answer immediately. Can you do that?” asked the woman.

“Senior, please go ahead.”

Long Chen then took a deep breath and became serious. He knew that the dragon expert never did anything superfluous, so there had to be a deeper meaning to this.

Chapter 4015: Passing the Trial

“Why are you not afraid of the dark?” asked the woman.

“Why would I have to be afraid of it?” asked Long Chen.

The woman paused, seemingly not expecting this. She continued, “Why do you like the dark?”

Long Chen didn’t hesitate and directly said, “Because I’m used to the dark. When I was bullied and humiliated without the power to fight back, this world of despair had no pity for me. No one had mercy,

no one helped me, and no one was willing to accompany me. Only the darkness never rejected me. No matter what grievances I had, the darkness was willing to silently listen to my complaints. Even if the entire world abandons me, it will always silently accompany me. It will never reject me. Its arms will always be open to me. When I hadn't set foot onto the path of cultivation, within my world, only the darkness was my friend. In its embrace, I silently wept and nursed my wounds. I only left it when I was strong enough. When I fought until I was covered in wounds, it was my greatest comfort because I knew that it was waiting for me. If it treated me like this, why would I fear it? Why would I not like it?"

The woman continued, "You have experienced darkness and you have experienced light. Which one do you like more?"

"I like them both... and dislike them both," said Long Chen with a bitter smile.

"Then what do you think is the boundary between light and dark?"

"There is no boundary. There is light in darkness, and darkness in light."

"So that's the case."

The woman seemed to comprehend something. She said, "Your principle is correct. This world has no absolute black and no absolute white; there is no absolute good or absolute evil. But you must remember, there is a boundary between them. There is a yardstick to measure right and wrong. That boundary, that yardstick, it is like a judge that can determine right and wrong."

Long Chen asked, "Is that judge really impartial? Who can guarantee that its judgment is correct?"

"That is related to a certain thing, the scales of the heavens. It is the foundation that maintains the balance between the ten thousand Daos and laws. Between black and white, right and wrong, good and evil, movement and stillness, corporeal and incorporeal—between any two opposing forces, there is always a scale as a foundation. To use your human race's principles, it is the principle of the Dao gives birth to one, one births two, two births three, and three births all things. All things in this world both restrain and support each other. Using that as an inference, where there is Yin, there must be Yang. Where there is life, there must be death. Where there is good, there must be evil. Where there is movement, there must be stillness. Where there is purity, there is impurity. However, between Yin and Yang, life and death, good and evil, movement and stillness, purity and impurity, there is a mysterious energy separating them. One and two are diametrical. But with three, one and two began to flow together, and the two kinds of energy formed a cycle. Only then was our world born."

Long Chen was shaken, feeling like a bolt of lightning had just struck his mind. He felt like he was seeing an unprecedented world.

"If it is the scales that are the three, then by mixing two opposite powers, is it possible to possess the power of creation?" asked Long Chen, his voice quivering.

"In principle, that is the case. But in reality... you are overthinking it. The Grand Dao cannot be spoken. Any principles that can be spoken clearly with the mouth are not the true Grand Dao. Thus, the Grand Dao that we speak of is only the ordinary Dao. If the true mysteries of heaven and earth are ever exposed, then either the nine heavens will collapse, or the ten worlds will be reborn."

"Many thanks, senior!"

Long Chen respectfully bowed to this woman. These words had essentially opened a window for Long Chen, letting him see an unknown world.

Now, Long Chen understood why the dragon expert had asked her to enlighten him. Her realm was truly high.

The woman nodded and her body transformed into flames that slowly dissipated. After that, Long Chen simply sat in front of the gate and slowly formed hand seals.

BOOM!

Golden scales covered Long Chen's body, as his blood, qi, and bones ignited. Their power was like erupting volcanoes.

The darkness that had returned to this world once the woman left now went away because of Long Chen.

...

On the tenth level, everyone was taking laborious breaths in the pitch-black world. They felt like their wills were about to crumble.

Within the darkness, countless negative emotions constantly invaded them. All their painful and bitter experiences were shown to them over and over again. It felt like there was an invisible wall in front of them that was blocking their progress.

That wall caused them to despair. Due to it, they couldn't see the light or hope. They could only see despair.

At first, Zhu Yunwen and the others were still encouraging them. Hearing the encouragement from Zhu Yunwen and the others, the imperial disciples were still able to endure.

However, toward the end, other than their own breathing and heartbeats, they couldn't hear anything else. It was as if everyone else was gone, as though they were alone in the abyss of death. They called to the heavens and got no response; they called to the earth but it was silent.

When they reached the last step, the darkness was even stronger. Long Chen hadn't even sensed the change due to how close he felt to the darkness. But everyone else found it difficult to endure. Even Zhu Yunwen and the others were starting to hear voices.

Suddenly, they saw light. Through the cracks in the gate before them, they saw golden light.

"It's Long Chen!"

Yu Qingxuan cried out excitedly. Hearing this, everyone was instantly revitalized. Long Chen was waiting for them up ahead, so victory was in sight.

In an instant, they charged through to the eleventh level. There, they heard various voices, and it wasn't just in their imagination. However, they ignored the voices, focused their minds, and continued toward the light.

BOOM!

