

## Resonance 571

### Chapter 0571: Heavenly Disaster Class Descends

Not long after Li Luo and friends activated the cleansing orb, a similar scene could be seen on the other end of Russet Rock City. As a result, the cleansing barrier started to expand. The bustling, illusory scenes on the streets dissipated wherever the radiance passed through.

Clearly, Lan Lan's team had also managed to achieve their goal.

At this point, Li Luo turned around to be greeted with the sight of a few beams of light descending gloriously from the skies. It was the squads who were holding the Others back.

Leading the pack was none other than the First Princess and Gong Shenjun.

The remainder were the other members of the group who had finally gathered.

It seemed as though the strong Others had either been vanquished or chased away.

From the looks of it, everyone had been through arduous combat, Gong Shenjun and the First Princess included. Their bodies held traces of resonant power being pushed to the peak and one could feel a sense of suppression coming from them. The other members from the Three Star Hall were no different, their bodies laced with traces of injuries.

"You've contributed greatly this time, friends." The First Princess smiled and did not hold back on her effusive praise. With Resonant Master Stage cultivation, they had traversed the dangerous streets and had managed to set up the first cleansing dew, easing the pressure on everyone else.

However, the situation was still critical, and so she did not continue for too long, only decisively stating, "We do not have much time to tarry and rest any longer. We have to strike while the iron is hot and move quickly as the assimilative effects of the illusion seem to be strengthening. Only by constantly setting up more cleansing barriers can we borrow their might to weaken the illusory formation. Otherwise, the Greater Heavenly Disaster Class will take advantage of it, which would put us at a disadvantage. That would spell an undesirable result for all of us."

No one disagreed, nodding to demonstrate their agreement.

Russet Rock City was an incredibly perilous area—how could their opponents give them a chance to rest and regroup?

Seeing the unanimous assent, the First Princess then looked directly at Li Luo. "Since your squad was the one that managed to set up the first cleansing dew, the subsequent anchor point will be handled by another squad." Li Luo demonstrated his agreement as well.

This was no simple task, and there was more than meets the eye. Why? The squad that set up the cleansing dew would receive the appropriate rewards from the act. In order to ensure a well-rounded division of points, other squads would also have that privilege.

Each squad would receive an equal share of points from cleansing Russet Rock City. This was only fair. Otherwise, it would incite internal discord and strife, and their cooperation could very well fall apart during a critical moment, such as during the fight with the Greater Heavenly Disaster Class Other.

"Move out. I'm afraid things will only become more arduous moving forward."

After reminding the rest, the First Princess proceeded to lead the group, boundless resonant power exuding from her beautiful figure.

The target: the depths of Russet Rock City.

The rest followed suit with waves of resonant power emanating from the entire group. This was the might of a true gathering of elites!

After which, they spent the rest of the day advancing deeper into the city.

The journey was perilous as the group constantly engaged in heaven-shaking battles with formidable and fearsome Others appearing one after another.

No one was excluded from this melee, whether it was the top experts like the First Princess and Gong Shenjun or Li Luo and his Resonant Master Stage friends. Everyone received injuries of varying seriousness.

Of course, no one knew if Zhu Xuan was just weak-willed or dumb. After being corrupted once by the Bewitching Other, he had actually managed to fall under corruption two more times! The transformations got progressively grosser. In the end, after a brief discussion between the other three, they decided to simply tightly wrap this heavy burden up with chains. This way, even if he were to be corrupted yet again, they could quickly restrain him, preventing him from causing a disaster!

As the arduous advance continued, the silver lining within was that their efforts were not in vain.

They set up an adequate amount of cleansing orbs in just half a day, each one projecting a beam of purifying light shining high into the sky. Together, they formed a purifying curtain of glorious light, dividing the illusory formation into sectors and weakening it.

If someone were to enter the formation now, they would be left utterly bewildered at the sight before them. Some areas were bustling streets filled with people going about their everyday lives, while in purified areas, the only thing that would greet their sight would be ruined structures and desiccated skeletons. In Li Luo's own words, the unnaturally lively and swarming streets only brought about a chill. On the other hand, the cold, silent ruins actually brought him solace.

Even the most perfect of illusions was just that. Ephemeral.

Weng!

When yet another pillar of cleansing light shot into the air, it created another curtain of purification that was like an umbrella, enveloping the area. Li Luo and the rest finally halted in their steps.

There was no choice. Exhaustion was inevitable.

Even the First Princess, a Heavenly Pearl Stage expert, had a forehead drenched with sweat.

"Your Highness, I would like to recommend we take a short break," Jiang Qing'e suggested.

Their blitzkrieg had resulted in both frequent and intense battles, so everyone was slightly injured. Further advancement without some respite might be detrimental to their overall plan.

"Qing'e, could I trouble you with a light restoration art?" the First Princess asked.

Light resonant energy possessed recuperative abilities, and with Jiang Qing'e's Ninth-grade light resonance, its efficacy was sublime. One of the key reasons why they had been able to progress so efficiently was precisely due to this.

Jiang Qing'e did not decline, as this was for the sake of accomplishing the mission. Her slender, jade hands executed a few hand signs and a resonance art was quickly activated.

"Tiger-general resonance art, Spiritual Light Rain."

Light resonant energy pervaded the air, gradually coalescing into tiny droplets of rain that fell from the sky. Upon contact with one's body, one would feel indescribably warm and comfortable, and their fatigue would be washed away. Even their injuries would quickly mend themselves.

"A Ninth-grade light resonance is truly unmatched."

Zhao Beili sighed in envy. It was not as though he had never experienced the effects of a Spiritual Light Rain, it was just that he had never experienced one that was so effective! Clearly, this was the benefit brought about by a superior resonance.

"It is our greatest fortune to have Junior Jiang accompany us on this trip," Gong Shenjun said gently with a warm smile.

On the other hand, Jiang Qing'e's was quite curt. "Senior Gong, you are too polite."

Li Luo had stretched out his hand to better have a feel for the droplets of light resonant energy that were raining down. He could feel their incomparably pure and majestic nature, and he sighed. Comparing the light resonant energy he could produce with this was like comparing the sky to dirt! One was pristine and unblemished, the other impure and muddy.

The First Princess smiled as she grasped Qing'e's slim arm. "Qing'e is truly the hero of this story!"

Faced with Her Highness' action, her gaze flitted for a moment, but she did not reject her "advances." Instead, she turned to face the deeper areas of Russet Rock City. "Now that we're near the core of Russet Rock City, isn't it strange that the Greater Heavenly Disaster Class Other has not appeared?"

The question elicited agreement from the group as they found it similarly baffling. They had been pondering this very question the entire way as well.

The illusory formation should have been the hard work of that powerful Other, yet it was happily sitting by and watching this group of upstarts dismantle it piece by piece? Something wasn't adding up.

Perhaps it wanted them to enter the core of the city?

This was an ambush they had to willingly walk into. After all, the group here had to slay the Other. It seemed as though the illusory formation was redundant and a move made in vain.

"Forget it. Regardless of what it wants to do, we'll engage in a final, decisive battle once we find it," the First Princess explained. Since they could not understand their opponent's intentions, then they'd just find their own answer. With violence.

Breaking the illusory formation would be the first step, and the Greater Heavenly Disaster Class Other would appear after that.

Jiang Qing'e lightly nodded her head, but just as she was going to speak, her expression rapidly changed and her gaze fell towards the inner core of Russet Rock City.

She could distinctly feel that terrifying amounts of corruption were coursing out from that direction.

This all-encompassing corruption brought with it immense suppression.

At the very same time, the First Princess and Gong Shenjun also turned their heads, expressions solemn.

Boom!

From the depths of Russet Rock City, a crimson-red pillar of light shot into the sky, bringing with it endless corruption that flooded the heavens and the earth. From afar, it seemed to have transformed into a fog riddled with countless ferocious and vengeful faces!

And right in the middle of the light pillar was a giant, blood-red tail lightly swaying in the sky, almost invitingly waving hello to the invaders.

Frightening pressure blanketed the entire city.

Even Li Luo felt a hint of terror under this crushing duress.

Meanwhile, atop a tower in the middle of the city sat an individual enveloped in crimson armor who started guffawing at the sight before him. "Ah, what a pity! I wasn't able to suppress it any longer. What a pity indeed. These brats are truly very vicious! Tearing the illusory formation to shreds truly enraged it. So be it, it's almost time. The true show begins now."

