

Resonance 361

Chapter 0361: Easter Eggs

While Li Luo wrapped up his dilemma, Lu Qing'er was struggling with one of her own. She too was spoilt for choice.

"There're so many... how do I choose one?"

She had about seven or eight fishes near her, each one with a different white-eye treasured artifact. Some were upper and some were lower grade, and she could not make a decision.

Finally she caught hold of one fish, an upper white-eye inner armor that would add a solid boost to her defenses. They would be chasing down Lin Suo soon, and she knew that she was the weakest, and protecting herself would be important.

But just as she was about to make the transaction, she spotted a faint glimmer of golden light nearby.

Curiosity piqued, she made her way over.

She saw that there was a large seabed reef, with a small slit amidst the gray corals. It was narrow enough that only Lu Qing'er's slimness allowed her to fit snugly through.

The space within was not large either, and only dimly lit by the light filtering in from outside. Within it, there were three fishes swimming in a lazy circle.

The white light coming from them was not like the other fishes. Lu Qing'er saw that there was a thread of gold in the white light.

Quickly taking them up for a closer look, she saw that each of them held a white-eye treasured artifact, although the white eyes had a faint gold line in the middle.

"Gilded white-eye?"

As young mistress of Golden Dragon Bank, there was much knowledge that she had been exposed to. She immediately understood what it was thanks to her expertise with handling treasures before.

Gilded white-eye referred to upper white-eye treasured artifacts that were on the verge of becoming gold-eye treasured artifacts. It was a hint of the power within that was just waiting to come out. In other words, such treasured artifacts were the best of the white-eye treasured artifacts, and naturally the most expensive as well.

Although still considerably inferior to true gold-eye treasured artifacts, but they were also a notch stronger than upper white-eye treasured artifacts.

That was why Lu Qing'er was so surprised to see not one, but three of them here!

She looked at them again. One was a black armor, another was a rhombus-shaped jewel with some sort of icy power, and the last was a bow with some light-rune trimmings.

A wonderful spread...

Lu Qing'er sighed regretfully. From what she had seen so far, all the upper-grade treasured artifacts had cost over 500 dao-gold per piece. These gilded white-eyes had to be 1000 or more, she estimated. Not a price she could afford to pay.

Still, it couldn't hurt to look.

She pulled the icy jewel close. Its frosty energies were probably a good fit for her resonance.

"Sunless Globe, upper gilded white-eye, made from subterranean dark crystal and forged to preserve the icy power of the stone. Will greatly increase ice resonant power's efficacy. Price: 200 dao-gold."

Lu Qing'er's eyes lit up with pleasure. This Sunless Globe seemed almost custom-made for her.

Eh?

She gasped. Wait... 200 dao-gold?!

How was that possible?!

She rubbed her eyes in disbelief. Indeed, it was 200 dao-gold, with no extra zeros.

"Impossible. Could it be miswritten?" she mumbled to herself. If other upper white-eye treasured artifacts were 500-600 dao-gold, then how could something far superior to them be 200 dao-gold?

It was too far off the mark.

A sudden thought occurred to her and she stretched out a hand to catch hold of the other two fishes.

"Blacklight Panoply. Upper gilded white-eye. Made from blacklight steel with superb defenses. The armor is heavy and requires strong physical stamina. Price: 200 dao-gold."

"Lambent Hawkeye. Upper gilded white-eye. This bow is fashioned from the bones of the lambent hawk, which can be activated by resonant power. Fires at the speed of light, unleashes a sonic wave that disrupts enemy state of mind. Price: 200 dao-gold."

Three gilded white-eyes for a total of 600 dao-gold? That was the price of a single ordinary upper white-eye!

How?! Was this some sort of easter egg?

The coincidence was too good to be true.

Moreover, these three treasures were a perfect fit for her team. Sunless Globe for her icy powers, the cumbersome Blacklight Panoply for the tireless beast-man Qin Zhulu. Perhaps now he would also have the defenses to balance his recklessness... although knowing him, he might simply take it as the green light to be even wilder than before. As for the Lambent Hawkeye... wasn't Li Luo using two shortswords and a bow?

They might as well have written their names on it already.

It would be insulting her intelligence if she was supposed to accept this as coincidence.

In any case, her mind was made up. She made the transaction, paid 600 dao-gold, then left with her new treasures.

No matter how these treasured artifacts came about, they were already here, and she was not about to pass them up.

They would need the best equipment if they were going to take on someone as strong as Lin Suo. Li Luo had even started to prepare some sort of dangerous secret technique for her sake. She had to do her best too.

With these three gilded treasured artifacts, their chances would be much better.

The Golden Dragon Dao Fields this time had been extremely odd from the start. Back at Xia Kingdom, she would ask her mum what was happening...

Quickening her pace, she came out to see Li Luo and Qin Zhulu already waiting for her.

Qin Zhulu was running his fingers up and down a powerful-looking black spear, as heavy as his last. He could not take his hands off his new toy. Li Luo was looking more ambivalent, nervous, excited, but also worried.

"You're back. Found something suitable?" he grinned when she arrived.

She ran to them and took hold of Li Luo's sleeve, then led him quickly to the shelter of some trees. "Come with me, both of you," she whispered.

Both boys looked at each other, puzzled, but followed.

As they slipped into a small grove, Lu Qing'er immediately pulled out Blacklight Panoply and Lambent Hawkeye before they asked any questions.

Both stared at the golden line in the middle of the white-eyes for a long time in stunned silence.

Chapter 0362: Starting Gun

In the little copse all was quiet for a long while before Li Luo and Qin Zhulu began to stir. They shook their heads to clear it.

"These are... gilded white-eyes...!" "You're really something else, Qing'er," Li Luo said to her admiringly. "You actually managed to sneak treasured artifacts in."

The Golden Dragon Dao Fields had a quirky rule, which was that those who came in were not allowed to bring treasured artifacts from outside. That was why Li Luo and the others had all come in with ordinary resonant artifacts.

Suddenly Lu Qing'er had two gilded white-eyes with her. They had no idea how she had pulled it off.

She rolled her eyes at him. "I can't work miracles like that. I just got these out of The Reservoir."

Li Luo shook his head. "Come on, Qing'er, no need to treat us like strangers here. It's not like we're going to rat you out for this."

Got them out of The Reservoir? That would be the real miracle. They had been right there with her as well. After so long, Li Luo had not seen many upper white-eyes, and not even a single gilded white-eye. Besides, the upper white-eye treasured artifacts were already priced at about 500 dao-gold. These two looked like they were four-digit-worthy. How could Lu Qing'er possibly have gotten that much dao-gold?

It was impossible that she could have "gotten" them.

Qin Zhulu nodded in reticent agreement.

"I'm not lying," she said impatiently. I did get them out of The Reservoir. Besides these two, I also have this..." She showed them the icy jewel that immediately cooled the air around them.

"They were priced at 200 dao-gold apiece, so I only spent 600 dao-gold."

Li Luo and Qin Zhulu shared a perplexed look. Lu Qing'er was looking serious, and she wasn't the kind to be lying with a face like that.

But... 200 dao-gold for a gilded white-eye?

That was the sort of bargain only to be found for expiring cabbages.

"Er... what's going on?" Li Luo frowned. Something was off.

"I don't know either. But I suddenly saw a crevice in The Reservoir, and found these three inside," Lu Qing'er explained.

"Could they be because of the half Golden Dragon Qi that you still have?" Qin Zhulu asked.

Lu Qing'er splayed her hands to signify her cluelessness.

Li Luo sighed. "We have been running rings inside these Dao Fields, but in truth it's been running rings right back around my head."

Doorstep delivery of such treasures. That was all too kind.

"But for whatever reason, they're here now. No reason to throw them away," Li Luo said. Hear hoofbeats, think horses not zebras. He would just accept them for now. They had a big battle up ahead, and these treasures would be very useful.

"That's exactly what I thought," Lu Qing'er nodded, handing over Lambent Hawkeye to Li Luo and Blacklight Panoply to Qin Zhulu.

