

Resonance 341

Chapter 0341: Ji Sun - Complicated

Xu Ling had been crushed, being struck so strongly that he lost consciousness with a single blow, unable to realize the gravity of the situation.

As a result, he could not muster any response to Li Luo's kind words. Perhaps this was for the best as he would definitely suffer more than just a physical injury.

Losing in such a straightforward manner did not indicate that he was weak. Instead, he had been beguiled by Li Luo's mindtrick, convincing him that he was facing an equal opponent. As a result, he had not expected the stark difference in strength. This greenhorn had perhaps just gotten a first taste of what reality was truly like: cold and merciless.

Glancing at the collapsed Xu Ling, he realized that it seemed impossible to kill any of his opponents in the Golden Dragon Dao Fields. The Golden Dragon Secret Keys would naturally protect their holders. This was in line with the bank's motto: harmony breeds wealth. There was no need to create unnecessary disputes resulting from this activity. Furthermore, most of those who were able to enter had backgrounds of significance, so dying here would cause a catastrophe.

Just as Li Luo concluded his battle with frightening haste, the other youth by the name of Guo Xiang had just arrived in front of Lu Qing'er.

With a dashing smile and a gentle tone, he spoke out. "Dear Miss, if you're unable to hold on any longer, please give up quickly. As a gentleman, I will have to oblige."

"I think your teammate is the one that can't hold on any longer," Lu Qing'er icily retorted.

Raising his eyebrow curiously, it suddenly struck him that the other end of the battlefield was eerily silent. The sudden realization frightened him, and he quickly turned to look. Yet he was only greeted with the sight of Li Luo, a face full of smiles as he slowly strode across the snowy plains, shortswords in hand.

Right behind him was Xu Ling lying in a pool of his own blood.

Guo Xiang was taken aback by this development. He was flabbergasted and left in a daze. Hadn't it just been a moment since the fight began? How had Xu Ling already been disposed of?

"Is this brat the one who did it?"

"Isn't he supposed to be a mere Third Pattern?"

"Damn it! Is Xu Ling throwing a tantrum since he couldn't have a round with the girl?"

Whilst Guo Xiang was lost in his own thoughts, a bitter-cold wind was summoned by his opponent. As she struck out with a single palm strike, the frigid air around the hand roiled violently, freezing the air around it.

This attack landed squarely on Guo Xiang's chest, but the result was completely unexpected. Guo Xiang's body disintegrated into numerous snowflakes, fluttering in the sky.

"A snow resonance?"

Lu Qing'er's expression was filled with surprise. Fighting such an opponent in this icy battleground was akin to giving a tiger wings!

Glancing around in every direction, she realized that Guo Xiang's presence had completely vanished. Even his resonant power could not be sensed. Guo Xiang was able to conceal his presence amidst the snow and ice.

Li Luo had leisurely strutted over and arrived with a grin at this point. "Wow, this snow resonance truly is a rare one."

"Do you really think you can hide? Don't forget that there is both ice AND snow here." Lu Qing'er snorted coolly. Ice resonant power surged out of her as she gestured with her glowing hands, summoning the ice all around them.

"Ice Crystal Binding!"

At this moment, countless dust-like ice crystals sparkled and spread outwards with Lu Qing'er as the nexus. A moment later, Li Luo noticed that these ice crystals were congregating at a certain location on his right. Gradually, a human silhouette could be made out.

It was the darned Guo Xiang.

On the other hand, Guo Xiang's expression was ugly as he stared at his body, which was now encrusted with ice crystals. Channeling his own resonant power violently, he managed to swiftly dispel all of the ice crystals.

Even though he had managed to rid himself of this plague, his figure was now clear for all to see. Li Luo cackled as he lunged towards him with his shortswords in hand.

"I need to see for myself just what sort of monster you are!" Guo Xiang's expression changed as he faced the dashing Li Luo. With a snort, all of the resonant power within him exploded outwards as he waved his hands. Snowflakes riddled the sky and air and then coalesced swiftly.

"Tiger-general resonance art, Great Snow Leopard!"

When the snowflakes gathered, they took the shape of a snowy leopard, completely wreathed in frigid air. It immediately pounced towards Li Luo.

Li Luo's expression remained unchanged as he hacked downwards with a simple, fluid motion. Waterlight resonant power enveloped his blades right as he activated his Water Edge Art.

With the Waterlight resonance reaching the seventh-grade, his waterlight resonant power had naturally become even purer, and his overall reserves had also increased. Not only that, a seventh-grade resonance possessed sentience, further aiding the strength of his resonance arts. As a result, his waterlight resonant power had improved not just quantitatively, but qualitatively as well!

Thus, this led to an evolution of the resonance art, which Li Luo happily dubbed the Overpowered Water Edge Art.

It was his favorite resonance art at the moment. Although the grade of the resonance art was not high, it could demonstrate mind-boggling might, way beyond anyone's expectations. Xu Ling had underestimated his Water Edge Art, and as a result, he had been struck down where he stood, even before he could react!

It would be no surprise if Xu Ling became depressed as a result. Looks truly were deceiving. An expert cultivator had been struck down by an unassuming-looking blade!

After all, no one could predict that the fusion of water and light resonances could result in such simple but destructive results.

The Water Edge glinted as it continued to surround the shortsword. Li Luo swept one blade downwards confidently, striking the Snow Leopard. Unsurprisingly, the elemental creature was cleaved into two, exploding into a mass of snowflakes!

Without skipping a beat, he swung his other blade towards Guo Xiang, intending to end things.

Just before the blow was about to land, Guo Xiang suddenly squatted down and started cowering in fear. "Stop! Don't hurt me! I believe you now!"

Weng!

The descending blade stopped a few inches away from him. The series of developments had left Li Luo a little surprised. This brat was truly a genius, knowing when the odds were against him and quickly admitting defeat.

With a chuckle, Li Luo swapped to the flat side of the blade and smacked Guo Xiang's forehead, knocking him unconscious.

"Wow, you're truly impressive. An average Third Pattern can't even hold a candle to you." Lu Qing'er sighed as she observed Li Luo's efficient elimination of foes.

"They're just two minor bandits, that's all. Nothing special about it." He didn't feel particularly accomplished at this achievement. Xu Ling's resonant power felt weak and unstable, and it was likely because he had just entered the Third Pattern Tier. His strength wasn't extraordinary either, his resonance being lower seventh-grade. This was nothing when compared to Li Luo, who had a seventh-grade waterlight resonance and a fifth-grade woodearth resonance. Even without using dual resonances, he was easily able to crush him like a dried twig!

"Let's go and help Qin Zhulu. He must be under significant pressure," Li Luo said. The two quickly turned and quickly made their way towards the icy snow-forest. Berserk clashes of resonant power could be constantly seen as the battle was indubitably more intense.

A moment later, the duo finally arrived on the scene, managing to catch a glimpse of the combatants engaged in a fierce struggle. Wave after wave of resonant power exuded outwards with each clash, devastating and felling the massive trees around them.

Qin Zhulu's eyes were completely crimson at this point, the golden tiger stripes on his body undulating with every strike as though they were constantly absorbing worldly natural energy. His entire body had

swelled several times larger and the heavy spear in his hand was pulsating with a dark-red resonant power. Each blow he delivered was massive and like a peal of thunder as he attacked Ji Sun.

Again and again, the strikes were accompanied by piercing sonic booms, rending both air and snow alike.

Despite being faced with this onslaught, Ji Sun seemed calm as ever, moving rapidly and constantly weaving in and out, dodging and leaving afterimages behind. Only after successfully evading the majority of Zhulu's attacks did he take the opportunity to strike back. Each time the lancet struck out silently like a gust of wind, it left behind a trail of blood in its wake as it effortlessly sliced through flesh.

However, these scratches were of no concern to Qin Zhulu. He retaliated in kind with a heroic offensive, unafraid of death or injury. As a result, this sort of berserk fighting style indirectly restricted Ji Sun, placing him in a situation where he was unable to quickly dispatch his opponent without suffering grievous wounds.

Regardless, if things proceeded the way they had been, Qin Zhulu would eventually be whittled down over time.

Ji Sun was at the First Changing of the Evolving Resonance Tier. When it came to comparing resonant power reserves and quality, he held the upper hand over Qin Zhulu.

Alas, this predictable situation was now plunged into chaos.

Why? Both Qin Zhulu and Ji Sun could sense Li Luo and Lu Qing'er approaching. One was clearly prepared for this outcome, whereas the other was left dumbfounded.

Recognizing the disadvantageous situation, Ji Sun retreated slightly whilst keeping a close look on Li Luo. "Well, well, well. It looks like someone here has been hiding his true strength."

He had originally assumed that the strongest fighter of the group would be the upper eighth-grade Snarling Golden Demon Tiger resonance trash, but it seemed he was mistaken.

Clearly, it was this dog-looking brat that was the most secretive with his strength.

"Thanks to you, I have gotten a taste of how the Xia Kingdom's Golden Dragon Bank carries themselves." Ji Sun laughed coldly.

Li Luo was unconcerned with these meaningless words, quickly retorting, "Sorry, but I have an important question to ask of you."

Unfortunately but not unexpectedly, this was met with an indifferent gaze.

However, Li Luo did not take this to heart, directly pointing at Lu Qing'er.

"Do you know why pies keep falling from the sky wherever she walks?"

1. TN: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5NPBlwQyPWE>

Chapter 0342: Surrounded

As Li Luo's words hung in the air, Lu Qing'er and Qin Zhulu both looked at him, flabbergasted.

Ji Sun narrowed his eyes. "What do you mean?"

"Nothing." Li Luo blinked. "Just a feeling."