With an insane fervor, he started to clap in excitement.

Meanwhile, deep within the light pillar was a demonic individual, its eyes glued shut as it lay within. What was unique about it was that there was a massive tail dripping with fresh blood attached to it, along with a blood-red rune inscribed upon its body. The rune was now quickly burning up, quickly disintegrating into nothingness.

At that very moment, a demonic expression appeared upon its face and its eyes opened.

Eyes crimson-red like pools of fresh blood. It was a frightening sight that chilled one to the bone.

Chapter 0572: Mixed-level Competition Final

Boom!

As soon as the figure within the blood-red pillar opened its eyes, corruption filled the air, spreading across all of Russet Rock City in a wave. Everything was covered in thick, black mucus, and the dreaded whispering filled the ears of all within its confines.

The First Princess, Gong Shenjun, Jiang Qing'e, and all the others sensed it immediately, looking up warily.

This new threat... there was indeed a Greater Heavenly Disaster Class Other within Russet Rock City.

Equivalent to a Heavenly Resonance Stage cultivator.

Even the strongest among them was only at the Heavenly Pearl Stage, which was a big difference.

The only advantage they had was numbers. Besides, Lan Lan, Gong Shenjun, the First Princess and the others were considered elites in their tier, and they had superb fighting skills.

Which meant that it was not a sure-lose situation even against a Greater Heavenly Disaster Class.

When the powerful Other revealed itself, there was an answering light from the opposite distance. Clearly, Lan Lan and the others had sensed the same threat and were hurrying over to group up at speed.

"It's really a Heavenly Disaster Class," Lan Lan said gravely, worry clear on his brow.

"We're really going to have to put our lives on the line for this one." Qin Yue sighed. He had never fought one before.

"Do we have a plan?" one of the squad leaders asked.

"There are still more Others as well," the First Princess said thoughtfully. "We can't ignore them. I suggest the eight squad leaders here take on the Heavenly Disaster Class, and the Three Star Hall students and below can deal with everything else. Qing'e, I hope that you can pay a little more attention to our side as well, of course. It would be a great help."

Her last request was met with a general murmur of assent from all the Heavenly Pearl Stage squad leaders.

Although Jiang Qing'e was only a Fiend Finisher Tier cultivator, no one doubted that she had power enough to make up for the difference with a Heavenly Pearl Stage cultivator. Her ninth-grade light resonance was superb, and light resonance was the antithesis of Others. She was definitely an asset even against a Greater Heavenly Disaster Class Other.

Jiang Qing'e inclined her head in acknowledgment. A Greater Heavenly Disaster Class Other was nothing to mess with. If she saw a chance to win them an advantage, she would attack without hesitation.

The First Princess nodded gratefully, then she turned to Li Luo and the other One and Two Star Hall students. "You have an important mission when we are fighting the Greater Heavenly Disaster Class. You have to get the remaining cleansing dew drops placed. When the entire purification area is expanded, it will not only dispel the illusion, but also suppress all of the Others in the area. Even the Greater Heavenly Disaster Class will be affected.

"This is a crucial task. Do not underestimate it," she said with utmost seriousness. They stiffened up and nodded seriously in response to the pressure she was applying.

Li Luo and the others were still coming to terms with their role. Before this competition, they had thought they would just be tagging along for the ride, but now they knew they had an important part to play as well. The First Princess' force delegation was well-calculated, and the other squad leaders were all in agreement.

Boom!

Just as their plan was settled, an explosion of ruby light interrupted their gathering. They could see a blood-red tail swishing in the sky.

When they looked closely, many of them shivered or clapped their hands to their mouths. Each hair on the bushy, red tail emitted screams, screams of agony and hatred.

As their gazes followed the tail, they saw that its owner was a petite girl with a demonic face.

The face was smiling, crimson eyes glinting malevolently in a way that sent chills down their spines.

Besides the red tail, the Greater Heavenly Disaster Class Other had no other differentiating characteristics from a human.

Which they understood as an indication of its great power.

"Heehee."

Coquettish laughter, infused with a timbre of power that rattled their eardrums, heating up their minds with hot, urgent desires that ate away at their wills.

"Calm your hearts," Jiang Qing'e called to them. "Do not let its seduction win. Temptation will scatter your will." She made a seal with one hand, sending a pulse of light resonant energy that cleared their hearts for a brief moment. They hurriedly stuffed their ears, afraid to listen to the laughter any longer.

"Hee hee."

A playful flick of the tail, and suddenly the vixen Other appeared before them.

Its red eyes surveyed them all with amusement, although there was a dark danger that lurked underneath its playful demeanor.

Although the Bloodtailed Other looked very human, it was still an Other at heart. It made no move to communicate with them, and the sudden surge in corruption in this region had attracted more Others into the vicinity.

Powerful Others came rushing over from all directions, giving the First Princess, Lan Lan, and the others pause.

The Three Star Hall students immediately leaped into the fray, led by Jiang Qing'e. They cut off the incoming Others, leaving their squad leaders free.

The Four Star Hall leaders rose into the sky, a rainbow of resonant power coalescing in the air. Behind them, their heavenly pearls absorbed worldly natural energy at a tremendous rate.

Combined, they were able to suppress the pressure of the Other's aura.

"Hee hee."*noV&Lb*)1n

Another pout and giggle from its cherry lips, and the corruption started to solidify into black clouds. Then it straightened into eight crimson chains that dripped with blood as they lashed out towards the eight leaders.

Even the void bent around the attack.

"Face it head on!" Lan Lan shouted. His water resonant power had been shaped into a large pool as he took the lead.

The First Princess, Gong Shenjun, and the others all followed suit.

Boom! Rumble!

An incredible storm of energy broke out in the skies of Russet Rock City.

The final battle of the mixed-level competition was well under way.

Chapter 0573: Diverted Influence

The climactic battle was more ferocious than anyone had expected.

The eight crimson chains were life-like and infused with murderous intent, like dragons made of blood and wreathed in corruption. The Bloodtailed Other directed his focus upon the eight squad leaders.

Boom!

They held nothing back in reserve, their heroic demeanor on full display as they summoned every remnant of resonant power they had. The Heavenly Pearls behind them voraciously devoured the worldly natural energy as they orbited their respective owners.

Next up was a demonstration of their mighty resonance arts. Heaven and earth continuously rumbled with the roars of materialized creatures.

Invincible dragon-general resonance arts descended upon Russet Rock City one after another and directly struck back against the dragon-like chains.

Yet upon collision, the expressions of the eight changed for the worse! They realized that their almighty resonance arts were being easily bypassed by the chains. The fresh blood that laced the chains also seemed to possess some sort of corrosive effect.

These resonance arts that had the power to move heaven and earth were nothing but a mantis stopping the cart.

The eight squad leaders were temporarily thrown into disarray, quickly taking out their gold-eye treasured artifacts to retaliate. With the assistance of their weapons, they were narrowly able to block the chains!

"What a frightening Greater Heavenly Disaster Class Other!"

Li Luo and the rest of the cafare were currently watching the pitiful squad leaders. Horror could be seen in their gazes, and some were a little pale. A seemingly casual attack was already so hard to fend off!

The worst part was that these were the strongest of the Holy Grail Meet!

Their concerted efforts seemed meaningless in front of the Bloodtailed Other's imposing presence, easily being suppressed.

One could finally understand what true terror was like.

"Alright, stop dreaming. We got to get to work ourselves. Whilst the squad leaders do their thing, we have to complete the purification barrier. It will sap away the Greater Heavenly Disaster Class' strength," Lu Ming reminded them helpfully.

"Everyone here has their own responsibilities. The role of setting up the cleansing dew will be left to us." Li Luo smiled as his gaze shifted towards a handsome youth in white robes.

"Senior Ao Bai is at the quasi General Stage, and is the strongest amongst us. We will definitely have to rely on you, then."

The group nodded in agreement. Even the perennially arrogant Jing Taixu kept himself in check whilst facing Ao Bai. There was also interest in seeing just how strong the Two Star Hall champion was.

Although being at the quasi General Stage meant that one had not truly stepped into the Earth Fiend Stage, it was still head and shoulders above the Fourth Changing Tier.

Ao Bai smiled humbly. "Junior Li Luo, you are too courteous. What does the quasi General Stage even stand for in the greater scheme of things? We will require everyone's close cooperation if we want to succeed."