"Test them out?"

Li Luo eagerly took Lambent Hawkeye with both hands. The limbs of the bow seemed to be made out of some white crystal that was hollowed inside to further reduce the weight and increase its draw. He could feel the spirit of the lambent hawk carved lovingly in every choice that had made the weapon. He pulled the string back, and the white gut bent obediently to the perfect tautness against his fingers. A little thrum of power tingled at his fingertip, and the cry of the lambent hawk could be faintly heard.

"Sweet weapon!"

Li Luo exclaimed. He could feel the power of this weapon on its own, and it was in harmony with his own light resonant energy.

Which became just a little more lively within him.

A simple pull of this bow was all it took for him to realize the difference from his shortswords and the silver-blue bow it made.

Resonant artifacts could never hope to cross the gulf of difference in ability.

While Li Luo was testing his bow out, Qin Zhulu was doing the same with Blacklight Panoply. The moment he donned it, he felt impregnable as an iron fortress. The black armor glinted with dark light as it shifted along with his body's movements. Wearing it made him feel invulnerable.

With his black spear and this black armor, Qin Zhulu felt ten times stronger than before.

"Awesome!"

Qin Zhulu whooped. Although Blacklight Panoply was heavy, but physical strength had always been one of his better attributes. Not even the Third Changing Lin Suo could cut him down easily now, he believed.

And when the time came to face him, Qin Zhulu believed that this armor would allow him to go all out even more than before.

Lu Qing'er was also admiring her Sunless Globe, resting prettily on top of her ice silk glove. Its smooth surface rested snugly against the patterned lace.

Weng!

A navy blue ripple of frost energy bloomed from her glove, and its icy power was enough to send a thrill down the back of Li Luo's neck. Lu Qing'er might only be a First Pattern, but the power he just saw was enough to cause a severe frostbite even to him, a Third Pattern.

Seemed like the Sunless Globe was quite the accent to her frost power.

"I think you can start accumulating more of those snow globes," Li Luo grinned. "I've even thought of a good title for you. You will be... Empress Snowager." "That sounds absolutely terrible," she said flatly.

"The Popsicle Queen?"

"Is the Lambent Hawkeye making you allergic?" she asked sweetly. "Shall I take it back."

Li Luo grinned and gave it another fond pat. "It's just lovely, thanks. I'll pay you back the price in skygold when we get back to Xia Kingdom."

Lu Qing'er scowled at him. "If you talk any more nonsense, I'm going to get angry."

"It's a gilded white-eye!" Li Luo protested. "It's too expensive."

He knew that both his and Qin Zhulu's gilded white-eye treasured artifacts had to be worth at least five million skygold back outside. It was no small sum.

"Isn't getting treasured artifacts all to help me in the end?" Lu Qing'er said severely, ending the conversation. She rounded on Qin Zhulu, who was hesitating whether to speak. "And you shut your mouth too!"

Qin Zhulu was stung. He hadn't even opened his mouth yet, so technically he could not shut it. Anyway, it was all Li Luo who started this, why was this his fault?! Lu Qing'er stomped out of the copse.

Li Luo watched her go and shrugged to himself with a helpless smile.

"So..." Qin Zhulu asked in a low voice. "We... keep the stuff?"

"Well, I guess Qing'er's kindness should be accepted. Let's do our best to get her a Golden Dragon Mountain writ as a return gift... Of course if you still feel bad you can pass me the money, and I'll bring her out and spoil her with food and gifts."

Qin Zhulu looked at him. "Li Luo."

Li Luo sighed, then tucked Lambent Hawkeye away into his pocket sphere. Qin Zhulu did the same with his armor. These treasures were to be saved for the big fight, where they could provide a surprise factor.

The two walked out of the copse, when suddenly they heard a thunderous rumble from a valley quite a distance away.

Every single person in the vicinity of The Reservoir froze, and turned to the direction of the sound intently. It was where Golden Dragon Mountain was.

There was also a majestic whirlpool of worldly natural energy spinning lazily in the air above Golden Dragon Mountain. It was breathtaking.

"That's the sign that the Golden Dragon Mountain writ is about to appear!" Lu Qing'er exclaimed.

Li Luo and Qin Zhulu watched on curiously.

As did every other person in the area. They all watched the energy vortex, which continued to gather and grow.

More than 10 minutes later.

Suddenly five beams of golden light rained down from the middle of the vortex, landing at the peak of the colossal Golden Dragon Mountain.

"The Golden Dragon Mountain writs are here!"

"There are five of them!"

"Go, go, go!"

"..."

Suddenly there was a mad rush at The Reservoir, as squads hurried to regroup and head over.

"Five Golden Dragon Mountain writs."

Li Luo blew out a long breath of air, then turned to Lu Qing'er and Qin Zhulu.

"The fun's about to begin. Let's go too."

"The goal is simple. If we can't find dogs to feed Lin Suo to, we'll just beat him up until he can fit in a kennel. And also, get a Golden Dragon Mountain writ!"

Chapter 0363: Up the Mountain

The appearance of the Golden Dragon Mountain Writs was like a bolt of lightning, electrifying the atmosphere. All the teams at the Reservoir scrambled to head out for Golden Dragon Mountain.

Everyone understood that there were only five writs and more than a hundred teams, which meant that only the best among them would actually stand a chance. But that did not stop them from trying. What if they succeeded? That irrational hope was all they had.

As for Li Luo's trio, they followed the masses towards Golden Dragon Mountain as well.

Half a day later, they finally made it to the foot of Golden Dragon Mountain just as the evening sun vanished over the horizon.

Many of the teams were camping around here for the night.

When they arrived, someone waved to Li Luo, and he saw that it was Gu Ying.

He walked over to her with a smile. "We meet again."

"I didn't think you'd be brave enough to chase him," she replied.

"Wasn't it you who told me that it's best to get the Golden Dragon Qi back?"

Gu Ying nodded. "I hope you're prepared. It's not going to be easy to take the Golden Dragon Qi from a Third Changing opponent.

"One more piece of info, free of charge. If you want to find Lin Suo, you can choose the fourth peak. Lin Suo's already put out the word that he's staking a claim to the writ there.

"This is pretty normal—the strongest teams will declare where they're intending to go. That way, these heavy movers can divide up the spoils among them and won't clash with each other."

Li Luo looked up at Golden Dragon Mountain. Indeed, while it had looked like a simple triangle from a distance, he could see many secondary peaks from this angle. And the fourth peak that Gu Ying mentioned had to be one of them.

"Many thanks." Li Luo cupped his fist.

"Don't mention it. It was easily available if you asked anyone else anyway." She waved it away.

"I hope you succeed. Lin Suo has already taken down quite a few teams single-handedly. He's really strong, and that blood resonance is not at all easy to deal with."

She nodded a farewell and left with her team.

"Quite kind, isn't she?" Lu Qing'er said too casually, eyeing Gu Ying's sexy figure and checking Li Luo's reaction.

"She's a really nice person," Li Luo agreed.

"Nice person?" Lu Qing'er said sharply. "Look at Zhao Ziyang. Did he bat an eyelid at you after the Golden Dragon Qi disappeared? Gu Ying is just lusting after your looks," she said snootily.

"That's shallow," Li Luo protested. "Besides, it's not like I can change my looks! I just want everyone to see who I am inside! The effort I put into cultivation and the grit in my character!"

Qin Zhulu winced. "Could you not be so loud about it? Everyone's turning to look!"

Lu Qing'er rolled her eyes at him as well. This guy's skin was so thick, he could give the Blacklight Panoply a run for its money.

Li Luo coughed to hide his embarrassment. "Er, well, anyway, it looks like we're heading for the fourth peak!" he said hastily. "There'll be a Golden Dragon Mountain Writ there as well, so perhaps Qing'er could explain the details of the process to us."

