

The Ages 1231

Chapter 1231 - Heart Like Fire, Sword Like Dragon

The power of a third-level constellier gathered onto Xiaoxiao from the Archaionfiend and the constellation. Power from burning caeli as fuel surged into the Dragonblood Desecration, and Xiaoxiao nocked three arrows on the bow.

Blood-colored lightning danced on the arrows. Although they hadn't left the bow yet, the arrows had already turned into snarling dragons. Under normal circumstances, even firing one arrow was difficult for her and at this moment, the berserk power from three arrows had exceeded the limits of her body.

Bloody mist leaked from her slender arms as they bore the brunt of the astralforce, then they were quickly snapped by the bow. The current Dragonblood Desecration could no longer tell friend from foe.

The power of the deepfiend constellation gathered in the three arrows.

None of it made Xiaoxiao's will waver.

"Kill!!!" she roared as she fired the arrows.

Three arrows, born from a combination of the power of caeli, Xiaoxiao and the Archaionfiend, fell from the sky; all were aimed at just one goldenmane skyape. It was the one that had previously been injured by an arrow. It completely failed to notice the danger descending on it from the sky.

When it finally reacted, a screen of gold appeared in front of it, but was easily pierced through.

The first arrow missed. However, the second landed on its eye and the last landed a critical hit on its heart! A startling shriek rang out and the impact blasted the skyape into the cauldron's wall.

The arrows greedily sucked up its blood, and the initially vigorous snarling soon turned into pathetic moans. The skyape had been heavily injured. If it weren't for its strong vitality, it would have died. Two of its fellows hurriedly ripped out the arrows, nearly pulling out its heart as well. However, they didn't have any choice! Their brother would have become a dried-up husk in a few more moments otherwise.

The scene shocked everyone, including Tianming! He turned around and saw a pale Xiaoxiao atop the Archaionfiend. She was leaning against its horn, and she squeezed out a smile toward him.

"Amazing," Tianming breathed. This was an unexpected pleasant surprise.

"Yes." What she was thinking was that it was good that she hadn't disappointed him. She nocked another arrow, using her action to tell him she could still fight.

Lingfeng and Xiaoxiao had had stellar performances so far, making Tianming incredibly happy. His happiness was even greater than if he had made a breakthrough or beat an opponent.

Both Dragonblood Desecration and the grandpath fiend pill had been seized by Tianming for the people closest to him, so he was happy for them to have benefitted so much.

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No matter how strong Zhan Yuance was, he had already lost one beast and his fury had somehow shot even higher than before. He returned the injured lifebound beast to his lifebound space, while the remaining four furiously glared at Tianming's group.

"That woman...." He had to deal with that sniper at the back. He deployed one skyape to stop Xiaoxiao from running interference, leaving him with three lifebound beasts.

Tianming's side had Lingfeng and the Soulfieud. Not even Xian Xian had been able to resist coming out, as it believed its Trisoul Fiendsong would be especially annoying for Zhan Yuance with his good hearing.

Demonic sounds began pulsating, which were even more effective in this enclosed place.

Zhan Yuance frowned deeply.

"Kill!" He swung his Divine Skypillar, using Weighty Domination Rod and Five Rods Break the Clouds. The staff seemed to split into five, the attack this time seeming to fill the sky. At the same time, the myriadhills constellation continued to press down on them.

At that moment, Lingfeng suddenly appeared behind them. His primordial constellation activated, turning into a vortex that covered the myriadhills constellation. An invisible sucking force was applied to Zhan Yuance and his lifebound beasts and their astralforce began uncontrollably being drawn out.

"What constellation is this?" Zhan Yuance was shocked.

At the same time, Tianming and his three lifebound beasts arrived on the scene as well, with their abilities.

Another arrow fell as well! Ying Huo used its tiny body and Cosmic Blade to lead one of the skyapes around on a merry chase. It would occasionally use sword arts and poke its opponent, eliciting yelps.

Meow Meow used its Regal Chaosfiend form to tussle with a skyape. As for Lan Huang, it was dominating now that it had found someone to engage in melee with. What did it have to fear with the Greenspark Tower and Montseabane? And most of all, they had Tianming's support through his Lifesteal Silverdragon!

Their abilities broke Zhan Yuance's constellation and put pressure on him.

Lingfeng came charging in from the side again. The power of the primordial constellation gathered in the Evil Suppression Pillar, which he swung at Zhan Yuance.

Infernal Soul Curse!

Although Zhan Yuance managed to force him back, the Infernal Soul Curse on the Evil Suppression Pillar still burned him. Zhan Yuance screamed in pain when he felt his soul being burned. He had finally experienced what his sister had suffered.

After the pain passed, another blood-coloured dagger came stabbing at him.... The only thing Zhan Yuance could say was these people just had too many methods.

"Petty tricks will always break before true power!" Zhan Yuance roared. The power of his myriadhills constellation shifted from his beasts to him.

“Die!” This time, Zhan Yuance used Nine Rods Fill the Sky, the third move of the Weighty Domination Rod. The Divine Skypillar extended over a kilometer, then nine of them appeared and came crashing down. The target was naturally Tianming.

He had a cool expression as he fused the Grand-Orient Sword back together, the dragon scale flashing with light.

“It’s go time!” Tianming looked Lingfeng in the eye.

The Heartpiercer Soulblade in Lingfeng’s hand split into tens of thousands of needles, which all flew at Zhan Yuance.

Zhan Yuance was still using his Weighty Domination Rod. He could only dodge, because the attack from Lingfeng’s third regal soul couldn’t be blocked. However, that altered the movements of his hand.

“I can take it! It’s just some soul pain!” Zhan Yuance grit his teeth before ignoring the needles. He allowed them to hit him while he went for Tianming.

“Ahhhhh!!” The pain was much worse than Zhan Yuance had imagined. He had been too overconfident. The Nine Rods Fill the Sky he was using had weakened by at least a half.

Tianming had already broken through the staff attack by this point.

Silverdragon Flashkill!

Blooddragon Sacrifice!

The Grand-Orient Sword was flickering with blood and silver colored lights that fused together into a new color. The attack had Flashkill’s speed and Sacrifice’s savagery.

“Break!” The sword lunged out like a dragon.

Zhan Yuance had wanted to tough it out, but he hadn’t expected Tianming’s speed and savagery.

“What sword art is that—” When hit by the sword, Zhan Yuance almost mentally collapsed. His hearing should have allowed him to block Tianming’s sword. However, all his ears could hear was Xian Xian’s Trisoul Fiendsong. He couldn’t even track the trajectory of Tianming’s sword.

“Where’s the sword?” Zhan Yuance was in disbelief.

“Up here.” Tianming’s action was instantaneous. Sword images flashed past Zhan Yuance’s ears. Two ears flew into the sky, spurting out blood and Zhan Yuance cried out in surprise.

“Goodbye!” The Grand-Orient Sword flashed once again and struck Zhan Yuance’s head.

His imperial star formation was activated.

Zhan Yuance shone with brilliant light. Filled with fury and resentment, he was kicked out of the Divine Worldeater Cauldron. His beasts were eliminated too.

“Li Tian—” Zhan Yuance was gone before he could finish.

Tianming suavely kept his sword as two bloodstained ears fell into his hand. "So tiny." Tianming smiled, then tossed them to Zhan Yingying, who was in a corner.

She fell onto her butt when she caught those ears, completely stupefied. "Big brother...."

It had all happened in a flash.

At that moment, there was dead silence in the Imperialdragon Palace as the jaws of tens of thousands of disciples had dropped onto the floor.

Chapter 1232 - Three Monsters

It was incredible enough that Tianming hadn't used his hostage. Even if they lost, they could be proud. But his team winning was something completely unexpected. Even though it was three on one, it was still a miracle to defeat Zhan Yuance, a fifth-level constellier who was publicly agreed to be the most likely to get the spot in Sky Palace.