Ao Bai's attitude was like a breath of fresh, spring air. Even the aloof and uptight Lu Ming had a hint of a smile upon hearing his self-deprecating words. He might be the champion of the Two Star Hall, but he was not a champion of hot air.

Zhu Xuan suddenly smiled and declared, "Ao Bai is truly a shining example of a champion. I'll definitely follow your lead when it comes to deploying the cleansing dew. You can order me through hell or high water, and I will obey!"

As he spoke, he took a glimpse at Li Luo.

During the previous few battles, Li Luo had been the de facto leader amongst the four. As a result, he felt slightly prejudiced. And that damned Li Luo had even wrapped him up in chains when they traveled.

Maybe he had been corrupted just a few too many times... but was there really a need to torment him so!? That brat was clearly trying to give him a hard time.

Thus, Ao Bai's timely appearance only brought Zhu Xuan joy. Li Luo's words would no longer hold the same weight in their group as he was not the strongest. Although Zhu Xuan's intentions were veiled, Li Luo understood it clearly. However, he didn't really care—he only smirked deep down. So what if one could speak on behalf of the group? It didn't mean much, so why would anyone put forth the effort to compete for such a useless position?

In fact, he couldn't be more excited that Ao Bai would take the lead in clearing out the last few anchor points. This way, he could have some peace of mind.

Zhu Xuan's words roused the rigorous support of the rest. In terms of strength, the Two Star Hall champion was a worthy leader for one to follow.

Now bearing the hopes and dreams of the group, Ao Bai could only helplessly smile. "Enough with the blind praises. We are all just here to accomplish our mission. Working together is all that matters." Being

able to manage the numerous egos of the group in such an amiable fashion brought about further praise.

"Let's stop blabbering like groupies and let's hurry up," Sun Dasheng said impatiently. The critical battle above was shaking the entire battlefield, while their group was still fooling around. Truly infuriating!

Ao Bai nodded and immediately headed towards the next anchor point with the rest following right behind.

Li Luo remained at the back of the group with a measured pace.

Yet all of a sudden, a familiar fragrance wafted by... Turning to look, it was his familiar friend Lu Ming. "Looks like you've been usurped."

"It's a meaningless position anyway..." Li Luo drawled after batting her a glance.

"Relax, I'll keep supporting you. My womanly instinct tells me you're the more reliable one of the two."

"Why in the world do I need your support? We're just condiments to the real fight happening above. Our only use is to take advantage of the distracted Others and set up the cleansing dew appropriately. After that, we can sit back, relax, and watch the show. If the squad leaders can beat the Greater Heavenly Disaster Class, that will be wonderful! Otherwise? We better make use of the distractions to run while we can..." Li Luo joked darkly.

"Hey, truer words have never been spoken." Lu Ming laughed as her beautiful eyes turned to focus on the frightening battle overhead. A flash of worry appeared for a split second. "We still don't know if the squad leaders can even triumph over such a foe. Do you still remember the news about the crimson knight-general? He hasn't appeared... even at this critical juncture. It would be great if he's gone. However, if he's biding his time in the dark, he will definitely be an even more frightening enemy than the Greater Heavenly Disaster Class."

Li Luo fell into pensive thought. The mysterious crimson knight-general could not be overlooked. No one knew how strong he was, and he was definitely the hidden hand behind the shadows of the Blackwind Empire's downfall.

"Sadly, we don't have the strength to bother with this unknown opponent. Him remaining in hiding can only be a good thing. Ideally, he only appears after the Other is defeated. Perhaps he's been scared away by the Academic Federation and has already fled. After all, the reclamation of the Red Clay Province should have been unexpected..."

"Perhaps..." Lu Ming gently sighed. The opponent escaping would be the best news possible. Otherwise, the difficulty of the mixed-level competition would be as difficult as transcending the 18 levels of hell.

As the two continued to banter, the group quickly advanced forth. Meanwhile, the ruckus brought about by the battles of the squad leaders and Three Star Hall students raging around them had managed to attract the attention of the majority of the Others. This resulted in a very smooth journey through the streets.

Upon reaching the first anchor point, they quickly set up the cleansing dew.

The group did not tarry and immediately moved on once the task was complete.

The group managed to achieve bountiful results. Three cleansing dewes had been put into place in under an hour, beginning the purification and tearing apart the illusory formation.

Their journey had encountered some troubles, but with everyone's cooperation, it was resolved easily.

Ao Bai's addition had truly improved the speed at which they broke through.

His quasi General Stage power was nothing to scoff at, demonstrating why he was superior to a Fourth Changing.

If all of the cleansing dewes could be set up, Li Luo would definitely sincerely compliment Ao Bai. He would even be his loyal follower in word! After all, talk was cheap.

As the eight squads continued with their work, the crimson-knight general was still sitting atop the tower, quietly monitoring the situation.

The bulk of his attention was focused upon the battle against the Bloodtailed Other.

"These eight brats undoubtedly have shown their prowess as the elite of their generation."

They were all only at the Heavenly Pearl Stage, yet their innate genius allowed them to demonstrate a prowess that surpassed their common peers. If they were placed elsewhere, their resplendence would only become more obvious amongst the rabble. Despite the shaky start, their cooperation improved over time and they were eventually able to restrain the Bloodtailed Other.

At the very least, things were now in a deadlock.

This was the best-case scenario as he wanted them to both exhaust their strength!

"However, the irritating ants at the Resonant Master Stage seem to be moving quickly..." He could see that there were numerous cleansing dewes being set up, creating pillars of light throughout the city. This was created by the Academic Federation and had been demonstrated to be able to ward off corruption effectively.

He could also see that once the cleansing dew was placed, it would create a purification point.

At a certain point, the purifying powers of the cleansing dew would completely dismantle the illusion formation, further suppressing and weakening the Bloodtailed Other.

He clearly understood the aim of these flies.

The point at which the purification barrier was complete would also be the time to counterattack.

His gaze flickered as he spoke lightly. "It took me so much time to orchestrate this battle between these two parties. I can't let these little rats ruin my finale."

Eyes piercing through the illusion formation, he continued to observe the Resonant Master stage irritants. In the end, his focus was fixated upon their leading figure, a handsome individual in white robes.

Chapter 0574: Betrayal

The terrific battle continued within Russet Rock City.

The battle was most conspicuous high in the sky, with large ripples of energy blowing back and forth, ripping through the clouds at fearsome speeds. Below, smaller battles raged on, intensity at a smaller scale but no less desperate. It was just as well that this whole area was a deserted city; otherwise, the accidental casualties would have been too many to bear.

Lan Lan, the First Princess, Gong Shenjun, and the rest of the Heavenly Pearl Stage students were doing their best to fight the Bloodtailed Other.

It continued to giggle and coo up in the air, its seductive laughter affecting the students fighting below.

A Greater Heavenly Disaster Class Other was truly a terrifying enemy.

It still held the advantage even against eight Heavenly Pearl Stage students.

Below, Jiang Qing'e was leading the Three Star Hall against an assortment of enemies. Although the Lesser Heavenly Disaster Classes had been dealt with already, there were still many Disaster Class enemies left. Jiang Qing'e was a rock against them all. She alone took on five Disaster Class Others, sweeping through them and lifting the morale of her comrades.

The firm defense line that the Three Star Hall students held ensured that no Others could encroach on the elite fight, saving the First Princess and the others from an even more unfavorable battle.

Next was Li Luo's side.

In terms of strength, their group was the weakest of the three fights. The strongest among them were Ao Bai and Yuan Banshan from the Enlightened Sage College. The latter had lost to Ao Bai in the hall-level competition, but he was still much stronger than the other Fourth Changing students like Zhu Xuan.

Over the course of the last hour, they had sped around and set down six droplets of cleansing dew, which was a rather decent rate.

Of course, their progress was helped by Jiang Qing'e's group, who were attracting the attention of most of the Disaster class Others.

Weng!

Another drop of cleansing dew landed, and another purification barrier bloomed out. Li Luo and the others sighed with relief.

"Three more drops, and we'll have a proper formation established!" Ao Bai shouted back at them in encouragement. Their faces lit up.

Once the formation was up, the illusion formation would be dispelled, and then even the Greater Heavenly Disaster Class Other would be affected. The entire situation would shift in their favor.

"Come on, put some speed on!" Ao Bai urged them, leading the way across the street.

The others hastened after him, and even the lagging Li Luo did his best to keep up.