"And why would I tell you such a thing?"

"Ah, such uncooperative behavior," Li Luo said regretfully. "The beatings will continue."

Ji Sun sneered at him. "Do your worst, kid. What do you think you can do? You and that weak bunch? Two Third Patterns and one First Pattern!" Although Guo Xiang and Xu Ling had been finished off a lot quicker than he had expected, he was not too worried, since he knew how much weaker they were.

He himself was a third-tier Resonant Master. Li Luo and Qin Zhulu might be big fish in their small ponds, but he was in a different class from them.

He couldn't help but laugh at them.

He simply could not understand. Why would a bunch of scrubs charge him so recklessly?

"Roar!"

Qin Zhulu could no longer hold back his battle will. The invisible dam of control within him burst, orange-gold tiger stripes bursting forth on his skin. His hefty spear led the way like a battering ram charging at Ji Sun. *n/-0ve/bIn*

"I was just toying with you before," Ji Sun sneered. "You really think you can take me on?"

He took half a step back, his lancet flashing in his hand. Green wind gusted around his weapon, then it flew out in a deadly slash that furrowed through the soil as it went.

Dang!

Slash against spear, the resonant powers clashed in a mad spiral that sent the nearby snow flying.

Ting, ting! Tang, tang!

As they fought, currents of wind were building up around Ji Sun, little green swirls that hovered protectively around him like layer upon layer of armor. After a while, it grew dense enough that it hummed around him with the power of a sonic wave. And then, when he clashed against Qin Zhulu, he suddenly shot it all forward. The deadly armor of wind sloughed off him and slashed through Qin Zhulu as quick as lightning.

Deep, bloody wounds riddled his flesh, and the tiger warrior howled. He retreated frantically.

Ji Sun pressed his advantage, matching his opponent's every step. He was relentless, a hurricane bearing down on Qin Zhulu.

But a new person had entered the fray, leaping out from behind Qin Zhulu. Li Luo.

"Hmph. Show me what you've got!" Ji Sun jeered. His wind-power lancet weaved intimidating patterns in the air. Ji Sun charged.

Li Luo's swords glittered with Water Edge. Water on wind.

Tang, tang!

Ji Sun's confidence faded a little from their first clash. He could sense how crisp and pure Li Luo's resonant power was. It was not at all weaker than Qin Zhulu's Snarling Golden Demon Tiger resonance.

"This guy has an eighth-grade water resonance?!" Ji Sun was taken aback. This was a strange squad. Their cultivation levels were weak as hell, yet all of them had high-level resonances. If these two guys were not Third Pattern but Fifth, he probably wouldn't even be able to beat a single one.

As shaken as he was, Ji Sun's hand did not hesitate at all. A flip of his palm sent another attack scything out, again with that deadly hum of sonic-charged power.

But the attack that had left Qin Zhulu wounded was not effective at all. Li Luo's body was covered in a layer of wooden armor that tanked the attacks easily.

"Wood resonant power?!" If he had been surprised before, this time Ji Sun was floored. He stared at the wooden armor on Li Luo's body and wondered if he was dreaming. Why would this guy have two resonant powers?!

Wasn't that the mark of a Duke?

Ji Sun felt befuddled.

BOOM!

His befuddlement was soon knocked right out of his skull by a berserk Qin Zhulu. He fought as if he were demon-possessed, his spear twisting and striking with precision and power. An agile dragon baring its fangs, wielded by an equally supple tiger.

Dang!

Ji Sun parried furiously, almost deafened by the loud and repeated ringing of metal. He was starting to look worried now, as he was forced back step after step.

But before he could say a word, he felt cold frost pooling under his feet.

Lu Qing'er, not far away, was on the move.

She was only a First Pattern, and she was well aware of the gap between herself and Ji Sun. That was why she did not attack directly, instead choosing to reduce Ji Sun's speed through her long-range power.

Ji Sun hurriedly banished her negative buffs, but they took just a moment longer than he had planned for. Another eighth-grade resonance that was just that much harder to deal with.

"What the hell is going on?! Three eighth-grade resonances?!" Ji Sun yelled, outraged. Did it rain ninth-grade spirit liquids in the Xia Kingdom, by any chance?!

By the time he had shrugged free of the frost, Li Luo and Qin Zhulu were upon him again, unleashing a coordinated attack that he did not dare ignore. He tore his eyes away from Lu Qing'er and focused on the two guys in his face.

This two-pronged attack was especially vicious. Two Third Patterns as strong as they were could negate most of the advantage that Ji Sun had. The three were locked in a hair-raising battle.

It was a stalemate full of action, and Ji Sun's heart sank even as he attacked and parried. He knew that the situation was already starting to turn against him.

Although his two opponents were weaker than him in resonant power, they had other tricks up their sleeves. Qin Zhulu's Snarling Golden Demon Tiger resonance enhanced his physical strength, and he had an iron will that made him fight like a freaking robot. Li Luo was even worse. His water resonant power was incredibly pure, and he also had a wood resonance to complement it.

All he had was a cultivation level advantage.

But from the way they were dealing with his attacks, the situation was already clearly out of hand.

Moreover, there was an eighth-grade ice resonance girl running interference at every turn, negating the speed advantage that his wind resonance should have gifted him.

His legs were on the verge of giving out, and so was he. Ji Sun despaired. He had looked at this sitting-duck team as heaven's gift to him. But now he saw that they were actually elite ducks.

Well, when the going got tough!

With a ferocious swing of his weapon, Ji Sun sent both Li Luo and Qin Zhulu flying back, then he disengaged and ran away.

Shoop!

A tree root snaked out like a python, coiling itself around both his feet. He tripped and went down.

As he struggled fruitlessly, two short swords and a spear tip ended up at his neck.

Ji Sun was completely trussed up, and he could barely cock his head to look at Li Luo and Qin Zhulu.

Li Luo squatted down and patted him kindly on the head.

"And now, friend, can we have a good chat?"

Chapter 0343: Golden Dragon Qi

With Li Luo happily patting his head, Ji Sun was so infuriated, his veins could be seen throbbing on his head. Directing a dark stare at Li Luo, he finally decided to speak. "Who would have expected that I, the great Ji Sun, would have my aspirations sunk due to an unseen ditch!"

"Huh? What do you mean 'unseen ditch?' We're clearly a huge river! Are you blind?" *nøVE-1b(1n*

Ji Sun snorted and couldn't be bothered to argue any further. "So what if you won? Do you think this is over? Your troubles have only just begun!"

Li Luo gave him a meaningful look, but he also had a grin on his face. "So you DO know something... Friend, why don't you explain further?"

Ji Sun remained as indignant as ever, refusing to even catch his eye. "Who do you think you are? What should I tell you? It's not like you can kill me!"

"Why don't you help a friend in need? There's no need to make things difficult. Can't we settle this harmoniously?" Li Luo sighed as he stroked his chin.

His invitation was met with a cold harrumph and a lack of a response.

As though part of a prearranged play, Qin Zhulu's gaze turned a little fiendish. "Let's break his arms and legs first, perhaps he might want to loosen his lips then."

"What an ignoramus. So long as I receive a serious injury, I will immediately be placed in a state of suspended animation. I might be considered eliminated, but you definitely won't be able to harm me."

Hearing his disdainful reply, Qin Zhulu was absolutely seething with fury. This dogshit Golden Dragon Dao Fields was such a pain! All the participants were too well-protected. How could this be fun?

Li Luo grabbed Qin Zhulu. "Now, now, there's no need to be so rude. What's wrong with you? Why are you always trying to beat people up on a whim, or worse still, kill them! Anyway, I saw some Amorous Blossoms on the way here. Why don't you find them and feed him some?"

"Amorous Blossom?" Qin Zhulu was left in a daze upon hearing this idea. This was a herb that spirit beasts liked to chew on when it was mating season as it aided them into heat.

Lu Qing'er blushed and bit the corner of her mouth upon hearing this diabolical idea.

Ji Sun's stoic expression finally softened up as he shouted, "What are you trying to do?"

"Hey, don't worry. We won't harm you. After we feed you some Amorous Blossoms, I will find you a spirit beast for a companion. Don't worry, don't worry... I'll do my best to find a female one!" Li Luo consoled

Ji Sun's face turned green. Damn it! What did he mean by trying to find a female spirit beast for him?

"Damn it! You won't have a good death!" Ji Sun swore. This bastard was too much—nothing was too low for him!

"I'll give you three seconds to decide." Li Luo smirked as he raised his fingers.

"One."

"Brother... Please! Just ask away!" Before Li Luo counted to two, Ji Sun quickly spoke out with utmost sincerity.

At the sight of this change of heart, Qin Zhulu scolded, "How lowly!"

This worm wasn't worried about his bones being broken and seemed so determined to take the secret to the grave. Yet upon hearing Li Luo's wondrous idea to feed him an Amorous Blossom and trap him with a spirit beast, he lost all sense of dignity and even tried to forge rapport with Li Luo by addressing him as "brother!" The world truly was pragmatic!

Ji Sun's expression seemed a little forced, but he no longer bothered with Qin Zhulu. He had wanted to resist further, but this bastard had no qualms with taking things to the extreme! One would prefer to be grievously injured than be subject to Li Luo's imaginative ideas! At least physical injuries could be cured. Maladies of the mind were a different sort altogether.

With a beaming smile on his face, Li Luo nodded in agreement. "Friend, you truly are an outstanding talent even amongst peers! Perhaps you might want to explain just what is happening?"

Even Lu Qing'er looked over. Anyone would be curious as to why they were so lucky.

Ji Sun glanced at Lu Qing'er briefly before speaking dejectedly. "Am I right to say that this girl here is from the Golden Dragon Bank?"