Not a single disciple of the tens of thousands present had guessed that would be the outcome.

A dead silence held for very long, with many even rubbing their eyes to make sure they had seen correctly.

"The strongest disciple ended up like this?"

"I know it was three on one, but still."

"Heavens, how did it end up like this?"

It didn't matter what they said, it was clear their minds were in chaos. The position of these Azuresoul Palace disciples in their hearts had completely changed.

"Even though they besieged him, that last attack of Li Tianming's could crush even a fourth-level constellier."

"His combat power is definitely worthy of being in the top ten, or even top five!"

"The most important part was that one of Zhan Yuance's skyapes was heavily injured and he lost two of his ears."

"The ears may grow back, but the humiliation will be forever. He'll become a joke to everyone. This fight will definitely shake the Myriad Solar Sects."

"Actually, I think Li Tianming was too kind. After all, he could've used Zhan Yingying to force Zhan Yuance out. However, he chose to go against the strong as a weak person."

"Zhan Yuance wanted to kill his lifebound beasts. Li Tianming showed mercy."

"Right, he didn't have a choice. He's from the Azuresoul Palace, a second-rate power. People like us without backing are helpless."

"For so long, there've been so many disciples who get crippled once they make a name for themselves. Who answered their grievances?"

“Li Tianming held back enough by not killing Zhan Yuance’s lifebound beast. If Li Tianming had been a first-rate power’s disciple, Zhan Yuance would’ve been crippled today.”

“Let me tell you. Even if held back to avoid trouble, the wargodeans will still find trouble with the Azuresoul Palace after this.

“The only exception is if Li Tianming joins a first-rate power, or even the Sky Palace.”

“I think that’s his goal.”

The conversation about Tianming was endless.

Tianming couldn’t hear the discussions. His choices had been made after due consideration. If no one was around, yes, he might very well have crippled Zhan Yuance. However, he had too many treasures now. Thus, he wanted to decrease the incoming trouble as much as possible. However, that didn’t mean he could just leave it like that. He had put the Imperial Sword Prison into Zhan Yuance as a precaution.

“I hope you can just humbly accept the loss.” It was always such a pain dealing with disciples with backing, so he had to think things through. He took a deep breath and grabbed a black war drum that was falling from the sky. When he touched it, the black war drum became a tattoo that appeared on the right side of his face.

Now, he had two war drums.

“Is this the symbol of the victor?” Tianming was uncertain. “I beat Zhan Yuance and got his drum. But the one who gets the Divine Worldeater Cauldron is based on who gets the exalted blood. Does that mean the war drums still have other uses? Does the Imperial Ninedragon Tomb have other secrets?”

He couldn’t get answers for now, so he let go of these doubts and examined Xiaoxiao’s injuries instead.

Yu Ziqian had given her some pills to help her recover. Tianming realized that that fellow did have some uses. For example, he was very understanding of the effects of various pills. He could also prescribe medicine like a doctor.

“You have this little brother’s respect, boss,” Yu Ziqian sighed in praise.

“A group effort,” Tianming said. Indeed, he couldn’t have done it without Xiaoxiao and Lingfeng.

In front of them, Zhan Yingying was still in a daze as she held the two ears.

“Do you accept your loss?” Tianming asked.

“You....” Zhan Yingying took a deep breath and shrank back. “Fine, I’m convinced. You beat my brother, so you do have some skill. We wargodeans respect the strong.”

Tianming chuckled.

“What’s so funny?”

“If you were a bit slower in talking, I might’ve believed you.” Though she had been so forward, it was clearly because she was afraid of Tianming tormenting her.

Zhan Yingying froze. “I’m being real here. My brother is a frank person, and he can take a loss.”

“Do I look like I was born yesterday?” Tianming shook his head.

“You!” Zhan Yingying’s chest heaved, and she retreated backward even more.

Tianming approached her.

She reflexively scrambled back. “If you touch me, the wargodeans will—”

“Just taking out your background when you can’t win, you siblings really are losers. I look down on you.” Then Tianming continued, “When you go out, tell him I’m waiting for him to take these two ears back. If he’s unconvinced of his loss, he can come back and I’ll fight him one on one. But if he can’t take the loss, and insists on sending the old fogies in the clan against me, his bloodline will forever be that of a loser.”

“You!” Zhan Yingying grit her teeth, but didn’t know how to retort.

“Are the wargodeans really that hard? You seem kind of soft.” Tianming lashed out and kicked Zhan Yingying in the face. She yelped as she was sent flying, her imperial star formation broke, and she was eliminated. The wargodeans had been wiped out from the Divine Worldeater Cauldron!

The disciples outside couldn’t hear what Tianming had said. But that merciless kick made many female disciples instinctively cover their faces.

“My god, this man....” Many looked from him, then to the silent Ye Lingfeng, then finally at the black-haired young woman.

“Why do none of them feel normal?”

“It feels like Yu Ziqian is the only normal one.”

“Honestly, I think Li Tianming’s eyes are scarier than Zhan Yuance’s.”

“Hmm, yeah. They’re severe and fierce. But he sometimes smiles and seems harmless. What an unstable fellow.”

“He’s quite handsome.” Several female disciples smiled.

“Eh?”

“Is he not?”

“He does look slightly good... but his actions just now made everyone forget about his appearance.”

“No, not his looks, but his aura. How your face looks only goes so far. Your aura, soul, gaze, and charm should also be considered. Some are pure, while some are mysterious.”

“Then, what do you say Tianming has?”

“Commanding and aggressive.”

“Eh, you’re right....” Many people looked up and nodded, convinced.

Chapter 1233 - Seven star Universal Manna

Within the Imperialdragon Palace, there was a corner where people didn't dare approach. There was a youth wearing a loose, grey robe standing there. He looked rather thin and his skin appeared a little shriveled. From a distance, he looked like an old man. He had few hairs on his body—especially his head, which only had a few strands of white hair, exposing much of his scalp. The white of his hair had a completely different sheen than Tianming's; it was the pale white that came with age. However, his eyes were as large as open mouths. They took up a third of his face, squeezing into the space of his mouth and nose. They were pale white without any irises, giving him a really odd look.

Without looking too closely, nobody would be able to spot him. Within his loose sleeves were terrifying, bony palms that didn't have a single strand of flesh on them. There was only some torn skin that barely connected the bones together. He looked ugly in an inhuman manner. With his pale eyes, he coldly looked at a black-haired, red-eyed youth within the Divine Worldeater Cauldron. There were around five thousand stars within his pale eyes, marking him as a specter.

"Kong!" a number of disciples called out to him. "Why aren't you inside yet?" The disciples surrounded him.

"I... missed it because of that..." Kong said with a hoarse voice.

"Because of what?"

"That." Kong pointed at his loose robes. All of a sudden, something bulged from within the robe and seemed to squirm around his body.

"Is this... the spoils from the Fienddragon Palace?"

"Yes...." Kong closed his eyes, his outstretched, bony hand twitching.

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The storms raged on as Zhan Yuance smashed into the ground, his blood boiling. He touched his blood-covered head. That wound had resulted from Tianming's last strike, which had shattered his imperial star formation. The blood flowed over his entire face.

"Huff... huff...." His mind was a mess and there was nothing but blood in his vision. Trying to touch his most prized ears, he felt a pang in his chest. It wasn't a physical pain, but one from the humiliation he suffered. The thought of how he had lost as the other disciples watched on caused his rage to surge and made him vomit even more blood.

"I was defeated in public by a second-rate sect's disciple...." The confidence he'd obtained from the yinyang skyscorch pill had brought him to cloud nine, only for him to be eliminated by a supposed nobody in the Divine Worldeater Cauldron. He was at rock bottom and had never felt worse or angrier. His wrath was turning him into a beast.