He had no problems with Ao Bai taking charge of the group. It was easier for Li Luo to chill at the back and blend in. Although many of the Others had been drawn over to Jiang Qing'e's side, there were

always a few stray ones that wandered across their path. A front man like Ao Bai packed a lot more firepower.

He would be even happier if Ao Bai could just straight up tank all the enemies so he could stroll to the mission's finish line with his eyes closed.

While Li Luo was thinking his slacker thoughts, the group had already charged to another street.

When they burst out into the avenue, a strange wind whipped up in their faces.

Many threw up resonant power defenses instinctively, but they were all melted away instantly by the wind, which chilled them all to the bone.

"Be careful! An Other ambush!" Li Luo yelled hurriedly.

The students hurriedly reached deep into their resonant palaces, scrambling to put up more resonant power defenses and flush the chill from their bodies. At the same time, they grouped up tightly and faced outwards, wary of any threats.

Yet surprisingly, there was no further disturbance after the strange wind blew by.

"What's going on?" Sun Dasheng frowned.

The others looked around at each other, confused.

The tense silence held for a full minute, then someone broke it. "Senior Ao Bai, what should we do now?"

Li Luo's eyes flicked to Ao Bai's still figure as well. Ao Bai stood like a statue, not replying to anybody.

Li Luo's eyes narrowed. Ao Bai was too still. Unnaturally still.

Behind Ao Bai, Yuan Banshan felt like something was off as well. He put a cautious hand on Ao Bai's shoulder. "Brother Ao, what's wrong with you?"

The moment Yuan Banshan's hand touched Ao Bai's shoulder, the stronger student whirled, sending a powerful punch exploding into the torso of Yuan Banshan.

Psssssh!

Caught completely off-guard, Yuan Banshan took the blow in its entirety. A fountain of blood spurted out from his mouth, and his bones cracked within. He was sent flying dozens of meters backwards, down for the count.

This betrayal stunned all of them.

Ao Bai attacking Yuan Banshan?!

And while they were still reeling, Ao Bai had already struck again. Two palm-shaped shadows burst out, smashing away the two closest students.

Another shrill howling gust of wind.

One of the two was Zhu Xuan, who had spent much of the time up till now trying to cozy up to Ao Bai.

"Brother Ao, what's wrong with you?!" Although he and Ao Bai were both Two Star Hall students, the difference in their power was stark. One hit from Ao Bai required all of his strength just to defend against.

Boom!

Ao Bai's resonant power had overrun his own all too easily, and despite his best efforts to fight back, he was soon defeated in the same fashion as Yuan Banshan.

In a few short moments, the three closest students to Ao Bai were all seriously injured.

Fortunately, the shock of the betrayal had worn off the others by now, and they hurriedly backed away from Ao Bai.

"Senior Ao Bai, what's wrong with you!?" Jing Taixu called out, his face gray.

Sun Dasheng and Lu Ming were watching with eyes wide as well.

It was truly dispiriting that the strongest of their little group would be turned against them.

"I'm afraid Senior Ao Bai's body is no longer his own," Li Luo said flatly. The One Star Hall students gasped.

"You mean... he's being controlled?" Lu Ming whispered.

Li Luo did not reply. He was too busy watching Ao Bai, who had lifted his head and locked on to the remaining four students.

Ao Bai's face was an emotionless mask, his refreshing smile completely gone. And a moth with dark-red wings fluttered in his eyes.

The crimson moth beat its wings lazily, releasing a dark-red powder that darkened the red of Ao Bai's eyes steadily, even as red liquid seeped down the corners of his eyes and trickled down his cheeks.

They shuddered. He was crying blood.

Chapter 0575: Four Heroes versus Ao Bai

Li Luo and the other three One Star Hall students stared at the moth in Ao Bai's eyes, and their hearts sank. Another damned controlling thing.

"Is it an Other?" Lu Ming asked doubtfully, cringing at the freakish sight.

"No idea." Li Luo shrugged.

In any case, it was probably reasonable to link the moth to the strange gust of wind that had come upon them previously. Ao Bai had taken the brunt of that gust, and the moth had probably taken control of him then.

That thought was scary enough to make Li Luo's stomach wobble, and he had to check that there weren't moths in his own belly. At the same time, he was a little happy.

It was no time to be popping champagne at all, but if he had been the one leading the group instead of Ao Bai, it would have been him with the fluttering beast in his eyes... and the one being controlled.

If even a quasi General Stage cultivator like Ao Bai had fallen without a trace of a struggle, Li Luo wouldn't stand a chance in hell.

Which meant... close shave.

"See, I always knew that staying low-key was the best way to do things." Li Luo congratulated himself nervously, wiping some cold sweat off his brow. He was also suddenly grateful for the useless egg that was called Zhu Xuan. If not for the fawning fop urging Ao Bai to be the leader, perhaps the Two Star Hall student would not have taken it up.

Lo and behold, less than an hour later, puppet.

Clearly, the word "leader" was spelled "C-A-N-N-O-N F-O-D-D-E-R."

Still, there was a very real danger facing them all. Ao Bai's mothy eyes were already lifting towards the four of them, completely devoid of emotion.

Resonant power was gathering around him, forming a silver snake with a dragon's horn.

Upper eighth-grade, Silver Horn Dragon Python resonance.

A three-pronged silver-scaled trident appeared in his hand, glinting with cold light.

"Shit. He's a quasi General Stage with his fiend palace already close to being formed. He's got resonant power for days. Way stronger than us," Sun Dasheng said tersely, gripping his staff.

Li Luo was sweating bullets too. Ao Bai was a terror to face—he wasn't crowned the strongest Two Star Hall student for nothing. A quasi General cultivator was many times stronger than the other Two Star Hall weeds like Zhu Xuan.

"If only Senior Yuan could still fight—that would be a lot easier," Jing Taixu groaned.

Li Luo took a look over at the unconscious Yuan Banshan, and could not help but agree with Jing Taixu. Yuan Banshan was closest in strength to Ao Bai. If he was not injured and had a few helpers, it would've been possible to hold Ao Bai down.

But the first blow from Ao Bai had felled him instantly, and now they were lacking a solid force in their ranks.

Was that all part of his vicious calculation, or merely luck?

"Alright, you three, we're going to have to work together," Li Luo said, pulling out his sword. "If we can't take down Senior Ao Bai, our mission to get the cleansing dew points up and running is toast."

Although a quasi General was a formidable opponent, they were desperate and had no other choice.

"Haha, I like your guts," Sun Dasheng hooted. "I thought there was no chance for us to shine here in Russet Rock City, but now they've handed us the Two Star top dog on a plate. In a dog bowl. Let's take down the beast!"

His eyes shone with excitement as he slammed his staff down for emphasis, leaving a deep, circular crack pattern.

"I would rather be less shining on the field, and more shining in the rewards," Lu Ming said, rolling her eyes.

Jing Taixu was relatively calm. Although he was not on the best of terms with Li Luo, he understood that their current situation called for total and complete teamwork, or Ao Bai would swallow them whole. Jeopardizing the cleansing dew mission was the most disastrous consequence of all.

And so he whipped out his green plantain fan at the ready as well.

"Li Luo, let's do this together," he called out gravely. "You and I are both Fourth Changings. Together, we face senior Ao Bai head on. Lu Ming and Sun Dasheng can flank him. What do you say?"

Li Luo swung his Onyx-Elephant Blade in a friendly manner. "Well then, do your best not to drag me down," he said with a cheeky grin.

"Petty child." Jing Taixu sniffed.

He was preparing his weapon too, and his green plantain fan was busy moving in a complicated pattern that harnessed the wind around him. Energy gathered, he blasted it out at Ao Bai's weak points.

Ao Bai took it calmly, his own silver resonant power rising like a wave. The green wind resonant power that looked sharp and deadly was completely engulfed by the silver tide.

Jing Taixu's eyes widened. Ao Bai's resonant power was indeed far stronger than the average Fourth Changing cultivator's. If they were fighting alone, he would not have been able to last very long, even with his quasi ninth-grade wind resonance.

"No need to test the waters, you're only wasting resonant power," Li Luo commented mildly.

He lifted his own Onyx-Elephant Blade and dug deep into his two resonant palaces, pulling out blue and green power that combined into one.

The familiar sensation of plentiful resonant power flooded every inch of his body until he felt saturated.

At the same time, he activated his Thunderpeal Avatar.

**BOOM!**

As the electricity sped through his body, stimulating his muscles, bones, and nerves, his skin glowed with an electrical current, as though he were being charged from within.