Suddenly, there was an explosive sound, causing them all to cry out in alarm. After that, the light vanished and the darkness returned.

At this moment, Long Chen was coughing up blood, and cracks covered his body. Within the darkness, he looked at his own hands and smiled.

“Hehe, I’ve found it. The blood, qi, and bones are corporeal, while the spirit, soul, and will are also corporeal. They are only incorporeal on the outside. The crux of the Dragon Soul Body Forging Art is to balance the corporeal and the incorporeal with the mind. It is the foundation of the scales, the three of the Grand Dao.”

After resting an hour, Long Chen shouted and the golden light once more appeared, exploding out of him. At the same time, a resplendent dragon cry rang throughout the entire Vermilion Bird space.

Long Chen’s dragon scales began to ripple as if they were breathing. Formless spiritual and mental energy then mixed with the power of his flesh and blood, no longer separable.

“Success!” The dragon expert roared in excitement. It was even more excited than Long Chen.

As for Long Chen, the moment he merged his corporeal power with his incorporeal power, he felt his body suddenly swell. It felt like it was about to burst.

“Cloud Dragon Immolation Claw!”

Long Chen let out a roar and slammed his claw at the gate. If he didn’t unleash this power, he would explode.

BOOM!

That giant gate crumbled. The next moment, space twisted and Long Chen and the others appeared in the palace once more.

“We’re... we’re out?!”

Zhu Yunwen and the others almost couldn’t believe their eyes. They had completed the trial by fire.

“Excellent, you’re finally out! Hurry to the battlefield! The Vermilion Bird Empire is in crisis!”

As soon as they appeared, they heard an ancient voice in their minds.

Chapter 4016: Rushing to the Battlefield

Upon hearing this, everyone's heart trembled, and they swiftly set aside their joy at passing the trial. After all, the Vermilion Bird Empire was embroiled in a fierce war.

“Everyone, your servant has been waiting a long time. Please prepare yourselves and hurry to the battlefield!” Just then, Eunuch Wei appeared.

The current Eunuch Wei no longer had any of his previous haughtiness. When he looked at Long Chen, there was even a hint of reverence in his eyes.

“Eunuch Wei, what is the current situation? Where are the emperor and empresses?” asked Yu Qingxuan worriedly.

For them to not be present, along with any other powerful experts, it was clear that the situation was not good.

“The eight empires have launched their attacks, so His Majesty and the empresses have gone to the various battlefields to defend our territories. The situation is critical. I also wished to go to the battlefield, but I am not strong enough to have much use, so I was left here to wait for you,” said Eunuch Wei shamefully.

In truth, Eunuch Wei could be counted as an expert. Although his cultivation base was only in the half-step Divine Venerate realm, due to cutting off a certain thing in his youth, he had refined his qi quite a bit, making him much stronger than the average experts.

However, in front of the princes and princesses, he now appeared miniscule. They had completely transformed, and Eunuch Wei could only look up at them.

“Brother Long, what do you think?” Zhu Yunwen turned to Long Chen.

After this trial, Long Chen had completely won their hearts. They would listen to him.

“Eunuch Wei, tell me the situation. Everyone, rest for two hours. Remember, you only have two hours. Recover all the energy that the little black room took. What awaits us is a true bloody battlefield,” said Long Chen.

Everyone, including Zhu Yunwen, Yu Qianxue, and the others, immediately sat and entered a meditative state. Being in the little black room had severely drained their willpower. Hence, they had to recover that energy, or their power would be greatly affected on the battlefield.

Seeing Zhu Yunwen and the others follow Long Chen’s orders, Eunuch Wei was shaken. As a result, when Long Chen looked at him, his heart trembled and he hastily reported the situation.

The eight empires had originally only surrounded the Vermilion Bird Empire. But fifteen days ago, they suddenly pressed forward, laying siege to the empire’s eight crucial border cities. These cities formed the backbone of the empire’s defenses, and their loss would result in a collapse of the entire defense system, rendering their formations ineffective.

It was because these eight cities were connected to the karmic vein of the Vermilion Bird Empire. If they were destroyed, it would rattle the very foundation of the empire. If the empire’s karmic luck was damaged, then in the future, the Vermilion Bird Empire would definitely decline. Perhaps even without the eight empires attacking, the Vermilion Bird Empire would simply decline on its own, fading away entirely.

The eight armies stood over the cities, each commanded by a three-flower Earth Venerate. To confront such formidable forces, the Vermilion Bird Empire needed experts of equal power. It was evident that this was yet another probing strike, testing the empire’s strength and preparedness.

Hence, the Vermilion Bird Empire had to respond and show their power. Only with enough power could they shake the other side.

Originally, on the surface, the Vermilion Bird Empire only possessed three three-flower Earth Venerates. They were Yu Xiaoyun, Jiang Huixin, and Xu Lanxin.

As the eight empires crossed the border, a surprising turn of events unfolded. Five additional three-flower Earth Venerates emerged from within the Vermilion Bird Empire, and among them was the patriarch of the royal family.

Witnessing the gravity of the situation, the emperor and empresses themselves took up positions to defend the cities, and even the patriarch didn't hesitate to join the defense. It was evident that the Vermilion Bird Empire had mobilized its entire might in response to the imminent threat.