Lu Qing'er nodded. "Firstly, don't think that climbing Golden Dragon Mountain will be a walk in the park. There are many dangers, and one of the most inevitable ones is the golden aquiline wasps. They are small-bodied spirit beasts with big stings. They win because of their numbers, and we need to be careful of interception zones infested by the wasps.

"And we have to be quick about the ascension. Once someone reaches the peak, the energy barrier will begin to form. Once the barrier around the peak is fully formed, the peak will be sealed off from the rest of the mountain, and no one else will be able to enter."

Li Luo nodded. "I assume these golden aquiline wasps don't have any attacks other than their stings. Like ants taking down an elephant. If we're caught, we'll be finished, but we won't be caught or finished. I have a plan!"

Qin Zhulu was surprised. "Already?! Li Luo is quite a reliable guy at times."

"When we start climbing the mountain, you'll take point," Li Luo said, clapping Qin Zhulu on the shoulder. "Your defenses are awesome, and you can just tank them all. With me and Qing'er supporting you from behind, we'll definitely break through at full speed!" he said encouragingly.

Qin Zhulu winced. That was the plan?

That was just meat shielding with extra words!

What kind of monster would suggest such a plan?

"Don't worry, you'll be fine," Lu Qing'er reassured him. "The golden aquiline wasp has a painful sting, but you're strong enough to bear it."

Qin Zhulu grunted, but he accepted the plan. After all, he was indeed the designated tank among these three. A tank's role did not include rights and privileges. Dirty work, all day every day.

"Little Lu understands. He's a reliable teammate." Li Luo cheered.

Qin Zhulu ignored him. This guy was a dual-resonance maggot, and even Lu Qing'er was being corrupted by him.

"When the energy barrier at the foot of the mountain dissipates, we'll go." There was a huge barrier of gold barring their way, preventing anyone from getting an unfair head start.

They finished their preparations and then waited in silence.

They waited for about two hours before loud chatter from the crowd woke them from their lounging. The energy barrier was fading away rapidly before their eyes.

BOOM!

When the energy barrier was gone, resonant power started to crackle to life.

Everyone shot forward, charging up the mountain.

Li Luo's trio followed.

From the base of the mountain, the crowd divided up into five smaller groups headed for the peaks that held Golden Dragon Mountain Writs.

Li Luo looked ahead to the front of the pack, where a familiar, vermilion streak stood out from the rest. He was moving with great speed and was steadily pulling away from the rest of them.

Lin Suo.

Li Luo locked on to him grimly.

"Mongrel, if I don't finish you off here and now, I'll make sure Yu Hongxi shows you what despair truly is!"

Chapter 0364: Golden Aquiline Wasp Zone

Shadowy figures zipped up the mountainside in the gloom of the evening, fast enough to blow tunnels of leaves up in their wake.

From afar, they looked like little rivulets of light flowing up the great beast's head in reverse.

Li Luo and his squad grimly poured on the speed in silence, focusing all their energy into moving forward. Although they were one of the weakest squads here in terms of resonant power, they all had advantageous resonance grades. Qin Zhulu with an upper eighth-grade, Lu Qing'er with a lower eighth-grade, and Li Luo with dual resonances. That put them at average or above average in terms of fighting ability. And if you included their three new gilded white-eye treasured artifacts, they were a force to be reckoned with.

"Another ten minutes or so and we'll be in the golden aquiline wasp infestation zone!" Lu Qing'er shouted to them over the howling wind.

Both responded with a terse nod, looking up at the golden belt of clouds ahead, swaying and shimmering gently. They knew that once they got closer, they would be able to make out the wasps that made up those clouds.

Li Luo raised a hand as a preparatory signal for them to penetrate through.

Ten minutes passed in a blur.

Up close, they could hear the deafening hum that made their eardrums vibrate. Li Luo could make out the golden aquiline wasps as well. They had golden-yellow bodies and long, needle-like proboscis that made one shiver just looking at it.

"Prepare to charge!" Li Luo yelled, largely in the direction of Qin Zhulu. The latter let loose with a low roar that activated his Snarling Golden Demon Tiger resonance. His body began to bulge with new muscles, and finally the golden tiger stripes covered his skin in a final wrapping of power.

Li Luo and Lu Qing'er took up defensive positions behind him and then they charged into the golden aquiline wasp infestation.

The wasps hummed angrily in response, their stingers aimed at Qin Zhulu.

He swept them aside with his black spear, its sizable girth working like a bludgeon against their slight bodies. He crushed them to pulp with each swipe, and both Li Luo and Lu Qing'er helped out, guarding against any wasps that came too close to his flank.

The golden aquiline wasps came on and on. As the meat shield, Qin Zhulu was feeling the worst of it, and there were so many wasps that the stings broke through his defenses frequently enough. Qin Zhulu was getting stung badly.

After landing their stings, the golden aquiline wasps would thrash and die in agony, but they left behind wicked-looking stingers sticking out of Qin Zhulu.

Soon enough, he looked like a tiger who had been playing with a porcupine.

His face was locked in a tight grimace. Although these stings were not particularly life-threatening, they hurt like mad.

With another low growl, he released a short pulse of resonant power that blew the stingers out from his skin, each one popping up with a small spurt of blood.

"Qing'er, stop the bleeding!" Li Luo ordered.

She immediately put a palm on Qin Zhulu's body, sending out frost energy that covered the wounds.

Li Luo used his own healing resonant power to speed Qin Zhulu's recovery.

Feeling his wounds ease up made him sigh in relief. These two were quite reliable supports. It was always easier to tank if you knew the others had your back.

Twirling his spear, he charged into the fray again, knocking golden aquiline wasps left and right as he headed straight for the peak.

Li Luo was watching their surroundings closely even as he followed his teammate ahead. The other squads were all too busy to care about anyone else, howling as they made their painful way through the infestation.

He was watching their front intently.

A crimson streak of light blazing through the wasps. Lin Suo must have cultivated some sort of illusion resonance art that allowed him to avoid most of the wasps' attacks. He was far ahead of them now.

Li Luo even sensed that Lin Suo was gradually increasing his speed, intent on breaking free of the pack. He probably aimed to activate the barrier at the peak as quickly as possible, leaving as many outside as he could.

Then the Golden Dragon Mountain Writ would be his for sure.

Things were not looking good for Li Luo. Lin Suo was navigating this impediment much faster than he had expected.

A Third Changing of the Evolving Resonance Tier—it was at times like these where the difference showed.

Li Luo and his squad fought forward as hard as they could, and Qin Zhulu bore the rain of stings with stoic determination.

Around them, the yelping and howling had become much more infrequent since people were dropping out.

Li Luo paid no more attention to them. He was most worried about Lin Suo pulling ahead with frightful speed. If this kept up, they would be left behind. They might not even make it to the peak before Lin Suo's barrier fully formed.

A few tense moments later, Li Luo made a decision. "Qin Zhulu, don't!"

They could not hide it any longer.

Qin Zhulu perked up, pulling out the Blacklight Panoply from his pocket sphere. He clapped it onto his meaty frame, and the armor seemed to come to life on its own, obediently wrapping around him and tying itself up at the joints and seams.

A dark light gleamed across the armor from head to toe, and Qin Zhulu suddenly became a shiny, black tank.

Ting, ting, ting!

The golden aquiline wasps' stings were completely repelled by the Blacklight Panoply. They made ineffective pinging noises that drained some energy from Qin Zhulu but did not harm him.

Renewed, Qin Zhulu charged forward with fresh vigor.

The three remained on the tail of the crimson figure up ahead.

Their sudden increase in speed was so surprising that even Lin Suo noticed. He turned and frowned. "Haunting me like a ghost."

He was not expecting them to really chase him.

"So they found a battle armor treasured artifact in the Reservoir. Looks like quite a good one too," Lin Suo muttered to himself as he watched Qin Zhulu from the corner of his eye. This armor was helping them resist the golden aquiline wasps with relative ease.

