

The Ages 1211

Chapter 1211 - Mounted Goddess of War

"Is that a horse?" Tianming squinted.

The beauty of the wargodeans, Zhan Yingying, saw them. Her eyes glowed as she charged toward Tianming with her fellow giants. Their golden hair made them look like flashes of gold light. They came running, swift and forceful like golden-maned horses.

According to the Azuresoul Palace's information, Zhan Yingying was a third-level constellier. Tianming would be worried about facing off against so many people if he was still at the ninth level of the Ascension stage, but now he was expressionless. He scanned them with his Plundering Eye and saw that her brother, Zhan Yuance, wasn't nearby.

"There were around three hundred wargodeans with Zhan Yuance back then. Now, there's around a hundred with Zhan Yingying. Did they split up?"

Either way, Tianming wouldn't let her off now that Zhan Yuance wasn't there. He also noticed that she held a wardrum formation. In other words, she was using it to locate the Whitedragon Palace, much like he had found the Blackdragon Palace back then. This time, though, he had arrived before they did.

"Tianming, her brother isn't around. If we capture her, we might be able to get the Lifesteal Silverdragon back," Yu Ziqian said, knowing that all of them had grown stronger.

"Alright." Tianming made his decision. They charged toward the approaching wargodeans head-on. As long as they didn't stop, the dragon golems would follow them from behind.

"Strike!"

Apart from Yu Ziqian, who was grabbing tightly on Meow Meow's fur, the rest attacked. Zhan Yingying felt her rage building when she saw that they weren't running. "Deal with them. They might still have the grandpath fiend pill."

Her sharp eyes immediately detected a cold, black-haired woman behind Tianming wielding a bow that struck fear into her heart. Both the bow and its bloody arrow looked like a blood-colored dragon. The terror from the grade-seven divine pattern in the bow, the bloodgorge dragonmark, was something that could be felt from far away. "That's... that's the Dragonblood Desecration!"

It was yet another top-tier divine artifact, and it was clear that Xiaoxiao had absorbed the exalted blood. For a no-name like her to be so fortunate drove Zhan Yingying absolutely mad. "Take it! Take it!"

Hundreds of people and beasts were within the same pathway. Lions, tigers, panthers and the like, all glowing gold, ferociously charged out and unleashed so many abilities that threatened to drown the four of them. Zhan Yingying put away the wardrum formation and took out her thick, three-meter-long spear, Titanic Aurum. However, it wasn't something that could be compared with a grade-seven divine artifact.

As she charged, a set of golden armor formed on her body, complete with war boots, war skirt, helmet, and shoulder guards. All of them were covered in divine patterns, being individually forged grade-four

divine artifacts. Her fully equipped form was incredibly domineering; clad in all that armor, her tall and fierce build made her stand out even more.

She was mounted on a three-meter-tall golden warhorse that was covered entirely in dragon scales and had a black single horn covered in golden flames. When Zhan Yingying mounted it, the two of them seemed to move as one body. Lifebound beast and master worked together and formed a constellation that further boosted their fighting prowess. Though it looked small, compared to other gargantuan lifebound beasts beside it, it was no doubt the strongest of all of them with more than four thousand and six hundred stars. All of that power was even more terrifying when compacted into a small form factor.

It was but one of Zhan Yingying's lifebound beasts. She had three other gigantic golden horses about the size of Lan Huang, though their star counts were inferior to the one she mounted. They were normal saintcrystal unicorns, while the smaller one was a saintcrystal regal unicorn. They all formed what looked like an entire cavalry unit, with their leader sacrificing its physical size to better fit Zhan Yingying. While they might not individually be that powerful, their force and momentum as a unit was something to be reckoned with. Most people of the same level weren't able to defeat this goddess of war. Despite being the smallest, the saintcrystal regal unicorn made the most commotion during its charge.

"Die!" Zhan Yingying aimed her golden spear at Tianming, completely ignoring Yu Ziqian. She wasn't aware of how he had managed to suppress Lan Feilin at the Silverdragon Palace, having only witnessed him sit on the sidelines at the Blackdragon Palace and heard rumors of his incompetence. "Crush them!" Her gallant war cry stoked the morale of the rest of the wargodeans, who joined in the charge.

Meow Meow was currently running around in its Regal Chaosfiend form, with Ying Huo and Lan Huang at its flank. Lan Huang howled with joy and anticipation; it loved direct clashes like these and accelerated like a mad dog. As the enemies' abilities came flying, Ying Huo, Meow Meow, and the Archaionfiend unleashed all they had. Their abilities were unparalleled even against hundreds of other lifebound beasts.

The clashing abilities caused a lot of dust to be beaten up. With everyone's visibility obscured, Lan Huang was the first to charge through the dust toward a golden knight followed by three gigantic war horses.

"Cowards like you who only know how to run dare to charge me directly?!" she said arrogantly, glaring mockingly at Lan Huang's head, upon which Tianming stood with the Grand-Orient Sword raised, ready for a confrontation. Using the momentum of her charge, Zhan Yingying executed Goldbreak Pierce, and her constellation took the form of countless golden meteors. "Kneel!"

Though she was domineering and powerful, she still oozed dignified femininity. Her figure was gallant and pristine.

Too bad Tianming was an equal-opportunity offender.

Chapter 1212 - Ninedragon Tribulation

Ying Huo, Meow Meow and Lan Huang all burst out from the cloud of smoke. When the giant beasts clashed, the cavalry was routed—the wargodeans and their lifebound beasts behind Zhan Yingying all became a bloody pulp upon contact with Lan Huang.

Zhan Yingying's Titanic Aurum and her saintcrystal regal unicorn's black horn got incredibly close to Tianming's abdomen. "Die!"

Tianming's hair fluttered and he held the Grand-Orient Sword in a two-handed grip, slashing it toward Zhan Yingying.

"Eh?" Tianming had just been planning to use Imperial Descent to meet this third-level constellier head-on. However, he didn't expect the nine-colored scale on the Grand-Orient Sword to suddenly sparkle. One of the light rays, silver in color, merged with the Grand-Orient Sword. It seemed like a layer of liquid silver was covering the sword now, making the originally black and gold sword shine silver. He could feel that the Grand-Orient Sword had changed completely.

It had become lighter, hence swifter and fiercer. And most importantly, its attack power had risen! There was a power that didn't belong to it added to it that supported the Grand-Orient Sword and gave it new properties.

While Tianming held the sword in a two-handed grip, his Plundering Eye on his left hand happened to be in contact with the scale. As the silver light gushed out, there seemed to be a world of sword intent hidden within. It was a silver world of metal. Piercing silver light filled that world, and all of its creatures and plants were all made of silver metal.

All of the silver light gathered together to form a massive silver dragon that shot up into the sky with incredible speed. When it had torn a hole through the clouds, it became a giant silver sword that split into countless silver swords and began raining down.

"Silverdragon Flashkill." The countless silver swords all gathered in the sky to spell out that name. Tianming instinctively read it out.

All of that only took an instant to occur, and that moment was enough for Zhan Yingying's spear and Tianming's sword to clash.

When Imperial Descent was unleashed, the sword intent was vastly different; it was much swifter and fiercer. Zhan Yingying blinked and the sword had already arrived in front of her. It wasn't that she had rushed toward Tianming, but that Tianming had somehow crossed the distance with one step, negating the advantage from her charge.

The sharp screech of metal clashing rang out and Zhan Yingying's Titanic Aurum was knocked out of her hand. The violent sword intent crushed down on her, and the various streams of sword ki seemed to become countless tiny silver dragons that gnawed at her armor. Her saintcrystal regal unicorn rose up beneath her, neighing, then tried impaling Tianming with its horn.

Unexpectedly, Tianming met it with his sword. The sword was even swifter this time. When the sword met the horn, the saintcrystal regal unicorn's horn, which was famed for its hardness, had its top shaved off.

The unicorn cried out, Tianming having well and truly routed the cavalry as well!

The unicorn collapsed, and Zhan Yingying barely managed to avoid being crushed under its weight.