"Fifth needs help!" One of the goldmane skyapes within his lifebound space was struggling. Zhan Yuance only just realized the pressing situation.

"Yuance!" someone called out.

Zhan Yuance looked up and saw a group of golden people heading his way, standing side by side like a wall—they were the senior wargodeans. The leader was an old man who was only around 1.8 meters

tall, having a figure on par with normal humans. However, his eight ears marked him as a fellow wargodean. He looked like a sage compared to the other burly warriors.

"Tumulus Pill God...." Zhan Yuance looked down in shame.

"I heard you fought against the four disciples of Azuresoul Palace. Don't tell me they defeated you..." the Tumulus Pill God said with an old voice.

"Tumulus Pill God, I failed! I've disappointed everyone's hopes!" Zhan Yuance knelt on the ground.

"Did they use Yingying to threaten you?" the Tumulus Pill God asked.

"No. Their methods were... complex... and they had me surrounded. Tumulus Pill God, Fifth is heavily injured. Please save it."

"Have it come out." The seniors quickly started treating the goldmane skyape.

"Your ears—"

"That's right!" Zhan Yuance's humiliation surged to a new height.

"Tell me the details."

Zhan Yuance told them everything he knew.

"They had the Lifesteal Silverdragon, Dragonblood Desecration, and a powerful soul adept.... Do they all fight on the level of fourth-level constelliers? Looks like they've been hiding their strength from the very beginning. Your loss wasn't entirely your fault."

"It's my incompetence that caused me to miss out on those opportunities."

"Yuance, tell me. Do you want revenge? Do you want us seniors to stand up for you?"

By then, Zhan Yingying had come out and brought him Tianming's message.

"I will avenge myself!" Zhan Yuance growled.

"Good. You have spunk. However... Li Tianming's group has too many treasures, so it isn't something you can decide alone. This is a complex and developing situation. Let's see who he ends up with, whether it's the Sky Palace, Xuanyuan Dragon Sect, or the Azuresoul Palace."

"What's the difference?"

"If he joins the Sky Palace, all is well. If it's the Xuanyuan Dragon Sect, there'll be a lot of bloodshed from the hidden repercussions. It'll be absolute chaos if he stays with the Azuresoul Palace."

"I see...." Zhan Yuance understood that the Azuresoul Palace couldn't possibly keep all those treasures. Not even the Xuanyuan Dragon Sect might be able to.

"Let's see who the Divine Worldeater Cauldron ends up with. If it's the Dreamless Celestial Nation, things would at least be somewhat peaceful. If the disciples of the Xuanyuan Dragon Sect or Azuresoul Palace get it... there'll be a great show to look forward to."

"Tumulus Pill God, why's the Sky Palace raising the stakes so high? Surely they'll reclaim all those treasures, right?"

"Who knows?" the Tumulus Pill God said, smiling the entire time.

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Meanwhile in Imperialdragon Palace on a separate battlefield....

"That's the Ninedragon Imperius!"

"What? That's the grade-eight divine artifact that belonged to the Ninedragon Emperor!"

"Heavens! I heard that Long Longlong got something from the Saintdragon Palace. Who knew it was that very sword?"

"Even the Lifesteal Silverdragon and Dragonblood Desecration can't compare to it..."

"In terms of combat power alone, the Divine Worldeater Cauldron can't measure up to it either!"

"There's four from the Xuanyuan Dragon Sect, Long Longlong among them, against Weisheng Moran alone. How could she possibly win?"

"She's surrounded..."

This had all happened while Tianming was engaged in a fierce battle. As Weisheng Moran and Long Longlong didn't have any grudges, the fight proceeded at a relatively casual pace.

"Long Longlong's a quint-beastmaster. He has five dragon lifebound beasts. Comparatively, Weisheng Moran only has one dreamless whale. Unique as it is, she's far too underpowered."

"That's right. One person and a whale can't possibly fight four people with seventeen dragons! It'll be a massacre."

If Weisheng Moran was fighting Long Longlong alone, they might think she would stand a chance. However, they didn't think she could survive a group onslaught. At that moment, half of the cauldron seemed to light up with a dreamy glow that inundated the entire Imperialdragon Palace.

"Seven thousand stars and more!"

"There's at least seven thousand and nine hundred!"

"That beast has even more stars than our sect master's! Isn't that the dreamless whale?"

A huge commotion began spreading in the palace. By then, Tianming's fight had ended, only for the appearance of the grand whale with so many stars to shock people once more.

"Before Weisheng Moran came into the Ninedragon Imperial Tomb, her whale only had around five thousand stars. That must mean she got a seven-star universal manna in one of the palaces and her lifebound beast evolved!"

"I heard she was a fifth-level constellier as well. Maybe she's at the sixth level now..."

"Zhan Yuance was taking up the entire limelight just now. Could she be the new strongest disciple among them?"

"It's hard to say. We have to see whether she'll get eliminated like Zhan Yuance was."

"Let's hope not... I hate seeing people being ganged up on like this. Let's hope Long Longlong is gentlemanly enough. He already has the best treasure anyway."

The fight started soon enough, and it was a group fight.

"Why do I get the feeling that Long Longlong is also a fifth-level constellier?"

"He's only in his twenties, but he's on par with Zhan Yuance! I recall he was still at the fourth level three months ago. There's a chance the Xuanyuan Dragon Sect got him a grade-seven divine pill beforehand to let him break through to the fifth level. He should be stronger than Zhan Yuance with that sword of his!"

"Looks like the fight here is getting more intense than on Li Tianming's side!"

The surprised disciples laid on the praise nonstop.

"Four disciples and seventeen dragons.... It's basically a ten-to-one ratio, but even so, Long Longlong looks to be at a disadvantage..."

"How could a disciple like Weisheng Moran, who isn't even thirty, be so powerful? I wonder if the celestial orderians have any young talent up to this caliber?"

"There's no doubt that she's the best beastmaster of this age!"

The epic fight in the Imperialdragon Palace caused the onlookers to regard these peak geniuses with awe.

Tianming heard the commotion from behind the black screen as he waited for their fight to conclude. The whale's song was deep and resounding, brushing past his face like a strong gust.

"How powerful...." He could feel her power. It wasn't just the astralforce, but the impact it had on his mind. The special power made him feel like he was dreaming. Perhaps this was the power that caused the seventeen dragons to falter. Then the little fish in his eye started swimming again.

Chapter 1234 - Results of the Battle

The whale's song was completely different from the roaring of other beasts. It wasn't ferocious, nor was it powerful. Instead, it was deep, airy, and spread far and wide, carrying with it the vastness of the ocean. It could permeate anyone's heart and make them uncontrollably shudder. Though Tianming had been separated from Weisheng Moran by a black screen in the cauldron, he could still feel the sound penetrating every fiber of his being. This beast was on a whole new level.

"Her lifebound beast must've evolved." Tianming had no way to see the star count like the other disciples in the Imperialdragon Palace, so he could only guess based on the sounds. "Looks like universal manna is more precious than divine artifacts and pills of the same grade."

The sound of fighting was louder and more chaotic than that which his and Zhan Yuance's fight had produced. Based on the shocked looks of the disciples beneath the cauldron, it was clear that Long Longlong and Weisheng Moran were nothing to be scoffed at.

"The Sky Palace might want the winners to fight another time later. So only by fusing all four black drums can we obtain the Divine Worldeater Cauldron, eh?" Yu Ziqian said.

"Seems to be the case," Tianming said.

"Do we stand a chance?" Yu Ziqian's expression was sour.

"Based on the sound alone, we don't. It'll heavily depend on our luck," Tianming answered honestly.

"They're all monsters, one after another...." He had thought that defeating Zhan Yuance meant they could get the cauldron.

