

Paradise 1671

Chapter 1671: Coming Out Of Closed-Door Cultivation

Lin Huang raised his head and looked toward the deep reaches of space in the Kingdom within him. Two giant spheres hovered in the air there, like two massive eggs suspended in the ocean.

These two spheres were the Kingdoms that had been extracted and refined from the two middle-rank Lords—Black Mountain, and Spy—after Lin Huang had killed them.

Although they were sealed at the moment, the size of both spheres was comparable to a star zone.

They existed in a state like this within Lin Huang's Kingdom and had not yet become a part of it, because Lin Huang had been unable to refine them previously.

Although their wills had been erased, the two Kingdoms were currently ownerless. Lin Huang had been unable to refine them, so he had had no choice but to set them aside for the time being.

However, now that he had elevated to become a Lord, he was fully certain that his current self would not encounter any hindrances when refining middle-rank Lords' God Territories.

He immediately set about the matter with barely any hesitation.

All it took was a mere thought, and endless blood-red Divine Fire seemed to appear out of nowhere. It enveloped the two giant eggs instantly and began the refining process.

Days passed in the virtual realm cabin.

After an indeterminate amount of time, the two Kingdoms were finally fully refined. They then became part of Lin Huang's Kingdom.

Including forty-eight Dao seals from Black Mountain and Spy, three hundred thousand god sequence chains, and a massive number of god rules also became part of Lin Huang's Kingdom.

After successfully refining the two Kingdoms in their entirety, Lin Huang lifted his head once more to gaze at the heavens of his Kingdom.

There were still five hundred and forty-one Dao seal stars there, moving around in disorderly fashion.

Apart from the ones he had obtained from killing Babble's group of lower-rank Lords, there were also those that Lin Huang had extracted and refined from the Kingdoms of the lower-rank Lords he had obtained from trading on Royal's auction.

As his Godly Right could not control Dao seals previously, he had not refined these Dao seals. He could only let them drift around in the starry heavens.

Now, however, he could refine them at last.

Lin Huang summoned up a thought, and blood-red fire blazed up again in the Kingdom, enveloping all of the Dao seal stars that were not under any control.

Time did not exist in the virtual realm cabin; Lin Huang did not know exactly how long this round of refining had taken.

Regardless, after the refinement was complete, the number of Dao seals in his possession had exceeded one thousand four hundred in total.

Including the three Dao seals within his body, he could now invoke over five point five million Dao tattoos (previously it had been god sequence chains.)

The Dao tattoos in Lin Huang's Kingdom had also increased exponentially from the initial fourteen point seventy-one million to eighteen million.

After refining all the Dao seals in his Kingdom, Lin Huang looked at his three Dao seals again.

He took a moment to consider whether or not he should continue consolidating more Dao seals.

After all, for every Dao seal he consolidated, the number of Dao tattoo powers that he could invoke would increase by one million.

However, after some thought, he set that aside for now.

He was not sure if he would attract the attention of the previous being above lord-level if he were to consolidate more Dao seals.

If that entity showed up again, he might not be able to count on a second chance of survival.

After all, the lady who had intervened to save him before was also a being above lord-level. Lin Huang did not think that she would be watching over him constantly and protecting him at all times.

Moreover, he now owed her a considerable favor. It would be embarrassing for him to owe her another one.

Lin Huang abandoned the idea of continuing to consolidate more Dao seals and immediately came out of closed-door cultivation.

He put the virtual realm cabin away and stepped back into the material realm.

After glancing at the barren planet where he was, he summoned the Gate of All Realms again and returned to the Ricky Star.

As soon as he returned to his hotel on the Ricky Star, Lin Huang took out his Royal Token and uploaded the eleven intermediate-grade Dao Weapons onto the auction page.

His conditions for the auction were as follows. "Trading in exchange for middle-rank Lords' God Territories that have fifty seals and above. The more Dao seals, the better. No restrictions on the Dao seal type; Abyssal and Bug Tribe seals are fine as well."

This time, Lin Huang set the duration of the auction for ten days.

For one, the trading conditions he had set out were more exacting. If the duration was too short, the Dao Weapons would not go for a good price.

For another, obtaining the God Territories of Lords was not a matter of urgency for him. At his current level of ability, he was more than able to face down any investigators the Raiders would send. There was no need to be in a hurry to refine more God Territories to advance his abilities.

Lin Huang had a lot of free time in the next few days.

He had already used up whatever resources he could currently utilize. If he wanted to elevate his abilities any further, he had to wait for Royal's auction to end.

Fortunately, there were many trading markets on the Ricky Star and within the Coyne Star Zone. Lin Huang just happened to be able to use them to pass the time.

At his current level of ability and experience, there were far fewer items that caught his interest. Therefore, he browsed more and purchased very little.

After strolling around all sorts of marketplaces for a few days, Lin Huang was finally able to gain new awareness about the pricing of various items.

All along previously, he had busied himself with cultivation and had not actually made a note of what resources he did not need.

Apart from that, he had only just discovered that there were grades of marketplaces in the God Territory.

For instance, heavenly god-level powerhouses would usually shop at Precious Treasure Pavilion's Heavenly Treasure Pavilion.

The Heavenly Treasure Pavilion basically did not sell any items below the level of god sequence relics. Not only that, the quality of all their items was assured. However, item prices were much more expensive compared to the black market. It was normal for some rare items to be priced three to five times higher.

Virtual Gods and True Gods, however, usually shopped at the Precious Treasure Market, which was also a Precious Treasure Pavilion site. This market was almost the size of a town. However, it was rented to various stall owners, and the goods were all provided by the various owners themselves.

It was said that Precious Treasure Pavilion had a Secret Treasure Pavilion that only lord-level powerhouses could enter. Rumor was that the collections were all treasures such as Dao Weapons and the like.

However, Lin Huang had only heard about it; he had never been there either.

Although he was a Lord now, he did not want too many people to know about his abilities.

He was quite interested in the Secret Treasure Pavilion, but he did not think that the items would be anything that Royal would not have.

After all, Royal did have beings above lord-level in their midst; they also had countless Lords under their command. A minor organization like Precious Treasure Pavilion could not compare with that.

For the past few days, Lin Huang had strolled around various markets large and small while waiting patiently for the investigators from the Raiders to arrive.

Unlike his previous state of mind when his abilities were insufficient, now he hoped more and more that they would show up earlier.

The sooner they arrived, the sooner he would be able to resolve the issue.

Furthermore, he hoped that they were more powerful and that there would be more of them.

After all, he was severely lacking in lord-level God Territories.

Moreover, the more powerful the investigators were, the more Dao seals and Dao tattoos he could refine.

As for whether he might be subsequently targeted by even more powerful Raiders from the universe, this no longer mattered to Lin Huang.

This was because as long as he showed his face anywhere, it was just a matter of time before he would be targeted by Raiders.

That is, unless he kept his head down for the rest of his life until he was more powerful than everyone in the Raiders.

Lin Huang felt he could not do that.

By nature, he was not someone who wanted to stand out and was willing to keep a low profile in the process of his development. However, if he were truly to encounter certain situations, he would make a stand if he had to. That was his character.

An example would be now, with the Raiders sending investigators over. Lin Huang could actually flee if he wanted to, but he did not wish to run.

Instead, he chose to work hard to become more powerful, then directly confront his enemy.

Chapter 1672: Wanted by the Whole World?

Lin Huang's wait lasted three days.

At the black market that day, as he was going past a shop that specialized in selling intel, he suddenly saw information on a wanted individual being projected on the shop wall that directly faced the entrance.

"Mission: Manhunt

Target: Lin Huang

Gender: Male

Race: Human

Age: Unknown

Combat Level: Unknown

Target's Information: Joined Death Sickle previously under the identities of Xie Lin and Xiu Mu. His main cultivation path is in sword skills, with a secondary cultivation path in Divine Telekinesis. Carries disguise equipment on his person and could be disguised as anyone of any appearance.

Mission Request: If you see this man, all you have to do is provide his coordinates, and you will get a top-grade god sequence relic or another item of the same value. If any lord-level powerhouses assist in the capture, they will be rewarded with an expert-grade Dao Weapon or another item of the same value.”

...

Remarks: This man’s abilities are not known, but he is extremely dangerous. It is not recommended that cultivators below lord-level confront this individual.”

Apart from this textual information, there were also several holographic projections of his various identities beside it.

Lin Huang could not help raising his brows after he finished reading. ‘The group of investigators has finally shown up.’

He immediately went into the store and asked, pointing at the projection, “Can this mission be taken on by just anyone?”

Before he had arrived for his temporary stay on the Ricky Star, he had disguised himself with a new form. He had also gotten Yang Ling to create a new identity for him so he was not worried that he would be recognized.

“That’s right. Anybody can take up this mission; there aren’t any restrictions,” the female staff responded with a professional smile. Clearly, she did not recognize Lin Huang.

“Alright, I’ll give it a shot.” Lin Huang grinned and scanned the info code at the bottom right corner of the projection. Almost immediately, he received the black market mission that the store had sent.