"No matter. Let me show you the gap in our strength." Lin Suo smirked arrogantly. His crimson power roared and he shot forth like a rocket, leaving a rust-red trail in his wake. After a few short minutes, he had passed through the golden aquiline wasp infestation belt.

When he broke through, there was a great disturbance in the energies around him. A curtain of energy gradually began to descend.

Right outside the wasp zone was the boundary line for the barrier.

Li Luo's trio felt a little pang of trepidation, and they moved forward with a new burst of nervous speed.

They were not far from breaking out of the belt now.

Lin Suo watched them approach, a little startled by how well they were doing. He raised his hand, gathering some crimson power on his fingertip.

"Finger of Blood and Bone!"

Psst!

Again, his fingernail tore backwards of its own accord with a sickening ripping sound, and his finger bone flew forward like a bullet rifling through the air.

He was aiming at Qin Zhulu's foot.

He could see that the three were only making good progress thanks to Qin Zhulu tanking everything for them. Take down the tank, and Li Luo and Lu Qing'er would drown in the sea of golden aquiline wasps.

Qin Zhulu saw the blast of crimson light come for him, but he was being held down by the wasps. He could not face Lin Suo's attack.

And given how strong Lin Suo was, he just might not be able to tank this one.

"Ignore it! Charge on!" Li Luo said tersely.

Qin Zhulu's eyes flashed. Setting his jaw, he charged.

The crimson light came on.

It was just about to hit them when a bowstring suddenly sang with the cry of a lambent hawk.

A curiously bright, white arrow of light flashed past Qin Zhulu, smashing into the white finger bone.

BOOM!

The two bursts of resonant power canceled each other out, evaporating the golden aquiline wasps near the collision.

The white finger bone still had some leftover energy, breaking past the first light arrow.

Another spirit arrow followed, then another, each one slowing the finger bone attack by a good margin until finally it cracked.

"Get ready to break out!"

Qin Zhulu rumbled. Summoning a new torrent of resonant power, he barreled through the last layer of golden aquiline wasps, carrying them out to blessedly-free air again.

Li Luo and Lu Qing'er were right behind him, and they broke out as well, panting from the adrenaline rush.

Behind them, the dense, shimmering cloud of golden aquiline wasps buzzed on, but they did not pursue.

The barrier of energy slowly descended between the wasps and them, closing down with finality.

And in front of them was a smiling Lin Suo.

Chapter 0365: Rematch with Lin Suo

Golden Dragon Mountain, fourth peak.

Lin Suo faced the trio, who were still panting from their close shave with the wasps and the energy barrier.

"You really came..." his voice trailed off on a note of amused disbelief.

"Lin Suo, are you that eager to get the writ? Why not come back to the Xia Kingdom's Golden Dragon Bank for a holiday with us?" Li Luo invited him warmly.

Lin Suo laughed and shook his head. "Why would I do something suicidal? Do you think I'm as dumb as the three of you? Three Pattern Genesis Tier cultivators chasing me? In the outside world, you would have been dead today."

"Perhaps not," Li Luo argued. "What if we made a plea so impassioned that it touched you and you decided to come back to the Xia Kingdom with us?"

Lin Suo snorted. He clenched his fist, summoning crimson power that burst forth with a wet, rusty smell. "No chance, Li Luo. Not even if your tongue were as silver as your hair. You cannot get the Golden Dragon Qi back from me. And I will get the writ without trouble and fly on to higher stages. Not even Yu Hongxi can do anything to me.

"As for you, you promised Yu Hongxi you'd take good care of Qing'er, but now you've dragged her around in the mud. You think you'll be seen as anything else besides a loud-mouthed scumbag?"

"You're the scum! Drooling down the jaw of a trash-loving mongrel!" Qin Zhulu snapped back at him with surprising eloquence. He was not comfortable with verbal sparring. Sweeping up his heavy, black spear, he sent powerful thrusts of energy torpedoing through the air.

Lin Suo looked at the energy blasts with disinterest. His own blood resonant power adhered to his body with coagulated stickiness. He sent out a few bloody palm prints that knocked Qin Zhulu's attack aside easily.

The difference in resonant power.

Lin Suo was at the Evolving Resonance Tier. Not only was there a difference in resonant power quantity compared to the Pattern Genesis Tier, there was also a qualitative difference. Evolving Resonance meant that the resonance was even more aligned with the user. For example, Lin Suo's blood resonance

was no longer just raw power, it emulated the special properties of blood, becoming even more corrosive and permeating.

As he continued to grow stronger, his resonance would evolve alongside him. If Qin Zhulu could reach the General Stage with his Snarling Golden Demon Tiger resonance, it would probably take on a more tangible beast shape.

BOOM!

The bloody palm prints blasted past his spear torpedos, continuing on towards Qin Zhulu. With a low roar of despair, he prepared to tank them.

But before he did, Lu Qing'er had made her move as well, her palms rapidly icing over to form a sphere of frost that crashed into the palm prints.

Crash!

The ice sphere shattered, but it reduced the resonant power of the attack significantly.

Qin Zhulu carefully aimed his spear and skewered the bloody-palm attack.

It was like taking on a rhinoceros' charge. The impact blew Qin Zhulu off his feet, and his entire body was shaken up badly. Luckily, the Blacklight Panoply released a ring of black light that negated the rest of the resonant power.

While Qin Zhulu and Lu Qing'er were dealing with the attack, Li Luo had attacked from the right side as well, his twin swords slashing out.

Ding!

Lin Suo's blood resonant power seemed to harden around him, blocking the swords easily. "You cannot even begin to imagine the difference between us." He laughed loudly.

And then he counterattacked, sending wave after wave of bloody energy at Li Luo.

Li Luo scrambled back desperately. The tables were flipped on him now, from attacker to defender. He had to block each wave of energy with all his strength, and still it shook him from head to toe.

Just like Lin Suo had said—an unimaginable difference.

Li Luo took cover behind a cluster of large trees. Charging his palm with leafy-green power, he sank it into one of the trees.

Rustle!

The trees seemed to spring to life, sending snake-like vines twisting out towards Lin Suo. He did not seem concerned in the slightest, his blood resonance leaping to meet them and rotting them all away to nothing.

Swish!

With a flash of red light, he appeared before Li Luo, and his truncheon came crashing down.

It moved through the air with a dull whistle, leaving a trail of blood in its wake.

Clang!

Li Luo blocked it with both his short swords, but this time the impact was too much to take. His short swords had finally reached their limit and both broke with a disheartening crack.

But at the same moment, Lin Suo's eyes widened slightly. The ground under his feet had become extraordinarily soft, almost swampy. He sank in rapidly.

Underneath Li Luo's feet, water resonant power kept him afloat. He quickly circulated some energy through his numbed arms to get them back up and working again.

"Qing'er!"

Ignoring his wounds, he shouted loudly to her.

She slammed her hands to the ground, charging it with ice resonant power. Instantly, the swamp froze over.

Lin Suo was encased in frozen mud, flash frozen and incapacitated for the moment.

Li Luo did not relent. Using his wood resonant power, he sent more vines out to bind Lin Suo's arms.

"Qin Zhulu, get him!" he shouted.

Boom!

The ground shook as Qin Zhulu lowered his spear like a lance, gathering resonant power as he charged forward. He was like a knight, except he was not borne by a herbivorous steed. His spear was on track to ram directly into Lin Suo's skull.

Their teamwork was excellent.

Lin Suo was looking fearful now. Li Luo's well-executed plan had caught him off guard.

"Get... off me!"

His eyes widening as he watched the spear approach, Lin Suo screamed and lashed out madly. The blood seemed to create a boiling layer over his skin that melted the frozen swamp and rotted away the vines. He spat out mouthfuls of blood that bloomed into vortexes of energy between himself and Qin Zhulu.

Pssh!

Each time Qin Zhulu passed through a vortex, his speed reduced significantly, and he felt his body become heavier.

When the spear tip was a few centimeters away from Lin Suo, he could no longer budge.

No matter how hard Qin Zhulu strained, he was completely unable to move forward.

"F*ck!"

