

Resonance 61

Chapter 0061: Hunting Lu Qing'er

When Lu Qing'er appeared on the screen, surrounded on all sides, there were looks of consternation back outside Whitespirit Mountain.

"That's Southwind Academy's Lu Qing'er? First on the leaderboard?"

"She's being targeted? That's Shi Huang, and Xiang Liang, Chi Su, Zong Fu. Hoo. All the top few in points."

"Southwind Academy is in trouble now. Shi Huang came well prepared. He must have plotted this earlier. If they can knock Lu Qing'er out, then Eastpool Academy will probably overtake Southwind Academy by eliminating their leader."

"Cheeky lads, ganging up on such a beautiful, wee lass."

"Well, no such rule. Lu Qing'er was careless, is all."

"..."

The chatter swelled with excitement. No matter which side you were on, this battle promised to be the most spectacular one in these exams.

In the pavilion, Yan Lingqing and Cai Wei were staring at the crystal wall, faces stiff.

"Lu Qing'er is in trouble," Cai Wei said.

"They're ganging up on Southwind Academy," Yan Lingqing said shrewdly.

They had accurately pinpointed Lu Qing'er's location, then Shi Huang had come personally. He had even invited three others who were currently on the top 5 standings. They were giving Lu Qing'er no room to escape.

"Trouble."

Cai Wei scowled. Li Luo was from Southwind Academy, so naturally she was on Lu Qing'er's side. Besides, Lu Qing'er had helped the Suncreek Villa out before, so of course Cai Wei did not want to see her eliminated.

Still, if wishes were horses, beggars would ride.

In the main pavilion, the atmosphere had become stifling. It seemed like the air itself had gone still.

It was the old dean's turn for a black mood. His body pulsed with a robust resonant power, casting an aura of intimidation around him.

Nearby, Governor Shi sat unfazed, a small smile playing across his lips.

"Governor Shi must have gone to great lengths to plan this, eh?" the old dean asked curtly.

This plot did not only involve Eastpool Academy, but even conspirators from three different schools. This was a plot long in the works, and no sudden get-together.

Xiang Liang, Chi Su, and Zong Fu were mere students. The fact that they would choose to work together with Shi Huang meant that their respective schools had given them such direction. And the only one in the Tianshu Province capable of uniting multiple major schools against Southwind Academy was Governor Shi himself.

"Southwind Academy has held the title of best school for too long," Governor Shi said cheerfully. "This is but the will of the masses."

"Governor Shi, your coming to the Tianshu Province can be likened to a rat dropping in a cauldron of soup," the dean said caustically.

A hint of anger flashed in Governor Shi's eyes. He stated simply, "My hand was forced by you, Dean."

"Don't worry. This year at the royal court evaluation, I will give you a poor review again. At that time, Governor Shi will probably give up the position," the dean said icily.

Governor Shi responded with an equally cold smile. "Oh, don't worry. If you lose the title of best school, then Southwind Academy's evaluation holds no weight."

Electricity sizzled in their mutual glare, a wordless communication of anger and hate that only heightened the tension in the main pavilion.

Mentor Anlie just sat there, ignoring their altercation. He had seen all too many of such politicking. As long as no rules were broken, he would not step in.

He was completely focused on the crystal wall. Inwardly, he thought that the lass Lu Qing'er was in a pitiful position...

Within the expanse of broken buildings.

Lu Qing'er's cold gaze was fixed on Shi Huang, who was in front of her. "You must have gone to great lengths to put this show together," she said, her voice ringing out clear and cool.

"A gesture of my great respect for you, Qing'er." Shi Huang smirked.

She shook her head slightly, knowing that words were useless. Her petite frame surged with icy-white resonant power, and her ice-silk gloves began to freeze over with flakes. It was almost like a tiger's tongue; a light graze would tear into flesh.

These custom ice-silk gloves were Lu Qing'er's weapons.

The other three began to harness their resonant power as well. Each readied their weapons as they stared mercilessly at Lu Qing'er.

The tension was palpable.

In the next instant, the three moved as one, each from their respective direction. Three beams of light shot forth, caging Lu Qing'er.

Lu Qing'er's own ice resonant power flared out to meet them. She did not back away, but instead took the fight to them.

As her power howled around her, the air around them grew thicker, and patches of frost could be seen on the cracked ground beneath them.

Bang!

The four resonant powers clashed in spectacular fashion. But the ones who were dismayed were the three attackers. They could sense the power behind Lu Qing'er's ice resonant power, sweeping away their own attacks.

"It's really a Ninth Seal's power!"

"A high-grade seventh-grade ice resonance!"

Then the three attacked again.

"Crimson Fire Palm!" Xiang Liang shouted, pushing his fire resonant power to his palms. A flaming crimson palm print flew towards Lu Qing'er.

"Poison Ivy Hex!"

Clasping her hands together, Chi Su sent her venom-green power snaking out along the ground, forming green tendrils that whipped out at Lu Qing'er's feet.

"Water Whip!"

Zong Fu waved his long sleeves and sent a blue whip flying through the air. It was packed with moist power, aimed at Lu Qing'er's head.

They had clearly coordinated this beforehand. Their well-choreographed attack targeted Lu Qing'er's vitals.

"Frost Halo!"

Lu Qing'er stomped her foot, and an icy-blue halo shimmered into existence around her body. It expanded smoothly, freezing all that it touched. The three attacks were nullified.

They faltered.

Lu Qing'er did not. She charged Xiang Liang, her dainty hands already moving, calling forth more icy wind as she moved, so they would have to fight in the bitter chill.

Lu Qing'er's onslaught overwhelmed Xiang Liang in an instant. If not for Zong Fu and Chi Su coming to his rescue, he would have fallen all too quickly.

The chaotic melee in the ruins was hard to keep track of.

It was three on one, but everyone could see that Lu Qing'er held the upper hand.

Such fighting ability left the spectators in awe. What beauty! What skills!

Seeing the situation on the verge of souring, Xiang Liang finally roared to their mastermind, "Shi Huang, what are you waiting for?!"

Bang!

Just as he shouted, a shrill thunderclap echoed across the wreckage. A bolt of lightning streaked towards Lu Qing'er.

Her eyes hardened at this new attack, but she was still unhurried. After all, she already knew that Shi Huang would join the fray eventually.

Her ice resonant power gathered at her silk gloves, and they seemed to be shrouded in crystals.

Her palm darted out to connect with the lightning spear.

Sshhh!

Ice and lightning clashed and scattered across the field.

Lu Qing'er was shaken slightly, while the attacker was sent retreating.

This might be the first time in the exams that Lu Qing'er had not had the upper hand in battle.

Worry crept up on her youthful features as her eyes tracked the crackling figure. "A high-grade seventh-grade lightning resonance. Formidable."

"Qing'er, your high-grade seventh-grade ice resonance is equally deserving of respect," Shi Huang replied jauntily.

"Still, you're not getting away today."

Lu Qing'er remained quiet for a few beats. Shi Huang and her were evenly matched. With his three lackeys in the fight, she was indeed at a disadvantage.

But if they thought that was all it would take to get Lu Qing'er to come quietly, they were naive.

"Since you want to play, I'll entertain you till the last," Lu Qing'er said coldly.

They felt a chill run down their scalps at those words.

All eyes on her. Lu Qing'er stretched out her hands and gently removed her ice-silk gloves.

With that, her bare hands were now exposed.

Their eyes narrowed. Shi Huang was suddenly looking serious too.

"Is she finally going to use that trump card..."

Chapter 0062: Hands of Ice Jade

When Lu Qing'er peeled off her gloves, all eyes were on her hands, perfect unblemished skin in a beautiful alabaster. They must have been shaped by a divine being.