Li Luo nodded simply.

"Then how did none of you do your homework on the Golden Dragon Dao Fields? You should have been able to guess the reason why."

Li Luo and Qin Zhulu were not from the Golden Dragon Bank and hence were definitely not privy to the secrets of the Golden Dragon Dao Fields.

At this point, Lu Qing'er's turned a little red in embarrassment. She was only here to gallivant and sightsee amongst the fields! Why would she do any homework? This Ji Sun was truly hateful, touching upon her sore spot. She truly wanted to freeze his mouth shut at this point.

"If I'm not wrong, she is exuding Golden Dragon Qi," Ji Sun explained as he stared at Lu Qing'er with unconcealed envy.

"Golden Dragon Qi?" Li Luo asked, his eyebrow lifted in interest.

"Simply put, when she entered the Golden Dragon Dao Fields, she could have formed a resonance with the space, or maybe she possesses a high degree of affinity with this place. As a result, a trace of Golden Dragon Qi must have itself attached to her. You can think of this ephemeral qi as a blessing, providing all sorts of lucky encounters to the individual. Although it has no effect outside of the dao fields, it is a separate matter altogether within the dao fields. She will become a lucky star—wherever she goes, fortune will follow. Any natural or rare treasure will fall into her hands," Ji Sun explained.

"Someone attracting Golden Dragon Qi is rare but not impossible. However, this is the first time I've seen it in person."

Lu Qing'er, Li Luo, and Qin Zhulu exchanged glances. The Golden Dragon Dao Fields were truly mysterious, able to create such strange miracles.

Simply put, Lu Qing'er was now a beacon of fortune. Anywhere she chose to go would inevitably cause treasures to fall into her lap.

Li Luo paused and muttered something to himself. Instead of excitement, his eyebrows furrowed into a frown. This Golden Dragon Qi might bring numerous benefits, but in this world, having too much treasure was a crime if they could not protect it! It would attract unwanted attention.

Furthermore, the strength of their group was not top-tier in the Golden Dragon Dao Fields. If they caught the eye of covetous leeches, it would be practically impossible to defend themselves.

At that point in time, the stronger groups might even capture Lu Qing'er and turn her into a treasure-seeking compass!

Being forced into such a role would inevitably be a terrible experience.

Lu Qing'er evidently came to the same conclusion as her expression darkened.

Qin Zhulu did not comment either. Although his personality made him yearn for opportunities to engage in exhilarating combat, the one who would be the focus of attention would be Lu Qing'er and not him. Thus, he would not get the chance he desired.

Lu Qing'er took the initiative to suggest, "Why don't we hide here for a bit?"

"So long as my Golden Dragon Qi is not exposed, it should not lead to any further trouble..."

Li Luo stopped to consider. Temporarily taking a strategic halt would be a good idea. They could take the opportunity to understand how the Golden Dragon Qi worked and could then take precautions to prevent it from being revealed. At that point, they would be safer.

It was then where he noticed that Ji Sun was looking at him with a strange expression. As though remembering something, Li Luo felt as though he was struck by a bolt of lightning. He slowly turned to face him and asked in the most polite of tones, "Hello, friend. By any chance, did you happen to spread news of this?"

Ji Sun gave a forced smile. "Of course not."

Leering at him for a couple of seconds, Li Luo cautiously asked, "It looks like our dear friend here wants to have a taste of the Amorous Blossom..."

Ji Sun's expression changed in fright, hurriedly returning to his previous honest and sincere appearance. "Actually... When I was tailing you in secret, I wanted to be cautious in dealing with your team. Thus, I captured all three of your appearances and wrote down the news of the Golden Dragon Qi into the Polar Wolf Kingdom's Flying Wasp Scroll. I sent it to another group from my kingdom..."

The atmosphere immediately turned heavy as Li Luo and Lu Qing'er glared at him with unkind gazes.

Unable to control himself, Li Luo scolded, "Is there something wrong with you? You had such a wonderful opportunity to yourself, but you decided to share it with another group? Jeez!"

"Well the other group leader is my close brother... If something unexpected did happen to me, then this lucky break could then be secured by them... Why would we let outsiders benefit from this?"

Damn him and his generosity! What nonsense was he babbling about, preventing outsiders from benefiting!?

Li Luo viciously glared at Ji Sun right at this juncture.

Ji Sun could feel a chill go down his spine. "Friend... Please honor your words. Please don't give up on your humanity..."

Gritting his teeth and holding down a belly full of fury, Li Luo waved his hand.

"Drag those two other buggers over and let's send all three of them on their way!"

Chapter 0344: Luck

Golden smoke gradually rose in a spiral into the sky. Ji Sun and his two friends were then enshrouded by the smoke as space twisted, warping them away without a trace remaining.

The void shattered at this point, and ten pieces of dao-gold landed on the ground.

Li Luo leaned down to pick up the dao-gold and heaved a sigh.

"So what do we do now?" Qin Zhulu asked as he cleaned his heavy spear.

"What else can we do? Let's get rid of the other group from the Polar Wolf Kingdom; otherwise, we will always have a sword hanging over our heads. The only bright side is that this experience has taught us the importance of hiding the presence of the Golden Dragon Qi. We can't be careless anymore," Li Luo declared.

From Ji Sun's words, the other group from Polar Wolf Kingdom were roughly as strong as his group. If they were well prepared, they would definitely be able to swallow them whole.

Additionally, once the other group received the news, they would most likely rush over at full speed. Hence, they just had to wait for the right opportunity to strike.

Lu Qing'er lightly nodded as she apologetically said, "I thought this would be free and easy. It looks like I've attracted quite some trouble."

"Don't say that! We're all here just to muck around. This doesn't even count as a problem. The group from the Polar Wolf Kingdom just happened to be in the vicinity, and once they're dealt with, we can keep a much lower profile. This way no one will pay attention to us," Li Luo consoled as he waved his hand, revealing a dashing and confident smile.

"Trust me, good-looking people can't possibly have bad luck!"

...

Bang!

Meanwhile in a mountain forest elsewhere... Berserk resonant power exploded forth in clash after clash. Fiery-red resonant power swept across like a tidal wave of flames, and all the trees that it passed through were turned to ashes.

Within the depths of the dark forest were two figures who had fallen to the ground, cutting a sorry picture. Both were drenched in blood as they stared at a figure walking towards them, out of the smoke, with utmost horror. *noVE-1b(1n*

This figure was a bare-handed youth. The most striking thing about him was that each of his fists were enveloped by a mantle of dark scarlet resonant power. It looked almost like hot magma flowing over his fists, exuding a tyrannical and extremely sweltering aura. [1]

At this juncture, the two miserable-looking individuals were glaring at the youth with both fear and fury. "Don't overdo it, Zhao Ziyang. We never bothered you, so why did you suddenly act out against us?"

The youth grinned confidently. "Well, maybe it's just that... I don't like looking at your faces?"

The answer was clearly not what the duo was expecting. It was frustrating and caused them to feel even more indignant. This Zhao Ziyang was from the Iron Sand Empire, possessing an eighth-grade Lava Resonance. He had also reached the Second Changing of the Evolving Resonance Tier. In the Golden Dragon Dao Fields, someone of his caliber could be considered one of the strongest. [2]

Based on their intel, Zhao Ziyang was on the list of individuals they should never aggravate, lest suffer the consequences.

Despite feeling outraged, the two swallowed down their fury. "Sir... if we have offended you in any way, do let us know and we will definitely apologize..."

"Hmm? I heard that you were rushing somewhere, talking about some sort of good luck and treasure?" Zhao Ziyang cut straight to the chase with a smile.

Without skipping a beat, the duo immediately gave forced smiles. "You must have misheard, good sir."

Zhao Ziyang continued to grin as he walked towards the two, knocking them out with a single kick each. After which, he reached a hand out and began to search their bodies. Not long after, he fished out a small bamboo tube. He opened it, and a piece of paper was revealed.

Looking closely at the piece of paper, his gaze gradually softened into crescents as he beamed radiantly.

"So it looks like someone actually possesses Golden Dragon Qi..."

A look of interest arose in Zhao Ziyang's eyes. Luckily for him, this piece of paper also contained a significant amount of detail and information, including the location and the appearances of the group that possessed the Golden Dragon Qi.

At this point, the sound of wind splitting could be heard, and two shadows flashed beside him.

"He's gone. That captain of theirs sure knows how to run," one of the new guys said slightly helplessly.

Zhao Ziyang casually replied, "Just a rat, that's all. No need to be concerned. Crucial intel has already fallen into my hands."

After which, he passed the paper to his teammates. The two quickly screened through the information before revealing looks of utter surprise. "Golden Dragon Qi? This is a walking gold mine! If we can capture her, won't we have more dao-gold than we can spend?" Zhao Ziyang nodded as he smiled like a cat with cheese.

"Let's go. This information came at the right time. The early bird catches the worm, and we're the early ones now."

"What about these two fools?" The other teammate pointed at the unconscious duo that Zhao Ziyang had helpfully handled.

"Offer them up." Zhao Ziyang waved his hands as he strode out of the forest.

Nodding in agreement, the two spent some time to burn golden incense and eventually received a few pieces of dao-gold before hurriedly rushing to catch up.

Not long after the trio left, a ripple of resonant power could be seen where they last were. A single figure descended from the sky into the charred clearing. His expression was gloomy-green as a look full of fury glanced in the direction Zhao Ziyang had gone toward.

This was the team leader of the two that had been offered by incense.

He was the individual Ji Sun had contacted regarding the news, a member of the Polar Wolf Kingdom.