"What will be, will be. It's incredible that we defeated Zhan Yuance as we are now. Let's just give the next fight our best shot." Tianming wanted to win, not only to help Yu Ziqian get the cauldron, but also because he believed that winning would give him a better chance of joining the Sky Palace. It didn't bode well for his chances were he to let anyone but himself be the final champion.

Tianming and the rest would be fighting the side that emerged victorious next. Based on how the other disciples were reacting, their upcoming fight with the victor was sure to be hectic. The sound of the fighting grew to deafening levels and the waves inside the Imperialdragon Palace were violent. Then, after a loud whale moan, the commotion seemed to have stopped. Based on the shock and awe of the disciples below, it was clear that the battle had ended. The next one would soon begin.

"Get ready to fight," Tianming said to Xiaoxiao and Lingfeng. The latter was still itching to fight, but Xiaoxiao apologetically bit her lip. "Are you not feeling well?" Tianming asked.

"I'm rather drained from just now. I might not be of much help," she said.

"Alright. Just do your best, but don't push yourself," Tianming said. At least they weren't going to fight to their deaths.

After that, the Divine Worldeater Cauldron began shaking. The walls that separated them began to sink and soon disappeared, leaving all of them in the same empty space. Tianming looked at the other battlefield and noticed that it wasn't as chaotic as he had imagined.

"Who won?" The side that lost would be ejected from the cauldron. What Tianming hadn't imagined was that Weisheng Moran, Long Longlong and the three sisters would all be there. Their beasts had returned to their lifebound space, so Tianming didn't get to see the evolved dreamless whale. Throughout Orderia's history, there were few youths under thirty who had managed to evolve their beasts to have as many stars as those who were thousands of years old, for universal manna was far more precious than equivalent divine artifacts or pills.

"Don't tell me there was no winner or loser?" It couldn't be. The walls wouldn't disappear otherwise.

"What's going on?"

He took a look around and noticed the patterns of two war drums on Weisheng Moran's face, while Long Longlong's face was no longer marked. Weisheng Moran was the victor! As for why Long Longlong

hadn't been eliminated, perhaps it was because Weisheng Moran wasn't as savage as Tianming had imagined. She had defeated them, but didn't break their imperial star formations. As a result, Long Longlong seemed rather respectful of her despite his pale face and wound-addled body.

"Sister Weisheng, I—" He was just about to bid her farewell when the cauldron ejected him and the other three sisters. Weisheng Moran was indeed the victor. Following that, she would be Tianming's strongest competitor for the cauldron. Though she looked dreamy and harmless, Tianming felt the domineering astralforce coming from her.

Everyone watched as the two sides faced each other. She had just fought an epic battle, but her dress wasn't the least bit ruffled. There was a green paper umbrella hanging stylishly from her shoulder. Then she smiled at Tianming; the smile was so clear and pure that it looked like it was being basked in the gentlest of sunlight. The slight hint of shyness it expressed was just the perfect amount.

"Hot damn, even I'm charmed by this enchanting vixen..." Yu Ziqian muttered. Though their standoff seemed peaceful, the hundred thousand disciples outside the cauldron were hungering for another grand battle.

"It's the final battle!"

"Can't wait for the show!"

"What show? The four from the Azuresoul Palace were already drained by the fight with Zhan Yuance, and he wasn't even Long Longlong's match. How could they defeat Weisheng Moran?"

"Well... it's still going to be fun to watch either way."

"To be honest, I didn't expect Weisheng Moran would be this powerful. I always thought that she was nothing but hype. I was so wrong..."

"She's no doubt the most powerful junior in the Myriad Solar Sects."

"The Dreamless Celestial Nation's rising. It's no surprise that a disciple from their nation is the top. Putting the Sky Palace aside, the dreamless celestial emperor should be the strongest in the Myriad Solar Sects."

"Still... why aren't they fighting yet?"

While those two factions didn't have any grudges, they were still competing for the cauldron!

Chapter 1235 - Little Fish's Gift

A long time ago, the Myriad Solar Sects had fought heavily among one another for the Divine Worldeater Cauldron, resulting in heavy casualties all over. Letting the youths compete over such a divine item was already ridiculous enough. It was akin to deciding the fate of an empire in a baby fighting tournament. It was both childish and unthinkable, but that only made it all the more crucial. The hundred-plus thousand disciples in the Imperialdragon Palace were envious and jealous. They collectively held their breath, waiting for the fight to begin.

"Start the fight!" many yelled. The palace fell into chaos again; however, the two factions inside the cauldron were completely at peace.

"Are we fighting or not?" Tianming noticed that all she did was look at him blankly and smile sheepishly at him.

"Is she a maiden in love? A half... maiden?" Yu Ziqian was confused as well.

Why was she behaving like that toward Tianming? It was one thing if someone else was fawning over him, but why was Weisheng Moran out of everyone doing that? It seemed like there was nobody else in her eyes but Tianming. Her umbrella twirled as she lowered her head. "This little fish has a gift for you...."

Tianming had an ominous feeling. While that could be a great boon for others, he felt completely confused. It was utterly unthinkable. "What kind of gift is it... bro...?"

Weisheng Moran chuckled at the address, then her person seemed to bloom. "This huge cauldron, of course."

Tianming and the rest were completely flabbergasted. He had a feeling that would be the case before she even spoke. He didn't know why he had that feeling, but it had actually come true. This was the Divine Worldeater Cauldron! Tianming had already obtained treasures whose worth combined was less than the cauldron, yet she was just going to give it to him?

"Stop joking around. If the people of your nation know you're doing this, they'll skin you," Tianming said in a serious tone.

"Don't worry, they can't boss this little fish around. I want... to pay you back...." Her voice was dreamy, but this was all too real. Her eyes, gazing through the mist, suggested that she wasn't joking at all.

"Am I the only one hearing this? It must be a hallucination," Yu Ziqian asked as he looked around, but everyone ignored him. The more aware one was of the cauldron's true worth, the more shocked they were. Who got the cauldron could affect the ranking and the Sky Palace both—it was a huge deal!

"Stop messing around, bro...." Tianming had never experienced anything like this in his lifetime. He couldn't believe it.

However, Weisheng Moran gripped her umbrella and twirled her skirt in front of him, her hair flowing with her skirt. She looked like a nimble fish. Then, two war drums appeared in her hand. When she stopped, she pushed them to Tianming with a smile. "Remember to save this little fish!"

Tianming subconsciously caught the two drums. Then they passed through his hands and marked his face. Just like that, he had gotten all four drums. He was still unwilling to accept the reality of the situation. Right as he was about to approach Weisheing Moran to ask about it, the cauldron ejected her. Even as the storm messed up her dress and hair, the sweet smile didn't vanish from her face for a moment. "Remember! This little fish's suffering will never end until you come!"

Her voice kept echoing after she vanished from the cauldron, leaving Tianming and the rest behind, dumbfounded.

"Am I going blind?" Yu Ziqian rubbed his eyes in confusion.

Lingfeng and Xiaoxiao had been ready for a fight, but it had ended before it even began.

"Are you some charming incubus or something?" Ying Huo snapped. Lan Huang and Meow Meow were just as shocked. Within the lifebound space, Xian Xian was inscribing some words on its trunk, probably something along the lines of Tianming selling his body to obtain the Divine Worldeater Cauldron.

"What in the world is going on?" All of them looked at Tianming.

"How would I know?!"

They continued giving him suspicious looks.

"Are you sure you didn't strike a deal with her behind our backs?"

"No!"

"Like... selling your private time to her..." Yu Ziqian mouthed.

"Fuck off."

Not even Tianming could understand what happened, let alone the rest. Either way, it was all over. He now had four war drums on his face, two on the left and two on the right. Each of them let out a loud beat. His face began pulsing like the surface of a drum. It felt like bubbles were popping on his face. As the beat went on, a dark aura came from the center of the cauldron.