Her hands had an otherworldly beauty to them, as if they were carved straight out of mutton fat jade.

When she revealed her hands, the three youths present were entranced by their beauty, even Chi Su, who was a girl.

Beautiful faces, they had seen plenty. But seeing hands that held such beauty, this was a first for them.

It was a pity that Lu Qing'er kept them hidden under silk gloves all the time.

There were also icy patterns that could be seen faintly on Lu Qing'er's hands, which were exuding a cold mist.

"Be careful. That's Lu Qing'er's secret technique, Hands of Ice Jade... She might only be a Ninth Seal, but that technique could trump some Duke Stage resonance arts," Shi Huang warned them sharply.

The others stiffened up upon hearing this. They looked at Lu Qing'er's beautiful hands with renewed caution.

Duke Stage resonance arts were on a completely different level than Ten Seals Stage fighters. They themselves were unable to use such high level resonance arts, and yet Lu Qing'er's ace could be used even before entering the Resonant Master Stage. That was a scary prospect indeed.

They were starting to understand why Shi Huang had called them together to deal with Lu Qing'er even though he was quite strong himself. This trump card must have been what he was afraid of.

Lu Qing'er, the ice queen, wasted no words. Without any changes to her frosty expression, she moved toward Shi Huang's position.

Deal with Shi Huang first, apparently.

Shi Huang had anticipated that. With a flash of lightning, he retreated.

The lightning resonance also specialized in speed, much like the wind resonance.

Lu Qing'er immediately changed targets, giving up on their leader and turning to Xiang Liang.

Xiang Liang panicked. He did not have Shi Huang's speed, and could only call forth his fiery resonant power with a shout.

At the same time, his sword burst into flames. He charged Lu Qing'er.

Hu!

The blade sang through the air, but Lu Qing'er did not seem concerned. With a flick of two fingers from her left hand, a gust of icy wind blasted out against the attack.

Dong!

A clear ringing sound like a bell, and Xiang Liang found his blade encased in a thick ice coating that doused his fire resonance instantly. It expanded swiftly, and soon he was encased in ice on the spot.

One move, and the Eighth Seal Xiang Liang was down!

Lu Qing'er's Hands of Ice Jade was chillingly strong indeed.

Chi Su and Zong Fu immediately ran for it.

But having shown her trump card, how could Lu Qing'er just let them go so easily? She sent two well-aimed shots at their legs, creating ice shackles that rooted them.

Another flick from two fingers, and two more ice sculptures were formed a few moments later.

In the blink of an eye, these three top rankers on the leaderboard had been dealt with by Lu Qing'er. However, after dealing with the three of them, the faint icy patterns on her left hand started to dim.

Clap, clap!

From behind, applause. "The brilliant Hands of Ice Jade." Shi Huang praised her gleefully.

Lu Qing'er turned to him with a neutral expression.

But this time, Shi Huang did not run.

Lu Qing'er sent her right fist pressing forward, icy wind howling with it. It seemed like even the air itself was freezing. It slammed straight into Shi Huang's chest.

Shockingly, he was not frozen.

Across the surface of his skin, lightning crackled. An electric armor.

"Qing'er, if your Hands of Ice Jade was complete on both hands, you could break my Voltaic Plating. But with just one hand? Not yet, it seems." Shi Huang smirked. His own trump card, revealed.

Against the full brunt of the Hands of Ice Jade, Shi Huang had to be cautious. But now that she only had half her strength left, he had nothing to fear.

In other words, he had gathered the other three as meat shields against the Hands of Ice Jade. All had gone according to plan.

They went at each other with full force, draining away their energy. Finally, Lu Qing'er's heart sank as the patterns on her right hand dimmed.

Her Hands of Ice Jade were expended.

Bang!

Just then, Shi Huang struck with lightning speed. A savage fist boomed out, smashing into Lu Qing'er's abdomen.

Her petite frame was sent flying, and she crashed heavily into a pile of jagged rocks. Blood appeared on her lips.

"Qing'er, what a shame. The final victor is... me," Shi Huang said, his smile almost apologetic. He walked over to the helpless Lu Qing'er.

Seeing the situation, Lu Qing'er sighed inwardly as well. She looked at the approaching Shi Huang dejectedly. As unhappy as she was, there was nothing more she could do.

"I'll have your points."

Shi Huang reached out a hand, pawing at the crystal medallion on Lu Qing'er's chest.

Swish, swish!

Just at that instant, dozens of lightballs whistled out of nowhere, exploding between Shi Huang and Lu Qing'er.

A blinding light.

Shi Huang was caught off guard, and his eyes were pierced with pain. Still, he quickly stretched out to snatch at Lu Qing'er.

Nothing but air.

Panicking now, he forced his throbbing eyes open, and he saw a figure clutching Lu Qing'er and vanishing into the ruins.

Shi Huang flew into a rage and rushed forward. He leaped over a broken wall but saw no traces of anybody.

All good humor was gone now, replaced by a towering mood.

That person had escaped quickly, but still Shi Huang had recognized him.

"That damn Li Luo!" Shi Huang hissed through gritted teeth. "He's ruined it!"

Chapter 0063: It's the Ol' White Knight to the Rescue!

In the crumbling ruins.

Shi Huang was fuming so hard that vapor was actually rising from his body. There was a demented look in his eyes. He was just on the verge of eliminating Lu Qing'er, his greatest obstacle, and now Li Luo had whisked her away!

The feeling of his painstakingly constructed plan going to ruins was enough to make Shi Huang blow his top. How he wished he could tear Li Luo into a thousand pieces!

Shi Huang's eyes swept the ground for traces of Li Luo's trail, but he saw nothing. The pair seemed to have vanished into thin air.

He searched for a while, then deemed it fruitless. He took a deep breath, struggling for composure. He returned to the three ice sculptures and used his resonant power to thaw them.

All three were blue in the face as they crawled out of the ice, shivering uncontrollably.

It was quite a while later before they finally began to recover.

Shi Huang looked at them. "Lu Qing'er has been taken away by Li Luo. Our mission is not yet complete."

"We must move quickly to find them. I injured Lu Qing'er. She will need some time to recover, and her Hands of Ice Jade are temporarily spent. She will not be able to use them for a while. As long as we find her, eliminating her will be easy."

The three nodded.

They had gone to such lengths, so they did not want to come up empty-handed.

"Just the few of us alone will not be enough, I fear. The terrain is confusing too. I suggest we spread word of Lu Qing'er's grievous wounds. There are also other students in Whitespirit Ruins. In peak condition, they would not dare to cross her, but with her injured and holding so many points, there will be bolder ones who would attack," Zong Fu said suddenly.

The others immediately approved of this, and even Shi Huang's eyes lit up.

"Let's go. Give them no time," Shi Huang ordered. Then they scurried away.

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Outside Whitespirit Mountain.

When Lu Qing'er was suddenly rescued, a huge cheer went up outside. After all, for those not invested, the winsome Lu Qing'er was a much more appealing side to back. Besides, she was the underdog.

However, they also knew that Lu Qing'er had been injured. Even though she had been saved, they had only bought some time.

"It seems like it was the Young Lord who saved Lu Qing'er." Cai Wei had a sharp eye, and she seemed to have identified him.

Yan Lingqing cocked her head. "This Li Luo is an oldhand at rescuing damsels in distress. Timing, method, all perfect. What girl could resist?"

Cai Wei gave a half-smile. "Could it be that Qing'e will have a new rival?"

"That will be something to watch," Yan Lingqing said with relish.

The lighthearted atmosphere here was a stark contrast to the mood back in the main pavilion, although the old dean had also lightened up a little with Lu Qing'er's rescue.

Still, he had not spoken, because he too knew that Southwind Academy was in a dire situation.

With Lu Qing'er heavily injured, it was too much to ask to take down Shi Huang.

