

Resonance 901

Chapter 0901: Inky Jade Dragon Ent

Roar!

The emerald dragon emerged, smashing apart the rain as its claws clashed with the Gilded Armor Spirit Blade that possessed unparalleled sharpness.

Weng!

At the moment of collision, golden light radiated resplendently and wood dust scattered in every direction. The emerald dragon's claws had been pierced through. Golden light scattered in every direction and the claws began to disintegrate.

Additionally, the blade continued tunneling towards the dragon's body, intent on dismantling it in its entirety.

However, the emerald dragon was no slouch. Resonant power continued to flow, and it contained Vestiges of Spirituality, endowing a sense of sentience to the resonance art. Even when faced with the tyrannical Gilded Armor Spirit Blade's attack, it continued to resist furiously and attempted to entangle itself with it.

There was hard-fought resistance, but a Pseudo Duke Art restricting an actual Duke Art was not a realistic outcome. A few moments later, the Emerald Dragon Ent was hacked into half at the waist.

"Banner Leader Li Luo, you seem to possess an affinity with too many resonant powers. Borrowing the aid of so many treasures to utilize resonance arts that you don't have an affinity with must have been quite pricey," Deng Fengxian casually stated.

The three Pseudo Duke Arts which Li Luo had demonstrated showed Deng Fengxian that he had utilized water, lightning, light, wood, and dragon resonance powers. This caused him to be exceptionally surprised. Although Li Luo had triple resonances and significant stores of resonant power, this should have been only possible with the aid of external mediums.

This was not a rare thing. When others cultivated a Duke Art that their own resonant power did not have any affinity for, they would borrow treasures to succeed. However, they were ultimately consumables that had to be replenished consistently. Therefore, using the art in question was not just cumbersome, it would also prevent the art from bringing out its full potential.

This sort of thinking was quite normal, and to be fair, they did not know that Li Luo's resonances had both a primary and secondary affinities.

"However, a Pseudo Duke Art simply cannot compare with a Duke Art. Banner Leader Li Luo, your methods have not been particularly effective."

Deng Fengxian flicked his finger once again, and the blade seemed to have come to life, lunging towards Li Luo.

Li Luo smiled upon hearing Deng Fengxian's critique. He waved his sleeve, and majestic amounts of dual resonant power poured out of him and into the shattered Emerald Dragon Ent.

The construct seemed to come back to life when resonant power flooded into it. The coarse branches intertwined and it transformed back into its original form.

"If one Pseudo Duke Art isn't enough, how about two?" Li Luo formed a hand seal, and the thunder clouds suddenly gathered onto the Emerald Dragon Ent, transforming into a robe that wrapped around it like a raincoat.

With the combination of the Thunderstorm Art, the Emerald Dragon Ent had turned inky jade in color, whilst lightning resonant power rumbled on its surface.

The Emerald Dragon Ent's body burst forth with energy undulations that surpassed what it had previously, something that everyone in the area could feel.

Roar!

The Emerald Dragon Ent shot outwards with a boom akin to a thunderclap and the speed of a lightning bolt. However, its speed hadn't only increased. What surprised everyone was that it had also become more corporeal. It dashed forward savagely, releasing a low but deafening rumble as it moved.

The countless banner members couldn't help but cover their ears with expressions of discomfort.

Deng Fengxian's eyes similarly shrunk as he focused upon the completely transformed inky dragon with a frown.

He could feel that the dragon was formed by the fusion of countless resonant powers. The rainwater that had combined with its body had increased its mass and increased its physical capabilities by a good margin. Its slow speed had also been boosted.

Was this due to the lightning resonant power?

However, lightning and wood resonant power were not compatible, so combining the two would generally not be very effective.

"He used water resonant power to cover the entire dragon like clothes, then he ran his lightning resonant power through it to fuse it with the Emerald Dragon Ent. This resulted in a large boost in speed. What marvelous usage of resonant power!" Deng Fengxian's expression was grave, but he sighed in admiration in his heart. Li Luo was not to be underestimated. Two simple Pseudo Duke Arts had been combined into something capable of contending against an actual Duke Art in his hands.

Deng Fengxian understood that this was the advantage of having multiple resonances. More importantly, Li Luo was capable of utilizing dual resonant power.

Li Luo had utilized his mastery over dual resonant power to complement his execution of two Pseudo Duke Arts, resulting in a frightening attack.

"However, you shouldn't underestimate me either." Deng Fengxian sighed lightly. Li Luo's magnificent performance had stimulated his excitement for battle. Perhaps it was only with a proper opponent like him that he could truly bring everything out to bear.

Deng Fengxian clasped his hands together to form a series of hand seals.

"Gilded Armor Spirit Blade, Separation Technique!"

As soon as he shouted, the blade immediately trembled and transformed into three rays of golden light.

Within each ray was a razor-sharp blade.

The three blades formed a formation, and their blade energy surged outwards. Then they rotated at a high speed as one and directly smashed against the dragon.

Bang!

A berserk explosion echoed throughout the field, kicking up a tempest in every direction.

Before the dust had settled, the countless banner members squinted, hoping to see the result of the collision.

One could see numerous green light dots dissipating into the air. The domineering spirit blade formation had wedged itself right into the head of the dragon.

Yet at the same time, the formation was also gradually dimming, its fierce aura receding.

A lot of energy had been consumed in order to destroy the dragon.

Weng, weng!

The spirit blades hummed. Despite the best efforts of the dragon, it was finally split into two from head to tail with a cry.

Bang!

The Emerald Dragon Ent fractured into minute shreds that dissipated into motes of energy.

Li Luo's mastery of this Pseudo Duke Art was miraculous, but it was unable to halt the Gilded Armor Spirit Blade's onslaught.

However, no one mocked him, and serious expressions could be seen on their faces. Even Deng Fengxian's followers were frowning. Looking at the resonant power expenditure, the two Pseudo Duke Arts had exhausted much less resonant power than the Gilded Armor Spirit Blade.

Most importantly, it had forced Deng Fengxian to utilize the second transformation of the Gilded Armor Spirit Blade. Even though Li Luo's attack had been halted, the gold light radiating from the blades had dimmed immensely and cracks could be seen on them.

Deng Fengxian's gaze changed. He had to take advantage of this brief period where Li Luo's resonance art had been overcome to quickly take him down.

With a thought, the three blades swiftly pierced through the air and viciously lanced towards Li Luo, leaving behind a trail of golden light.

The looming spirit blades were gradually growing in size from Li Luo's perspective, but he was unfazed, only smirking.

The previous exchange had left him very satisfied. The wondrous combination of two Pseudo Duke Arts had managed to consume a good amount of Deng Fengxian's Gilded Armor Spirit Blade's energy.

Thus, when faced with these three dim blades, he did not retreat, only taking a step forward.

"Tri-Radiance Glass!" Three kinds of glazed light permeated every inch of his body, giving him a rainbow-like shine.

"Thunderpeal Avatar, Three Sonic Pulses!"

The sound of a thunderclap burst out from within him, and his body strengthened rapidly.

"Tri-Radiance Spiritual Marks!" This was not the end—the spiritual marks on his body began to shine, letting off a blazing and scalding energy. Li Luo was like a cauldron as his body continued to strengthen to an even more astonishing level.

He looked like a glazed, godly statue. With a step, he appeared before the three blades and punched them directly.

Bang!

Stormy waves of energy rumbled in every direction as the blast echoed throughout the mountain range.

Fist met blade directly without hesitation.

The collision only lasted for a moment before the numerous banner members heard a faint, cracking sound.

The cracks on the three blades expanded rapidly before finally exploding into golden motes of light with a huge bang.

When they landed on Li Luo's glazed body, they only left behind tiny, white scratches.

This caused the entire field to fall into utter silence.

Chapter 0902: Li Luo Ascends

After the blades fragmented, Li Luo stood tall amidst the silent field. He gave off a heroic aura and his body was steaming. It was like he was a furnace full of energy, each and every motion capable of huge amounts of force.

The strength of his body alone was something that the average Fiend Finisher would not dare to clash against.

The emotions of the people on the field were complicated, especially those from the Gold Light Banner. Their mouths were agape at the sight before them. They had followed Deng Fengxian through countless battles and were clear of how ferocious and lethal his Gilded Armor Spirit Blade was, especially once the triple blades transformation was utilized. Even amongst the Twenty Banners, the number of people who could counteract this art could be counted on the fingers of one hand.

Today, another person joined that small list: Li Luo.

Li Luo had not demonstrated a true Duke Art in this fight. He had used the combination of Pseudo Duke Arts to resolve the assault of the Gilded Armor Spirit Blade.

One had to know that Li Luo had not even stepped into the Fiend Finisher Tier yet either.

Although he had triple resonances, which gave him a reserve of resonant power that far surpassed anyone on his level, it shouldn't have been comparable to the peak Fiend Finisher Deng Fengxian, right?

Thus, the scene before them was, frankly, frightening.

The Gold Light Banner members had complicated gazes. Everyone assumed that Li Luo's rise through the rankings of the Twenty Banners was only possible because of Harmony... It was all external strength, and thus no one really cared about it. The Green Nether Banner had gradually risen under his leadership. Yet without the banner, Li Luo would be unqualified to challenge the other Banner Leaders as he was considerably weaker individually. This was the prominent viewpoint amongst those in the Twenty Banners.

Additionally, there were even people from the Dragon's Blood Lineage that were spreading rumors about the Battle of the Dragon's Head, that it would finally allow everyone to truly see Li Luo's true and worthless self!

Li Luo had snatched the Golden Dragon Pillar from Li Qingfeng in the Dragonbreath Pool. Thus, the members of the Dragon's Blood Lineage were incredibly dissatisfied. They felt that Li Luo was simply cunning, taking advantage of the other Banner Leaders who had expended all their effort to drag down Qin Yi. As a result, he struck while the iron was hot and snatched the vacant Golden Dragon Pillar before anyone could react.

However, the battle between Li Luo and Deng Fengxian had let the audience truly experience his real power. It was not to be belittled.

Although he had not stepped into the Fiend Finisher Tier, his battle strength allowed him to compete against the most elite of Banner Leaders.

The Green Nether Banner exploded into thunderous, elated cries. Everyone was chanting Li Luo's name.

Li Luo, on the other hand, continued to watch Deng Fengxian closely with a smile. "Banner Leader Deng Fengxian, I suppose you still have a trick up your sleeve?"

Deng Fengxian had not released his Fiend Dipper Energy in the previous clash, and it would have served to strengthen his previous attack.

He had a complicated look on his face. "Well, you haven't used your Duke Art either."

Both had held back in the initial clash, but regardless of the situation, the Gilded Armor Spirit Blade was Deng Fengxian's strongest move. Now that it had been shattered, it would not be a simple task to recondense a new one, and Li Luo would not watch him idly.

Thus, Deng Fengxian was clear that he had lost the initiative.

Hearing Deng Fengxian's almost depressed tone, which seemed to imply that he was giving up, Li Luo asked with surprise, "We aren't fighting anymore?"

Deng Fengxian retracted his golden resonant power and shook his head before he calmly said, "Banner Leader Li Luo, you have improved with godly speed. I have to respect that, and since I'm at a disadvantage, there is no need to pointlessly struggle any further. I have a trump card up my sleeve, but I believe you have many more as well."

