

The Ages 1171

Chapter 1171 - Lan Feilin

The skyward eye had clearly broadcasted the entire battle. Lan Xingyao had performed rather well and showed his power, but a royal blueblood being defeated by a nameless disciple of a second-rate sect was a hard pill to swallow. Having just lost, he shook from the pain of losing his arm.

“That disciple of the Azuresoul Palace is amazing.”

“Lan Xingyao was completely crushed. Few second-rate sect disciples would be able to make someone with that status suffer.”

“Amazing. Not only did he lose the minorsky stele, he also lost face.”

“The Blueblood Starocean’s hundred thousand disciples might go after the Azuresoul Palace’s as payback.”

The chatter and looks from the crowd had completely crushed Lan Xingyao’s pride. “You’re called Li Tianming?” he said, looking up at the Skyward Stele and glaring at Tianming.

“That’s right.” Tianming put on the spatial ring he had just taken, finding many precious treasures within it. As his main goal was to obtain top caeli of other sects, he was glad that Lan Xingyao had brought quite a few with him. There was a piece of divine caelumite in the ring with a span of ten meters, within which was stored more than thirty thousand caeli from dead seniors of surprisingly high quality. They all belonged to constellers and above. The fact that Lan Xingyao could carry so many of them on his person showed how high his status was.

“You’d better remember this. Not only did you take my minorsky stele, you even humiliated me like this. The Blueblood Starocean will pay your sect back tens of hundreds times for what you’ve done. A mere second-rate sect like yours has no right to even challenge us, got it?” Lan Xingyao’s blue blood continued flowing from the corner of his mouth, making him appear even more ghastly.

“Hehe, isn’t your sect ranked last among the first-rate sects? You’re one accident away from being bumped into second rate, yet you seem to think you’re hot sh*t?” Tianming was more than pleased. Not only had he kept the stele, but he had also gotten Lan Xingyao’s treasures. As for his threats, Tianming didn’t think too much of them; after all, they weren’t able to use transmission stones within the Voidsky Realm. There was no way the few disciples of Blueblood Starocean that were here could notify the tens of thousands of others to target the Azuresoul Palace.

“Haha... how ignorant you are...” Lan Xingyao still managed to laugh despite his situation with the knowledge that the tenth place of the myriad sect ranking and the first-placed second-rate sect wasn’t just a difference of one place. In fact, that was made possible by the conquest of an entire continent and its countless elites.

“Me? Ignorant?” Tianming tilted his head and looked Lan Xingyao in the eye. “You’re still staying here instead of running away. Looks like you didn’t notice how serious things were getting.”

Tianming had initially planned to leave, yet that fellow still remained to threaten him. It was all too apparent that leaving him in the Voidsky Realm would bring a lot of trouble to himself and the Azuresoul Palace.

“Looks like it’s time for you to make your exit.” Tianming had been about to put his sword away, but he suddenly struck. Lan Xingyao was still holding on to his severed arm, but was completely stunned when Tianming charged him with a fist. He used Cryptdragon Meteor, one of the tens of moves he found somewhat useful after challenging more than twenty-three ancient idols. This was a third-realm divine fist art. His fist shot out like a meteor with a hint of dragons, slamming toward Lan Xingyao’s head.

“You don’t know what’s good for you!” Lan Xingyao roared as he hurriedly backed off. He was completely helpless against any further assault, especially with Tianming using his black left arm. The fist crashed into Lan Xingyao’s nose, immediately shattering it with the force of mountains and even caving his face in. Lan Xingyao’s horrid shrieking sounded like a pathetic, crying whimper from his deformed mouth.

“If it weren’t for the imperial star formation, you would’ve died! Now screw off!” The moment Tianming said that, Lan Xingyao’s imperial star formation activated to defend him, then waned. Now he could no longer weather the flaming storms and was flung out of the Voidsky Realm, completely eliminated. Though he was someone who could have been ranked in the top thousand, he was eliminated before his name was even listed.

“Li Tianming, Azuresoul Palace! All of you will die!” Lan Xingyao cried as he flew further and further away. He sounded like his lungs were about to explode.

“I already gave you a chance to leave, but you chose to stay there and take it. You deserved it.” Finally, it was dealt with. Lan Xingyao could have stood a chance, had he immediately backed off after losing, but he persisted with his pride of being in a first-rate sect.

Tianming didn’t stop after defeating Lan Xingyao. Working with Lingfeng, he eliminated the other Blueblood Starocean disciples there. That way, no other disciple of Blueblood Starocean would actively seek out the Azuresoul Palace members within the Voidsky Realm. The thousands of other witnesses watched as the two of them sent the Blueblood Starocean disciples flying out of the Voidsky Realm, those among them that lusted after the minorsky stele having completely given up on the notion of trying to take it.

“Whatever. If we didn’t even dare to offend Blueblood Starocean, it’s best that we don’t mess with them either, especially when Yu Ziqian is there.

“Those three are really fierce, for them to even dare to beat up first-rate-sect disciples.”

“Not to mention, they even robbed them.”

“Looks like Li Tianming is going to be famous outside thanks to the skyward eye.”

As they spoke, they made way for Tianming and the rest.

“Friend! No matter what, you managed to teach those totem users a lesson and show them what beastmasters are made of! You have my respect!”

A few burly men waved to him in a friendly manner.

“Thank you, everyone.” Tianming swept his gaze through the crowd and didn’t see Yu Ziqian. He had probably bailed during the fight. “That fellow...”

With the people scattering, Tianming was planning to leave too. He turned to the Skyward Stele and saw that his points had increased to three thousand and four. “There’s four more than before. What does that mean?”

“Might it have something to do with how many imperial star formations we activate by defeating our enemies?” Lingfeng asked.

“Apart from Lan Xingyao, I took care of two among the five that remained. It should be three, not four,” Tianming said.

“Nah, it’s correct. You forgot about Yun Feiyang. The number increased by one after your name first showed up. They rectified the score without us noticing.”

“I see. In other words, the ranking takes the number of defeated enemies into account. Maybe other factors like obtaining the minorsky stele also gives us points, and I got three thousand from it.”

“That sounds about right. There must also be a minimum number of points needed to qualify. So far, nobody but you has passed the threshold.”

“Got it,” Tianming said, looking at the Skyward Stele.

At that moment, there was a bit of commotion among those who scattered. Another name had appeared on the Skyward Stele, and it read: Second Place, Lan Feilin (Blueblood Starocean), 1001. That meant the threshold to be ranked was at least a thousand points. Her appearance also confirmed that defeating enemies also helped one gain points, as Lan Feilin’s points continued increasing every few moments. Soon, she was up to a thousand and eight points. Her points had slowly been built up, unlike Tianming who had won three thousand points in one go. Lan Feilin had probably defeated a thousand and eight enemies.

“So that means she’s eliminated more than a thousand people from the Voidsky Realm...” Even as Tianming spoke, her points increased by three. She was no doubt involved in a huge fight.

“It’s actually her!”

“I get it now! One has to get a thousand points to be ranked!”

“So defeating enemies is one way to get points. Li Tianming also got three thousand points by obtaining the minorsky stele, the equivalent of defeating three thousand foes! There must be other ways to get points, too!”

“It’s a competition with variety, alright. Looks like combat and understanding are both among the many things tested.”

The participants finally started to understand some of the rules of the competition. Though, most others in the Voidsky Realm didn’t know about the minorsky stele. The only thing they knew for sure was that defeating others was worth points. All of a sudden, a battle royale started in the Voidsky Realm.

Chapter 1172 - Let the Gods Fight for Me

Defeating a thousand would allow one to rank, and defeating ten thousand would cause them to skyrocket in the ranking! Perhaps those who can defeat a million would rank in the top ten. The first thousand points required to be ranked was probably a threshold set to allow the participants some time to accommodate themselves to the rules of the match. They started off with no specific goal until someone defeated a thousand people first.

Historically, the Voidsky Realm had many trials that ranked people by the number of defeated enemies. While there was often variation in the specifics, fighting was always involved in some way, thus ensuring that only the strongest would rise. Tianming felt that there were probably many more items like the minorsky stele that could also help with points, which would help offset the importance of defeating enemies in the ranking to prioritize other qualities.

“This multivariable test feels much fairer.”

No doubt, a battle royale would soon occur. There were easily a billion people here. While they initially didn't dare to make rash moves because they were uncertain of the rules, they no longer cared about that now for the glory of their sects.

.....

“Sheesh, that vixen sure is harsh,” Yu Ziqian said after he popped back out.

“Vixen?” Tianming looked at Lan Feilin's ranking again. It almost sounded like Feiling. “Don't tell me she's the older sister of Lan Xingyao.”

“Of course she is. Now that you've messed with her younger brother, you've offended her. It'll get even more intense if you run into her,” Yu Ziqian said with a hint of schadenfreude.

“She already defeated a thousand people alone. She must be pretty fearsome,” Tianming said.

“Well, she's ruthless, I'll give her that. No matter what, though, she's a total goddess. Even though I've never seen her in person, I've been ogling her portrait for ages. She's truly an angel!”