Qin Zhulu's neck muscles strained under the exertion. Finally, he cast his spear aside and leaped on Lin Suo's face like a wild animal.

Crash!

A ferocious fling from Lin Suo sent Qin Zhulu flying. He was on the floor a dozen meters away, covered in wounds.

Lin Suo was also dazed. Qin Zhulu had done his best to tear Lin Suo's face off, leaving his face bloody and teeth loose. He looked equally woeful.

But Lin Suo was angrier than ever now.

He had not imagined that three Pattern Genesis fleas could ever deal such damage to a mighty Third Changing like himself.

Screaming, his resonant power came forth again.

He rose into the air and landed on a tree. Layer after layer of crimson resonant power formed rings around his body, pulsing out with an erratic wildness.

His anger had consumed him, and he was holding nothing back anymore.

Li Luo looked at the enraged Lin Suo charging up with everything he had, and he reached into his own pocket sphere and pulled out the great, white bow made to resemble a hawk with its wings outstretched.

Everything depended on this now...

"Let's see who will be left standing!"

Chapter 0366: In Synergy

Lin Suo swayed on top of the tree, continuing to gather red plasma that flowed around him in swirls. He stared at Li Luo with a deadly fury, ready to wipe out the irritating opponent who had actually managed to make him panic for a moment.

He had felt true fear for a moment back then. All caused by three Pattern Genesis Tier nobodies.

Lin Suo spat out a mouthful of frothy blood that he had been gurgling. Clapping his hands together with a thunderous crack, the swirling blood spread out into a mist that settled over his skin.

It slowly began to form a crimson silhouette that flickered like a body double.

"Tiger-general resonance art, Blood Buddha!"

The bloody silhouette clarified into an angry visage of blood.

Lin Suo's aura blew up into a whole new level. Clearly this was his ultimate move.

Li Luo blanched a little, then he signaled to the other two to be careful. He himself retreated, drawing the Lambent Hawkeye as he went. A blast of energy flew forth in an arrow of light.

The light arrow moved with great speed, even faster than the waterlight arrow that had taken many an opponent by surprise with how fast it moved. This was the power boost that a treasured artifact like the Lamberent Hawkeye brought him.

Even Lin Suo could barely track the movement of the attack. He was surprised by the speed, but not afraid. Speed without power was nothing. He tanked the light arrow with his bloody visage.

Pssh!

The light arrow melted away into the visage.

The gory power around Lin Suo churned as he turned, speeding towards Li Luo so quickly that he left afterimages behind him.

Li Luo ran for it. Lin Suo was in peak condition right now. He would be like a praying mantis trying to stop a wagon.

Lin Suo was fast, and he caught up to Li Luo in a matter of moments.

BOOM!

What felt like a tower of steel crashed into Lin Suo from the side, throwing him off his course.

Crash!

Lin Suo was sent flying a dozen meters, but so was the steel-encased figure. He smashed through a few trees.

And then he stood up again as if nothing had happened. Gripping his heavy, black spear tightly, he charged Lin Suo again fearlessly.

Lin Suo frowned. Qin Zhulu was a real pain in the ass. His attacks were not particularly threatening, but they were disrupting his attempts to shut down the only possible threat—Li Luo. Plus, Qin Zhulu had always been a tough guy, and now he was encased in that black armor. He was as impregnable as a turtle shell.

He turned on Qin Zhulu first. “Well then, if you want to die, I'll grant you death!”

He swung his mace, which was gleaming with blood, and charged Qin Zhulu.

Clang, clang, clang!

Each time they clashed, Qin Zhulu was badly rattled from head to toe. Soon, his palms were bleeding from the sheer effort it took to hold on to his weapon during each exchange. Still, he fought on without making a single sound. He risked his life again and again to attack Lin Suo's vitals.

His efforts were heroic but fruitless. Every single attack was nullified by the bloody visage that protected Lin Suo.

Such was the disparity between their powers.

Luckily, Lu Qing'er had joined the fray as well. She chipped in with well-timed attacks that helped Qin Zhulu catch his breath, buying him precious time at crucial moments. But even with the pair working together, they were still badly outclassed by Lin Suo.

While Qin Zhulu was fighting Lin Suo with all his might, Li Luo was in a nearby tree. His keen eyes were watching intently for the slightest opening. He took a deep breath and drew his bow.

Within his body, both resonant palaces shuddered as they generated power.

His four resonant bubbles popped.

The two resonant powers clashed, mixed, struggled, and finally... melded.

The synchronization between his dual resonances gave Li Luo a dramatic increase in power.

His fingers danced across the bowstring, and a light arrow formed in the shape of a hawk. This was the Lambent Hawkeye's power, its ability to channel its user's resonant power into the arrow and fire it with a sonic-boom attack.

The stronger the wielder was, the more powerful the arrow would be.

Li Luo's dual resonance-charged light arrow was many times stronger than before. It flew out with a pair of resonant power wings, streaming through the air like a hawk in full flight.

And at the tip of the arrow was the hawk's sharp beak, brimming with remarkable and deadly power.

Halos constantly bloomed from the arrow's tip, peeling away as it hurtled on.

This was the strongest attack Li Luo could muster right now.

Lin Suo inhaled sharply as he fought off Qin Zhulu and Lu Qing'er. He could sense Li Luo gathering his energies for this attack, and he could sense that Li Luo's arrow would actually pose a serious threat to him.

With the treasured artifact, Li Luo was a force to be feared.

With a sudden, effortful blast of blood resonant power, he forced Qin Zhulu back in the instant that Li Luo fired. The hawk's defiant scream rent the air, and the sky turned white with light.

The sonic boom attack made Lin Suo's brain buzz with a foggy haze. He frowned but quickly shook it off.

Hands tightly wrapped around his mace, he prepared himself to deal with Li Luo's strongest attack. He knew that if he could just stop this one attack, Li Luo's squad would be set back drastically. The advantage would be his again, once they had spent their greatest weapon.

Swoosh!

The white light swept out past him.

Just as Lin Suo prepared to receive the light arrow, it suddenly veered away to his right.

Had it missed?

Bizarrely, it was headed straight for Lu Qing'er.

"Qing'er!" Li Luo yelled.

Her slim hands moved, icy resonant power forming on her lace gloves. She created a mirror of ice that deflected the light arrow.

Swoosh!

The arrow was deflected, but not towards Lin Suo. Instead, it was flying back to Li Luo.

Lin Suo was completely wrong-footed now. He had no idea how this attack was unfolding.

His confusion was soon replaced with fear.

He saw Li Luo also holding up a mirror of light to reflect his own arrow.

When the hawk-arrow of light pierced his mirror of light, it was reflected yet again. But this time, it seemed to become even faster, leaving a faint afterimage in the air.

Swish!

Even someone as strong as Lin Suo could only see a glimmer of white light ricocheting around. Before he knew it, it was in his face, and cold sweat ran down his forehead.

What speed!

Li Luo was an unsettling bag of tricks!

How had he increased the light arrow's speed with his mirror?!

Lin Suo bellowed, his resonant power surging forth. His crimson visage turned an even more brilliant shade of red, crossing its fists before him like a shield.

Pssh!

The light arrow was almost there.

All three watched with bated breath as their best hope pierced the blood visage.

Psssssh!

The blood visage's arms were penetrated by the arrow, which buried itself in Lin Suo's chest.

Crash!

Lin Suo was sent flying, spitting a mouthful of blood that sprayed through the air. This time it was an injury rather than an attack.

Lu Qing'er and Qin Zhulu's eyes widened in delight. Their incredibly strong foe had fallen!

Chapter 0367: Octagold Shield

Both Lu Qing'er and Qin Zhulu felt a thrill of exuberance when they saw Lin Suo wounded. This was their first attack that had really connected in any meaningful way. This attack cooked up by Li Luo was really unexpected.

As happy as he was, Qin Zhulu still had his sharp battle-sense. Heavy spear in hand, he leaped forward to press the advantage while Lin Suo was wounded. Shining with dark-red power, he stabbed out at Lin Suo.