At this point, numerous complex feelings welled up in his heart. Just half a year ago, Li Luo was barely in the Fiend Palace Tier. Even though he had noticed him, it was merely cursory and he did not pay too much attention.

Li Luo then displayed a startling performance in the Dragonbreath Pool, but everyone had merely attributed that to the assistance of Harmony. It had hidden the gap that existed between him and the other Banner Leaders.

No one could have expected that in half a year's time, Li Luo would be nipping at their heels.

"Tri-Radiance Glass Body." Deng Fengxian quietly focused upon the triple glazed light radiating from Li Luo's body. He knew that this was the best possible foundation one could have in the Glass Fiend Tier, as he had tried to achieve it himself in the past. It was a pity he had failed in the end.

Cultivating it to the peak had strenuous requirements on both one's foundation and opportunity.

In the current generation of the Heavenly Dragon's Five Lineages, even Li Qingfeng had failed to achieve it.

Relying on it in combination with his triple resonances, Li Luo could completely suppress the average Fiend Finisher with his huge reserves of resonant power. Thus, Deng Fengxian understood that his advantage in cultivation level was nullified, so the chances of him winning today were minute.

Since he knew the result, there was naturally no need to struggle to the end.

Deng Fengxian was not one that liked to waste time on impossible things.

Li Luo had never expected him to give up like this. However, since his objective had been attained, he would naturally not force things. Thus, he also retracted his resonant power. Then he clasped his hands with an amicable look on his face.

"In this case, I have to thank you for letting me win, Banner Leader Deng."

"If neither Li Jingtao nor Li Fengyi wish to challenge you, then the position of the leader amongst the four banners belongs to you," Deng Fengxian coolly answered.

The surrounding audience had turned quiet and turned their attention to the two in question.

Li Jingtao had a face like a benevolent elder as he slowly enunciated his words. "We are one family. There's no need to fight amongst ourselves."

As always, the unambitious and relaxed Li Jingtao had indicated that he was uninterested in the position.

Li Fengyi, on the other hand, waved a clenched fist at Li Luo whilst coldly snorting. "You want me to give up? How could things be so simple? Perhaps if you bring us all to the Ascending Cloud Pavilion for dinner tonight..." At this point, she could no longer keep up the pretense and a smile leaked out.

Li Luo's performance today was exceptionally satisfying to her.

Naturally, he could only grin and nod in response.

With the two expressing their stance, the entire field began to erupt into cheers, of which the Green Nether Banner was the most expressive. Zhao Yanzhi, Mu Bi, and Li Shi were the earliest followers of Li Luo, and they couldn't help but be excited about having the opportunity to follow a boss with such great potential. It seemed that their own futures in the Dragon's Fang Lineage would be smooth as well.

At this point, they were rejoicing immensely that Li Luo had chosen to enter the Green Nether Banner half a year ago.

The Gold Light Banner's morale, on the other hand, seemed to have fallen. In the beginning, they had always assumed that Deng Fengxian would become the leader of the four banners. However, the position had been seized firmly by Li Luo, which was a blow to their confidence.

Additionally, there was one individual in the Gold Light Banner with an incredibly ugly expression. It was Zhong Ling, who had chosen to leave the Green Nether Banner.

As he stared at his previous banner, which was now ascending into the skies, his face turned gloomy. He had similarly never expected that Li Luo could force Deng Fengxian back.

It was just a short half year. When Li Luo had first joined, Zhong Ling didn't even consider him a threat!

Alas, Zhong Ling had lost to Li Luo in a duel to become the Banner Leader and reluctantly chose to leave. At that point in time, he thought that Li Luo was nothing special and would barely be able to eke out any results. Thus, he had chosen to join the Gold Light Banner in the hopes of watching the Green Nether Banner decline into obscurity.

Oh, how wrong he had been. His expectations were merely castles in the skies.

Under Li Luo's guidance, the Green Nether Banner stood out with excellent results in the Dragonbreath Pool. Now, half a year later, Li Luo was standing shoulder to shoulder with the strongest Banner Leaders as well.

And he had become the leader of the four banners for the Dragon's Fang Lineage.

Zhong Ling felt even more awkward as a result. He could feel his fellow banner members looking at him with strange gazes.

"How could he have achieved so much?" Zhong Ling said with gritted teeth. A hint of regret could be felt within his heart. If he knew how amazing Li Luo would have been, he would not have chosen to cause so much trouble.

Unfortunately, it was simply too late.

"Well, even though you're the leader, you're still no match for Li Qingfeng," Zhong Ling furiously thought in his heart in an attempt to console himself.

The excitement lasted for quite some time. When the sky started darkening, the four banners made their way back. Li Luo, on the other hand, brought the other Banner Leaders to the Ascending Cloud Pavilion for a celebration.

Li Jingtao, Li Fengyi, and Deng Fengxian were sitting happily at the top of the building.

The atmosphere wasn't bad. Perhaps it was because Deng Fengxian had voluntarily chosen to retreat that Li Fengyi didn't take the opportunity to torment him.

Deng Fengxian took the initiative to kindly remind Li Luo, "I heard that Li Qingfeng is determined to win the Battle of the Dragon's Head. He's spent the last month cultivating bitterly, and the Dragon's Blood Lineage has supported him with untold amounts of resources. From what I know, he and Lu Qingmei are planning to break into the Heavenly Pearl Stage."

Li Luo nodded. This was something that Li Jingzhe had already informed him of. If Li Qingfeng and Lu Qingmei truly entered the Heavenly Pearl Stage, then the Battle of the Dragon's Head would be extremely tough.

"Will they really succeed?" Li Fengyi frowned. If they succeeded, the gap between them and the other Banner Leaders would widen and the rest might not have a chance.

"Their Fiend Dipper Energy is already at nine hundred and fifty feet and their foundations are sturdy. Entering the Heavenly Pearl Stage would be no surprise," Deng Fengxian explained.

Li Luo sighed. This was expected from the geniuses that were nurtured from a Heavenly Emperor power. They possessed both talent and resources and should not be underestimated.

Li Luo suddenly changed the topic and asked, "I'm just wondering, what other benefits are there to the Battle of the Dragon's Head?"

Li Jingtao cackled. "Third Brother, you truly waste no time.

"Being the Dragon's Head is just the first benefit. There are two more. The second one is to learn Heavenly Emperor Li's famous Sanctified Dragon's Body."

Chapter 0903: Sanctified Dragon's Body

"Sanctified Dragon's Body?"

This piqued Li Luo's interest.

Li Jingtao nodded and continued, "It's a special body-tempering art from the Bloodline of Heavenly Emperor Li. Once mastered, your physical body will be significantly strengthened and your resonant power will receive a great boost as well. If there were a ranking for all the body-tempering arts in the Heavenly Origin Divine Continent, our Sanctified Dragon's Body would definitely stand at the top."

Li Fengyi added proudly from the side, "Once you have cultivated the Sanctified Dragon's Body, your vitality will skyrocket. As long as you're not dealt a fatal blow, you'll recover from any injury no matter how serious it is. It's truly a life-saving skill."

"Actually, the Sanctified Dragon's Body art is really suitable for me," Li Jingtao commented with an honest smile.

Indeed, as he specialized in defensive arts, if he could get his hands on the Sanctified Dragon's Body as well, he would be like an invincible, iron tortoise.

Hearing their explanations, Li Luo was slightly moved. The Sanctified Dragon's Body was undoubtedly a secret art that was much higher in grade than the Thunderpeal Avatar.

Nonetheless, body-tempering arts would usually not boost one's fighting prowess by much.

"As members of the Heavenly Dragon's Five Lineages, we have been laying the foundation for the Sanctified Dragon's Body for years. For example, the Draconic Breath Fiend Art that we have cultivated since the Earth Fiend Stage is not only for refining abstruse fiend lights, it's also given us strands of Heavenly Dragon Energy. These strands will undergo a metamorphosis during the Battle of the Dragon's Head and form the foundation for the Sanctified Dragon's Body," Deng Fengxian explained as well.

"Ordinarily speaking, as direct descendants of the Lineage Chief, you have more strands of Heavenly Dragon Energy in your body compared to others. After all, they have flowed through your blood since birth. Outsiders like me have to work harder through the cultivation of Draconic Breath Fiend Arts in order to make up the difference. As such, it's naturally harder for us."

Li Luo nodded in acknowledgement. The Sanctified Dragon's Body was a vital part of cultivation in the Bloodline of Heavenly Emperor Li. At the same time, he sighed a little. The Heavenly Emperor powers had amazed him yet again. Such a complete and elaborate inheritance process was far beyond what he had seen back in the Xia Kingdom.

Even if the talents in the Xia Kingdom and the Heavenly Origin Divine Continent were at the same cultivation level, the latter would likely crush the former if they had to battle.

"The Sanctified Dragon's Body is just the first form. The final form is called the Nine Scales Form," Li Fengyi continued explaining.

"Nine Scales Form?"

Li Fengyi nodded as she continued, "There are two different parts to the Battle of the Dragon's Head. The first stage is known as Dragon's Ascent, while the second stage is known as Scales Seizure.

"You'll learn about the first stage when the time comes, there's no need to explain further. As for the second stage, it's one of the most important parts of the Battle of the Dragon's Head. The Dragon's Head is decided by it. Simply put, the focus of the second stage will be on obtaining the Divine Scales of the Heavenly Dragon. Every time you obtain a scale, your Sanctified Dragon's Body will be upgraded by one level. If you're able to obtain nine scales, you'll get the Dragon's Head position as well as the potential to cultivate the Nine Scales Sanctified Dragon's Body.

"The Nine Scales Sanctified Dragon's Body is considered one of the highest achievements for the younger generation. It's not something that every generation's Dragon's Head will be able to obtain.

"However, I heard that Third Uncle was able to get it back in the day." At this point, Li Fengyi paused for a moment and smiled at Li Luo. "You'll have to work hard for it too."

Li Luo simply smiled back helplessly. He was no longer surprised by his father's achievements. Ever since he arrived in the Dragon's Fang Lineage six months ago, he had heard about many of his father's accomplishments. It was only natural that a man like him would accomplish feats that ordinary individuals couldn't.

Nonetheless, his primary goal was still to secure the Dragon's Head position. His true objective was the Nine Marks Sacred Heart Lotus, and he would fight for it by hook or by crook. As for the so-called Nine Scales Sanctified Dragon's Body, he would just see how things turned out then.

"Eldest Brother, you mentioned a third prize. Now I'm even more interested in it," Li Luo said as he turned towards Li Jingtao.

Hearing this, Li Jingtao smiled and replied, "The third benefit will happen after the Battle of the Dragon's Head concludes. It relates to a secret realm known as the Spiritual Resonance Cave. The secret realm is a really grand event in the Heavenly Origin Divine Continent. Many major forces send their talents to fight for this rare opportunity when the time comes.

"When the moment arrives, every talent in the continent will be in one place, and everyone in the Heavenly Origin Divine Continent will be watching it. It'll be a great chance to make a name for yourself and enter the Emyrean Chronicles."

However, Li Luo did not have much interest in this. He just asked pragmatically, "What's so great about the Spiritual Resonance Cave?"

"Do you know why the secret realm is known as the Spiritual Resonance Cave?" Li Fengyi asked in response.