As for the eight empires, their leaders had yet to personally descend upon the battlefield, which showed just how disadvantageous things were for the Vermilion Bird Empire.

The Vermilion Bird Empire had already brought out everything it had, while the eight empires had only brought out a fraction of their forces. From this, it was clear who had the advantage.

Most vexing of all was that countless people inside the empire were fanning the flames, intentionally spreading rumors to disturb the people's hearts, encouraging them to surrender and give up.

During times of crisis, bad people always jumped out first. Those fake scholars in particular finally had a chance to write all kinds of stories and fake news, sowing as many negative emotions as they could.

Most hateful of all, some people even took the lead in carrying out vandalism. With the interior of the empire in chaos and them pressing down from the exterior of the empire, their enemies gradually inched closer and closer to victory.

The Vermilion Bird Empire was like a dam holding back a river, but the rebels were like termites eating away at the dam, leaving giant holes.

Merely three days ago, traitors from within the Vermilion Bird Empire had led small squads from the eight empires through unguarded gaps in the border and infiltrated the empire's territory. With the bulk of the empire's forces stationed at the crucial eight border cities, they couldn't be swiftly redeployed. Thus, they had no choice but to rely on other available forces to handle the invaders who had stealthily sneaked in.

As a result, the Vermilion Bird Empire's forces were split. While they had gathered a force to confront the infiltrators, their plans were leaked, leading to a disastrous outcome. The force meant to counter the invaders fell into an ambush orchestrated by the eight empires' forces. This setback further strained the empire's defense and made it evident that their enemies were skilled in exploiting their vulnerabilities and internal discord.

In just a short three days, thousands of small skirmishes had been fought and the Vermilion Bird Empire had lost hundreds of thousands of experts. When that news was spread, it fanned the flames. It felt like the Vermilion Bird Empire was on the verge of collapse, causing the residents of the empire to panic.

Due to this, a growing number of people revolted and changed sides, exacerbating the turmoil within the Vermilion Bird Empire. In the end, the situation spiraled out of control and no one could stop it.

Hearing Eunuch Wei narrate this, Long Chen nodded. That was about what he had predicted. After all, a battle between empires was different from battles between people.

When it came to wars between empires, it was rarely hatred that drove them. Instead, it was profit. In other words, the eight empires simply wanted to consume the Vermilion Bird Empire for profit.

However, in order to get the greatest profit, they had to lower the costs, and using mental warfare to throw the empire's people into chaos was such an excellent method. As long as the interior crumbled, the eight empires' main forces wouldn't even need to do anything. Just through intimidation, they could take over the Vermilion Bird Empire.

When people couldn't see any hope, they would definitely leave. In the end, all that would be left was the royal family. At that time, they would be cut off from help, and no one would be able to save the empire.

They would either have a deathbed struggle or just dejectedly leave. Even if a battle was unavoidable in the end, with all eight empires joining forces, destroying the royal family would definitely not cost that much.

Wars between empires were sometimes just that simple. Using overwhelming power was the best tactic. To use the old man's words, in front of absolute power, all schemes are meaningless.

At this moment, Yu Qingxuan and the others woke up after two hours of recovery. They were at seventy to eighty percent power.

"Long Chen, let us rush to the battlefield!" said Yu Qingxuan, feeling worried about her parents.

"We will be going to the battlefield. But it is not the Vermilion Bird Empire's battlefield," said Long Chen.

"Then where are we going?" Everyone was startled and confused.

"The Violet Thunderclap Empire. We will destroy their imperial city!" Long Chen smiled sinisterly, declaring his target word by word.

Chapter 4017: Huge Treasure

A giant flying boat slowly flew through the air. At this moment, countless runes flowed on top of the flying boat, reflecting the appearance of the sky.

From the ground, this flying boat was completely invisible. With its slow speed, it made no sound and caused no air currents. Thus, no one would sense its existence.

This was the special invisible flying boat that Guo Ran had made. The first time they reunited again, in order to show off, he directly gave it to Long Chen. But this was Long Chen's first time actually using it.

With it, Long Chen and the others secretly arrived at the border without anyone being the wiser. They avoided the sentries of the Heavenly Ruler Seal Empire and headed directly for the Violet Thunderclap Empire that was behind it.

Originally, Long Chen's plan was to lead them to the eight battlegrounds. However, he then had a thought. Right now, their power was an absolute secret, so why not carry out a surprise raid?

The Vermilion Bird Empire might appear to be in a crisis, but their enemies were mostly only intimidating them. They hadn't reached the point of a bloody clash. If they were to do such a thing, the eight empires would lose many soldiers as well. That wasn't what they wanted.

On the other hand, considering the Vermilion Bird Empire's preparations, for them to be so flustered, it was clear that it was intentional. Thus, he decided to do something big.

As the flying boat slowly flew through the air, everyone took advantage of this time to recuperate. Long Chen himself left the flying boat to Yu Qingxuan to control while he entered his meditation state.

He had reached an initial level of control over the Dragon Soul Body Forging Art. The only problem left was that this technique was not the dragon race's Dragon Blood Body Tempering Art.

After all, there was a large difference between the two. Right now, Long Chen's Dragon Soul Body Forging Art was still in an embryonic form, but it was already very hard to use.