“No matter her beauty, she'll flatten your face with a punch,” Tianming said.

“Sheesh, you're always so straightlaced. You're trying to dissuade me because you want her for yourself, aren't you? I won't let you!” he said, shaking his fists.

“It was a joke. Do you think I can defeat her?”

“You? Maybe not now. You can catch up slowly in the future. She even has a reputation among the celestial orderians,” Yu Ziqian said.

“Catch up, huh.”

Thanks to the minorsky stele having something to do with the Grand-Orient Sword, Tianming had improved his cultivation somewhat. So far, he was near the end of his post-Lifesbane growth spurt. His future cultivation might slow down somewhat, though he had understood from the very beginning that

his fortune wouldn't go on forever. With his path still being so long, haste would do him no good. When one was on the path of godhood, each and every step was fraught with obstacles.

The Voidsky Realm was in complete chaos. Everyone saw the two names on the Skyward Stele and began wildly fighting to get their own names on it. Yet Tianming felt the calmest of all. The fight was only just beginning; if he was to rise up among the billion others, he shouldn't be out fighting nonstop. Instead, he should pave a path forward in his cultivation. He had begun to feel a bottleneck after his divine will's recent growth.

.....

Amidst the fiery storm, Tianming talked with Ying Huo and the rest as they walked along.

"Do you feel that your cultivation will become harder from now on?" Ying Huo asked.

"That's right. It won't be as fast as the earlier parts of the Ascension stage," Tianming said.

"Come on, you chose the path of Lifesbane Will and Imperial Will! They were hard to begin with! If it weren't for your decabane, you'd be twenty percent slower by relying solely on us. The top geniuses of Orderia have fewer bane-rings than you, but the wills they chose to cultivate are easier. Not to mention, some even switch to a new will once they advance to the next stage, unlike you who continues persisting on the same path," Ying Huo said, wings on its hips.

"I want to be able to instantly grow powerful enough to dominate Orderia."

"Come on, that's easy! Just take a nap with me! It's possible in your dreams!" Meow Meow said.

Ying Huo's words rang true. The only reason Tianming hadn't been stuck at the Ascension stage for too long like most geniuses in Orderia was thanks to his Aeonian Grandbane and Trisoul Prime. While other people took nearly a decade to rise through the Ascension stage, he had managed it in three to four months. Even so, the benefits of symbiotic cultivation with his lifebound beasts were limited and couldn't help him improve his understanding of Imperial Will. His growth was mostly thanks to him being a decabane, and that wasn't too far off from the geniuses of Orderia. He would no longer be the top of the top like he had been in the Flameyellow Continent; his future growth would resume at a reasonable rate.

"Guess I really lucked out with the Ascension stage." If the path of godhood was so easily traversed, Orderia would be filled with countless gods.

"Feng and Xiaoxiao both rely on consuming something to raise their divine wills. However, you're the most stable. Feng is alright, but Xiaoxiao is incredibly unstable. She makes rapid progress thanks to the Archaionfiend, but her strength is no doubt the weakest of the three of you."

"Oh? You sound like an expert on this."

"What did you expect? I'm a learned chicken."

"Shut up."

Jokes aside, a spark was lit in Tianming. "Actually, I know another path that'll help me rise rapidly." He yearned to become strong to protect his family and friends. He had promised to let Qingyu live a

peaceful life and he wanted to spare his parents from the pursuers so that they could live freely. If it weren't for his desires, he would be more than happy to live on the continent as the Human Emperor rather than continuing to push his boundaries like this.

"What path?" Ying Huo and the others were all curious.

"Conquer this place and become its emperor. That way I'll be able to use the Omniscient Threads to get the people of Orderia to worship me and fight with me." That was Tianming's ultimate goal. Back at the Flameyellow Continent, the Omniscient Threads had helped him break through twice in a single day, something that would be amazing even in Orderia. "If I can achieve that, I wonder if my parents will be able to stop running for their lives. Would I be powerful enough to protect them then?"

He would always be driven by this ambition. If his parents ended up dead, he would never be able to live it down.

.....

"Junior Brother Li, the fighting outside is getting intense. It's time to get points. Are you sure you want to hide away like this?" Yu Ziqian asked.

"It's not hiding, I'm seeking a path to victory," Tianming said calmly.

"Boast more, why don't you? Lan Feilin will catch up to you in another day. It's only been a day, but there's two thousand more people in the ranking. Soon, there will be those that have defeated ten thousand others. You'll be pushed to the hundredth rank and beyond."

"If you're so anxious about it, why don't you go out there yourself?"

"Hmmm... forget it! Haha!" he laughed awkwardly.

Ever since Lan Feilin got into the ranking, the other participants found a goal. Those participants were among the most powerful disciples of the Myriad Solar Sects, though many were samsarans. So it wouldn't be hard for a single constellier to defeat more than a thousand samsarans. Needless to say, Tianming's score would soon be surpassed, though he wasn't too worried about it.

For starters, he felt that the number of enemies defeated wouldn't be too important in overall weighting. Not to mention, he believed his current level of power didn't match his ambitions. Minorsky steles weren't something that he could find just because he wanted to. Since he wandered for a while and didn't gain much, he decided to calm down and train.

.....

The firestorm still raged in the skies. Now, more than five thousand names were on the stele. Tianming was completely radio silent and had been outranked by many others. The top ten all had tens of thousands of points and the fighting was only growing more intense. The whole time, none of them got three thousand points in one go. Instead, they racked up their points one by one, which showed that nobody had discovered another way to gain points as of yet.

Tianming stood beside a river of lava. Next to him was a girl in a black robe, seated in meditation. The veins of the Archaionfiend had saturated her whole body, making her face look rather insidious and

demonic. She was completely different from the dainty girl back in Ignispolis, though the same could be said about Tianming. Back then, he used to be the boy next door, but now he looked regal.

"How is it?" Tianming asked, seeing her absorb nova source for the past few days.

"I'm at the eighth level now." A hint of red flashed through Xiaoxiao's eyes. Her vibe resembled Lingfeng's, making them look a little like siblings. However, there was a huge difference. Lingfeng's demonic aura came from his soul, while hers came from her cold and savage bloodline that was nourished by caeli. She had obtained a brand new life and skin filled with vitality.

Chapter 1173 - Maidservant

Like Tianming, Xiaoxiao had inherited a great bloodline. She had an aura resembling that of a gigantic beast.

"Man, how envious I am of you. All you have to do is eat," Tianming said.

"It isn't the same. My level grows fast, but my divine will feels a little weak. I feel like I can't quite control the eighth-level astralforce yet, so I need time to stabilize," Xiaoxiao said softly.

"Either way, it's a talent that most people would yearn for, but wouldn't be able to get."

"I have you to thank for much of it."

Tianming had given her universal manna, artifacts and even battle arts. He even handed her twenty thousand of the thirty thousand caeli he got without question.

"You're welcome." He sat down beside her and looked closely at her.

Thinking that his look was a little intense, she asked, "What's there to look at? I'm just an ugly duckling."

"You're no ugly duckling."

"Then what am I?"

"An ugly adult duck?"

Xiaoxiao was speechless.

"Relax, I was joking."

"I know," she said with a nod. The atmosphere was a little awkward.

"Lock up your lifebound space," he suddenly said.

"I always keep it locked. I don't want to let it see what's outside." She put both arms on her thighs as she looked at the lava ahead of her. "Just say what you want to say."

"Do you hate it?"

"Wu You?"

"Yeah."

"It hasn't really submitted to me, it's just afraid of Bloodrose Curse. The moment its bindings are loose, it will go back to its usual self."

"I'm not just talking about that. It replaced your original lifebound beasts and killed them, right?"

"Yes. This is a scar that'll never disappear. Even if I start thinking that Wu You isn't that bad after all, I'll still feel sad about the others that're no longer here," she said, feeling a little depressed.

Tianming could understand this irreconcilable loss. If Ying Huo and the rest had been the ones to kill Midas, he would agonize over it too. "Yeah, I can understand that."

"You think it's laughable, don't you? On one hand, it's thanks to the Archaionfiend's bloodline that my life took a different turn. I was supposed to be an insignificant person on the Flameyellow Continent, but now I find myself on the sun with the peak geniuses of higher lifeforms. I'm even able to accompany a legend like you. I feel elated just thinking about how my life has changed. On the other hand, I can't forgive it for the nightmares it's given me." She had been carrying this burden with her the whole time. Aside from Tianming, there was nobody else she could talk to about this. He knew everything about her by now.

"Is that what's kept you troubled this whole time?" Tianming asked softly.

"It should be... That's why I sometimes feel really confused and don't know what I should really be doing. What's the real meaning of life? I also don't want to be arrogant enough to assume that coming all the way here from the Flameyellow Continent means nothing. Becoming one of the higher lifeforms must mean something, right?"

"If you're confused, just do what I say," Tianming said, looking her in the eye.

"What should I do?"

"One has to be decisive. Even if it's a little crude, we can never let ourselves be held back too long when we make decisions. Here's my question to you: the Archaionfiend has chosen you and killed your lifebound beasts so it could rise back to its prime, right?"

