

The Ages 1381

Chapter 1381 - Birth of Strange Phenomena

Inside the Soaring Palace, eight giant beasts that burned as bright as the sun were ravenously devouring tens of millions of divine herbs. Each mouthful gulped down over ten thousand of them.

As the two girls entered, a man shining with a brilliant light leaped up from the pile of divine herbs. Waves of powers were rippling from his body.

Li Ruoshi's face lit up. "Big Brother Haochen is breaking through?"

"A ninth-level constellier.... Now he should really be peerless, right?" Long Youyou asked.

Fighting spirit was burning in the eyes of the man they were looking at.

"Now we should be able to go back, right?"

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"The ninth level?" Li Haochen naturally couldn't escape Yin Chen's eyes. And Yin Chen's eyes were Tianming's. This lifebound beast had elevated his survival abilities and made him practically omniscient.

"Two million Yin Chens means there's almost no secrets left unhidden from me on this continent. However, the Supracloud Sanctuary has even more ore mines than the Azuresoul Palace."

After having handled Yun Tianque, Tianming was eyeing their ore mines. However, he wasn't in a rush. There were too many variables in the continent now, and he planned to go to the wondersky realm to challenge the number one there, Ye Chen. However, he was worried something would crop up here that urgently needed him. Thus, he had put aside the plan for a bit.

"I suppose Li Haochen isn't far off from Ye Chen now. But if he wants to use me to wipe away his past shame, haha...." Tianming wasn't being arrogant. It was just that for peers he had passed, it was nigh impossible for them to make a comeback.

These few days, while Tianming had been monitoring the continent, he'd also been training the fifth move of the Ninedragon Tribulation, Whitedragon Exaltation! The nine basic sword arts of the Ninedragon Tribulation were not created equal. The latter ones were stronger, and also harder to fuse. He had been working on the Whitedragon Exaltation for quite a while already.

On Fairman Peak in the Sixth Sword Branch, Tianming held the Grand-Orient Sword and practiced the strike in the woods. "This sword art adds a soul attack component. If a totem uses it, it'll damage both the opponent's totem and vita. I could even teach this to Feng if he used the sword... alas."

That was why Tianming didn't believe that the Ninedragon Tribulation was created by the Ninedragon Emperor. This Whitedragon Exaltation was created for totems; part of its power also came from using the vita to attack.

"Unfortunately, my soul is only at the level of a first divine soul. My vita doesn't have that much attack power, unlike Feng's third regal soul. So I need to rely on my totems. If I also had a third regal soul, I wouldn't even need to fuse it for this sword art to be frightening."

Feng's vita cultivation method came from the Primordial Demonlord, so Tianming didn't have the fortune of enjoying it. But on the other hand, Feng didn't have the Aeternal Infernal Codex.

"Feng said he almost has a fourth imperial soul. He's only in his twenties, but his vita is on the emperor's level. His attack power will be even more frightening then." He had considered the method of vita cultivation, as it was important. Unfortunately, he didn't have any suitable techniques. So he just didn't bother; there was no point in half-assing it. He had the Soul Tower, so at least it wasn't a weakness now.

There was no one around, so Tianming used his totems and his totemic calamity, transforming them into many smaller swords.

"Whitedragon Exaltation!" Ten thousand swords transformed into white dragons and formed a sword formation.

A brilliant flash went off that would blind enemies if they saw it. And the most dangerous part was the white dragon harassing the vita.

"If I can fuse this sword art in and create my Fivedragon Tribulation, it'll be nearly a seventh-realm divine art." In terms of battle arts, the Ninedragon Tribulation would make Tianming surpass his peers.

The Grand-Orient Sword stabbed out. Shining white light transformed into a giant white dragon that flashed out like a ray of light. The white light swallowed up a patch of forest, immediately reducing the trees and rocks within to ash.

"I'll keep trying to fuse it. But first, I'll make a trip to the Swordbath Pool first to get some grade-six divine hazard sword ki." Tianming was clear what divine hazard sword ki were in the Swordbath Pool. He had already specifically selected a grade-six divine hazard sword ki, Dawnlight Soulbreaker, for his new sword art. The divine pattern at its heart was the Soulshaking Light, which had the innate property of damaging vita and totems. It was very suitable for the Whitedragon Exaltation.

After an unpleasant period of fusion, Tianming managed to absorb the divine hazard sword ki into his body. He had made his full preparations for tackling the five sword art fusion. Totems, sword ki, and fusion were all in place. Even Ying Huo had absorbed some grade-five divine hazard sword ki, making Gujian Qingshuang's scalp tingle just watching.

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The next day, at the Cloudysky Gorge on the Azurecloud Continent in the central area of Supracloud Sanctuary.

The divine herbs produced in this area were particularly numerous. Hence the Supracloud Sanctuary had built a large base here and created a temporary defensive formation. Today, the Tumulus Pill God, Lan Sha, and Yun Tianque had brought over ten thousand Supracloud Sanctuary cultivators alongside a few thousand wargodeans and Blueblood Starocean cultivators.

"So the new discovery was here?" the Tumulus Pill God asked.

"Right. This is just one of eighteen discoveries, all of them with strange phenomena occurring. All have been marked and are under heavy guard," Yun Tianque replied.

“Based on precedent, the tree is about to go into a period where it starts fruiting exponentially. Based on what I see, the harvest this year will be seven billion. More than the previous time, and roughly average historically. It may be related to this timing if strange fruits like these are appearing. Bring me there,” the Tumulus Pill God ordered.

“Please follow me.” Yun Tianque bowed.

The Supracloud Sanctuary cultivators all looked slightly troubled at seeing their leader so polite.

With Yun Tianque leading the way, they quickly arrived in a normal-seeming region.

“And it’s right there! Take a look,” Yun Tianque pointed. Two strange fruits appeared in their line of sight. They were human-shaped, and even seemed to be in the position of hugging each other.

“Actually, it appeared long ago. However, they didn’t have divine patterns so we thought they weren’t even divine herbs. But that’s clearly not it. We still can’t see patterns, but perhaps they’re grade-eight divine herbs?”

Yun Tianque was excited, because all eighteen sites had those pairs of fruits, making a total of thirty-six! And those were just those in the Supracloud Sanctuary’s territory. The Azuresoul Palace definitely also had some.

“Let me examine it,” the Tumulus Pill God said.

Chapter 1382 - Fury of the Divine Tree

As an alchemist, the Tumulus Pill God was an expert in judging herbs.

“No way this is a grade-eight divine herb, it isn’t even grade-one. It doesn’t even have the tribulation or heavenly patterns to make up a divine pattern. Did it really manifest strange phenomena?” he asked with confusion.

“Yes, hundreds of thousands of people saw it. Rainbow colored light sprang out from these unassuming fruits. The exact same phenomena at eighteen different locations, all from the same kind of fruit,” Yun Tianque said.

The Tumulus Pill God nodded. “Let me think about it.” He spent a full two hours in contemplation before shaking his head in the end. “I can’t find anything special based on my experience. However, they’re all unripe yet, and are fruits that have never appeared in the Azurecloud Divine Tree’s history. These strange phenomena never happened before either. Leave this to us. The wargodeans and Blueblood Starocean will deploy our troops to guard it. Sect Master Yun, I’ll have to trouble you to be responsible for the rest of the herb picking efforts.”

The meaning was clear. No matter what it was, it was theirs now!

“Yes.” Yun Tianque lowered his head, feeling very stifled inside.

“What is it? Let me take a look,” a cold female voice drifted over.

Everyone turned around and saw Li Wushuang. The Tumulus Pill God’s straightened back even slightly bent. Those not in the know may have thought he had a hunchback.

The Tumulus Pill God hurried forward with a welcoming smile. "Welcome, Lady Wushuang."

The wargodeans and Blueblood Starocean cultivators all hurriedly saluted with respect, too, as Yun Tianque stealthily retreated to the side.

Li Wushuang approached the fruit while the Tumulus Pill God continued to give her his opinion. He finally concluded with, "It's all just in case. What if it is a treasure? Don't worry, I'll guard all of them well, Lady Wushuang. Also, if the Azuresoul Palace has these things too, we need to seize the initiative and grab them all early."