Li Luo thought for a moment before he said, "I suppose it has to do with our resonance affinities?"

With a smile, Li Fengyi nodded and replied, "Well, you're a smart one. The secret realm is filled with rare materials and treasures, with some top-tier ones that can even push up the grade of one's resonance. Moreover, there are special treasures that can give birth to a secondary resonance as well. These treasures are rare but have appeared before. They even sparked a great bloodbath among all the talents before. After all, everyone knows how much one's strength will be boosted if they are able to get a secondary resonance."

Li Luo couldn't stop himself from taking a deep breath. A rare treasure that could give birth to a secondary resonance? Wouldn't this be the same as him with his primary and secondary resonances?

Indeed, he had heard of such rumors in the past, but who would have thought that it was actually real.

Nonetheless, he already had three resonances with primary and secondary resonances. This kind of treasure was not particularly interesting to him as he could no longer give birth to any more secondary resonances. In contrast, he was particularly interested in the rare treasures that could increase his

resonance grade. At present, his waterlight resonance was an eighth-grade, while his woodearth resonance was seventh-grade. However, his Thunder Dragon resonance was still a sixth-grade despite all the hard work and cultivation he had put in. He had not managed to boost it to the seventh-grade yet.

Since these rare treasures would likely have the same effect as liquids and lights, he might be able to get a huge increment in strength if he could get his hands on some of them. Thinking of this, Li Luo's heart started itching. The Heavenly Origin Divine Continent was truly amazing. A wonderful place like the secret realm would be impossible to find in the outer divine continent.

In the end, he could only contain his excitement. There was no rush to this. His primary focus now was the Battle of the Dragon's Head.

The Nine Marks Sacred Heart Lotus was his highest priority.

Besides, the Spiritual Resonance Cave would attract talents from all the major forces of the Heavenly Origin Divine Continent. These top talents would surely be as extraordinary as Qin Yi... If he wanted to have a chance to take full advantage of this rare opportunity, he would need to raise his own strength first. For example, by cultivating the Sanctified Dragon's Body. It would be perfect if he could cultivate the Nine Scales Sanctified Dragon's Body successfully.

With this in mind, Li Luo finished up all the wine in his cup. There was renewed and heightened anticipation towards the upcoming Battle of the Dragon's Head.

Chapter 0904: Beginning of the Grand Battle

As time ticked by, the day of the Battle of the Dragon's Head arrived.

On a vast field on Dragon Fang's Mountain.

Li Jingzhe stood in the center, and the elders from the four halls, as well as a few elders of the Dragon's Fang Lineage, gathered around him.

The members of the four banners had also gathered in front of them, with faces full of anticipation and excitement.

To them, the Battle of the Dragon's Head was a competition to see who would become the leader of their generation.

The winner would be declared the leader of the Twenty Banners. He would also be the strongest member of their generation in the Bloodline of Heavenly Emperor Li.

After all, every single member of the Twenty Banners was an elite cultivator specially selected from the Heavenly Dragon's Five Lineages. Although they were not the absolute best, they definitely represented the strength of this generation of the Bloodline of Heavenly Emperor Li.

The single individual who could stand out among these hundreds of thousands of elites and climb to the very top was definitely worthy of being considered the strongest member of their generation.

This person would undoubtedly become the leader of the generation. Not only would they get the glory of the title, they would also receive the attention of the elders from various lineages. The elders would

provide them with immense cultivation resources and help them go even further. They would grow into one of the main pillars of the Bloodline of Heavenly Emperor Li.

"Are you ready?" Li Jingzhe asked as he looked at the front row of the crowd. Li Luo, Deng Fengxian, Li Fengyi, and Li Jingtao were standing in front of all the banner members. They were the four who were going to participate in the Battle of the Dragon's Head.

When they heard Li Jingzhe's voice, they nodded immediately.

Seeing this, Li Jingzhe continued, "The Battle of the Dragon's Head will be held in a secret realm. I'll open up the portal and lead you all into it later. The elders of the halls will follow us in, while the other banner members will be able to view the battle from a projection outside."

As soon as he finished speaking, rays of light shot out of the pupils of the stone dragon sculptures in the center of the square. The rays interweaved into a light curtain in midair, but the curtain remained shrouded in clouds and mist for now, obscuring any vision of the place.

Next, Li Jingzhe threw out a golden dragon seal. A ray of golden light shot out of its mouth, then the void behind him started to warp into a vortex.

"If you're ready, let's set off."

With that, Li Jingzhe did not say anything more. He took a glance at the four of them before he turned around and walked into the vortex. In the blink of an eye, he disappeared without a trace.

Li Luo and the other three took a look at each other before rushing up and following him closely.

The four banners cheered loudly behind them.

The lively cries in their ears disappeared soon after they entered. For a moment, they started to feel dizzy.

This sensation lasted for a short while before the four of them could feel their feet stepping onto a cold, hard, stone floor. Taking a quick scan of their surroundings, they noticed that they had arrived in a place full of mist and clouds.

In the next moment, the mist and clouds dissipated rapidly.

They could see further ahead now. In the distance, there was a jade green stage full of figures. Taking a closer look, they could tell that they were the Banner Leaders from the other lineages.

In the same moment, they also noticed the arrival of Li Luo and the rest.

However, a vortex appeared in the void again before they could speak, and four imposing figures entered the area.

Leading them was a tall and upright man with a dominant air surrounding him. It was none other than Li Qingfeng from the Dragon's Blood Lineage. Beside him was the charming beauty Li Hongli.

"Haha, everyone has arrived early it seems." Everyone's attention shifted towards Li Qingfeng as soon as he entered. With a smile on his face, he put his hands together and greeted the other Banner Leaders.

In the same moment, chatter exploded amongst the crowd. Everyone knew that Li Qingfeng was a strong contender for winning the Battle of the Dragon's Head.

As Li Luo stared at him, he could also feel a terrifying pressure emanating from him. His heart fluttered a little. It was very likely that Li Qingfeng had entered the Heavenly Pearl Tier.

This was not really surprising. He was already at the Fiend Finisher Tier when Li Luo arrived in the Dragon's Fang Lineage half a year ago. With nine hundred feet of Fiend Dipper Energy and his exceptional talent, it was only expected that he would break into the Heavenly Pearl Tier successfully.

"It seems like you have advanced into the Heavenly Pearl Tier, Banner Leader Li Qingfeng," Li Senyan, the Banner Leader of Thunder Horn Banner, commented with a big smile. He had sensed the changes emanating from Li Qingfeng too.

As soon as the other Banner Leaders heard this, their faces changed as well. Many were looking at him with envy and admiration.

Humbly, Li Qingfeng smiled and replied, "Yes, I finally managed to do so after months of hard work. I hope the rest of you won't find it comical."

Li Senyan responded with a bitter smile, "Who would dare to laugh at you? With this breakthrough, there is no need for the Battle of the Dragon's Head anymore. The winner will surely be you, Banner Leader Li Qingfeng." It was a commonly known fact that the Dragon's Horn Lineage and the Dragon's Blood Lineage were close to each other. As the Banner Leader of Thunder Horn Banner, Li Senyan was naturally close to Li Qingfeng. His words were clearly meant to decrease the competition for Li Qingfeng here.

However, the other Banner Leaders could not refute him despite knowing his intentions. Even though they knew that Li Qingfeng's advancement to the Heavenly Pearl Tier was mainly aimed at securing the Dragon's Head position, they were clear that none of them could pose any threat to him other than Lu Qingmei.

"Not necessarily so." Li Hongli laughed coquettishly. With a sly smile, she continued, "There's still the fellow who obtained the Golden Dragon Pillar, right? Maybe he will surprise us yet again?" With such strong gunpowder hidden in her words, the attention of the Banner Leaders shifted towards Li Luo immediately.

Li Fengyi raised her eyebrows when she heard those words, and she replied with a sneer, "Thank you for your kind words. I hope you aren't celebrating too early, or you may have to take back your own words once again."

Hearing this, Li Hongli smiled faintly and said, "See, do you really think that? You must remember that you can't use Harmony in this competition. It's all up to the individual's strength. I'm afraid that someone will be beaten back home once he loses the assistance of external aid."

Just as Li Fengyi was about to retort, Li Luo stepped in and stopped her. He replied with a serious tone, "Forget it, let's not bicker with her. We are noble and respectable direct descendants. Unlike her, who's just seeking our attention. The more you bicker with her, the happier she'll be."

Li Fengyi was taken aback for a moment. The corners of her mouth couldn't help but twitch a little. At the same time, the other Banner Leaders watched with strange expressions. Li Luo's words had been really vicious and unforgiving, despite the veneer of politeness. Li Hongli, on the other hand, was so fuming mad that her face turned green instantly. "What nonsense are you spewing? Why do I need to seek your attention?!" In response, Li Luo kept his mouth shut and ignored her completely. This made Li Hongli even more furious. Her face became greener, and steam seemed to be coming from her head.

At this point, Li Qingfeng stepped in. "There's no need to be so harsh with your words towards a girl. That's not very gentlemanly of you."

"Oh? Do you want some attention too?" Li Luo asked in surprise.

Li Qingfeng's expression changed immediately as well. He did not bother to say more.

Seeing this, the other Banner Leaders did not dare to talk to Li Luo.

A few moments later, space began to twist once again. A slender and tall figure stepped into the field, and a glazed rod full of cracks slammed into the ground with a crisp thud.

It was none other than Lu Qingmei.

She was wearing plain clothes on her delicate and exquisite body. Her short hair that barely covered her ears made her seem both sassy and capable whilst her long, slender, and straight legs were particularly eye-catching.

As soon as she entered the space, she could sense that the atmosphere was a bit off. This naturally piqued her curiosity, so she approached Li Luo, who was standing nearby.

"What happened here?" she asked.

Li Luo smiled and replied, "They aren't interested in speaking with me, it seems."

Lu Qingmei was confused by his reply, but she did not probe further. Instead, she observed Li Luo's body from head to toe and emphasized, "On the contrary, you seem to have attracted my interest."

Li Luo was shocked by her words. He looked at her with a complex expression. "Hey, you've ruined my plans. What's with this smooth flirting?"

She simply held up her glazed rod and slammed it into the ground once again. "I look forward to your performance. Although you will not have the aid of Harmony this time, I know that you've hidden a lot of aces up your sleeve. Please do not disappoint me."

Li Luo looked back at the martial arts fanatic helplessly. Her senses were clearly sharper than Li Hongli's.

As two were speaking, violent waves started to appear in the misty space in front of the jade-green stage. Everyone's attention was instantly drawn towards it.

When the thick mist receded, everyone noticed an enormous, stone dragon appear in front of them, winding and hovering far into the distance.

The stone dragon was like a majestic mountain floating in the air. At the same time, there was an extremely terrifying aura of oppression around it that caused the surrounding space to tremble in its presence.

It seemed like the stone dragon was actually alive for a moment.

When everyone took a look at this object that was as tall as a mountain, they understood immediately. This was the first stage of the Battle of the Dragon's Head.

The Dragon's Ascent.

Chapter 905: 30,000 Feet Stone Dragon

The mountain-like, stone dragon was far in the distance. It gave off an aura that was oppressively terrifying, causing the void around it to shudder.