Beside him, Governor Shi sipped his tea serenely. He was not overly affected by Lu Qing'er's rescue. He also knew that this development had come just a little too late.

She was no longer the biggest problem.

As long as Shi Huang found her and took her points, all would be well.

At that time, the coveted title of best school in the Tianshu Province would fall to Eastpool Academy.

The thought brought a faint twitch of happiness to Governor Shi's lips.

Oh, the rescuer was Li Luo? That House Luolan boy was indeed a vexing one. But no matter; as long as he remained in control of the Tianshu Province, there were all too many options for him to create trouble and instigate House Luolan's fall.

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Somewhere in Whitespirit Ruins, Li Luo gently laid Lu Qing'er down in a natural tree hollow.

He lowered his head to find Lu Qing'er's eyes locked dead on his face.

"Although I know the impact of my white knight rescue has devastated you, I hope you can control yourself," said a deadpan Li Luo.

Lu Qing'er bit her lip, her willowy brow dipping in reaction to the sharp pain coming from within. She knew her injuries were not trivial.

"How bad is it?" Li Luo asked.

She sighed, discouraged. "Quite bad. I'll be much weaker in fights from now on. I was too careless."

"That's bad. Shi Huang and his goons will be hunting us desperately. If he's smart, he'll call the other students. We'll be dug out sooner or later." Li Luo frowned.

"I'm sorry." Lu Qing'er hung her head.

"What are you sorry for?" Li Luo asked, surprised.

"I wasn't able to get first place. I let everyone down. Southwind Academy will lose the additional entrance slots," Lu Qing'er said softly.

"How's that your business? Entrance slots are to be earned individually. Additional slots, your first place, all those are your individual accomplishments. If you can't take them, it's just bad luck for the other Southwind students," Li Luo said indignantly.

"The Lu Qing'er I know isn't this shy. Were you hit over the head or something?"

She stared at him huffily. "You're the one hit on the head."

Li Luo grinned. "Oh, I almost forgot. You're injured, and I have a water resonance. I can help you heal!"

"I'm afraid these injuries won't completely heal in so short a time." Lu Qing'er hesitated.

"Heal what you can," Li Luo said. His waterlight resonance was special, and both water and light resonances had rejuvenating properties. Combined, they should be able to work some healing miracles.

He reached out to clasp her small, white hand with his own.

He had just taken hold of her hand when Lu Qing'er jolted upright. She vehemently pulled her hand back, her usually fair complexion now blushing furiously. She stared at him embarrassedly. "Hooligan, what are you doing!?"

Li Luo was startled by her reaction as well. "Using my water resonance power to heal you."

Lu Qing'er stammered. "Well—well don't hold my hand!"

Li Luo shook his head, dumbfounded. "My resonant power is faint enough as it is. Through clothing, it will be even weaker. Or you could turn around and I could pull your clothing down a little?"

Lu Qing'er's pearly whites grated against each other, staring him down furiously like a little mother tiger.

"Fine! No healing! Too hard to coddle! Let's just wait here for elimination, then!" Li Luo was irritated now. This girl was troublesome. Such a fuss over healing!

Even he would get angry!

"Wait."

Seeing him rise, Lu Qing'er hurriedly stopped him. She hung her head. "I was wrong. Continue, please."

Li Luo sniffed, then sat back down. He stretched out a rough hand to take Lu Qing'er's own. Perhaps because of her technique, her small hand was especially cool to the touch, almost like jade itself. It put some naughty thoughts in his head.

But Li Luo kept his expression blank, quickly channeling his resonant power. Blue power flooded through his hand, entering Lu Qing'er's body and repairing damage.

As his water resonance power flooded through her, she was surprised by its purity. Its regeneration was far more effective than she had anticipated.

A slow warmth spread within her, and the pain faded.

She glanced up at Li Luo holding her hand and then dipped her head so her long hair covered her face. Her face was red as a tomato, and her body was also quivering. It was a sight not often seen.

Lu Qing'er was not actually unwilling to let Li Luo hold her hand. But because she cultivated the Hands of Ice Jade, it made her hands especially sensitive when she was not channeling power through them. That was the reason she wore the ice-silk gloves, not allowing others to touch her hands.

Li Luo had grabbed her hand roughly and then later made her apologize—the usually proud Lu Qing'er felt humbled.

Chapter 0064: Hostages No More

Within Whitespirit Ruins, things were a mess.

The remaining students had all received messages from Shi Huang's camp that Southwind Academy's Lu Qing'er was badly injured and in hiding.

It sparked a wave of greed. Everyone knew that she was first on the leaderboard. If Lady Luck brought them to her, wouldn't they shoot up to first place instantly?

Usually, they would be afraid of her strength. But now that she was injured, what was there to fear?

And so the greedy students-turned-bounty-hunters started to comb the area for her energetically.

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Shi Huang was perched on a tall, brick feature, emotionlessly monitoring the changes in Whitespirit Ruins. They had been searching for an hour now, but Li Luo and Lu Qing'er seemed to have vanished. No one could find them.

"I don't know what's going on. It's unsettling," Shi Huang said, cocking an eye at Xiang Liang and the others.

Zong Fu said, "There's no need to panic. With such a methodical search, they won't be able to hide much longer."

Shi Huang let out a long sigh. He knew that getting nervous was not going to help. But he could not dispel the uneasiness that weighed on his mind.

Suddenly, he heard a rustle. Turning, he saw Song Yunfeng walk out from the ruins nearby, someone in hand.

"I should be able to help you force Li Luo out," Song Yunfeng said with a small smile.

He gestured to the trussed up figure with him. "This person is called Zhao Kuo, a good friend of Li Luo in school. He and Yu Lang were following Li Luo before.

"Li Luo was able to track you down probably because of Yu Lang. What he didn't know was that while he was tracking you... I was tracking him.

"When you fought with Lu Qing'er, I went in and caught Zhao Kuo. But Yu Lang got away."

Zhao Kuo was bound hand and foot, and even gagged for good measure. He could only stare furiously at Song Yunfeng.

They had actually been aware of Song Yunfeng's presence, but they had dropped their guard against a schoolmate. After all, it did not make sense for them to compete against one another, which would be counterproductive.

And yet Song Yunfeng had struck deviously.

In that moment of crisis, Zhao Kuo had thrown himself at Song Yunfeng, buying Yu Lang time to get away, but sacrificing himself.

Song Yunfeng ignored his furious gaze. "Although we cannot kill during the exams, we can play with this guy. I'm sure that once Li Luo gets wind of it, he won't be able to resist coming to save his good friend."

"Haha, Yunfeng, you're a godsend!" Shi Huang laughed loudly.

He turned to Chi Su. "Put this Zhao Kuo up in a prominent place. I want to see whether Li Luo will choose his brother or Lu Qing'er."

Zong Fu frowned. "Isn't that a bit excessive?"

Shi Huang dismissed it with a wave. "It's all Li Luo's fault for poking his nose in. All of this started because of him," he said indifferently.

Chi Su obliged. She lifted a hand, and green vines stretched out to bind Zhao Kuo.

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In the tree hollow.

Li Luo opened his eyes, looking at Lu Qing'er, still blushing red as a tomato and quivering. He found it peculiar. "You alright?"

Her teeth were biting hard against her rosy lips as she shook her head. "Is it done?" she asked in a faint voice.

Li Luo nodded and smiled, letting go of her hand. Her entire body relaxed, as though relieved of a heavy burden.

The blush slowly receded while Lu Qing'er checked her wounds. She was astonished. "My injuries are more than 80 percent recovered."

It had been just about an hour, and Li Luo had worked a miracle.

Were his healing powers so strong?

"Li Luo, you're amazing!" Lu Qing'er squealed.