"Yes."

"It was the one who chose you, and it was the one who did all those heinous acts. Not only that, it also forced you to do many things you didn't want to do back on the Flameyellow Continent. That's why your relationship can never improve. You said that if it weren't for the constraints, it would try to control and enslave you again, right?"

"Yeah."

"Since the Archaionfiend has made its choice, it must suffer the consequences. The Bloodrose Curse is merely a leash. Now, you've managed to gain the edge in a struggle you didn't choose to be in. That's why you have to accept the powers its bloodline offers, too. You deserve it after coming out on top. This is its punishment. It chose to play the game by its own rules and lost. So you don't have to feel bad at all about using everything it can offer you.

"You don't have to feel sorry toward your former lifebound beasts, either. I'm sure they'd be happy to learn that you overcame their killer and managed to gain its powers for yourself, right? And now that

you have this power and an endless road ahead, you're worrying about the future. If you can't figure out what is right, just do what you feel is right. Don't let the power you have now go to waste. You could maybe start with simple acts of heroism, or even exploration like you said before. Make your own meaning in life."

Tianming had taken a similar path to stand up once more after losing his lifebound beast. The only difference between him and Xiaoxiao was that her current lifebound beast was the culprit she could never forgive. Even so, that shouldn't stop her from taking advantage of what she had. The Archaionfiend was merely reaping the seeds it had sown of its own accord.

Xiaoxiao wouldn't have to go out of her way to mistreat the Archaionfiend; it was already bound by the curse. Instead, it would be much better for her to use its abilities the best she could for a better future. She shot him a serious look and said, "It's my lifebound beast now. Just a beast I have to tame."

"That's right."

"I shouldn't reject the talent and power it offers me because this is the result of its own choices. You're saying I should do what I feel is right, correct?"

"Yes. You learned my teachings well."

"Got it." She smiled, though there was a tear in the corner of her eye.

"You'd better not start bawling now. I only gave you a few simple pointers, so don't treat me like your therapist or something. I merely think of you as a malleable talent. I'll mold you into someone who can serve me well. I'm doing it for my own benefit, you hear?"

"Whatever you say. You suck at being honest to yourself, huh?"

"You hear?"

"Fine, I hear you. So, I shouldn't overthink things and just do whatever I want."

"That's right. Be more daring like a real man. Don't overcomplicate things."

"Alright." She looked down and bit her lip, then said, "Thank you."

"Don't be in a hurry to thank me just yet. There's something else."

"What is it?"

Tianming pointed at himself and said, "Did you forget? Back at Ignispolis, I killed your brother. Your family fell into ruins because of me."

Xiaoxiao was stunned. She clutched her head and felt it ache. "Don't say any more..."

"If you feel uncomfortable about that, feel free to leave me. I don't regret what I've done. You're well aware of how things were for me back then, how I spent those three years. I wasn't the one who started it," he said, patting her shoulder. He had said it matter-of-factly.

Xiaoxiao could never forget the sight of the white-robed girl ending her own life at the Flameyellow Scions Institute, even though she badly wanted to.

“Do I make you feel the same things as the Archaionfiend?” Tianming asked.

Xiaoxiao kept her head low for quite some time. Just as Tianming thought she was about to leave for good, she looked at him with annoyance. “Why remind me of something I’ve already forgotten?”

“It’s better for us both to clear things up once and for all.”

“Fine, then listen up.” She took a deep breath. “You’re right. I know the full truth and how you suffered. That was something between the three of you, and I had nothing to do with it. Not to mention, I don’t identify too well with my powerful but cruel family, either. That’s why I chose to leave and never return. That’s completely different from the Archaionfiend’s case, so I won’t hold it against you. Instead, I eventually came to serve and depend on you—” She suddenly stopped.

“Are you talking about the Omnisentient Threads?” Tianming asked. This was something rather odd. Even though she had been away from the Flameyellow Continent this entire time, she still had a connection with him through the threads. It was a sign of her faith in him. Surely, Tianming reasoned, this wasn’t something someone with a grudge against him would have.

“Yes. The threads,” she said, feeling the weight lift from her shoulders.

“Then let’s make a pinky promise.” He smiled at her, his face beaming like the sun.

“Alright.” She hooked his pinky lightly and pulled her hand back.

“From now on, I’ll steal more caeli to feed you and make you stronger. But you should never betray me,” he said.

“Alright.” She briskly sealed the deal. The Archaionfiend wasn’t the only one bound by the curse; she was too, but not a literal one. Instead, Feiling, the one the Archaionfiend truly feared, would keep her in check as well.

Chapter 1174 - Genius Monopoly

In the wondersky realm, Tianming and Lingfeng entered the Violetglory Pagoda together for a challenge at the same time. Tianming managed to enter the third level like before. He saw a boundless sky filled with countless stars, each one a caelum of a departed senior. Unlike seniors who had died under unpredictable circumstances, those that managed to leave their caeli behind were considered to have led rather decent lives. After all, almost all of them had died at the end of their lifespan. Given how rapidly Tianming scanned through caeli, he needed a vast pool of them like there was in the pagoda, rather than the meager number he obtained in the Voidsky Realm.

“Since Orderia doesn’t have a wondersky realm, unlike the Violetglory Star, the latter must be closer to the core of the astralscape of order where more power is concentrated. However, where in the world is it?”

It was said that the astralscape of order was so vast that nova source worlds spread out across it weren’t able to see each other, or if they did, the stronger one would incite a war of conquest. That was the reason for the existence of outposts.

Given that Tianming was accessing the cultivation benefits of Violetglory Star despite being in Orderia, the battle arts he could use were nothing short of amazing. As he scanned through the caeli, he slowly

paved his own path. Every day, he would be challenged by someone as powerful as a sixth-level constellier, given the level he was on. As for how long he could persist, it depended on luck.

“Lin Feng, it’s actually you!”

“Wow, you’re famous! I heard that many sects are looking for you in the real world. They even promised you cultivation resources!”

“Did you hear about the secluded old masters that have shown up to ask you to be their disciple?”

“Have you chosen who to side with yet?”

Many of the people that had challenged him recognized him.

“Given how you were able to challenge eighteen ancient idols straight, people say your comprehension abilities are unbelievable.”

“Hmph, let’s see how you fare in real combat.”

Winning and losing were common affairs in the Violetglory Pagoda. The worst-case scenario for Tianming was that he would only be allowed to come back to the pagoda ten days after he lost. On average, he was only able to stay for two or three days, but that was still more effective than cultivating on the second level of the pagoda. As for the time he wasn’t in the tower, he went hunting in the Voidsky Realm like the other participants. Since he only had to eliminate them by shattering their imperial star formation, it wasn’t killing for real and he didn’t feel bad about doing it.

“Still, it kind of feels like this competition is heavily based on luck. The rate of encountering other participants here has little to do with actual strength.”

Using his Plundering Eye, he had a much easier time finding the other participants. About ninety percent of the billion people here were samsarans, so Tianming only needed to use Vitasteal against them. That was a move he could easily employ against those who were a whole stage weaker than him, thanks to the qualitative difference in their souls. Anyone with a first divine soul and below was easily controlled by Tianming. All he needed was to use Vitasteal on them and let his lifebound beasts do the rest. As such, he could easily take down thousands of samsarans at once. The problem was: where was he to find so many people gathered in the same place? The Voidsky Realm was fraught with hiding places, and anyone with a bit of sense would keep a low profile and try not to attract the attention of others.

“In essence, my encounter rate determines the number of points I get.” Though Tianming felt like he was putting in quite a bit of work to raise his points, the imperial star ranking always had people who had way more points than him.

As a month passed, the names on the ranking kept on shifting. There were some that he recognized, but others were unknowns just like him. Currently, the top score on the stele was a hundred and eighty thousand—a single person had taken out that many enemies. Those in the top ten all had more than a hundred thousand points.

These days, Tianming spent most of his time seeking out enemies, apart from the time he spent in the Violetglory Pagoda. He had only just managed to get his thirteen-thousandth point, finally joining the other ten-thousand-pointers. Now, he was ranked around two thousand and eight hundred. People had

long forgotten that he used to be in first place and stopped paying attention to him, turning their sights to those competing at the top instead. As for Yu Ziqian, even he could rank among the top ten thousand. Lingfeng and Xiaoxiao were also in the ranking around the eight-thousandth place, having some two or three thousand points.

The imperial star ranking now had around ten thousand names as the geniuses rose to the top. Every name had a sect beside it, and any casual examination would show that more than eight of the ten thousand ranked disciples belonged to the top ten sects. The Blueblood Starocean's disciples alone took up more than seven hundred places. As for the top hundred in the ranking, they were all from the first-rate sects without exception. It was a monopoly by the elite geniuses!

Geniuses born across the various continents would be recruited by the first-rate sects, who promised them enough resources to move the talented youths from rural places. Youthful talent was the foundation of a sect's strength, and smaller sects had a really hard time retaining it, causing them to weaken over time. However, the larger sects that recruited people from the smaller sects would usually compensate and protect them. In that sense, the smaller sects didn't suffer much even if they weren't able to keep their talented disciples.