Li Luo and the rest stared at it from the stage. They felt like tiny, little ants in comparison, a feeling of awe rising up within them.

All of a sudden, a majestic voice sounded in the air and echoed throughout the space.

"This is the Dragon's Ascent, the first stage of the Battle of the Dragon's Head.

"All participants will have to ascend this stone dragon that spans thirty thousand feet in length. With each step, you will have to overcome a terrifyingly oppressive dragonfear. This will be a test of not just your physical strength, but your mental fortitude as well. Only those who can conquer all their fears will be able to reach the head of the stone dragon. At the same time, the dragonfear will be a rare opportunity for you all. With each step that you take, a strand of dragonbreath will infuse into your body. This will help you build up your foundation for the Sanctified Dragon's Body later. Therefore, please make good use of this opportunity."

As he listened to the regal voice, Li Luo stared at the stone dragon entrenched in the void in front of him. He had spent the past two days doing his homework on the Battle of the Dragon's Head, so he already knew all this information.

The first stage, the Dragon's Ascent, was extremely important.

One could acquire strands of dragonbreath during this stage, and those strands would be repeatedly refined by the dragonfear. This process would forge and fuse them closely with one's body. Only after passing this stage would they form the foundation to begin cultivating the Sanctified Dragon's Body.

Otherwise, the dragonbreath in their body would be in disarray and beyond what their current power could control. This meant that their strength would not be boosted at all.

Without this forging, there was no other way they could utilize these strands of mysterious dragonbreath, resulting in them being useless in the end.

"You'll need to reach thirty thousand feet in order to get the perfect Nine Scales Sanctified Dragon's Body. That is the only way for the dragonbreath to be completely refined by the dragonfear so it can fuse flawlessly with your bodies. It's the foundation for the Nine Scales Form."

Simply put, Dragon's Ascent was like a training mechanism. Its purpose was to prepare the participants for the next stage, where they would gather the materials for the Nine Scales Sanctified Dragon's Body.

Li Luo's eyes lit up at this thought. He was naturally very interested in the ultimate form of the Sanctified Dragon's Body. After all, it was top-tier! His strength would surely skyrocket if he got his hands on it.

Hence, Li Luo decided to give it a try. Of course, if it was too difficult, there was no need for him to force it.

As Li Luo was pondering over it, the clouds in the misty sky started to form a bridge connecting the jade-green stage to the stone dragon.

"Let's go."

After the voice resonated in the air, the twenty Banner Leaders stepped forward without any hesitation. Their resonant power surged up and they flashed across the bridge, heading towards the stone dragon.

After a few moments, the mountain-like dragon got larger and larger in their eyes. Soon, they stepped onto its tail.

They were currently standing on the hard, gray-white steps of a stone staircase.

The stairs were mottled, as if they had been there for many years. As soon as Li Luo and the rest took the first step up, they sensed a gigantic pressure press down on them like a boulder weighing thousands of kilograms.

At the same time, a horrifying, draconic roar entered their ears. The sound instilled an indescribable terror within them that slowed down the flow of their resonant power. In fact, even their minds were affected. They were overwhelmed with fear, making them feel like turning around and fleeing.

This was the dragonfear emitted by the stone dragon.

Nonetheless, the Banner Leaders were the elite amongst elites in this generation of the Heavenly Dragon's Five Lineages. Although their faces had changed a little, they did not lose their cool over it and quickly composed themselves.

This was just the beginning. If they could not even handle this, there was no need to talk about the Dragon's Ascent at all.

The stone staircase was wide enough that the twenty Banner Leaders could keep a considerable distance from each other. None of them said anything; they just silently began their climb.

The Dragon's Ascent had started.

As Li Luo and the rest made their way up the long and lengthy flight of stairs on the stone dragon, an elevated platform materialized in the air. Many figures were spectating their ascent from it.

Naturally, the Lineage Chiefs of the five lineages were sitting in the front.

The elders and Hall Masters were behind them.

As Li Tianji, the Lineage Chief of the Dragon's Blood Lineage, watched the little, black dots make their way up the stone dragon, he smiled and was the first to break the ice. "Speaking of which, it's been a long time since we've seen someone complete the whole thirty thousand feet, right?"

The other Lineage Chiefs nodded. It was extremely tough to reach the peak. In the past few years, the best record was only around twenty-nine thousand feet, still falling a bit short.

At this moment, the silver-haired Lineage Chief of the Dragon's Scale Lineage, Li Qingying, turned towards Li Jingzhe with a smile. "The kid named Li Luo surprised all of us with his spectacular performance in the Dragonbreath Pool. Do you think he will surprise us in the Dragon's Ascent like his father?"

Hearing this, Li Tianji smiled a little and replied, "I think there's a chance. If not, Lineage Chief Li Jingzhe would not have so easily agreed to using the Battle of the Dragon's Head to decide on who gets the Nine Marks Sacred Heart Lotus from our Ancestor."

Hearing about the Nine Marks Sacred Heart Lotus, the faces of the other Lineage Chiefs changed immediately. This was an extremely rare and valuable ingredient that piqued their interest as well. They had also tried to trade numerous resources for it multiple times.

In response, Li Jingzhe simply replied, "Just giving it a try. However, I am really determined to get the Nine Marks Sacred Heart Lotus. Regardless of the result, I hope the other Lineage Chiefs can help me with this."

Li Tianji laughed and responded, "Sure, we can talk about it when the time comes. I understand that you are a man of principle, Lineage Chief Li Jingzhe. If any of the other four Lineage Chiefs get it, I am sure you will trade a worthy and satisfactory treasure for it."

At this point, Li Jinjiao, the Lineage Chief of the Dragon's Horn Lineage, also nodded. What made him special was that there was a golden horn glowing on his head. He smiled and said, "I've always wanted to see Lineage Chief Li Jingzhe's Heavenly Temple Lotus for myself. If there's a chance, may I borrow it from you?"

Li Jingzhe did not show any reaction when he heard this. However, he was cursing him in his heart. "This sly, old fox is trying to exploit me to the fullest! He still covets my Heavenly Temple Lotus? Hmph! If he dares to piss me off, I will tear off that horn of your head!"

He did not comment any further on this matter. At this moment, he simply looked towards the stone dragon and whispered to himself, "Li Luo, whether we obtain the Nine Marks Sacred Heart Lotus smoothly is up to you... If you fail, I'll get exploited by these old farts."

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With a light push off from his toes, Li Luo flipped in the air and easily conquered a few more steps. When he landed on the mottled staircase, he could feel a mysterious force enter his body through the soles of his feet. It was something that was far beyond his control. Once it entered his body, it disappeared without a trace.

Li Luo could not sense it any longer, but he knew that this was the so-called Heavenly Dragonbreath.

As he made his way up the stairs, the terrifying dragonfear gradually grew stronger. His body seemed to be crying out and shaking in fear.

"It seems like there are subtle changes taking place deep inside my body," Li Luo muttered to himself. He could feel burning air rising up somewhere within his body after each step.

At the same time, the dragonfear struck him like a heavy hammer repeatedly. It was like his body was getting forged into something stronger and better.

Besides that, Li Luo could also sense some subtle changes taking place in his three resonant palaces under the repeated strikes from the dragonfear. Resonant power was flowing actively within them, as if something was brewing.

It seemed to be... the birth of Fiend Dipper Energy.

Li Luo had gone through repeated tempering in Li Jingzhe's fire veil in order to refine Fiend Dipper Energy, but he didn't see much success. However, he shifted his focus to cultivating the Myriad Resonances Dragon Fang Sword Formation afterwards and delayed his cultivation in that area. Now, he could feel his resonant power being refined through the repeated forging of his body with the aid of dragonfear.

Excitement bubbled up within Li Luo. Perhaps this competition was a chance for him to refine his Fiend Dipper Energy.

He paused in his tracks for a moment and scanned his surroundings.

It had been roughly an hour since the Dragon's Ascent began. The twenty Banner Leaders were doing their best to make their way up. However, the beginning half of the trail was not considered challenging to most of them at all. Nearly everyone had made it to five thousand feet smoothly.

It was only at this point that differences started to emerge among the Banner Leaders.

There were two individuals in front of everyone: Li Qingfeng and Lu Qingmei. Their resonant power was the strongest and the effects of the dragonfear on them was minimal. Hence, their speed of ascent was the fastest.

Behind them, there were people like Deng Fengxian, Li Hongli, and Li Senyan. This was the group where Li Luo found himself in at the moment.

Behind them, it was the Banner Leaders with weaker foundations, including Li Fengyi and Li Jingtao. In particular, Li Jingtao was nearly all the way at the end of the group.

However, his ascent was slow but steady. Taking one step at a time, he was not in a rush and proceeded forward steadily like an old cow. Li Luo shifted his gaze back to the two figures in the lead. Their current positions here were not deterministic of their final positions.

Everyone would endure the first half of the ascent quite easily; the differences would only start to surface in the latter half.

"Phew."

Li Luo took a deep breath and calmed himself down. This was not the time to fight for the first position. He decided to make good use of the dragonfear to strengthen his body and refine his resonant power.

He knew that his foundation in the Fiend Body Tier had already reached the maximum possible threshold and it was about time for his Fiend Dipper Energy to appear.

“Fiend Finisher Tier, here I come!”

Chapter 0906: Dragon's Infernal Baptism

The first individual to reach the fifteen thousand foot point was, to no one's surprise, Li Qingfeng.

However, right at that moment, everyone saw a sudden change take place around his body. Gray wisps of flame materialized around him and quickly condensed into a long, gray-flame dragon.

The dragon circled around Li Qingfeng before passing directly through him.

It did not incinerate his clothes, but as soon as it made contact, Li Qingfeng immediately halted in his steps and a trace of pain could be seen on his handsome face.

This was known as the Dragon's Infernal Baptism.

When one first crossed the fifteen thousand foot mark, they would experience a trial that served to exemplify how difficult the Dragon's Ascent truly was.

The gray-flame dragon would ignite one's flesh, blood, bones, and even their resonant power. This effect would renew every time the dragon circled around the individual, which was a tremendous test of one's will.

However, this smelting would also destroy the impurities in one's body and refine their physical state. Of course, the more impurities there were in one's body, the greater the burn, and thus the greater the pain.

Thus, if one did not have a strong will, they would reach their limit at the midway point and be unable to proceed any further.

However, Li Qingfeng merely paused for a few seconds before he staunchly stepped forward yet again. Just a single gray-flame dragon was not enough to stop him.

This was just the beginning though—the number of dragons would increase the higher he went. There would be a total of eight dragons at the twenty-nine thousand foot mark.

When one reached the final one hundred feet, they would encounter the most difficult part of the trial: the Nine Dragons Infernal Baptism.

This was the greatest impediment of the Dragon's Ascent. Countless geniuses of the Heavenly Dragon's Five Lineages were stopped right at that step, unable to achieve the highest glory.

Meanwhile, the group behind Li Qingfeng was closely observing the gray-flame dragon that circled around him. Their gazes were solemn as they knew that this was a trial they would soon face.

As Li Luo observed this, he couldn't help but to think of Li Jingzhe's Nine Dragon Fire Veil. He had spent countless days being tormented by it, so it could be said that he was prepared for what lay ahead. Although the affinities of the flames were not the same, it should have improved his tolerance.