He made a show of looking around and glanced at some of the other missions.

After listening to almost everyone in the store talking about him, he left the black market unhurriedly.

After returning to the hotel, Lin Huang pulled up the mission information and read it over in detail.

It had to be said that the information the Raiders had on him was quite complete.

Practically all the identities he created since coming to the great world had been exposed. Furthermore, his real identity as Lin Huang and his identity as a human had been revealed as well.

This was not surprising in the least. After all, Spy had done some digging into Lin Huang’s identity before; it would have been very difficult to keep that information concealed from him. From the looks of things now, he must have put Lin Huang’s information on file at the Raiders’ headquarters.

In other words, if Lin Huang used any of these identities—Lin Huang, Xie Lin, Huang Mu (Xiu Mu)—and was discovered by anybody in the black market, they would definitely report him.

After closing the black market mission, Lin Huang checked Death Sickle’s forum.

He logged in with Xiu Mu’s identity using incognito mode, which would not attract any attention. However, if he used his Blood Sickle member authorization, anyone on the system’s backend would be able to see his login status.

He used Xiu Mu's identity because it had Gold Sickle authorization in Death Sickle. This meant he could see more information using that identity.

However, as soon as he logged in, he saw that forum's main page was practically swamped with discussions about him.

There were also all sorts of strange headings.

"Xie Lin, Xiu Mu, can't tell them apart"

"Xiu Mu (Xie Lin)'s true identity exposed"

"Xiu Mu, the human spy who sneaked into the God Territory!"

"A boss is still a boss no matter how many identities he's switched"

"My night with that sleaze Xiu Mu"

...

Lin Huang could not help clicking into a few threads to read the contents. The ones exposing his identity were all wild guesses. There were a few conspiracy theories saying that he was a human spy, but none of them provided a shred of solid evidence—they all insisted on laying the blame for various matters at his door. As for the threads that proclaimed he was a sleaze, Lin Huang did not click into those stories at all. However, he glanced at a few of the posters' accounts. They were all men...

Given the state of the forum, Lin Huang did not even need to think about it to know that everyone from Death Sickle must have seen the manhunt information which listed him as its target.

He clicked into the mission section. As expected, the first mission pinned on top was the mission to hunt him down.

Furthermore, the thread was authorized for public viewing. Even reserve members could see it.

Lin Huang did not think there was anything untoward in Death Sickle posting the mission about the manhunt.

He knew that Death Sickle had had no choice but to do it, under pressure from the Raiders' investigators. If not, they would be destroyed in the investigators' fury.

There would be at least one upper-rank Lord among the investigators; Death Sickle would not be able to contend against this at all.

Death Sickle might have a backer behind the scenes in the universe, but in the great world, it was just a small branch organization without a guardian Lord (Buried Heaven had elevated on his own later on).

If Death Sickle truly did enrage the upper-rank Lord and they were wiped out, at most, the Raiders would compensate their backer in the universe out of courtesy. It was highly unlikely that there would be more serious consequences.

Although he had already faked his death to sever any ties to Death Sickle, the Raiders' investigators most certainly would not allow any possible clues on Death Sickle's end to slip through their hands so easily.

However, Lin Huang did not know how much contact the investigators had had with Death Sickle, or if they had been in touch with Buried Heaven. Given Buried Heaven's character, Lin Huang was rather worried he might bring down trouble upon himself by protecting Lin Huang.

Currently, seeing the mission that Death Sickle had posted actually helped him feel slightly less worried. At the very least, Death Sickle's compromise meant that they had not been wiped out.

After closing Death Sickle's forum, Lin Huang checked out the forums of a few grade-7 organizations by logging in as a guest.

Based on the situation in Death Sickle's forum, any news in the grade-7 organizations should also be accessible to the public.

Just as he expected, the discussions on all the forums of the grade-7 organizations were entirely about him.

Most of the topics were discussions about his identity as a human, while most of the threads had nothing good to say.

Of all the discussions, the ones on God Capital's forum were the worst. It was almost entirely one-sided abuse, using the most derogatory of terms.

After all, God Capital was an organization of pure blood Protoss. They even looked down on those of their own kind who were not of pure blood. Naturally, they looked down on humans even more.

Lin Huang ignored these vituperative threads and looked at the mission section.

The five major grade-7 organizations—the Combat God Temple, God Capital, Precious Treasure Pavilion, Xeno, and Divine Clapnet—had published the mission about the manhunt. Not only that, it was accessible to the general public; even guests could view it.

It was the Combat God Temple and God Capital that puzzled Lin Huang a bit more. One must know that these two grade-7 organizations never accepted external missions. However, not only had they accepted the mission this time, but they had even made the mission public.

Lin Huang then checked on news from the humans' side. It turned out that they were discussing him as well.

The three Saints and seven sects—Daluo Temple, Sanctuary, Leiyin Temple, and the rest— had also posted up the mission about the manhunt. The time of the mission's publication was even several hours earlier than the organizations in the God Territory.

This alone had shown Lin Huang how powerful the Raiders were.

It did not matter if the investigators went door to door requesting the organizations' cooperation, or whatever other reason. All of this was sufficient to prove how afraid of these investigators the organizations in this great world were.

“Just as I expected, force wins the day.” Lin Huang smiled and shook his head.

If this had occurred before he had performed unification and become a Lord, he might have panicked a bit upon seeing this news. After all, the situation made one feel as if the entire world were against them.

However, right now, Lin Huang merely found it amusing.

Chapter 1673: The Arrival Of Unwelcome Guests

The God Territory, Blood Sickle Shelter, Death Sickle’s headquarters.

In the conference room, the expressions of Buried Heaven and the several Blood Sickle members were not very pleasant.

Sitting across from Buried Heaven at the conference table was a red-haired man with a red beard.

He rested both his legs on the table, his upper body practically slouched on the chair. He had a cigarette in his mouth and was blowing a cloud of smoke; his tone of voice sounded rather indifferent.

“I’ll give all of you a bit more time to think over whether or not you want to ask Lin Huang to show himself. However, I suggest that you make up your minds soon, as my partners aren’t going to ask so nicely.”

“Seniors, Lin Huang hasn’t made an appearance since he entered a secret Heavenly God territory as Xiu Mu over two years ago. If not for your mentioning him, we’d have thought all along that he had already died,” one of the Blood Sickle members said, looking helpless.

The red-haired man blew out a puff of smoke and fixed his gaze on Buried Heaven. “Mr. Buried Heaven, I’ve heard that personally, you got on fairly well with Lin Huang, and you took good care of him in the past. Hasn’t he contacted you since then?”

“No,” Buried Heaven responded expressionlessly, “I took good care of him in the past because he had extraordinary talent and incredible potential. I felt he was a worthy young successor and decided to train him up. After he went missing, I tried contacting him, but to no avail, so I just left it at that.

“Anyway, I’ve been busy with pre-unification preparation work for the past two years. I certainly haven’t had time to spare any thoughts for a person who’s most probably dead.”

Buried Heaven’s reply was fully convincing, but the other party clearly did not believe him.

The red-haired man flicked away his cigarette ash and glanced at Buried Heaven. His tone remained casual.

“To be honest, I’m a lazy individual. Whenever I encounter an issue, I always hope to be able to resolve it in the easiest manner. Distinguishing whether a person is lying or not isn’t my strong suit. However, some of my partners specialize in this. I hope that what all of you say remains consistent when they show up. Otherwise, the consequences might be extremely serious.

“Alright. I’ll end my questions here.” The red-haired man glanced at his cigarette, which was already down to its end, and stubbed it into the ashtray. He then lit another cigarette and said rather indistinctly

to Buried Heaven and the rest, “You won’t mind if we borrow your conference room for a moment, will you?”

“Not at all. Please go ahead, seniors,” one of the Blood Sickle members returned immediately.

Just as Buried Heaven and the rest were getting up to leave, they heard the red-haired man’s voice again suddenly.

“Oh yes, later on, when our partners arrive, you can just bring them up here straight away, and that will do.”

After Buried Heaven and the others departed, the only ones left in the meeting room were the red-haired man and two other men seated on his left and right, who had not said much the entire time.

The man on the left was extremely cadaverous, practically skin and bones like a mummy. “The one called Buried Heaven was clearly lying. Why didn’t you detain him directly and force him to contact Lin Huang?”

“If we directly read his memories, perhaps we might find something useful.” The one on the right—a tall, lean individual over three meters tall—nodded as well in agreement.

“Do the two of you really think we can do as we please in the great world just because we’ve applied to Royal for an investigation permit?” The red-haired man glanced casually at the two people on either side of him. “This is Royal’s affiliate territory. Everything we do is constantly under Royal’s surveillance.

“Furthermore, the top organizations of the universe’s affiliated territories are usually under the protection of the organizations in the universe. Judging by how the organizations in this great world are graded, Death Sickle belongs in the top category—they’re a grade-7 organization under Royal’s protection.

“If we want to move against Death Sickle, we must have a solid reason. Otherwise, Royal will very likely intervene.”

The red-haired man took a deep drag of his cigarette, blowing the smoke out after he had finished speaking. “It’s not worth coming into conflict with Royal over something so insignificant.”