.....

Tianming couldn't be bothered paying attention to the fierce competition over the top ten places. He knew that these people understood the Voidsky Realm far better than him and had the cooperation of their fellow disciples. The chances of competing with them in terms of number of enemies defeated was a pipe dream.

"There's no chance unless a million samsarans suddenly appear in front of me for me to defeat." Based on the state of the points now, the three thousand he got from the minorsky stele was just a small number.

The first-rate disciples continued their rampage across the Voidsky Realm. Oftentimes, they would gather up a lot of prey before sending them off for the slaughter. There was no competition at all, and Yu Ziqian was on the verge of crying. Though his pill recession phase hadn't passed yet, he was so far back compared to those on the top.

"Even if the phase passes, how am I to catch up?" he said, troubled.

Ranking high was much harder than he thought it would be. There were too many factors that made it unviable. He finally felt how hard it would be to be a lone wolf without any backing. "If I want to join the Sky Palace, I must rank in the top ten and gain the Azuresoul Palace's protection. Otherwise, things will get messy for me, especially with how everyone outside knows me now," Tianming mused.

Backing in the form of having a good sect was crucial. He had come here to look for such an opportunity, though he was worried that Qingyu wouldn't be able to wait that long. Not to mention, getting a place in the Sky Palace would affect the hatching of the fifth egg. He knew he couldn't afford to lose.

"However, I can only enter the Violetglory Pagoda once every ten days, and only for two or three days at a time. Even after a month, I've only spent around eight days inside it. It's still not enough for me to make significant progress."

It wasn't that he didn't know that the standards he placed on himself were far too high. The strides he had made within this short time would take even top disciples six months to a year of cultivation despite their talent being not that much inferior to him, not to mention their simpler divine wills.

"All I can do with the caeli is observe the experiences contained within. I still have to be the one to make my own breakthrough." The most important part of cultivation was actually getting into the fray and expending one's own energy in battle. "I need to get used to how difficult it'll get. Easily getting my way all the time could cause me to lose my imagination in cultivation."

Though he hadn't been able to break through over the past month, he was at least able to stabilize his power at the ninth level, far more than Xiaoxiao did. Since their conversation that day, there was no longer anything lingering between them. Through his battles, he had gotten some three hundred thousand caeli for her. As their quality couldn't compare to those in the Violetglory Pagoda, he had no use for them.

Xiaoxiao continued consuming the caeli to nurture the talent she had gotten from the Archaionfiend, slowly building up her reserves. Her growth was quickly apparent, much to Tianming's envy. Naturally, the Archaionfiend was overjoyed at this. Though it didn't really have a say in the matter, the stronger Xiaoxiao got, the stronger it grew as well. Not to mention, it was more powerful than its beastmaster in combat, unlike most other beasts.

It had been a month, and Xiaoxiao felt so bloated she was about to explode. Tianming had fed her all the way from the Octasaint Sky level to the Orderian Sky level. Now, she was only one step away from becoming a constellier. "Is cultivation really that easy?" she mused.

"Get out of my sight!" Tianming said saltily. He was still struggling in his own cultivation troubles.

Then again, though Xiaoxiao was a twelfth-level ascendant, her actual power was lower than that. It would already be good enough if she could exert enough power to rival an eleventh-level ascendant. Her divine will was akin to an overfed fatty, having enough mass to rise up a weight class, though most of it was soft blubber rather than firm muscles. Tianming's Imperial Will, on the other hand, was a super-stiff sword.

Though, it didn't matter too much. All she had to do was to slowly cut the fat and lean up. More importantly, the Archaionfiend was filled with power. At the twelfth level, its abilities could rival even those of beasts of first-level consteliers according to Tianming's tests.

Chapter 1175 - Li Tianming's Metal Legion

Lingfeng still hadn't finished digesting the xenofiends he had consumed. Like Xiaoxiao, he also relied on consuming something for cultivation, but it was merely a supplement for him. As he relied more on his own efforts, his power was more stable than Xiaoxiao's. In the past month, he had relied on the 'nutrients' from the xenofiends to reach the Lifecycle Sky level, two levels higher than Tianming.

As for how he fared in combat, it depended on who he was up against. Given his current power and the Soulfriend's combat capability, his limit against beastmasters was a first-level constellier. If he was up against totem users, their totems were as good as useless and they would have to suffer the pain of burning, too, so even second-level consteliers weren't his match. All in all, Tianming's path was still the

most difficult one among them. He relied purely on his own cultivation. Though his divine will grew slowly, it grew firmly.

“Everyone’s path is different. I shouldn’t be envious of Feng and Xiaoxiao’s unique talents, especially considering that I have my own. They wouldn’t be able to keep up with me otherwise.”

He had quite a laid-back view about it. If it weren’t for his stable and well-paced growth, his power wouldn’t surge every time he made progress. “It’s only been a month. The competition over rankings has probably only just begun.”

.....

After finishing another round of cultivation at the Violetglory Pagoda, Tianming recounted his past few days. “I’m getting closer to the tenth level.”

This time around, he had focused on developing his Lifesbane Will. As it was still a heavenly will, rather than a divine will, it wasn’t as difficult to improve. Whereas for his Imperial Will, each step of progress would lead to another bottleneck. The breakthrough he had thanks to the Grand-Orient Sword’s shard was probably the last one for his Imperial Will for quite a while to come.

He held the minorsky stele in his hand. “This might really be a shard of the Grand-Orient Sword. I wonder what’ll happen if I get the patterns on it to fuse with those of the five gates?”

Tianming felt the patterns on the stele with his fingers, looking puzzled. He took out his sword and wanted to try to see if he could cut it, but he hesitated. “Forget it. This stele originated from the Voidsky Realm, so perhaps it has some other use in the next phase of battle. It could be some kind of key, for all I know, so it’s better to keep it around.”

He didn’t think the stele was only good for three thousand points, so he put his sword away.

“Li Tianming, save us! Your lifebound space is about to overflow!” Ying Huo cried from within.

“What in the world? We’re running out of real estate and it’s not even a good spot!” Meow Meow said.

But those two were still fine relative to Xian Xian and Lan Huang. The former had pulled its leaves back and kept sighing nonstop, while the latter huddled up in a corner and stood on its two hind legs and hugged its tail with its forelegs, having no space to stretch them out. Something else had taken up their space.

Tianming hadn’t paid attention to it for quite a while. When he looked within, he saw more than ten thousand eggs rolling about inside, all of which had two black eyes that alertly looked at its siblings as they expanded their territory, not allowing the rest to approach.

“Hey, it’s your kid! Take responsibility!” Ying Huo snapped.

“It’s got nothing to do with me. It ain’t my fault you guys are so weird! I always have to make do!” Tianming said. He couldn’t afford to damage the eggs yet, but not because he was worried it wouldn’t hatch. Lan Huang had accidentally crushed one, only to find that it had split into three eggs.

“Hatch it quickly! I want to beat it up!” Ying Huo said.

“Huh, you think you can handle it after it hatches when you can’t even deal with its egg form?” Fifth was promising to be quite a troublemaker. Ever since it had started moving, it behaved like a fellow with a short temper. Everything about the egg’s expression screamed ‘weird’. Perhaps it was some kind of instinct.

Tianming didn’t worry about it too much, believing that the rest would come to embrace it as family. Every child was born wild and alert, after all, but they would eventually learn to love with the help of their siblings.

“Come, it’s time to eat.” Tianming took out a divine artifact, a sword made of some kind of metal. Artifacts made using divine ores were either metal based, mineral based, or a mix of the two. The Grand-Orient Sword was a hybrid artifact that skewed on the side of metal, while the one he just took out was purely metal based. The ore used to forge this blade was called nonaflame arcanite. The moment he said that, a bunch of eggs popped out of the lifebound space, looking alertly at Tianming and greedily at the divine artifact.

“It isn’t your first time feasting, right? Why are you still hesitating?” He tossed the artifact on the ground. Then, around a thousand of the eggs surrounded the sword. Soon, metallic crunching could be heard nonstop. Then the eggs sluggishly rolled about the ground as if they had eaten their fill. Some of them even burped.

Tianming noticed a silvery sheen on the shells of the eggs. It looked like the eggs were impenetrable and even usable as hidden weapons to lob at others with. There was no doubt that they were as hard as a divine artifact. Interestingly, the hilt of the weapon that it had consumed was still left there. Only the metal parts were cleanly eaten, and not a single part of the hilt was touched. Looks like he had a picky eater on his hands. Ever since he’d found out about its preference, Tianming had fed it many metallic divine ores and artifacts.

“It must be a metallic broodmother beast, huh...” It was a fusion of two types. He had guessed that it was a broodmother thanks to its ability to duplicate itself.

“Will this become... a metal legion?” He was already looking forward to it. His beasts kept getting weirder and weirder, starting from a phoenix, then to a cat, then a two-headed dragon, and then to a plant, with equally unconventional abilities. What in the world would be next?