Just as Li Luo was thinking of all this, Lu Qingmei vaulted ahead and also reached the fifteen thousand foot mark, undergoing the smelting of flame.

A moment later, the group that was just behind had made their way up as well.

Li Luo similarly maintained his rhythm and stepped onto the same step as the rest.

Gray-flame dragons then appeared, coiling around each of the participants, occasionally tunneling through them.

Huge amounts of piercing heat could be felt coming from their bodies. Even Li Luo couldn't stop himself from frowning in pain. This flame was indeed different from Li Jingzhe's Nine Dragon's Flame Veil. More accurately, Li Jingzhe's flame was grand and domineering, possessing destructive properties. On the other hand, this gray flame was much more subtle, looking to permeate through every inch of his being.

When the flame dragon passed through him, the impurities lying in the depths of his flesh were ignited one after another.

With a deep breath, he composed himself and simultaneously released his Glass Fiend Body with three glazed colors.

Tri-Radiance Glass Body.

His body seemed to have turned into a glazed piece of glass, allowing the dragon flames to burn him. It even seemed as though his body was turning even clearer and more refined as a result.

With the appearance of the three-colored light, Li Luo could feel that the pressure and pain brought about by the gray dragon flame had diminished. Perhaps one of the benefits of reaching the Tri-Radiance Glass Fiend Tier was that his body possessed less impurities and thus he felt less pain in this particular trial.

Although reaching the Glass Fiend Tier was not rare amongst the Banner Leaders, he was the only who had reached this realm.

Thus, Li Luo's climbing speed increased.

With less impurities in his body, the degree of pain inflicted by the dragon was lessened, resulting in a noticeable advantage for him.

In a short span of time, he overtook Li Hongli, Deng Fengxian, and the rest.

His sudden increase in speed was the subject of numerous surprised gazes. The others were all suffering from grievous pain due to the incinerating flames and could barely move. Meanwhile, Li Luo was increasing in speed?

Even the two at the front, Li Qingfeng and Lu Qingmei, could sense a disturbance coming from behind them, so they turned to take a closer look.

However, when they spotted the tri-colored radiance coming from Li Luo's body, their expressions changed as they immediately recognized it.

"Tri-Radiance Glass!" Li Hongli sputtered, and her beautiful face turned gloomy. All those who had reached the Glass Fiend Tier were well aware of the highest realm one could reach. However, doing so came with corresponding difficulty.

One's body had to build a strong foundation, and they would have to find external lucky opportunities.

In their generation, even Li Qingfeng was unable to do so!

On the other hand, it seemed like Li Luo had accomplished the impossible.

"What is that brat up to? How has someone who spent so many years languishing in the outer divine continent managed to build such a sturdy foundation?" Li Hongli clenched her teeth. Her father was in the same generation as Li Taixuan and she had been raised on a diet of envious and disgusted words towards him. She didn't understand why the loathing was so intense back then, but her viewpoint had changed. She could even empathize slightly with her father now.

"Hmph. He's merely outstanding in the Fiend Body Tier. Li Luo is worthless compared to Brother Qingfeng. Does he think he can rely on the Tri-Radiance Glass Body to obtain the Dragon's Head? An idle fantasy. How can the huge gap be bridged so easily?" Li Hongli cursed with a deep sigh in her mind as she attempted to console herself. After which, she quashed these thoughts in her heart and continued to focus upon the gray-flame dragons, no longer bothering with Li Luo. Li Qingfeng's gaze also rested upon Li Luo momentarily before he turned away, continuing to forge his way up the steps.

He was not affected significantly. The Tri-Radiance Glass Fiend Tier was rare, but Li Luo was still at the Fiend Body Tier. He, on the other hand, was at the Heavenly Pearl Tier. Thus, this wouldn't change things.

Although the Tri-Radiance Glass Body allowed the pressure of the dragons to be lessened, it was not possible for it to change the inevitable result.

Lu Qingmei, on the other hand, had a look of increased interest. Li Luo was constantly surprising her.

"The Tri-Radiance Glass Fiend tier is truly rare. Hopefully, I'll get to encounter him during the Scales Seizure and I will finally see for myself whether it's enough to stop me," she thought to herself with great anticipation.

Li Luo remained unfazed by all the gazes. He was not going to waste this opportunity, and he increased his speed yet again.

He left Li Hongli and Deng Fengxian far behind as he attempted to close the gap between him and the frontrunners.

It seemed that he would soon catch up with the first group.

Just as Li Luo was hot on the heels of the leaders, the other Banner Leaders finally reached the fifteen thousand foot mark. It was at this point that the gap between individuals could be seen as the distance between them opened up.

Everyone was sweating profusely, their gazes full of pain, their bodies literally burning from the gray-flame dragons. Each and every step increased their agony by a tiny notch.

As everyone slowly suffered, their speed plummeted, but they could suddenly feel a figure advancing relentlessly from the back.

Was that Li Jingtao?

Li Jingtao was not considered quick. Each step was measured and deliberate, steadily advancing. In the beginning, his speed was incomparable to the likes of Li Fengyi and the rest. However, while everyone began to slow down at the halfway mark, he remained unaffected.

As a result, the gap shrunk. Li Jingtao huffed and puffed up the steps, overtaking most of them.

Numerous Banner Leaders turned towards him.

Li Jingtao was fully focused upon climbing as the gray-flame dragon constantly passed through him. For some strange reason, his expression seemed relatively unchanged, as though it wasn't very painful. Even with the dragonfear surrounding him, he remained unperturbed.

Everyone felt like his unchanging stance and determination were inconceivable.

Li Fengyi similarly looked at him with astonishment as they were now almost neck and neck.

Perhaps the number of people watching him was a little too much, and Li Jingtao finally seemed to have realized something. Turning his head, he swept his gaze past the numerous curious looks before something seemed to have gone off in his head. He hurriedly let out a foolish smile and began to slow his steps.

But before he was able to relax, Li Fengyi's chilly voice rang out. "I'll break your legs if you dare to stop!"

She had a great understanding of this lazy bum and thus gave him a stern warning. Otherwise, he might very well just end up slacking off completely.

This threat caused Li Jingtao to freeze momentarily before he flashed his most endearing smile at Li Fengyi. Reluctantly, he could only maintain his existing pace as he trudged upwards, leaving the entire group behind and catching up with Li Hongli and Deng Fengxian's group.

Li Hongli felt a hint of movement behind her. Turning around, she saw that it was Li Jingtao, and her expression turned ugly.

All of her feelings could be expressed in a single sentence.

Don't come near me!

Chapter 0907: The Exceptional Li Jingtao

Li Jingtao's sudden approach startled Li Hongli.

The degree of shock that had just hit her far surpassed what she felt when Li Luo had strode past her. Li Luo might have been in the Heavenly Dragon's Five Lineages for merely half a year, but the miracles he had created had forced everyone to accept that he was indeed talented, whether they liked it or not.

Unlike him, Li Jingtao had always been a quiet and unimpressive individual. If not for his impressive performance with his Duke Art during the Dragonbreath Pool Battle, he might have simply faded into complete obscurity.

There was no other way to describe his reputation. He barely registered on anyone's radar.

Li Jingtao was warm and gentle, never seeking conflict with others. As a result, he never showed any ambition and thus no one paid any attention to him.

Since this was the case, she inevitably felt that Li Jingtao catching up to her was a massive outrage.

Just what was he relying on?

Li Hongli's beautiful round eyes glared deathly at him.

Li Jingtao was similarly taken aback by her sudden reaction, so he moved off to the side before continuing his ascent.

He was on the verge of overtaking her, and her expression had turned a steely green as a result. All the resonant power within her then exploded outwards and she forcefully increased her speed, creating a gap between them.

Her actions might have given her a quick burst of speed, but this disrupted her momentum and cadence. With the gray-flame dragon burning away, her resonant power was consumed rapidly. Once she ran out of resonant power, it would be extremely difficult to continue climbing any further.

If she had maintained a rational mind, she would not have done so. However, her competitive spirit had been ignited by Li Jingtao and all reason had been thrown away.

At the same time, Deng Fengxian, Li Senyan, and Li Kun were also a little shocked, and they shook their heads. She was simply too emotional, and now her journey up the Dragon's Ascent would come to a premature end.

Still, Li Jingtao's sudden appearance had raised alarm bells. His disgusting defensive abilities had caused others to start paying attention to him, and his climbing speed further showed that he was not merely average after all.

It could only be said that Li Jingtao's foundation did not pale in comparison to theirs.

More importantly, the Dragon's Infernal Baptism did not seem to have much of an effect on him. There was only one possible reason: his body was similar to Li Luo's, practically free of impurities.

Still, no one had ever heard of him reaching the Tri-Radiance Glass Fiend Tier.

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At the same time, a surprised cry was heard from the platform where the Lineage Chiefs and the elders were sitting.

The five Lineage Chiefs were now inspecting Li Jingtao's body with their peerless vision, which seemed to be able to penetrate everything.

The light in Li Jingzhe's eyes flashed briefly and his expression shifted.

"Ah, Li Jingtao has a truly peculiar body." The one that had spoken was the Dragon's Bone Lineage's Lineage Chief, Li Xuanwu.

He possessed a body like a giant's, being the strongest physical cultivator amongst the five Lineage Chiefs. Indescribable amounts of blood energy emanated from his very being, so intense that it seemed to have transformed into its own world around his body. It was a mystical sight.

Li Xuanwu, the one with the strongest body in the Heavenly Dragon's Five Lineages.

He was focused on Li Jingtao, and a bloodlight flashed through his eyes. When he spoke, it was like thunder booming in the skies. "His body has been refined and seems to be incredibly tenacious. His flesh and blood have attained a purity that far surpasses any of the other Banner Leaders. He seems to have practiced some sort of body-tempering Duke Art, and it's not a low-grade one. However, his body seems a little strange. It might be resilient, but the amount of energy it's able to produce doesn't seem to be great either. How should I put it? He seems like an invincible... sandbag?"

At this point, Li Xuanwu's gaze turned a little strange. Just what sort of oddling was this Li Jingtao kid? He had cultivated his body to such an extreme, demonstrating immense talent. The advantage of cultivating a strong body lay in its majestic strength. One punch could shatter the skies and rend the earth. It was tyrannical and unyielding. His body was strong indeed... but only in terms of being extremely resilient.

With how impervious Li Jingtao's body was, Li Xuanwu felt that even if countless Banner Leaders ganged up upon him, they would only end up exhausted with nothing to show for it!

"Lineage Chief Jingzhe, this brat is suitable for body tempering. Why don't you send him over to the Dragon's Bone Lineage for cultivation? The Dragon's Fang Lineage focuses on offense, which doesn't seem to fit him." Li Xuanwu smiled.

Li Jingzhe peered at Li Jingtao and emotionlessly replied, "With his mischievous and mild-tempered personality... I don't think he would be a good fit for the Dragon's Bone Lineage either."

The Dragon's Bone Lineage's cultivation was arduous and bitter. Li Jingzhe knew Li Jingtao's personality all too well. If he were thrown there, he would simply feign death at the earliest sign and throw the Dragon's Fang Lineage's reputation into the mud...

"Actually... Li Luo would be the best choice. Since he managed to reach the Tri-Radiance Glass Fiend Tier, it means that his foundation for cultivating a strong body is incomparably firm! If you agree, the Dragon's Bone Lineage would happily take him in." Li Xuanwu's grin grew wider.