Ji Sun had never expected his friends to encounter such rotten luck. After receiving news of a windfall, they were determined to rush over and claim their due prize. However, it was beyond anyone's imagination that they would encounter Zhao Ziyang's team, and even worse, have him overhear their conversation...

This was some damned unfortunate luck indeed!

All of his teammates had now been eliminated, leaving him to fend for himself. Wanting to achieve any form of good result would be impossible now, much less struggle to obtain the Golden Dragon Qi.

The news had already been discovered by Zhao Ziyang, and if he went alone, it would be akin to walking into the jaws of a lion, offering himself up as dao-gold.

Resentment coursed through him at the thought of his reward being snatched away. He was unwilling to let this bastard off so easily after taking advantage of him!

At this moment, a trace of cruel enlightenment could be seen in his eyes. Well, if someone wanted to steal his bone, even if he couldn't win, he wouldn't give him an easy time!

He had decided that he would spread news of the Golden Dragon Qi far and wide, and all the groups would inevitably be attracted by this. Although he couldn't beat Zhao Ziyang, there were a hundred other ways he could cause him endless misery. The other top teams would do that for him.

"Zhao Ziyang, you damned monster! Just you wait!" Furiously exhaling, the captain turned around to leave.

...

Snowy Mountain Range

Li Luo and friends were currently on top of a mountain, utilizing the white snow to camouflage and hide their presence. Meanwhile, they were laser-focused on observing the vicinity with their advantageous highground.

They had already been waiting for at least half a day.

Once the Polar Wolf Kingdom team arrived, they would quickly destroy them and leave!

"This group from the Polar Wolf Kingdom are such slowpokes! If they move this slowly, there'll be nothing left for them!" The frigid temperature was causing Li Luo to sneeze continuously as he grumbled.

Lu Qing'er smiled comfortably. This was the perfect environment for her as she possessed an ice resonance. As a result, she had an exceptional resistance to cold temperatures.

"There's no rush. Patience is, after all, a virtue. If you can't hold on any longer, we can always withdraw."

Lu Qing'er consoled Li Luo before taking out a fragrant, red fruit from her pocket and passing it to him. "Here's something I picked off the ground. Since we don't lack dao-gold, why don't you eat it? It should help to bolster your resonant power."

"Wow, the Golden Dragon Qi really is too awesome." He sighed upon receiving it.

Not standing on ceremony, he immediately took a bite and started chewing, the fruit melting away with the lightest touch. Simultaneously, the fruit turned into a warm current that surged into his body. Not wasting any resource, Li Luo immediately circulated the 12 Step Weave and began to refine the medicinal strength, gradually feeling his resonant power growing. This was a sight for sore eyes.

The Golden Dragon Dao Fields was a wondrous place, full of happiness!

As he snacked away, Li Luo could feel a bitter gaze focused in his direction with his well-honed senses. Turning around, he saw a certain Qin Zhulu peering intently at the unusual fruit in his hand, swallowing his saliva as he attempted to resist the temptation.

"Ah! I'm sorry, Xiao Lu, I only have a single fruit. If I find another, I will be sure to share it with you!" Lu Qing'er hurriedly said.

Upon hearing those words, Qin Zhulu silently turned away. He should never have come to these damned golden crappy fields!

Yet at this very moment, Li Luo's expression changed as he looked in the northwest direction. "Someone is here."

Lu Qing'er and Qin Zhulu turned to face the same direction and spotted three silhouettes speeding towards their current location.

"Wait a minute! Something isn't right." Li Luo's eyes had resonant power circulating within them, creating the ability to see as far as a hawk. His complexion turned a little gloomy when he realized that further away, there were numerous groups converging onto this location.

Lu Qing'er and Qin Zhulu also noticed this anomaly, and their faces changed for the worse.

"Didn't you say that good-looking people have good luck?" Qin Zhulu quipped quietly.

Li Luo's face turned pale as he exclaimed angrily, "Damn his mother! That dog shit Ji Sun! He has no morals at all. Didn't he say that he only told one group about us? Just what is this?"

1. TN: Is that you, Fire Fist Ace?

2. TN: Nope it looks like Akainu

Chapter 0345: Intercepted

After his tirade, Li Luo heaved a sigh. This was completely unexpected. Normally speaking, wouldn't someone want to keep the secret of the Golden Dragon Qi to themselves? This was a secret they should have taken to the grave! How did that Polar Wolf Kingdom team turn this knowledge into common information for all!?

Could such churlish people even exist in this world?

The thoughts of the foolish were unfathomable.

"What do we do now? There are a few too many groups..." Lu Qing'er asked with a frown on her face.

"If we have no choice, then we fight!" Qin Zhulu's battle spirit blazed with vigor as he made that suggestion.

Of course, Li Luo did not accept this barbaric solution for their predicament. They weren't even that strong in the grand scheme of things, and now they were at a disadvantage in terms of numbers. Going ahead with Qin Zhulu's plan was absurd.

"Let's run and hide. The situation has become too complicated, and we should avoid the brunt of things if possible..." Li Luo finally decided.

Lu Qing'er had no comments, but Qin Zhulu seemed a little dissatisfied. However, in a situation where it was two votes versus one, he had to acquiesce to their choice.

"Brother Zhao, the situation seems a little off. It looks as though there are other groups heading in the same direction as us."

Just as Li Luo's merry band of friends had discovered more visitors, Zhao Ziyang's team had the same revelation when scouting ahead.

Zhao Ziyang frowned upon hearing this, quickly ascending atop higher ground to take a glance for himself. The sight made his expression glum. "It looks like the little rat from the Polar Wolf Kingdom has been stirring the pot."

"How despicable, actually spreading news of this all around."

However, this was quite reasonable upon second thought. After being completely maimed by their vicious group, they had no other choice but to make life difficult for them as a form of revenge!

It was just that this act of breaking the pot so that no one could monopolize it was truly unbearable.

The number of groups gathering here were not small, some possessing combat strength no weaker than his. If all of them caught up, obtaining the Golden Dragon Qi would be several magnitudes more arduous.

"Continue advancing, we have to take advantage of our head start. If we can enter the mountain range first and capture that wench with the Golden Dragon Qi, then we can take the chance to escape."

"We have to proceed with due haste. Otherwise, the rest of them will catch up."

"Jing Zhi, release the Bloodwing Mosquitoes. They will assist us in locating the group hiding within the mountain range faster."

Upon hearing Zhao Ziyang's command, one of his teammates nodded his head and took out a square jar. Biting his fingertip, he first let blood drip into it before smashing it onto the ground.

Bzzzzz!

Immediately after, a black cloud composed of countless red-winged mosquitoes rose from the debris. They surged in the direction of the mountain range and vanished into the distance in the blink of an eye.

"Go!"

Zhao Ziyang waved his hand, indicating that the hunt had begun. He shot off like a speeding bullet, legs shrouded with raging, red resonant power. Each time he took a step, he would leave behind a charred patch.

The trio quickly made their way into the mountain forest.

Not long after they entered, other groups made their way to the edge of the mountain forest as well. Upon realizing that time was of the essence, each and every team utilized their own special capabilities to commence the chase.

Inadvertently, the entire mountain forest became abuzz with activity.

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Somewhere within the mountain forest.

Li Luo and his little team were currently rushing away.

This brief period of time allowed them to sense the endless eruptions of resonant power coming from the numerous teams rushing in.

Clearly, quite a few of them were scuffling with each other.

"Li Luo, with our current speed, it's very likely that someone will catch up with us shortly. Based on what Ji Sun told us, he has also engraved our likeness onto the scroll! The moment we encounter someone, they will definitely be able to recognize us," Lu Qing'er said.

Li Luo nodded in agreement. Time was tight.

"Let's head east to that patch of high ground," Li Luo suddenly suggested as his eyes glinted. It seemed that this was a man with a plan.

"That open patch? Won't we be more easily found?" Qin Zhulu frowned.

"We want to be ostentatious and stick out! The more teams focused on us, the more space we will create for ourselves."

Qin Zhulu didn't seem to understand what Li Luo meant, but Lu Qing'er understood the gist of it.

If they were caught by a single elite group, their situation would undoubtedly be extremely precarious. More groups focusing on them would raise the possibility that they would fight each other and possibly provide a diversion.

Simply speaking, this plan did not seem rational at first glance, but it would make sense once one pondered more deeply.

This was probably Li Luo's plan, or so Lu Qing'er assumed.

She trusted him wholeheartedly—he would definitely figure out a solution.

Right at this moment, Li Luo frowned and fired out a single bullet of resonant power, which resembled a droplet of water. This water droplet pierced through a leaf, boring a neat hole and adhering to a tree.

Pausing, he sauntered over, and one could see that within the resonant power droplet was a mosquito with blood-red wings.

"Well now, it looks like we've been discovered."

Li Luo continued to stare at the Bloodwing Mosquito with a furrowed brow. Experts were as common as clouds in the Golden Dragon Dao Fields. They even possessed such mysterious means to locate and pursue someone.

"We need to hurry up." Signaling the others to move, he turned tail and left with redoubled haste, the other two tailing right behind. Their destination: the highground to the east.

Roughly an incense stick's worth of time after, a river tens of meters wide appeared right in front of them. This was the last obstacle between the team and their high ground.

Resonant power surged forth from the trio as they forded the river.

Unfortunately, their luck had finally run out. Berserk and scorching resonant power exploded from right behind them, and a youth clad in scarlet resonant power that resembled flowing lava shot right after them. "I've been waiting here for a while!"

Not interested in speaking further, he struck out, releasing a fist phantom akin to magma erupting from a volcano, both in terms of heat and explosiveness, ripping through the air. The blow was even backed by a tyrannical aura, enveloping all three of them, almost rooting them in place.