“Then what do we do now?” The cadaverous man asked again.

“We wait,” the red-haired man responded simply.

...

Buried Heaven and the rest looked grim as they walked out of the meeting room.

Although this time only three individuals from the universe had come to call, all three were Lords.

Buried Heaven was unable to discern the red-haired leader’s combat strength at all. However, he could clearly sense that the two who hardly spoke were middle-rank Lords.

He was vaguely conscious of the deadly threat emanating from these two myrmidons.

As for the red-haired man, Buried Heaven could only hazard a guess that he was an upper-rank Lord.

The crux of the matter was that more than three of them had arrived in the great world.

Given that the veteran grade-7 organizations like the Combat God Temple and God Capital had posted the orders for Lin Huang's capture under coercion from the red-haired man's partners, Death Sickle had no choice but to post the mission regarding Lin Huang as well.

The red-haired man had made it very clear. If they did not cut ties with Lin Huang now, he could regard Death Sickle as accessories in the death of his Raider partners.

If they could not find Lin Huang, they would have no choice but to take revenge by killing all of his Death Sickle teammates.

No matter how close Buried Heaven was to Lin Huang, he could not sacrifice all of Death Sickle's members just to protect him.

Besides, it was merely posting a manhunt mission. They were not being asked to move against Lin Huang.

It was an expedient compromise.

Buried Heaven believed that Lin Huang would understand their situation if he saw the mission that they had posted.

"What do we do now?" Blood Sickle Gao Ming asked Buried Heaven via voice transmission, his brow furrowed tightly.

Buried Heaven fell silent upon hearing the question.

He did not know what he could do at the moment either. Right now, the only thing he could do was to try his best to keep Lin Huang's hiding place a secret.

He had no idea that Lin Huang's previous hiding place—the Devil Hunter Star Zone—had already been reduced to ruins.

"I think that red-haired fellow isn't lying. His partners are likely to be even more dangerous. As soon as they show up at our headquarters, we might run into even bigger problems," Boundless Blood voiced his concerns from where he was standing when he saw Buried Heaven remaining silent.

"So what you're saying is that we should betray Lin Huang for Death Sickle's sake?" Buried Heaven shot a dismissive glance at Boundless Blood.

All along, he had harbored a deep respect for this senior who had participated in the founding of Death Sickle. However, right now, Buried Heaven felt that Boundless Blood was being selfish.

"Buried Heaven, Senior Boundless Blood definitely doesn't mean that." Beside them, the Nine-tailed Fox Hu Xian'er hurriedly smoothed things over. "I think we should at least discuss a plan on how to respond."

"It doesn't matter what we plan; once we make our move, our odds of winning are zero." Buried Heaven shook his head helplessly.

As a Lord, he was the most capable of intuitively sensing the gap in abilities between himself and the three Raiders.

“What if we collaborate with the Combat God Temple and the other organizations? Wouldn’t that work?” Hu Xian’er followed up with another question.

“Why do you think the Combat God Temple and God Capital made an exception and posted a reward for capturing Lin Huang? Why do you suppose they made the mission public as well? They haven’t made their missions public for a few eras now,” Buried Heaven asked in return.

“Because... they’ve been threatened by these outsiders from the universe?” Hu Xian’er answered rather uncertainly.

“Let me put it this way. That red-haired fellow in the meeting room could easily destroy all the grade-7 organizations in the entire God Territory on his own.” What Buried Heaven said stunned the several Blood Sickle members. For a while, they had no idea what to say.

Right as the atmosphere turned chilly, almost to freezing point, Buried Heaven’s communication ring suddenly began vibrating...

Chapter 1674: Where Are You?

By the time Lin Huang finished perusing one round of information on the internet, the sky was beginning to darken on the Ricky Star.

He thought for a moment, then called Buried Heaven.

When Lin Huang heard the ring tone being cut off before it had even rung halfway, he smiled.

This was because it meant Buried Heaven was still alive.

If the communicator sensed the host’s death, it would be locked and shut down within less than a minute. If one called, they would get a message saying, “The number you have dialed cannot be reached”.

“He ended the call in such a hurry...” Lin Huang raised his eyebrows. “That means the investigators are still at Death Sickle.”

Now that he had ascertained this, Lin Huang composed a message and sent it off.

“If investigators arrive at Death Sickle, just give an honest answer to whatever questions they ask. There’s no need to cover up for me. If they want my contact, just give it to them right away. All of you can’t handle these people from the Raiders. Don’t put up any resistance; let me deal with them...”

...

Buried Heaven merely glanced at the communication page and ended the call immediately.

Beside him, Boundless Blood and the others glimpsed the name of the caller—Xiu Mu!

The atmosphere became even weightier now.

At that moment, a voice suddenly came from in front of them. “Why didn’t you answer the call?”

It was not clear when the red-haired man had shown up in front of them. Smiling, he barred Buried Heaven and the others' way.

Almost at the same time, two figures appeared behind the Blood Sickle members. They were the subordinates who had not spoken at all in the conference room earlier.

Buried Heaven and the few Blood Sickle members looked extremely grim.

However, at that moment, Buried Heaven's ring vibrated again.

The vibration was slightly gentler this time and only sounded once. It was clearly a message notification.

The red-haired man smiled at Buried Heaven. "Take a look and see. Maybe it's Lin Huang?"

Buried Heaven kept his head down and did nothing.

He knew that he would die if he were to attack. He would not be able to escape either, even if he tried.

"Please open your communication page." The red-haired man smiled as he looked at Buried Heaven, his tone still mild. "This isn't a suggestion, by the way."

Buried Heaven knew that he would die if he did not obey the order!

He raised his hand rather stiffly and tapped open the communication page.

A new message notification popped up instantly.

The sender was Xiu Mu!

The entire corridor instantly went silent.

The Blood Sickle members' faces turned ashen when they saw the sender's name.

Even Buried Heaven had some difficulty swallowing.

His mind was rapidly churning as he tried to find a counter-strategy, but nothing occurred to him.

"Ooh, what a coincidence! Isn't this the friend we're looking for?" The red-haired man smiled and walked over to Buried Heaven, then put an arm around his shoulders. "Why are you hesitating? Open it and see what he says. We can read it together."

Feeling the weight on his shoulders, Buried Heaven tapped opened the message helplessly.

The moment the message popped up, everyone focused their eyes on it.

There were only a few short lines in the message. Practically everyone finished reading it almost at once.

After reading the message, Buried Heaven's mind was a tangle of confusion. Since matters had come to this point, he no longer knew what he should do afterward.

The red-haired man next to him patted his shoulder with a smile. "This young fellow is certainly very loyal and self-sacrificing to suggest on his own that you should give him up.

"I think it's not a bad suggestion at all. What about the rest of you?" The red-haired man tilted his head and stared at Buried Heaven.

Buried Heaven kept his head down expressionlessly and did not answer.

Clearly, despite matters coming to this, he was still unwilling to betray Lin Huang.

Observing that Buried Heaven said nothing, the red-haired man kept on smiling.

“Mr. Buried Heaven, Xiu Mu already sent you a message. Isn’t it rather rude not to reply?”

He paused, then shook his head. “You should call him back right away. I think a video call would be even more polite.”

Buried Heaven remained motionless.

He used silence to indicate his defiance.

However, he suddenly felt as if his body had lost control of itself.

His right hand lifted on its own. Not only that, his finger extended and pressed the sender’s name above the message on the communicator display. He then pressed the video call request in a practiced manner...

“You...” Buried Heaven stared at the red-haired man beside him, appalled.

“Since you’re unwilling to betray your friend, I had no choice but to give you a little help.” The red-haired man’s tone remained mild.

...

‘Eh? He’s calling back? Has he found a safe place to talk then?’

Seeing the sudden video call request from Buried Heaven on his communicator, Lin Huang did not give it another thought and accepted the call.

After that, he saw Buried Heaven and another person’s projections appearing simultaneously in front of him.

A red-haired man had his arm around Buried Heaven’s shoulders in what seemed to be a very friendly manner.

However, Lin Huang caught the stiff expression on Buried Heaven’s face at first glance and instantly guessed the red-haired man’s identity.

“If I’m not mistaken, you ought to be one of the Raiders’ investigators?”

“Amazing, Mr. Lin! It seems you’ve guessed my identity with just one look.” The red-haired man gave a thumbs-up sign. “You’re certainly worthy of being the man who destroyed our branch.”

“Let’s talk, shall we,” Lin Huang returned calmly with a smile.

The red-haired man had obviously not expected Lin Huang to be so calm. However, he nodded immediately. “Very well then, let’s talk.”

“How many of you came this time? Can you tell me?” Lin Huang asked, still smiling. His tone sounded as if he were catching up with a friend.

“Are you scouting out the enemy’s position?” The red-haired man asked with a smile.

“I just want to make sure beforehand so I can prevent any fish slipping through the net when the time comes.”

Lin Huang’s reply stunned the red-haired man for a moment. Clearly, he had not anticipated such a reply. He then laughed. “I never thought that you would be such a fascinating person. Since you’re so interested, I can answer your question.