Li Luo sketched a bashful gesture. "Make use of what time we have—recover some resonant power."

Lu Qing'er dipped her head, shutting her beautiful eyes. She started to channel her own energy cultivation art to recover power.

When Li Luo stood up and poked his head outside the tree hollow, his expression turned dark as he spotted something.

Glancing back at the recovering Lu Qing'er, he used his water resonance power to cloak himself in the Water Shadow Art, then he slipped out of their hiding hole.

Li Luo moved swiftly through the wrecked landscape. A few dozen minutes later, he paused in a well-hidden place, watching the scene ahead.

High on a weathered tower, Zhao Kuo hung.

Shi Huang and the others were around him, keenly watching their surroundings.

"Li Luo, I know you can see us. I'll cut the crap. Give us Lu Qing'er, and I'll free your friend," Shi Huang shouted loudly.

Silence all around.

"If you don't come out, then your friend's pride will be ground to dust today." Shi Huang sneered. He picked up a stone, crushing it into pieces in his hand. With each flick of his fingers, he sent a piece smashing painfully into Zhao Kuo. The pain was intense enough to make him break out into a cold sweat.

He had been ungagged, but still he gritted his teeth, not making a sound. He knew that they were doing this to lure Li Luo over.

"Tough, aren't you?"

Shi Huang said with a cool smile. Flick, flick, flick. Now the pieces were charged with lightning resonance, and they thudded into Zhao Kuo with dull shocking sounds.

He writhed and thrashed like a fish on the hook.

Shoosh!

Just at this moment, a green streak breezed in. "Shi Huang, you ball-less scum! When I get my hands on you, I'm gonna dip you in the latrine!"

Shi Huang cocked an unconcerned eye at him. "That's Yu Lang," Song Yunfeng informed him.

"Zhao Kuo, I'm here to save you!"

Yu Lang shouted. He shot forth like a bullet towards the hanging Zhao Kuo.

Song Yunfeng snorted. He sent a casual backhand into Yu Lang, who did not defend himself, taking the blow.

Blood spurted forth from Yu Lang's lips, but he still moved like a leaf cutting through the wind, drawing ever closer to Zhao Kuo.

Shi Huang frowned. He attacked.

But suddenly, a burst of green light spewed from Yu Lang's mouth. It landed squarely on Zhao Kuo's chest, smashing his crystal medallion.

Yu Lang suddenly froze. Song Yunfeng was stalking him like a hungry tiger. Calmly, he plucked the crystal medallion from his own chest and then crushed it.

"Haha, I've got no medallion now. I'm out. Come fight me, then."

Yu Lang hooted with glee as he danced a little jig, taunting them.

Shi Huang, Song Yunfeng, and the others all paused. They had assumed Yu Lang was here to save Zhao Kuo. But in truth, he had never intended to do so. He was here on a suicide mission to eliminate them both.

They could not do anything to eliminated students. That was against the rules.

As the reality of the situation dawned on them, their faces were as sour as if they had swallowed lemons.

Chapter 0065: Three, Two, One, Done!

An empty plain amidst the ruins.

Yu Lang had a cheeky grin on his face as he sat on the ground. Still dangling in the air, Zhao Kuo was chortling as well, swinging with the wind.

"Yu Lang, you rascal. You're smarter than you look. It's like you have a brain!"

"You praise me too much," Yu Lang said, scratching his head in a bashful gesture.

Shi Huang looked at the two. They were of no more use to him now. And all they could do was throw angry words at him. There was no need to bother with them anymore.

Song Yunfeng was the more frustrated one. He had come up with this plan, and Yu Lang had ruined it completely.

"Yu Lang, you two had the chance to make it to the top 10. Why choose to be eliminated here? You think it's worth it?" Song Yunfeng needled him.

Yu Lang drawled lazily back at him, "A blockhead like you wouldn't understand, Song Yunfeng. Yu Lang here might like money, but even I have standards. At the very least, I wouldn't do something like backstab my own school to help out other schools."

"Your words mean nothing. I will go on to the Astral Sage College. And you two, your careers end here," Song Yunfeng replied coldly.

Yu Lang smirked at him. "Really? Even Li Luo fought you to a draw last time. Who's to say what's possible or not?"

A dark shadow crossed Song Yunfeng's eyes. This Yu Lang really had a poisonous mouth.

Shi Huang cut him off with a gesture. "Enough. This plan has failed. We will continue to search for them inch by inch. They cannot hide for long."

Song Yunfeng nodded, turning away from Yu Lang.

Unbeknownst to them, Li Luo was watching this all with a calm expression.

His expression was calm, not a single ripple of emotion showing. And yet those familiar with Li Luo would know that this was extremely unusual for this usually warm and amiable man. Something was wrong.

A calm expression was intense anger for Li Luo.

His gaze lingered on Shi Huang and Song Yunfeng for a few seconds, then he turned, moving swiftly and surely away.

As he left, Shi Huang seemed to sense something, as if an enemy had been watching him. He turned vaguely in that direction.

Could it be Li Luo? Best if it was. Surely that exchange must have angered him.

Then again, what could a weakling's anger do?

Inside the tree hollow.

When Li Luo returned, Lu Qing'er was still recovering. He did not disturb her, instead sitting down and cultivating with his eyes closed.

Another hour passed.

When the sun began to set, russet rays cast long shadows on Whitespirit Mountain. Vision fell, but Li Luo could hear more voices coming their way. The searchers.

Li Luo opened his eyes to Lu Qing'er's lovely eyes staring at him. The latter quickly averted hers.

"How's the recovery?" Li Luo asked.

"Not bad," Lu Qing'er said with a pretty smile.

Li Luo was silent for a few beats. "Right now, can you still beat Shi Huang?"

Lu Qing'er hesitated. She shook her head. "I can't. Shi Huang is not weaker than me. If my Hands of Ice Jade were in peak condition, I might be able to. But now that it's expended, it will not recover in a short time. Plus, my injuries are not completely healed.

"Besides, Shi Huang's Voltaic Plating Armor is quite daunting. Without the Hands of Ice Jade, I can't break it."

Li Luo's face fell when he heard that. Didn't that mean Shi Huang would get first place sooner or later?

Lu Qing'er sensed something off about Li Luo's mood. She asked cautiously, "Li Luo, what's wrong?"

"I will have Shi Huang and Song Yunfeng eliminated before the top 10 are decided," Li Luo said ruthlessly.

"They captured Zhao Kuo and humiliated him, trying to force me out. But in the end, Yu Lang snuck in to eliminate Zhao Kuo himself, then smashed his own crystal medallion.

Examination suicide," Li Luo said tonelessly.

Lu Qing'er's beautiful features were lit with anger now. "That's too much!"

Now she knew why Li Luo was thrown off. His usual, sunny demeanor was gone. He was truly angry now.

"I'll help you. Shi Huang is hard to deal with, but if we fight to the bitter end, he might not win!" Lu Qing'er suddenly said after a long silence.

Li Luo looked at her. He saw a vengeful resolution in Lu Qing'er's eyes that surprised him. Could she have something else up her sleeve?

But it seemed like such an ace, if it existed, would come at a heavy price. Otherwise, she would not have held it back when she was already at the brink of elimination.

"Not necessary."

Li Luo was moved, but he shook his head, smiling. "I'll deal with Shi Huang. You take care of Xiang Liang, Chi Su, and Zong Fu."

Lu Qing'er stared at him, aghast. "You? Deal with Shi Huang?"

Although she did not want to crush his spirit, the truth was that Li Luo was only a Seventh Seal, while Shi Huang was a Ninth Seal with a seventh-grade lightning resonance!

That was far stronger than Song Yunfeng and the others.

Li Luo gave a reluctant smile. "Well, I didn't intend to steal your spotlight this time around, but who asked them to push me like that?"