Li Wushuang looked at it for a long time, then mildly said, "Aren't you overthinking things? It's just an ordinary fruit. This tree is already old and hasn't produced anything good for a long, long time."

"True," the Tumulus Pill God awkwardly said.

"Even a fruit wants to form a pair? How annoying." Li Wushuang extended her hand as she said that. Her two fingers were like a sword that cleaved through the person-shaped fruits, separating them.

The sword ki disintegrated the man-shaped fruit, leaving behind only the woman-shaped fruit without its arms. Li Wushuang couldn't help but laugh. "This fruit resembles Long Wanying." The thought made her even more pleased.

"Lady Wushuang, you...." Yun Tianque hurried over and blocked the remainder of the fruit. He quickly spoke up, "Everyone, historically, every time a strange phenomena occurs from the divine tree, it's followed by great changes. Please don't damage it anymore."

Yun Tianque hadn't wanted to say that at first, but seeing something that was just sitting there by itself all fine ruined for absolutely no reason had made Yun Tianque's heart pained.

"You want to question me?" Li Wushuang was just in a happy mood when Yun Tianque had stepped out and told her not to do something. What difference was there from spoiling her mood?

"That's not what I meant! I—"

"Get lost!" Li Wushuang's voice was frosty.

"Yun Tianque, move." The Tumulus Pill God's words were both warning and reminder.

"Lady Wushuang, this...." Yun Tianque just couldn't get it. Why destroy an ordinary fruit? What was wrong with just waiting and seeing? He could only conclude that Li Wushuang simply liked to do things willfully. He was just about to explain more when Li Wushuang strode forward. Without warning, she gave him a slap on the face! Yun Tianque's face was half-swollen as he was sent flying away, blood dripping from the corner of his lips.

"You...." Yun Tianque's eyes widened.

"Sect Master!" The hundreds of thousands around them may not all have been cultivating at the Supracloud Sanctuary, but they were all still a part of it. Seeing their leader lose his dignity like that and getting slapped for no reason had made them feel extremely aggrieved.

“Brother Yun, come here and let me tell you some things.” Lan Sha hurriedly dragged him away, signaling him. “Brother, don’t blame me for saying this, but you deserved that. Who’s Lady Wushuang? Just look at the Tumulus Pill God’s attitude and you’ll know. In the celestial orderians, apart from the emperor, not even the empress dares to go against her! Don’t blame her for whatever she does. Maintain your respect even if she cuts the tree down right now, okay?”

“I get it.” Yun Tianque wiped away the blood. The swelling quickly receded and he smiled as if he was unaffected, adjusting his clothes.

“Smart man.” Lan Sha patted him on the shoulder.

“It was my fault from the very start,” Yun Tianque said.

“It’s understandable, you don’t really know Lady Wushuang.” Lan Sha smiled. He didn’t realize that he and Yun Tianque were talking about different things.

The Supracloud Sanctuary members were still feeling very humiliated, but Yun Tianque waved a hand to calm them down.

While that was happening, Li Wushuang was happily hacking away at the remainder of the paired fruits. Yun Tianque made some guesses. Perhaps in the past, Lady Wushuang hadn’t been able to get a man she wanted. After failing to compare to Long Wanying, she ruined not just the man, but wanted to kill the woman too.

There was definitely something wrong with her brain.

“Divine tree....” Yun Tianque looked up at the massive tree. It was an unforgettable imprint on every native of this continent. Every time they opened their eyes, the tree would fill their sight. Yun Tianque’s youth had been spent growing up on this tree. After becoming sect master, he had begrudged it for stealing the nova source of the continent. However, he knew the truth in his heart—the Azurecloud Divine Tree was never at fault. Those at fault were the ones that rested under its shade and couldn’t protect it.

“The ancestors claim that strange phenomena are caused by the fury of the divine tree....” Was there any truth to that story? Yun Tianque’s face was still stinging, but this special feeling inside him made him forget it. In his eyes, this lofty tree was like an elder that had lived for millennia. “If it’s alive, can it see everything?” He couldn’t forget that human-shaped fruit that looked like two people hugging each other.

Suddenly, his eyes widened. “Those... are saplings! They have to be saplings!”

If the tree was alive, why couldn’t human-shaped fruits be never-before-seen saplings? The guess made Yun Tianque enter a state of shock. When he finally turned around, Li Wushuang had finished venting. She was lecturing the Tumulus Pill God and telling him not to waste time and preparing to leave herself.

Suddenly, a mournful cry came from all directions and filled their surroundings. Everyone instinctively covered their ears. It was like the whole world was shaking, as the continent underfoot heaved. Mountains were collapsing and rivers were roiling. The branches and even the entire Azurecloud Divine Tree were shaking.

“What’s going on?”

This had never happened before, so everyone was stunned. They were aware that it wasn’t someone else causing the earthquake and the mournful sounds, but the tree itself.

The mournful sounds were like a whale’s cry, filling the entire continent. Every native’s blood was churning right now, their blood seeming to sense that sorrow.

“I, I didn’t manage to protect it....” Yun Tianque was plunged into misery. He himself didn’t understand why he felt this way. It hadn’t hurt this much when Li Tianming had taken control of his life.

The pain was born from his bloodline and caused by a lifetime of absorbing the tree’s fruits and using them to construct his body. He descended from seniors that had also absorbed a countless amount of the tree’s bounty.

Tears spilled down.

When the mournful cries passed and he lifted his head, he saw that all of the Supracloud Sanctuary’s people had also gone red as if they had lost someone precious. Even breathing was difficult through the pain that filled their chests.

“It is our roots, and its blood flows through us....” Today’s events had toppled Yun Tianque’s worldview. He had even proposed cutting down this tree countless times before to return the continent’s nova source. But now he hated his past self.

It took fifteen minutes for the mournful cries to end. The tree didn’t seem to have done anything. It had chosen to submit and go quiet. However, everyone had noticed this disturbance. Clearly, it was due to Li Wushuang destroying that fruit. What did it mean?

Li Wushuang’s eyes shone. “Deploy everyone to guard these fruits, including those of the Azuresoul Palace.”

“Kill whoever dares block us!”

“Yes!” Everyone from the wargodeans and Blueblood Starocean hurried to accept their orders.

Chapter 1383 - Legend of the Saplings

In response to the appearance of the human-shaped fruits, Tianming had gathered the Xuanyuan Dragon Sect, Group of Celestial Maiden Halls, and Azuresoul Palace on the Azuresoul Sword Mountain.

Yin Chen had clearly seen what had happened in the Supracloud Sanctuary. Once again, it had rendered huge merits. The little fellow merely haughtily said, “Do not... thank me... I just... want more... metal ore!” Eating ores to replicate itself was its base instinct, just as much as bathing was.

When the key figures like Gujian Qingshuang, Long Wanying, and Yan Nuxia had arrived, Tianming relayed what had happened with Yun Tianque. “I just carefully checked, and we also have eighteen pairs here. The entire continent should have thirty-six sets then. Thirty-five remain after Li Wushuang destroyed one,” he said.

Every pair of them had one man-shaped and one woman-shaped fruit hugging each other.

The tree's mournful cries and the ensuing earthquake had led to emotions running high for all of those present.

"Head instructor, do you know what this is?" Tianming asked.

After his briefing, Gujian Qingshuang had been standing in a corner in a daze. Just now, he had been plunged into sorrow by the Azurecloud Divine Tree and hadn't recovered yet.

"If the tree is alive, could these fruits be its seeds? I'm not very sure, this is all just passed down by ancestors, but... in the legends of the tree, if saplings were to appear, we were to guard it to the death. Else, the tree would be furious and there will never be a bounty again."

"I've heard of it before too." Jiang Qingliu nodded.

"Did you have that feeling too? That sorrow from the depths of your bloodline?" Gujian Qingshuang asked Jiang Qingliu.