Qin Zhulu might come across as slow and awkward in many situations, but he was in his element in battle. A true beast, honed with a lifetime of experience in fighting. He understood the importance of kicking the opponent while they were down.

Weng!

It was a vicious thrust that whistled through the air.

But when the spear tip touched Lin Suo's body, a dark, golden light repelled the attack.

Clang!

The clear sound of metal, with a cluster of sparks. The resonant power ricocheted back, and the shock traveled back up Qin Zhulu's arm.

He staggered backwards, shaking his head in confusion and pain.

Both Li Luo and Lu Qing'er were dismayed as well. An octagonal-shaped shield of gold was floating before Lin Suo, shining gently. In the center of the shield was a small, white mark that resembled an eye.

"Upper white-eye treasured artifact?!" Lu Qing'er exclaimed.

This was not that great of a surprise. After all, Lin Suo had been to the Reservoir as well. Of course he would come out with something. They were just surprised that he had chosen a defensive upper white-eye treasured artifact.

There was another mark on the Octagold Shield, evidently from Li Luo's previous attack.

Lin Suo slowly crawled to his feet. His face was black as a storm, and blood still dribbled down from his lip. Although the Octagold Shield had slowed down Li Luo's arrow, the impact had passed through to his vital organs.

He was both fearful and angry.

Never had he dreamed that a mere Third Pattern of the Pattern Genesis Tier would be able to cause such damage to him.

If he hadn't pulled a defensive upper white-eye from the Reservoir, he might already be face-down in the water.

"Looks like I underestimated you," he called up to Li Luo, who was still perched in the tree. "Dual resonances are quite legendary.

"But I don't think you have a second attack like that ready."

Li Luo sighed. Indeed, that had been his strongest, once-off attack. He had used both his dual resonances and resonant bubbles and channeled them into his Lambent Hawkeye. Lastly, he had

reflected the attack with his Broken Mirror technique, which had no other real function besides increasing the speed of light resonant energy attacks. But sometimes speed could be power.

Through his many processes and additions, Li Luo had managed to construct that strongest arrow.

Without an upper white-eye treasured artifact like the Octagold Shield, they would have ended this battle already.

A pity.

There was not much time to beat himself up over it, because Lin Suo was ready to do the beating on his behalf. This time he turned to Li Luo, sure that no such powerful attack was coming again. Of the three, only Li Luo was a potential threat. Once he was finished off, the other two would be nothing to be feared. But he had barely started towards Li Luo when the steel tower Qin Zhulu barred his way, heavy black spear in hand.

"Scram, scram, scram!!"

Lin Suo's voice was building to a hysterical scream. Qin Zhulu was the epitome of irritation. He was wounded, but he was still ready to fight. Again and again. He was like a zombie, clambering to his feet to stand in his way at every turn.

Without Qin Zhulu's intervention, he would have caught up to Li Luo long ago.

Clang! Clang!

He sent crushing attack after crushing attack from his mace. Qin Zhulu parried desperately, deflecting them with a shrill screeching sound as they glanced off his spear.

Qin Zhulu was angry as well, his eyes red with battle lust as he advanced on a Third Changing opponent with no fear in him. He welcomed the challenge.

Li Luo watched this carefully.

At a signal, Lu Qing'er appeared by his side. *(Over)*

"Qing'er, give me a shot of Crystal Heart," he said tersely.

She looked at him doubtfully, knowing that he was about to try that risky secret art. She worried for him, but she also knew that this was not the time or place. Setting her jaw, she put a hand on Li Luo's back.

"Crystal Heart!"

A cool wave of energy flowed into Li Luo's body. It did not harm him, instead calming him down until his heart was like a cold crystal, impervious to negative emotions.

"Be careful," she blurted out. She then fled, moving to help Qin Zhulu.

Li Luo was completely calm now. He knew that Crystal Heart alone was not enough. The three-tailed heavenly wolf's corruption was too strong. Crystal Heart would only help lessen it slightly.

He pulled out a pearl, faintly glowing with a holy light. That was the upper white-eye Seraph's Pearl that he had pulled from the Reservoir.

This was the real core of Li Luo's defense, and the main reason why he would dare to try and tap into that power.

With a flick of his hand, he popped the Seraph's Pearl into his mouth. Another wave of seraphic energy spread across his entire body, calming his entire being. The effect was far stronger than Lu Qing'er's Crystal Heart.

Li Luo drew a sharp finger across his wrist, letting some blood flow. He pressed his hands into the blood with deliberate intent, channeling his will to shape it as he needed.

Heavenly Libation Chant.

According to what Pang Qianyuan had taught him, the Heavenly Libation Chant had three tiers, known as the Three Chains of Heavenly Libation Chant. He was only using the first chain. He had yet to master the second chain, so it was best not to screw around with it. With each chain, more of the three-tailed heavenly wolf's power was unlocked. Li Luo could not control so much power yet.

As for the third chain of the Heavenly Libation Chant, it was in the second half of the Heavenly Libation Chant manual, which the principal had yet to give him.

In his practice, Li Luo had always taken multiple attempts to create the Heavenly Libation mark required, but this time the combination of Crystal Heart and the Seraph's Pearl helped him succeed on the first try.

Still, this did not mean he could get careless. Li Luo knew where the real difficulty lay.

The corruption of the three-tailed heavenly wolf's will. If he could not hold that corruption at bay, not only would he be hard-pressed to utilize its power, he would also lose his mind to the savage will of the beast.

But with his heart calm and still as deep water, Li Luo did not hesitate.

The Heavenly Libation Chant helped the line of blood connect from his arm to the dark-red bracelet.

He was flooded with a power that was both familiar and savage.

Chapter 0368: Clove At First Shot

The power almost overwhelmed him. He could feel it bursting at the seams, ready to climb out of him and run away. Red veins started to pop in his eyes, and his face twitched as he fought for control. His jaw was tight and his upper lip lifted in a feral grimace.

Li Luo was completely different from how he usually was.

How he longed to rip! To tear! To kill! His heart howled with the need, trying to wrest control from his rationality. It would make him a puppet, a killing machine that would take down everything in his way.

The world in front of him was tinted with a faint, red sheen.

A voice whispered in his ear. "Is it really so bad to just give in? To kill?"

But eventually, Crystal Heart and the Seraph's Pearl helped him maintain a clear portion in his mind. He desperately clung to it like a rock in the turbulent madness that crashed all around him as he drew the Lament Hawkeye.

He had to release the power before it turned on him.

Weng!

When Li Luo released the string, all of the power rushed out of him in one draining surge, funneled into the light arrow that strained his bow like a wolf on a leash. It pulsed with charged life, trailing tail feathers of uncontainable power that spilled out from behind.

This time, the light arrow was not the shining, pure yellow from before, but instead a dark-red projectile with a menacing air about it.

The point of the arrow quivered as it tried to contain the energy within, blooming with halos of power that thrummed out in its wake.

This arrow was incredibly powerful.

Holding the bow taut was killing him. The string bit into Li Luo's drawing finger, deep enough to expose bone to air. Blood hit the floor in a steady drip as he aimed. His entire arm was screaming from the effort, and his muscles spasmed painfully.

The attack would take everything out of him. And then some.

Lu Qing'er, Qin Zhulu, and Lin Suo were locked in battle, but all three sensed the attack coming.

"What power!" Qin Zhulu marveled, his eyes wide.

He knew that Li Luo had a trump card hidden, but this was way beyond his calculations.

This power far surpassed an Evolving Resonance Tier Third Changing!

Lu Qing'er's eyes were also wide, but unlike Qin Zhulu, she was more worried than delighted. She had seen the redness in Li Luo's eyes and knew that the power cost him dearly. Hopefully, he had not paid a price too heavy.

"Back!"