Tianming and the rest turned back and saw the black exalted blood appear once more. It seemed to be a gnarly beast that stared back at them. That was a sign that the cauldron's ownership had been decided. No matter which of them bound it, it was considered the Azuresoul Palace's possession now.

This caused a complete uproar. It was unthinkable that the ownership had been decided just like that. The hundred thousand other disciples in the palace were completely shocked and stunned. Though they hadn't heard the conversation, they saw Weisheng Moran hand over her war drums and leave on her own accord, even though she appeared to be more powerful. It probably wouldn't have been hard for her to defeat them. It was no different from giving Tianming the cauldron.

"Am I seeing things?" Most of the disciples watching were doubting their sight.

"That can't be possible!" Any ascendant knew that the Divine Worldeater Cauldron was worth much more than any other treasure, even the Ninedragon Imperius!

"What's going on with Weisheng Moran? What in the world is she thinking?"

"We all saw it!"

"Putting aside her seniors... all of her fellow citizens will want her dead!"

Chapter 1236 - Final Secret

"This isn't just a small deal. The Divine Worldeater Cauldron could make the Dreamless Celestial Nation much more prosperous and long lasting, allowing them to dominate the Xuanyuan Dragon Sect and Voidword Shrine and remain at the very top of the ranking!"

"That's right. Even the dreamless celestial emperor would want this...."

"Perhaps he might kill Weisheng Moran over this. She is his disciple, after all."

"Why in the world did she do that? Was there some other circumstance?"

Countless disciples shook their heads, knowing that no amount of scrutinizing would get them closer to the truth. How could they know, if Tianming himself didn't?

"Either way, Weisheng Moran has done something that'll completely shake the various factions."

"Quickly, we have to report back! We might yet gain something from this news."

"That's right!"

"The Dreamless Celestial Nation might just blow up over this. They might demand the cauldron back from Li Tianming."

"There's no way the Azuresoul Palace would dare to keep it, either. Even if Tianming assimilates the exalted blood, it wouldn't matter. It's a divine artifact to begin with, and someone like the dreamless celestial emperor should be able to overpower the artifact soul of the cauldron."

"Yeah, exalted blood only benefits youths."

"Don't speculate too much. It's one thing whether the Azuresoul Palace can keep it or not... but Weisheng Moran basically gave the cauldron away."

"Owning such a precious treasure with everyone knowing about it wouldn't be a good thing either way. It's just a bomb waiting to blow up."

The discussions in the Imperialdragon Palace were incessant. Everyone was trying to make sense of what had just happened.

"How shortsighted of the Azuresoul Palace's disciples to claim such a treasure...."

"Well, they already did the same to many other treasures, so they're hardly in a worse position now. I believe their treasures will be robbed immediately once they leave, especially this cauldron."

"While the exalted blood will raise their ranking, there's no way they can keep the treasures by relying on their own power in the long term."

"That's right. Surely they aren't that stupid."

"You're right. That must be why Li Tianming had Yu Ziqian assimilate the exalted blood. If he had plans of his own, he would've assimilated it himself."

They could tell that Tianming was the leader of the party based on how they interacted with each other. Everyone watched as Yu Ziqian stood in front of the drop of exalted blood.

"Are you really sure you want me to do this?" Yu Ziqian asked for the third time.

"Hurry up and stop wasting time," Tianming said.

"No, but... it's like I'm dreaming...."

"Don't be too happy about it. Everyone knows you got the cauldron. No doubt the dreamless celestials will come slaughtering your way to demand you return it. You'll only get to touch it for a bit, so make sure you get the most out of it."

"You're right. Was that Weisheng Moran's true goal? But there's no need. She could just take it and nobody would rob it from her, thanks to her background."

That was also something Tianming doubted.

"Whatever, I'll assimilate the exalted blood first. The Lifesteal Silverdragon is one thing, but the Divine Worldeater Cauldron is a disaster magnet. The Azuresoul Palace might not be able to hold on to it, but maybe I'll rise in the ranking! That's what I should focus on now. Not to mention, my life will have been worthwhile if someone as young as me got to touch the cauldron once!" Yu Ziqian muttered.

"It's good that you're aware of it. However, there is a way we can keep it for good," Tianming said.

"What is it?"

"The Sky Palace."

"Whoa... but that's too difficult!" Though he said that, there was still a light of hope in his eyes. Who would want to lose such a treasure if they could help it? He took a breath and touched the drop of blood, which turned into a spike that shot into his palm, tearing through his flesh.

He clutched his arm as the black drop of blood spread throughout his body. His blood underwent a complete change, causing his hair, eyes, and lips to turn dark purple. The air around him was completely different. He looked a little dark and broody compared to before.

"It feels good... yet sore at the same time!" As he jumped around, the cauldron itself shook.

Tianming finally saw the artifact soul. It was a gigantic black toad that blocked out the light from the sky. Its dark, green eyes were like skies in themselves, and its huge, red mouth was like an abyss.

"A toad? It kind of suits you," Tianming joked, almost thankful that he wasn't the one to assimilate it. The artifact soul had appeared for only the slightest moment, but its presence was far more terrifying than the Lifesteal Silverdragon and Dragonblood Desecration's artifact souls combined. The artifact itself seemed to be the embodiment of a dark abyss.

"Hey, don't judge a book by its cover!" Yu Ziqian said.

"Eww... you're purple. You're looking more and more like that artifact soul," Tianming and Ying Huo mocked.

"Damn you!" Yu Ziqian took out a mirror and furrowed his brow at his new look. "My handsome features... they're gone..." He didn't even have the tears to cry.

Seeing him like that, Tianming doubled down on it. "If my lips turned purple, Ling'er would get a heart attack when she wakes up."

"It sure is a sight," Lingfeng said.

"Yeah, it looks rather wild. But I think it suits him," Xiaoxiao said.

All the while, Yu Ziqian agonized over the changes, though the disciples watching from below could only curse and envy him.

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The change in the ranking caused another commotion outside, which spread like wildfire. All the sects watching from afar were completely overwhelmed.

"Yu Ziqian got four hundred thousand points!"

Word of the cauldron's appearance had just reached the many sects, so they immediately knew where the points had come from. The new ranking was as follows:

First Place, Li Tianming (Azuresoul Palace), 780000

Second Place, Weisheng Moran (Dreamless Celestial Nation), 550000

Third Place, Yu Ziqian (Azuresoul Palace), 480000

Fourth Place, Zhan Yuance (Wargodean), 390000

Fifth Place, Feng (Azuresoul Palace), 360000

Sixth Place, Kong (Voidword Shrine), 360000

Seventh Place, Long Longlong (Xuanyuan Dragon Sect), 350000

Eighth Place, Lin Xiaoxiao (Azuresoul Palace), 340000

...

With Zhan Yuance out for the count, his points would no longer rise. Kong and Long Longlong had defeated many dragon golems, causing their points to soar above Xiaoxiao's. As for the points from the treasures within the tomb, they were given to the top eight. Tianming got four hundred thousand from the Lifesteal Silverdragon and Ninedragon Tribulation. Yu Ziqian got four hundred thousand from the cauldron alone, marking it as the premier treasure. Half of the top eight places of the ranking were taken up by the Azuresoul Palace.

"Not even a first-rate sect has ever achieved something like this...."

The commotion the cauldron had generated was far greater than the Ninedragon Imperius's. After all, the sword was Long Longlong's ancestral legacy, so it only felt right. However, nobody had heard that the cauldron had had anything to do with the Ninedragon Emperor.

"Compared to the cauldron, the Lifesteal Silverdragon and Dragonblood Desecration don't really count for much...."

"Azuresoul Palace, huh...."

Following the change in the ranking, the disciples within the tomb were ejected from it. They fell like rain into the Voidsky Flame Pillar.

"The fact that they're still within the pillar means that the match is continuing...."