"Yes. I think that... every person's body comes from their ancestors and is a passing down of bloodline. However, each generation is deeply intertwined with the nurturing of the Azurecloud Divine Tree, so our bodies and souls are tied to it," Jiang Qingliu said. Those were words he had wanted to say to Gujian Qingshuang for a long time. Cutting down the tree was an act of betrayal toward their ancestors.

"Saplings? Does that mean if we plant it, it'll grow and become a new divine tree? And if one pair is one, doesn't that mean there's thirty-six potential Azurecloud Divine Trees?" Tianming asked curiously.

"Well, actually, thirty-five." Long Wanying sneered. The bonegnaw ants in Yun Tianque's body had heard everything the man heard. Long Wanying knew better than anyone why Li Wushuang had destroyed the fruits so willfully. The old grudges in her heart resurfaced, turning her eyes bloodshot.

"Uncertain. Maybe the saplings have other effects, or maybe they aren't even saplings. That's just our guess. But what we can be sure of is that such an ancient tree can't grow so fast. We won't have dozens of young trees all around. Planting it would probably only bring fortune thousands of generations later," Gujian Qingshuang said.

The forebears would plant the tree and the descendants would harvest it. Even if it was for future generations, giving the children of your children a good environment was still a great merit.

"Whatever the case, the human-shaped fruit needs to be protected," Tianming concluded.

"Yes, that's the consensus. The remaining thirty-five must not be destroyed," Gujian Qingshuang said, his heart filled with pain. The destruction of every pair was the end of infinite possibilities. And the first loss had caused the tree so much sorrow and fury.

"What does Yun Tianque think about these human-shaped fruits?" Long Wanying asked.

"He also thinks they may be saplings. I could feel that he received a huge mental blow when Li Wushuang destroyed one and slapped him."

"Could he turn to our side now?"

Tianming smiled and confidently said, "The issue is almost a done deal. Even ignoring the mess the wargodeans and Blueblood Starocean have caused, his bloodline will push him to our side too. The bonegnaw ants are just insurance. It'll be best if he chooses for himself."

"You're right. This event really can change the heart. At least for me, my heart is pumping now." Gujian Qingshuang remembered the resonance he had felt just now.

"This is the path our ancestors have pointed out to us. Perhaps, Li Tianming, you're the one our ancestors and the divine tree has chosen to save us..." Jiang Qingliu emotionally said.

"I wouldn't dare claim that. I'm just trying my best," Tianming said.

Protecting the human-shaped fruits would be their next mission, with higher priority than fruit picking.

"Tianming, have you determined the eighteen locations yet? If so, we need to plan our deployments," Long Wanying said.

That was the advantage of the Myriadworld Immortabeast. Tianming could gather information from everywhere on the tree without sending people out to search.

"Yes. But first we have to decide something," Tianming said.

Everyone looked at him.

"Right now, all of the wargodeans and Blueblood Starocean have moved out to protect theirs. We can forget about those for now. But if we send people to protect ours, the Emyrean Sword Sect will find out. Should we tell them?" Tianming asked.

"Let me think about it." Long Wanying pursed her lips, then looked at Gujian Qingshuang. "The Emyrean Sword Sect doesn't know the Azuresoul Palace stands on our side. They think the head instructor is in the same camp as them. If the head instructor knows about this and hides it, when they find out, it'll cause them to have ill will toward the Azuresoul Palace and act even worse.

"The best way to handle this is to immediately tell them. If they know the human-shaped fruits are important, they'll protect them well, and even come up with ideas. It'll cause conflict with the wargodeans and Blueblood Starocean, too...."

Perhaps the Emyrean Sword Sect may already know from the commotion on the Supracloud Sanctuary's side. Since they couldn't be excluded, the best thing to do was to point them at the enemy.

Gujian Qingshuang and Jiang Qingliu exchanged a look. Currently, Gujian Qingshuang still had the Emyrean Sword Sect's trust.

"Head instructor, go and find them to talk about this," Jiang Qingliu said.

"I'll leave first, then." Gujian Qingshuang stood up and left. If there were any new developments, Tianming could communicate with him any time using the bonegnaw ants.

Tianming was very clear that even if the Supracloud Sanctuary and Azuresoul Palace joined up, they didn't have the strength to challenge the invaders. Rather, it would be more effective to scheme in the dark and use intelligence, since they had Yin Chen. Hidden in the dark, they still had a good chance, even

though they were much weaker. The Tumulus Pill God and the Wind and Rain Swordlords would never think of invisible cockroaches and bonegnaw ants no matter how they wracked their brains.

“It isn’t that we’re very intelligent. Rather, the Primordial Chaos Beasts have provided me an advantage others can’t imagine.” Tianming believed that he was someone rash who didn’t consider matters from every possible angle. Long Wanying had been the one helping him make arrangements during this period.

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Gujian Qingshuang went to the Driftsword Halls to find Shi Yan and the Wind and Rain Swordlords. When he arrived, the people of the Emyrean Sword Sect had already received a report from the Supracloud Sanctuary’s side. After all, even an idiot could tell something had happened after the tree had made such a commotion.

“Head Instructor Gujian, the report says the human-shaped fruit is a sapling. What do you think?” The Rain Swordlord asked. There seemed to be a hidden meaning in her words.

“From our ancestral records, that may be the case. I’m not too sure. But what we do know is that since it can incite such a huge reaction from the divine tree, it must be important,” Gujian Qingshuang said.

“The Supracloud Sanctuary has seventeen left. The wargodeans and Blueblood Starocean have already moved out, yet, we seem to be behind them,” the Rain Swordlord reprimanded him, stressing the words ‘wargodeans’ and ‘Blueblood Starocean’.

“Swordlord, don’t worry. I immediately mobilized the entire Azuresoul Palace to check. We found some in our territory too. So far, fifteen have appeared. More are still being found, and I suspect we’ll have eighteen too.”

“Locations determined?”

“For fifteen of them, yes. We are still searching,” Gujian Qingshuang said.

“Fine. Give us the locations. Our one hundred and ten thousand swordpupils will split into eighteen units to guard them. When the matter is so huge, how could we not help? Right, don’t stop with the normal fruit picking work, either. Don’t slack off, your mission is important.

The Rain Swordlord’s words were completely within Long Wanying’s expectations. They didn’t want to help; they wanted to take it all over.

They were no different from Li Wushuang.

Chapter 1384 - Monster

A few short sentences had been enough for the Emyrean Sword Sect to signal their desire for the saplings.

“Gujian Qingshuang, this matter is very important. We can see that from how the wargodeans and Blueblood Starocean have taken over the saplings from the Supracloud Sanctuary. We can’t be remiss. We have to protect them well so they can mature.” The Wind Swordlord’s words were the same as the Rain Swordlord’s, only dressed up nicer.

"This...." Gujian Qingshuang had a troubled expression. "With eighteen locations, each of them will only have a few thousand swordpupils. Will that be enough as guards? Should I send out the Azuresoul Sword Army as support and add a hundred thousand troops each?"

The Rain Swordlord snorted, "Head Instructor, oh, Head Instructor. Can a hundred thousand of your swordtroops match up to a few thousand swordpupils from my Emyrean Sword Sect?"

"Alright then! Sirs and madams, you need to protect it well. This matter is huge, and we can't afford any mistakes. I predict that people from the Supracloud Sanctuary's side will trespass as well. This will drive people even crazier than the grade-eight herb, and I'm certain blood will spill and there will be casualties," Gujian Qingshuang yielded.

Gujian Qingshuang had always yielded to the Emyrean Sword Sect, so there was nothing suspicious about it. The three from the Emyrean Sword Sect were probably even gloating inside about their superiority!

"Don't worry. If they really want to get violent, the Emyrean Sword Sect will step in and put down the lapdogs of the celestial orderians. The chance to unify the continent has come. We aren't afraid of them coming. What we're afraid of is them cowardly turtling up. If they come out, they have a death wish," the Rain Sovereign viciously said.

Inwardly, Gujian Qingshuang sneered. He knew about the alliance the Northdipper Swordsage was trying to form. Unfortunately, as long as it wasn't formed, these people would never revolt. They were just there for easy profits. Hence, this was just bluster and false promises. Of course, the saplings had huge potential value. While birds died for food, humans died for wealth.