“So fierce....” A third-level constellier beastmaster and lifebound beast pair had had their charge halted by Tianming.

“Impossible!” Zhan Yingying’s pride made her continue, and she picked up her spear again for round two.

“So slow.” Zhan Yingying heard a voice drift past her ears, and that mind-numbingly fast sword was already moving again. Zhan Yingying’s spear was directly knocked away. The skin on both her hands was torn, and her shoulders wouldn’t stop shaking. It proved that Tianming didn’t just have speed, but strength as well.

“Impossible.” Zhan Yingying had still been indulging in the memory of how pathetic Tianming had been when her brother was chasing him down. She had been confident she could easily handle such an opponent. But now, she had been defeated so perfectly.

Another hit landed on her head; however, she wasn’t decapitated. At the last moment, Tianming had switched to using the flat of the blade.

“Ahhh!” Zhan Yingying cried. The protective artifact on her head directly broke. As the entire armor on her body was considered one piece, the rest broke as well, all of it dropping off her body. Fortunately, she still had clothes underneath, but it was still a feast for the eyes.

The impact from that attack even caused various wounds to open up on Zhan Yingying’s body. She collapsed to the ground, her mind a mess.

“My bad. I thought you were dangerous when you kept tooting your horn. I wasn’t expecting you to be a flower vase.” Tianming’s words almost made Zhan Yingying puke blood in her fury.

Before she could say a word, a chain appeared and wound around her body, trussing her up.

“Amazing!” Yu Ziqian finally reappeared and looked at Tianming with praise. Then he looked at Zhan Yingying again. “Big Brother, you did this on purpose, right?”

“What?” Tianming asked suspiciously.

“Tying up a beauty like this....”

“Scram. This is for insurance, it’s an honest tying job,” Tianming said.

“You shameless lechers! What do you want to do? Touch one hair of mine and the wargodeans will wipe out your Azuresoul Palace!” Zhan Yingying was frightened when she heard those words.

“My big brother wants to improve the next generation’s genes. He wants them tall, so he’ll definitely go for you,” Yu Ziqian sniggered.

“Don’t you dare! Li Tianming, if you touch me, I’ll kill myself and you’ll definitely die.” Zhan Yingying grit her teeth.

Tianming was too lazy to waste energy on her. “Don’t overestimate yourself. You aren’t my type.” He reached forward and grabbed her hand, removing removed her spatial ring and taking out the wardrum formation before handing her to Yu Ziqian.

“Haha, time to make a whole new sect!” Yu Ziqian laughed.

The two immediately started scolding each other. In truth, Yu Ziqian just wanted to frighten her.

They quickly got on Meow Meow, dragging Zhan Yingying along, then broke out of the encirclement and sped away.

On Meow Meow’s back, Tianming put together the wardrum formation together with his.

The two surprisingly fused together, becoming a black war drum that was obviously bigger. Tianming tapped it, and heard a distant drum sound that sounded different from before.

“That way,” Tianming directed Meow Meow.

Meow Meow quickly ran.

Yu Ziqian came over to Tianming and asked, “Hey, I saw that fight just now. There seems to be something on your sword, can I see it?”

“Sure.” Tianming had already intended to ask him about it. He took out the Grand-Orient Sword and presented it.

Yu Ziqian’s expression when he examined the sword. “This is a legendary grade-eight divine art! It was a famous battle art used by the Ninedragon Emperor. Supposedly, it’s very powerful. You’re a lucky bastard for this to fall into your hands.”

“Grade eight? Wasn’t all the stuff here grade seven?” Tianming asked.

“Battle arts are a bit less impressive than artifacts and pills of the same grade, but they aren’t that far behind. Even so, a grade-eight battle art is ridiculous, especially when it belongs to the Ninedragon Emperor. It’d be top-tier even within grade-eight battle arts. This is the most valuable treasure to appear so far!”

“Even more than the Lifesteal Silverdragon and Dragonblood Desecration?” Tianming was surprised at the high evaluation.

“Yes. The world outside will go crazy if they hear its name.”

Tianming had experienced its strength just now. That was how he had defeated Zhan Yingying so fast. That move was called Silverdragon Flashkill. Tianming hadn’t trained in it; it had all been the work of the scale. Since the dragon scale had nine colors, Tianming supposed there would be eight more spectacular sword arts.

“What’s it called?” Tianming inspected the scale closely. While he was excited about gaining more treasures, he also knew the pressure was greater. Even so, he still wanted to seize back the Lifesteal Silverdragon. After all, birds died for food, but men died for fortune.

“Ninedragon Tribulation.”

Chapter 1213 - Fusion Sword Daos and Divine Hazards Sword Body

“Ninedragon Tribulation?” Tianming had a look of dislike when he heard the name.

“Is something wrong?” Yu Ziqian asked, confused.

“Isn’t the name a bit too... blergh? It’s the kind of name I came up with for my imaginary techniques when I was a kid.” Tianming snorted. However, as he did so, a ray of light shot out of the scale and cut him on the face, the pain making him hurriedly shut his mouth.

“Big Brother, such an overbearing, mighty and explosive name and you say that? It’s the kind of name that makes people crap their pants! When you use it in public, just watch out for people’s reaction.”

“Is it really that great?” Tianming was half-convinced, but still doubtful. It was just a battle art.

“According to history, this battle art has infinite possibilities. It can even contend with grade-nine battle arts. Grade-nine battle arts are the pinnacle of Orderia, and only appear in legend. And even then, it only appeared in the hands of Orderia’s founding ancestor. If you can really use the Ninedragon Tribulation to its maximum one day, your strength and position will at least be on par with the Sun Emperor!” Longing was in Yu Ziqian’s eyes. He was truly envious of Tianming, and further impressed with his calm. After all, anyone else would be going crazy with joy.

“I still think the name is lousy and makes it sound third-rate—” The scale started lighting up again, and Tianming hurriedly stopped. Giving a light cough, he said seriously, “Still, at our level, we can use grade-four or grade-five battle arts at best. Without exalted blood, how can we use it? Is there a point to getting it so early if we can’t use it?”

Tianming was still working on his grade-four battle art, Imperial Descent.

“That’s the amazing part of this battle art. Honestly, at our age, even the grade-six battle art, Divine Sun, is beyond us. Trying to practice it would just be a waste of time, let alone a grade-eight battle art. But this sword art is different.” There was a rare seriousness to Yu Ziqian’s tone.

“Another kind? Is it a simplified version?” Tianming asked. He remembered he had started with a simplified version when he had learned the Moonnight Subdued Strike, which was how he had started on it early.

“Of course not.” Yu Ziqian smirked. “The specialness of the Ninedragon Tribulation lies in its fusion sword dao.”

“It has nine basic attacks. Each is individually just a grade-three battle art in difficulty. There’s nothing that even requires you to be a constellier. They aren’t very strong alone. To become stronger, it has to be fused! Second fusion strikes are stronger than most grade-four battle arts. Third fusion strikes will have the power of a grade-five battle art!

“The path ahead is fusing more and more. Every tribulation added will increase the difficulty and power of the strike by frightening amounts until, finally, the sword intent will be complete at the ninth fusion strike. It’ll have the power of a grade-nine battle art. You’ll be able to dominate the world!”

“Supposedly, this is counted as a grade-eight battle art because the Ninedragon Emperor himself only managed to fuse eight. Nine fusions is the level of legends! If the Ninedragon Emperor had been able to fuse that last one back then, he could’ve overthrown the celestial orderians and united this world. He was just missing that last step...”

Tianming's expression was strange.

"Isn't this the Shenxiao Sword Art?" Ying Huo rolled its eyes. They had learned the Shenxiao Sword Art at Li Shenxiao's tomb at the Li Saint Clan. That, too, had used the theory of fusing sword daos. Although Tianming hadn't completed the last bit of the wind element, he had grasped the concept of fusion strikes. This world was definitely filled with many fusion sword daos. Even the Flameyellow Continent had people developing them. However, this Ninedragon Tribulation was definitely the apex among them.