“Fifth, everything is ready. We’re only lacking the final push. The whole family will wait for you to join us in the beautiful world of the living.”

Chapter 1176 - The Ninedragon Emperor

In the sky above and earth below, the fiery storm raged on.

“Brother! Brother! My brother!” As soon as Tianming sent the little eggs back to his lifebound space, Yu Ziqian came rolling and tumbling toward him, his face excited and purple hair fluttering in the wind. He slid all the way down, leaving two deep lines behind him.

“What’s wrong with you? Have you gone mad?” Tianming mocked.

“Brother, look up! Look at the Skyward Stele! It’s been a month and something big has happened. The Voidsky Skirmish has definitely entered the next stage!” Yu Ziqian was excited and nervous. He was still

incapacitated and had to rely on Tianming for everything. But after pondering it for a time, he realized that even if he didn't make the top ten on the imperial star ranking, he would still have someone backing him up. Perhaps Tianming's position in the Azuresoul Palace might surpass Jiang Qingliu if he managed to bolster the sect's ranking so they overshadowed the Supracloud Sanctuary. He would be fine as long as Tianming spoke up for him.

Tianming looked up in astonishment. On the Skyward Stele, ten thousand names gleamed in gold; there was nothing out of the ordinary. As he took a closer look, Tianming discovered that a red dot had appeared behind several hundred names. Upon scrutiny, the red dots seemed to form a dragon head.

"What is it?" He focused on the names with the red dots using his Plundering Eye. For example, there was a red dot after the name "Lan Feilin." The names with red dots were basically concentrated in the upper half of the imperial star ranking.

At that moment, the red dots flashed, combining into a bright, red light which pierced through the fiery storm and shone on a certain location. The clouds parted and light reappeared. Under the brilliance of the red light, an enormous underground palace emerged from below as loud dragon roars shook the heavens and earth. The violent earthquake reached Tianming's feet as a huge crack in the ground expanded toward him. Tianming rose into the air just as the ground beneath him split wide open, revealing an endless abyss. Countless magma columns sprang up from below.

The underground palace was so enormous it was impossible to gauge its height. What the red light illuminated was merely the tip of the iceberg. Tianming caught sight of a massive dragon sculpture. Mighty and majestic, it was the very picture of the coming of the celestial emperor.

"What's that?" Tianming exclaimed.

"The Nine... Nine..." Yu Ziqian trembled, struggling to speak.

"Nine what? Calm down, buddy." Tianming slapped him on the back of his head.

"Brother, that's the Imperial Ninedragon Tomb!" Yu Ziqian strained to speak the words.

Tianming looked strange.

"Are you in shock?" asked Yu Ziqian.

"No? What's the Imperial Ninedragon Tomb?" Tianming was calm. Wasn't this the Voidsky Skirmish? Then what on earth was the Imperial Ninedragon Tomb?

"It's an Orderian legend!"

Yu Ziqian looked at Tianming strangely. How could he not know this?

"We've been cultivating in the mountains over the past two decades. My master forbade us from meeting other people. The reason we left was to see what's out there," Tianming replied.

"You're a weird one," Yu Ziqian said speechlessly.

"Cut the crap. Tell me, what's so special about this underground palace?" Tianming asked.

"Alright!"

Yu Ziqian took a deep breath and began explaining. "For millions of years, the emperor of Orderia has always been a celestial orderian, except once when an invincible beastmaster from the Myriad Solar Sects subdued the entire world, defeated the elites of the celestial orderian race, and almost succeeded in unifying the myriad sects. That man was the Ninedragon Emperor! Back then, his status was equivalent to the present-day sun emperor. He kept the celestial orderians' defensive formation open throughout his reign, and it wasn't until his death that the celestial orderians dared close the formation." As Yu Ziqian spoke, his eyes were filled with longing. Undoubtedly, the man was a legend.

"What then? Go on," Tianming urged.

"It would take me forever to list all his great achievements. Anyway, legend has it that he built the Imperial Ninedragon Tomb before he died, leaving behind everything, including the secret behind his meteoric rise. However, no one has ever discovered traces of the tomb, not even his descendants. So this is the site of the emperor's legacy and it belongs exclusively to the Myriad Solar Sects, not the celestial orderians," Yu Ziqian explained.

"It's all very strange. How could it have appeared here? And it's clearly part of the Voidsky Skirmish. With the emergence of the tomb, shouldn't all the elites be rushing into action?" Tianming asked.

"I think it's strange as well. This is clearly the work of the Sky Palace. It seems they've long discovered the tomb but had yet to announce it to the world. They've probably taken away all the good stuff, turned the tomb into a battleground, and designed trials inside." Yu Ziqian speculated.

"It's possible." Tianming nodded.

"Anyway, the treasures are gone, but there'll be leftovers. Who knows? Perhaps there's treasure after all?" Yu Ziqian said, his eyes gleaming.

The location of the tomb was projected by the Skyward Stele. Very soon, everyone would gather, making it the perfect opportunity to hunt and kill. No one would miss out on such a momentous event.

"The Imperial Ninedragon Tomb? A beastmaster? Did he have nine lifebound beasts?" Tianming asked.

"Nine? You're crazy! Five is the limit," said Yu Ziqian.

"Is that the limit? Then why was he called the Ninedragon Emperor?"

"In the legends, he has five dragons for lifebound beasts, but cultivated his arms and legs into dragons through some unknown method. His four limbs and five lifebound beasts make nine dragons. I have a painting of him. I'll show it to you." Yu Ziqian reached into his crotch, fiddling for some time.

"What're you doing?" Tianming stared at him strangely.

"I'm afraid others might steal my spatial ring so I wear it on my pecker." He smiled suggestively.

"Fuck!" As soon as Tianming held the picture in his hand, he smelled a musty odor. His stomach rolled; if it weren't for his curiosity, he would have slammed the painting onto Yu Ziqian's face. "Hold on!" Glancing at Yu Ziqian, he laughed. "Spatial rings are usually worn on the ring finger, so the size of your pecker is..."

"Fuck off! I'm a grower. What do you know?!" Yu Ziqian blushed.

Xiaoxiao, who was standing beside them the entire time, had to struggle to keep herself from laughing.

“Who would’ve thought you gifted men would gather in this wasteland?” Lingfeng couldn’t help but laugh.

“Shut up! Yu Ziqian wished he could find a hole to hide in.

Tianming had already opened the painting. Amidst the clouds, the emperor was the embodiment of power and authority, yet seemed to possess the grace and compassion of a god. There were five dragons circling his figure, but what was even more shocking was the fact that he had dragons for limbs. It was hard to believe anyone could evolve into this form if Tianming hadn’t seen it with his own eyes. However, he wasn’t shocked by the emperor’s limbs, but his eyebrows! On that ferocious countenance was a third eye.

“Archaic House of Xuanyuan? The Trioptic True Dragon Branch?” Tianming was bewildered.

“I thought you knew nothing, but you’re familiar with the Archaic House of Xuanyuan? They’ve switched their surname to ‘Long.’ The Xuanyuan Dragon Sect that’s second on the myriad sect ranking was founded by the Ninedragon Emperor,” said Yu Ziqian.

Tianming was dumbfounded. Glancing at the painting, he asked, “How many years ago was this?”

“Over half a million years ago.”

Then this man had nothing to do with Great Emperor Xuanyuan of the Flameyellow continent. But it was very likely that the Archaic House of Xuanyuan in the Flameyellow Continent originated from the Ninedragon Emperor and the Xuanyuan Dragon Sect.

Perhaps an ordinary disciple left descendants in the Flameyellow Continent, leaving behind the Trioptic True Dragon Branch and changing the history of the continent. Love between a god and a mortal was normal. Not everyone was as self-righteous as the divine moonrace. However, it was still rare. Most romances ended up with the woman being abandoned and forgotten.

For the descendants of these superior races that grew up on the Flameyellow Continent, Ascension is the ceiling for them, which only proves how much influence the world has on human development. The Archaic House of Xuanyuan’s bloodline was diluted so they weren’t as talented as they were before. Of course, that was insignificant. More importantly, Tianming was certain the tomb was related to the next stage. He had to enter it.

“The names with a red dot are probably those who’ve already gone in!” Yu Ziqian exclaimed.

“Let’s go then!”

The four immediately set out. Unbeknownst to them, the emergence of the tomb had caused a sensation in Orderia. A thousand skyward eyes appeared in the sky above the tomb. Through the skyward eyes, the audience could see that all one billion disciples were headed in that direction like a dense colony of ants, flocking to the huge underground palace. The underground palace was still rising. When it had fully emerged, it would begin descending until it completely sank into the ground once more. Then the underground palace would be sealed again. The disciples would have to rely on their skills to enter the palace before that happened.

Chapter 1177 - Burning

It also rained in Orderia, but it didn't rain water. Instead, small embers came falling from the flaming sky above. Each time the nova source burst out, flaming clouds would gather to a point where flaming rain would fall. Whenever that happened, the world would turn into an endless sea of flames that blanketed everything. People would have to take shelter in the cities and settlements that had their formations turned on to block the rain. As for the trees and everything else outside those places, only those that had absorbed enough nova source to develop a resistance to the fiery rain wouldn't be set aflame. Eventually, they would absorb enough divine patterns from the nova source to become materials used to make pills and artifacts.