Long Wanying and the rest had predicted that if conflict broke out over the saplings, the Emyrean Sword Sect would go for the kill.

"Incredible, Li Tianming. Just one Yin Chen allowed you to see through all of their schemes."

All of the Azuresoul Palace's ore veins had been traded for two million Yin Chens. And today, Gujian Qingshuang found it quite a worthwhile trade. Working together with Li Tianming had made it clear what kind of person he was. He may have had Yin Chen as a trump card, but Gujian Qingshuang could tell he still remained modest in front of his seniors and friends.

Controlling Gujian Qingshuang showed his ruthless side. But no longer bothering Yun Tianque's family and giving him freedom, as well as giving Gujian Qingshuang dignity was a sign that Li Tianming had certain personal principles. That said, if someone assumed he was a candle that would burn himself up for others, they'd be dead wrong.

Gujian Qingshuang looked at the three higher-ups of the Emyrean Sword Sect. They were already planning their deployments. They don't know that the sword of Li Tianming is already hanging above their heads. It may fall anytime and slay them. Gujian Qingshuang's expression was full of helplessness. His job done, he left the Driftsword Halls.

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"What an intelligent man. If he'd talked back, I would've had to take a page from Li Wushuang's book and given him a tight slap to wake him up." The Rain Swordlord sneered. "His sect ancestors were just some strays that left our Emyrean Sword Sect. And he actually thought he had some authority."

"Enough, enough. He's already bowed down, so don't go overboard," the Wind Swordlord said.

"I'm just worried he isn't happy. Then he'll whine and whine next time. I've seen quite a few like that these few days. Those Azuresoul Palace swordpupils pretend to be polite to us, but they keep judging us inside. Don't they get it? The Xuanyuan Dragon Sect is gone, so what would they do without us?" The Rain Swordlord didn't stop jabbering.

At the side, Shi Yan felt like her head was splitting apart.

"What're you thinking?" The two swordlords glared at her.

"Nothing." Shi Yan lowered her head. Inside, she was actually wondering if the two swordlords were sent here by the Northdipper Swordsage to annoy her instead.

Actually, there wasn't anything wrong with the Emyrean Sword Sect not letting the Azuresoul Palace intervene with the duty of protecting the saplings. But the Rain Swordlord was so old that she already had wrinkles. Yet, she was still dressed so extravagantly, using pink, green, and orange, colors usually used by those younger women. Her words were brash and she had a controlling personality, with every word making others uncomfortable. In the past, Shi Yan would never have been so rude to Gujian Qingshuang that he would be so depressed like today. In her experience, pushing honest people too far would always have consequences.

"But it's none of my business!" She knew that those in the Emyrean Sword Sect would always turn and walk away after seeing the Rain Swordlord. Only the Wind Swordlord would be so attentive as to keep cleaning up after her every day.

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In the Supracloud Sanctuary, Yun Tianque was currently in a dark, secret room, communicating with the bonegnaw ants.

"Why do you need so much effort to speak?" Yun Tianque asked.

"Not any... of your... damn business... you trash," Yin Chen scolded using his robotic and hoarse voice.

"Are those Li Tianming's words or yours?" Yun Tianque laughed.

"It's me... your granddaddy... scolding you," Yin Chen said, displeased.

Yun Tianque scratched his head. In truth, this metal lifeform was the most terrifying devil in his heart. However, he never would have expected it to be a little cute. Through Yin Chen, Tianming and Yun Tianque were currently holding a long distance call. However, the connection could only be described as spluttering. Even a short sentence took a long while to transmit. Fortunately, it had patience. Despite the intermittent connection, it was successfully completed.

"Was that slap today good?" Tianming asked.

"What're you trying to say?" Yun Tianque said coldly.

"The divine tree's shaking caused sorrow for us all. I may not be a native, but I've heard many people talk about it. I believe you felt it, too. I saw everything. Your emotional changes, your surroundings, and everything your Supracloud Sanctuary's people have suffered. So I'm certain you'll make the right choice now," Li Tianming said.

"I believe your affection is one-sided here. You think one slap is enough to make me, Yun Tianque, work for you? Brat, things are easier said than done. If unifying the continent was easy, someone else would've done it long ago," Yun Tianque mocked.

"So stubborn? I know better than you what you're thinking. No matter what you say, no one can betray their bloodline and beliefs. Even if you don't believe it, nine out of ten people in your Supracloud Sanctuary know what the right thing to do is, because the divine tree is your roots," Tianming said.

Yun Tianque laughed and continued mocking him, "What an absolute joke!"

"Fine, let's not talk about it. Right now, seventeen of your saplings have been taken by the wargodeans and Blueblood Starocean, while the Azuresoul Palace's eighteen have been taken over by the Empyrean Sword Sect. Both sides want the saplings from the other side and have their own schemes. Sooner or later, a bloody conflict will erupt. We need you and Gujian Qingshuang to fan the flames and make them pay with their lives," Tianming said. This was a great chance for him, as both sides had stopped the Supracloud Sanctuary and Azuresoul Palace from getting involved, and both sides were being very greedy.

Yun Tianque continued sneering.

"Senior Yun, you really are stubborn. Look in the mirror and see how you look at Li Wushuang. Lan Sha may not have gotten it, but I know what you meant it when you said, 'It was my fault from the very start.'"

"Shut up! Stop spying on me!" Yun Tianque exploded.

"What, feeling guilty?" Tianming smiled. As he laughed, Yin Chen echoed his laughter. Tianming's voice changer made the laugh sound very eerie, but his laugh was actually very cheerful.

"Well, we'll need a chance to fan the flames. Before that, I need you to do something," Tianming said.

Yun Tianque kept silent, not wanting to participate in the conversation.

"Ten percent of your Supracloud Sanctuary's ore veins are metal ores. I need you to recall the personnel there. Tell them they need to pick fruit. Empty those mines and keep people away." Tianming already knew where the veins were located and their quantities. He could also pass through the defensive formations himself. As long as Yun Tianque removed those people, he would be everywhere!

"No way! I said I'm not on your side!" Yun Tianque raged. Two million Yin Chens was already terrifying enough to make his hair stand on end. And this brat still wanted more? Yun Tianque had never ever feared anything, not even death. However, when those ants occasionally crawled out of his body and looked at him with their beady black eyes.... That was the first time Yun Tianque had ever felt such primal fear.

A monster, a true monster! Why was such a thing a lifebound beast?

Chapter 1385 - Five Million Yin Chens

Tianming already thought it was miraculous enough that Xian Xian was able to confuse armies on the battlefield, yet his fifth Primordial Chaos Beast had completely exceeded his expectations.

"Sect Master Yun, I need your help," Tianming cordially said.

"No way!" Yun Tianque said.

"Fine. I'll let you have a taste of the 'pleasure'. I'll stop when you agree."

"Don't force me to kill myself."

"Feel free. I can just switch to Lu Yuanji, it's all the same to me. Though it'll be a little hard to unite your sect with you gone, Lu Yuanji also has her own form of influence. I'll still be able to use her to my own ends. Not to mention, you promised your children that you were going to take them fishing. Don't forget it."

"Are you threatening me with them?"

"You're overthinking it. I won't do anything to them, I just think it's a shame that a father would break a promise with his children over stubborn pride rather than becoming a brave revolutionary."

"You're shameless!"

"Whoa! Enough with the flattery!"

The bonegnaw ants went to work, causing Yun Tianque to writhe and twitch to the point that his tears uncontrollably flowed and veins pulsed. He clawed at his throat, but he couldn't even cry out in pain. The pain lasted seventeen breaths of time.

"I wanted to wait a little bit more, but one pair of the divine tree's saplings is already dead. Didn't you feel bad when you heard the cry of the divine tree?"

"Ugh... ugh...." Even after it all ended, Yun Tianque was still clawing at the ground with his hands, and Tianming's reminder about the divine tree was rubbing salt on the wound. This junior didn't mess around at all and had experienced far more things than those of his age, including three years of struggles and despair at his lowest point.