"The concept may be the same, but after seeing Silverdragon Flashkill, the basic strikes of the Ninedragon Tribulation are thousands of times more complex than the Shenxiao Sword Art's." This was Tianming's evaluation, and he had the feeling he had only seen the tip of the iceberg thanks to the scale. The more he focused his mind on the scale, the more shocked he was. If the silver dragon sword art was a silver dragon tens of thousands of meters long, the Shenxiao Sword Art would be half of one of its scales.

"And that's not all." Yu Ziqian looked at the scale with envy. Although he didn't use a sword, he knew that to many powerful seniors a Ninedragon Tribulation art that could be trained and passed down to juniors would be at least three or four times as valuable as the Lifesteal Silverdragon.

To sword fanatics, its value would be over ten times.

"Something even more incredible?" Tianming was excited.

"Right, fusion sword daos is its brand, but that isn't its limit. It can also absorb divine hazards that have sword-type divine patterns and infuse them into your albi, creating the Ninedragon Sword Body. Can you imagine how scary that is? Other people have divine patterns in their weapons, but yours will be in your body! As long as you can endure and cultivate it, the 'fusion' and 'sword body' will mutually reinforce each other, allowing it to step into the realm of a grade-nine divine art!

"The Ninedragon Emperor absorbed a grade-eight divine hazard called the voidshaker sword ki, and supposedly one puff of breath from him could massacre an army. There's a lot of fusion sword daos, and there's a lot of arts to cultivate a sword body. But this is the only divine art with both." Yu Ziqian looked at Tianming again and gave a sigh of praise.

The real unlucky one was Lan Feilin. Just one step away, and she would have gotten her Blueblood Starocean a grade-eight battle art. But alas, her seniors hadn't given her a grade-seven divine artifact. Otherwise, she may have broken that Ninepole Dragonsword Formation before Tianming arrived.

Ying Huo's mind was in shambles. "Dude, this is exactly the Invincible Sword Body. This is literally the Shenxiao Sword Art combined with the Invincible Sword Body."

Chapter 1214 - The Final Palace

The Shenxiao Sword Art and Invincible Sword Body were honestly the most special arts Tianming had ever cultivated. They were completely different from the Voidgod Sword Intent and Hexapath Samsara Sword.

These two sword arts were special because they were hard.

Fusion sword daos' difficulty lay in fusing. The fusion was hard, and if you failed, you might lose all your progress. The Invincible Sword Body's difficulty was in finding sword-type divine hazards and the unbearable pain of absorbing them. An art combining these two would be pure suffering. You wouldn't just have to suffer pain, but merge the different types of divine hazards as well.

"This really is the greatest of sword arts."

"Was this created by the Ninedragon Emperor?" Tianming asked.

"Naturally. That's what all the records say. He's the only one who knew it ever since ancient times. He didn't even pass it on to the Xuanyuan Dragon Sect.

"I don't think so." Tianming shook his head.

"You mean it wasn't created by him?" Yu Ziqian smiled at Tianming's doubt of the recordings.

"Yes." Tianming nodded.

"How so, brother?" Yu Ziqian patted him on the shoulder.

"He was a pure beastmaster, right, without totems?" Tianming asked.

"Of course!"

"This sword art has a sword formation that's unleashed by totems. It also takes up one third of the content. Fusion, sword body, and a totem sword formation each takes up a third of it. If he self-created it, why would he create a whole section on totems if he didn't have them or understand them?" Tianming had come up with this conclusion after analyzing the scale.

The sword art was meant for totem cultivators. Although beastmasters and ordinary people could use it as well, it would lose a third of its might without a totem in the equation. There was a gap, as totem battle arts could let totems unleash battle arts themselves. The Moonnight Subdued Strike was a totem battle art, but the Hexapath Samsara Sword wasn't. It didn't have anything for totems.

"Are you serious?" Yu Ziqian's eyes widened.

"My understanding is very surface level, so I may be wrong." Though he had said that, Tianming was actually very certain already. It was just that arguing this didn't really accomplish anything.

Why did it matter whose battle art this was? When he paired the totem sword formation with his Myriadsword Providence, the might would exceed the historical records.

Although this battle art is difficult, it's completely worth throwing a huge amount of effort into. Although the Imperial Descent has a much more straightforward sword dao, it isn't as meaningful for me. Tianming set a new goal for himself as he looked at the scale.

"Worth three to four times as much as the Lifesteal Silverdragon?" Tianming sighed inside. "I definitely have to join the Sky Palace. The Azuresoul Palace won't be able to protect me."

The greatest value of battle arts was that they could be passed down. The Ninedragon Emperor didn't even pass down this Ninedragon Tribulation to his children! How would those descendants feel now that it had reappeared in the world?

“The Sky Palace really is playing big. They didn’t even touch the treasures inside and just threw them to a few kids to fight for.” Tianming understood that he needed to seize first place or he would have nowhere to escape.

Should I bravely advance forward and shine, or hide and slowly improve in safety? Hiding was definitely safer. As long as he could endure, greatness would still be his one day. Unfortunately, some chances would cause a lifetime of regret if they weren’t seized. If Tianming had chosen to hide earlier, Lingfeng wouldn’t still be alive and Feiling might not have survived even her first Perpetual Nirvana.

He shortly considered it before choosing to shine. The Grand-Orient Sword and nine-colored scale seemed to sense the passion in him and vibrated. A dragon’s roar sounded out, which seemed to resonate with Tianming.

“Looks like next on my shopping list is sword-type divine hazards.”

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After that, Tianming also placed some attention on the black war drums.

“Two combined into one and became black?” He would periodically tap the black war drum and wait for its response. Then he would have Meow Meow speed there as fast as possible.

“I wonder how many palaces have appeared, and how many people have gotten treasures.” Tianming knew of five so far.

Next to them, Zhan Yingying was furious. Lingfeng had used his Heartpiercer Soulblade to damage her soul. Now she was powerless and barely able to move. As for her lifebound beasts, every time they came out, they were quickly beaten up and went back in injured.

“Make sure she doesn’t break her imperial star formation,” Tianming said.

“Relax. Me and Little Feng, we’ve got this,” Yu Ziqian said happily. In truth, Yu Ziqian wasn’t even doing anything.

“Pray you don’t meet my big brother, or you’ll end up ten times worse than me!” Zhan Yingying grit her teeth.

“How does her elder brother treat her?” Tianming asked.

“Zhan Yuance? He’s famous for being overly protective of her. He’s said before that he would kill the family of whoever dared to touch his sister.” Yu Ziqian shrugged.

“Good. That means we can trade the Lifesteal Silverdragon back,” Tianming said. He knew it was best not to offend this kind of person. However, as fellow competitors, conflict was inevitable.

Tianming was still tapping the war drum. He realized the surrounding passageways had darkened a lot, and the area was dead silent. Even the destroyed dragon golems and sounds of battle were gone.

“Do you know who else has gotten treasures from the palaces?” Tianming asked Zhan Yingying.

“Heh.” Zhan Yingying merely sneered.

Tianming gave Lingfeng a look and Lingfeng plunged the Heartpiercer Soulblade into the back of her head. The lady goddess who had been acting tough immediately burst out into tears.

“Talk.”

“I know Weisheng Moran got one!” Zhan Yingying sobbed.

“That leaves three palaces, with at least one left.” Tianming considered.

“Why at least? Couldn’t they all be empty?” Xiaoxiao asked.

“If they were all empty, we should be out of here,” Lingfeng replied.

“True.”

Meow Meow sped onward, a black streak of lightning.

The next moment, they were engulfed in darkness and couldn’t even see their fingers. However, Tianming could still see thanks to his Plundering Eye. The next response from the war drum was right next to Tianming’s ears.

They raced out of a passageway and entered a wide space, which Tianming quickly scanned with his Plundering Eye. He found that they were in a palace ten times bigger than Whitedragon Palace. It seemed that this was the core of the tomb.

Meow Meow came to a stop. There was nothing around; however there were words on the ceiling.

“Imperialdragon Palace!” That name meant it belonged to the head of the nine dragons.