"Don't blame me for it. My hand was forced."

"Oh, who cares about the spotlight. But you... Don't put on a brave front, okay? I already said I can help you beat Shi Huang," Lu Qing'er said with a stomp of her foot.

She was afraid that Li Luo would recklessly go solo and end up in Shi Huang's hands.

"Have some confidence..." Li Luo smiled.

"You're a Seventh Seal! Light years apart from Shi Huang!" Lu Qing'er cried.

"That at least is true."

Li Luo agreed. "So I intend to reach the Eighth Seal!"

Lu Qing'er was speechless. "What?"

"Three..."

"Two..."

"One..."

"Done." Li Luo breathed out.

Lu Qing'er was confused as all hell. She was just about to speak, when her eyes went wide as she stared at Li Luo in shock.

She could sense the resonant power within him stirring... His resonant power had increased?

He was really an Eighth Seal?!!

She was absolutely flabbergasted. Was this some sort of prank?! Was Li Luo really this amazing?

Chapter 0066: Li Luo's Anger

In the tree hollow, Lu Qing'er was still reeling from Li Luo's change. Her pouty, little mouth was now hanging open, a marked contrast to her usually cool demeanor. It was a cute side of her that was rarely seen.

Li Luo was tickled by her expression too. "Haha, I'm kidding. I prepared a lot before these exams, and was already on the verge of a breakthrough. Thanks to the stimulation from Shi Huang and Song Yunfeng, I cultivated a little and managed to break through."

Lu Qing'er seemed convinced, but she shot him a dirty look nonetheless. For a moment, he had her believing that he could really break through at will. One, two, three, silly me.

"But your cultivation speed is quite frightening. I feel like it's above average for a seventh-grade," Lu Qing'er continued suspiciously.

Li Luo nodded. "I used spirit liquids and purifying lights to increase my quality."

Lu Qing'er accepted this with a slight nod and did not pursue the topic further. She returned to the main question. "But even if you're an Eighth Seal now, you've only closed the distance to Shi Huang halfway. Your chances of winning are still slim."

Shi Huang was a Ninth Seal, and with a high seventh-grade lightning resonance. It was, by nature, an offensive and speedy element that was hard to deal with, and ferocious in battle.

In comparison, Li Luo was a fresh Eighth Seal, and a passable sixth-grade-or-so water resonance... The gap felt drastic.

"Let's just go with this first," Li Luo said.

Seeing his determination, Lu Qing'er complied. If she could finish off her opponents speedily, she could go and help Li Luo.

While the two were talking, a head suddenly popped into the tree hollow. He was agog with surprise at seeing the two, then yelled out happily, "HERE!"

Ping!

He had just shouted when a blast of ice resonant power landed on his face, freezing it solid.

He had been culled before he could even yelp.

Still, his call had attracted the attention of those nearby, and many were flocking over now.

But as they neared, they saw Li Luo and Lu Qing'er walk out.

"Lu Qing'er's fine? Were we had by Shi Huang?" Seeing a recovered Lu Qing'er and a frozen unfortunate beside her changed their minds quickly enough.

Lu Qing'er had already put her ice-silk gloves back on, and she glared at the vultures. "Get lost. Our goal is Shi Huang."

Her icy voice was backed by icy power at the ready. The gravel beneath her feet was already icing over.

The other students turned pale and quickly ran away, inwardly cursing Shi Huang for being a sneaky liar. Lu Qing'er wasn't hurt badly at all!

After chasing the others away, the pair remained where they were. They knew that Shi Huang and the others would arrive soon enough.

Indeed, they were not kept waiting long. A few minutes later, a few people could be seen rushing over from the west, leaping agilely over the terrain.

Shi Huang, Song Yunfeng, and company.

They paused in front of Li Luo and Lu Qing'er, staring with alarm at her vastly improved condition.

"Qing'er, your injuries are healed?" Shi Huang asked, his face full of concern.

She ignored his oily concern, instead turning to Song Yunfeng. "Song Yunfeng, you're an ingratiate."

She had been ambushed by Shi Huang and the others previously precisely because Difa Qing had left markings as Song Yunfeng had instructed her. He was the one who had enabled this.

Song Yunfeng quailed a little under her ice-cold stare. "Qing'er, I have my own troubles!" he stuttered shamefully.

Her stare continued to bore into him, her chill working deeper into his psyche.

Cracking under her fury, Song Yunfeng snapped back with his deepest feelings, "You pretentious girl! I've wooed you for so long, and you didn't even respond! Let's see how high and mighty you'll be after you get eliminated!"

His anger was directed at both of them. Li Luo must have played a part in Lu Qing'er's quick recovery.

He did not know what they had been up to during this time. Besides, Li Luo was the white knight who had rescued Lu Qing'er. Recalling her attitude towards him, the fires of jealousy were lit in Song Yunfeng's heart now.

"Li Luo, you must have been born in the year of the dog, since you like to poke your nose everywhere," Song Yunfeng lashed out.

Li Luo cocked an eye at him. "Says the filthy traitor who sabotaged Zhao Kuo and Yu Lang."

Song Yunfeng sneered. "Even if I hadn't done it, they would have been eliminated sooner or later."

Li Luo smiled. A very unsettling smile that had doubt seeping into Song Yunfeng's bones.

Shi Huang's eyes were darting back and forth between Lu Qing'er and Li Luo. "Hey, Li Luo, this matter has nothing to do with you," he pointed out with a smile. "I'll let you leave, how about that? Then you'll still have a chance of making it to the top 10, hmm?"

Li Luo turned his smile on him. "But now I am very angry. I don't want you to enter the top 10."

Shi Huang choked on his laughter, pointing at his head. "Has your anger made you lose your mind? Seems like your brain is affected by the turn of events."

"Yes, Qing'er might be better, but you're naive to think that she can beat me."

Li Luo shook his head. "I have no intention of letting her defeat you. I was planning to do it myself," he said with full conviction.

Shi Huang did not even bother to laugh at that one. Beside him, Song Yunfeng and the others also stared at Li Luo as if he were an alien, lost for words at the sheer ridiculousness of his declaration.

Had Li Luo lost his mind?

While they were still speechless, Lu Qing'er turned to Li Luo. "So I'll deal with Xiang Liang, Chi Su, and Zong Fu? What about Song Yunfeng? Shall I deal with him as well?"

Li Luo scratched his chin. "Before the main course, I think I need an appetizer. Song Yunfeng will do just fine."

"Understood."

Nodding prettily, Lu Qing'er turned to her targets.

They were all flustered now. Lu Qing'er was actually intending to let Li Luo take Shi Huang down?

"What should we do?" Xiang Liang and the others turned apprehensively to Shi Huang.

Shi Huang's eyes narrowed. "Lu Qing'er's Hands of Ice Jade cannot be used. Go keep her occupied. I'll be there to help you once I deal with this," he said flatly.

The three hesitated, then they finally nodded. They cautiously turned to face Lu Qing'er.

And as they spread out, now it was Li Luo alone, facing Shi Huang and Song Yunfeng.

All of this was fed back to the foot of Whitespirit Mountain, raising a loud clamor. This was even more outrageous than the ambush on Lu Qing'er.

Chapter 0067: Let The Acting Begin

At the foot of Whitespirit Mountain, the atmosphere was as volatile as a cauldron of bubbling oil.

"What am I seeing? That's Young Lord Li Luo of House Luolan, right? He's going to fight Shi Huang and Song Yunfeng alone?!"

"Unbelievable! That Li Luo's not even in the top 10 candidates, right? What's making him so plucky?"

"No idea, can't read him."

"But that boy looks so handsome. Maybe he has some real talent."

"Ehhh, all that glitters is not gold."