Each time it rained, everyone in Orderia felt like they were burning. Matters of survival, competition, and oppression were always the main concerns in Orderia, and the rain was just another thing they had to survive. Looking into the distance, it looked like countless shooting stars were falling, leaving one pothole after another on the ground. Rumbling could be heard all across the place.

As there was no night in Orderia, rest and fatigue weren't part of their daily cycle. They couldn't afford the time for it, for when they were out cold, they would quickly get in trouble. For instance, if one were to be asleep during a flaming rain, they would no doubt die from it. The rain spanned the entirety of the sun—even through the territory of the celestial orderians.

There, there was no sect, no empire, only the race. The survival instincts of their race were embedded deep in their hearts. This was a land that was forbidden to the Myriad Solar Sects, who thought of the celestial orderians as madmen, totem users of flaming destruction whose only goal was violence and gore.

However, the celestial orderians had never seen the Myriad Solar Sects as their enemy. Instead, they were merely prey. Their true enemies came from the depths of the endless cosmic aether, like plunderers of nova source worlds or elites from other nova source worlds. That was why they had to cultivate and grow stronger.

The two sides of the sun were completely different worlds, with the territory of the Myriad Solar Sects filled with internal strife while the celestial orderians had complete unity. Their formless and united will had been passed along countless generations, bellowing like the roar of the flaming rain.

As the ember rain fell over countless settlements and cities, it stopped outside the place on the opposite side of the Voidsy Flame Pillar. There was no flaming pillar there. Instead, a gigantic divine palace was built on the place where the pillar was supposed to stand, absorbing all of the energy from the pillar. This grand palace was ancient and eternal. Each pillar stood tens of thousands of meters tall and every tile was at least a thousand meters wide, engraved with the symbol of the sun. There were countless sculptures of totems in every corner of the palace, resembling gravestones. One would even be able to find a sculpture of Huiye Shi's moonfiend.

The palace was large enough that even totems a few kilometers tall could move and fight there without issue. This was none other than the Divine Sun Palace, the sacred land of the celestial orderians. It served to suppress the surge of the nova source, absorbing the other Voidsy Flame Pillar entirely into itself. From a distance, the palace was covered in flames that stood millions of meters high, so high that they touched the flaming clouds.

From even further away, the palace looked like a gigantic flaming head with its mouth open in a terrifying roar. There were two flaming balls where its 'eyes' would be, each about fifty thousand meters wide. They shone so brightly that the palace was hard to look at properly. Upon closer inspection, one would notice that they contained a fundamental cosmic force that didn't come from the sun's nova source. The eyes were actually stellunar sources, though they were much smaller than the Divine Moon Realm's. That was because the stellunar source worlds had been compacted many times to achieve that relatively small size, changing even the density and power contained within!

While it was only a fraction of the size of a normal moon, they were completely different things. The cores were no bigger than a small ball. It was only possible thanks to the celestial orderians' access to a nova source, which was said to be able to sustain higher lifeforms for millions of years.

Any lifeform from a mortal world would be shocked stupid at the sight of this divine palace. It was no longer apt to call it a building; it was will incarnate and seemed to have a life of its own. It represented the propagating willpower of the celestial orderians. Every one of them would be able to see the Divine Sun Palace once in their lives when they were brought there at the age of three for their sacred pilgrimage, during which their racial will would be imprinted into them. Nobody had the right to refuse the ceremony. As their seniors often said, even if they ended up at the edge of the universe or were reduced to ashes, there was no changing the blood that flowed through their veins.

.....

The embers that rained down on the divine palace were swallowed by its even bigger flames. Amidst the flaming rain, a dragon about two thousand meters long was freely flying about. It was dark red and had three pairs of fleshy wings on its back. Its horns looked like branching antlers that sported ninety-nine skyward spikes in total. Though it looked bloody, it wasn't actually blood. Instead, the embers turned blood red the moment they touched its body. Its great roar disturbed the flames around it as it landed before the divine palace.

A black-haired, black-eyed youth dressed all in black dismounted the dragon. Blood-fire burned around his body as well. When the flames scattered, one would be able to see that he was a cold, yet handsome man with an aura that was as insidious and terrifying as the dragon. At the center of his brows was a blood-red eye that burned with the same blood-fire.

The dragon returned to his lifebound space after they landed. He adjusted his black armor as he stepped into the shrine ahead of him, walking past countless flames and towering sculptures. Finally, he entered a grand hall, struggling to keep his eyes open from the bright, red-gold light.

"This humble servant greets Your Solar Majesty." He didn't dare to look up, having immediately prostrated himself the moment he entered the hall. He kept his face flat on the ground, even letting his third eye touch it.

Countless beasts' roars echoed throughout the hall. It felt more like a chaotic jungle than an audience hall, though the bright light blinded everyone.

"Raise your head," said the heavy voice. There was so much pressure in the voice that the youth sweated just from hearing it.

"Understood." He struggled to get up and looked ahead, seeing nothing but seas of flame. It felt like flaming starlight was clashing all over him and making him see things. He grit his teeth and calmed himself, allowing his eyes to adjust. In front of him was a throne around ten meters tall, adorned with nine dragon heads, each with an agonized expression. The throne itself seemed like the bodies of nine dragons. It was designed to make the one seated in it look like they were dominating dragons. There was a blinding body of light on the throne that the youth had a hard time looking at. The figure looked to be around five meters tall, despite being seated. His flaming eyes looked just as blinding as the two 'eyes' of the divine palace. Only his fluttering hair was visible.

"What is it?" the voice rang. The youth felt his ears boil again.

Taking a deep breath to stifle his fear, he said, "Your Solar Majesty, the Voidsky Realm has taken out the Imperial Ninedragon Tomb for the Voidsky Skirmish. It doesn't feel like a mere test."

All of a sudden, the hall fell completely silent. The deafening roars from before could no longer be heard. The young man lowered his head and looked at the ground, awaiting his reply silently.

"It's the imperial tomb of your race's ancestors?" the person on the throne said mechanically.

"Yes."

The proclamation was followed by another stretch of silence.

"Hmph... are they trying to rebel?" Immediately, the roaring could be heard again. The young man closed his eyes and prostrated himself once more, his fingers shaking with fear.

Chapter 1178 - Returning to the Top Ten

The youth remained prostrated, waiting. He had finished his report, but didn't dare to excuse himself. Instead, he waited for the sun emperor to speak. After some time, he felt rather uncomfortable as the person he worshiped stood up and approached him. The flames from his body completely enveloped the youth. The youth began charring, his hair starting to singe. However, he endured it without uttering a sound, not moving an inch.

He saw a pair of crimson legs in front of him even with his gaze lowered. There were ten toes in total, each one looking like a fierce beast and roaring at him.

"She," said the booming voice.

"Yes!"

"Do the memories of betrayal and genocide still exist inside you?"

"We remember it across thousands of generations! Now, their descendants occupy our race's lands! It is an insult to the Xuanyuan Dragon Clan."

"Very good." The man didn't move an inch, but his toes were still glaring at the youth's charred face. He stopped bringing up the Ninedragon Imperial Tomb. Instead, his voice sounded much gentler. "What about the goddess? How's she doing?"

"She is giving it her best and hasn't disappointed Your Solar Majesty's hopes in her."

"What I'm asking is what she is doing apart from cultivating."

"She... is watching the Voidsy Skirmish with close intensity. I believe she understands Your Solar Majesty's intentions and keeps trying to improve herself by getting to know the achievements of her peers as well."

"Hmm." Suddenly, a huge palm slammed into the youth's head, stunning him. "She, you have done well these past years. We have promised your parents to let you be Our son-in-law. Now that the date of your marriage has been decided, tell Us what you think is fitting as a dowry for wedding Our daughter."

"Your Solar Majesty has truly spoiled me by allowing me to take the goddess's hand in marriage. It's nothing less than multiple lifetimes of karma. I wouldn't dare to make any additional requests. I swear to protect the goddess with my life," said the youth nervously.

"No. Dowry is part of the ceremony. We're a civilized people, so the rituals must be observed." The flames in the hall burned bright once more. The rising crescendo of roaring beasts almost caused the youth to push his ears shut. The youth wouldn't forget what the sun emperor said next: "Our daughter must have a dowry befitting her status. She, I'll give you the entire Xuanyuan Dragon Sect."

.....

"Damn...."

"Damn?"

"Dammit!" Yu Ziqian was being dragged around by Tianming. He turned to look at the Skyward Stele and had no other way to express how he currently felt. The closer they came to the Ninedragon Imperial Tomb, the larger he noticed it was. "Word is that the Divine Sun Palace is huge beyond imagination. I didn't think the Ninedragon Imperial Tomb would be comparable to it. How could such a huge structure have been hidden underground?"