The only sound that could be heard was heavy breathing, because a group of people had arrived earlier. They were all seated cross-legged and unmoving. They only finally opened their eyes when Tianming and the others arrived, directing many golden pupils towards them. There were about two hundred of them. They were the wargodeans, including Zhan Yuance!

Zhan Yuance had a black war drum identical to Tianming’s in his hands. It was how he was here as well.

“It seems they’ve been here since long ago. However, they probably haven’t gotten anything yet.”

And now Zhan Yingying, who was being carried by Tianming, met the gazes of those present. The wargodeans almost directly exploded with fury.

Zhan Yuance had two war drums, one big and one small. He had used the black one to come here. However, he hadn’t managed to get anything, so he had given the small one to Zhan Yingying to go in another direction. That was how she had met Tianming. However, it had ended up with Tianming merging two small war drums and getting a black one.

Before Zhan Yuance could explode, Tianming lifted Zhan Yingying and said, “We finally meet again. The Lifesteal Silverdragon for your sister, please.”

Chapter 1215 - Return My Sister

A sharp chain had Zhan Yingying tightly bound within. Even as a tough wargodean, her skin was still torn by the blades of the divine artifact. Her hair was completely frizzled and her body was covered in blood

all over. Coupled with Lingfeng's Heartpiercer Soulblade, her face was now exceedingly pale. Though her injuries were only skin deep, the two hundred or so wargodeans' breathing intensified at the sight of their precious princess being treated like that. Golden flames burned bright within their eyes, let alone Zhan Yuance's, whom Tianming had just threatened. Yu Ziqian had said he was quite overprotective of his sister, after all.

Zhan Yuance's golden hair was practically standing straight. His eyes radiated seething rage that came slamming at Tianming's face. The heaving of his chest had a bestial quality to it. As if that wasn't expressive of his rage enough, his ears even furiously flapped, spewing flames with each movement. His rage and will to fight had risen to a never-before-seen peak.

The heavy breathing seemed to cause the environment around them to shake. Every wargodean gazed piercingly at Tianming and the rest, with what he said still echoing throughout the Imperialdragon Palace.

Zhan Yuance pointed at Tianming, opening his golden teeth to speak with the lowest and fiercest voice he could. "I have sworn that anyone who touches a single hair of my sister will be split into eight pieces and vaporized. Not only did you do that, you hurt her to this degree.... Congratulations. You've really pissed me off this time. Enjoy the moments of your life with your pals in the Azuresoul Palace before it all falls to pieces."

"Brother, don't hold back against them! These four won't know the consequences until they've felt it! I want you to make them kowtow to me until they're dead!" Zhan Yingying yelled, having waited for a long time for this. Her pain was all too apparent in her voice. Even now, they still didn't think much of their enemies and haughtily wielded their backing. The wargodeans were a peak race and ranked fourth among the factions of the Myriad Solar Sects, so the Azuresoul Palace couldn't compare at all. Not a single one of them thought of this as a transaction. They all charged toward Tianming and the others, who were standing at the entrance of the pathway outside the palace so that they could escape at any moment.

"Looks like they still don't understand the situation." Tianming expressionlessly looked at them without a hint of fear on his face.

Lingfeng immediately took out the Heartpiercer Soulblade from his head and jabbed it into the top of Zhan Yingying's skull in a ghastly maneuver, causing her to horribly shriek and twitch. Even so, Lingfeng controlled his power to only make her feel the pain in her soul without actually harming her. She would recover, given enough time. It was already merciful compared to cutting her limbs off or killing her lifebound beasts.

"Have them stand down," Tianming said, holding Zhan Yingying by the back of her dress and raising her up.

"Stop! Brother, stop!" she cried, tearing at her hair as tears uncontrollably flowed. Xiaoxiao couldn't help but poke out her tongue at the grisly sight. Even Yu Ziqian couldn't help but start at how Tianming and Lingfeng were able to so easily inflict suffering on a beauty of this caliber. Her constant cries of agony and Tianming's completely unfazed gaze, coupled with Lingfeng's terrifying blood-colored blade, stunned the wargodeans.

"Stop!" Zhan Yuance yelled angrily. "Li Tianming, you'll regret your reckless actions for the rest of your life!" His teeth could be heard grating after he finished.

"Have you run out of slogans yet? The Voidsky Realm is a place of fair competition. Don't bother bringing up your background to scare me just because you can't defeat me. I'm not afraid of you, don't you get it? Your threat won't work. Now, you have eight ears, so it's shocking that I even have to repeat myself to get you to listen. Hand over the Lifesteal Silverdragon and I'll return your sister. Any hesitation or threat will result in her experiencing even worse pain. Let's get this over with and stop wasting each other's time, shall we?"

Tianming's words were completely infuriating to Zhan Yuance. He felt utterly provoked and humiliated. "Huh, you're saying I can't beat you? Isn't it the opposite? Why would you take my sister hostage otherwise? You're the one resorting to underhanded methods! You allowed me to take the Lifesteal Silverdragon in exchange for the grandpath fiend pill. Are you going to return that?" His fists were gripped so tightly that his golden veins were visible.

"I think you're misunderstanding something, Zhan Yuance." Tianming smirked and continued calmly. "First, this is a fair arena of competition held by the Sky Palace. The fact that they allowed hundreds of wargodeans to join means that they sanction team battles. As a result, taking down the leader of a team to cripple them is a completely viable strategy. It's like taking the king in chess. I don't know about your definition of shamelessness, but playing by the established rules certainly isn't part of mine. If we were to follow your logic, any tactic or strategy is an act of cowardice. That only makes you sound incredibly dumb and childish.

"Second, the grandpath fiend pill was never yours to begin with. I broke the golem formation of that black dragon myself and got it fair and square, so it wasn't yours to begin with. Not to mention, I'm not asking you to return the Lifesteal Silverdragon as if I had dibs over it. I'm making a trade with you. Your sister for the weapon. Don't think your pathetic guilt-trip will work on me. Think of some new material for your skit, why don't you?."

Those words completely shut Zhan Yuance up. Tianming saw that the Lifesteal Silverdragon was still being held down by two of his goldenmane skyapes; they were faring even worse now that the chain was reacting more powerfully in Tianming's presence.

"Zhan Yuance, allowing your sister to run into me was your mistake. Now stop wasting time. Torturing girls isn't my hobby," Tianming said. Seeing Zhan Yuance fuming but not being able to do anything about it, on the other hand, was absolutely delightful. It was so good that almost being killed by him back then was worth it.

Zhan Yuance still hesitated. He felt horrible, but wasn't able to do anything other than roar and cry like a great ape in a cage. Seeing more time being wasted, Lingfeng increased the power of his ability, causing Zhan Yingying's cries to rise to a new crescendo.

"Zhan Yuance!" Tianming urged once more.

"Release it!" Zhan Yuance practically felt his tongue rotting away. He had astralforce surging in him, but submission was his only option. He had never felt like this in all his life. The skyapes didn't hesitate and let go of the chain, which immediately zipped toward Tianming the moment it was free.

"Now, return my sister!"

Needless to say, Tianming held up his part of the bargain. He pulled the chain off of Zhan Yingying, bid her farewell, and tossed her far into the distance.

"It's over for you!" Zhan Yingying cried.

By now, Lifesteal Silverdragon had shrunk to a meter-long dragon and wrapped around Tianming's black arm. Meow Meow had been ready the entire time. Right as Zhan Yuance roared, they easily zipped away, their escape made especially effortless considering that Tianming hadn't even exited the pathway.

"Though I managed to mess with him this time, he's still more powerful than me. Fighting him would do no good." There was no point in fighting a losing battle. Not to mention, the Imperialdragon Palace seemed rather empty and had nothing that was worth fighting over. There was no point in him risking his life for it. "I already won when I got the Lifesteal Silverdragon back."

Meow Meow zipped through the twists and turns, easily losing the wargodeans. In that maze, it would be hard to stop Meow Meow if they didn't have it surrounded. The roars coming from behind told Tianming how frustrated Zhan Yuance truly was. Though, Zhan Yingying wasn't that badly hurt and could make a full recovery. He was only mad because he couldn't catch up to Tianming, and for having his pride crushed.