“Nine of us have come this time. Of these nine, three are upper-rank Lords, and six are middle-rank Lords.”

The red-haired man stared at Lin Huang as he was talking, as if he wanted to see the shock on Lin Huang’s face. Unfortunately, from beginning to end, Lin Huang did not display any trace of being disconcerted in the least.

“That’s more or less what I anticipated.” Lin Huang nodded, smiling.

However, Buried Heaven found it hard to stay calm. He had earlier guessed that the red-haired man was an upper-rank Lord, but he had not expected that there would be two more upper-rank Lords on the way.

The Blood Sickle members behind Buried Heaven all displayed shocked expressions. They knew that the red-haired man and the rest were powerful, but they had not expected that there would be upper-rank Lords coming.

“You asked me a question, so now I can ask you a question? It’s only fair this way,” the red-haired man smiled and asked Lin Huang.

“Sure, ask away.” Lin Huang nodded with a smile.

“I want to ask...” The red-haired man continued after a moment, “Where are you right now?”

Buried Heaven’s pupils contracted slightly as soon as this question was asked.

The rest stared fixedly at Lin Huang’s video projection as well.

Chapter 1675: I Can’t Leave A Single One Of You Out

Upon hearing the red-haired man’s question, Lin Huang smiled. “What, you’re so anxious to meet me?”

“That’s right.” The red-haired man was smiling too. “If we don’t meet you, we’d even lose our appetites.”

“It’s not that I can’t tell you where I am.” Lin Huang glanced over the three investigators. “But only three of you are here; it’s no fun with so few of you. I prefer more people to liven things up. We’ll talk about it when the rest of you arrive.”

“You’re not afraid to disclose your location, are you?” The red-haired man said with a smile, trying to provoke Lin Huang.

“I’m just worried that after I kill off the three of you, the other six won’t dare to come here. Since nine of you arrived, I ought to send all nine off together. I can’t leave a single one of you out.”

Buried Heaven and the rest of the Blood Sickle members felt their hearts quake when they heard what Lin Huang said.

They had not expected Lin Huang to be this unyielding when confronted by an upper-rank Lord. What made them speechless was that they felt Lin Huang’s tough attitude did not seem to be an act at all. He genuinely appeared to be that confident.

The red-haired man was furious, but he smiled instead. “You’re the one who said it. I’d like to see if you’ll still dare to share your coordinates once all of us have shown up!”

“Don’t worry, I’m a man of my word,” Lin Huang did not forget to issue a reminder, “Don’t forget to send me a video call request as soon as everyone on your side has arrived.”

As soon as he finished speaking, Lin Huang immediately ended the call. The video projection of him instantly faded.

The red-haired man stared at the spot where the video projection had faded and growled in irritation, “This fellow...”

It had been years since he last lost a verbal fight to anyone. However, in his conversation with Lin Huang this time, he had not managed to get the upper hand at all. Lin Huang had even ended the call before he had, which also made him feel extremely out of sorts.

“Might there be an ambush?” The cadaverous man asked.

“Would an ambush even work? Judging by the entry restrictions Royal has set, this great world has no upper-rank Lords at all. Besides, we have three upper-rank Lords on our side. What’s more, Master Nine Snake is a peak upper-rank Lord. Even if this fellow could get help from hundreds of middle-rank Lords, he won’t be able to turn the tables.” The tall, thin man had full confidence in the team’s abilities. “He was just pretending to be calm earlier in the video call. When all of us have arrived later on, I’m sure he won’t accept the video call request.”

The red-haired man said nothing. However, he clearly felt that Lin Huang was merely putting on an act in the video call earlier. The reason for this was that he could not figure out what sort of methods Lin Huang might be able to use to extricate himself from this situation.

The investigators were not bothered by the fact that Buried Heaven and the rest were right there during their discussion. It seemed that as far as the investigators were concerned, there was no need to conceal anything.

The several Blood Sickle members kept their heads low and pretended not to hear anything. In their hearts, they were silently hoping that this band of murderers would leave Death Sickle as soon as possible.

Buried Heaven, on the other hand, looked depressed. He put himself in Lin Huang’s shoes right now and tried to think of a counter-strategy. However, he could not come up with any way at all to turn things around.

This was a hopeless situation!

He could not help feeling sad for Lin Huang.

“Send word to Nine Snake and the others, and have them come here as soon as they’re done with their missions,” the red-haired man ordered his two subordinates.

He then patted Buried Heaven’s shoulder. “Good job, all of you.”

After that, he headed straight for the conference room where they had been earlier.

The cadaverous man and the tall, thin man immediately followed suit.

...

Lin Huang could not help giving a faint smirk after ending the call.

‘I was originally wondering how to contact all those investigators. I never thought that they would show up at my doorstep on their own.’

Initially, he had only wanted to ascertain the situation with Buried Heaven and Death Sickle. If the opportunity presented itself, he would ask about the investigators’ movements.

He had not expected that there would be investigators standing guard at Death Sickle. What was more, they had used Buried Heaven to contact him.

Not only that, the entire exchange could be considered fairly pleasant.

‘So in that case, after this, where should I set my battlefield?’ Lin Huang tapped open the star map and began choosing suitable battlegrounds.

...

In the evening, a man with snake eyes showed up in the conference room of Death Sickle’s headquarters.

As soon as he arrived, the six remaining people in the conference room immediately came to their feet.

“Master Nine Snake.”

The snake-eyed man nodded slightly, then turned his gaze to the red-haired man. “Scarlet Fox, why don’t you tell me the specifics of the conversation all of you had with Lin Huang.”

The snake-eyed man’s codename was Nine Snake. His position in the Raiders was higher than the other two upper-rank Lords. This was because he was a direct subordinate of the ultimate-rank Lord, Lonely Peak. He had even been called Lonely Peak’s right-hand man.

As for Lonely Peak, he was only half a step away from surpassing lord-level. Among the Raiders, he was one of several Lords with the most potential.

He had already received the message that Scarlet Fox and the others had sent, so he had a rough idea of what had transpired during the video call with Lin Huang.

The red-haired man—Scarlet Fox—nodded and began to recount the conversation he had had with Lin Huang. He did not leave out even the slightest detail.

Scarlet Fox had been dispatched here by Rose. To be exact, he could not be considered Rose's underling; in fact, he was her lover.

Of course, Rose was not his only girlfriend; he had hundreds of other girlfriends and boyfriends.

His tribe was rather unique—they could change their genders whenever necessary.

Nine Snake narrowed his eyes slightly after listening to Scarlet Fox's account of what happened. He directed an inquiry at Scarlet Fox only after falling silent for a moment.

"Do you think he's pretending to be calm, or is he genuinely calm?"

"He didn't look as if he were pretending to be calm, but I think his acting skills are excellent. I couldn't see any flaws, no matter what," Scarlet Fox admitted truthfully after thinking things over for a moment. "However, I did consider things for a good long while. If I were in his place right now, I wouldn't be able to find a way out at all."

Nine Snake turned his gaze to the cadaverous man and the tall man. "What do both of you think?"

"I think he's just putting on a show," the cadaverous man said expressionlessly.

"As far as I'm concerned, he was clearly pretending to be calm," the tall man was even more certain of his answer.

Nine Snake gave a slight nod and did not dwell any further on the matter. He turned his head and looked at the only metal robot present.

This was a bright silver humanoid being. In appearance, he looked like a human formed from metal. His skin, as well as the clothes and shoes on his body, was bright silver like metal.

"Silver, will you be able to pin down his coordinates when we call his number later?"

"Only if the call is answered." Silver's voice sounded like it had been electronically synthesized.

He was a mechanoid. Although he was not from the same Electronic Tribe as Spy, he had taken the initiative to apply for the mission. His purpose for doing so was naturally to obtain Spy's Goldfinger.

As an upper-rank Lord, he was also one of the three investigation team leaders.

"After the call is picked up, how long do you need?" Nine Snake followed up with another question.

"Given the size of this great world, I can lock down his coordinates in five seconds at most. The closer he is, the less time I'll need," Silver answered with complete certainty.

"What if he doesn't pick up?" Nine Snake asked.

"Then there's no way we can locate him," Silver said very frankly.

Nine Snake's expression immediately darkened. "Find a way even if there's none!"

The meeting room instantly went silent.

“Alright, get Buried Heaven in here, and let’s give Lin Huang a video call!”

Chapter 1676: I Don’t Like Meeting Tardy Dates

“I’ll pick this one.”

Lin Huang spent over half an hour before finally deciding on a battleground that he felt was suitable. He immediately felt much happier.

After that, he stepped through the Gate of All Realms.

It was almost an hour or so later before his communicator finally vibrated again.

Lin Huang clicked into the communication page and saw that it was Buried Heaven who had sent the video call request.

The corners of his mouth quirked up slightly, and he clicked on the answer button.

As soon as the video call connected, the red-haired man and the others immediately appeared in the projected image.

The few of them sat around a long table, but Lin Huang did not see Buried Heaven. He was most likely on the other side of the table.