Yun Tianque took a deep breath and said, "Fine, the ore mines are all yours." He closed his eyes and gripped his fists tight.

"Thank you, Senior Yun. Don't agonize over it. One day, you'll come to thank yourself for having made the right decision." It all turned out as Tianming had planned. No matter how much Yun Tianque wanted to deny it, the situation of his sect, and the divine tree, as well as the threat of the bonegnaw ants gave him no choice but to side with Tianming. His mouth might be stubborn, but his body was quick to learn to fear the pain.

"Enough of your brainwashing. I'm not buying it," Yun Tianque said.

"You're mistaken. This isn't brainwashing. I was just thinking that if I were your son, I'd definitely hope that you're a hero rather than a traitor. If you were the latter, it'd leave a bad taste for the rest of my life."

"Isn't submitting to you the same as betraying my sect?"

"It's not the same. The wargodeans and Blueblood Starocean are subjugating you with sheer violence, and they'll make you kneel to them for the rest of your life. However, I only need you to cooperate with me for a time. When the time is right, I will release you. Perhaps we can even be friends."

"You'll let me go? How can I trust you?" The last thing he wanted was to remain in this nightmare.

"It isn't something I'm willing to promise yet. We'll see how things go. The point is if you dare to revolt against them and stand with me, I'll eventually dare to release you. It depends on how well you do."

Yun Tianque stayed silent.

"I still have to thank you. Now, all the mines on the Azurecloud Continent are mine, so I'll be able to increase the body count of my lifebound beast to five million."

"When will you show me its main body?" Yun Tianque asked, curious as to what kind of monster it was. His imagination was running wild.

"There's no rush. You'll see it one day." In fact, he already had. Even the smallest of bonegnaw ants was just as real as Yin Chen's other bodies.

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The Blueblood Starocean, Emyrean Sword Sect, and wargodeans soon formed perimeters around the thirty-five spots where the saplings had sprouted. The two swordlords left the Azuresoul Sword Mountain to go to the front lines, staring down at the enemies across the border. The entire continent was permeated by killing intent.

There was one thing the two sides shared in common: they each saw the saplings as treasures that they shouldn't destroy no matter what. That was why Tianming was willing to use the saplings to fan the flames of conflict between the two sides. They would be expending their own lives to defend the sapling sites.

There was an additional twist to the plan; Yan Nuxia and her thousands of allies from her sect went to the Emyrean Sword Sect to cause trouble after 'finding out' about the saplings. Long Wanying also applied pressure as the representative of the Xuanyuan Dragon Sect. No matter what, they couldn't be lazy with keeping up the act. It would be most unnatural if they didn't do anything after word of the saplings' appearance had spread.

After much arguing and threats, the Group of Celestial Maiden Halls obtained the right to guard two pairs of saplings instead of the half they had originally demanded, not that they had much of a choice. There were only a few thousand of them, while the Emyrean Sword Sect had a hundred and ten thousand swordpupils. The fact that they even got two was thanks to Long Wanying's quick wit in negotiating.

Naturally, she made sure to choose the two pairs that were closer to the sect, which made their assignment safer. There was little chance they would clash with the other side while defending there. All of it was to create the false impression that the Azuresoul Palace was on the Empyrean Sword Sect's side. Not to mention, guarding the saplings didn't necessarily mean that they would be given the saplings at the very end, so the Empyrean Sword Sect wasn't too bothered by it. At the very least, they believed that they already had half of the continent under their control, a sentiment that was shared by Li Wushuang and the others on the opposite side.

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Large numbers of cultivators had gathered around the thirty-five sapling sites for the past two days. Yin Chen reported that Li Wushuang had left with Li Haochen, the Tumulus Pill God, Yun Tianque, and the rest toward the Azuresoul Sword Mountain.

"What're they going to do here?" Long Wanying asked.

"Li Haochen broke through to the ninth level and grew greatly in strength. Li Wushuang prevented him from leaving because she couldn't stand the fact that the celestial orderians lost. Now she wants him to fight me in a rematch to regain their lost honor," Tianming nonchalantly said.

"Heh. That's her personality, alright. She never admits her losses, and even if she truly has lost, she disregards all other rules and continues trying to oppress others. She'll stoop to using any underhanded trick in the book, like an obsessed demon who thinks her destiny is to win every single battle she fights."

Only Li Wushuang could pull off something like forcefully dragging her nephew into a rematch for her own lost honor. Her pride as one of the hegemon of the sun ran too deep in her bones.

Chapter 1386 - Long Wanying's Plan

Long Wanying understood Li Wushuang far too well. Her desire to fight and dominate was far too overwhelming, and loss wasn't a word in her dictionary. There were only short-term setbacks, no such thing as a permanent loss, and she would stop at nothing to overcome those setbacks to the point that she wouldn't even let Li Haochen take a loss with grace. It wasn't that much of a surprise, considering that she had no son of her own.

"Aunt Ying, don't worry. Li Wushuang and Li Haochen will be losing again this time around," Tianming said. Defeating him wasn't just a simple matter of breaking through one time. Li Haochen wasn't the only one making progress, after all. Putting Tianming aside, even Xiaoxiao and Lingfeng never stopped improving. Yu Ziqian, however, was an exception that had his high and low moments.

"Are you sure?" Long Wanying asked.

"Of course. Last time I only had a seventy percent chance of winning, but this time it's almost certain."

"Arrogance is a folly of youth. You'll suffer because of that," she reminded gently.

"That won't happen. I already saw Li Haochen's ultimate move last time we fought. Not to mention, I've constantly had eyes on him since then. It isn't an exaggeration to say that I even know how many hairs he has. There's no secret he can keep from me." That was the truly terrifying part. While he didn't know what kind of life Li Haochen had led up till now, he knew that his previous performance was the

culmination of twenty-five years of training. After that, Tianming factored in every single divine herb his totems consumed into his estimations, and even then he was still certain of his victory.

"Alright. I'll trust you, then."

"It's a pointless fight. He's already lost to me once, so all I have to do is to send them running off another time."

"No, perhaps we can use this to spark a flame of conflict between them and the Emyrean Sword Sect."

"What do you have in mind?"

"It goes like this...." Long Wanying told him about her detailed plan, during which he nodded the entire time and committed the important points to memory. "What do you think?"

"It's brilliant! Aunt Ying, you might be the smartest person in the universe. Smart women are really charming!" Tianming flattered.

"Really?" She shyly touched her face and feigned frustration. "Regardless, wrinkles will still eventually form. Time is an enemy that nobody can beat. I'm already middle-aged... If it wasn't for all the things that've happened recently, I feel like I'd probably be a walking corpse by now."

"Aunt Ying, it won't happen. Women who have their things together will always be charming. The heavens won't disappoint those who put in effort."

"Well, I suppose I'll take your word for it, little boy," Long Wanying said, winking.

"Do your best, you middle-aged girlboss avenger!"

"Are you asking to be beaten up?!"

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Tianming could track their every movement with Yin Chen, so he was ready and waiting by the time they arrived at the Azuresoul Sword Mountain. However, he still pretended that he hadn't known they were coming and waited for people to call him to go to the Celestial Welcome Hall where Li Wushuang and the rest were.

Currently, the two swordlords were away defending the sapling sites, so Ye Dongliu and his son were in charge of the harvesting process. Apart from them, the One-strike Slaughterer, Shi Yan, also happened to be at the Azuresoul Sword Mountain. Gujian Qingshuang was there too. As for Yang Ce and Long Wanying, they hadn't left the sect and were focused on protecting Tianming.

Tianming knew how much Long Wanying's care and her network meant for him. Without her, he wouldn't have been able to achieve anything like he had. This time around, she went with him and Yang Ce to the Celestial Welcome Hall.

Yang Ce was a quiet person who seldom spoke, and stood coldly by the wayside. The only time his gaze softened was when he looked at Long Wanying. Yan Nuxia said that he'd been by Long Wanying's side for years and had only disappeared for a while after she got married. It was only after something had

happened to her family that he came back to her, but only to protect and help her, never bringing anything else up.