"You must be blind. That isn't gold, it's a brilliant diamond."

"...."

Cai Wei and Yan Lingqing sighed softly to themselves. "What is that young man up to now?"

It was quite a headache. Previously, Li Luo was a low-profile kind of guy. If others didn't bother him, he would prudently get on with his life. But now he had sprung up to challenge Shi Huang and Song Yunfeng. The gap was quite astounding.

"Can he really beat Shi Huang and Song Yunfeng?" Cai Wei asked doubtfully. She had always had confidence in Li Luo, but it was the enter-top-10 kind of confidence, whereas he was in deep now.

Yan Lingqing had no answer to that. She pinched an elegant brow. "I wouldn't know."

The storm cloud hanging over the two ladies was as though their own little brother was in a rebellious phase.

In the main tent.

The glum dean was watching too. Surprisingly, he did not feel surprised. Instead, a thrill ran through him.

This Li Luo...

Perhaps because he knew Li Luo's parents too well, looking at Li Luo step up put a lightness in his heart.

Logically, there was no way that Li Luo should be able to take on Shi Huang. But instinctively, a glimmer of hope seemed to present itself.

"The bravery of this Young Lord is quite commendable." Governor Shi laughed.

"Pity that he... isn't Jiang Qing'e." He shook his head.

The old dean turned a deaf ear to him. No point in getting into a fight now. Let the kids fight, and all would be clear.

He was busy staring at Li Luo's thin profile. He suddenly recalled the excitement he felt back when Li Taixuan and Tan Tailan had dropped Li Luo off at Southwind Academy.

Back then, Southwind Academy already had Jiang Qing'e. With the addition of Li Luo, Southwind Academy's reputation within the Xia Kingdom would only bloom.

But that excitement had died down quickly after Li Luo's blank palaces came to light. It was a bitter pill of disappointment for him to swallow.

But now...

"Li Taixuan, Tan Tailan, is your son a late-blooming miracle?"

...

With all eyes on him, Li Luo turned to face Shi Huang and Song Yunfeng. "How shall we play," he beamed.

"You're bluffing! I can deal with you alone!" Song Yunfeng jeered.

He had just started forward when he found Shi Huang's hand on his chest. Shi Huang smiled slightly.

"Why go alone? Whether he's truly confident or faking, why even offer him a chance? We'll go together. Faster that way."

Song Yunfeng hesitated. "Looks like we're thinking too highly of him."

"I'm not afraid of thinking highly of him. I'm afraid that our plan goes awry," Shi Huang said coolly.

Seeing him so cautious, Song Yunfeng gave in with a resigned nod. The two brought their resonant powers to bear and shot it towards Li Luo.

"Nggh..."

Seeing their simultaneous attack, Li Luo was flustered as well. "Hey! Where's the cliché fight-the-lackey-first, boss later?"

"You're full of crap," Song Yunfeng scoffed, redoubling the intensity of his attack.

Li Luo had been on the verge of pulling out his shortswords to meet the enemy, but faced with one more than he had bargained for, he froze, instead turning tail and running away.

Shi Huang and Song Yunfeng naturally gave chase with all their strength, blasts of resonant power still flying out in pursuit.

Li Luo dodged adroitly.

"Li Luo, weren't you all cocky just now? You're just a chicken!" Song Yunfeng mocked.

Li Luo ignored him, concentrating on putting one foot in front of the other as fast as he could. With a final burst of speed, he sprinted into an area with a build-up of broken walls.

Song Yunfeng and Shi Huang had their hands full just chasing him.

Swish, swish!

As they rounded the corner, lightballs greeted them. Strong explosions pierced their eyes with light, disorienting them.

But both were prepared. Shutting their eyes, they thrust their weapons in front of them, calling forth powerful gusts of power that swept away the buildings.

By the time they opened their eyes, Li Luo had vanished.

Shi Huang's face was black. He leaped up on a big boulder, scanning the horizon. He could see a faint shadow fleeing in the distance. Towards... where Lu Qing'er was fighting Xiang Liang and the others.

"Luring the tiger away from the cave? Sneaky devil!"

Shi Huang's eyes went flat. Li Luo was trying to pull them away from Lu Qing'er's fight and then turn back to help.

Help Lu Qing'er secure a swift victory, then face them together?

"He's going to help Lu Qing'er. I'll go stop him!"

Shi Huang shouted to Song Yunfeng. In a flash of lightning, he was gone, a silver streak charging after the fleeing shadow.

He opened his lightning resonant power to the maximum, and soon caught up to the faint shadow. Fashioning his electric power into a spear of lightning, he pinned the shadow to the wall.

It did not even make a sound. Instead, his spear flew on through it and embedded itself against a stone wall.

Shi Huang's face whitened. There was only a faint echo of power that held the shape of the shadow. But Li Luo was not here.

"Shit, it's a trap! This is the real bait! His target is Song Yunfeng!"

Shi Huang was furious. He had been played hard by Li Luo!

Li Luo had no intention of going to help Lu Qing'er. He wanted to separate the two and then take down Song Yunfeng.

But... How could that punk think he could take down Song Yunfeng so quickly?

Dismissing the thought, Shi Huang turned back as fast as he could.

Meanwhile, Song Yunfeng was also speeding across the tricky terrain, trying to catch up to Shi Huang.

But as he leaped over a broken brick wall, a bolt of blue resonant power came arcing his way.

The sudden attack left Song Yunfeng scrambling. And then he understood.

His expression was disdainful.

"You think I'm as soft as a rotten persimmon?"

"Li Luo, I'm going to let you know how lucky you were in the last—"

While shouting, Song Yunfeng shook his silver spear, calling forth the depths of his power unreservedly. He sent forth his spear against the blue sword slash.

Dang!

The clash of metal.

When their resonant powers clashed, the resulting shock was enough to crumble the nearby walls, raising a dust cloud that slowly drifted down.

Song Yunfeng's expression only grew uglier as he threw forth his strongest attack with reckless abandon.

Peng!

Song Yunfeng was sent flying, crashing painfully into rubble.

"—draw?"

His voice cracked.

Chapter 0068: Let the Spotlight Shine

"What did you just say?"

Li Luo looked at the battered Song Yunfeng with polite puzzlement. The latter was a miserable wreck on the floor. Li Luo's single slash had creamed him.

Flecks of blood could be seen on Song Yunfeng's lips. "You, you're an Eighth Seal?" He looked up at Li Luo in disbelief. "Impossible!" In that clash, Li Luo's resonant power had been a match for his own.

Moreover, he was deeply shaken by how pure Li Luo's water resonance power was. And the robust, mature feel to it—it felt like a seventh-grade water resonance!

Wasn't his water resonance a fifth-grade?

Song Yunfeng wondered if he was dreaming.

Li Luo let out a soft sigh. "Well, that's a tale that starts 16 years ago. I had just been weaned, and on that day..."

Song Yunfeng was listening closely.

He did not hear Li Luo lean forward, waterlight gathering under his feet as he zipped over to Song Yunfeng and slashed at him brutally again.

Song Yunfeng hurriedly parried, but the force of the slash forced him to a single knee. "You tricked me?!" he yelled.

"Very clever, you have seen through me."

Li Luo encouraged him. Another kick flashed out whip-like into Song Yunfeng's chest, sending him flying face-first into mud.

Before he could stand up, Li Luo was on him again, his sword twinkling and roaring with the power of a tidal wave.

Song Yunfeng was overrun. An Eighth Seal Li Luo with equivalent matching power and tricks up his sleeve—it was keeping him so busy that he had no time to think.

Tricks unbecoming of the young lord of House Luolan!

Li Luo had soon carved Song Yunfeng up like a turkey. He was a woeful, bleeding sight.