“Good evening, Mr. Lin Huang,” red-haired Scarlet Fox greeted with a smile.

In truth, he was rather confused right now, just like everyone else present. They had thought that Lin Huang most likely would not answer the call. They certainly had not expected him to pick up before the first ring.

As Nine Snake watched the projection of a clearly relaxed Lin Huang, his own expression was obviously rather stiff.

Now that he was seeing Lin Huang for himself, he, too, felt that the other’s ease of manner was not faked.

“It’s noon over here,” Lin Huang responded with a smile, then asked, “Is everyone there?”

“Of course. All nine of us are here.” As he nodded, Scarlet Fox shifted the camera angle slightly to include all nine people in the conference room in the shot.

“You can make good on your promise now, can’t you?” Scarlet Fox asked with a smile. However, up until now, he still did not think that Lin Huang would truthfully disclose his coordinates.

Silver had begun trying to locate Lin Huang as soon as the video call connected.

“Of course. But before that, I need all of you to promise me something.” Lin Huang swept a glance over the nine people in the shot.

Scarlet Fox glanced at Nine Snake when he heard that.

“Go ahead,” Nine Snake said expressionlessly.

“I hope that all nine of you will come together without leaving anyone behind.” Lin Huang stared at Nine Snake, smiling. “Can you do that?”

Nine Snake stared back at Lin Huang and fell silent for a moment before responding, “Very well.”

“In that case, I’ll tell you my coordinates now. Please make careful note of it since I’ll only say it once,” Lin Huang emphasized, smiling. “The Ten Thousand Bug Maze in the Queen Mother Star Zone...”

“Are you messing with us?” Nine Snake’s eyes were cold.

Way before coming here, they had gathered information on this great world, including information from star maps. They had noted down some key landmark regions as well.

The Queen Mother Star Zone was the core star zone of the Bug Tribe’s territory. What was known as the Ten Thousand Bug Maze was actually the Bug Tribe mother hive in this great world. Practically all the Queen Mothers lived there.

By giving this location, Lin Huang clearly intended to make use of the Bug Tribe’s advantage in numbers to deal with his opponents.

Nine Snake was not the only one who thought this; almost all of the investigators at the scene did so as well.

However, right at this point, Lin Huang switched the camera angle to the other side.

Very soon, Nine Snake and the rest saw that Lin Huang was really in a hive.

“I’m definitely not kidding.” Lin Huang switched the camera angle back, smiling as he looked at Nine Snake and the rest.

“Do you think that will stop us ?” Nine Snake remained expressionless.

“I just thought it would be more fun if I chose this place,” Lin Huang answered with a smile.

“I’ll be here for one hour waiting for you. If you don’t make it here within that hour, I’m very sorry, but we’ll have to meet again next time. I’m the sort of person who doesn’t really like meeting tardy dates.

“The countdown starts...” Lin Huang extended his hand and tapped open the timer. He raised his brows at Nine Snake and the rest and pressed the timer button without hesitation. “Now!”

The minute he finished speaking, the video projection in Death Sickle’s conference room instantly vanished.

Only Nine Snake and the others were left, staring at each other.

“What a nasty character.”

Scarlet Fox could not help growling in disgust.

Nine Snake looked at Silver right away. “Have you locked down his coordinates?”

Silver projected the star map at once. A set of red coordinates was blinking on it. The location was right in the Bug Tribe’s territory in the Queen Mother Star Zone.

“So he’s really in the Queen Mother Star Zone!” Scarlet Fox’s eyes widened, and he immediately pulled himself together. “This fellow definitely intends to take advantage of the Bug Tribe’s numbers to drain our Ody!”

Nine Snake looked grim. He turned his head and looked at Buried Heaven. “Get out.”

Buried Heaven stood up and left without hesitation after hearing this.

Although this was Death Sickle’s territory, he felt no sense of security in this conference room.

He was also aware that the affairs of these investigators were not things that he could listen in on. As soon as he heard anything that he should not be privy to, there would only be one end for him—death!

Nine Snake only spoke after he saw Buried Heaven leaving and closing the conference room door.

“I don’t think this affair is as simple as it seems…”

As soon as he said this, everyone in the conference room looked at him.

“He didn’t seem like he was pretending to be at ease. I think there are two possibilities.

“The first is that he doesn’t fear death. Therefore, it doesn’t matter how many of us are here or how powerful we are—it doesn’t bother him at all.

“The other possibility is that he genuinely has a trump card to go up against us. What’s more, he’s very confident that he can kill all of us with it. That’s why he requested that all nine of us show up there, without leaving anyone behind.

“He might be trying to confuse us by choosing the hive for a showdown so he can conceal his true objective.

“Of course, there’s another possibility, which is that he needs the help of the Bug Tribe to unleash the trump card’s effects.”

“Should we change the meeting point, then?” Scarlet Fox asked immediately, “Or else we can just wait for an hour and let him suggest a change of location.”

“He’s not going to let the advantage fall into our hands, so he most certainly won’t agree to our meeting point suggestions.” Nine Snake shook his head, “As for waiting for an hour—if we really do that, I suspect he’ll use even more vicious methods to take revenge. It’s highly likely he might instantly go incommunicado rather than picking another location like we want.

“Our position would be even more passive then. After all, as investigators, our time in this great world is limited.”

“So, what do we do now?” Scarlet Fox asked again.

“We get to the coordinates he’s given as soon as possible.” Nine Snake’s murderous intent flared up instantly. “After that, we join forces to consolidate a battle formation and kill him at once! We won’t give him a chance to attack at all!”

Clearly, he had come up with a strategy. No matter what Lin Huang had up his sleeve, things would be fine as long as they disposed of him fast enough—before he had sufficient time to initiate whatever he had in store.

After all, Lin Huang was someone who was not even lord-level yet. Even if he possessed methods that could kill upper-rank Lords, it was highly unlikely that he would be able to pull them off instantly. He probably needed a certain amount of time to prepare.

Nine Snake and the rest did not have any inkling at all that Lin Huang had already elevated to become a Lord.

“Are all of us really going to go?” Scarlet Fox frowned slightly.

He felt that if Lin Huang truly did possess methods of killing them instantly, they would be going straight to their deaths if all of them went.

“The more people, the more powerful the battle formation,” Nine Snake gave his opinion, “The power of a battle formation created by all nine of us is comparable to that of an ultimate-rank Lord. Even if he does manage to initiate whatever special methods he has, we should be able to handle him.”

Scarlet Fox did not raise any further objections after hearing that.

“Silver, plan the route. We’ll get there as fast as possible!”

Chapter 1677: Dog Eat Dog

After ending the call, Lin Huang’s figure gradually transformed into a Mantis King.

His level of disguise was already no longer mere simple camouflage but a transformation resulting from a card contract.

This sort of transformation allowed him to take on the appearances of all of the Monster Cards he owned. Furthermore, he would also be able to fully inherit all of the relevant Monster Card skills.

The Mantis King that he had currently transformed into was one of his Monster Cards.

As long as he did not remove the disguise, he could maintain it indefinitely, and no one would be able to see through the ruse.

At the very least, lord-level beings would certainly not be able to see through his disguise.

Hiding in the biggest Bug Tribe mother hive in this great world as a Bug King was practically equivalent to being in the safest place in the entire great world.

However, Lin Huang was not concealing himself here for safety.

He knew very well that in this mother hive, be it Queen Mothers or Bug Queens, even their most powerful abilities would not exceed middle-rank lord-level.

It was only a matter of time before Nine Snake and the other two upper-rank Lords would annihilate this hive once they had joined forces. At most, it would only drain a small fraction of their Odyl.

However, as far as Lin Huang was concerned, this was not his goal. It was merely a small supplemental benefit.

Initially, when he had begun choosing battlefields, he had been considering barren regions.

This would allow him to avoid casualties.

In the great world, there were actually quite a few regions that met this condition.

After looking at several of these places, Lin Huang suddenly discovered a region that was in the core zone of the Bug Tribe. It surrounded the Ten Thousand Bug Maze in the Bug Tribe mother hive.

This was an empty zone constructed by the Bug Tribe specifically to protect the mother hive of the Ten Thousand Bug Maze and had been specially cleared out for this purpose.

However, any living beings that dared to enter this empty zone would be surrounded by the Bug Tribe army immediately.

Lin Huang's discovery of this empty zone was what had led him to transfer his sights to the Ten Thousand Bug Maze.

He suddenly felt that his previous way of thinking had been wrong.

The Ten Thousand Bug Maze was clearly a better battlefield.

The Bug Tribe had wreaked havoc in the great world for countless eras. They now occupied a small, distant plot of land and had become one of the most powerful Tribes.

Furthermore, given the Bug Tribe's reproductive ability, this entire great world might have become their empire if not for the fact that various parties had joined forces in eras past to limit the Bug Tribe's numbers through occasional wars.

The Ten Thousand Bug Maze was the largest Bug Tribe hive in the great world.

Throughout the eras, the hive had continued expanding. Currently, it already encompassed more than twenty star zones.