Tianming didn't know what to make of Yang Ce. His personality was one that made him focus more on cultivation than anything else. Though he was obviously attracted to Long Wanying, he never took the initiative to make an approach or talk to her. Tianming really didn't understand why, but at the very least, he knew that Long Wanying probably wouldn't be too receptive to his advances given the grudge she still held.

As he wondered about the dynamics of his group, they arrived at the Celestial Welcome Hall. The Azure Sky Myriad Sword Formation was completely sealed off. Even though the number of enemies was small, they were all among the strongest fighters on their side, so Gujian Qingshuang didn't permit them to enter. They had been coldly glaring at him from the outside for fifteen minutes, and Tianming's appearance set off their fuse.

The other swordpupils and disciples had heard of what was going on. Many of them hadn't had a chance to see the previous fight with their own eyes, so they swarmed to the Celestial Welcome Hall. Tianming immediately spotted Li Wushuang and Li Haochen. The cold, moon-white-haired woman still looked distant and aloof, her gaze locked on Tianming. She immediately gave Li Haochen a look, signaling him to make the challenge.

"Yes, Aunt." Li Haochen was much more confident ever since he had broken through. He had never wanted to lose in the previous fight, and this was a chance to tip the scales back in his favor. Only by winning this battle could he proudly return to the celestial orderians and deserve his status as the son of the sun emperor.

"Don't let your father suffer any more humiliation for our kind. This is your final chance. If you lose here and now, you'll never have any more hope ever again," Li Wushuang said. Though her voice wasn't loud, every single word was as heavy as a mountain to Li Haochen. Being born as who he was had cost him about half of his whole life.

"Brother Haochen, relax. Just do what you normally do. It'll be fine," Long Youyou said.

"That's right. He's a beastmaster, so he can't grow as quickly as you do," Li Ruoshi said.

"You two had better stay far away and not get in the way," Li Wushuang said with a glare.

The girls meekly turned and walked away.

"For someone so young, he's already mired in lust thanks to you two. If he loses today, the two of you will be forbidden from meeting him before you all turn fifty," Li Wushuang said.

"Aunt...."

The two girls were completely shocked. Their jealousy and arguing would be completely pointless now. They quickly moved as far as they could so that they wouldn't affect Li Haochen in the slightest.

The pressure only continued mounting on Li Haochen. Li Wushuang wanted to make sure that he would give everything he could to win. She couldn't accept a loss before Long Wanying, even if it wasn't her own.

Li Haochen looked at the crowd at the Azuresoul Sword Mountain. As the sun emperor's son, it was the first time he had been regarded with so much hostility in his life. Back then, even the disciples from the Myriad Solar Sects had looked at him like he was the sun, only being able to admire him from below and look away from his shining radiance. He took a deep breath, drew his Crimsoncloud Dragonbane, and pointed it at Tianming. "Li Tianming, come fight me."

It was a rematch after all! The disciples of the Azuresoul Palace felt their blood boil. They had been dreaming about how glorious the previous fight was even though most of them hadn't seen it with their own eyes. In their eyes, perhaps even those of all the disciples in the entire Myriad Solar Sects, Tianming was like a god among gods, their only hope and figure of worship. Tianming was surprised to notice the appearance of Omniscient Will, the power of the masses. Even though it was still rather weak and only came from the juniors of Azuresoul Palace, it still marked the first time he had received any since he'd come to the sun. It sparked the hope of him eventually being able to rule the sun and the higher life forms as an emperor one day. It would be a repeat of what had happened on the Flameyellow Continent.

Looks like there's a point to showing off after all, he concluded. He stepped forward and calmly said, "Li Haochen, you already lost to me. What right do you have to demand a rematch at my doorstep? If I take challenges from any random person who wants to challenge me, how would I have time to cultivate? I need you to give me a reason to accept your challenge." Nobody but Tianming had the right to call the son of the sun emperor a random person, but that didn't make it any less infuriating. However, the disciples of the Azuresoul Palace felt his stunning bravery before the lofty celestial orderians when he questioned their right to challenge him, further intensifying their feelings of worship. All the juniors and even some of the youthgrand disciples began looking at him in a worshipful light.

Naturally, Tianming's arrogance was part of Long Wanying's plan. Li Haochen would no doubt feel psychologically attacked from being looked down upon, but he took a deep breath and said, "That's right, you of all people have the right to treat me just like a random person, because you've defeated me before. Might makes right, so toy with me however you wish. But nobody stays a victor forever. I hope you're brave enough to fight to keep your victory rather than hide for the rest of your life out of sheer pride and vanity."

Chapter 1387 - Just Like Clothes

"Nobody stays a victor forever?" Tianming thought the words had a point. In fact, Li Wushuang was the one who needed to hear them the most. However, he kept quiet about it and went along with Long Wanying's plan, continuing to feign arrogance. "You accuse me of not daring to accept your challenge? Stop joking around. I wouldn't even bat an eye even if three Li Haochens came to challenge me. The problem is that you aren't even offering me an incentive for giving you a chance. The last time we fought, we were at least able to fight over the universal manna and divine herb. Are you going to challenge me empty-handed this time?"

"An incentive?" Li Haochen turned to look at Li Wushuang. After she gave her permission, he took a deep breath and asked, "Alright, what kind of incentive do you want?"

"If you lose, I want those two beauties behind you to be my concubines. They came here with you, but they won't be leaving," Tianming gleefully said. Immediately, many senior swordpupils blankly looked at

him with their mouths agape, marveling at his courage. Those two beauties weren't just normal people; one of them was from the Veildragon Palace, and the other was a soul tribulator. Their statuses were almost as high as Li Haochen's, and more importantly, they were engaged to him. If Li Haochen agreed and lost, it would be ten times as humiliating as before and the story would be told again and again for tens of thousands of years. The celestial orderians definitely wouldn't tolerate any such treatment.

"Li Haochen, consider it well. They're so beautiful that I'm bewitched by them. Won't you give me a chance?" Tianming continued. He knew better than anyone that he was absolutely acting like a despicable villain. The three nervous youths almost seemed like the protagonists that were being humiliated; however, it was important for the plan to work.

As expected, Li Haochen wasn't the one who exploded with anger first. Li Wushuang was. She glared at him angrily and thrust toward the formation, causing tens of thousands of others to raise their swords at her.

"What is it, Senior Li Wushuang? You want to kill me through the formation? Don't be in such a rush. It isn't like Li Haochen will necessarily refuse. You celestial orderians can't accept losing face, right? Do you consider the people you love less important than winning?"

Though Li Wushuang stayed silent, her glare was so fierce it was terrifying. Triggering her was the very thing Long Wanying and Tianming were trying to achieve. The angrier she grew, the deeper she fell into Long Wanying's trap. Tianming's shamelessness and his fearless performance was completely irresistible bait to someone like Li Wushuang, who got mad at every little thing.

Li Haochen endured the shame and grit his teeth. "I didn't think you'd be such a shameless person despite being so powerful. I can accept anything else, but I won't tolerate using people as betting chips."

"Fine. Then go back. Call me when you think it through. A piece of advice: honor is like your limbs. Without them, you can't even properly live your life. But women... women are just like clothes. They can be worn and removed as you please. Those two outfits of yours have really beautiful designs. What's the harm in letting me try them on?"

"You ingrate! Shameless sicko!" Long Youyou cursed, tears forming in her eyes. She had been born into high status, and while she had endured the hardship of battle, this kind of humiliation was completely fresh to her. Not to mention, though their seniors didn't hold back on giving them corporeal punishment as a form of character building, people of their status never had to suffer any real consequences like experiencing the deaths of their lifebound beasts or being trampled beneath the feet of others and completely losing their dignity.

"Leave me alone and buzz off," Tianming said.

"No. If you don't come and fight, I'll wait outside. Let's see if you can wait out your entire lifetime without leaving here," Li Haochen firmly said. He would even go so far just to be able to win.

"No incentive, no rematch. My lessons don't come free, you know. It takes effort to beat you up, you see." It didn't matter what they said as long as Tianming and the rest were safe within the boundaries of the formation. The terms of battle were his to dictate, and he wasn't in a rush to reclaim his honor like Li Haochen was.