The sudden ambush had also taken the trio by surprise.

Just analyzing this simple magma fist phantom allowed them to understand the gravity of the situation. This youth possessed strength that far surpassed Ji Sun!

"Roar!"

Qin Zhulu snarled as golden tiger stripes materialized and his demonic qi exploded outwards. He lanced forward with the heavy spear in hand, domineering and undeterred, summoning his full might to clash against that fist phantom.

BOOM!

Upon collision, the astonishing force behind the fist phantom knocked him flying all the way across the river, causing him to land heavily on the ground. Qin Zhulu's wild and raging resonant power had been completely extinguished. His spear was dyed a crimson red, emanating such high heat that the areas where he gripped the spear started sizzling with white smoke.

Yet it was not enough—the magma fist phantom continued flying unabated towards the remaining two.

Ever the gentleman, Li Luo's gaze flickered as he delivered a palm strike at Lu Qing'er's waist, knocking her flying towards the relative safety of the opposite bank.

As the magma fist phantom approached, one could feel the blistering heat exuding from the attack, burning the skin.

Remaining calm, Li Luo took a deep breath, summoning his waterlight resonant power and quickly forming a radiant water mirror.

"Mysterious Mirror Art!"

The magma fist phantom's reflection could be seen on the radiant surface of the mirror, and immediately after, an identical fist phantom flew out from within the mirror!

BOOM!

Frantic, blazing waves of resonant power exploded outwards upon impact, causing waves of heat to radiate outwards.

The mirror shattered at this point, and the original attack had shrunken significantly, but it continued to viciously fly at him.

Although Li Luo remained calm, his gaze seemed to have become untold times gloomier. This preliminary exchange had let him understand how vast the gulf was between him and the assailant. This fellow was more than twice as strong as Ji Sun.

It was very likely that he was a Second Changing of the Evolving Resonance Tier.

There were countless tiers of difference between the two.

As it stood, a frontal clash with both Li Luo and Qin Zhulu cooperating had been crushed in the most direct way.

Despite all this, Li Luo remained unfazed and unfrightened. The opponent might be mighty, but he wasn't so easily defeated by a single probing attack.

Retreating slightly and jumping backwards to create some distance, he unsheathed his shortswords.

With the Water Edge completely coating both his weapons, they turned into blades of resplendent light, almost akin to swimming fish, as his resonant power channeled through them. Just in the nick of time, he slashed downwards, the shortswords gradually severing through the lava resonance power which made up the fist phantom.

His sword technique seemed to be filled with mysticality, giving all who saw it a sense of relief.

At this point, he neatly landed on the opposite side of the river like his teammates. Both of his shortswords were dyed crimson-red, steam endlessly emitting from them.

The bright side? That probing magma fist phantom had finally been neutralized.

The unfortunate price was that cracks had started to emerge on his shortswords as a result of the high temperature and stress they had faced.

Clap, clap, clap.

Sounds of applause resounded across from the forest on the opposite end. Three silhouettes slowly made their way out of the shadows, and the one in the lead was naturally Zhao Ziyang.

In fact, he was staring at Li Luo with immense interest.

"Wow, that was pretty impressive. A Third Pattern was able to receive my fist?"

Chapter 0346: Gathering the Wolves

When Zhao Ziyang and his squad appeared, Li Luo locked on to him immediately. He watched him warily, noting the resonant power pulsing from his body.

He was probably around the Second Changing of the Evolving Resonance Tier—the same as Zhu Xuan.

Li Luo weighed his chances. If he did not use dual resonances, his two resonant palaces alone would give him enough power to fight a Fifth Pattern of the Pattern Genesis Tier and stay even. With his dual resonances, he could take on a First Changing cultivator of the Evolving Resonance Tier. That was a significant leap across major tiers, but Zhao Ziyang surpassed even that.

Still, with his Resonant Bubble Art prepared from before, Li Luo was not completely without weapons.

The problem was that neither his dual resonances nor the Resonant Bubble Art could be sustained for long. They were there to secure a quick win. This guy did not look like a quick win at all. His resonant power was flowing out of him in powerful pulses. In their first clash, the purity and clarity of his attack marked him as probably an eighth-grade resonance user.

Strictly speaking, Li Luo probably could not beat him alone.

The difference in their cultivation levels was too big. Li Luo sighed. Just when he thought he had overcome that problem from a while back. Still, he believed that he had come further than anyone else, even the upper eighth-grade Snarling Golden Demon Tiger resonance user, Qin Zhulu.

"The Iron Sand Empire's squad, eh?" Li Luo said, eying the badges on their chests with a glittering, red motif. The Iron Sand Empire was much more famous than the Polar Wolf Kingdom, and it was at least as strong as the Xia Kingdom.

"So it's you three with the Golden Dragon Qi?" Zhao Ziyang grinned at them, sizing them up before his gaze stopped on Lu Qing'er. "Intel says it's you, girl."

She stared at him with an expression as frosty as her resonance. Under her feet, a layer of ice started to form over the withered grass.

"Could you have the wrong person, friend? These woods are a confusing place," Li Luo offered.

Zhao Ziyang ignored this. "Hand her over," he said mildly, "and I'll let you two walk."

No minced words, no beating around the bush. A straightforward and direct threat. He was in control here.

His read of the situation was spot on. Through one brief exchange, he had already determined how strong their squad was. Three Pattern Genesis Tier cultivators, and not a single Evolving Resonance to be seen...

It was a pathetic lineup. He could not believe that the Golden Dragon Qi had appeared with them.

Beginner's luck!

Qin Zhulu laughed coldly at him. Slamming his heavy spear into the ground, his resonant power began to build like a tiger stalking its prey through the tall grass.~~novel-1b-1n~~

Li Luo sighed. "You're really a berserker, you know?" He hefted his own shortswords at the ready.

Zhao Ziyang let his amusement show. "You don't know your own strength, I see. Your determination to protect your friend is commendable, but you should know your own limits. I'm not even going to harm her. I just want her help."

Neither Li Luo nor Qin Zhulu budged an inch.

Zhao Ziyang shook his head. Clenching his fists, a glowing, ruby-colored power sprang forth, flowing along his arms like veins of lava.

"Fine. I'll finish you two pests off and then take her away." He stepped forward.

"Wait," Li Luo suddenly said.

Zhao Ziyang smiled at him. "Thought things through?"

Li Luo did not answer him, but fished out a signal tool from within his pocket sphere. He sent the flare shooting high into the sky with a high-pitched firework-whistle. It bloomed grandly above them, a cluster of pyrotechnics that announced their location to all.

It would definitely attract the attention of anybody in the vicinity.

Li Luo put his pocket sphere away and then calmly turned back to Zhao Ziyang. "Okay, continue."

Zhao Ziyang stiffened, dark anger flashing on his face. This bastard was toying with him!

"Trying to attract other squads to create chaos? Smart, aren't you... but you won't survive until then!"

Zhao Ziyang's foot slammed into the ground with a thunderous boom. It cracked with a loud report under him as he shot forth like a bullet. He was facing Li Luo in a heartbeat.

"Get the other two. I'll handle this punk." He bared his teeth, releasing a hiss of hot air from his mouth.

Li Luo had pissed him off.

Zhao Ziyang's two companions looked at Li Luo almost pityingly. The kid had no sense of danger. Angering Zhao Ziyang always ended in pain. Loads of it.

The flame-fisted youth was a rash and impetuous character. And once he attacked, he never stopped until his job was done. Vermilion energy shone around him, crackling the air with its temperature. He shot towards Li Luo like a comet.

Li Luo started to run away like a comet.

Zhao Ziyang's speed was terrific. He caught up to Li Luo in a matter of seconds, his insistently furious fists punching out attacks like a jackhammer.

He was a wave of heat, and Li Luo's skin felt the scorching burn from up close.

Li Luo continued to duck and weave, only choosing to engage when he could not avoid an attack. He would take it with his blue shortswords.

Tang, tang!

Fist on blade, and still the sound was metallic in its ring.

A few short exchanges later, Li Luo was covered in fist-shaped scorch marks. He was smoking from burn wounds, completely outclassed by Zhao Ziyang.

Zhao Ziyang smirked at him, disdainful of his evasive approach.

"Buying time?"

"You might be able to cause some serious trouble for other teams in this. You're smart, but you forget yourself. You think a puny Third Pattern like you deserves to come compete in a place like this?"

Li Luo privately thought to himself that Zhao Ziyang might seem like a fiery, powerful guy, but he had a really narrow mind.

Not even he would have stooped so low with the personal attacks.

No wonder no one had joined the fray yet even though Li Luo had spotted some squads watching nearby.

They were probably too weak. They would be squashed into fish paste if they joined.

Joining such an unequal fight wouldn't benefit them at all.

Li Luo regarded Zhao Ziyang with unconcerned amusement. This guy was really something else.

Dang!

After another clash, Li Luo suddenly slid away. Opening the distance between them with one sinuous move, he changed the grip on his swords, and his eyes turned serious.

Zhao Ziyang came at him again, large strides that ate ground between them. He thundered on, fists cocked and ready.

He unleashed a tremendous punch that was backed by a roaring river of vermilion power that twisted like a python.

"Tiger-general resonance art, Flaming Serpent's Punch!"

The dried leaves on the ground were turned to ashes before they could even catch fire, such was the intensity of the heat. His attack shot forth, leaving a black streak on the forest floor in its wake. Zhao Ziyang was holding nothing back with this punch.

Eighth-grade Evolving Resonance Second Changing. His power was indisputable.

Li Luo stood his ground this time, to the surprise of the eyes watching from the sidelines.

His blades crossed and drew two sword patterns in the air.