"Level One Divine Elephant Power!"

Veins bulging like earthworms under the skin, his arm's strength surged.

The aura of power around Li Luo continued to build.

Jing Taixu shivered a little. The two had fought before, and so he had a deeper understanding of Li Luo's power than the others. And that deeper understanding was telling him that Li Luo was a level stronger than him right now.

Even if he did not want to admit it, the truth was the truth.

"After this Holy Grail Meet ends, I'm gonna charge to the Earth Fiend Tier without stopping," Jing Taixu swore to himself under his breath. "My quasi ninth-grade wind resonance will see me through before this silver-haired devil!" Li Luo paid no attention to the jealousy going on. He stepped forward and sent his attack blasting out at Ao Bai.

In perfect sync, Jing Taixu's quasi ninth-grade wind spirit avatar shimmered into view behind him, sending forth a storm of green energy that shaped itself into a green palm several meters wide, slamming down on Ao Bai from above.

"Monkey King's Three Strikes: Strike That Moves Seas!" Sun Dasheng's bellow was followed up by a tremendous strike that seemed capable of raising a tsunami all by itself.

Thunder rumbled behind Ao Bai.

Lu Ming's slender frame rose up, covered in the same electrical glow as Li Luo's body. She had also used her Thunderpeal Avatar to greatly increase her speed and strength.

"Bolt Sword!" Lu Ming sent a crackling sword strike flashing out towards Ao Bai's exposed back.

A coordinated four-way attack by the cream of the One Star Hall crop, against the strongest Two Star Hall student.

Chapter 0576: The Weakness

The four One Star Hall geniuses swarmed the possessed Ao Bai from different directions, each using their killer moves without holding back.

Mercy could mean their own deaths.

They understood that the disparity against a quasi General Stage cultivator was huge. Although the four of them were good for their level, it meant nothing against this.

Although it was their first time fighting together as four, each came with a ton of battle experience, and they were able to hammer out some working synergy on the fly.

Four mighty attacks came smashing down towards Ao Bai's weak spots.

Ao Bai showed no emotion against his four opponents. Only the crimson moth continued to flutter in his eyes, weaving in and out as it created a hollowness that continued to deepen.

"Dragon's Bulwark!"

In a flash, Ao Bao's resonant power formed a suit of silver-scale armor around him. Each scale was wrinkled in the mystic manner of a dragon's coat, imbued with an additional magical resistance.

Boom!

All four attacks landed on Ao Bai's scale armor in a cacophony of bangs and sparks.

The four gasped as one.

Many scales were lost, but the underlying armor itself was unbroken. *Overl* **B1n**

"I've seen information on Ao Bai before. This is his best defensive resonance art, a low grade dragon-general resonance art! Be careful, its defenses are scary strong," Jing Taixu called out to them.

Ao Bai's hands were already moving again, forming a succession of new patterns.

Weng!

The silver scale armor was moving now, reforming into the figure of a dragon. Its muscular tail struck out with a pompous flick.

Boom!

The energy released was enough to smash the ground nearby to fine dust.

The four One Star Hall students retreated a dozen steps hastily. The latent power in that flick was enough to put them on guard.

They could feel their blood heating up just from the passive energy released by that blow.

"Like attacking a tree with a penknife." Li Luo scowled. This dragon-general resonance art was trouble indeed. Even the four of them together could not break through it.

"Dragon's Bulwark is split into two tiers," Jing Taixu told them. "Silver scales and golden scales. It seems like he hasn't reached the second tier yet; otherwise, it'd be a toothbrush instead of a penknife." It seemed like Jing Taixu had indeed done his homework regarding Ao Bai.

"Dragon-general resonance arts are much stronger than tiger-general resonance arts," Li Luo mused to himself. He made a mental note to get some dragon-general resonance arts after the Holy Grail Meet. It seemed like tiger-general resonance arts would no longer serve his needs against stronger opponents.

Dragon-general resonance arts had a much more demanding requirement of resonant power, which was why he had not considered them before. Along with their much higher price point and rarity, it had made the whole prospect rather daunting. Even in House Luolan's archive, dragon-general resonance arts were few and far between.

Out of the four One Star Hall students, only Jing Taixu had a low grade dragon-general resonance art, with the exception of the unique case of Sun Dasheng. Still, even that was only barely executable with the help of his quasi ninth-grade wind spirit avatar's additional worldly natural energy.

"I'm only a step away from the General Stage though," Li Luo thought to himself. "After the Holy Grail Meet, I'll have enough funds to get some dragon-general resonance arts. I really need more weapons up my sleeves before the Housemeet comes around."

Meanwhile, Ao Bao was attacking again. He moved with the sinuous deliberation of a scaled-dragon, his trident poised dangerously.

Both Li Luo and Jing Taixu squirmed as they were the designated head-on tankers of the attack.

Even together, they felt the danger that they were in.

Still, neither was a coward, and they calmly gathered their resonant power and met him accordingly.

CLANG! CLANG!

The Onyx-Elephant Blade and green plantain fan answered with parallel swings that clashed against Ao Bai's trident, releasing a wobbling blast of energy on impact.

The three fought on intensely.

The two One Star Hall fighters in the melee felt the stress of facing a much stronger opponent. Each time the trident swung, it contained enough power to rattle them from head to toe. A few swings later, both felt their arms going numb, and they began to dread the next attack.

Li Luo was able to take a bit more roughing thanks to the strengthening of his Thunderpeal Avatar, but Jing Taixu was already badly shaken up. Both his palms were bleeding badly, and he had to grit his teeth through the pain of each block.

The difference between a Fourth Changing and a quasi General Stage.

"Monkey King's Three Strikes: Strike That Raises the Heavens!"

Sun Dasheng leaped up, his staff shining like never before. He had strengthened it to an awesome thickness, until it looked like a pillar that held up the sky itself. He brought it crashing down towards Ao Bai's head.

Ao Bai turned to face this new threat, and his trident shifted into a bolt of silver light that he thrust upwards, sharp points glinting like the fangs of a scaled-dragon.

BANG!

Blood flowed freely out of Sun Dasheng's mouth, but his fingers continued to scrabble desperately against the bulk of his staff. He would not let go.

He was only a Third Changing, one sub-tier weaker than Li Luo and Jing Taixu, so he was clearly not going to fare well in a hard clash of powers against Ao Bai.

Ao Bai's eyes locked on to Sun Dasheng and narrowed as he prepared to move in for the killing blow.

Boom!

But at this moment, a mystical power crackled. The images of Sun Dasheng, Li Luo, and Jing Taixu wavered, and then a new figure appeared behind Ao Bai.

The sound of lightning gathering nearby caused Ao Bai to freeze for a moment, and the moth in his eyes fluttered a lot more slowly. It could not tell which of these were real or illusions.

The hesitation lasted only a second. With one heroic sweep from Ao Bai's trident, it smashed through everything around him, clearing a breathing space.

However, this brief interaction was enough for the shrewd Lu Ming to notice something.

She came around to stand behind Li Luo and Jing Taixu.

"I sensed that the moth is afraid of lightning resonant power. If I can send one good jolt into Senior Ao Bai's body, it might be able to chase the moth out and un-possess him," Lu Ming quickly said. Li Luo and Jing Taixu turned to stare at her in surprise.

That was very good news indeed.

"There's just one problem. His Dragon's Bulwark armor protects him too well. If we can't break that armor, my lightning resonant power can't reach his actual body," she quickly supplemented.

All four of them were at the Evolving Resonance Tier, so they were all quite stumped against a quasi General Stage expert's defensive dragon-general resonance art.

"Well, Dragon's Bulwark is very strong, but it doesn't mean we don't have a way to punch through it," Li Luo mused thoughtfully. "Besides, I don't think his full power is unlocked under possession. I mean, the moth couldn't tell the difference between Lu Ming's illusions and reality. So I don't think it's a very smart moth. I propose we keep it busy with illusions, then the three of us use our best moves to attack the same point all at once to break through Dragon's Bulwark."

Sun Dasheng grinned. "I can use Demon Ape's Will. It's my strongest attack, but I can only keep it up for ten seconds."

Li Luo nodded. This had to be the unfinished Duke Art that Sun Dasheng had. It was probably stronger than his and Jing Taixu's moves, although the ten-second limit made it a bit uncomfortable to pull off.

"I have a dragon-general resonance art too," Jing Taixu offered. Of course, he was talking about the Wind Demon's Wrath that he had used against Li Luo at the end of their fight.