Long Chen had to use his mind to balance his blood, qi, and bones with his spirit, soul, and will. As for the mind, that was what the dragon expert called it, but Long Chen felt that it shouldn't be called that. This power should be called something else, yet he was unable to think of a word for it.

In any case, the foundation of this technique was to balance the corporeal and incorporeal power within someone, producing a more primal force.

Long Chen also didn't know what kind of word to call this force. It was all very profound and mysterious, beyond his current scope of understanding.

Right now, the main problem lay in the fact that after he learned the Dragon Soul Body Forging Art, whenever he summoned the Dragon Blood Battle Armor, it put an extremely heavy strain on his body.

When Long Chen's claw attack shattered the trial gate, endless power also exploded out of his body, leaving him in a weakened state afterward. That was completely different from what he had anticipated.

The Dragon Blood Battle Armor was a state that he could fight in for a long time. But now, he could only use it for one attack. There had to be a problem somewhere.

"Senior, what is going on?" Even after thinking about it for a long time, Long Chen was still lost, so he asked the dragon expert for aid.

The dragon expert seemed to be pondering the question as well, and it eventually said, "I asked the Vermilion Bird expert to give you enlightenment because the Vermilion Bird has a close connection with the human race. It knows how to communicate with the human race. On the other hand, our dragon race relies on our bloodline and memory inheritance for many things. We don't record things on paper or pass things down with word of mouth. Anyway, you've already grasped the right path, so you should figure it out yourself. There are some things that I understand but cannot explain clearly. If I were to try to explain, you might misunderstand. It's like a chicken talking with a duck. It would be troublesome if you were to misunderstand. Since you've already figured out the general embryonic form, you should slowly think it over yourself."

Hearing the explanation, Long Chen thought about it. That was reasonable. The dragon race's inheritances were very simple and crude, completely different from the human race's inheritances. When it came to the Dragon Soul Body Forging Art, the dragon expert's explanation was different from Long Chen's comprehension of the technique in many areas.

If Long Chen one day figured out the complete Dragon Soul Body Forging Art, it would probably have deviated from the original and become its own peerless technique.

Since there was no actual answer, Long Chen could only continue to grope around in the dark. Luckily, after condensing the corporeal and incorporeal power, he quickly found the crux of the problem.

When these two powers merged, they began to clash against each other. As a result, the explosive utilization of these merged forces intensified the clash even further, leading to an even greater percentage of their energies colliding.

"So to put it frankly, this is the result of my scale not being stable enough. I am unable to fully isolate and control the two sides, causing their merger to be chaotic. Although it allows me to unleash explosive power, these two forces end up canceling each other out. But where does that canceled energy go? They should remain in my body, right?"

Long Chen then tried again. To his surprise, he found that when these two powers canceled each other out, they simply vanished, as if something had stolen them away.

"Can power really just vanish like that?"

Long Chen was startled. It was like he was once more a rookie on the Martial Heaven Continent. The dragon expert's Dragon Soul Body Forging Art left him dumbfounded.

When cold ice met red-hot iron, it would become steam. But when Long Chen's powers canceled themselves out, they just silently vanished. There was no reason to speak of.

"Ugh, this is beyond my knowledge." Long Chen was truly befuddled this time. But since he couldn't figure it out, he just stopped thinking about it. He simply worked on increasing his control through the use of this so-called mind aspect.

Through repeated attempts, his control over the different forces gradually grew. It was a simple case of practice makes perfect. Sometimes, there were principles that the mind couldn't understand, but the body would.

In the same vein, this Dragon Soul Body Forging Art had toppled Long Chen's previous understanding of cultivation.

Previously, Long Chen had thought that martial techniques required comprehension first, and only after enlightenment and practice could one truly control a refined technique.

However, now he found that some things were just randomly learned, randomly trained, and then randomly mastered. He himself didn't even know how he had learned this technique.

Hence, Long Chen truly believed the dragon expert when it said that it was unable to explain clearly with words. This technique had opened a door to an unknown world for Long Chen.

Not only did Long Chen gain a deeper understanding of power, but he felt like he saw a multicolored radiance of another world. That radiance was something that he had never encountered before.

"We've arrived at the border of the Violet Thunderclap Empire," whispered Yu Qingxuan. A lightning barrier had appeared in front of them. This was the Violet Thunderclap Empire's city defense. Once they got close, they would immediately be sensed. It was just like the Vermilion Bird Empire's flame barrier.

"Lei Linger!" called out Long Chen.

"Leave it to me!"

Lei Linger's figure appeared. When the flying boat touched the lightning barrier, lightning wrapped around it, causing it to merge into the barrier and pass through without any alarm ringing. They easily slipped their way into the Violet Thunderclap Empire.

"Big brother Long Chen, I can sense that this place has a huge treasure inside!"

As soon as they passed through the barrier, Lei Linger suddenly cried out excitedly.

Chapter 4018: Immemorial Lightning Beast

The Violet Thunderclap Empire was vast, with a long history. In terms of territory, it was actually even larger than the Vermilion Bird Empire.

Moreover, the Violet Thunderclap Empire was the strongest of the empires around. Although they often had conflicts with the Vermilion Bird Empire, they didn't actually border each other. Thus, the Violet Thunderclap Empire chose to join forces with the empires surrounding the Vermilion Bird Empire to put pressure on them.