"He never took you seriously, and now that he did, you humiliated him. Though he wasn't faring too badly with the Lifesteal Silverdragon in hand, he has nothing now," Yu Ziqian said. He was the one who'd come up with the idea to seek out and take Zhan Yingying hostage, and it had turned out rather well.

Tianming put the chain away. "Now that it's back, we have four of the nine treasures. The only place the wardrum formation is pointing to now is the Imperialdragon Palace. So far, no dragon golems have appeared yet, and Zhan Yuance's group is still squatting there. That can only mean they've gotten nothing from it. Though I have a feeling that the wardrum formation led us there because the Imperialdragon Palace will be the key to the struggle within the Ninedragon Imperial Tomb."

Chapter 1216 - Final Battleground

"That's right. That could be the final battleground," Yu Ziqian said.

"So even though we've escaped for now, we have to eventually head back?" Xiaoxiao asked.

"We're in no rush. Zhan Yuance has that place occupied, and we won't be able to do much head-on. We'll sit back and hide and observe how the situation develops."

They weren't that far away from the Imperialdragon Palace. It wouldn't take too long for them to return if anything changed.

"We have no choice in the end. If it wasn't for Zhan Yuance, staying at the Imperialdragon Palace would be for the best." Their difference in strength was insurmountable. Tianming clearly felt it, especially after Zhan Yuance had consumed the yinyang skyscorch pill.

"If that place is designed to be the last palace and final battleground by the Sky Palace, the fighting there will be intense. There's no way Zhan Yuance will be able to obtain the treasure there without anyone noticing. Even if nobody fights him for it, the Sky Palace will have some kind of trial for him," Tianming

reasoned. That was why he wasn't worried about it. Some treasures weren't obtainable just because one squatted there the whole day.

"Meow Meow," Tianming called out as he pulled the sleepy cat from his lifebound space. "Hey! What gives?!" It subconsciously clawed at the one who had disturbed its slumber with a look of annoyance.

"Monitor the situation at the Imperialdragon Palace. Come back immediately if something changes."

"No. It's off hours for me. Time for me to enjoy my slumber," it refused, shaking its head.

"Ying Huo, lend me a feather."

"What for?" Ying Huo asked with a smirk.

"It's about time for the neutering," Tianming said.

"Meow?!" Meow Meow tightly clasped its legs and immediately zipped back where they came from as it complained, "You ruthless beastmaster! I only wanted some well-deserved rest! I'll claim this time back, you hear?!"

The others held back their laughter as it left.

"It won't go there and just fall asleep, right?" Ying Huo said.

"Let's hope not...." Though Tianming had a bad feeling about it, he chose to trust Meow Meow. It was the fastest to run from any trouble compared to the rest, after all. "Zhan Yingying said that Weisheng Moran also got one of the treasures. Apart from the Imperialdragon Palace, there are two more palaces that we don't know of yet, but they probably pale in importance compared to it. They might also be empty by now. There's bound to be a lucky few among the millions that came in. That means the Imperialdragon Palace will be the final goal."

As they didn't know how the points on the ranking had changed, the dragon palaces were the only thing they had to go on. The biggest question was yet unanswered: why would the Sky Palace take over the legendary Ninedragon Imperial Tomb just to give these young disciples all of its treasures?

"Well, it isn't something we can just figure out like that. Let's make the best use of our time and get stronger." The difficulty of the upcoming battles was bound to be much higher. "The Imperialdragon Palace might be the key to joining the Sky Palace!"

With too many treasures on hand, they could no longer turn back. They needed sufficient backing just to survive. Not to mention, Tianming had a new thing to cultivate: the eighth-realm divine art, Ninedragon Tribulation!

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There was a dark atmosphere at the Imperialdragon Palace. The words with the name of the place high above made it even eerier.

"Waaah...." At the center of the large palace was Zhan Yingying, surrounded by a group of wargodeans. Her crying made them feel strongly for her.

"Stop crying now. Big Bro will keep my promise to you," Zhan Yuance consoled as he hugged her.

"That white-haired animal... I want to pull out his teeth one by one and gouge out his eyes!" she hissed hatefully.

"Alright. Big Bro will dominate him. I'll even let you disembowel him. You can dance with his intestines, alright?" He stroked her long, blonde hair and spoke as he would to a child.

"That's better. Hmph, Big Bro, I'm fine now. You should find out what secrets this place holds! It's a large place and Tianming already knows its location. He'll definitely be attempting something. We have to act first while he's still away to find any advantage we can!" She wiped her tears, light returning to her eyes.

"Alright, let's proceed." Zhan Yuance didn't dare to make too much noise to avoid drawing more people to them. Now, the location of the Imperialdragon Palace was known to others that weren't them. Thus, he planned to adopt a new strategy.

"Does anyone have any ideas?"

"The key must be the wardrum formation."

"There's nothing here but walls and the name of the palace."

"That's right."

Zhan Yuance looked up and said, "Let's study the words up there. Someone else, take a look at the walls."

"Nine-five Prince, we have to be wary of Li Tianming coming back. He's slimier than a sewer rat and we can't let him steal from us again," someone said.

"Steal from us?" Rage returned to Zhan Yuance's eyes. "My sister is safe now. If he dares come again, I'll make him spit out everything else he took apart from the one he stole from me." He had to know that Tianming had fused two war drums to get the black one which he also had. "In other words, when someone kills enough dragon golems, they'll get a small wardrum formation. Fusing them together gives a black war drum, the same one produced by the nine-headed black dragon. That must mean the black dragon was worth thousands of times more points than normal dragon golems. If others kill thousands of them to get their own black war drum, they'll be here sooner or later. I have to hurry." He had a feeling that victory would be his once he got the treasure from the Imperialdragon Palace.

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"Tsk tsk." Meow Meow rolled its eyes at their conversation. It laid flat in one of the pathways with its limbs lazily stretched out. As it yawned, its vision blurred. Gradually, its soft body conformed to the ground beneath it.

These folks found out nothing new... so it should be fine if I take a half-hour nap, right? No... the mission is important. I can't mess this up, so I'll only nap for fifteen minutes! At that thought, it smiled and entered dreamland. It was so comfortable that it rolled over and exposed its belly with its legs hanging in the air. Its tail slowly slumped to the ground and everything went dark.

Chapter 1217 - Ultimate Swiftblade

With Meow Meow watching the wargodeans, Tianming felt 'safe' enough to turn his attention to cultivation.

Yu Ziqian didn't really understand why they weren't even letting a single second go to waste. "The treasure of the Imperialdragon Palace might show up at any time. This is pointless."

Whether it helped or not, Tianming was used to not wasting any time. Normally speaking, cultivating for some tens of days wouldn't do much, but Tianming could enter the wondersky realm and head to the third level of the Violetglory Pagoda for more caeli scanning. There was an endless number there for him to scan through, much more than the Azuresoul Palace could ever dream of having. Not to mention, getting stronger had allowed him to stay on that level for longer. This time around, he lasted five days before being defeated by a fifth-level constellier.

Since that time, his alias Lin Feng had attracted a lot of attention. He was famous across the Violetglory Star, so he didn't stay there long and immediately left when he was done, then had Ying Huo check out the palace. So far, the wargodeans were still the only ones there. They had tried many methods but hadn't been able to uncover the secrets of the place yet. It allowed Tianming to calm his nerves. There would be five more days before he could enter the Violetglory Pagoda again, so he decided to practice the Ninedragon Tribulation.

Lingfeng and Xiaoxiao were also cultivating. Even the lazy and relaxed Yu Ziqian caved in the face of peer pressure and started cultivating as well. Though, he did have a point. Cultivating when danger was just around the corner wasn't really efficient.

These days, Tianming had scanned lots of caeli, though his Lifesbane Will's growth was meager. "Looks like the growth period started slowing when I reached the tenth level, much like my godfather's. He also slowed down after a while." His decreased efficiency put him closer to the levels of the Orderian geniuses, though he was still among the top of them. Since he was no longer able to burst through levels like before, he turned to the ultimate sword art left behind by the Ninedragon Emperor and analyzed it with his Trisoul Prime.