The python punch attack rapidly grew larger in his vision, and Li Luo's two resonance palaces roared to life, sending a torrent of resonance power from his resonance seeds.

The torrent of power was further cranked up a notch as his four resonant bubbles were popped as well, releasing yet more resonant power into the flow.

His body was flooded with power beyond his limits.

Dual resonances!

Li Luo raised his swords and leaped at the fire punch attack head-on.

Dang!

The clash was colossal, and Li Luo was sent flying backwards, staggering to maintain balance. Each foot he tried to put down left deep imprints in the ground as he countered the impact bit by bit.

No one was watching him. They were all too busy looking at Zhao Ziyang.

Because he had been sent staggering back a couple of steps too.

And there was a thin trickle of blood flowing down his knuckles.

Even the wind seemed to cease, and silence fell over the battlefield.

Chapter 0347: Negotiations

It was quiet in the forest.

It was a shocked silence that filled the air. No one had expected the likes of Zhao Ziyang to have his attack repelled by a mere Third Pattern opponent. Moreover, his resonant power protection had been broken, and now his fist was bleeding.

The wound was not deep, but it was symbolic. His defenses had been penetrated.

A mere Third Pattern against a Second Changing?!

It was unbelievable. Plus, Zhao Ziyang was no slouch. With his eighth-grade lava resonance, he not only had fiery power, but rocky defenses as well. It was a balanced resonance of both attack and defense. There should have been no weakness for Li Luo to exploit.

This handsome, silver-haired youth was a strange one indeed.

"Brother Zhao?"

His teammates called out to him with uncertainty. Both of them were First Changing, and they were having an easy time against the other two. Of course, Lu Qing'er was much weaker, so most of their efforts had been concentrated on Qin Zhulu.

They had also been paying some attention to Zhao Ziyang's side, and they were shocked by his injury.

As his teammates, they understood Zhao Ziyang's capabilities well. Back in the Iron Sand Empire, he was among the elites of his generation. He had always been the one challenging those above his class. How had the tables flipped on him today?

Zhao Ziyang bent his head to look at his fist. The wound healed right before his eyes, but the glower on his face did not fade away as quickly.

At his age, he was at the Sage College in the Iron Sand Empire. Those that he respected had always been seniors who were of a higher cultivation level. And even then, they treated him with mutual respect. It had bred a strong sense of pride within him.

Today, this pride had been exposed as arrogance.

"To think that I would one day see dual resonances wielded by one not yet a Duke. This is indeed a wide world we live in. Miracles happen," Zhao Ziyang said slowly, almost to himself. *novel-lb-1n*

The shock deepened for the spectators. Dual resonances?!

A mere Third Pattern youth had dual resonances? What kind of godly luck did he have to be blessed with a second resonant palace so early?

Li Luo felt the watchers in the trees turn to study him.

No wonder he dared to go up against Zhao Ziyang. So he had this strange resonance situation.

Li Luo was not surprised by Zhao Ziyang's reaction. There was no hiding the truth of it once he used it, and Zhao Ziyang was no fool to overlook it either.

He just stood his ground, short swords held loosely but ready. There were cracks all over his blades.

These two swords had been forged a long time ago, and they would not last much longer.

He curbed his own irritation. This counter of dual resonances plus four resonant bubbles should have gotten him better results. He wanted to at least wound Zhao Ziyang, and not just give him a scratch across the knuckles.

Still, it was Li Luo's first time using it in a real battle, so he was a little raw.

If he tried it again, he would probably be able to draw out better effects.

A pity... he wouldn't have time to try it again.

After his four resonant bubbles burst, the resonant power faded away. There would be no repeat of that attack. Plus, he was in a weakened state after using his dual resonances.

"The cultivation level difference is still too big," Li Luo lamented to himself. This guy was far stronger than Ji Sun from before. Even with his best moves, he could only barely stand his ground.

However, his true goal was not just to beat Zhao Ziyang. He wanted to bare his fangs to the other wolves watching.

He had to let them know that these three Pattern Genesis Tier cultivators were no easy meat. Sometimes, deterrence was more than half the battle.

Zhao Ziyang took a careful step forward. "What is your name?"

Li Luo looked coolly at him. "I'm Yu Lang." [1]

Lu Qing'er and Qin Zhulu stared at him.

"Alright, Yu Lang. I'm surprised that the Xia Kingdom has managed to raise such a talent. I assume you're from the Astral Sage College too? Heh, everyone's going to pay more attention to you guys at this year's Holy Grail Meet."

"I, Yu Lang, fear nothing. Come at me with whatever you have," Li Luo said haughtily.

Zhao Ziyang said nothing in return. However, his arrogance had been cut back down into guarded pride after seeing Li Luo's strength and dual resonances today. Neither did he directly demand for Li Luo to hand Lu Qing'er over.

That was one of Li Luo's goals too—unleash his strongest attack and show them that he was on the same level. Otherwise, there was no chance a bunch of rabbits like them could keep the wolves away.

"Yu Lang, you should know that your dual resonances bring no resolution to this matter," Zhao Ziyang continued.

"Golden Dragon Qi is rare. Now that it has appeared, we will not let it go. She's a walking treasure, and you alone cannot possibly keep her safe."

He waved back his teammates, calling off the attack on Lu Qing'er and Qin Zhulu. It was a gesture of his sincerity to negotiate.

Li Luo grinned at him. "And you can keep us safe?"

Zhao Ziyang's face was emotionless. Li Luo had lured over many teams. Even as strong as he was, he would be overwhelmed by all of them. He realized that this was not a prize he could take for himself anymore.

From within the woods, a flurry of resonant powers approached. Squads were starting to appear left and right.

"Keke, Iron Sand Empire friends, don't think you're going to get that juicy prize all for yourself. You might break your back trying to carry it," someone called out, their warning dripping with greed.

"The Golden Dragon Qi has to be divided up equally," someone else called.

Zhao Ziyang's eyes flashed with anger, but he quelled it. "You got us into this situation," he said to Li Luo. "How do you propose we get out of it?"

Everyone turned to him. Before, none of them would have paid him any attention, but now his strength and dual resonances granted him some basic respect.

More importantly, they were in a complex situation, and someone had to get the unraveling started.

As the possessors of the Golden Dragon Qi, this youth called Yu Lang and his team were in the best position to do so.

Li Luo smiled at all of them. "Well, since we're in this mess, I know there's no way I can have the Golden Dragon Qi all to myself. I guess I don't mind splitting it.

"But." His smile grew wide.

"As great a prize as the Golden Dragon Qi is, do you think it can support so many...?"

1. TN: AHA HOW THE TABLES TURN. 📖

Chapter 0348: Wolf on Wolf

Li Luo's toying words made Zhao Ziyang and the other squad leaders narrow their eyes.

There were about 20 to 30 teams here, close to 100 people. If everyone had a bite of the Golden Dragon Qi, it would be meaningless.

Just like Li Luo had said—it couldn't feed them all.

"What are you thinking?" Zhao Ziyang asked.

Li Luo took some time to dust off a large boulder, then he sat down on it and made himself comfortable. He stretched out four fingers. "Four teams. I'm only willing to share it with four teams. Any more, and the qi will be too faint to do anything."

"As for who these four teams will be..." He looked around indifferently. "I couldn't care less."

The hungry teams started to look around at each other warily.

This kid was a monster.

He wanted them to turn on each other, and he would share the bounty with the top four teams?

"Brilliant strategist, this Xia Kingdom friend."

Cold laughter rang out, and Li Luo turned to see a slender and sexy girl stride forth. Her skin was a dusty bronze that gave her an exotic look, as though she were a female leopard fresh from the mountains.

Sexy. And savage.

Her short-cropped hair framed an arrogant expression that was turned against Li Luo presently. "You want us to fight among ourselves and use the chance to escape?" she accused him.

"Besides, you might have dual resonances, but you're only at the Pattern Genesis Tier. As if you could beat Zhao Ziyang in a straight fight!

"Perhaps... I should test that." She took another small step forward, resonant power curling forth in a forest-green leopard silhouette.

Li Luo was looking at the badge on her chest. "Rainforest Dynasty?"

"Rainforest Dynasty, Gu Ying," she said coolly.

Li Luo nodded. This Gu Ying was strong, perhaps as strong as Zhao Ziyang. And given that he was weakened and no longer had resonant bubbles, he would be at a severe disadvantage if they fought.

"Well, Miss, if you have no interest in my suggestion, you're welcome not to participate." Li Luo yawned.

"Like a fish on the chopping block challenging the knife," Gu Ying hissed. "Little boy, this is no place for you Pattern Genesis babies." n((O--v.(E(.l--b(/l))n

Before Li Luo could speak, Lu Qing'er stepped forwards with an icy expression. "An interesting comparison. Another one I've heard is the fish struggles until death, or the net breaks. We do not want to leave the Golden Dragon Dao Fields either, but if you force us to, we will."

She twirled her fingers and fashioned a long, sharp icicle, pinching it like a cigar between index and middle finger.

"If I get severely injured, the Golden Dragon Secret Key triggers, and I leave."

She reversed the grip, now holding the icicle like a dagger.

Zhao Ziyang and Gu Ying paled. They hadn't come all the way here just to see the Golden Dragon Qi fade away right before their eyes.

This ice girl was a plucky one.

Li Luo was equally shocked by her movement, and he frowned at her. "What are you doing?" he whispered urgently.

Lu Qing'er heard the dismay in his voice and turned to him, puzzled.

"Put it down," he instructed quietly.

"I promised President Yu that I would protect you. Before I collapse on the ground, I don't want to see you try that sort of thing. If you trust me..."

"Of course I trust you!" Lu Qing'er quickly replied.