He knew that things could not go on like that. With a primal scream, his own resonant power burst forth, charging Li Luo recklessly with a scarlet spear.

Li Luo lifted a palm up, and waterlight seemed to shimmer before him. "Giga Reflection Art!"

Hearing this shout, Song Yunfeng recalled how Li Luo's sneaky Water Mirror Art had reflected his power on him, even though he was only a Sixth Seal then. Now that he was much stronger, wouldn't the Water Mirror Art's reflective ability be even stronger?

Song Yunfeng pulled up short at the last moment, checking his strength.

To his horror, no water mirror formed before Li Luo. Instead, all he saw was a handsome face grinning smugly at him.

"Gotcha."

Li Luo chuckled. He darted forth with the Ripple Blade, its Water Edge spinning so fast that it was humming.

One chop from Li Luo neatly severed Song Yunfeng's spear in two.

Dong!

The ring of steel, then Song Yunfeng was staring at his broken spear, stricken.

The blade came down on him again.

"Ah!"

He screamed, fresh blood spurting from his chest.

Li Luo heard a rustle in the wind behind him and saw a black-faced Shi Huang charging over.

"LI LUO, HOW DARE YOU!" Shi Huang yelled, loud enough to make his eardrums throb.

Li Luo ignored him, sending the pathetic Song Yunfeng flying with a kick. His other leg casually hooked up the broken spear and sent it flying.

Weng!

The broken spear pierced Song Yunfeng's shoulder, pinning him to the wall.

Shi Huang had arrived. Furious, he sent a spear lancing towards Li Luo, jerking from its electrical charge.

Li Luo moved backwards easily, landing on a wall. "Hey," he said cheerfully, "rushing back for dinner?"

Shi Huang's eyes flicked over to Song Yunfeng, dangling from the wall. He frowned. The latter was heavily injured, his fighting ability temporarily nullified by Li Luo.

He looked back, the anger in his eyes fading away. "Li Luo, everyone underestimated you.

"You are the one in Southwind Academy whose waters run deepest."

Li Luo smiled. "You're too kind."

Shi Huang's expression was neutral. "No need to get a swollen head over it. The game is in motion now. You'll change nothing."

"Well, I won't know if I don't try," Li Luo said with a small smile. "I have just one thought right now..."

His gaze swung back and forth between Shi Huang and Song Yunfeng. "As Yu Lang said... to dip you two in the latrines."

Shi Huang shook his head. Useless words. He lifted his spear, pointing it at Li Luo. "Enough with the bluster. You're only making a bigger fool out of yourself.

"Show me what you got, Li Luo. Otherwise... I will wipe the floor with House Luolan's reputation."

With those final words, his lightning resonance crackled into life, his Ninth Seal resonant power brought fully to bear.

Bang!

Shi Huang shot forth with a low rumble, his speed bewildering the eye. Truly a terrifying lightning resonance.

Weng!

In a few breaths, he was already in front of Li Luo, his lightning spear seeming to slice the fabric of reality itself as he thrust it.

It crackled ominously.

Li Luo responded with his strongest offensive skill, the Water Edge Art. He charged his blue resonant power to its maximum.

His twin blades sliced out, leaving faint traces of blue light in their wake.

Ding!

Blade and spear clashed, generating an impact that scattered the gravel.

In this straight clash, Shi Huang did not budge an inch, whereas Li Luo was sent skidding backwards. A clear advantage for Shi Huang.

"Eighth Seal resonant power...

"But such purity. I couldn't destroy your body with my lightning resonance."

Despite his advantage, Shi Huang looked slightly troubled. There was a bizarre purity to Li Luo's resonant power. He possessed a seventh-grade lightning resonance, which was already fairly dominating. Cultivators with such high-grade resonances could gradually grind away at their opponent with each clash, corroding their opponent's resonant powers. It was an advantage of these higher-quality resonant powers.

Although he had beaten Li Luo back, his lightning resonance had been unable to penetrate his body and diminish his fighting power.

Li Luo whirled his twin blades experimentally. He now had a feel for how strong his opponent was. No wonder even Lu Qing'er was wary of him.

Ninth Seal, seventh-grade lightning resonance.

A worthy opponent indeed.

Li Luo suddenly grinned. He was not at all worried about how strong his opponent was. Instead, he found himself bubbling with excitement.

All these years, his blank palaces had bred in him an aversion to showing his true self. He always liked to play his cards close to his chest, it gave him a sense of safety.

Low-profile, as much as he could.

Although he had been growing while keeping his head down all these years, a fierce battle will coursed deep down in his bones.

After all, he was the son of two Dukes.

Very well, then. After so many years, it was time to take center stage. Let the spotlight shine!

With a small laugh to himself, he channeled the resonant power within him. Gripping his blades tightly, he shot towards Shi Huang.

Chapter 0069: The Great Showdown with Shi Huang

Ding! Ding!

Within a broken-down hamlet, two figures charged with resonant power clashed in a blur of sword and spear, leaving cracks on the walls nearby.

The loose gravel beneath their feet was churned up, clattering against the walls almost as if in a rhythm.

Li Luo was fully focused, his blades whirling and cutting without pause as he sent wave after wave at Shi Huang.

In contrast, Shi Huang looked much less concerned. Even against Li Luo's constant attacks, he chose to overwhelm them with brute force. His spear swept out time and again, charged with lightning resonant power, beating back the swords.

It was an intense clash of weapons and resonant power.

And yet Shi Huang could see that he had the upper hand. His spear found gaps in Li Luo's offense, threatening him menacingly.

Each time, Li Luo's sword would shoot out little orbs of light that dazzled him, forcing Shi Huang back.

Although he had the upper hand, Shi Huang's resentment lingered. It was still not a situation he had planned to find himself in.

Taking advantage of a gap, the lightning power on Shi Huang's spear leaped into a new frenzy and his eyes gleamed.

"High-grade resonance art, Thunder Bird's Call!"

Electricity welled from the tip of his spear, and a shrill bird call sounded. It was as loud as thunder, and it rendered Li Luo's ears temporarily deaf.

His world silent, Li Luo saw the accumulation of lightning coalesce into an angry thunder bird that swooped forward.

Li Luo's waves of sword light were blasted away by it.

But just as the spear was about to reach him, a mirror of water shimmered into existence.

"Waterlight Demon Mirror!"

Weng!

The thunder bird crashed into the water mirror, rippling the surface. A powerful energy surfaced in response, crashing into the thunder bird.

Boom!

The shockwave of resonant power left many more cracks in the walls of the hamlet.

Both Li Luo and Shi Huang were sent flying backwards, their feet leaving deep gouges on the ground.

Shi Huang stared keenly at Li Luo. "Is that the damned Water Mirror Art you used to fight Song Yunfeng to a draw?"

He was clearly well informed about Li Luo.

"You can call it... the Great Stalemate Art!" Li Luo joked.

Shi Huang ignored his nonsense. Waving his spear, he called forth his lightning resonance and sent another Thunder Bird's Call forth.

Li Luo lifted a hand, summoning the Waterlight Demon Mirror again. Again, both were forced back.

The intense battle continued. Despite his advantage, Shi Huang could find no way to break through Li Luo's Waterlight Demon Mirror. The battle reached a stalemate.

The spectators outside Whitespirit Mountain were shocked by this unexpected turn of events.

The Young Lord of House Luolan's reputation had been lackluster for these past few years. Who would have thought he would rise so spectacularly during the College Final Examinations?

Then again, the apple would not fall far from the tree.

Cai Wei and Yan Lingqing were gaping in shock as well. Before they knew it, Li Luo was an Eighth Seal. Just a month ago, he still had blank palaces. Although they knew he had caught up a little in that time, such a ferocious rate of cultivation was mind-boggling.

It seemed like he had been preparing for this chance for a long time.