"There isn't any divine hazard sword ki here and I can't show my totems, so I can only unleash a third of the power of this eighth-realm sword art. Even so, it should give me a move stronger than one anyone our age can unleash if I manage to fuse two moves together."

The nine-colored scale was like the minorsky stele and allowed Tianming's caelum to enter it. When he did, he found himself in an icy, silver world filled with blinding light. There was only one thing in his mind: speed. It felt like Meow Meow's lightning, but this feeling came from the silver light. It was the speed of light! The light formed a silver dragon that flew around his body before entering it.

"Silverdragon Flashkill." Tianming had already used that move, but back then, he had merely experienced it. The one that actually executed the move was the nine-colored scale itself. "This dragon scale is a legacy formation for an eighth-realm battle art. Without its guidance, a normal disciple of my level wouldn't be able to master it with just the mantra alone."

The scale was secure in the Grand-Orient Sword, having recognized Tianming as its owner. "The sword intent should be based on the concept of speed, the ultimate aspect for most battle arts. Meow Meow's speed is in its movement, while this move's speed is in the movement of the sword before it connects

with its target. That's why disciples of Zhan Yingying's level are completely unable to match my pace if I use this move. I can even use tens of thousands of different variations of the same move without anyone knowing how to counter it. If I used it with totems and the Ninedragon Sword Body to triple its power, this Flashkill move alone would be stronger than Imperial Descent."

Based on what Yu Ziqian had said, the full potential of the Ninedragon Tribulation had yet to be witnessed. The Ninedragon Emperor didn't have totems, after all, so he could only use two-thirds of the move's power.

"So the basics of this move, without involving totems, won't look too different from a fourth-realm divine art, but when used to the utmost, it's definitely superior to all fourth-realm divine arts. By fusing only two of its moves, it'll be more powerful than most fifth-realm divine arts."

The key to that would be absorbing divine hazards. The higher the quality of the hazards, the more powerful they were. As one of the nine basic strikes, Silverdragon Flashkill wasn't that difficult. The real hard part was fusing it with other strikes.

Tianming studied the move from start to finish. Ying Huo, being his lifebound beast, wasn't able to enter the scale, but Tianming was able to explain his own insights to it through their telepathic connection, allowing both of them to train together. Ying Huo also had its own ideas, which helped him to some extent.

Tens of thousands of silver dragons manifested within this silver world, occasionally taking the form of silver swords. They gathered together to form an amalgamation of a ten-thousand-meter-long silver dragon. Regardless of the form they took, they were as fast as a flash. By the time one saw the light, they would already be dead.

The sharp sounds of swooshing swept past Tianming's ears. He stretched out his fingers and touched the silver dragons. Once they passed through his finger, they accelerated to a blinding speed. It was such a simple sword strike, yet it contained boundless profundity.

"This sword intent will change again once it reaches its peak." The killing flash was so fast that it couldn't be blocked. Tianming kept reading the mantra out loud, watching the silver dragon change as he executed the move with his fingers, going faster and faster.

"Piupiupiupi!" rang a voice beside him.

"What's with that sound effect?" Tianming said, looking at Ying Huo.

"You're going faster and faster. I bequeath you the title of 'quickshot'," Ying Huo said.

"Idiot." Tianming closed his eyes and continued to immerse himself in his practice. He let his hands follow the silver dragon's trails at a blinding speed—it was as fast as Ying Huo had described it. The slashing sounded almost like high-pitched firing. The enemy wouldn't even see his sword before they were killed.

"This strike isn't suited to the Grand-Orient Sword's combined form. It has to be split." After doing so, Tianming was able to go even faster, killing without even being seen doing so. Days soon passed. His caelum had executed that move countless times inside the nine-colored scale, while in reality, the black Grand-Orient Sword in his hand was piercing the walls of the Ninedragon Imperial Tomb with silver light.

"How quick! It's amazing!" Yu Ziqian said, his eyes wide with awe.

"What is?" Xiaoxiao said, rolling her eyes.

"The sword strike, of course. What else?"

"I thought you'd fallen for him or something."

"Why you— aahh... so you like that kind of naughty stuff, huh?" Yu Ziqian sighed and shook his head.

Xiaoxiao glared at him and ignored him. She held the Dragonblood Desecration, still studying it seriously. Nearby, Lingfeng seemed to have blended into the darkness. The vortex in his chest seemed to be expanding and shrouding his body in mist.

"This Feng friend of yours is impressive," said the portable grandpa within Yu Ziqian.

"How so?" Yu Ziqian asked.

Chapter 1218 - Descendants of the Emperor

"He has a different way of assimilating divine pills, making him the perfect test subject for us alchemy gurus! When he consumes divine pills, there are two effects. For instance, he and that blonde both consumed a grade-seven divine pill. The blonde one only absorbed less than a fifth of its effects immediately, while the rest of the potency of the pill would continue to be assimilated throughout his future cultivation. However, Feng can thoroughly dig out the full potency of the pill and digest it. Don't think his two consecutive breakthroughs are the end of it. He might even fully digest decades' worth of the pill's effects in the coming month. As long as his body has the capacity, he'll grow far more than the blonde in the short term," said the portable grandpa.

"Wow... what a monster. The perfect test subject, huh? This must be something one can only dream of but never obtain, right?" Yu Ziqian said.

"Yes. There's no wastage of the divine pills at all. Wastage is the greatest bane of people like us! He's just amazing!"

It was akin to someone consuming everything the chef makes, down to the last bit of sauce.

"Gan Gangan, you have to make a decision," said the remnant soul of the old man.

"What?"

"You have to fully commit to joining them. For the rest of the competition, you might even have to give them some of the things I gave you. Make sure they have an edge in the upcoming fight at the Imperialdragon Palace."

"Heavens, are you insane? Those treasures are for me and even I hesitate to use them!" he said, feeling the heartache.

"Riches can be earned back, but friends are more important. Such is life. Once you meet someone who deserves it, never hold back and follow your heart. Things will turn out for the better. I've lived a long life and am a great judge of character, so I have my reasons for advising you to do this." He sighed and

continued, "The only reason I ended up like this was because I lived a solitary life, caring about nothing but refining pills. I ended up being targeted by a group of people and I had nobody else to help me."

"Alright, I'll do what you say this time," Yu Ziqian said, taking a deep breath. He did hesitate quite a lot at the prospect of giving away what might be his insurance for the future. It was akin to asking Tianming to give the Grand-Orient Sword away. "At the very least, in the time I've spent with them, I've learned that they are direct and honest. Li Tianming especially is a decisive and good person that doesn't attempt to fool others."

"He has the makings of an emperor," said the portable grandpa.

"Then what makings do I have?"

"The grand eunuch."

"Like grandpa, like grandson, eh?"

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The sword struck so quickly that it was unbelievable. Tianming felt like he was holding a beam of light rather than a sword. That beam could transform into countless forms and reach far distances. The wall of the pathway they were in had been pierced time and again. Sparks flew when the dragons bit into the walls. The black Grand-Orient Sword looked silver thanks to the light coming from the scale.

"It's been three days. I've more or less got it." Though the time seemed short, Tianming had been practicing tens of thousands of times each day. It wasn't that he had learned the entire eighth-realm divine art in three days, but rather the sword intent of the move was complex while the execution of the moves themselves was only as hard as a fourth-realm divine art. Fusion was the hard part! When he finally mastered the first move, the nine-colored scale changed once more.

"Blooddragon Sacrifice." The dragons of the silver world turned blood red. Then a sea of blood appeared, causing the dragons to roar toward the skies, exuding killing intent. "This is a ferocious and savage strike, completely unlike Silverdragon Flashkill. Its core lies in savagery!"

The tens of thousands of blood dragons gathered and formed one gigantic one. It roared from above the clouds before slamming into Tianming's caelum. Back in the real world, the blood light on his sword dyed the sword red. His aura completely changed to a bloody, savage one like he had turned into a demonic fiend. It was as if he had climbed out of a bloody sea of corpses. His sword ki was filled with ferocity; even Yu Ziqian couldn't help but duck away as he watched from a distance.