She hesitated, then let the icicle fall to the ground.

Li Luo took a step forward and looked squarely into the eyes of Zhao Ziyang, Gu Ying, and the others.

"My proposal remains unchanged. Four teams. That is the limit of what I will accept. If you don't like the idea, the talks are off. Come at me as you will, and I will deal with you."

His words were stated with a quiet confidence that radiated from his eyes. He was in a tough situation, but he was supremely confident that he could get out of it as he wished.

He raised his hand, letting his sleeve fall away to reveal the demonic red-seal.

Zhao Ziyang stared at it with some worry. He was not angry, but curious. Why would Li Luo be so confident while surrounded by such strong opponents?

Was it the dual resonances?

That was not enough to turn the tables. Not with only Pattern Genesis power backing it.

Although he did not know the source of Li Luo's confidence, at least Lu Qing'er's threat was one he could understand. She could ensure that no one of them got it.

That alone meant that they had to approach this situation cautiously.

Gu Ying was silent as well, frowning to herself.

Silence fell again, but this silence was fraught with tension and uncertainty.

Some of the weaker squads were looking belligerent. They knew that if Li Luo's plan was accepted, they would be the first to lose out.

The bastard really knew how to stir up trouble.

The tense atmosphere dragged on.

Suddenly, someone could hold it back no longer, flying towards Lu Qing'er in an attempt to spring an unexpected kidnapping.

It caught them all by surprise, and many froze, unsure of what to do.

Li Luo stood there calmly, showing no signs of responding.

The would-be kidnapper was closing in on Lu Qing'er.

A wicked smirk on his face, he reached out with his hand.

BOOM!

A magma punch fell on his head from the sky, crushing him into the ground.

His back arched backwards with a sickening crack, and he vomited fresh blood.

“ROAR!”

Zhao Ziyang's foot was on the attacker's head.

He looked up, flaming power cloaking his body.

"Scum, begone!" he growled, his voice radiating with power.

Many of the squads' faces fell. They knew that Zhao Ziyang attacking meant that he had decided to back Li Luo's plan.

Golden Dragon Qi was a tasty, tasty cake, and only four squads could get a slice.

If they wanted to be one of the privileged four... then they would have to see who could survive until the end.

Like a dam breaking, bursts of resonant power filled the air all of a sudden, and the squads duked it out in a royal rumble. The wolf pack was fighting among itself.

Chapter 0349: Role Reversal

The howling of the cold mountain-air was punctuated with the sound of relentless clashing and an acrid smell of blood.

Pockets of resonant power erupted throughout the forest, forming gorgeous but deadly fireworks for all that managed to see it. A trace of blood could even be seen with each explosion, adding a visceral beauty to the sight.

Li Luo, on the other hand, was calmly sitting atop a rock, surveying the chaotic rumble. His gaze was merciless and cold. Since these animals wanted to hunt them down, he would ensure that a pound of flesh would be paid in turn.

The hunters had become the hunted. Still, the balance was precarious and could change at any time.

Qin Zhulu walked over. "Aren't we supposed to escape in the chaos?"

Lu Qing'er glanced over as though in agreement.

Li Luo smiled and shook his head. "There's no need to do so. The moment we attempt to escape, the entire battlefield will be focused on us. They will definitely set aside their differences to deal with us. Honestly, the moment we revealed that we possess Golden Dragon Qi, our situation turned precarious. With our strength, we are unable to properly protect this, so it is no longer a blessing or a curse! In the Golden Dragon Dao Fields, we can't take a leading role as a result."

A trace of helplessness could be heard in his voice. If the Golden Dragon Qi had not been revealed, they could amass massive benefits whilst remaining hidden. The unfortunate bit was that they had been discovered by Ji Sun and friends.

What was even worse was that that damned fellow had spread the news to his fellow teammates from the Polar Wolf Kingdom! That wastrel of a team hadn't managed to protect the information either! One had told another and now every single clown in the vicinity had gotten wind of this.

"Even if we did manage to escape for the moment, they would inevitably encircle us with their larger numbers. Thus there is no point in engaging in meaningless activities." Li Luo explained as he focused on the intense battle occurring within the forest. "Since we can't monopolize the Golden Dragon Qi, getting some valiant knights to assist us is the next best option."

Lu Qing'er nodded in agreement. This was the most logical and possibly only option. If they remained greedy and tried to keep the benefits all to themselves, an early elimination would be their result.

It was clear that Li Luo had already come up with a contingency plan once this fiasco started.

However, it would be difficult to execute this in reality. The most crucial fact was that their group was too weak. Three Pattern Genesis Tier individuals were no different from ants in the eyes of Evolving Resonance Tier cultivators. Upon meeting them, the likely outcome would be subjugation and not negotiation.

Once they fell into the hands of their opponents, the initiative would be lost.

Against all expectations, Li Luo had stopped Zhao Ziyang's attack and seemingly demonstrated might no weaker than his. This caused the rest to take a step back and reassess the situation. The final outcome? The battle royale in front of them.

Qin Zhulu sat down next to Li Luo. "It seems that you have improved once again."

Li Luo had single-handedly blocked Zhao Ziyang's assault, and this was something he could not match up to. Based on his own private evaluation, he could at most deal with a Fifth Pattern opponent without much trouble. On the contrary, anyone stronger, such as those in the Evolving Resonance Tier, would completely overwhelm him.

Zhao Ziyang was a Second Changing to boot.

Li Luo's uncanny strength had far surpassed his.

Just half a year ago when he first entered the Astral Sage College, his might far eclipsed Li Luo's. The Li Luo then had yet to show his keen edge, but with the turning of time, he had demonstrated his radiant presence with his dual resonances and ingenuity.

Li Luo grinned. Qin Zhulu may possess an upper eighth-grade Snarling Golden Demon Tiger resonance, but he had a seventh-grade Waterlight resonance and fifth-grade Woodearth resonance. He would not lose out if it came to a contest of resonant power.

So long as he did not meet a ninth-grade resonance, no one else was his match amongst peers of similar tiers.

When it came to surpassing those who were of a higher tier, his ace in the hole would be his dual resonances as they could bring about frighteningly explosive might. But this possessed a fatal drawback: it could not be sustained for long. If he could not obtain the opportunity to eke out an advantage, then he would be placed on the backfoot with the high consumption of resonant power.

The situation before encapsulated this perfectly. If Zhao Ziyang had continued to fight, considering that four of his resonant bubbles had been used up, he would undoubtedly have fallen into a disadvantageous position.

"Sigh. At the end of the day, we are just a little too weak. Otherwise, why would we have to borrow someone else's strength?" Li Luo sighed with regret. Most of the groups within the Golden Dragon Dao Fields were at the Evolving Resonance Tier, so Pattern Genesis Tiers like them were just begging to be oppressed.

"Hey! If even you are belittling yourself, where does that leave us? Huh? How can we even bear to live anymore!?" Lu Qing'er couldn't help but to snort in annoyance.

"Most of the groups are in the Two Star Hall in their respective sage colleges. You're able to skillfully maneuver around their encirclement despite their overwhelming strength. This is already something exceptional that others can't achieve, even if we throw two more Qin Zhulus into the mix!"

Hearing that comment, Qin Zhulu stared at Lu Qing'er. Just why did she have to use him as a basis for comparison?

With a matter-of-fact tone, Lu Qing'er continued as she glanced briefly at Qin Zhulu. "Well, if there were two more of you, they'd just knuckle down and attempt to force their way through. Even if you had a harder head, the only result would be a bleeding, broken skull if you resorted to brute force." **Over-**

Qin Zhulu's expression turned rigid. He couldn't deny that that was the case. It was his personality, forthcoming and direct! He wouldn't bother with any of these fancy, schmancy plans. If they were truly surrounded... Well then, he'd fight to the death!

"What are we going to do when four groups are remaining?" he asked curiously.

Li Luo nodded. "The last four groups will be our future allies and bosom friends. We'd need to make love, not war, figuratively."

Qin Zhulu spat on the floor in disgust. What the heck did he mean by 'make love not war'? If these wolves had the opportunity, what they'd wish most dearly would be to tear Li Luo to shreds! After all, they had been forced to dance in the palm of his hand.

Regardless, these brats were putting up a great show. Kicking back and relaxing whilst watching was pretty good after all.

The trio then made themselves comfortable and proceeded to enjoy the entertainment. The royal rumble lasted for an entire hour, completely devastating the forest.

Countless teams were eliminated mercilessly.

At the end, four groups were victorious, and they made their way to the trio. Zhao Ziyang and Gu Ying's group were both part of the four.

Each and every one of them exuded a baleful air as they strode out. Quite a few of them were riddled with wounds, each dripping fresh blood. Evidently, they had all paid a heavy price for their final standing.

Divided, the teams were as weak as loose sand, especially when infighting was added to the mix. Otherwise, if everyone banded together, the trio would have no way to resist, and they might have obtained the Golden Dragon Qi with less effort.

Hence, the gazes which Li Luo and his friends were showered with seemed a little ill-intentioned, even ominous.

Yet Li Luo took everything in stride and pretended as though he had seen nothing. Instead, he greeted them with a face full of smiles as he arose from his seat while applauding them. "Congratulations for surviving the ultimate selection! You're now the last four winners."

Gu Ying glared at Li Luo, clenching her teeth. "Yu Lang, was it? I'll remember you well. I hope for your sake that we don't encounter each other during the Holy Grail Meet; otherwise, there will be hell to pay."

The other three groups coldly snorted in agreement. Gu Ying had helpfully vented their feelings.

Without skipping a beat, he replied, "I was concerned someone might attempt to game the situation! Hence, I didn't explain everything fully. Either way, if we do meet again, there is no need to be merciful."