Tianming ignored him and continued approaching the tomb; it was a grand place filled with an air of history. Having been buried for far too long, dirt and rocks were falling from its side. Boulders thousands of meters wide were crumbling as they crashed to the ground. Nine dragon sculptures roughly a hundred thousand meters long surrounded the structure, though they looked rather unique. Some of them had three heads and six arms, some had the heads and tails of dragons but bodies of other creatures, and there were four that only had their top halves. The gigantic structure itself looked like a sleeping giant.

It was covered in countless dragon scales, each roughly a hundred meters wide, and all of them glittering from the light of the flaming storm. They almost seemed alive. A faint roar could even be heard as people approached.

Tianming and the rest had been pretty lucky, finding themselves not far from one of the nine entrances of the tomb. This entrance was none other than the head of a dragon sculpture. From a distance, hordes of people could be seen entering the dragon's mouth like ants. Some were flung into the entrances by the flaming storm, while others blended in with the rest as they entered.

"As expected, the people that enter will have a red dot next to their names in the ranking. All of this was planned by the Sky Palace. To think that they'd go so far for disciples under the age of thirty.... Isn't this something everyone in the Myriad Solar Sects would fight each other over?"

The disciples within the Voidsky Realm had no idea how their seniors were reacting at witnessing the reappearance of the Ninedragon Imperial Tomb. Chaos had erupted all across the sun after the revelation. All of the sects had assembled to hold emergency meetings. Far too many people were wondering what the Sky Palace was planning by doing something like this.

"The appearance of the tomb marks this Voidsky Skirmish as different from the others. It isn't just a competition among disciples anymore."

"If it weren't for the Sky Palace sealing off the Voidsky Realm, countless people might be trying to make their way inside. It's a place that'd attract even peak elites."

"Well, those above thirty don't really care about things as long as the sect rankings stay the same. Initially, they weren't going to pay too much attention to the Voidsky Skirmish, but now everyone's keeping an eye on what's happening here."

"The skyward eyes have all switched to displaying the view of the tomb."

"Does that mean anyone inside the tomb won't be visible through the skyward eyes?"

"Not necessarily. The Sky Palace could have other ways to broadcast what's inside."

Tianming was right in front of the gigantic labyrinth, but there were millions of other disciples in front of him. No part of his vision wasn't filled with people. The commotion caused by the Ninedragon Imperial Tomb was enough to attract almost all the disciples in the Voidsky Realm. So far, only some twenty million had been eliminated, so the bulk of them were still there. Tianming would have to pave a path of blood to enter it.

"I have to go in no matter what!" With his target decided, he decided it was time to take action. The tomb was still rising from the ground, but there was no saying when entry to it would be forbidden. So, time was of the essence.

"Do you see the scores of the names on the stele that don't have a red dot next to them? Their points are rapidly rising!" Yu Ziqian said.

In other words, there were others near the tomb that'd begun culling the prey that had gathered in one place on their own accord. However, getting points and ensuring one's entry into the tomb wasn't going to be easy.

"Let's fight as we make our way to the entrance," Tianming said. The entrances were the most crowded places, after all.

"Let's not risk it. We can try sneaking in instead. There's no way we'll be able to defeat so many of them!" Yu Ziqian said. As far as he was concerned, getting into the tomb was now far more important than gaining points.

"Who said we can't?" Tianming smirked. At least nine million out of the ten million people there were samsarans. When Tianming was still a samsaran himself, he had used Vitasteal to completely dominate

saints. But now, his soul had become a divine soul at the Ascension stage, so samсарans with normal souls weren't able to withstand his Vitasteal. He had already tried it a few times before against 'mortals' without divine souls. It was a shame he hadn't encountered enough people in the past month, but that was no problem now!

"Even though we risk not entering by staying outside, the ranking is still more important for the future! If I can get back to the top ten in the ranking and enter the tomb, I'll be able to catch up with the current frontrunners." Tianming was currently ranked a few thousand places down. "Not to mention, the skyward eyes won't be able to clearly see what I'm about to do. I can more or less keep Vitasteal a secret."

Immediately, Tianming charged into the crowd and made his move, with Lingfeng and Xiaoxiao flanking him and taking advantage of the situation. As for Yu Ziqian, he merely chased after them, cursing the whole way.

"Die!" There were at least ten thousand people directly in front of him, most of whom were samсарans. "Vitasteal!"

The power of sky plunderers was channeled from his outstretched hand as his black arm grasped the air ahead of him. All of a sudden, seven thousand people collapsed to the ground as if they had lost their souls, their eyes wide open in a daze. Their vitae leaving their sea of consciousness caused them to lose control of their bodies. While they wouldn't die from it, they were no longer able to resist. Though Tianming couldn't keep them in that state for long, he only needed a little time.

"Go!" The whole group charged in, lifebound beasts and all!

Chapter 1179 - Rampage

The ones dealing the most damage were Ying Huo with its Skyscorch Featherblast and Xian Xian with its Bloodrain Swords. Each of Ying Huo's feathers contained power from its Blazebane, Cosmic Blade, which was fatal to samсарans. Thanks to Vitasteal, the targets couldn't resist or evade at all, making it even more effective. Meow Meow and the Archaionfiend's abilities also swept across a wide area.

"If I dared to use my totems and providence swords, it would be even quicker!" Though, even without them, Tianming was culling his enemies at a horrifyingly efficient rate thanks to Vitasteal. Even so, the names without red dots next to them were still quickly rising in the ranking. Now, the first place that used to have a hundred and eighty thousand points had a quarter million, having defeated seventy thousand others in a short span of time. Even so, the rate of increase was still slower than Tianming's.

After using Vitasteal, Tianming's name quickly rose through the ranking, and he even carried Lingfeng and Xiaoxiao up too. He couldn't kill everyone targeted by Vitasteal alone, after all, so the other two took care of the rest. After a while, even Yu Ziqian snapped out of it and started picking up on the leftovers as well, though he didn't really know what was happening.

"It's insane!"

"What the— so many people aren't going in just so they can defeat droves of people here!"

"Those that went in earlier really lost out on this. Some were even pushed out of the top ten."

"Wouldn't it be funny if those that stayed outside lost their chance to go in?"

"There must be some epic treasure left behind by the Ninedragon Emperor deep inside the tomb!"

"Some might say that those who rushed in had good foresight. Maybe the treasures will be more worth it in the long run."

Fighting was present at all nine entrances of the tomb. Wafts of smoke and explosions containing chunks of lifebound beast flesh were coming from all over. The beasts weren't protected by the imperial star formations, so they could be killed for real. The Voidsky Skirmish wasn't something one would necessarily emerge unscathed from.

While Tianming's efficiency was high, thanks to Vitasteal, the commotion he had caused didn't stand out much in the grand scheme of things. Far too many others were slaughtering away just as he was. Loud roars and the abilities of lifebound beasts could be seen and heard all across the sky as droves of people engaged each other in a chaotic clash.

"The tomb has reached its highest point and is beginning to sink back," Yu Ziqian reminded.

"It's fine. Continue." Tianming was close to the entrance of the tomb, and was confident that he could enter before it sank back underground. Now, it was only a test of his mental fortitude. Thanks to the near crash between the moon and the continent, though, his mental fortitude was more honed than most others'. "Still, there are far too many samsarans trying their luck here."

There were countless people that thought the same thing. Even now, there were many samsarans charging toward the tomb, worried that they would be missing out on the chance of a lifetime. Nobody who didn't want to change their fate would bother coming to the Voidsky Realm.

"Even if we really are locked out, the people outside won't be able to scatter immediately. We'd be able to raise our points to a million and above and remain in the top ten spots in the ranking," Xiaoxiao surmised.

"It'll still be best if we enter. The Sky Palace will definitely have other ways for you to raise your rank through the trials within the tomb. Perhaps even defeating a million people outside would make no difference," Tianming said.

"That makes sense."

Tianming used Vitasteal on some eight thousand disciples again; it wasn't tiring to him at all. When their vitae were torn from their seas of consciousness, Tianming and the other three attacked them until their imperial star formations expired at a staggering rate. Now, Tianming was rising in the ranking at the fastest rate out of everyone else! Amidst all the chaos, however, nobody really noted the single Azuresoul Palace disciple that used to rank below a few thousand rising straight to the top like that.

The tomb was still gradually descending. By now, a small part of the entrance—that is, the mouth of the dragon—had already sunk beneath ground level. Though Yu Ziqian was growing anxious, Tianming was still slaughtering away. By now, there were around eight thousand names up there with red dots next to them. More and more disciples desperately rushed toward Tianming and the rest, willing to give their everything to enter the tomb.

"Make way!"

"Don't block us from entering!"

"Scram!"

The fighting only intensified. Tianming's points grew at an even faster rate, but with the tomb already closing up, he was walking a thin line.

"You... you're back in the top ten!" Yu Ziqian couldn't help but exclaim when he looked at the stele.

Tianming looked up and saw his name in ninth place with a hundred thousand points. The number was still rising. At least seven other names above his had red dots, with their points rising slowly. Some had even stopped increasing; this was the perfect chance to catch up. "Let's keep on fighting a little longer. It's pure profit, baby."