This was a complete fiasco. Many had thought that Tianming didn't dare to fight because he was afraid of losing, but even they had to admit that seeing the son of the sun emperor get talked down to like that was a guilty pleasure. It made for a really awkward situation. Li Wushuang's eyes were completely bloodshot with rage; she was probably considering bringing in more forces to break down the formation so she could kill Tianming and Long Wanying herself.

Right at that moment, Yun Tianque shuffled close to the Tumulus Pill God and said, "It won't do to let this continue. Why don't we offer up an incentive and see if they agree to it? I doubt it'll be good for us if Li Wushuang's anger continues getting stoked." He touched his face, subtly reminding the Tumulus Pill God about the time he had been given a fist to the face.

"What incentive? We used a seven-star universal manna last time. There's nothing more precious than something like that, especially not to a beastmaster. That little brat really is really devious. There's no way Li Haochen will take the risk of losing his women just for a fight."

"I know. I didn't think the brat would be so shameless. However, we came all the way here, so it's not easy to back down. But Li Wushuang is getting more and more annoyed and the young prince doesn't want to leave without a fight. What can we do about this? If the fight doesn't happen, it'll be rather troublesome."

"Lady Wushuang is too obsessed with winning, to the point that she cares so much about fights between juniors. However, we're at a crucial time now with the appearance of the saplings. Linger here for too long can't be good for us... wait, what about the saplings?"

Yun Tianque's eyes glowed as he thought, you finally took the bait. "Do you mean we should offer the rights to defend some of the saplings to them? Lady Wushuang did say that we should take all thirty-five sapling pairs.... But that means we'd have to fight the Empyrean Sword Sect for them."

Tianming hadn't brought up the saplings the entire time, just as Long Wanying had planned. If he was the one who brought them up himself, it would be far too obvious. Long Wanying intentionally had Tianming humiliate them through Li Ruoshi and Long Youyou to make Li Haochen lose his reason and give Yun Tianque an excuse to offer them the perfect alternative. It turned out as they had expected when the Tumulus Pill God brought up the suggestion to Li Wushuang himself.

Chapter 1388 - Long Live Senior Brother Li

It would be really hard for Li Wushuang to refuse the suggestion, given how irrationally mad she was. Long Wanying understood them too well—Li Wushuang in particular.

Eventually, Li Wushuang assented and the Tumulus Pill God said, "Chief Instructor Gujian, Whitedragon Empress, and General Shi Yan, we'll offer the right to guard one sapling site as an incentive. How does that sound?"

The fact that he didn't address Tianming meant that he had no right to decide. Not to mention, the sapling site wouldn't be attractive to him at all, but it was different for his seniors. There were still seventeen sites in the Supracloud Sanctuary's territory, even though one pair had been destroyed. Offering one site as an incentive was already a huge concession. Everyone quieted down when they heard those words, with Tianming feigning shock himself.

"Let us talk about it." Long Wanying and the rest kept a straight face. She joined up with Shi Yan, Gujian Qingshuang, and Tianming for a talk.

"What do you think, Tianming?" Gujian Qingshuang asked.

"It works. The saplings are really important, so it's worth taking the chance," Tianming said.

"What about the Emyrean Sword Sect, General Shi?" Gujian Qingshuang said.

Shi Yan rolled her eyes. "What does it have to do with me? I don't really care, as long as we won't be at risk of losing any of our own sites. I'd suggest asking for another site, though, to test their limits."

After all, Li Haochen was the one who was asking for the privilege of a rematch so his honor could be restored. It wasn't a fight where both sides had something to lose, so Tianming had no obligation to accept the challenge at all. As such, Li Haochen needed to offer an incentive for the fight. The discussion between the four of them was merely a show they were putting on for Shi Yan.

After they came to a conclusion, Gujian Qingshuang said, "Tumulus Pill God, we want two of your sapling sites, namely the ones at Aix Lake and Inverse Peak. If you agree, Li Tianming will accept the challenge."

Tunnel vision often led people to fall for simple traps. Those two selected locations were sensitive areas where conflict would be prone to occur. If the Azuresoul Palace's side sent troops to guard those sites, the two sides would be separated only by a lake.

Shi Yan had also sent word to the two swordlords about the developments, which Tianming noticed. He looked at Long Wanying and couldn't help but smile. If their expectations were correct, the Emyrean Sword Sect would rush to take those two sites, though it wasn't like those from the Group of Celestial Hall Maidens had enough manpower to fight them for the sites anyway.

Now, it all depended on Li Wushuang. As expected, she didn't care about the sapling sites at all in her totally enraged state. She had already planned to take them all, so temporarily losing two made no difference to her. Not to mention, Tianming wasn't the one who asked for the saplings, leaving her ignorant to Tianming's plan to conquer all the saplings of the two sects.

Aix Lake and Inverse Peak weren't too distant from each other and cultivators from both sides often clashed there, so conflict would be inevitable. Apart from that, Long Wanying had an even more fatal link in the plan that would be inescapable if Li Wushuang fell for it.

As expected, Li Wushuang was completely fine with letting go of the two sites. She couldn't help her drive for victory, especially not after being provoked.

"Li Wushuang, I'll use your obsession with winning against you to make you lose everything," Long Wanying said under her breath after Li Wushuang agreed.

"Aunt Ying, don't worry. The game has just begun," Tianming said.

To prevent anyone from interfering in the fight, Gujian Qingshuang set up a battlefield within the Azuresky Myriadsword Formation and only let Li Haochen inside. The rest weren't too worried that they would harm him, given his status.

Li Haochen finally had the chance to face Tianming again in battle. He once respected Tianming, but the white-haired youth's shameless actions today had completely changed his impression of him. He absolutely loathed and hated him now.

Tianming entered the battlefield as those behind him cheered for him like he was their king. He knew that the fight itself wasn't really that crucial. After all, they'd already won the moment Li Wushuang and the rest had fallen for the trap. He insidiously smiled at Li Haochen with his head tilted and sneered, "So, you're here to humiliate yourself again. Why bother? You'll even lose two sapling sites as a result. Is it so hard to just accept that you've lost?"

"Quit putting up that carefree act, it only makes me look down on you more. Let's not waste words. Only celestial orderians deserve to win," Li Haochen said.

"So you're saying that only you guys deserve to stand at the top and other people don't even deserve to look up at you?"

"You can think of it that way." No doubt, he was enraged at the disrespect Tianming had shown Li Ruoshi and Long Youyou, causing his fighting spirit to rise. The vastsun godbeasts that had been consuming tons of divine herbs emerged from his bane-rings. He wielded Crimsoncloud Dragonbane and stood in front of his totems that blocked out the whole sky. They were much larger than before and the golden flames on their bodies burned even stronger. At the ninth level of the Constellation stage, he had reached even greater heights that his peers could only dream of.

The godbeasts furiously roared at Tianming, sending vast pillars of flames his way. The normal disciples who were ascendants and below in the crowd behind Tianming paled at the sight. As far as normal people like them were concerned, Li Haochen was like a god!

"Long live Senior Brother Li!"

"Beat him up!"

Their faith in Tianming was the only thing that supported their confidence. Then a black and red phoenix with a wingspan of a thousand meters emerged alongside a Regal Chaosfiend bathed in lightning bolts and an even larger gigantic two-headed dragon. Then, a tree thousands of meters tall took root on the battlefield. It looked like a smaller version of the Azurecloud Divine Tree. Those four lifebound beasts alone were like miracles in and of themselves.

Li Wushuang and the rest could tell that Ying Huo had evolved with the Solar Nucleus and had become a seven-star divine beast. But was that all? Tianming, standing between the four beasts, waved his hand. A terrifying stream of metal reflecting silver light appeared, forming a silvery vortex around him that was tens of thousands of meters wide. It was a sea of metal made up of Yin Chen's three million bodies, the super metal army!

"Whoa!"