Over 50% of the Bug Tribe in the great world lived in this giant hive. What was more, there were at least ten Bug Tribe Lords guarding it.

Lin Huang had intentionally chosen this place as his battlefield primarily to draw upon the group of Raiders' powers to destroy this hive, thus removing a grave threat to humans in the great world.

Secondly, he could attack without holding back in here and not worry about harming innocents.

Thirdly, killing mass numbers of Bug Tribe monsters would mean he would definitely be able to obtain many complete bug beast Monster Cards and card fragments. He could use these to expand the numbers of his Bug Tribe army.

Fourthly, all of the Bug Tribe Lords that died here would enter the virtual realm. Lin Huang would subsequently be able to harvest another round of benefits there.

This could be considered killing four birds with one stone.

Compared to other barren regions, this was undoubtedly the better battlefield.

Lin Huang, in his Mantis King disguise, hid himself in a bug cave and patiently waited for the Raiders to arrive.

An hour practically flew past just like that.

Just as Lin Huang was about to start his countdown, Nine Snake appeared above the giant hive of the Ten Thousand Bug Maze with the eight investigators.

As they were too quick, the Bug Tribe could not stop them in time.

However, since enemies had appeared right before their eyes, the Bug Tribe responded immediately without hesitation. A massive horde of bugs swarmed furiously at the nine invaders.

Naturally, Nine Snake and the others did not take the bug horde seriously. Only one middle-rank Lord attacked.

It was a white-robed "Priest".

He struck at the air with an open palm.

In an instant, frightening white rays of light like those of an exploding star lit up the entire Ten Thousand Bug Maze.

The swarming bug horde rapidly melted like accumulated snow under a bright sun. Within three seconds, the tens of billions of bugs in the first bug horde wave were completely annihilated.

This was suppression resulting from an absolute gap in abilities.

Naturally, Lin Huang was able to observe everything happening in the outside world using Divine Telekinesis. Even he could not stop nodding as he watched this subduing of the bug horde.

However, the second bug horde wave arrived merely a moment later.

A massive number of bug beasts surged in a frenzy from various hive exits. Almost in the time it took to breathe, hundreds of billions of them had gathered.

This time, the bug hordes were no longer coming at their opponents in a frontal assault. Instead, they swarmed toward the nine Raiders from every direction.

Not only that, the number of bug beasts joining the battle kept on increasing.

This did not surprise Lin Huang at all.

The Bug Tribe was an extremely ferocious Tribe. They would not easily negotiate with their enemies.

What surprised Lin Huang was that Nine Snake and the rest did not seem as if they were intending to negotiate with the Bug Tribe either. Instead, they were planning to die in here with the Bug Tribe.

He realized why after thinking about it carefully for a moment.

The Bug Tribe was inherently enemies with every other Tribe in the universe. The Raiders must have slaughtered countless Bug Tribes in the universe as well.

Now that they had arrived in the great world, the Raiders looked down on these “native” Bug Tribes even more.

Although they knew Lin Huang was merely drawing on the might of the Bug Tribe, the nine Raiders attacked the Bug Tribe without hesitation anyway.

This antagonism was also what Lin Huang was most desirous of seeing.

Like a tsunami, massive numbers of bugs surged from all directions toward the nine Raiders hovering in midair.

Nine Snake and the rest did not panic in the least. The three upper-rank Lords were even calmer; they did not look like they were going to attack at all.

Just a split second before the wave of bugs was about to swamp all nine of them, the white-robed “Priest” took action again.

He tapped the air with a finger. A silver gleam the size of a needle point seemed to slowly drift above their heads. Suddenly, it seemed to freeze in midair.

The next instant, endless silver gleams spread out in all directions. Not a single spot was overlooked.

Wherever the gleams passed through, all the bug beasts were charred to ashes and dissipated in the air...

The silver gleams even found their way through the bug hordes and struck the surface of the Ten Thousand Bug Maze, creating a loud buzzing sound.

Priest smiled faintly. “This hive’s defenses are pretty good.”

“It’s at least as powerful as an intermediate-grade Dao Weapon.” Red-haired Scarlet Fox’s interest seemed to have been piqued. He turned his head and looked at Nine Snake beside him. “Let me have this hive. I’ll trade it with something of the same value.”

Nine Snake did not even look at Scarlet Fox. He merely stared at the hive. “Up to you.”

When Nine Snake said this, disappointment clearly flashed through the eyes of the few middle-rank Lords present.

Within their midst, the white-robed “Priest” betrayed a slight change of expression as well. However, he did not dare to argue with Scarlet Fox over this matter.

He even had some regrets about the words that had slipped out of his mouth earlier. He wondered if Scarlet Fox would have coveted the hive if he had not brought up the power of its defenses.

Naturally, Scarlet Fox noticed all these microexpressions. However, he merely smiled and ignored them.

Chapter 1678: This Ought To Be Fairly Worth Seeing

Lin Huang lay quietly inside a cave deep within the hive, happily using Divine Telekinesis to observe the battle in the outside world.

Since elevating to become a Lord, his Divine Telekinesis strength had broken through to ultimate-rank lord-level. Furthermore, he was only using its sensing function to do peripheral spying, so he did not need to worry about being discovered.

After two rounds of futile attempts, the Bug Tribe still had no intention of negotiating. Instead, they were becoming increasingly frenzied.

Watching the trillions of Bug Tribe fighters swiftly gathering to consolidate a bug formation outside the hive, Lin Huang could more or less understand the Bug Tribe's fury.

This was their stronghold. It was also the temporary dwelling of tens of thousands of Queen Mothers, as well as many Bug Queens that had not yet grown to full maturity.

Any living beings who barged in were not only showing utter disrespect to the Queen Mothers, but they were also an immense threat to the Queen Mothers, the young Bug Queens, and even the future of the entire Bug Tribe.

A hive was sacrosanct to the Bug Tribe. The Ten Thousand Bug Maze was the most sacrosanct of all sacrosanct objects to the Bug Tribe in this great world.

It was understandable that they seemed to have abandoned all reason, wanting to drive out Nine Snake and the others.

Nine Snake and the team had possibly been aware of this since the beginning, so they had not made any overtures to negotiate at all. They did not even bother to explain why they were here.

They were also aware that Lin Huang was certainly secretly watching the drama unfold at the moment. However, they had no choice but to play things according to what Lin Huang had scripted out.

Even as they watched the bug formation consolidating in the air, Nine Snake and the others made no move to stop it in the least.

A one-sided massacre was indeed rather boring. It was much more interesting to see one's opponents struggle on occasion.

With that attitude in mind, Nine Snake and the rest patiently waited for the bug formation to finish consolidating.

The formation created from trillions of bug beasts had Heavenly Gods as its core and True Gods as auxiliary support, consolidating into a gigantic celestial beast.

Its massive size exceeded many of the surrounding stars.

This was a Galactic Titan Bug, a mutated bug from ancient times.

Back in ancient eras, the Galactic Titan Bugs consumed stars, absorbing the metal mines within them to strengthen their bodies.

When they were young, their size could compare to a planet. As they consumed more and more stars, they would continue to increase in size. The biggest ones were comparable to a star zone and consumed star zones as food.

As they looked at the Galactic Titan Bug that had been consolidated from the bug formation, Nine Snake and the rest remained calm.

For a moment, nobody was willing to make a move, even.

Seeing the Galactic Titan Bug charging over like a tank, a muscular brawler finally stepped forward.

He was short, only around one point six meters tall, but his entire body was terrifyingly muscled.

From where he was watching in the distance, Lin Huang felt that the thickness of this fellow's arms might be at least twice the size of his thighs. He thought the man's pectoral muscles were even bigger than his own head.

As for the man's legs, the word 'bucket' was insufficient to describe how thick they were. More precisely, they were as thick as water tanks.

Lin Huang stared at the man's bald head and secretly gave him a nickname—Short, Burly Baldy.

He abbreviated this to Short Baldy.

After Short Baldy walked out, his body swiftly began to crystallize. Instead of transforming into a white crystal, he changed into a red crystal.

He seemed to have been entirely transformed into a short, burly, bald ruby in human form.

He glittered under the light of the nearby stars.

Lin Huang noticed that the crystallization was not just a superficial change on the surface of the man's skin but a transformation of the cells in his body. Every single one of his cells seemed to have transformed into crystalline structures from the inside out.

"He looks pretty tough," Lin Huang commented casually.

The second his body completely crystallized, Short Baldy grinned ferociously. Suddenly he sprang forward to confront the Galactic Titan Bug, throwing a punch.

An instant later, the blood-red crystal fist collided with the Galactic Titan Bug's head.

Boom!

A violent boom shook the entire galaxy, even transcending the restrictions of a vacuum and spreading in all directions.

A second after colliding with that fist, the Galactic Titan Bug's head instantly exploded.

Immediately after, the punch's power continued to spread deep into the formation itself. The Galactic Titan Bug's body rapidly began to disintegrate like the collapse of a large building triggered by building implosion.

That single punch easily tore through the bug formation made up of trillions of bug beasts. More than half the bug beasts were killed or injured.