Lu Qing'er seized Qin Zhulu by the arm and dragged him away urgently. He cringed violently at the physical touch, and almost jerked away out of instinct. But he realized that the battle with Lin Suo had taken so much out of him, he could barely move. He let Lu Qing'er help him retreat. As for Lin Suo, he had lost all interest in Qin Zhulu and Lu Qing'er, turning to Li Luo in fright.

The dark-red arrow of light was being aimed in his direction.

"F*ck! You must be cheating!" Lin Suo swore, his face turning green. This power was way beyond his level, and he could feel his knees shaking in fear. How could Li Luo have such power?! It didn't make sense!

What sort of secret art could be so terrifying?!

Lin Suo felt a strong surge of regret. If only he had finished off Li Luo at any of the earlier opportunities he had... If only the kid wasn't a freaking monster!

He did not stand his ground. He was smart enough to spend all his energy trying to escape, heading immediately for the dense forest to try and defray some of the arrow's energy.

Li Luo sighted in on his opponent and steadied himself. He let go.

"Caw!"

The shriek of a hawk, amplified until it was practically a sonic boom. The streak of red light bore down on the fleeing Lin Suo in a blur of speed.

Boom!

This time, the sound wave was far stronger than before. It vaporized all of the trees in a flash.

Even at a considerable distance, Lu Qing'er and Qin Zhulu fell to the floor, clutching their ears in agony.

As for Lin Suo, his ears were bleeding from the impact, eardrums shattered by the sound. His entire head was throbbing and his vision blacked out for a moment.

He stood still, trying to recover. He turned to face the attack—it was too fast for him to outrun.

In this life-or-death situation, he screamed in defiance and unleashed all the remaining resonant power he had, charging his Octagold Shield to create the strongest defense he could. *no ve(lB)*In

Weng!

A golden nimbus hummed to life, protruding from the Octagold Shield.

Swoosh!

The red arrow blasted through the layers of light like a ballista bolt through paper.

A few short moments later, it reached the metal of the shield itself.

The golden light defense had barely done anything.

As the light was snuffed out like a candle, Lin Suo's eyes were filled with resignation. There was little more than he could do. The Octagold Shield was cracking under the power of Li Luo's attack.

CRACK!

The shield buckled, and the relentless, red bolt flew on, burying itself deep in Lin Suo's chest.

The head emerged from his back, and still the arrow flew on, carrying him through the air. It plowed through a tree, cleaving it in two before pinning him to a rock wall further behind.

The rock reported the impact with a loud crack and a deep fissure.

One arrow had decided the victory. Qin Zhulu and Lu Qing'er stared in wonder at the lifeless Lin Suo, pinned to the rock.

Li Luo's arrow was amazing.

Such power as a Third Pattern... was this even humanly possible?

Li Luo slumped down from the perch in his tree. Lu Qing'er started towards him, but Qin Zhulu suddenly reached out to hold her back. "Something's wrong with Li Luo."

Lu Qing'er saw that Li Luo's face was twisted in a feral grimace, a snarl that she had never seen on his features before.

He looked more like an animal at the moment.

"Was he corrupted?" Qin Zhulu wondered aloud.

Lu Qing'er turned pale, but she insistently shrugged off Qin Zhulu's warning hand. She continued to walk towards Li Luo, whose eyes were locked on her, hungry as an animal.

She did not care, walking on until she was right in front of him. She slipped her small hand into his, using Crystal Heart again.

"Li Luo," she said tenderly. "It's over now."

Li Luo fought the redness in his eyes, closing them as he took deep breaths.

Slowly, the mania faded away.

When he opened them again, he was back to normal. He ran his fingers through his hair and smiled grandly at Lu Qing'er. "Was that not the coolest shot you ever saw?"

She laughed, tears of relief brimming at the corners of her eyes. She reached out to hug him tightly.

Li Luo was startled by the sudden affection, quickly opening his hands to show his innocence. "That's too forward... be careful! If Jiang Qing'e sees this, there'll be trouble."

Lu Qing'er pouted. "I'm not afraid of her!"

Li Luo felt like crying. "Of course you're not afraid. The one she'll beat up isn't going to be you!"

Chapter 0369: Dividing the Spoils

The battleground was a mess.

Li Luo sat under one of the trees that had not been leveled. Lu Qing'er was bent over him, tenderly helping him bandage the wound on his palm. Although Li Luo had healing abilities, the wound was so deep that he would probably take a few days to recover.

Qin Zhulu was slumped over like a ragdoll nearby, too tired to move an inch. He had been ridden hard as well, caked in thick patches of dried blood from when he had tanked Lin Suo's attacks. He had paid a heavy price too.

At the moment, there were more wounds than unblemished skin for Qin Zhulu.

It was said that the best defense was a good offense. Indeed, Qin Zhulu's constant aggression had kept Lin Suo too busy to attack Li Luo. Of course, the Blacklight Panoply had augmented his defenses and closed the gap between a Third Pattern and a Third Changing.

Beaten up and bedraggled, now he had to watch the guy and girl beside him.

He was not envious. Rather, he felt emotionally uncomfortable, like a third wheel.

Wrestling with both physical and emotional discomfort, he scooped over and lowered his upper body down with a groan, lying flat down and staring up into the sky. There was nothing he could do about the others, but perhaps he could find some rest.

The great battle had completely worn them out. Although they had had the numbers advantage, it was not enough to overcome the disparity in strength. All three were doing their best to recover.

Close to twenty minutes later, Li Luo creaked to his feet and walked over to Qin Zhulu, clapping him on the shoulder.

Qin Zhulu snorted and rolled his eyes. "You're dry yourself, man. How are you going to heal me?"

"You did the most." Li Luo grinned. "I'll find a drop or two. Brace yourself!" Li Luo squeezed out some healing power. Qin Zhulu winced in relief, the healing power easing him up like a shot of oil into rusty joints. He grunted and his breathing grew lighter. The pleasant feeling lasted a full ten seconds before vanishing.

"That's it?" Qin Zhulu demanded.

"I told you it was only a few drops," Li Luo responded.

Rising to his feet heavily, he plodded towards Lin Suo, who was still pinned to the rock. Qin Zhulu swore and followed, scrambling to his feet while using his spear as a crutch.

Li Luo looked down at Lin Suo. There was a huge hole in the latter's shirt, and his chest had caved in slightly, broken ribs paving the way down to a yawning hole through which his organs could be seen pulsating gently.

Lin Suo's breathing was ragged. He was on the verge of death.

But thanks to the Golden Dragon Secret Key, he was still holding on to one last breath.

Light-headed and disoriented from his state, he looked up at Li Luo with eyes unfocused but filled with a deep resentment.

He was boiling with anger, because the tables had been turned on him. ~~None~~ In

A honest-to-goodness Third Changing like him, beaten by a Third Pattern!

Li Luo ignored the poison in the wounded youth's gaze, giving him a hearty smack on the shoulder. "Brother Lin, since we came together, we should go back together. That's all neat and tidy, wouldn't you say? I'll treat you to a meal when we get back, if there's a chance." Qin Zhulu stared at him. Li Luo was a dark-humored bastard. When they went back, Yu Hongxi would probably flay him to within an inch of his death. Have a meal together? The only chance would be through a straw.

He made a mental note that Li Luo was the kind of person who would kill you cheerfully, then hum a ditty while he dug you a grave.

"Eurrgh!"

Lin Suo's reaction was an aggravated mouthful of blood before he fainted.

"That's all you got?" Li Luo demanded of the unconscious youth. He was only sending this guy back to the Xia Kingdom. Kids these days were too soft.

Li Luo reached out to grab Lin Suo's pocket sphere.

Rummaging through it, he quickly found the black gourd that held half of Lu Qing'er's Golden Dragon Qi.

"Qing'er, catch," he said, casually tossing it over.

She reached out to catch it with both hands. The moment it landed on her cupped palms, a golden mist rose from it, which Lu Qing'er breathed back into her body.

The transition lasted for a dozen breaths of time before all was quiet again.

The black gourd lay inert in her hands.

"I feel the same..." she said with uncertainty.