Li Jingzhe smiled as well and replied noncommittally, "The Dragon's Bone Lineage might indeed be the best at body cultivation, but that doesn't mean that he belongs there. That kid is extraordinary in all regards, and his strong physical body is but one of his strengths. I have a feeling that he will become even more outstanding than his unreliable father."

This casual statement caught the four other Lineage Chiefs off guard. Everyone was well aware that Li Taixuan was Li Jingzhe's most prized son. Li Taixuan was the only young person who had shown such exceptional potential in the recent generations of the Bloodline of Heavenly Emperor Li. Furthermore,

when he was at the peak of his prominence, there were countless rumors that the future Dragon's Fang Lineage might attain the celebrated status of having two Kings within a single lineage! If such a thing actually happened, the Dragon's Fang Lineage would undoubtedly lead the five lineages in terms of both absolute strength and reputation.

Alas, it was a pity... that Li Taixuan was struck with misfortune, being forced into the outer divine continent. Even till today, there was no news from him.

It had prevented the rise of the Dragon's Fang Lineage, even before it began.

Li Taixuan was exceptionally impressive, and yet Li Jingzhe actually thought even more highly of his grandson?

The Dragon's Blood Lineage's Lineage Chief Li Tianji smiled slightly. "The fact that Lineage Chief Jingzhe hopes for his grandson to grow into an exceptional individual is expected. However, he is still only at the Fiend Body Tier. As for any results, we will have to see what happens. At the very least, Li Taixuan was able to weather through the Nine Dragons Infernal Baptism. We still have yet to see if Li Luo will be able to do so."

"Keep watching, then." Li Jingzhe smirked.

Li Tianji nodded. "Then we'll keep watching."

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While the five Lineage Chiefs sparred verbally, the Dragon's Ascent continued. The twenty Banner Leaders roused their resonant power one after another, doing their best to resist the pain brought about by the grilling of the gray-flame dragons as they forced their way upwards.

Li Luo was similarly just a few feet behind Lu Qingmei. He could be considered to be part of the first and fastest climbing group.

At this point, the trio had reached the twenty-thousand foot mark.

The number of flame dragons around them had increased to three.

Vigorous dragon flames roasted their bodies while dragonfear pressed down upon them. At this point in time, regardless of whether it was Li Luo, Li Qingfeng, or Lu Qingmei, everyone was sweating buckets. Their steps felt incomparably heavy and an expression full of suffering was evident on all their faces.

Despite this, they maintained the same pace as they continued to climb.

An hour passed like this.

Li Luo's group had now surpassed the twenty-six thousand foot mark.

There were now six dragons around each of them.

They could now feel a tremendous pressure pushing down upon them. Each and every step brought about an immense bout of agony.

Bang!

It was at this point that Li Qingfeng exploded forth with frightening amounts of resonant power. Amidst the majestic surge of resonant power, everyone could clearly see a single pearl of energy manifesting behind him.

Everyone felt like they had been struck by a bolt of lightning.

This was... a Heavenly Pearl.

Although they had long prepared themselves mentally for this sight, the numerous Banner Leaders felt complicated emotions well up within them.

This was undeniable proof that he had broken through.

They were clear that Li Qingfeng was planning to take advantage of his strength to rush to the peak in a single go.

Chapter 0908: 29,700 Feet

When the Heavenly Pearl materialized behind Li Qingfeng, the worldly natural energy in his surroundings trembled violently and rushed towards it. As it gathered around the Heavenly Pearl, the energy was instantly transformed and fused into Li Qingfeng's body.

His resonant power instantly surged up immensely.

A wave of terrifying resonant power pressure swept across the field. Not far behind him, Lu Qingmei and Li Luo were partially affected, and their pace slowed.

The Heavenly Pearl Tier was part of the Heavenly Dipper General Stage. In terms of resonant power strength and intensity, it was far ahead of the Fiend Finisher Tier, which was at the end of the Earth Fiend General Stage.

Each Heavenly Pearl was like an engine to a machine. Not only could it bolster one's resonant power by itself, it could also gather up the worldly natural energy from the surroundings and strengthen the user.

At this moment, Li Luo's eyes turned serious as he stared at Li Qingfeng's back. He posed a much bigger threat after breaking into the Heavenly Pearl Tier.

The talents from the Heavenly Dragon's Five Lineages were truly extraordinary.

If they were in the Astral Sage College, Li Qingfeng would have been in the Three Star Hall. Reaching the Heavenly Pearl Tier at his age would surely have caused a huge commotion in the Xia Kingdom. At this moment, Li Qingfeng could feel the immense resonant power flowing through his body. With this, the dragonfear from the stone dragon became considerably weaker than before. He took another glance at the six flame dragons circling around him. His face remained unchanged as he took another steady step forward. He continued his climb towards the top, this time at a much faster pace than before.

As he sped up the mottled stone stairs, another one hundred feet were covered in the blink of an eye.

Everyone else was left behind in the dust.

Astonished cries erupted from the back.

At this very moment, Li Qingfeng had stolen the limelight. This must have caused a really huge commotion even amongst the thousands of banner members spectating from the outside.

When Lu Qingmei saw Li Qingfeng getting further and further ahead, she turned around and asked Li Luo, who was not far behind, "What do you think? Are you still confident in becoming the Dragon's Head? The power of the Heavenly Pearl Tier far exceeds that of the Fiend Finisher."

Hearing this, Li Luo replied with a sigh. "Indeed, he's truly amazing. He's without a doubt the most famous guy in the Twenty Banners for a reason. However, having such a formidable rival will be a good chance to sharpen myself too."

"Using an opponent at the Heavenly Pearl Tier to sharpen yourself? You're brazen. Aren't you afraid of breaking yourself if you make a mistake?" Lu Qingmei asked with a raised eyebrow.

"It's just the Heavenly Pearl Tier; it can't be that bad, right?" Li Luo replied with a laugh.

"If those words had come from anyone else, I'd write them off as being arrogant. But since it's you, I'll give you a pass. I'll wait and evaluate your upcoming performance before drawing a conclusion," Lu Qingmei calmly responded.

At this point, Li Luo stared at her and smiled. "Banner Leader Lu Qingmei, you must have broken into the Heavenly Pearl Tier too. Why aren't you using yours?"

"I won't hold back, then." Lu Qingmei smiled brightly. Then the wind lightly ruffled her tidy, short hair, and she gave off the confident aura of a heroine.

As soon as she finished speaking, a ray of light emerged behind her figure. The light grew brighter rapidly, and a dazzling pearl of energy condensed behind her.

This pearl of energy was like a blackhole that sucked in all the worldly natural energy from the surroundings before fusing it with the resonant power flowing inside her.

Without a doubt, Lu Qingmei had entered the Heavenly Pearl Tier too. However, the brightness of her Heavenly Pearl paled slightly in comparison to Li Qingfeng's.

Nonetheless, she was still at the Heavenly Pearl Tier.

"I'll make a move first," Lu Qingmei said as her resonant power surged up. She instantly flashed ahead as she chased after Li Qingfeng.

As Li Luo watched their figures rapidly shrinking into the distance far ahead, his face remained unchanged. He was not particularly rushed or panicking over it. Instead, he maintained his pace steadily and proceeded with his climb.

As the six flame dragons floated around his body, they continued to occasionally pass through him, resulting in excruciating pain. The burning sensation made him feel like he was about to burst into flames from the inside out.

Raging flames burned inside him while dragonfear pressed down upon him from outside.

Under such tremendous torture, there was no room for one's mind to waver, not even for a moment. It would be close to impossible for one to take another step if that happened.

Li Luo kept his eyes on the end goal as a glimmer of a tri-colored light enveloped his Glass Fiend Body. The resonant power in his three resonant palaces was becoming purer and more condensed thanks to the repeated incineration of the flame dragon.

As his resonant power flowed, there seemed to be a really faint ray of light being conceived deep within his body. When the light glowed, there was an extreme fierceness to it. This was the Fiend Dipper Energy of the Fiend Finisher Tier.

Although the Dragon's Ascent was extremely tough and challenging, Li Luo was utilizing the tremendous pressure from it to help him attain another breakthrough.

With that in mind, Li Luo made his way up, one step at a time.

The situation on hand had completely changed while he was doing so.

With the aid from their Heavenly Pearls, Li Qingfeng and Lu Qingmei had gone way ahead of the rest.

Twenty-seven thousand feet.

Twenty-eight thousand feet.

In the end, they both nearly reached the twenty-nine thousand foot mark.

There were eight flame dragons swimming around their bodies at this point. They impeded the Heavenly Pearl Tier duo like eight chains tethering them to the ground, bringing indescribable pain with every step they took.

At the same time, the dragonfear from the stone dragon had reached a truly terrifying point. The Heavenly Pearls on their backs radiated strongly, trying their best to resist the immense pressure.

At the twenty-nine thousand foot mark, Li Qingfeng was the first one to pause in his tracks. He looked at the peak ahead with an eye of seriousness. He was so close to the finishing line.

However, the flame dragons around his body would increase to nine as soon as he took one more step forward.

The legendary Nine Dragons Infernal Baptism. This was the scariest part of the Dragon's Ascent.

There must have been countless talents who had their journey brought to a halt here.

Even with his Heavenly Pearl Tier cultivation, Li Qingfeng was not confident that he could climb the last thousand feet. Numerous Heavenly Pearl Tier Banner Leaders had been forced to a halt at this exact same point.

As he pondered over this, his eyes lit up. Li Qingfeng shoved all his worries and hesitation aside and took a step forward. After coming this far, he had to give it a try no matter how tough it was.

With countless gazes trained on him, he bravely took a step forward.

A gray light appeared as soon as his foot landed on the mottled stone step, transforming into the ninth flame dragon.

The moment this happened, the other eight flame dragons suddenly let out low, draconic roars. It was like the dragons had achieved some sort of resonance with each other with the addition of the ninth.

The nine flame dragons grew even bigger and livelier. At this moment, even the dragon scales on their bodies became significantly more clear. One could clearly see the fire runes carved on the dragons' bodies now.

In the next moment, the nine flame dragons opened their maws tyrannically and breathed fire onto Li Qingfeng. His resonant power burst ablaze immediately. Li Qingfeng possessed a quasi ninth-grade Wind Dragon resonance, which already produced an extremely pure and mighty form of resonant power. Even with this, his resonant power was unable to resist, burning up rapidly under the domineering flames.

The Heavenly Pearl behind him glowed resplendently as it was pushed to the maximum, sucking in the worldly natural energy to replenish Li Qingfeng's resonant power as quickly as possible.

Yet the dragonfear from the outside strengthened at this point too. When it slammed onto the Heavenly Pearl, a faint ringing sound could be heard.

Li Qingfeng gritted his teeth tightly and started to sweat profusely. Every step forward required every bit of his will.

But he continued his climb, one step at a time.

At this moment, nearly everyone was watching him. After all, it was not common to see someone attempt to reach the top.

Even Lu Qingmei had stopped her advance and watched him quietly from the back. She stared at Li Qingfeng intently, wanting to see how far he could go.

Under everyone's gazes, Li Qingfeng conquered one step after another.