Tianming continued slaughtering away. Getting back into the top ten from a few thousand ranks below was a huge deal. He had thought this would be beyond him at one point, but reality begged to differ.

"Even Feng and Xiaoxiao are in the top thirty now. I need to give it even more effort." Yu Ziqian, tempted by raising his rank, no longer wasted his breath. Even if he was only capable of fighting sixth-level ascendants now, most of the samsaran disciples that came charging were helpless to resist, thanks to Tianming. As such, even Yu Ziqian was raising his rank.

Tianming alone stopped countless samsarans from entering the closing tomb, his rank still undergoing a meteoric rise. Was he really trying to get back to the top spot?

Chapter 1180 - Rising Up

At that moment, the Myriad Solar Sects, as well as people within and without the Voidsky Realm had noticed this unknown, yet familiar name.

"Azuresoul Palace, Li Tianming? I seem to have seen that name before."

"Yet another disciple of a second-rate sect has made the top ten...."

"Isn't this the first name to appear on the imperial star ranking? But it fell to the thousands later on."

"How'd he make his way back up again? He's probably a second-level constellier."

"Wow, did he make a move outside the imperial tomb? He's ridiculously efficient, but more importantly, those ahead of him are already in the tomb."

"Where's the skyward eye? Quick, focus it on Li Tianming!"

They tried searching for him through the skyward eye. But due to the chaos, the only thing they could see was smoke and battle. It was impossible to zoom in on a specific person.

"He's still moving up!"

"Two hundred and thirty thousand! He's now second in place."

"That's amazing. In just half an hour, he's made progress that rivals the month-long result of others."

“Who knows what will happen? What luck for the Azuresoul Palace if this person stays in the top ten until the end of the Voidsky Skirmish! They might even rise on the myriad sect ranking.”

“That’s right, the Azuresoul Palace and Supracloud Sanctuary are only one place apart. It’ll be interesting if the Azuresoul Palace surpasses the Supracloud Sanctuary. This isn’t a matter of one or two years. With the switch in resource allocation, the Azuresoul Palace will suppress the Supracloud Sanctuary. Just one disciple will have changed the structure of the entire Azurecloud Continent.”

“Let’s keep watching!”

Outside the Voidsky Flame Pillar and at the gates of the Myriad Solar Sects, everyone witnessed an astonishing scene that left them speechless.

“My goodness! Were the ancestral tombs of the Azuresoul Palace blessed?”

"The thirty-eighth-ranked second-rate sect? How shocking!"

For a time, endless discussion swept across the Myriad Solar Sects. What did they see? Two other Azuresoul Palace disciples had appeared on the imperial star ranking! A disciple named Feng shot to the ninth place, while the tenth place was taken by a female named Lin Xiaoxiao. Like Tianming, the two overtook numerous red-dotted names. This was clearly a mass slaughter. Without Vitasteal, the others didn’t have it as easy. Even if time was short, the gathering of a hundred million was heaven-sent for Tianming.

"Three second-rate sect disciples made the top ten on the imperial star ranking! And they all belong to the same sect!"

“Has this ever happened before?”

“No. Even though this isn’t the final ranking, nothing like this has ever happened.”

“If these three disciples possess the talent to match their rankings, the Azuresoul Palace might be strong enough to take on the first-class sects in a hundred years. They could transform the structure of the Myriad Solar Sects.”

“The problem is, that isn’t necessarily the case. It’s possible they have some kind of special technique and took advantage of the chaos.”

“Of course.”

The Myriad Solar Sects were enormous and had a correspondingly large population. There were hundreds of millions of conversations about the three of them. Tianming used the opportunity to achieve fame once more, thrusting the entire Azuresoul Palace into the center of the storm.

Far away on the Azuresoul Sword Mountain in the Azurecloud Continent, the elders of the Azuresoul Palace were stupefied. The current developments were obviously a cause for celebration, but their minds were sluggish from the shock as they knew Tianming’s origins.

“Are they all disciples of Jiang Qingliu?”

“Master Jiang is truly impressive!”

“Senior brother has also risen to the top three-hundred. He’s finally showing his strength!”

Although they had yet to meet the new disciples, this momentous event could mean making history. Everyone felt a surge of excitement and nervousness.

“Senior Brother Li has made second place. Will he continue trying for first place?”

“There’s a difference of fifty thousand points. The first place has yet to enter the tomb, and her points are still rapidly rising. The odds of that happening are slim.”

“The tomb is about to close. They should hurry!”

“Yes, entering the tomb is of most importance.”

.....

“That’s enough. Stop fighting.”

Once Xiaoxiao entered the top ten, Tianming decisively stopped. They all knew the importance of the tomb. When they turned around, they discovered that two-thirds of the entrance had sunk into the ground and tens of millions of people were crowding around the remaining area. Urging the others to gather around him, Tianming pulled out a divine chain and secured each of them to him so they wouldn’t be separated.

At that moment, a hollow, fathomless bellow sounded from the distance; Tianming could tell that it came from a whale. Only creatures living in the gloomy depths of the ocean could produce a sound capable of spreading so far and wide, leaving hearts trembling. The clear transmission of its bellows through the chaotic battlefield meant one thing—this was an extraordinary beast. Like a dream, the dismal, heartrending sound seemed to plunge them into deep waters.

Tianming turned around subconsciously. Squinting his eyes, he caught sight of a giant, white whale amid the fire and smoke. The whale swam through the clouds, its three-thousand-meter long body like an island in the sky. Its pulsing calls filled the air as it swooped down from the clouds. Wherever it went, the jade-like behemoth slammed thousands of imperial star formations. The whale reminded Tianming of the Decimo Dao Palace lord’s Nebula Emperor Whale that perished in the Divine Capital. At the time, its huge, gleaming body had given Tianming quite a shock, but the white beast before him was even more astonishing. It was colossal, ethereal, and profound. The lingering white mist made it seem almost illusory. Tianming felt like he was back in the wondersky realm.

“What the hell is that? A whale in the clouds?”

This gigantic beast had more than five thousand stars, which surpassed Ying Huo. It was definitely a lifebound beast of the top disciple in the Voidsky Realm.

“That’s the dreamless whale!” Yu Ziqian exclaimed.

Tianming couldn't help but look up at the imperial star ranking. He was now in second place, and above him was another name that belonged to the beastmaster of the dreamless whale.

Just a moment ago, the dreamless whale was breaking imperial star formations, but now that the tomb was about to close it was ready to return to its beastmaster's lifebound space. Squeezing into the dragon's mouth with its large physique would be difficult.

A glimpse was all it took for Tianming to notice the woman on top of the dreamless whale. Despite the misty clouds and great distance between them, Tianming could see her clearly with his Plundering Eye. At the first sight of that beautiful countenance, Tianming was transfixed. Even he had to admit that her beauty transcended the gods.

"It's no wonder she's said to be the most beautiful of these billion disciples."

Upon the dreamless whale stood a young woman, her long dark green hair cascading down like a waterfall. A twirling green paper umbrella rested on her shoulder, preventing the flames from reaching her. Under the umbrella, her almost perfect countenance shone against the cloudy mist, her dark green eyes bearing a demonic charm that hid an ultimate temptation. Despite appearing innocent, her beauty tantalized and teased. Her delicate eyebrows curved when she smiled, her lips cherry pink and soft as a rose petal.

Tianming had seen many beautiful women. Feiling was a peerless beauty; in terms of appearance and temperament, few could rival her. From the very start, Tianming had laid his eyes on the best, so despite his youth and vigor, ordinary looks weren't enough to tempt him. However, the young woman before him just happened to possess such captivating charm.

There were countless beauties in the world—tempting peaches like Mu Wan, Bai Zijin, and Li Caiwei; gentle belles like Muxue; and ravishing bombshells like Xiaoxiao. However, one person's beauty couldn't eclipse another. Diversity made the world what it was. In the face of this dreamlike woman, Tianming felt appreciation, nothing more. Etched in his heart were some things that weighed more than his reproductive instincts.

"That's Weisheng Moran?" Tianming asked.

"Yes, isn't she beautiful? Is your heart pounding? Do you want to conquer her until she obediently lies under you?" Yu Ziqian said as a trace of wiliness flashed in his eyes.

Tianming couldn't be bothered to reply to the lecherous faker; he was a little sad. Does everyone with the surname "Weisheng" have giant whales for lifebound beasts? Is this a coincidence or something else?

The ancestors of the Southsky Sect in the Grand-Orient shared the surname "Weisheng." Their ancestor, Weisheng Yuyin, and the Li Saint Clan's ancestor, Li Shenxiao, were a pair. Weisheng Yuyin originated from the Weisheng clan of the Decimo Dao Palace, and was one of palace lord Weisheng Yunxi's ancestors. Both Weisheng Ruosu and Weisheng Yunxi's lifebound beasts were whales. And now, this young woman named Weisheng Moran not only possessed a five-thousand-starred dreamless whale, but she was also number one on the imperial star ranking.