"That's right. Looks like the tomb was only there for the treasures. There could be a fight to end it all."

"Of course there'll be one. We couldn't even see anything inside as there were no skyward eyes within. It was kind of pointless."

"Yeah. What kind of Voidsky Skirmish is this if the youths aren't allowed to show off before an audience?"

The descent of the Ninedragon Imperial Tomb didn't mean the end of the competition, as many had guessed. Either way, everyone was certain that the competition would only get tighter from now on.

"That's right, does anyone know how Yu Ziqian obtained the cauldron?"

"I heard it was supposed to be a fight between four groups. Did the Azuresoul Palace's disciples really take out Weisheng Moran, Zhan Yuance, and Long Longlong?"

That question was on everyone's mind, and they were itching for an answer. The tomb had been a mystery since it appeared.

"The only thing we can be sure about is that after the match, the Azuresoul Palace will be completely smashed if they don't hand the cauldron over."

.....

Within the Imperialdragon Palace, Yu Ziqian was still testing out the Divine Worldeater Cauldron. Countless cries were heard as more and more disciples were being ejected from the tomb; it would be closing soon. However, Tianming noticed that the four black war drums were still fused and present.

"Why are the drums still here with me now that the cauldron has already been claimed?" Tianming wondered. So far, no other drum had appeared either. "Don't tell me there's still secrets to be discovered in the tomb...." If there were, they must have something to do with the Sky Palace.

Chapter 1237 - A Hundred War Drums

The rumbling of the tomb grew louder and louder. When the disciples were flung out of the tomb, the pathways suddenly changed and began moving like a snake. All the pathways in the gigantic tomb wiggled around, causing quite a few disciples to fall unconscious before they had even been sent out. They were like ants in a collapsing ant nest.

"Careful!"

"We must hold onto each other! Let's not get separated outside!"

Many disciples from the same sects had joined up together inside the tomb in groups of hundreds. Though they knew they were going to leave the tomb, they wanted to stay together, but things wouldn't go as they wished. The tomb's insane shaking made it hard for a group to stay cohesive.

All of a sudden, it looked like the ceiling of the Imperialdragon Palace was about to collapse.

"I'm finally done!" Yu Ziqian had managed to control the artifact soul of the cauldron, allowing him to shrink the cauldron to the size of a bowl. Only then were they able to see what it actually looked like.

Tianming noticed that it looked a little similar to orderian cauldrons. When he took his out, the orderian cauldron fused with the Divine Worldeater Cauldron like it was part of it.

"An orderian cauldron?" Yu Ziqian shot a weird look at Tianming. "Why would you have something of the celestial orderians?"

"What does this cauldron have to do with orderian cauldrons?" Tianming asked as he looked at the cauldron.

"The celestial orderians have many orderian cauldrons which they use to protect their borders. They're split up from subcauldrons of the Divine Worldeater Cauldron. There are two such subcauldrons, one of which is with the celestial orderians and the other is with the wargodeans. The wargodeans' subcauldron is complete, while the celestial orderians have split theirs into countless orderian cauldrons," Yu Ziqian said.

"There are subcauldrons too? Man, this artifact sure has many tricks."

"That's why I said I'd be your ally for life if you help me get it." Yu Ziqian was still really emotional. His eyes teared up and blurred his vision.

"Hold it!" Tianming noticed that the Divine Worldeater Cauldron was unbelievably heavy, as he didn't have the exalted blood in him. The mere touch hurt his fingers and he hurriedly returned it to Yu Ziqian.

"Is the entire Azuresoul Palace really incapable of maintaining ownership over the cauldron?" Tianming asked.

"Definitely. It wouldn't surprise me if we're robbed of it right after leaving this place. Either that, or we disappear from the world all of a sudden without anyone noticing." Yu Ziqian lovingly touched the cauldron, obviously not wanting to part from it. "Oh, these intricate patterns... this perfect feel to the touch! My life has been worth living!"

He wasn't just consoling himself. He wasn't even counting on living long, now that he had assimilated the exalted blood.

"Don't stand too far away."

The tomb was still shaking and more than five million disciples rained down outside after having been ejected from it. However, Tianming and the rest still remained within, huddling together to prevent being flung apart. Tianming looked at his palm and saw that the four wardrum formations had fused into a new black war drum about the size of a human head. It was still expanding on his hand, but it no longer had anything to do with the cauldron. Instead, it somehow seemed tied to the tomb's changes.

He noticed a small beam of light shoot out from a passageway in the Imperialdragon Palace. Upon closer inspection, it was a small war drum, much like the first one Tianming had obtained. It kept beating nonstop, causing the drum in Tianming's hand to resonate. Then it flew over and fused with the huge drum, making it even bigger. The drum was formed from many divine celestial patterns, making it somewhat resemble the Cyclic Map. The fusing of another drum had only made the patterns even more complicated. It started looking like a physical drum, rather than just a diagram.

"What's next?" Tianming looked around, seeing that half of the hundreds of thousands of disciples had been ejected. Some others were glaring at them, intent on taking their treasures, but most didn't make it and were flung away in the chaos. The number of people continued decreasing.

"There's another one there!" Lingfeng said.

Tianming turned to look and saw a small war drum fly toward him and fuse with the one on his hand like before, making the pattern even larger and more complex. "These wardrum formations come from the dragon golems. That must mean there's many more of them in the tomb. But why are they coming toward me?"

Then a third and fourth war drum came flying, followed by even more. The more the tomb shook, the more drums appeared. Upon the eightieth fusion, the drum in Tianming's hand was about twenty centimeters wide and didn't change in size any longer, though the celestial patterns were now so complicated that the drum looked three-dimensional, almost like a divine artifact.

"Looks like the cauldron isn't the closing act. This is..." Lingfeng said as he looked at the black drum.

"It very well might be," Tianming said. He inspected the entire tomb through the black war drum. Slowly, he began to feel countless smaller drums fusing together into a new whole. It was somehow connected to the entire tomb, while the nine treasures weren't.

Chapter 1238 - Lighting Up the Silverdragon Palace

The Ninedragon Imperial Tomb kept shaking as all disciples, apart from Tianming and his friends, were flung out. He guessed that they were the only ones who remained. Then the tomb stopped shaking all of a sudden and everything was peaceful once more. The absence of all the others made the entire place deathly silent, as if nobody had visited this place for countless millennia.

Yet, the four of them still remained.

"The ninety-second..." Tianming saw another drum coming toward him and had a feeling it would be the last. In total, there were a hundred smaller drums. They all anxiously waited as the last drum finished fusing.

Then, the fused drum on Tianming's hand morphed as eight dragon-shaped sticks appeared around it, all of them different in look and color. Tianming saw the silver dragon from the Lifesteal Silverdragon and the blood dragon from the Dragonblood Desecration there, alongside the white, black, flame, and other dragons.

Each of them looked to be a part of the wardrum formation. On the surface of the drum was a depiction of the black nine-headed dragon, which intimidatingly looked at Tianming. There were nine dragons in total, the same as the number in the name of the tomb. Tianming probingly pinched the silver dragon stick.

"Maybe beating the drum will work?" Yu Ziqian said.

"Yeah." Tianming took the silver stick and gave the drum a light beat, but nothing happened. "How about this...." He used all the astralforce he could muster and slammed the silver stick on the surface of

the drum with his black arm, yet the surface seemed to absorb the full force of the strike without making a single sound.

"It won't make a sound?"

The other three were also confused.

"We should be the only ones left here. The one who set this all up must want you to strike it somehow," Yu Ziqian said.

Tianming gave him a look and said, "Stop talking. It must be hard moving those swollen purple lips of yours."

Yu Ziqian touched his lips in agony. His perfect face was gone!

Tianming had the same thoughts as Yu Ziqian did. Then an idea occurred to him—he imagined the silver stick as a sword. "Let's give it a try."