He pushed his quasi ninth-grade Wind Dragon resonance to its extreme, and a faint manifestation of a wind dragon could be seen behind him. He burst forth with everything he had, leaving nothing in reserve. Green veins bulged out of his forehead, and he let out a low growl.

Just as Li Qingfeng made it to twenty-nine thousand and seven hundred feet, the Heavenly Pearl behind him let out a sharp, whining sound.

The nine flame dragons that were floating around his body began to change once again. This time, they merged together. In the next moment, they transformed into an enormous, flame dragon that hovered in the sky, staring down at Li Qingfeng with its fiery eyes. Following this, its body burst into flames, morphing into a singular strand of dark-gold flame that flew straight towards Li Qingfeng.

It did not seem particularly terrifying in the eyes of others, but Li Qingfeng felt like it could set the whole world ablaze.

The dark-gold flame was far too powerful for him to endure. If he took it head-on, he might end up seriously injured.

In that short moment, Li Qingfeng sighed helplessly. He retreated backwards by half a step.

With this small retreat, a ringing sound echoed in the air. Suddenly, Li Qingfeng appeared back at the twenty-nine thousand foot mark.

Nonetheless, a faint glow was now hovering in his previous position at twenty-nine thousand and seven hundred feet.

This marked the final point that Li Qingfeng had ascended to.

Twenty-nine thousand and seven hundred feet. He could have reached the peak with just three hundred more.

However, the small distance was as vast as the sky. Li Qingfeng could barely progress any further.

Whether it was the thousands of banner members spectating on the outside, or the Banner Leaders that were on the stone dragon itself, everyone let out a sigh at this moment.

Reaching the peak at thirty thousand feet was a true accomplishment.

In actual fact, many people had hoped that Li Qingfeng could achieve it. After all, if anyone could do it, it would be him. If he could make it there, it would be a proud moment for the Twenty Banners of this generation to outshine the others.

Unfortunately...

This was far harder than they had imagined.

If even Li Qingfeng had fallen short just three hundred feet away, there was little hope left for this generation. If the leader of their generation couldn't do it, who could?

Chapter 0909: Tortoise Dragon Resonance

There were countless sighs after Li Qingfeng had failed to reach the thirty thousand foot mark. After all, many were hoping to see the birth of a new legend. It had been a number of years since anyone had managed to reach it.

As the most famous talent in this generation, Li Qingfeng had the highest chance to pull it off. If even he had failed, they would most likely have to wait for the next generation.

Amidst all their sighs, Lu Qingmei began to make her advance as well.

She did not back down just because Li Qingfeng had failed. Instead, the spirit of competitiveness within her eyes blazed as she took each step forward without any hesitation.

The ninth flame dragon materialized, and the terrifying dragonfear slammed her hard.

Under the gazes of the audience, Lu Qingmei made her way up the challenging, stone steps. She had pushed the resonant power in her body to the maximum at this point too.

A golden deer with a nine-colored glow emerged behind her. This was her quasi ninth-grade Nine-Colored Golden Deer resonance.

At the same time, the Heavenly Pearl behind her shook violently. A ringing sound echoed in the air as it continuously absorbed the worldly natural energy and transformed it into resonant power for her.

Lu Qingmei's steps were slightly heavier than Li Qingfeng's. Clearly, her foundation was not as strong as his even though both had reached the Heavenly Pearl Tier.

As such, the crowd was certain that Lu Qingmei would not exceed Li Qingfeng.

The result was exactly as expected.

When Lu Qingmei reached twenty-nine thousand, six hundred and eighty feet, a ringing sound erupted from the Heavenly Pearl behind her. Ripples of energy pulsed out of it continuously. This was a sign that it had reached its maximum load and could not go on any further.

The domineering dragonfear fell down like a heavy mountain, bringing immense pressure onto the Heavenly Pearl.

At this moment, Lu Qingmei's face started to turn a little pale. She began to feel a little dizzy in her mind. When she sensed the changes in her body, she could not help but let out a sigh.

She actually had the strength to take a few more steps and possibly be on par with Li Qingfeng. She could have gotten the chance to challenge the nine dragons becoming one too.

Unfortunately, she had lost because she was not a direct descendant of Heavenly Emperor Li. The Heavenly Dragon Energy in her body was simply not as pure as that of Li Qingfeng and the others.

As such, she had to pay a heavier price for each step that she had taken.

As someone not of the direct bloodline, getting so far was truly a remarkable achievement.

Lu Qingmei shook her head lightly. She paused her ascension and did not take any further steps. In the same moment, the domineering dragonfear started to weaken and the nine dragons circulating around her body began to fade.

A faint light flashed by, and Lu Qingmei appeared back at the twenty-nine thousand foot mark.

Li Qingfeng took a look at her and said, "What a pity, Banner Leader Lu Qingmei. If not for the weaker Heavenly Dragon Energy within you, your achievements would not have paled in comparison to mine."

However, Lu Qingmei did not seem to mind his words. She replied, "It's fine. Neither of us would have made it to the thirty thousand foot mark either way."

Hearing this, Li Qingfeng sighed and responded, "Climbing the full thirty thousand feet is a true trial. The Nine Dragons Becoming One is not something that a first-grade Heavenly Pearl Tier cultivator can endure. I guess our generation will have no luck with this."

"Not necessarily so. It has yet to end... right?" Lu Qingmei said.

Li Qingfeng took a quick look behind him before he smiled and said, "Are you referring to Li Luo? It seems like he's moving even slower than before; even Li Jingtao is catching up to him already."

Indeed, Li Luo's pace had slowed down not far behind them. Was it because the pressure was too great for his body to endure?

Just a little behind him, a figure was catching up to him slowly but steadily.

That was none other than Li Jingtao.

His endurance had exceeded everyone's expectations.

Apart from Li Qingfeng and Lu Qingmei, many curious gazes from within and outside the stone dragon were watching him. They wanted to see just what surprises this unreputable fellow had in store for them this time.

Under the numerous gazes, Li Jingtao slowly climbed towards Li Luo's position. He noticed that Li Luo was completely focused on himself, paying no attention to the outside world at this moment. He knew that Li Luo was using the dragonfear from the stone dragon to aid in his cultivation. As such, he did not plan to disturb his cousin.

"Third Brother, I'll help you scout out the road ahead," Li Jingtao whispered to him before he continued climbing. Before long, he reached twenty-nine thousand feet as well.

"You've hidden your true strength really well, Banner Leader Li Jingtao," Li Qingfeng said slowly as he watched Li Jingtao approach.

Shaking his head, Li Jingtao smiled humbly and replied, "I'm not hiding it. It's just that I've never fought over anything with you, so no one has paid any attention to me."

"So you're finally going to compete with us this time? If you reveal your true strength now, you can no longer be so carefree in the future. Others will surely put pressure onto you," Li Qingfeng responded.

Hearing this, Li Jingtao replied with a bitter smile, "I didn't expect them to climb so slowly either! Before I noticed anything, I was already up here!"

Li Qingfeng's mouth twitched a little. This guy was really an oddball.

"No matter how deeply you've concealed yourself, I'm not giving up the Dragon's Head. If we meet in the Scales Seizure later, I would love to see just how strong you truly are," Li Qingfeng commented calmly. From his words, it was clear that he had acknowledged Li Jingtao as a contender for the Dragon's Head.

Previously, Lu Qingmei was the only one in this category.

Li Jingtao hurriedly waved his hand. "Well, I don't want it."

With an earnest smile, he continued, "However, my Third Brother has a good chance to get it. If we meet during the Scales Seizure later, I may have to work a little harder even if I do not want to compete for it."

"I'm only afraid Li Luo will not meet your expectations," Li Qingfeng responded.

At this point, Li Jingtao simply smiled in response and did not chat with him any further. He looked up ahead at the mottled steps. With a bitter frown evident on his face, he sighed.

If he had the choice, he would not want to endure the pain of the last thousand feet.

However, he had already attracted the attention of everyone by reaching this point. If he did not even give it a try, Li Fengyi would surely torture him for the next month or so. Although he was very thick-skinned and could withstand her scoldings, seeing Li Fengyi's nasty expression hollering at him for a month would be a terrible experience.

Hence, he decided to take a step forward under the countless curious looks.

In that instant, the ninth dragon appeared.

Li Jingtao took a deep breath. His plump face had become slightly twisted as the immense pressure had increased considerably.

Moreover, the domineering dragonfear was strong enough to flatten even a mountain. One could only imagine the tremendous pressure on his body.

A yellow resonant power flowed deep in Li Jingtao's body, and the manifestation of a yellow beast slowly emerged behind him.

The huge beast looked like a giant tortoise, but it had the head and claws of a dragon. With a thick, black shell, it gave one a sense of extreme stability and indestructibility.

This was Li Jingtao's resonance.

The upper eighth-grade Tortoise Dragon resonance. His upper eighth-grade resonance seemed to possess a hint of sentience to it, making others feel like it was close to a breakthrough into the quasi ninth-grade.

The spectators noticed that a bright glow had also appeared behind Li Jingtao. When the brilliant energy condensed into its purest form, rays of dazzling light shot out of it.

This was a familiar sight to the spectators now.

It was a Heavenly Pearl!

However, Li Jingtao's Heavenly Pearl appeared a little illusory and faint, as if it had not materialized completely.

Quasi Pearl!

Li Jingtao had taken his first step into the Heavenly Pearl Tier. He was the next guy after Li Qingfeng and Lu Qingmei in this generation to reach this stage.

"Oh!"

This scene caused a huge uproar amongst the crowd. Behind him, the faces of Deng Fengxian and Li Hongli changed completely. Now they finally understood how he had overtaken them so easily.

He had already taken half a step into the Heavenly Pearl Tier!

Li Fengyi was stunned for a moment. She bit her teeth and shouted, "You're really a tortoise, only moving when pushed!"

Among all the excitement and surprise from the crowd, Li Jingtao started to form hand seals with both of his hands. Wrinkles started to appear on his skin rapidly, becoming something like a shell glowing in bronze light.

This was not all. Following the bronze glow, layer after layer of light started to enveloped the surface of his skin.

When the fourth layer of bronze carapace enveloped him, Li Jingtao finally heaved a sigh of relief. He then began to make his way up, one step at a time.

Just like previously, he moved up slowly and steadily.

In the end, he made his way all the way to twenty-nine thousand, six hundred and ninety feet, a whole ten feet ahead of Lu Qingmei.

The next step would be twenty-nine thousand and seven hundred feet, where Li Qingfeng had ended earlier. That was where the toughest challenge would manifest, Nine Dragons Becoming One.

At this moment, Li Qingfeng stared at Li Jingtao's figure intently.

Li Jingtao hesitated for a moment before he took his next step, stepping onto the twenty-nine thousand and seven hundred foot mark.

As soon as Li Jingtao crossed the threshold, the nine dragons fused into one. The enormous, lively fire-dragon emerged and stared down at him.

Earlier, Li Qingfeng had chosen to retreat here as he was not confident that he could endure the dark-gold dragon flame.

Similarly, Li Jingtao could feel the same threat. He was thinking about retreating deep in his heart too. He understood that although he had made it past Lu Qingmei and caught up with Li Qingfeng, he was not stronger than them. It was simply because he had an advantage in this particular test.