"Li Luo, what about you? Don't have one yet, do you?" Jing Taixu asked smugly.

Li Luo just gave him a small smile. "Didn't need one to beat you. Imagine if I had one."

Jing Taixu snorted. "You think dragon-general resonance arts are cultivated based on what? A desire that they fall out of the sky and into your head?"

Li Luo did not argue with him. "Don't worry about me. You all just focus on giving your best. I'll break the final defense."

Jing Taixu shot him a suspicious look, but he said no more.

"When the last illusion vanishes, that's the signal," Li Luo said. Lu Ming's illusions were already almost fully dispersed by Ao Bai's trident.

They closed in, improving their positions and preparing their attacks. Then, when the last illusion winked out, all three shot forward at the same time.

Do or bust, this was it.

Chapter 0577: Modifying Resonance Arts

"Demon Ape's Will!"

As soon as the last illusion was skewered through by Ao Bai's trident, Sun Dasheng started them off by unleashing his long-charged up killer move. His entire body began to swell up with muscle, pushing his chest out until it was broader than a barrel. A jet-black light glimmered on his skin like polished iron.

His blood mingled with his resonant power within him, creating a new, powerful concoction that crawled through his veins and painted his skin in sinisterly arcane tattoos of crimson.

A tail of light formed behind him, long and agile like a monkey's tail.

Sun Dasheng's eyes turned red as well. He was an ancient ape that had come back to life.

Even Li Luo was impressed by the overall transformation.

Sun Dasheng was only a Third Changing, but in this state, even Li Luo would find it a challenge to beat him.

"How in the world did you beat him during the hall-level competition?" Li Luo demanded of Jing Taixu.

"His Duke Art is incomplete," Jing Taixu said indifferently. "Once he uses it, his rationality is suppressed. He's completely a primal ape now... dodge him for ten seconds and then he'll emerge in an extremely weakened state."

"Ah." Li Luo understood. "You beat him the sneaky way, not the proper way."

Jing Taixu snorted. "I beat him the easier way. Not the harder way."

BOOM!

While the two spoke, Sun Dasheng had already locked on to Ao Bai, roaring his defiance as he stomped the ground to loose gravel under his hairy foot.

He charged Ao Bai like a raging bull. No resonance art was employed—all he needed was brute strength and his metal staff, which he swung in a brutal smash aimed horizontally at Ao Bai's chest.

The raw physical strength was tremendous to behold, and the nearby buildings trembled as the staff passed by.

Li Luo was well and truly amazed by this attack. He was pretty sure that he would have been injured if he were in Ao Bai's shoes. A Duke Art was truly nothing to mess with. Sun Dasheng's incomplete mastery was already far stronger than any dragon-general resonance art he had seen so far.

Boom!

But while Li Luo and Jing Taixu might have chosen to avoid Sun Dasheng's attack, the possessed Ao Bai had no such presence of mind. He did not back down even an inch. His trident flicked out like a dragon's tail, crashing against the simian's attack.

Like the meeting of two comets.

CLANG!

A spider-web of cracks rippled out under the pair as they struggled for the upper hand. A few seconds later, Sun Dasheng suddenly slid backwards, then he was sent flying, shrinking as he went. His resonant power leaked out of him like a punctured balloon.

Demon Ape's Will had run out.

Curled up in a ball, he tried to break his landing as he crashed into a broken wall, coughing up blood.

"All... yours..." he wheezed.

Li Luo and Jing Taixu had no time to pay attention to his injuries. They were locked on to Ao Bai as well. The force of Sun Dasheng's attack had traveled past his defenses, landing on his chest and catapulting him back several dozen meters.

More importantly, it had blown apart a huge hole in the thick layer of silver dragon scales at the chest area.

As a bonus, Ao Bai was looking a little vague and unfocused, and the moth was flying in a strangely drunken pattern.

"Low grade dragon-general resonance art, Wind Demon's Wrath!"

Jing Taixu wasted no time. He formed a spear of pure energy with his green plantain fan, then whipped it at Ao Bai's exposed chest while the possessed student was still clearing his head.

"Li Luo!" Jing Taixu could only hope that Li Luo would complement his attack perfectly. He alone could not possibly break through the remaining Dragon's Bulwark.

Li Luo took a deep breath, then began his own move. Hand tight on the Onyx-Elephant Blade, he started to coat it with rippling light.

Jing Taixu stared at him. "Thousand Watery Knives Art? You don't have a dragon-general resonance art at all!" he cried in dismay.

Seeing Li Luo's cockiness before had convinced him that Li Luo had been hiding one up his sleeve, but now he was just using the common Thousand Watery Knives Art that Jing Taixu had seen too many times before.

It was not a bad resonance art, but ultimately, it was merely a tiger-general resonance art.

Li Luo might be quite strong with his buffed-up physical body and his dual resonances, but this tiger-general resonance art was not going to cut it at all against an opponent of this caliber. He was not even a peer of their same year—he was the damned winner of the Two Star Hall's strongest student title!

Li Luo ignored Jing Taixu's dismay. He was busy honing the edge on his sword blade, until it was the sharp reefline that separated the inexorable tide from the shore.

The Thousand Watery Knives Art was a high grade tiger-general resonance art.

It was also the resonance art that Li Luo had cultivated closest to perfection. He understood the move deeply, had lived it, breathed it, and used it to save his life on more than one occasion. The fusion of

light resonant energy into it elevated the speed of the water, and hence its cutting power, far beyond what others expected.

With each level of understanding that Li Luo developed for the move, he continued to refine it.

If others knew that a humble Resonant Master was ambitious enough to modify resonance arts, they would probably laugh, as if he were a toddler sharpening a twig with a stone. He did not care. He was talented in resonance arts, a talent that even Jiang Qing'e had acknowledged before. Back before anyone had activated their resonant palaces in Southwind Academy, he had climbed to the top based on this talent alone.

"The Thousand Watery Knives Art harnesses the cutting edge of water resonant power. The faster the flow, the stronger the cutting power. Until now, it was assumed that straight-flowing water was fastest and therefore produced the most cutting power.

"But is that really so? Changing the edge pattern of the attack is incredibly difficult... unless you can imbue light resonant energy like I do. Light resonant energy is ethereal, ever-changing, and even more versatile in form than water resonant power. I can use it to create new channels, mold the water's flow however I wish."

Li Luo's eyes gleamed in triumph.

Within him, his light resonant energy started to pepper the edge of his blade with points of light, throwing the flow of water resonant power into a unique pattern that he had carefully experimented with before. Mathematical curves that flowed back and forth, forcing the water onwards faster and faster.

Li Luo was not done yet. He continued to overlap the curves across each other to create jagged edges that joined seamlessly against each other.

Finally, he joined one end of the entire construct to the other, creating a full cycle! Water pushed against water, spurring it onwards in a virtuous cycle of speed, until the entire attack was humming with speed.

Jing Taixu's jaw dropped.

He could sense that this attack had gotten way stronger than it ever should have.

Was this even the Thousand Watery Knives Art anymore?!

The hum he heard from it reminded him of a dragon's purr.

"Indeed, I don't have a dragon-general resonance art yet," Li Luo said with a grim smile directed Jing Taixu's way.

"But don't you think this modified tiger-general resonance art of mine just about compares?"

Jing Taixu shook his head in wonder. Li Luo was truly mad. Had he managed to come up with his own resonance art?! Was this something a Resonant Master cultivator was capable of?

Li Luo stepped forward and unleashed the attack.

Weng!

The void itself warped around the attack as it shot out. Behind it, its creator smiled, the reflection of the wheel of water spinning in his eye.

Li Luo smiled.

"Senior Ao Bai, taste my newest creation. I call it... Thousand Watery Knives Wheel."

Chapter 0578: A United Win

Weng!

A torpedo-like spear barreled onwards through the air, explosions of resonant power propelling it even faster as it flew on, straight and true.

Jing Taixu's Wind Demon's Wrath.

While the moth in Ao Bai's eyes was still disoriented, the spear landed square in the center of the area that Sun Dasheng had opened up for them, where the silver dragon scales were more scarce.

Wind Demon's Wrath took the work a step further, scouring the remaining scales clean off with its abrasive energy. All that remained now was a clean, silvery layer underneath, a resilient, final layer of protection that looked to be weaved out of countless silver threads.

Ao Bai's quasi General Stage-strength defensive dragon-general resonance art was indeed a tall challenge for the four of them to take down.