With a completely astounded audience watching from outside, the battle between Li Luo and Shi Huang continued for many more minutes.

Each time, Shi Huang came with the same attack and was met by the Waterlight Demon Mirror's responding counter.

But the last time, Shi Huang's body was covered with a faint, sparkling light, as though forming an electric armor around him. The counter attack was immediately absorbed by the lightning armor, which grew stronger.

Li Luo's eyes widened, and he hurriedly retreated.

But Shi Huang was quicker. His spear swept out, an arc of lightning catching Li Luo's body.

Peng!

A dull thump accompanied the electric shock, and Li Luo was sent flying. His shortswords dug into the ground, skittering backwards for a long time before he finally found footing.

A smear of blood could be seen on his mouth, and he could feel an intense, piercing pain in his chest. All from a single attack of Shi Huang's spear.

Luckily, he was a waterlight resonance user with powerful regeneration powers. With a quick activation of his powers, his wound began to heal speedily.

Li Luo looked up. Shi Huang was looking at him neutrally, spear in hand. The electric armor he was sheathed in had absorbed the counter attack from his own Waterlight Demon Mirror.

"Voltaic Plating, eh..."

Li Luo frowned. Lu Qing'er had warned him about this—Shi Huang's killer move. Voltaic Plating not only greatly enhanced Shi Huang's defenses, but also augmented his offense and speed. It was quite a useful move.

While Li Luo was still reeling, Shi Huang did not intend to give him any space to breathe. With a quick twist of his body, he was on the move again.

This attack was even more ferocious than the last.

Li Luo did not take it head on. A flick of his finger sent forth a Waterlight Bullet that impeded Shi Huang's attack.

But he was ready. Shutting his eyes, the electric-charged spear thrust in Li Luo's direction.

Pools of waterlight shimmering beneath his feet, Li Luo swiftly slid away, out of the attacking area of effect.

Shi Huang's attack did not cease. As inexorable as a storm, he came pressing forth.

More walls cracked in their wake as Li Luo desperately retreated and Shi Huang grimly chased, a leaping bolt of lightning in pursuit of flowing, glowing water.

All of Li Luo's moves were rendered useless now.

Shi Huang with Voltaic Plating had completely outclassed Li Luo.

Sighs of regret came from the spectators. At this point, the disparity was all too clear. Ultimately, Li Luo just could not beat the Ninth Seal Shi Huang.

It seemed like Southwind Academy's best school title was in danger.

Chapter 0070: Li Luo's Arrow

Boom! Boom!

Within the wreckage, faint sounds of thunder boomed out. Some distance away, the other schools' students were watching Shi Huang throw his full strength time and again, constantly forcing Li Luo back.

If this continued, Li Luo would be eliminated before too long.

They shook their heads. Although Li Luo's growth had been ferocious, he was just that bit of oomph short of taking on someone as strong as Shi Huang. A pity.

Ding!

Another brutal clang of sword and spear, and Li Luo was again sent flying, crashing straight into a broken building.

Shi Huang's spear was upright as he stared into the wreckage, cutting a striking figure as electricity leaped and danced across his skin.

"Li Luo, trying to play a stamina game? I don't think you're quite there yet," he said, a hint of contempt in his voice.

"If you want to keep some pride, hurry up and surrender."

Inside the building, the light was dim. Li Luo was leaning against a wall, and he laughed to himself when he heard Shi Huang's voice. "Tough indeed," he mumbled. "Seems like I was a little naive. I thought I could keep this in reserve, but it seems like I need some firepower after all."

With an arrested expression, he grasped his two swords and hit them together, hilts first. Both hilts were engraved with snarling beasts, and now their fangs connected. With a light twist, they clicked into place.

At the same time, the curves of his blades began to deepen.

It looked... like a big bow made from his swords.

A silver-blue bow.

Li Luo pressed a finger at a spot on the blade, and a small hole appeared, silver string springing out. Li Luo twirled it out gently to string his bow.

This was the special resonant artifact he had custom-made. Usually in the mode of twin swords, others did not know that it had another form, a big bow that Li Luo had dubbed the Dewlight Bow.

He curled his hand tightly around the hilt-grip. He did not want to reveal his hidden ace just yet, but clearly if he kept his head down any longer, it would be chopped off.

He looked up at the figure of Shi Huang outside, lips curled in a cold, cold smile.

Outside, Shi Huang seemed to have sensed that something was wrong. Frowning, he transformed his spear into a silver bolt that flew into the building.

Boom!

He was rewarded with a boom of resonant power. Someone leaped out, landing gently on a vine-covered rock.

Li Luo.

Shi Huang clenched his fist, and his spear was called back. He was slightly worried, especially about the silver-blue bow in his opponent's hands.

Both inside and outside Whitespirit Mountain, there was puzzlement. What was he intending to do?

"What damned trick are you up to this time?" Shi Huang asked indifferently.

Li Luo did not reply, instead choosing to take a deep breath and drawing his bow. His resonant power formed a faint arrow of light on the strings.

Both arrowhead and shaft were glowing, formed by his light resonance. Only Li Luo himself knew that the light resonance structure was full of holes and gaps, which he then filled in with water resonance power, creating a synergy between them.

It was as if water was being carried forth by light, at an indescribable speed.

If water could reach such speeds, who would dare to call water resonance soft and weak?

Li Luo could feel the resonant power fading from his body, but there was a smile on his face. This resonance art was based on a high-grade water resonance art called Riverflow Art and another high-grade light resonance art called Flowing Light Art...

After numerous failures, Li Luo managed to express his dual resonant nature and successfully crafted this art.

This arrow, he called it...

The Dewlight Skystream Arrow.

This was Li Luo's strongest attack now, and his final trump card.

Shi Huang had been very composed this whole time, sure that there was nothing Li Luo could do. But when the arrow of light appeared on Li Luo's silver-blue bow, his face changed.

He could feel a strange prickling sensation, as though he was facing an incredibly strong opponent.

"Impossible! He's just an Eighth Seal. How can he pose a threat?" Shi Huang's eyes were wide. He had the Voltaic Plating. He did not even fear Lu Qing'er at full strength; what was a mere Li Luo?

What was that arrow of light?

Could it be a Duke Stage resonance art? But an Eighth Seal could not possibly activate such a resonance art!

But if it wasn't a Duke Stage resonance art, how much damage could it do?

Shi Huang started to back off. Facing Li Luo's unknown attack, he did not charge recklessly, but instead chose to retreat.

He believed that this was Li Luo's final attack. As long as he could evade it, Li Luo would be at his mercy.

Li Luo looked calmly at the quickly retreating Shi Huang. Lightning was fast, but could it be faster than light itself?

His bow now pulled to a full crescent, Li Luo released his hooked fingers.

Twang!

A light humming rang out.

A bolt of light shot forth at a speed that confounded the eye.

Boom!

His hairs standing on end, Shi Huang shouted, "Lightning Steps!"

Electricity crackled to life at his feet, and he reached his maximum speed.

Useless.

He could only watch as the light shaft sped into his vision, and a wall between them suddenly opened up with a hole. Evening sun filtered through it.

Sensing the danger he was in, Shi Huang called forth his resonant power and hurled his spear forth in the form of an electric dragon.

Ting!

A crystal-clear sound. Eyes wide, Shi Huang watched as his lightning-charged spear shattered.

The light arrow continued on its path, punching through Shi Huang's extended left palm and leaving a clean hole.

His Voltaic Plating did not manage to hold up for even a breath before it was penetrated.

"Ahhh!"

A scream of pain.

Shi Huang's left shoulder was gushing with blood, and he fell to the ground, heavily wounded. Slumping against a broken wall, blood bubbled out from his mouth.

And all around Whitespirit Mountain, silence fell.