He executed the Silverdragon Flashkill with the silver stick and struck the surface of the drum. Finally, it let out a booming sound that shook his heart. The sound resonated through every single tile of the entire palace. The strike caused the drum to turn silver before casting a beam of light toward a passageway within the palace.

At the same time, all the other passageways fused, leaving few open in the end, though all of them were wide. The new pathways connected the entire tomb together. From the drum in his hand, Tianming could see the entire tomb and how the pathways connected. The silver beam pointed toward the Silverdragon Palace and lit the entire place up when it touched it. Every brick of the palace was covered in countless divine celestial patterns. It was like it had been born anew.

"What's it doing lighting up Silverdragon Palace?"

Ying Huo and the rest, including the Fifth egg—or rather, the tens of thousands of them—came out. Tianming didn't need to go there directly, but could see the entire palace from the formation on his hand. It looked completely new and habitable.

After that, he used the Blooddragon Sacrifice with the blood dragon stick to strike the drum. The same thing happened, causing the Blooddragon Palace to glow and change. The light of the two palaces seemed to awaken the slumbering tomb. It felt livelier all of a sudden.

"Guess that's the extent of it for now." Tianming hadn't mastered the other moves yet. He tried striking using the other sticks, but to no avail. "But what does this all mean?"

They left the Imperialdragon Palace. Now that the pathways' layout had been simplified, it was much easier to go to the Silverdragon Palace. There was a new silver hall within the confines of the palace. When they entered, they saw that the sculptures were as grand as those in an actual palace. The hall was so large that hundreds of gigantic lifebound beasts could freely roam about within it. Not to mention, every part of the hall seemed made of the best divine ores.

"What in the world?" Tianming's eyes were dazzled as he looked at the wardrum formation.

"I have... a guess.... I wonder if you all will believe it," Yu Ziqian said without certainty. However, excitement was oozing out of his eyes. "Let's hear it." Tianming had his own guess, but he needed the perspective of a native of Orderia to fill out the details.

"Have you heard of the celestial orderians' Divine Sun Palace?"

"What about it?"

Chapter 1239 - Divine Astralship

Yu Ziqian took a deep breath and began explaining. "The Divine Sun Palace uses two compressed stellunar sources as its power source. Its foundation is supported by a fusion formation for a stellunar source world. In other words, the Divine Sun Palace itself can be said to be equivalent to two stellunar source worlds! However, it's far smaller than actual stellunar source worlds, which means that the fusion formation is also different. A fusion formation for something on a scale as small as the Divine Sun Palace must be incredibly mysterious and complicated. Like a fusion formation of a stellunar source world, it can be used to reinforce and control a stellunar source for consumption. It can also do things that normal fusion formations can't: hyperspeed astral voyages!"

"Stellunar source can be compressed too?" Tianming had no idea what was being said here. For something the size of the moon to be able to be shrunk to this degree was something that was completely out of his world. He had gone to the mooncore and seen a stellunar source's power before, and he knew how terrifying it could be.

"That's right. As long as the fusion formation is complex enough, it can compress a stellunar source. Not only that, it can raise it to the level of a nova source through compression. It's basically a portable nova source. Imagine something that billions of people on the sun use shrunk to a size that can fit in your pocket! It's enough for hundreds of thousands of people to use for many millennia."

Tianming knew that for the strongest person of Orderia, their strength would seem far beyond the likes of a stellunar or nova source. People could only slowly absorb the various sources of fundamental cosmic forces they had, yet that was enough for countless years of prosperity. Throughout the aeons, elites rose and fell because of these cosmic forces. Being able to directly control the source of one would allow someone to wield untold amounts of power.

"So the Divine Sun Palace is based on a unique fusion formation that has its own compressed stellunar sources, which are akin to nova source. Not to mention, it can even rapidly orbit the skies of Orderia while still exuding energy for those underneath to cultivate. It's basically a moving fortress, right?" Tianming asked.

"Not just that. With a miniaturized nova source, it can even field defensive or offensive formations! Such is the home base of the divine celestials, as well as the place the Myriad Solar Sects fear the most. The Divine Sun Palace can just deploy those offensive formations right at the sects' doorsteps, making it as powerful as the strongest armies, or better.

"That's the ultimate weapon of the celestial orderians. Relying on the Divine Sun Palace alone, they've reigned over the sun for millions of years. It's also been used to invade other nova source worlds. The sun often sends the palace out to the astralscape of order to explore the uncharted regions in search for other nova source worlds."

Only after spending some time in Orderia had Tianming come to understand that the astralscape of order was far vaster than he'd imagined. Beyond the fiery sky above were countless other stars—a wealth of other worlds! He had thought that Orderia was more or less the same as the astralscape of order, only to find out now that Orderia was to the astralscape what the Welkin plane was to Orderia.

While it wouldn't be hard for Tianming to leave his plane and come to Orderia, it was almost impossible to fly from Orderia to other nova source worlds using one's own body. Most cultivators in Orderia followed a custom of roaming the stars. Many of them used their divine artifacts as their vehicles, but without a nova source to power them, the cultivator's own energy would be depleted. In the void of space, one could only use divine pills to refill their reserves. That was why traveling vast distances was so incredibly difficult. But if what Yu Ziqian said was true, the Divine Sun Palace's fusion formation could generate its own power and speed past the vast astralspace in a short time with practically infinite fuel, moving much faster than the sun and moon themselves!

"Normally, we call vessels like the Divine Sun Palace divine astralships, and they all share the commonality of having a compressed stellunar source." Naturally, the astralship that Yu Ziqian spared no effort in telling them about had something to do with their current predicament as well.

"Did the Ninedragon Emperor have his own divine astralship?" Tianming asked in a hoarse voice.

"There are many chronicles with varying details. Most of them aren't taken as the truth. However, there are a few that state that he had found a legacy deep in the astralscape that had a shipwrecked astralship. He then used most of the rest of his life to repair its fusion formation," Yu Ziqian said. However, his tone was far more measured and calm than before. "I might be overthinking this... the Ninedragon Imperial Tomb can't possibly be a divine astralship. Even if it were, it's useless in its ruined state."

"No." Tianming gripped the war drum and the eight dragon drumsticks circled around his hand. Then the light of the Silverdragon Palace illuminated his body. "This is a divine astralship. It's even functional. More importantly, the eight drumsticks in my hand and this drum is the key to activating it. Once I illuminate all nine dragon palaces, I'll be able to move it!"

"Are you joking? Who told you that?" Yu Ziqian merely shook his head and laughed.

"This told me that." Tianming looked at the black drum and felt a vibe similar to Sovereign Xi's Moondream Soul. The nine dragon palaces were like mooncores in their own right, the cornerstones of the fusion formation. No doubt the Imperialdragon Palace was the main core. Now, only two of the nine palaces had lit up, and the rest were still dormant. The war drum already belonged to Tianming, so verifying his theory would be an easy matter. Something truly insane had happened to them.

"I can be sure that this is a divine astralship. Naturally, it doesn't have a compact nova source yet." This fusion formation was akin to something like the Ninefold Hell, though the home of the specters was empty inside. Unlike other stellunar source worlds, however, these ships were incredibly dense and compressed and could move at unimaginable speeds with far more stability.

"Heavens! Is what you said true?" Yu Ziqian's eyes were wide open and his prominent purple lips parted with shock.

"Yes." Tianming nodded.

"What does this even imply? Did the Sky Palace just give a divine astralship away to the winner here? Why don't they use it for themselves?!"

"Who knows? I'm not even sure why they brought out so many treasures. Does the Sky Palace have any compact nova source we can use to power the astralship?"

"I have no idea." It wasn't just him, not even the Myriad Solar Sects themselves knew the Sky Palace's intentions.