Regardless of whether they employed brute force or cunning tactics, guided by the Violet Thunderclap Empire, the eight empires relentlessly created obstacles for the Vermilion Bird Empire.

As for the root of the Violet Thunderclap Empire's enmity with the Vermilion Bird Empire, it was a secret. It seemed to relate to some ancient secret, and outsiders didn't know.

In any case, the Violet Thunderclap Empire and the Vermilion Bird Empire had fought for countless years without any true large-scale wars erupting between them.

Thus, no one knew why the Violet Thunderclap Empire's pressure on the Vermilion Bird Empire would suddenly grow increasingly violent over the past few years. As a result, they gradually reached the point of no return.

As the Violet Thunderclap Empire continuously grew, their pressure grew as well. To make things worse, the surrounding empires that could be said to have somewhat friendly relationships with the Vermilion Bird Empire all became allied with the Violet Thunderclap Empire. Even the Heavenly Ruler Seal Empire, which had been saved from crisis several times by the Vermilion Bird Empire, joined the dark side.

The most satirical part of it was that Yu Xiaoyun's ancestor had once saved the Heavenly Ruler Seal Empire from the Violet Thunderclap Empire. The ninety-seventh generation monarch of the Violet

Thunderclap Empire had tried to devour the Heavenly Ruler Seal Empire, only to be stopped by the Vermilion Bird Empire.

However, now, the Heavenly Ruler Seal Empire seemed to have forgotten history and the aid that the Vermilion Bird Empire had given them. They were now the Violet Thunderclap Empire's subordinates, their most loyal dogs that bit at the Vermilion Bird Empire's legs.

When Long Chen and the others snuck their way into the Violet Thunderclap Empire, they found that its cities were more numerous and flourishing than the Vermilion Bird Empire's.

Furthermore, every city emitted divine radiance mixed with thunderforce to form a powerful defense. They were on a tight lockdown.

"What's going on? Do they know that we're here? Why are they prepared for us?" exclaimed Zhu Yifeng.

Even they didn't dare to think that Long Chen would bring them here, so it was inconceivable that their enemies would be prepared for such a thing.

"Impossible. They would never think that we'd sneak attack them. According to what they know, the Vermilion Bird Empire has used up all their power just by defending, and those forces are tied down. There is no force capable of sneak attacking them. Also, the Vermilion Bird Empire wouldn't take the risk of attacking in their critical state, especially when the attackers would have to pass through two barriers to reach this place. They are not prepared for us," said Long Chen.

"But look at them..."

Zhu Yifeng and the others stared at the cities that had rampant thunderforce around them. They could not think of any other reason for this.

"Ignore it. We're still going forward, so maintain your peak condition. Be ready for battle at any moment," said Long Chen.

The flying boat continued to fly forward slowly, and they saw countless cities covered in thunderforce. However, they gradually came to realize that the people inside the cities looked very relaxed. They didn't seem to be wary of an attack.

They also noticed that there seemed to be some kind of specific sequence to the cities. They vaguely sensed some kind of energy flowing beneath the ground.

Those energy fluctuations were small, but they gradually grew as they went deeper into the empire. It was like tiny streams were gathering into a powerful current underground.

After all, Long Chen and the others were moving toward the capital of the Violet Thunderclap Empire. That was precisely where this energy was flowing to.

"Could it be that they're preparing some big move?" wondered Yu Qingxuan.

"That is the most likely case. But we'll only know what it is once we see it," said Long Chen.

Long Chen hadn't expected to inadvertently find such a thing. The only reason that he had chosen the Violet Thunderclap Empire was because Lei Linger possessed two of the Violet Thunderclap Empire's

priceless treasures. With their help, it would be easy to pass through their barriers. Furthermore, with the two of them as probing tools, it would be even easier to get around.

Fortunately, Lei Linger had already nourished both of them with her core energy. Both of them were completely loyal to Lei Linger now.

Long Chen then had Lei Linger summon the two of them and try to communicate with them. He wanted to know more secrets of the Violet Thunderclap Empire.

They told her that the Violet Thunderclap Empire had four national treasures, with the Wild Blade and the lightning tower being two of them.

The others were a bell and a sword, and these four divine weapons were like four keys that could open the seal beneath the Violet Thunderclap Empire.

What lay beneath the seal was a slumbering immemorial lightning beast. The Violet Thunderclap Empire seemed to be attempting to awaken that slumbering beast, but due to lacking two of their national treasures, they needed to borrow other power. Hence, they were using the power of the entire empire to forcibly awaken that beast even without two of the necessary keys.

“Immemorial lightning beast? Is it to counter the Vermilion Bird Empire’s immemorial Vermilion Bird?” Long Chen’s heart shook. He instantly thought of that woman in the Vermilion Bird space.

If that was the case, then this lightning beast had to be an astonishing existence. It had to at least be on the same level as that woman.

Long Chen had sensed that woman’s terrifying pressure, so he knew that she was a legendary existence. In front of her, three-flower Earth Venerates were nothing.

“Then we’ll have to be a bit more careful. No, no. Lei Linger, can we consume this piece of meat?” asked Long Chen.