"Well, the Golden Dragon Qi's a strange thing." Li Luo shrugged cheerfully. "Puny Resonant Masters like us wouldn't know what it's about."

Lu Qing'er nodded.

Li Luo upended the pocket sphere and pulled out the Octagold Shield next. There was a nice, clean hole in it, and its energy levels were badly dimmed. It had somehow been broken by the attack.

Still, upper white-eyes were upper white-eyes. If he dropped a little gold for the repairs, it would make a great defensive tool.

He paused thoughtfully before handing it over to Qin Zhulu. "It's yours."

All three of them had helped to make the win come through. Li Luo had no intention of taking all the spoils for himself. Lu Qing'er had her Golden Dragon Qi back, and that was not divisible. But their meat shield had worked hard, and he deserved his rewards.

Qin Zhulu took one look at the Octagold Shield, then shook his head. "You did the most. Keep the shield. Besides, you might need a defensive treasured artifact more than I do. I already have the Blacklight Panoply."

Li Luo shook his head. "I want the pocket sphere though." He intended to give it to Jiang Qing'e when he got back, which was why he had given up the shield.

"Take them both. Give me a million skygold in return," Qin Zhulu said unconcernedly.

"Little Lu, you treat me so well," Li Luo said with puppy eyes. "I actually have a few drops of healing energy in reserve, do you want me to give them to you?"

"Nah, stay away from me." Qin Zhulu scowled at him, then turned and stalked away.

Li Luo grinned. He knew that this was Qin Zhulu being nice, but he wasn't going to stand on ceremony. The Octagold Shield was indeed going to be helpful for him. As for the pocket sphere, the price was probably slightly over a million skygold, so Qin Zhulu was asking for a reasonable price.

Li Luo tucked the pocket sphere away, satisfied. "Well, you should go get the most important thing now," he reminded Lu Qing'er, gesturing at the peak of the mountain, where a golden light shone. Within, a golden writ floated.

The Golden Dragon Mountain writ.

Lu Qing'er turned to look at it reverently. She walked right through the light unhindered and took the golden writ.

A life-like golden dragon was inscribed across it. Its scales gleamed and caught the light from different angles, giving the impression that the dragon was moving. Faint dragon roars could even be heard from the precious writ.

Lu Qing'er examined it with a mixture of curiosity and delight. Although she had not come expressly to get the writ, it was definitely what her mother wished for. Surely Yu Hongxi would see Li Luo in a different light now that they had come out with a good result, right?

A little bit of pride sprouted in her chest as she imagined her mother's surprise at the outcome.

"I bet you feel embarrassed for underestimating Li Luo now!"

Chapter 0370: Dao Fields' Closing

When Lu Qing'er took the Golden Dragon Mountain Writ, the light on the peak faded away, indicating that the fight on this peak was over.

Of all five lit peaks, this was the first one to be claimed.

Which was why when the golden light faded away, it drew much surprise from the other participants. They all knew that the strongest individual present, Lin Suo, had staked his claim to that peak. As a Third Changing cultivator, he had taken down many teams single-handedly, inspiring fear in them all.

The other elite teams had avoided challenging his peak because of his strength.

When the light faded away, everyone naturally assumed that Lin Suo had done it as expected.

Soon enough, the light on the other peaks winked out one after another as their writs were also claimed.

Soon, all the peaks were dark again, the writs in the hands of new owners.

Suddenly, the five writs shone brightly like stars, drawing attention to their beholders.

Li Luo looked out to the other peaks, where he could make out a few familiar figures... Both Gu Ying and Zhao Ziyang seemed to have claimed one. He was not surprised—they were among the strongest teams here.

They, on the other hand, were extremely surprised to see Li Luo's trio with the writ.

"Them?! What about Lin Suo?!" They could not believe it. That was Lin Suo's peak... where was the man? There was only one explanation, an unthinkable explanation.

Lin Suo had been defeated.

"How could they have won?!" Zhao Ziyang stammered to his team.

He was well aware of how strong Lin Suo was. Third Changing was a notch above him, and even with his allies, the battle would be close. That was why he had been reluctant to challenge him, even when Lin Suo had destroyed the Golden Dragon Qi, killing off their golden goose.

But now the mighty Lin Suo had lost to the team of "Yu Lang?!"

How?! Lin Suo was as shrewd as he was strong. He would not underestimate his opponents.

Gu Ying was of the same mind. She did not think it possible that this was all part of Lin Suo's purpose. Not getting the writ was a failure, plain and simple. And it might even cost him his life... He had crossed the young mistress of the Xia Kingdom's Golden Dragon Bank in a vicious plot to steal her Golden Dragon Qi. Back at the Xia Kingdom, surely Lu Qing'er's parents would be furious.

His only chance to survive was to get the writ and immediately secure passage on to greener pastures.

Without the writ, he would be sent back the way he had come... to an ending that everyone could predict.

Yet with so much at stake, Lin Suo had lost.

Lin Suo had every incentive to do his best... which meant that his opponents had brought enough power to beat him at his best.

But Lu Qing'er's trio were only Pattern Genesis Tier cultivators!

Gu Ying's mind immediately jumped to "Yu Lang." He had struck her as a resourceful youth, one not only as pretty as a jewel, but as valuable as one too. He was the hardest to read... it had to be him. And her instincts told her that this "Yu Lang" had to be the largest factor in Lin Suo's downfall.

Dual resonances... it was as rare as a ninth-grade resonance.

"Yu Lang..."

Gu Ying and Zhao Ziyang both muttered the name to themselves with some wariness.

Yu Lang was from the Xia Kingdom's Astral Sage College. At year's end, he would almost definitely be at the Holy Grail Meet, where the best of the elite schools' talents would come together. Although Yu Lang was only a One Star student, from what he had shown, he would definitely be closely watched at the Holy Grail Meet. He would be a dangerous opponent then.

"Looks like we'll have to relay that information to our school once we get back. If we meet Yu Lang during the Holy Grail Meet, it'll be best to find a way to eliminate him as soon as possible. Before he causes any trouble."

Many of the students thought that way to themselves.

Which meant that in the near future, the name of Yu Lang would be spread far and wide across the schools of the East Divine Continent.

“Yu Lang—a formidable foe.” With this thought going through the minds of all the participants, energy vortexes began to form in the sky, sending down pillars of light.

Each pillar fell neatly around one team.

"That means we're going out," Lu Qing'er told Li Luo and Qin Zhulu.

"Which means it's time for the final step," Li Luo said eagerly.

The final step he referred to was the dao-gold cultivation breakthrough!

When they left the Golden Dragon Dao Fields, all the dao-gold they had remaining would be converted into energy that would help their cultivation.

Besides the Reservoir, this was one of the most prized components of being able to enter the Golden Dragon Dao Fields.

The unconscious Lin Suo still lay at Li Luo's feet, and the bugger still had some dao-gold on him. Unfortunately, the rules of the Dao Fields was that dao-gold could not be stolen. Lucky bugger. The energy column hummed, and Li Luo, Lu Qing'er, Qin Zhulu, and the unconscious Lin Suo all rose into the air.

They looked out at the light columns scattered all across the mountain range, people rising up like some sort of holy ascension. It was a splendid sight.

As they were lifted up, he could see dao-gold flying out of his pocket sphere.

Every piece of dao-gold was burning up into golden flames.

They scattered around him like a swarm of energetic fireflies, vibrating hard before they zoomed towards him as one.

Li Luo closed his eyes in anticipation.

Each little ball of fire entered his body smoothly and silently.

It was a vigorous and pure energy that spread within his body, going off like soda bubbles in a glass.

They bubbled out of him, and he glowed at odd spots with a fiery light even as he continued to rise through the air. All around him, the same phenomenon was happening to every other participant.

Higher and higher they rose, until they were sucked up by the energy vortex and taken away.

After less than ten minutes, the lively mountainside was quiet and dark.

The only thing that had changed was the destruction and damage that they had left behind.