But there was still Li Luo's attack left.

The wheel of watery knives sparkled as if it were crystal, beautiful and deadly.

Reworked into its current form, the tiger-general resonance art was probably as strong as any low grade dragon-general resonance art!

It slammed into Ao Bai's chest with a satisfying crunch.

Screech!

The serration struggled to break past the last line of defense, cutting through the stubborn, silver threads one by one.

Ao Bai sensed the danger and bellowed. Silver light exploded across his body, activating the scales covering the unharmed parts of his armor. They also dissolved into silver light and converged at the vulnerable point that was being attacked.

"Lu Ming!"

Li Luo was delighted at this turn of events. He had managed to force all of Dragon's Bulwark to one single spot, leaving the rest of Ao Bai's body vulnerable. Without the protection of the silver dragon scales, it was time to strike.

At Li Luo's cry, a silhouette rose up behind Ao Bai.

Lu Ming had been carefully preparing for this moment, although she had privately doubted whether the moment would ever arise. She had doubted Li Luo could overcome the gap between them and a quasi General Stage cultivator.

It was a challenge that demanded power, not just a clever presence of mind in battle that Li Luo had shown as his greatest strength so far.

And again she had been proven wrong. Li Luo's attack was stronger than anything he had ever shown them before!

"This guy can modify resonance arts...? That's some scary talent," she thought to herself. As a dual resonance user herself, she too had dabbled in mixing different powers in ways that others had yet to experiment with. She understood the power potential that lay in that aspect, but Li Luo's creation was truly inspirational.

He had all but created a new resonance art for himself.

As surprised as she was, Lu Ming did not miss the opportunity by even a beat. The moment Li Luo created the opening, she was pouncing as quickly as a cat, appearing on Ao Bai's right side.

Her slim fingers were crackling with electricity as she jabbed a hand to clutch at Ao Bai's throat.

If she managed to land the hold, she could electrocute the moth into powder.

Sensing danger, the moth beat its wings violently and desperately. A spurt of blood flew out from Ao Bai's eyes and landed on Lu Ming's hand.

Pssh!

The blood smothered out the electricity instantly, neutralizing the attack and eating away at Lu Ming's hand. It was clearly destructive.

The moth's own ability to attack came as a surprise to Li Luo and Jing Taixu, and their hearts sank upon seeing the attack fizzle. If Lu Ming was injured, then their entire plan would have come to naught.

Phish!

Lu Ming wavered and then vanished.

An illusion!

Li Luo and Jing Taixu's eyes widened as one.

Lu Ming was truly the soul of caution. With this additional step, she had cheated out the moth's final defense!

Boom!

At the same time, another figure appeared on Ao Bai's left. Crossing two fingers, she landed a precise dab onto Ao Bai's temple.

BOOM!

The electrical energy ripped through Ao Bai's head, rocking it backwards. His eyes started to hiss, and they could see the moth flying haphazardly within, banging against the sides of the head as the electric power began to wrap around it.

Although the moth had controlling powers, it was weak by itself, and helpless against this direct attack.

A few moments later, it sizzled into a fine, red powder that trickled out of Ao Bai's eyes.

Lu Ming sprang back, her beautiful eyes watching Ao Bai carefully.

Li Luo and Jing Taixu held similarly cautious stands.

Ao Bai coughed up blood, and his face suddenly turned pale.

"I've... troubled you guys," he said hoarsely.

The attackers heaved sighs of relief, including the injured Sun Dasheng, who was still recuperating. They were glad to have Ao Bai back with them.

It was Li Luo who spoke up. "Senior Ao Bai, this was not your fault. That moth was too strong, and there was nothing we could have done about it. But just in case, I suggest you don't move around just yet. Just gather your strength there."

Ao Bai managed a weak smile. "That prudence is my only option, Junior Li Luo. Don't worry, my resonant power is completely spent, and I couldn't move even if I wanted to."

Although he had been under control, he had watched Li Luo and the others fight to take him down. He knew that it had been a hard-fought victory, and they were be almost as tired as he was.

Jing Taixu, Sun Dasheng, and Lu Ming nodded wordlessly, approving of Li Luo's prudence.

"There are three more cleansing dew points to be set. I'll have to leave it to you four," Ao Bai said, struggling to a sitting position and stowing his trident.

"Just wait for our good news," Li Luo reassured him cheerfully. Throwing a look to the other three, the four of them regrouped, giving Ao Bai a wide berth, and then hastened on to the next point.

...

"Eh?"

High on the tower, a crimson-clad figure whirled around in surprise.

"The ghost moth's been destroyed? Those four Resonant Master kids took down a quasi General? Truly elites, these kids are. Full of surprises," he murmured to himself.

He smirked for a moment, then turned back to watch the Bloodtailed Other's fight.

"Just as well, it's about time anyway.

"Any longer and those eight Heavenly Pearl kids won't last."

Chapter 0579: Time to Counterattack

The energy storms buffeted the city, shaking it like a giant's rattle.

High in the sky, the intense battle raged on.

Eight elite Heavenly Pearl Stage students were engaging the Bloodtailed Other, their Heavenly Pearls absorbing worldly natural energy as fast as they could behind them. Yet one look at the battle was enough for anyone to tell that the single Other held the absolute advantage.

The stronger of the eight, such as Lan Lan, the First Princess, and Gong Shenjun, were holding their own, but the others, such as Qin Yue and Zhao Beili, had already incurred injuries.

Qin Yue was the worst off. An angry, wet stripe of blood dripped through his shirt, marking him from right shoulder to hip. Hairs from the Bloodtailed Other's bristly tail were stuck to the wound, causing him incredible pain and preventing him from healing it. His face was pale from the pain, and he was almost in a daze.

Still, he continued to fight on.

The First Princess and the others understood his plight and tried to cover more of the attacks against him, preventing the Bloodtailed Other from using him as their weakness. They were already in trouble in an eight-on-one. Any diminishing in their forces would only lead to an increased pressure on the others.

The First Princess' jade scepter was flashing non-stop, sending jets of green, luan-shaped light out at the Bloodtailed Other.

A contemptuous swat from the bushy tail nullified them.

The sashaying fox tail was a huge threat that none of them dared to look away from for too long. It was the source of power for the Bloodtailed Other, and it flowed heavy with sinister energy. It was both a weapon and defense, and it foiled them at every turn.

Each time the tail swept out, all eight had to duck and run.

"We can't hold on for too long..." The First Princess frowned. They were forced to permanently play defense, choosing to hold their scant strength for the right moment to attack.

The right moment was the completion of the purification points.

At that time, the Bloodtailed Other would be weakened and suppressed, and it would be the best time to counterattack.

They had but one shot to go all out and finish it off.

And if things continued dragging on like this, they would be in trouble.

The First Princess kept up her delaying attacks and risked a quick glance behind her. She saw a scattering of bright cleansing dew points winking comfortingly back at her out of the gloomy, gray landscape.

"Li Luo, that boy, what a strength he is to have around," she thought, allowing herself a small smile.

Of course, the squad leaders had sensed it when Ao Bai had been possessed, and they despaired at the thought that the weaker One Star Hall students would not be able to overcome him.

Even keeping Li Luo and the others occupied long enough would stall their mission and cause them to lose the overall battle.

But they themselves were being badly beaten by the Bloodtailed Other, and could not spare anybody to help their juniors. They could only wish them luck... and somehow it had worked.

Of course, it was not a fair fight in many ways, but the win was still unexpected.

At their current pace, the cleansing dew points would be up very soon.

Yes!

While the First Princess' heart lifted, the Bloodtailed Other suddenly gave another rosy giggle that made all of her opponents pause nervously.

They had fought the Bloodtailed Other for a while now, so they were used to the amount of strength needed to stop each laugh-attack. But this time, the attack was significantly stronger.

"Be careful!" Lan Lan called out to them. "It senses the purification points taking shape. It might be making a move to take us down!"

The other seven tightened up their focus, doubling down on their Heavenly Pearl defenses. They had to stop the attacks not only against themselves, but also guard against the Bloodtailed Other breaking through their line to go attack Li Luo and the others.

The vixen waved its tail again, shaking loose more crimson power that formed eight bright-red skulls of ruby.

The skulls began to float and then caught fire in the air.

The flames burned hotter and hotter within their hollow eyes, then they flew out, each one targeting one squad leader.

The fireball skulls were a new attack, and even Lan Lan braced himself heavily for it, sensing how powerful it was.