“I don’t know. But I want those other two divine weapons. With their assistance, we should have a chance,” said Lei Linger.

“Hahaha, good, then let’s go big!” Long Chen laughed excitedly. If Lei Linger could subdue that lightning beast, this war really would be interesting.

The imperial city was covered by a giant lightning whirlpool, which also protected this entire region.

At the center was a pillar of lightning that poured into the vortex, injecting endless power into it. The whirlpool was continuously growing.

“Big brother Long Chen, wait a moment!”

Lei Linger suddenly cried out, so Long Chen hastily stopped the flying boat. After that, Lei Linger formed hand seals, summoning a saber and a lightning tower in her palms.

With a light wave, the Wild Blade and lightning tower vanished. An incense stick’s worth of time later, four figures appeared on Lei Linger’s palms. They were a saber, a sword, a bell, and a tower.

“Success!”

Lei Linger cried out excitedly. She had had the Wild Blade and lightning tower communicate with the other two divine weapons. Unexpectedly, they had succeeded so quickly; it was practically effortless.

Just then, the lightning whirlpool quivered and Long Chen's flying boat instantly vanished, appearing above the nine heavens.

Following that, the flying boat slowly descended through the whirlpool at the center, going against the flow. Lightning then wrapped around the flying boat, concealing it within the current.

This current was overseen by those two divine weapons. Now that they were also Lei Linger's loyal followers, with four divine weapons working together, they easily entered the core of the imperial palace.

When the flying boat was close to the ground, Long Chen's heart shook. He saw a person seated in the air.

"Weng Taibei!"

Long Chen was startled. He hadn't expected Weng Taibei to be personally standing guard over this place.

When Long Chen saw Weng Taibei, Weng Taibei's eyes flew open, his gaze as sharp as a sword. He then looked in Long Chen's direction.

"Not good! We've been noticed!"

Chapter 4019: Lightning Sea Sacrificial Altar

Long Chen and the others' hearts clenched. If they were noticed in this state, wouldn't they be instantly caught like a fish in a net?

However, Weng Taibei simply looked at the pillar of lightning and didn't move. Instead, he took out a formation disc.

"Empire lord, how much longer?" asked an elder beside Weng Taibei. This person was the elder that had accompanied Weng Tianyao to the Vermilion Bird Empire. In other words, it was Weng Tianyao's master.

"The lightning pillar's color has deepened. Things are progressing well. In at most seven days, we can awaken the immemorial lightning beast," said Weng Taibei.

Long Chen and the others instantly relaxed when they heard this. It was fine as long as they weren't noticed.

However, with Weng Taibei staring so intently at the lightning pillar, they didn't dare to move. They just had Lei Linger maintain their disguise.

"Hmph, once the immemorial lightning beast comes out, who will dare to fight us? After so many years of offerings, the immemorial lightning beast can definitely rival the immemorial Vermilion Bird. When all eight empires bring out their immemorial divine beasts, no matter how powerful the Vermilion Bird is, it

still won't be a match for all of them. There's simply no doubt to the Vermilion Bird Empire's destruction," said Weng Tianyao's master darkly.

"However, we cannot be careless. Yu Xiaoyun is just an idiot that we don't need to consider, but his two empresses are crafty and cunning. They're not so easy to deal with. How are things going over there?" asked Weng Taibei.

"Everything is under control. The Vermilion Bird Empire has long since lost their sharpness. Over the past few years, their focus on martial arts declined, and their interior is a mess right now. Also, a portion of their people are on our side, while another portion is just waiting and watching. Our arrangements throughout the Vermilion Bird Empire are essentially complete. We are prepared for everything and just have to take this final step."

Long Chen's heart shook. Yet another grand plot, but he still didn't know what this plot was.

"Good. In any case, just don't be careless," said Weng Taibei.

"Empire lord, we have steadily seized victory. Why are you so cautious?" asked the elder. Weng Taibei seemed particularly careful this time, as if he didn't dare to have anything go the slightest bit off.

Weng Taibei stared at the lightning whirlpool for a long time before finally saying, "I don't know. I keep feeling a bit uneasy, as if some great tribulation is about to descend."

"Empire lord, you're worrying for nothing. Perhaps if our Violet Thunderclap Empire were to challenge the Vermilion Bird Empire alone, we wouldn't know who would win. But with all eight empires joining forces against them, they have no chance. Those empires also know what the consequences of failure are, so they'll definitely bring out their full power. Furthermore, we have so many backup plans. The Vermilion Bird Empire's destruction is set in stone," said the elder.

"I know. However, for some reason, I still feel worried. In any case, we have no other stuff to do at this point. Being careful is nothing bad. Go take a look at the situation in the other empires. You must keep up a tense atmosphere, or they'll start skimping. There can be no slip-ups at this point," ordered Weng Taibei.

"Yes!"

The elder assented and left, but he had a slightly odd expression. He felt like Weng Taibei was overthinking things.

For the eight empires to join forces against the Vermilion Bird Empire, there shouldn't be any suspense at all. If they were too cautious, the other empires might secretly look down on the Violet Thunderclap Empire.

It had to be known that the Violet Thunderclap Empire displayed an even greater force than the Vermilion Bird Empire on the surface. Thus, for Weng Taibei to be so cautious showed that even after joining forces with the other empires, the Violet Thunderclap Empire was still afraid of the Vermilion Bird Empire.