Nine Snake and the team watched the entire scenario expressionlessly. They did not display any traces of surprise or delight.

It was as if everything went without saying.

Lin Huang, watching the battle from afar, was not surprised at all either.

Although this bug formation was powerful, the consolidated Galactic Titan Bug was only lower-rank lord-level.

However, the short, burly bald man was a bona fide middle-rank Lord as well as a combat cultivator.

It was not surprising that the bug formation had been shattered by a single punch.

“This third round of assault has been countered as well...” Lin Huang was rather curious what the Bug Tribe’s reaction would be next.

Honestly speaking, the Bug Tribe should have had a fairly “accurate” gauge of the abilities of Nine Snake’s team after the three rounds of testing. If nothing else, they could determine that these arrivals had the abilities of at least middle-rank Lords

Logically speaking, at this point, they ought to have abandoned resistance and considered making peace with their opponents instead.

After all, given that all nine arrivals were middle-rank Lords, all these Bug Tribe beasts in the Ten Thousand Bug Maze had no chance of winning at all. This was not yet taking into consideration that there might be beings above middle-rank Lords among these nine.

The problem was that the Bug Tribe could not maintain rationality once someone had laid hands on their sacrosanct object.

Lin Huang felt the situation was hard to predict.

However, a moment later, he witnessed the answer to this question.

A massive number of Bug Tribe beasts swarmed out of the hive. Among them were even ten lower-rank lord-level Bug Queens, as well as a middle-rank lord-level Bug Queen.

Lin Huang was quite surprised to see this battle array.

It had to be said that the number of Lords in the Ten Thousand Bug Maze was indeed frightening. Not only that, this was clearly not everyone in the hive because not a single lord-level Queen Mother had revealed themselves yet.

Lin Huang knew that there was at least one lord-level Queen Mother in the Ten Thousand Bug Maze.

The eleven lord-level Bug Queens immediately gathered, creating a bug formation. One by one, they consolidated into the form of ferocious mutated bugs from the ancient era.

Each bug formation was made up of a lord-level Bug Queen as the core, with tens of billions of Bug Tribe Heavenly Gods and trillions of True Gods as auxiliary support.

Within the time it took to breathe, eleven bug formations had consolidated.

The mutated bugs in the heavens were comparable to a star in size. Their aura was skyrocketing.

The weakest aura was middle-rank lord-level, while the aura of the bug formation created by the most powerful Bug Queen had definitely reached upper-rank lord-level.

The team from the Raiders was clearly stirred when they saw that.

Nine Snake was the only one who remained expressionless. His emotions did not display any changes whatsoever.

“This ought to be fairly worth seeing.”

Deep in the hive, Lin Huang stared with great interest at the battlefield where both parties were. If not for the fact that he was worried the other bug beasts would smell it, he almost felt as if he wanted to bring out the popcorn.

Chapter 1679: What’s the Bug Tribe Best At?

This time around, the Bug Tribe finally began taking things seriously.

Without any further testing of the waters, the eleven lord-level Bug Queens marshaled their bug formations, assembling eleven ancient mutated bugs of various forms in the air.

The mutated bug formed by the leading middle-rank lord-level Bug Queen was a Divine Magic Winged Bug. This was a mutated bug beast that possessed extremely powerful overall abilities back in archaic times past.

It had one hundred and eight pairs of wings, and each wing was a heavyweight killing weapon. Every single scale on the wing surface could transform at will into weapons and defense equipment of all kinds.

Not only did the bug possess powerful attack capabilities, but its speed was also top-notch among monsters of the same level.

The Divine Magic Winged Bug’s one hundred and eight pairs of wings slowly unfurled. After that, it let out a high-pitched shriek.

The shriek was like a bugle sounding the charge. The remaining ten mutated bugs immediately went into battle mode and besieged Nine Snake and the others.

The Raiders did not dare delay their response.

The white-robed Priest and the remaining six middle-rank Lords attacked almost simultaneously, charging at the ten mutated bugs.

However, the three upper-rank Lords—Nine Snake, Scarlet Fox, and Silver—watched quietly from the sidelines and did not attack.

For one, they thought it was not necessary.

For another, they wanted to reserve their Ody to fight Lin Huang later.

On the Bug Tribe's side, the Divine Magic Winged Bug with its upper-rank lord-level combat strength did not attack either.

In reality, the middle-rank lord-level Bug Queen that controlled the bug formations had only sensed Nine Snake and the other two's real combat strength after consolidating the bug formation.

The three of them had not attacked before this, nor had they intentionally released their auras. With the hive in between, the Bug Queen could not sense how unusual these three were.

Not until the bug formations had been consolidated and the hive was no longer separating them did the Bug Queen finally become aware that the sense of danger Nine Snake and the other two gave off was still extremely threatening.

This also made it somewhat reluctant to attack.

The reason was that it knew once it acted, at least one of the three individuals opposite would definitely take a hand. Not only that, there was the worst-case scenario of all three of them joining in the fight together.

The Bug Queen was very much aware of its own abilities. It was not so arrogant as to think it could battle three upper-rank Lords just because it had assembled a bug formation.

The truth was, the three Raiders did not attack because they saw that the Divine Magic Winged Bug across from them had not made a move.

As a spectator of the battle, Lin Huang was actually the most qualified to voice an opinion.

If Nine Snake and the other two fought, this battle would lose all its suspense. It might even be over completely in just a few seconds.

After all, Nine Snake was a peak upper-rank Lord. Once he attacked, he could easily destroy the entire hive on his own.

As for the Divine Magic Winged Bug assembled from the bug formation, the strength of its aura was upper-rank lord-level. However, if someone who had mastered a level-101 Dao seal was an upper-rank Lord, so was someone who had mastered a level-1000 Dao seal. The disparity in ability between the two could almost be considered an insurmountable gap.

Nine Snake was clearly the latter. As for the Divine Magic Winged Bug, it was not that much more powerful than the former.

In terms of the combat strength of the middle-rank Lords in both parties, Lin Huang did not even need to look to know that the Raider team was more powerful.

Although the Bug Tribe had more bug formations, their numbers were far from sufficient to compensate for the disparity in ability.

However, all along, the Bug Tribe's strong suit had never been their abilities. Rather, it was their teamwork in battle.

At least judging by the Bug Tribe's team deployment this time, Lin Huang anticipated that victory would not be so easy for the six Raiders.

Therefore, this round of battle was sure to be interesting.

The battle between both parties swiftly began in the starry heavens outside the Ten Thousand Bug Maze.

As their massive size was not an advantage in this current battle—since this would only result in them become giant targets—the ten mutated bugs consolidated from the bug formations shrank themselves from the size of a planet to the size of a regular bug beast.

The first group of formations spearheading the charge on the frontlines consisted of three heavily armored mutated bugs.

One was a Sacred Beetle that looked as if it were made entirely from gold, one was a Demonic Jumbo Bug that seemed as if it were carved from obsidian, and the last was a Dragon-scaled Beetle with scales that enveloped its entire body.

The second group of formations consisted of three attack-type mutated bugs.

These were a Six-winged Golden Cicada, a Flying Centipede, and a Demonic Armored Mutant.

They were superb fighters in terms of speed and attack capabilities.

The third group of formations was comprised of three control-type mutated bugs.

These three were an Archaic Demon Spider, a Devilish Sonic Cicada, and a Black Abyssal Demon Bug.

The formation bringing up the rear was a Shadow Bug that specialized in stealth attacks.

On the Raiders' side, the short, burly bald man enthusiastically faced down the attack from the three heavy-armored mutated bugs.

The first target he chose was the dazzlingly glittering golden Sacred Beetle that was as tall as himself.

Two golden rays of light collided in the starry heavens.

Just that one collision sent the Sacred Beetle flying backward. However, it was evident that its defenses had not been breached.

However, just as the Sacred Beetle was sent flying, the Six-winged Golden Cicada suddenly attacked. Both its wings stirred in the air, and countless colorless sabers were sent flying at the short, burly bald man.

In a mere instant, tens of thousands of saber gleams shot through the air.

The short, burly bald man was immediately swallowed up in the colorless saber gleams.

The five remaining Raiders made no move to act. They knew how powerful the short, burly bald man's defense capabilities were. The might of the Six-winged Golden Cicada's attack was not enough to breach his defenses at all.

However, a devastating shriek sounded an instant later from where the short, burly bald man was.

Even Nine Snake and the other two upper-rank Lords looked over in his direction with some confusion.

A moment later, Nine Snake looked across the void with his snake eyes. His gaze fell on a mutated bug at the back.

It was the Devilish Sonic Cicada!

At present, a faint light was radiating from its entire body, and it was muttering softly as if it were chanting.

The short, burly bald man's physical defenses were indeed still intact. However, the Devilish Sonic Cicada's mystic tone had infiltrated his mind and was directly attacking his God's soul.

Lin Huang, watching the battle in secret, was able to observe this even more clearly. The Devilish Sonic Cicada was extremely adept at seizing opportunities to attack. It had taken advantage of when the short, burly bald man was defending himself against the saber gleams. The bald man had thought that his opponent's attack would not breach his defenses, so he had relaxed his guard for just an instant.