None of them dared to take the attack lightly. They each dug deep into their reserves of resonant power and blocked with all they had.

A few moments later, the clash happened.

Boom!

All eight squad leaders were thrown backwards. It had taken all of their power, but all of them had managed to stop the flaming skulls.

Just as their shoulders sagged in relief, the skull in front of Qin Yue suddenly cackled. Unhinging its bony jaw, there was an additional finger bone in the mouth that flicked a patch of black sludge towards his brow.

Qin Yue was caught off-guard by this additional attack. Clearly, the Bloodtailed Other had prepared a special extra something for the weakest of them.

"Qin Yue, watch out!"

The others were too far to offer any help in time, having been forced back by their own skulls.

At the crucial moment, Qin Yue managed one final burst of energy. Leaping backwards, he leaned back to create even more distance and shot an arrow of resonant power that mitigated much of the black sludge.

Pssh!

Most of the sludge was gone, but there was still some left that he had not managed to remove.

And it was coming towards a completely defenseless Qin Yue.

There was no time to even break his spirit mirror!

Was he going to die here today?

His eyes were closing in bleak finality, when suddenly a giant, flaming sword appeared over his shoulder, slamming into the black sludge and burning it into a crisp.

SWOOSH!

The clang of metal rang out as the sword thrust on to smash into the finger bone.

The golden flames bloomed even more intensely. Then, with a final puff of black smoke, the finger bone cracked and disappeared.

Qin Yue shuddered, still feeling the icy hand of death on his head.

The First Princess and the others cheered. Jiang Qing'e had come in as reinforcement!

She had already dealt with most of the Others throughout the city, and had come over to support their fight.

Closing her fist, her heavy sword flew back to her hand.

"Junior Jiang, thank you," Qin Yue gasped.

Jiang Qing'e gave him a small smile, then she turned to the other squad leaders. "It's almost time."

They turned as one in the same direction.

One drop of cleansing dew was rising slowly into the hazy sky.

The final drop.

As it rose into the air, a thread of light began to connect all of the drops of cleansing dew.

In the next moment, they formed a powerful screen of light that bathed the entire city like a bright moon.

The illusion of Russet Rock City was rapidly disappearing.

The sounds of the city faded away.

Scraggly weeds rose up in its place, a tattered coat over the dusty bones and bricks of the city.

Despite the dreariness of the sight, all of the students heaved big sighs of relief.

The purification points were up. Now it was their time to counter attack.

Chapter 0580: Leaders' Attack

Weng, weng!

The cleansing power spread outward in pulses that quietened the bustling illusion of Russet Rock City, stripping away all pretense from the dreary reality.

Soon, the city was back to its lifeless state, revealing the true extent of devastation that the Other Disaster had left on its construction.

On a creaky, stone roof, Li Luo surveyed his surroundings. The final drop of cleansing dew twinkled above him as it linked up with other droplets. The cleansing power was still spreading throughout the city.

"I heard that Russet Rock City had a population of a few million in its prime," Lu Ming said quietly from beside him.

Even the usually boisterous Sun Dasheng was quiet for a moment. Millions of people, now millions of corpses.

"Well, let's make a few more Other corpses to even the tally a little," Li Luo said, looking up determinedly. With the dispelling of the illusion, it was the best time for them to take down the Greater Heavenly Disaster Class while it was suppressed.

Although the eight squad leaders had remained on the defensive all this time, they were not incapable of attacking. They had simply been biding their time.

...

In the sky above Russet Rock City.

The Bloodtailed Other screeched in outrage, its beautiful face suddenly turning poisonous. The diminutive, cherry lips had stretched to gruesome proportions, revealing rows of razor-sharp, ivory teeth behind them, still dripping with blood.

The bushy tail had also been squashed inwards, and now it looked less luxuriant than before.

"Everyone, we have but one chance," Lan Lan said. He pressed his hands together and started a series of gestures.

"Don't hold back now. Bring your strongest moves."

Hearing Lan Lan's command, the other seven leaders moved with conviction and relief. Finally, their moment had come.

"Any longer, and I'm afraid I wouldn't even have had the strength to hit back," Qin Yue thought wryly to himself.

"Dragon-general resonance art, Mountains' March."

Slapping his hands together, his resonant power formed a dull, yellow hill several hundred meters in height.

"Dragon-general resonance art, Glassy Flames."

Zhao Beili pulled out a tiny, blue flame cupped within his hands and blew on it until it grew. The temperature of the air around him instantly soared.

"Dragon-general resonance art, Demon Lion's Fist!"

Lian Zong roared in pleasure at being freed from their reserved fighting strategy. He punched the air exuberantly, releasing a large, black lion that bounded forth.

"Dragon-general resonance art, Green Luan Sword Technique."

The First Princess waved her jade scepter, creating a lotus flower of swords that filled the air with sword qi.

Gong Shenjun twisted his index and middle finger together, creating a silver nimbus of light. "Dragon-general resonance art, Finger That Parts the Jade Seas."

Each squad leader had used their best moves, and all of them were impressive. However, the star of the show was going to be Lan Lan, with the giant, hulking silhouette behind him that had a kingly majesty to it.

Facing the eight leaders' attacks, the Bloodtailed Other's eyes narrowed nervously. With a vigorous shake of its tail, it released many hairs that began a rain of blood.

"Attack!" the First Princess shouted, and the eight moved as one.

"Eek!"

The Bloodtailed Other dug in. The rain of blood formed a small pool of blood at its feet, and tortured humans rose up from within, each twisted in agony. These were probably the citizens of Russet Rock City.

Even worldly natural energy decayed away in the pool of blood, forming a new type of blood energy instead.**novE-lb-ln**

The Bloodtailed Other was strong within its territory. With a defiant flick of its bushy tail, it leaped to face the leaders.

The battle took place high in the air, but the stray blasts of energy were enough to level the already brittle buildings below.

For Li Luo and the others below, it was like armageddon breaking out. They huddled away behind a broken wall some distance away, as broken debris continued to rain down.

So this was a fight at the Heavenly Dipper General level. From the sound alone, it was many times more intense than their Resonant Master fights.

"They're just at the Heavenly Pearl Stage," Jing Taixu said loftily. "When I'm in the Four Star Hall, I might well be a Heavenly Resonance Stage cultivator. I'll leave my own mark in the records of the sage colleges of the East Divine Continent."

"Big mouth for someone only with a quasi ninth-grade. Have you forgotten about Senior Jiang? She has a real ninth-grade light resonance. You think you can beat her record?" Lu Ming scoffed.

Jing Taixu flinched. He had forgotten.

There was a real ninth-grade cultivator at the Holy Grail Meet!

"I hear there's a big gap between the Heavenly Pearl Stage and the Heavenly Resonance Stage," Li Luo added. "Of all the sage colleges across the East Divine Continent, no one has broken through to the Heavenly Resonance Stage while still a student. You would need a lot of talent... and a lot of resources."

"It's the last damned stage before Duke, isn't it?" Sun Dasheng added eagerly. "Some people even call it Little Duke. Of course it's hard to reach."

"I hear the sage colleges in the inner divine continent have Heavenly Resonance Stage Four Star Hall students once in a while though," Lu Ming said wistfully.

Li Luo nodded to himself. Compared to an outer divine continent like the East Divine Continent, the inner divine continent was much richer and had better talent. It was natural that their students did better.

This was a natural advantage, and there was nothing he could do about it.

Still, it was not impossible for someone of Jiang Qing'e's talent to reach the Heavenly Resonance Stage while still in the Four Star Hall. And perhaps even Li Luo himself... Once he reached Earth Fiend Stage, he would be able to fill his third acquired resonance. With the power of three, his cultivation speed might well match a ninth-grade resonance.

Maybe he could give it a go too.

Boom!

While they chatted, the sky above them rocked yet again. They looked up to see that the pool of blood had swallowed up several of the attacks, although it was also looking worse for wear.

The Bloodtailed Other was not having an easy time of it anymore.

"Senior Lan Lan's Three Kowtows of the Enlightened Sage is coming," Jing Taixu suddenly said.

Li Luo perked up and looked as well. The mystical figure behind Lan Lan was incredibly majestic, and it seemed like heaven and earth were attuned to it.

A King's shadow!

Lan Lan's hair turned white.

Still, his face was resolute as he walked up to the Bloodtailed Other and bent at the waist.

The kingly figure followed suit behind him, bowing.

BOOM!