It had to be known that the reason the other seven empires dared to cause trouble for the Vermilion Bird Empire was entirely because of the backing of the Violet Thunderclap Empire. They all thought that the Violet Thunderclap Empire was stronger than the Vermilion Bird Empire.

What Weng Taibei didn't know was that this mission he had entrusted to Weng Tianyao's master was treated as nothing. This elder only took a stroll through the other empires.

At this moment, Weng Taibei stood in the air, personally overseeing things here. When his full attention was no longer focused on the lightning pillar, Lei Linger continued to control the thunderforce and send the flying boat down the stream of lightning.

The flying boat finally reached the ground where an underground palace resided. There was a giant space here, practically as large as the imperial city.

At the core of this space was a giant sacrificial altar with a sword and bell floating beside it. Two empty spots could also be seen there.

Clearly, this spot was jointly controlled by four divine weapons. Two of them had been taken by Lei Linger, leaving only behind the sword and bell.

Endless lightning filled this space, forming a giant sea of lightning with the altar as its center.

On the altar, a sphere of lightning contained a curled-up beast that emitted an immemorial aura.

This beast looked to be some kind of lizard, and its scales were flickering with runes, emitting heaven-shaking power. Even through the lightning sphere, everyone could sense its terrifying power.

"It seems that this is the immemorial lightning beast."

Long Chen was delighted to see it, while Yu Qingxuan and the others were not. This was an existence comparable to the immemorial Vermilion Bird, and the Violet Thunderclap Empire was planning on using it to deal with them.

Furthermore, from what they had heard, the eight empires actually planned to use all their trump cards at once, destroying the Vermilion Bird Empire in one go. They apparently possessed more than one such beast.

Originally, they had been preparing to show their power after coming out of the Vermilion Bird's trial by fire. However, this one beast was like a bucket of cold water over their heads. Now, they felt a chill from the top of their heads to the tips of their toes.

An existence like this was not something that they could fight, causing their high spirits to instantly vanish.

"Lei Linger, what do you think?" asked Long Chen.

Lei Linger eyed the immemorial lightning beast greedily. After that, she formed some hand seals, and the four divine weapon images on her palm constantly revolved. It seemed that she was calculating something.

"Big brother Long Chen, give me some time! I can consume it!" declared Lei Linger.

“Weng Taibei said that it would be done in seven days. Can you do it?”

“Seven days should be enough. Leave it to me!” After saying that, Lei Linger transformed into a lightning dragon and slowly merged into the lightning sea, stealthily getting close to that beast.

While Lei Linger dealt with the immemorial lightning beast, Long Chen had the flying boat follow the guidance of the Wild Blade and the lightning tower to a gate beneath the sea of lightning.

The gate slowly opened. When they saw what was inside, Yu Qingxuan and the others let out startled cries, while Long Chen’s eyes glowed.

“We’ve struck gold!”

Chapter 4020: Blue Flame Voracious Wolf

When the gate opened, what was reflected in everyone’s eyes was an uncountable number of treasures. There were even battleships and war chariots lined up in neat rows.

Behind them was a stack of crystals. Seeing them, Zhu Yunwen and the others’ eyes almost popped out of their sockets.

“Lightning Thunderclap Battleships, Lightning Thunderclap War Chariots, Heavenly Lightning Crystals...!”

Having fought the Violet Thunderclap Empire for countless years, the Vermilion Bird Empire was aware of their strongest instruments of war. Their Lightning Thunderclap Battleships and Lightning Thunderclap War Chariots were not just quick as lightning, but their attacks also contained immense thunderforce. It was almost equivalent to the full-power attack of a Double Supreme Earth Venerate.

Even three-flower Earth Venerates would be in danger against hundreds of these battleships at once. Their killing power was astonishing.

To their surprise, there were over a hundred thousand of them here. When they saw this, Zhu Yunwen and the others’ expressions changed. The Violet Thunderclap Empire had clearly come prepared.

“Destroy them, or they will cause huge damage to the Vermilion Bird Empire!” said Zhu Yifeng quietly.

“Are you a fool? Why destroy them? Why don’t we use them?” demanded Long Chen.

“But the method to use them is a secret of their empire. Only the imperial members of the Violet Thunderclap Empire can use them, and they have spiritual seals on their souls to prevent those secrets from being stolen. We can’t even do a soulsearch,” said Zhu Yunwen.

The Violet Thunderclap Empire’s battleships and war chariots were their instruments of war, and their secrets were tightly locked. Outsiders couldn’t use them.

After fighting them for so many years, the Vermilion Bird Empire had obtained some of their battleships and war chariots, but those things were just collecting dust. No matter how they studied them, they were unable to replicate or control the chariots.

“Can such a minor thing cause any difficulty for us? What do you think these two are for?” Long Chen smiled and pointed at the Wild Blade and lightning tower.

Lei Linger had left the lightning tower and Wild Blade to Long Chen's control. Their souls were shared, so the lightning tower and Wild Blade also viewed Long Chen as their master.

Long Chen pressed his hand on the lightning tower. After that, its light illuminated the battleships and war chariots. A flood of information quickly entered Long Chen's mind.