It had to be said that the Bug Tribe's collaborative efforts were indeed splendid this time.

The remaining five people on the Raider team soon noticed the anomaly.

"Muscle Overlord, you missed this time," the white-robed Priest teased, pointing all ten of his fingers in the air. Countless golden beams of light shot in the Devilish Sonic Cicada's direction like bullets being fired continuously.

In less than the time it took for a breath, the golden beams already numbered over ten thousand themselves.

The white-robed Priest was not only attacking the Devilish Sonic Cicada, but also the nearby Archaic Demon Spider and Black Abyssal Demon Bug.

However, the Demonic Jumbo Bug suddenly let out a high-pitched cry. The sound wave rippled and formed a black mirror in the air, shielding the Devilish Sonic Cicada and the several mutated bugs. It devoured all of the golden beams of light; not a single one escaped.

The white-robed Priest raised his brows when he saw what happened. "This is quite interesting."

At that very moment, a bewitching sound suddenly arose in his head, and his gaze abruptly became vacant.

At the same time, a tall, thin humanoid figure rapidly consolidated within his shadow. An inky-black, sharp arthropod leg stabbed toward the back of the white-robed Priest's head.

An instant before the Priest's head was about to be impaled, the arthropod leg suddenly froze in its tracks.

Blood-red threads wound themselves around the Shadow Bug's body.

The red-robed woman's voice was charming. "I've got you now..."

Before she finished speaking, the body bound by the blood-red threads gradually faded, as if what had been captured earlier was merely a phantom.

The white-robed Priest struggled free from the illusion at the same time. He was panting hard. "Damn it, I nearly failed at something so easy!"

Chapter 1680: This Guy is Really Lucky!

Watching the Bug Tribe's beautifully timed cooperation over and over again, Lin Huang could not help cheering for them.

He suddenly realized that the battle was much more interesting than he had initially anticipated.

On the Bug Tribe's side, there were tanks, strikers, controllers, and even covert killers.

The ten mutated bugs had their own duties. They worked together seamlessly in practically every round of battle. Clearly, they had trained countless times before this.

However, the six individuals on the Raiders' team obviously had no rapport.

Even with the few rescues that had been enacted, Lin Huang could still clearly see how hastily they had been carried out.

If they had been just a second late, the white-robed Priest would have been killed by the Shadow Bug.

Even a layman could tell by a glance that the six of them had definitely never worked together before.

Lin Huang even had some suspicions that among all six, some might have been meeting their partners for the first time because of this mission.

With that in mind, it made total sense that some of them had no sense of rapport at all.

The fight between both sides was still going on in the starry heavens.

Their several embarrassing performances caused the six individuals from the Raiders to begin taking things seriously.

The Bug Tribe's camp, however, was orderly and methodical. They were old hands at working together.

Their plan remained the same—three defense mutated bugs, two assault bugs, and one mobile defense that was ready to take the attacks for the other mutated bugs at all times.

The three high-damage dealing mutated bug strikers attacked in a frenzy as soon as they decided on their target.

The three control-type mutated bugs were ready to take control of the battlefield at any time. They were watching for any chances to create an opportunity for the mutated bug strikers to fight.

As for the Shadow Bug proficient in stealth attacks, it was watching the entire battle situation attentively. It would attack immediately as soon as it found an opportunity to do so.

Whether or not it managed to kill its target, it would slip away immediately after its attack without lingering.

The ten mutated bugs worked together in a practically flawless manner.

Lin Huang could almost imagine the extremely strict training these bug beasts had gone through in private to be able to perform so competently on an actual battlefield.

In comparison, the Raiders' side messed things up completely despite having superior abilities.

As the ten mutated bugs fought steadily, the six middle-rank Lords from the Raider's camp were gradually split up.

The courageous short, burly bald man's heavily muscled, resilient physique was useless at present. As soon as he came back to his senses in the slightest, the Devilish Sonic Cicada and Black Abyssal Demon Bug would take turns to attack his God's soul.

He could only strive to protect his God's soul. He did not have the strength to attack at all.

The white-robed Priest, who possessed the fastest attacking speed, was being targeted by the Shadow Bug. It would attack him whenever it could seize the opportunity to do so; he was completely unable to defend himself against this. The few control-type mutated bugs would attack him once in a while as well.

After almost being killed two or three times in a row by the opportunistic Shadow Bug, his mental state completely went under. He could only unleash less than fifty percent of his ability.

Meanwhile, the red-robed woman who used the blood-red threads had been targeted by the Demonic Armored Mutant. The blood-red threads she unleashed were easily cut through by the Demonic Armored Mutant's blade-like legs.

In addition, the several control-type mutated bugs had been controlling the battlefield, so she was practically being subdued the entire time.

She felt as if the Demonic Armored Mutant was pursuing her to her death.

There was also a plump man who specialized in violent damage dealing, but his defense capabilities were nowhere near those of the short, burly bald man. However, his ability to deal damage as an individual was probably the most powerful of all six Raiders.

He had almost killed the six defense-type mutated bugs in the beginning. However, the Bug Tribe had very soon found a counter-strategy.

The Flying Centipede—the most mobile of the mutant bugs—confronted him, with the Six-winged Golden Cicada acted as auxiliary support and the Archaic Demon Spider controlling from a distance away.

Under the effects of the Flying Centipede's toxin, the plump man's condition very evidently deteriorated. The space between his brows was already gradually beginning to turn jet-black.

Watching the entire battle via Divine Telekinesis, Lin Huang noticed that even the plump man's God's soul had been contaminated by the Flying Centipede's toxin.

However, the plump man himself did not seem to notice this at all. Instead, he continued to deal out massive damage, venting his fury.

Judging by how fast the toxin's contamination was spreading, Lin Huang's best guess was that the plump man could only last for another half an hour at most. After half an hour, even an upper-rank Lord would not be able to be revived.

Lin Huang saw from the surveillance image that the two middle-rank Lords were obviously not in good condition at this point.

From a distance, the Six-winged Golden Cicada's colorless saber gleams targeted the cadaverous man by kiting him. As soon as he went after the Cicada, however, he would inevitably be blocked by the Archaic Demon Spider's spider webs.

His defense capabilities were second only to the short, burly bald man. Therefore, the Bug Tribe's strategy was to restrain him instead of treating him as the main hunting target.

However, the plump man was worn out from the Six-winged Golden Cicada's interference. Not only that, he would occasionally be hampered by spider webs and did not have extra energy at all to go to anyone else's aid

As for the tall, thin man, the situation was worse.

He specialized in God's soul attacks. However, this ability was not very useful when he was faced with the bug formations.

This was because a portion of his God's soul attack was filtered off by the bug formation. The load of attack power that passed through the bug formation would be disseminated among the massive numbers of bugs in the bug formation.

One must know that there were trillions of bug beasts. After the bug formation had filtered the attack and the Bug Queen Lord at the core of the formation had taken the brunt of the impact, the shared load of the God's soul attack that each bug beast bore would be somewhat minimalized.

After sensing his condition, the Bug Tribe immediately put him on the list of those that absolutely had to be killed.

The tall, thin man was the one with the highest rate of interference from the three control-type mutated bugs. Not only that, he was the main target of the Six-winged Golden Cicada's kiting. He was also the Shadow Bug's primary target.

Within just a short few minutes, he almost died several times.

Lin Huang broke out in a cold sweat for the tall, thin man as he watched, giving a running commentary.

"Hey, he hasn't died yet!"

"That still didn't kill him?!"

"This fellow may just have used up a lifetime of luck in this battle."

...

Right as the Shadow Bug ambushed the tall, thin man once more, and Lin Huang felt that he was truly doomed this time, a blood-red electric arc shot into the air, crushing the Shadow Bug's newly consolidated shadowy figure.

It was Scarlet Fox who had attacked.

Unable to restrain himself anymore, the upper-rank Lord had finally been moved to act.

Nine Snake's expression displayed no signs of joy or sadness. Silver, whose whole body seemed to be made of metal, showed no trace of emotion on his face either. However, the irritation on Scarlet Fox's countenance was clear for all to see; he did not conceal it at all.

Scarlet Fox had been annoyed ever since the battle started, and he saw the six Raiders falling into the tempo of battle the Bug Tribe had set. However, since Nine Snake had not said anything, he had forced himself to tolerate things until now.

At this point, he could take it no longer and finally made a move.

This was because he knew the tall, thin man he had brought along would die if he did not do so.

The ten mutated bugs from the Bug Tribe's side swiftly fled the battlefield as soon as Scarlet Fox attacked.

The six disgraced middle-rank Lords from the Raiders' side did not pursue them. Instead, they returned to their camp.

The intervention of an upper-rank Lord was a signal that the fighting was about to escalate.

The warm-up battle had ended, and the second stage was about to begin!

As he watched both sides stop fighting at the same time, Lin Huang felt as if he were left wanting more of that excitement.

"Tsk, tsk. That tall, thin fellow escaped death again. This guy is really lucky!"