"We might find out if we're lucky enough to join them." Nobody could accurately gauge how much more precious a divine astralship was compared to the Divine Worldeater Cauldron. This was something on par with the ultimate weapon of the celestial orderians.

"Friend, I feel like we can't even tell my master about it. It's best if we keep this among the four of us," Yu Ziqian said.

"Agreed." After all, he wasn't able to control it yet, and he didn't have any fuel for it. Even if all nine of the palaces were illuminated, it would probably be dormant like the Ninefold Hell. Things would get out of hand if others found out.

"So, has the divine astralship been destined to be yours since you obtained the nine-colored scale of the emperor?" Lingfeng said.

"That makes sense...." Tianming figured that if he had lost to Zhan Yuance or Weisheng Moran, the cauldron would fall into their hands. But that wouldn't change how the Ninedragon Imperial Tomb itself would become his! After all, nobody else had the Ninedragon Tribulation. He shot Yu Ziqian a look. "Let's say nothing. Perhaps not even the Sky Palace knows about this."

"My mouth is sealed." The divine pill and cauldron had already triggered a lot of inconvenient complications.

"Actually, there isn't much to reveal in the first place. I'm just a nobody, not a lord. I wouldn't have any use for it. The most that'll happen is I'll lose the scale and this war drum to someone else," Tianming said. Just like the Divine Worldeater Cauldron, if they really weren't able to keep it, they had better abandon it if the situation required them to. At the very least, Tianming wasn't sure how the Ninedragon Imperial Tomb could benefit him for now. He would only ever consider conquering the astralscape once he reached the level of the sun emperor. Though, he did know that using the tomb to its full potential could completely change his life.

If we get strong enough one day, we'll roam through the astralscape in this divine astralship. Ling'er, Ying Huo, and the rest, as well as Feng, Qingyu and Xiaoxiao.... What pleasant days those would be! he thought. Currently, the tomb had sunk into the Voidsky Realm. It was visible, but there was no movement at all. Tianming wouldn't be able to shrink it and take it along with him.

"For now, its existence is a secret. As long as the Sky Palace doesn't reveal anything, nobody will know. We'll let it slumber here for now until the day we really need it. Then again... I still had to find out why in the world the Sky Palace would allow it to fall into my hands. Anyway, let's go!" Whether or not Tianming could join the Sky Palace would be the key.

Chapter 1240 - Alliance

A sword strike pierced the skies of the Azuresoul Sword Mountain, leaving an obvious mark through a few clouds. The place was filled with activity, with countless cultivators going about talking about the development of the imperial star ranking. Word from the Voidsky Flame Pillar had arrived, followed by even more, increasing in intensity. Gujian Qingshuang wasn't able to sit without being knocked off his chair by one shocking news after another.

He had left the Azuresoul Sword Palace and joined the others there to watch the grand event. The appearance of the Ninedragon Imperial Tomb had immediately rocketed the current match to a historic height. To the powerful cultivators of Orderia, who could live up to two millennia, a thirty-year-old was no different to an infant. It was a battle of babies. Yet this competition was being regarded even more seriously than the most dire of sect wars, especially after word of the Ninedragon Imperius and Divine Worldeater Cauldron's appearance. The juniors of the sects almost went insane watching it, and even the seniors had started to pray.

"The Ninedragon Imperius was claimed by Xuanyuan Dragon Sect.... That isn't the worst outcome. Please, don't let our disciples claim the Divine Worldeater Cauldron!"

The cauldron was a legacy that could allow the Azuresoul Palace to reign for thousands of generations, yet they were praying they wouldn't get it. It was clear from that alone how wise the second-rate sects were when it came to matters concerning the powers that be. Yet the thing they had worried about the most had come to pass after all.

"Chief Instructor! Look at the imperial star ranking!"

Countless seniors felt the blood drain from their faces. Without them having to remind him, he was the first one to note the changes.

"Yu Ziqian got four hundred thousand points and reached third place!"

"The chief disciple got the Divine Worldeater Cauldron!"

Those of the sect had all kinds of polarizing reactions toward the same news. The elites of the Azuresoul Palace were stunned beyond belief.

"It'd already be a miracle if we were to get even one of those treasures, yet we got the cauldron, of all things! Sigh...."

"What in the world is with these disciples of Jiang Qingliu?"

"The Xuanyuan Dragon Sect is going to take three of them in without Yu Ziqian, but now it looks like he has to go, too. Otherwise we'll be in deep trouble."

"Looks like this disciple is already too risky to keep."

"What do you think, Chief Instructor?"

Everyone turned to Gujian Qingshuang, who merely watched the changing ranking with his hands behind his back. Taking a deep breath, he said, "The Divine Worldeater Cauldron is no doubt the most precious of those treasures. Currently, the Myriad Solar Sects, and even the celestial orderians, will be keeping their eye on the Xuanyuan Dragon Sect. They might not be able to maintain their hold on that."

What I'm afraid of is that after we hand everything over and obtain the Xuanyuan Dragon Sect's protection, we'll still be involved in the subsequent massacre that is to happen..."

Most of them already guessed what he was implying.

"Ideally, Yu Ziqian should join the Sky Palace! That way the matter of the cauldron will be wiped clean. Without it, the Xuanyuan Dragon Sect will only have three treasures. The divine pill has been consumed, after all. Unlike the cauldron, those weapons can only make a single person powerful. Yet the cauldron holds the potential to strengthen a whole group of people at once. Should that be the case, the Xuanyuan Dragon Sect will be fine, and us by extension." That was the ideal scenario he envisioned.

"Chief Instructor, someone from the Xuanyuan Dragon Sect is here," came a report.

"Have them sent in, quick!" Gujian Qingshuang knew that the appearance of an object of that caliber would trigger a huge storm in Orderia. With what had happened at the Voidsky Realm, the Azuresoul Palace was at the very frontier of that storm. "We can only rise or fall now. There's no other way."

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At the south of the sun, the Voidsky Flame Pillar continued expelling nova source toward the reddish sky. Drops of fiery rain fell to the ground with a sharp sound like a literal meteor shower, sowing chaos over the terrain below. Yet the number of people around the Voidsky Flame Pillar was only increasing.

Initially, only seniors waiting for their disciples to come out had been there. But after the appearance of the Ninedragon Imperial Tomb, many interested parties had emerged. Certain factions were even preparing to assemble their armies. Their intentions were plain as day. The only thing that remained to be revealed was the pick for who would join the Sky Palace. That single decision would shape the history of the sun for aeons to come.

"These kids should be proud of causing a commotion of this magnitude," someone said, staring at the Skyward Stele at a corner facing the pillar. Mist seemed to move about in his cloudy eyes. "Four of the top eight places have been taken by the Azuresoul Palace, eh...."

His expression was initially sour, but he suddenly sincerely smiled when Yu Ziqian emerged.

"Interesting.... Will the Xuanyuan Dragon Sect be able to protect you?"

There were too many intricacies amidst the complex political dealings of the factions within the Myriad Solar Sects. Earning the ire of many was not a wise move. Not even the Dreamless Celestial Nation would be able to take on everyone else at once.

"Brother Yun," a deep voice called out.

Yun Tianque turned back and saw a group of blue-haired people approaching. The leader had a face like that of a shark. When he spoke, a few sharp teeth could be seen.

"Brother Lan Sha." Yun Tianque waved to him. Behind Lan Sha were tens of others from the Blueblood Starocean, Lan Feilin and Lan Xingyao among them.

"I have some friends to introduce you to, Brother Yun," Lan Sha said with a smile.

"Oh? To whom do I owe the pleasure?" Yun Tianque saw golden giants heading toward them, all of them more than three meters tall. They were like gigantic beasts, threatening to flatten everything in their path with every step. They were the wargodeans who ranked fourth among all the factions, being the most powerful faction among them that was united by a shared racial heritage. Their fame echoed far and wide.