"The second move is here. This move isn't hard in itself. It probably won't take too long for him to figure it out, though fusing Flashkill and Sacrifice sounds difficult...." As Yu Ziqian mumbled to himself, Tianming suddenly struck. It wasn't as fast as Flashkill, but his stance conjured the image of a roaring blood dragon. "Wow, he even managed to execute it...." More and more, Yu Ziqian was becoming certain of his decision.

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Light footsteps echoed through the dark pathway, followed by the resonating sound of a drum. A really young boy emerged from the pathway with a black war drum, clad in a black robe adorned with much

jewelry. The golden dragon patterns on his robe looked incredibly lifelike, especially when the robe fluttered about. His three eyes were beautiful and deep blue like the cold ocean depths. One of them was vertical and located between his brows, though his eyes weren't the part of him that stood out. In fact, he had two black draconic horns sprouting from his head. It wasn't part of any headgear, but something that actually grew from his skull. Though he was young, he possessed a unique countenance. He calmly pondered as he looked in the direction where the resonant drumbeat had come from.

"Longlong, wait for us," a gentle female voice called out. Not long after, three beautiful girls came up to the youth. They looked somewhat older than him and were also of the Xuanyuan Dragon Sect's Trioptic True Dragon Branch. They each had their own unique points, especially their third eyes, which were blue, fiery red, and purple, respectively, indicating their origins from different sub-branches. They seemed to care a lot about the youth called Long Longlong.

"Sis Yaoyao, this black war drum should be leading us to the last dragon palace. We have to hurry up," the youth said to the one with the purple third eye.

She was clad in a light purple dress and looked to be the eldest from her rare, mature aura. "Alright, let's hurry up then."

The four of them nodded and increased their speed.

"Longlong, don't be too anxious. This is the tomb of our ancestor. We're the descendants of the Ninedragon Emperor, so we should be prioritized."

"Longlong, the fact you were able to obtain the best divine artifact of our ancestor from the Saintdragon Palace, the Ninedragon Imperius, is proof of that. It's a grade-eight divine artifact, you know. How many of these have shown up in the history of Orderia? You have the exalted blood. In terms of weapons, none of the Seven Dragon Imperials aside from Grandfather can compare to you."

"Yeah. You definitely got the best treasure out of all of them."

"Longlong, you're no doubt the anointed successor of our ancestor. He'll definitely have the legacy of the entire tomb prepared for you to receive, and we'll make sure to help you get it."

Long Longlong himself stayed silent the whole time. After a while, he said, "Sisters, if our sect was the one that discovered the tomb, what you said would make sense. But now, the Sky Palace has occupied it. So, they won't have the legacies served up on a silver platter for me. I obtained Ninedragon Imperius with my own power."

"That makes sense, too...."

"I'm not trying to be humble. I just want to remind you to forget who we are for the upcoming competition. It's better for us to not assume things are going to automatically work out for us."

"Alright. We'll do whatever Longlong says."

They knew that despite his age, he was a really calm and reassuring person.

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The appearance of the treasures in the tomb shook the sects of Orderia. But when the fifth treasure to be found was revealed by the eliminated disciples, it sent a stronger wave of shock than all previous four combined.

"The Ninedragon Imperius! A grade-eight divine artifact!"

"It's the ultimate weapon of the Ninedragon Emperor!"

"It's been lost for aeons.... Finally, it's returned!"

"Long Longlong claimed the exalted blood. Has the Ninedragon Emperor anointed a successor?"

"The Azuresoul Palace is basically with the Xuanyuan Dragon Sect now. They truly lucked out this time!"

"It was their ancestor's treasure to begin with."

"Wrong! The Sky Palace owned it and put it up for fair competition in the Voidsky Realm! It has nothing to do with the Ninedragon Emperor's will. The Sky Palace must be fair in how it manages the affairs of the Myriad Solar Sects!"

So far, nobody outside had seen the legendary sword yet. But they were all twitching with anticipation.

Chapter 1219 - First Fusion

After a few days, Meow Meow returned and reported that a new group of people had arrived at the Imperialdragon Palace.

"Who are they and what do they look like?" Tianming asked.

"There's a guy and three women. The guy looks like he has two huge lumps on his head and he calls the three women sisters," Meow Meow lazily said as it groomed itself.

"Lumps? What do you mean?" Tianming thought about the intelligence reports he had read and didn't recall anyone who met that description.

"Perhaps it's the Xuanyuan Dragon Sect's Long Longlong, the grandson of the Saintdragon Emperor. Those lumps are actually dragon horns. The three women should be children of the Saintdragon Emperor as well," Yu Ziqian explained.

"I see." Tianming seemed to have some impression of him. There wasn't much information about Long Longlong. He was only twenty, and hadn't shown himself much. Even his cultivation level was hard to determine. "So he's only twenty, yet he's able to face off against the others in the Voidsky Realm. His Saintdragon's Blessing must be pretty impressive then."

"He has Saintdragon Eyes and those horns. That's a sign of top talent in Xuanyuan Dragon Sect! If you'd seen the portrait of the Ninedragon Emperor, you'd see horns like that too," Yu Ziqian added.

Tianming nodded. This was another competitor they had to face off against. "As the descendant of the Ninedragon Emperor, he might have some kind of advantage in this tomb. The fact he's able to come to the Imperialdragon Palace must mean that he's defeated enough dragon golems, and perhaps he even obtained one of the nine treasures here." He turned to Meow Meow and asked, "Did he have a black war drum when he came?"

"Meow?" The cat poked its tongue out stupidly.

"Did you fall asleep?" Tianming facepalmed.

"I only snoozed for a few moments, so I didn't see how they arrived. I woke up noticing that they were fighting, but the blondies had more numbers and pushed them into a corner. However, they didn't leave," Meow Meow explained.

"A few moments? You were asleep for at least three days," Ying Huo said, rolling its eyes.

"Chicken Bro, that's an unfounded allegation! You didn't see how hard I was working!"

"Enough. Go back to sle—I mean monitoring them! Notify me immediately if there's any change. Looks like those two groups aren't aware of the secret of the Imperialdragon Palace for now," Tianming said.

"Roger that! I'll keep my eye on the place. Not even the slightest breeze will escape my sharp eyes!" Meow Meow immediately slipped away, obviously in love with this easy job.

"Before they manage to crack the secrets of the place, more people will definitely defeat enough dragon golems to obtain a black war drum, which will lead them there." Tianming effectively had more time now, since he was not far off from Imperialdragon Palace.

"Aren't you the relaxed one? Most people would choose to stay there after finding the palace," Yu Ziqian said.

Tianming stood at a corner of the pathway and took out his sword once more, continuing to ponder the insights from his new move. "Well, what can we do when we're overpowered? Not to mention, being close to the place doesn't seem like it'd afford us much advantage anyway." He closed his eyes and let his caelum enter the nine-colored scale.

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It had been ten days since they'd discovered the Imperialdragon Palace. Tianming alternated between going to the wondersky realm and practicing his swordsmanship. The fusion of the Blooddragon and Silverdragon basic moves proceeded slowly. Thus far, no third move had appeared within the scale. It could only mean that Tianming would only go to the next step once he fused the first two moves.

"Silverdragon's speed and Blooddragon's ferocity... a fusion of light and blood. The second-fusion strike can be called Dualdragon Tribulation...." As the number of moves increased, so did the number of the name. The final-fusion strike would be none other than Ninedragon Tribulation.

"These are two really esoteric sword intents...." Tianming used one of the Grand-Orient Swords to execute the two moves subsequently and saw no way to blend them together. "That didn't feel right...."

He continued pondering in his corner, his sword flashing silver and red from time to time, going from speeding light to bloody roar, yet the two moves just didn't seem to harmonize at all. The sword of light was a stark contrast to the fierce sword of blood in terms of ferocity, which was in turn too slow to match the sword of light's speed. They were out of sync with each other.