There was a great deal of information, including the method for creating them, inscribing the runes, and controlling them.

Long Chen's Spiritual Strength then spread, passing this information to everyone. They were all delighted. The secret that they had been unable to uncover for so many years was dealt with in the blink of an eye by Long Chen.

With insiders like the Wild Blade and the lightning tower, there was nothing impossible. Long Chen had everyone divide up the battleships and war chariots.

The energy source for the battleships and war chariots was the Heavenly Lightning Crystals, so they divided the crystals up as well, enough to power chariots and battleships for a long time. This was the stock that the Violet Thunderclap Empire had been accumulating for millions of years.

After dividing up the battleships, war chariots, and Heavenly Lightning Crystals, everyone sent them into their astral spaces. Long Chen was then guided to another treasury by the Wild Blade and lightning tower.

However, what they found inside were items that only lightning attribute experts could use. Alas, the Vermilion Bird Empire's experts were all flame element cultivators, so these things were useless to them.

Long Chen simply tossed all of them into his own pocket. Even if he couldn't use them, he could always sell them for some decent money.

Even after emptying the treasuries, Long Chen wasn't worried about being noticed. After all, the mechanisms here were under the control of the four divine weapons, which belonged to Lei Linger. Thus, Long Chen had the inside scoop that granted him the ability to embezzle all these treasures.

Even if Weng Taibei were to think of checking the treasuries, they could make it so that the runes in charge of opening the gates were broken, stalling him for a while. They wouldn't suspect that someone had stolen them all.

"Now what?" asked Yu Qingxuan after they were done plundering the treasuries.

Originally, Long Chen's plan was to destroy the capital of the Violet Thunderclap Empire. Even with Weng Taibei standing guard over here, Long Chen wasn't discouraged. If they couldn't beat him, they could always run. After all, with so many of them present, Weng Taibei couldn't do anything to them.

However, now the plan had changed. Lei Linger was trying to control that immemorial lightning beast and needed time. They couldn't expose themselves yet.

"Let's take a stroll to the Blue Flame Empire. I heard that their faith divine beast is the Blue Flame Voracious Wolf. I feel like we can try it," said Long Chen.

Of the eight empires, the Blue Flame Empire was the weakest. Just like the Heavenly Ruler Seal Empire, they had once been the Vermilion Bird Empire's little brother. Having offered tribute every year and being very subservient, they were actually akin to a subordinate empire.

Also, due to their faith divine beast being a flame element beast as well, the two empires got along quite well up until the past few years.

Unfortunately, people's hearts were the hardest thing to refine. The Blue Flame Empire had joined forces with the Violet Thunderclap Empire, and a major reason for this was that they wanted to devour the immemorial Vermilion Bird in order to strengthen their Blue Flame Voracious Wolf.

Right now, Lei Linger was taking control of the immemorial lightning beast. If she succeeded, her power would rise to an unbelievable level.

If she could succeed, then Huo Linger could also succeed. Although she had no insider divine weapons that could help her go against the Blue Flame Voracious Wolf, Huo Linger was still stronger than Lei Linger at the moment.

After all, Huo Linger had devoured countless flames, one of them being the rank eight flame on the Heavenly Flame Rankings, the Ice Soul Divine Flame. There were also the Yan Xu Flame, as well as the Moon Flames and Sun Flames in the primal chaos space that she was constantly devouring.

It could be said that the current Lei Linger was the queen of flames. Although the Blue Flame Voracious Wolf was an immemorial divine beast, it was still a heroic spirit just like the immemorial Vermilion Bird. It didn't possess a body of flesh and blood.

Huo Linger would definitely have a high chance of consuming it. Even if she failed, it wouldn't be that bad. But if she succeeded, then when Lei Linger and Huo Linger unleashed the Double Dragon Destruction, it would truly destroy the heavens.

"Can we even sneak into the Blue Flame Empire?" asked Zhu Yifeng.

"As long as you follow me, there's no need to think that much! Let's go play around!"

After Long Chen had everyone get on the flying boat, the Wild Blade and the lightning tower sent them up the lightning stream. They then saw Weng Taibei sitting in the air again.

Weng Taibei once more opened his eyes and looked around suspiciously, but he still didn't notice anything.

Not wasting any time, Long Chen quickly brought them to the border. After crossing it, Long Chen had everyone summon the Lightning Thunderclap Battleships. Just like that, they brazenly flew for the Blue Flame Empire.

They didn't know what Long Chen was doing with this, but since he didn't say, they didn't ask. They just thickened their faces and followed.

The battleships whistled and thundered as they headed straight for the Blue Flame Empire. When they reached the border, Long Chen didn't slow down. He directly barged through their barrier, piercing straight through it. That action shook the entire Blue Flame Empire.

The Lightning Thunderclap Battleships proved to be incredibly fast. The Blue Flame Empire's capital wasn't too far from the border, so before any countermeasure could be enacted, the battleships had already come to a halt directly above the capital. Long Chen then raised his hand, and a fiery lotus bloomed with rapid intensity.

"World Extermination Flame Lotus!"

An enormous flame lotus fell to the ground like a meteorite, crashing into the heart of the capital's formation. Long Chen had unleashed a thunderous attack right from the start.