At the same time, he reached a hand out to the group. "However, so long as we are in the Golden Dragon Dao Fields, I will recognize you as my friends. You can rest assured that we will distribute the spoils from the Golden Dragon Qi fairly."

At this point, Zhao Ziyang and the rest did not bother with Li Luo's outstretched gesture, yet their expressions softened a little. If not for the uncountable benefits, these three troublemakers would have already been sent out violently! They were here only for the Golden Dragon Qi and the dao-gold it conferred.

"Friends, we're all bosom buddies now. We can go forth together, but do keep in mind that we caused a massive disturbance today. I'm afraid to say that other groups will likely attempt to ambush us. When push comes to shove, we will leave it up to you," Li Luo excitedly explained. He didn't mind their cold demeanors—he'd make up for the difference with his enthusiasm.

"From this moment forth, you will be the guardians of our Golden Dragon Qi! I hereby proclaim you as the Golden Dragon Qi Protectors!"

With his passionate and fervent words, the frigid facade of this group of unlikely allies finally cracked as emotions could be seen on their faces. In fact, some were even in a slight daze...

Damn it, there was something wrong about this entire situation.

Hadn't they come here to rob and plunder?

How had they mysteriously turned into the Golden Dragon Qi's mightiest protectors? Huh?

Chapter 0350: Reunion

The Golden Dragon Qi's protection alliance had finally been decided.

Although they were an alliance filled with inner conflict and distrust, the structure of things had been grudgingly confirmed. Of the four squads, Zhao Ziyang and Gu Ying were the strongest—at Second Changing of the Evolving Resonance Tier. The other two squad leaders were First Changing, which was a decent level as well.

It was quite an impressive lineup to roam this area with.

Which was why in the first two days, things went smoothly. Besides some reckless squads that insisted on standing in their way, nothing major happened. Those squads ended up as a little bit of extra pocket change to supplement the dao-gold from the Golden Dragon Qi.

Zhao Ziyang, Gu Ying, and their other protectors were satisfied as well. Lu Qing'er's Golden Dragon Qi was even more of a golden goose than they had expected. Even though the earnings were split, it was far more than what they would have earned on their own.

That helped motivate them all even further.

But the good times couldn't last. Word of the Golden Dragon Qi had started to spread, and many of the desperate and empty-handed teams were starting to converge on their location, forming their own groups.

The stronger teams came forth more directly to negotiate, asking to be allowed to join the protection alliance and gain a share of the profits.

In these negotiations, Li Luo's squad remained silent. It was Zhao Ziyang and Gu Ying who had the strongest objections. If they joined forces with these stronger teams, how could they be content keeping the original few squads around once they tasted those profits?

Their blatant refusal enraged those teams and only made their way forward harder. Even more teams started to oppose them, and the protection alliance suffered for it.

Finally, Zhao Ziyang decided that it was most prudent for them all to keep their heads down. They no longer moved forward boldly, but kept away from the main route in order to avoid the largest groups of attackers.

...

"At our speed, and on our current route, we will reach the Reservoir in five days."

Li Luo's group were in a gorge. They had set up camp beside a stream that ran deep and cold with snowmelt. They had made a campfire, its merry flames keeping away the chill and filling the air with the pleasant scent of oak.

"Five days, huh..."

The rest of the alliance nodded slowly. Five days was an endurable duration.

Gu Ying nursed some angry scars on her wrist, which were still seeping blood through the bandages. Her exhaustion was plain on her face, her cheeks and brow sagging from the fatigue. The last few days had been high-intensity battles, one after another without much pause.

Li Luo smiled at her. "Let me help you treat that. We're all travelers on the same road anyway."

Gu Ying regarded him warily for a moment but then relented, taking the bandages off and stretching out her arm. "Thanks."

Li Luo shook his head cheerfully. "If I might express my humble opinion, I think you guys are a little too possessive about the Golden Dragon Qi," he said as he summoned his healing powers and started to treat her. "Like a bunch of dragons on the gold pile. What's wrong with letting the stronger teams join? Standing apart from the others is like trying to cut down all the trees in the entire forest. Why not bend with the wind?"

"You're a really flexible one, aren't you?" Zhao Ziyang replied scathingly.

Li Luo should be the one troubled. After all, all those people were here for Lu Qing'er's Golden Dragon Qi. But now he was the one at ease, while they—his bodyguards—were bleeding for the cause.

Although they were doing this for their own profit, something didn't sit right with them.

"I hope we can get to the Reservoir quickly. Our little band can be disbanded then. I hope everyone gets the treasured artifacts they wish for and does well in the battle for the writs," Li Luo continued cheerfully, refusing to let Zhao Ziyang's negativity taint the conversation.

This was an uplifting thought. Once at the Reservoir, their dao-gold would come into use. After all, the battle for the Golden Dragon Mountain Writs was everything. In that battle, Golden Dragon Qi would count for nothing.

They feasted on their grilled fish and contemplated this happily.

A sudden warning whistle from their lookout broke the peaceful silence.

"Someone's here."

Li Luo, Zhao Ziyang, and Gu Ying looked at each other carefully. They immediately moved to extinguish their fire, then they turned to the direction of the whistle.

They swiftly moved through the light, brushy terrain and very quickly reached the whistler. He beckoned them over and pointed to where three figures were approaching.

"Just one squad?"

Li Luo's squad looked over with a jolt of surprise. Since they had smashed their way through many of the squads, the number of individual squads trying to take them on had dwindled away.

"Li Luo, they look familiar," Lu Qing'er whispered by his side.

Li Luo nodded. From the resonant powers of the squad, he had recognized them as well. "Ning Zhao, Zhu Xuan, and Lin Suo?"

"You know them?" Zhao Ziyang asked, frowning.

This squad was pretty strong. There was even one among them who might be his equal.

"It's the other squad from the Xia Kingdom," Li Luo said with an enigmatic smile.

Zhao Ziyang and Gu Ying looked at each other worriedly. This alliance was getting more and more complicated. They had been ridden hard like horses, at least comforted by the fact that Lu Qing'er and her two friends were supposed to be under their control. They could always assert themselves if needed.

But now an elite squad from the Xia Kingdom was here. The power dynamics were shifting.

This was not good news for them.

While they hesitated, the squad had already arrived. Indeed, it was Ning Zhao, Zhu Xuan, and Lin Suo.

There was some staring on both sides. Zhu Xuan stepped forward. "This is what you meant when you promised President Yu you'd take care of Qing'er?" he spat disbelievingly at Li Luo.

"Trapped between stronger forces, with no will of your own?"

"Ah, strong words," Li Luo said, unperturbed. "I prefer to think of it as a joint win."

"You're deluded," Zhu Xuan snapped. "Qing'er, I apologize for arriving late. It must have been undignified for you."

"Just tell me. You can come with us. No matter how hard things get, we can take you away."

Zhao Ziyang and Gu Ying scowled at that, shifting their hands to their weapons.

This guy would dare to snatch the Golden Dragon Qi away from right in front of them?

Lu Qing'er checked Li Luo's expression carefully, then shook her head. "It's just a training excursion. No need to take things so seriously. The sights here are quite pretty."

Zhu Xuan was stunned.

Zhao Ziyang and the others heaved an inward sigh of relief.

Ning Zhao spoke up as well. "Qing'er," he said worriedly, "if you don't want to leave, we respect your decision. But for your safety, we have to accompany you. If anything happens to you, what would we tell the President?"

"Accompany?" Zhao Ziyang echoed. "Did you ask for our permission?"

An additional squad meant a slimmer cut of the profits from the Golden Dragon Qi.

Zhu Xuan returned his unfriendly look. "We are all of the Xia Kingdom. Do you think we need your permission?"

"Oh, is that right?" Zhao Ziyang's eyes glittered, and his vermilion power began to seep forth. **Over-**

lb(1n
"Lava resonance?"

Zhu Xuan noted warily. His own flaming resonant power blazed forth, and the temperature rose.

Suddenly, they were on the brink of a fight.

Li Luo suddenly stepped out between them. "Come now, everyone. There's no need for such hostility. There are other enemies lurking around. If we fight, only they win."

Both sides backed down a notch. Zhu Xuan smirked at Li Luo. It looked like Li Luo was in a tough spot, squished between strong forces. Clearly, he was trying to beg them to come to his rescue. Right?

But there were too many strong squads eying them sharply, and Zhu Xuan held his tongue. He led Ning Zhao and Lin Suo over to Lu Qing'er's side.

A tentative peace being established, they all moved deeper into the forest by tacit agreement.

Li Luo hung at the back of the formation, watching both Zhu Xuan and the nondescript Lin Suo carefully.

Although they were all from the Xia Kingdom, that did not mean they were rescuers. They might even be more dangerous than Zhao Ziyang...

"Yu Lang, you never told us that there was another strong team from the Xia Kingdom," Gu Ying and Zhao Ziyang hissed as they came flanking him.

"I don't want to split the profits any further," Zhao Ziyang declared.

Li Luo shrugged helplessly. "I don't want to either, but you've seen for yourselves... They're the main force, we're just the backups. If we don't agree to what they say, there'll be trouble for us when we get back. I'm sorry that I can't let you fight openly like that."

Zhao Ziyang glowered. "So you're going to let them stay? That's your choice?" Li Luo showed him his best conflicted face and sighed deeply.

"They are much stronger than my squad, and they'll just ignore whatever I say. So... if you want to do anything, don't say it's on my behalf. I don't know anything."

He let his last statement hang pregnant in the air and then quickened his pace forward.

Zhao Ziyang and Gu Ying looked at each other and broke into identical, satisfied smiles.