His specialty was in defense. The Dragon's Ascent didn't assess one's offense at all, so all one needed to do was endure it silently and make their way up. This was why his performance had far exceeded everyone's expectations.

If this was a fight against the other two, all he would be able to do was thicken his skin and defenses and perhaps force them into a draw.

Li Jingtao hesitated for a while before he finally made his decision.

"Third Brother must be aiming for the Dragon's Head. In that case, let me try out the intensity of Nine Dragons Becoming One first. With my thick skin, the burn shouldn't be that bad, right? When he arrives later, I can share this information with him."

With that in mind, he faced the giant fire-dragon directly and took a step forward. Everyone gasped in disbelief.

Roar!

The giant dragon roared and transformed into a dark-gold dragon flame, diving straight into Li Jingtao.

Chapter 0910: Li Luo's Sprint

“Ah!”

When the strand of dark-gold flame enveloped Li Jingtao, he immediately screamed out in utter agony.

"This is too painful! I'm not climbing anymore!"

Li Jingtao hopped on the spot as the layers of strange carapace covering his body melted at an alarming speed. Even his Tortoise Dragon manifestation had been incinerated to the point that it started to turn illusory again.

At this point in time, he understood why Li Jingtao had chosen not to advance any further and to not face the fusion of the flame dragons.

This seemingly harmless flame was actually utterly terrifying.

Even though Li Jingtao specialized in defense, it was difficult to endure the flames.

As he felt his defenses gradually crumble, Li Jingtao clenched his teeth and forcefully endured the pressure as he took another step ahead.

Twenty-nine thousand, seven hundred and ten feet!

It was ten feet higher than Li Qingfeng's record!

After which, he no longer had any motivation to continue going, so he hurriedly retreated.

Stepping backwards signified that he had given up on the Dragon's Ascent. His figure flickered, then he reappeared beside Li Qingfeng and Lu Qingmei.

A glowing spot was left behind at his previous location, signifying his achievement.

The heavens seemed to have gone silent at this moment.

Gazes full of complicated emotions fell upon Li Jingtao. This result was simply out of everyone's expectations.

No one had expected that the one with the best result in the Dragon's Ascent would be not Li Qingfeng, but the relatively unreputable Li Jingtao!

"Beautiful work!" Li Fengyi beamed unrestrainedly. A look of unhindered joy and happiness could be seen on her face as Li Jingtao's final step was like the final stroke of a masterpiece.

Although he had surpassed Li Qingfeng by merely ten feet, this would be a sore point for the Dragon's Blood Lineage.

Especially for Li Hongli!

At this point, Li Fengyi turned towards the girl in question. Li Hongli's expression was steely green upon seeing the latest development, and Li Fengyi felt her spirits rising as a result. The other Banner Leaders were similarly befuddled as this result was far too strange to comprehend.

At the twenty-nine thousand foot mark, Li Qingfeng's expression had turned slightly frosty as he looked at Li Jingtao. "Beating me by a single step... Banner Leader Jingtao, are you looking to humiliate me?"

Li Jingtao hurriedly waved his hands in response. "How would I dare to have such a thought? The truth is that the Nine Dragon's Flame Baptism is simply too terrifying. I was only able to resist for a moment, which coincidentally allowed me to take just another step."

Li Qingfeng's eyes drooped slightly upon hearing his response, and he indifferently replied, "It looks like the Dragon's Ascent is simply more suitable for your techniques. We'll wait for the Scales Seizure stage... I look forward to seeing how tough your tortoise can be."

With that, he turned his gaze away, no longer bothering Li Jingtao. There was not much point in this as any enmities would be resolved during the next stage.

Just as the Banner Leaders sighed at the updated results, up in the void, the five Lineage Chiefs were also a little taken aback by this development.

"It seems Li Jingtao has cultivated the Eight Carapaces Art. If I remember correctly, this is the Dragon's Fang Lineage's only Soul Ascension-grade body-tempering Duke Art." Li Xuanwu smiled.

Li Jingzhe subtly nodded in confirmation. The Dragon's Fang Lineage did not possess many body-tempering Duke Arts. Their lineage was renowned for their offensive prowess, but the Eight Carapaces Art was not very effective at attacking. It only had one special point: its ridiculous defensive properties. The average body-tempering art would enhance one's physical strength, but this one channeled all improvements towards one's defensive capabilities.

Thus, if a member of the Dragon's Fang Lineage wanted to cultivate a body-tempering art, they would not pick this one.

It was simply too unpopular.

However, its defensive properties were truly frightening. It was said that if someone could reach the so-called Eighth Carapace Realm, they would possess a defense that was comparable to a similar Duke Art at the Destiny-grade! In the past, an elder of the Heavenly Dragon's Five Lineages had cultivated this art to an extremely high realm, and as an eighth-grade Duke, he received a direct attack from a King and actually survived! The news had shocked the Heavenly Origin Continent.

Additionally, the Eight Carapaces Art was exceptionally difficult to learn. No one had any idea how this brat had managed to successfully cultivate it. In fact, he even seemed to have reached the Fourth Carapace Realm quite some time ago!

"This brat is the first individual I've ever seen who's reached this step by purely relying on his defensive prowess," Li Qingying of the Dragon's Scale Lineage commented.

"It looks like he has the potential to become the hardest individual in the entire Heavenly Dragon's Five Lineages." Li Jinjiao of the Dragon's Horn Lineage smiled bitterly. "Getting as far as he did is pure coincidence. It only happened because he is well suited to tackling the Dragon's Ascent. Otherwise, he would never have surpassed Li Qingfeng and Lu Qingmei."

His words were met with agreement from the rest. This trial was simply too suitable for him. Still, luck was also a form of strength.

"It looks like this test has pretty much ended," Li Tianji suddenly said with a smile.

"That might not be true." Li Jingzhe's eyes dropped slightly. "Li Luo has yet to finish his climb."

Everyone's gazes then turned towards the stone dragon, where they could see Li Luo continuing to forge ahead step by step. Although he was moving slowly, he was gradually approaching Li Qingfeng and the rest.

"He is using the pressure of the dragonfear to temper his resonant power," Li Qingying observed.

Li Xuanwu nodded. "He must be planning to use the pressure to condense Fiend Dipper Energy."

"How courageous, using the Dragon's Ascent as a whetstone to sharpen himself. The average individual would not dare to do so. If one were to be careless, they might dull their edge instead, directly shattering it," Li Jinjiao commented.

"Brave and thoughtful. He is weaker than Li Qingfeng and the rest, and if he wants to catch up, he has to take an unorthodox path to the peak. If he's able to refine Fiend Dipper Energy, then he can explode forth with frightening strength." All of the Lineage Chiefs possessed exceptional experience and insight, so they were able to discern his intentions quite easily.

"Well, let's wait and see if he can reach the peak."

As the five Lineage Chiefs focused upon Li Luo, the remaining Banner Leaders were also doing the same. After all, the only one who was still capable of going any further was Li Luo at this moment.

The rest had already reached their limits.

Under the eyes of numerous individuals, Li Luo's body radiated with three-colored light, his resonant power unceasingly activated and his resonant palaces buzzing.

Eventually, he reached the twenty-nine thousand foot mark.

Li Luo's slightly sagging eyes finally raised at this moment as he stared at the mottled, stone staircase before him.

"Do your best, Third Brother!" Li Jingtao's voice rang from the side.

Li Qingfeng and Lu Qingmei did not say anything, only quietly observing him.

Li Luo flashed Li Jingtao a smile. "Eldest Brother, you have truly hidden yourself deeply! You've actually obtained the best result so far!"

Although he had been deeply engrossed in tempering his own body, he still split a strand of his attention to observe Jingtao during his ascent.

Li Jingtao shook his head. "What Banner Leader Qingfeng said was not wrong. The Dragon's Ascent is a trial that is suitable for me. All I needed to do was rely on my thick skin and push ahead relentlessly."

"Well, your thick skin is something you cultivated bitterly. It's not something you were born with... or was it?" Li Luo joked.

Li Jingtao scratched his head. "Well, that's reasonable too..."

Li Luo grinned and no longer said anything else, only taking a deep breath before continuing to trudge onwards, crossing past the twenty-nine thousand foot mark.

Nine flame dragons began to float around his body and intense dragonfear pressed down upon him. Li Luo felt his shoulders sag uncontrollably.

"Tri-radiance Light!" Li Luo's body then emitted a burst of glazed light. A three-colored light flowed ceaselessly from within his body, forming a barrier that protected him.

"Tri-Radiance Spiritual Marks!" The tri-colored spiritual marks on his body were also activated, and his body turned clearer and sturdier, emitting a mysterious luster.

"Dual resonances, third realm." His dual resonance power was also activated. Countless Vestiges of Spirituality could be seen within, which allowed his resonant power to reach a higher grade. This enabled him to resist the incinerating dragons with greater effect, allowing him to last longer. In terms of absolute quality of resonant power, he had fused eighth-grade water resonant power with seventh-grade wood resonant power, which would definitely be more effective when compared to Li Qingfeng's quasi ninth-grade resonant power.

"Thunderpeal Avatar." Li Luo had truly activated all he had. A thunderclap could be heard, immediately bolstering his physical defense by yet another level.

Every single card he had was on full display right now.

With all these augments, he continued to force his way upwards step by step.

A while later, he arrived at Lu Qingmei's previous position, the twenty-nine thousand, seven hundred and eighty foot mark. At this point, he paused temporarily as ferocious dragonfear surged towards him from every direction. The crushing pressure caused his body to be suppressed so hard that a light crack could be heard. Burning pain spread throughout his body, making him feel like his entire body would be set aflame.

However, Li Luo did not stop here. Two breaths later, he composed himself and continued to push forward.

He directly reached the twenty-nine thousand and seven hundred foot mark during this brief period.

The nine flame dragons around him began to fuse, forming a single dark-gold strand of dragon flame. It eyed Li Luo like a tiger eyeing its prey, exuding a frightening aura from its unimpressive appearance.

Nine Dragons Becoming One.

There were countless gazes focused upon Li Luo at this point in time.

They had already seen how scary this unassuming strand of flame was. Even Li Qingfeng had decided to retreat after a moment of hesitation, all in order to protect his own body from being destroyed.

Only Li Jingtao had dared to advance, borrowing the prowess of his invincible body to take a step. Alas, he had been burned to the point of misery, then he had hurriedly retreated a moment later.

Li Luo might have triple resonances and the Tri-Radiance Glass Body... but he was only at the Fiend Body Tier.

Being able to climb this high was already an achievement in and of itself. However, trying to reach the peak of thirty thousand feet might be a pipe dream.

The dark-gold strand of dragon flame was all he could see. He could sense a hint of spirituality as it stared at him. So long as Li Luo showed that he was about to take another step, it would immediately bring to bear its frightening strength.

“Phew.”

Feeling the pressure, Li Luo sucked in a deep breath of air that was scorching hot in the presence of the flame dragon. Resolution could be seen in his eyes.

Although he might suffer a grievous injury if he tried, possibly affecting his performance in the Scales Seizure stage, Li Luo did not plan to give up.

Since he had decided to act, he would do his very best until the end. Being timid now would only be an embarrassment.

With this in mind, Li Luo took a step forward, directly receiving the strand of dark-gold dragon flame with his body amidst the numerous shocked gasps of the audience.