"Looks like the quintessence of this move is the fusion of radically different aspects of the different moves." Tianming had experience with fusion moves through the Shenxiao Sword Art, but this was

thousands of times more complex than fusing the lightning and fire aspects of the older move. Since Tianming had broken his Lifesbane curse, it was as if he had been guided by the terrifying force of destiny, which had allowed him to easily conquer the Moonnight Subdued Strike and Imperial Descent. But it didn't seem to work when it came to fusing these two moves.

"The one who made this divine art was no doubt a miraculous genius. It's already this complex even before incorporating the sword body and totems into it."

Normal divine arts didn't differ too much from battle arts. The core difference was the complexity of the sword stances. For instance, the Shenxiao Sword Art was only a matter of shifting between a dozen stance permutations, while there were tens of thousands of possible sword formations for the Ninedragon Tribulation. It was so overwhelming that one's foe would have nowhere to hide. It was just like how alchemy, tome, smithing, and formation gurus of Orderia could manage far more complex divine celestial patterns compared to the novices of the Flameyellow Continent.

"Haste won't do much for me here. I have to calm myself and let go. Persevere...." He recalled what had happened at the Imperialdragon Palace. His anxiousness to hurry must be affecting his state of mind as he pondered the move. He allowed himself to completely dissociate from their current situation and focused on the present, forgetting about the flow of time and concentrating on the vertical slice that was 'now'. He no longer cared about who went to the palace and when.

Eventually, a month passed since they had discovered the palace. Every ten days, Tianming entered the third level of Violetglory Pagoda, and so did Lingfeng, but Tianming usually stayed for longer. Out of the month or so, he spent a full fifteen days within the pagoda, and the rest of the time was spent on fusing the moves.

"If I become a constellier, my Lifesbane Will should morph from a heavenly will to a divine will." That would explain why it was so hard for him to advance in the Ascension stage. He was trying to bring a heavenly will all the way to a divine will, which was akin to ascending to godhood a whole separate time.

"Right now, I'm really close to breaking through. I'm just a hair's breadth away, but I'm stuck all the same." He had tried many times, but wasn't able to make it to the Lifecycle Sky level. "Looks like these bottlenecks will be common in the future, as is the case with everyone else. Many of those my age get stuck for years at a time."

Tianming was still calm when it came to that. He was more or less at the point of shifting his Lifesbane Will to becoming a divine will, so in a sense, he was reliving his days of trying to ascend. The process was easy for Xiaoxiao and Lingfeng, though, who had relied on caeli and the grandpath fiend pill respectively.

Chapter 1220 - Celestial Maiden Out of the Dust

"Even though a month has passed, nothing about the Imperialdragon Palace has changed." The stalemate between Zhan Yuance and Long Longlong still persisted. "Looks like killing thousands of dragon golems to obtain the black war drum isn't that easy after all."

Tianming figured it wouldn't be too much longer. As nothing about the palace had changed, he was really relaxed. He wasn't in a rush to raise his score by defeating dragon golems or other disciples, for he knew his own power was going to be much more important in the upcoming fights. He continued keeping to his own pace, switching between the Violetglory Pagoda and his swordsmanship.

This past month, Xiaoxiao had processed many of the fifty thousand caeli they'd taken from Zhan Yingying to cultivate, reaching the second level of the Constellation stage before Lingfeng. Like usual, she seemed completely drained and hurt after the breakthrough, taking a few days to recover.

Yu Ziqian began to see the wondrous effects of their 'last-minute studying'. At the very least, he was dumbfounded by Xiaoxiao's rate of growth. Naturally, he still respected Tianming the most; there were hundreds of thousands of holes in the wall of the pathway made by him alone, and they were only increasing in number.

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Whenever a disciple passed through, Tianming would use them to practice his moves. It seemed like a battle royale was still happening within the tomb.

"Phew...." Tianming took a deep breath, having been stuck for a long time. "Let's change my approach."

He split the Grand-Orient Sword into two, which caused the scale to split as well. One part was completely silver, while the other had eight colors. When he practiced the Blooddragon Sacrifice, the blood-red color would dominate the other seven.

"The Grand-Orient Swords can be used completely independently, allowing me to use two different moves at the same time. Perhaps that'll help me fuse them quicker."

He closed his eyes and stood in front of a wall. Half of his body was immersed in a world of blood, while the other was in a world of silver. His normal right hand held the gold sword, which was dyed silver and swept around rapidly. His black left hand held the red-dyed black sword, its powerful strength fitting for executing the bloody, sacrificial move.

"One slash for a flash-quick kill, another to turn legions into blood sacrifices!" Using his new method, there was more of a chance. The complicated gears finally seemed to click into place as they ground together. This new Dualdragon Tribulation would have the speed of the silver dragon and the ferocity of the blood dragon.

A few days later, the blood color from the eight-colored split scale left and fused with the other scale that only had silver, shining bright and dimming from time to time. The silver blended with the red into a new, metallic-crimson sheen. After more than a month of long training, Tianming had finally completed his first step in practicing the move.

"If I can use totems to form a sword formation and cultivate a sword body, it'd be even more impressive." That would triple his power, and that was only an estimate. Tianming had ten sword totems to begin with, all of which excelled in terms of attack power. Surely, using them to execute the second-fusion strike would strengthen it much more. "I guess I can easily find out how powerful it can be with my seven registered totems in the wondersky realm."

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Tianming gripped his swords within the spherical battlefield, facing off against a 'young' third-level constellier in his eighties with seven of his sword totems. Ying Huo and the rest didn't show up.

"Lin Feng?" The opponent recognized him, but right as he spoke, Tianming charged in with both swords and his totems. It was complete domination when the two dragons bore down on the poor man.

"Lin Feng is victorious!"

Tianming's expression was one of shock. "So this is a sword art designed specifically for totems!" Now he was certain that the Ninedragon Emperor wasn't the one who had invented this battle art. Its true name might not even be Ninedragon Tribulation. "A non-totem user couldn't possibly have created a divine sword art that so perfectly works with totems."

Given his ten totems, he should be able to quadruple the moves' power if he used his totems and cultivated a sword body. The Ninedragon Emperor was probably only able to bring out double the power by fusing the moves.

"This can't be an eighth-realm divine art. It should be at least a ninth-realm one once all nine moves are fused." Tianming now knew how truly precious the battle art was.

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Right as he was about to enter Violetglory Pagoda, the heavenly locus formation informed him that someone was approaching it. Tianming had told Yu Ziqian to not interrupt, so something had obviously happened. His caelum immediately left the wondersky realm, causing his real body to wake up. He opened his eyes and saw Yu Ziqian. "What happened?"

"Someone's looking for you there." Yu Ziqian shrugged and turned towards the pathway's entrance.

Tianming felt his eye twitch. No doubt, the little green iris in his eye had turned back into a fish and was swimming around. He looked behind him and saw an inky black silhouette with long, black hair. Even in the weak light, her irisless left eye could still be seen. Her right eye was an inky green, looking deep and void. Even from a distance, her absolute beauty could be felt. She looked like a girl out of one's dreams and didn't even seem to exist in the real world despite standing right there. Her presence was so fleeting and transient.

"Careful, don't fall for her. She has a member," Yu Ziqian whispered, snickering.

"Buzz off." Tianming had wanted to look for her to ask about the eye-iris long ago. He approached Weisheng Moran, seeing her face more and more as he did so. He noticed that she was the only one other than Feiling to have made him aware of their beauty—it was awe-inducing. Though Li Caiwei and Sovereign Xi were both charming beauties of the highest caliber, they just weren't his cup of tea. His type was the pure, ethereal, celestial maiden kind.

However, Weisheng Moran was both male and female, a fact that made Tianming feel a little awkward when he was hopelessly reminded of how much of his type her female side was. Deciding to try his best to ignore her enchanting looks, he cleared his throat. "Bro, stop showing off your feminine wiles. I have no grudge with you, so why put a fish into my eye? Did you hit the wrong target instead?"

"...Bro?" She bit her lip and blankly looked at him as he spoke, her voice sounding just as airy and light with a hint of magnetic charm, digging its way into his heart. The fact that it affected him so much made Tianming feel all the more uncomfortable.