The appearance of Yin Chen caught many there by surprise. The vortex of metal spun with Tianming at its center, creating a lot of sparks and sharp noises from the friction. It hurt just to be near them. If one looked close enough, one would notice that the vortex was made out of countless tiny metal insects. Some were locusts, others were spiders or scorpions, and there were even interlinked centipedes. In

terms of volume alone, those bodies could rival Xian Xian's tree. Contrasted against those gigantic beasts and totems, Tianming and Li Haochen looked puny.

"These lifebound beasts...."

Everyone, including the Tumulus Pill God, gasped in confusion. Little did they know that these bodies had been created using the mines across the continent. There were still two million bodies outside, split up into a total of twenty million invisible cockroaches that surveilled the entire continent, apart from the three million bodies that remained with Tianming in case of combat. The five lifebound beasts alone had completely outshined the eight totems.

Even Li Haochen was stumped, despite his earlier confidence. Even a fool would be able to tell that Tianming wasn't fighting on the same level he had back then. His lifebound beasts had all evolved, and Yin Chen now had three million bodies compared to the previous hundreds of thousands. Too bad for him, Tianming didn't even give him a chance to process it.

"Go!" Tianming didn't even have to do the work, leaving it to Ying Huo, Lan Huang, Meow Meow, and Xian Xian to try out their new abilities. Ying Huo had only used Sungod's Wrath against Princess Shen Yu in the wondersky realm before. Now, it flew into the sky and exploded into a new sun before crashing back down.

The look on Li Haochen's face immediately changed. He immediately used his ultimate move, his totemic calamity Vastsun Truegod. The eight totems fused and formed a flaming warblade-wielding titan. It looked far more powerful than before, thanks to the divine herbs, but Ying Huo wasn't the only one attacking. Meow Meow showed off its wings, forming them into eight trigrams as it executed Regalfiend Wings. The wings attracted countless lightning bolts, all of which had Blitzbane text within them. Then the wings flapped and created countless lightning vortices that crashed down on the gigantic totem alongside Ying Huo's sun. After that, countless mud-water dragons appeared from the ground, constricting the flaming titan's body before linking and forming a cage!

Chapter 1389 - Born to Rule

The mud dragons were created by Lan Huang's new ability, Dragonprison Hell. They were formed from its tough and sharp scales, giving them a shocking sharpness and allowing the defensive ability to be used offensively as well. Combined with Meow Meow and Ying Huo's abilities, it caused quite a lot of trouble for the Vastsun Truegod. Apart from all that, a floral torrent of green loti blasted toward it. They were Demise Greenloti.

The clash of all those abilities resulted in an explosion on a scale that shouldn't occur in a fight between constelliers. The entire formation shook and rumbled from the sheer force, making it seem like the earth and sky were falling apart. It was outright shocking that a clash between juniors could result in so much commotion. The audience watched as the combined totem began disintegrating from the sheer forces that swallowed it up. It didn't just separate into eight totems, but rather shattered into smithereens, mere pieces of terra, before they were driven back into the bane-rings. It wouldn't be possible for Li Haochen to use them for the time being, a completely unbelievable outcome!

"Last time, Li Tianming and Li Haochen at least managed to exchange blows, but now his lifebound beasts alone were enough to completely disintegrate the eight totems! It's clear who's improved more!"

"This is a complete domination."

"It's not over, look!"

After the four abilities destroyed his totem, Li Haochen charged toward Tianming, only for the terrifying swarm of metal to instantly swallow him up. The countless metal insects gathered together in a large sphere as the locusts constantly bit at him, the spiders spun their silver threads nonstop, the scorpions kept trying to inject metallizing venom, and the centipedes started constricting him. It was heaps upon heaps of attacks from all directions. People couldn't see Li Haochen at all, only the occasional glimpse of his blade as it slashed and peeked out from the swarm to no avail. They barely saw the thick ball of thread that now bound him.

Bursts of flame flashed amidst the swarm; normal insects would definitely have been burnt to crisp, but these metallic ones only slightly melted, dying at a snail's pace. Some partially-melted ones only needed to cool off before reshaping themselves into insect forms and continuing the assault.

Ear-piercing sounds rang out nonstop as the insects constantly morphed and reformed, completely dominating Li Haochen as he desperately swung his blade. The mandibles of the locusts and legs of the centipedes had left countless wounds on his body, which was heavily bound by silver threads that left even more bloody marks as they bit into his skin, some even cutting into his organs! Stream after stream of venom was also injected into him.

The Crimsoncloud Dragonbane's ocean-parting slash eradicated many of Yin Chen's bodies, but that was only a small fraction of the whole. Even if Li Haochen's body was small relative to the totems, it didn't stop him from being completely trashed by the swarm of metal insects. There were even bonegnaw ants that started burrowing into him, causing him to howl in pain and desperately try to break out. He was completely covered in his own blood.

"Save me! Save me!" Yin Chen was a lifebound beast that couldn't be completely killed off. Being trapped within its bodies felt like drowning. Putting Li Haochen aside, even Tianming feared the prospect of being on the receiving end of such an onslaught. The number of Yin Chen's bodies could greatly raise Tianming's offensive capabilities. Having consumed almost all the ore on the continent, it had more than enough bodies to take care of a ninth-level constellier, though it lost around fifty thousand of itself in the process.

"Li Haochen's losing again...."

"How pitiful... this is too sad to see."

Seeing Li Haochen desperately crawl toward the borders of the Azuresky Myriadsword Formation, leaving behind a trail of blood, the audience was shocked into silence. Had this really been a fair fight? No, it was more like a ruthless slaughter. Tianming himself didn't even have to fight; his lifebound beasts alone were enough to plunge Li Haochen into a nightmare. Even the nearby juniors could tell that most of the confidence Li Haochen had built up through his life had been crushed when they saw him scramble toward the formation's edge. The swarm of metal insects would no doubt continue haunting him for life. There was losing, and there was being completely dominated. Last time, he had managed to stand back up and steel his resolve to better himself, but now his spirit was utterly crushed.

"Don't be too sad about it. I only used around seventy percent of my full power, so I'm not as terrifying as you think," Tianming consoled when he saw the look of absolute defeat in his opponent's eyes. This wasn't something he should be doing to an enemy.

"Yes... yes...." Li Haochen's teeth chattered when he spoke. The two of them, both the finest among their peers, looked at one another from opposite ends, but one stood high above in the heavens while the other groveled on the ground.

Thanks to his beasts, Tianming had become a legendary figure for those of the sect, and by extension, the continent. People began chanting his name, slowly building up to a crescendo of worship. Tianming closed his eyes and enjoyed the sensation of his Imperial Will being nourished. The familiar feeling is back! The sensation of resonating with everyone that was connected to him felt fantastic. If I want to get stronger, I'd better show off my power even more.

Even though Tianming was fighting someone weaker than him, his utter domination had allowed him to take the first step into becoming an idol of worship for those of the continent. This is where I take my first step toward world domination! He wasn't a saint; he was born to rule!

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The battle was over, but the tense silence persisted. Li Haochen returned to his group, tired and battered. They all blankly looked at him. As for the only two people that truly cared for him, Long Youyou and Li Ruoshi, they were bawling nonstop. They didn't dare to move one bit as Li Haochen consoled them out of fear of Li Wushuang. Angering her meant they would be forbidden from meeting until they were fifty. This might be the worst day of their lives.

Chapter 1390 - Death of Shi Yan

Tianming looked at Li Wushuang and knew that she couldn't accept how things turned out. Even though she had come here filled with confidence that the honor of the celestial orderians would be restored, things hadn't turned out as she'd hoped. What was worse was that they suffered an even more humiliating loss than before. Now Li Haochen completely despaired, fully knowing that he would never rise above Tianming for the rest of his life. The realization was far worse than the prospect of going back to face his aunt.

"Aunt...." He grit his teeth, barely being able to mouth the word. He didn't look up at all, keeping his eyes fixed on her lower body. She looked just like a frozen statue. He could feel the chill coming from her from a distance.

"Haochen," she said, her cold voice grating painfully on his ears.

"Aunt, I'm listening."

"You may go back."

"Yes."

"After you return, face our kind and atone for your mistakes with your death." Her voice penetrated him bone deep. Li Haochen felt like he had fallen into ice water as he struggled to breathe; it was as if his airway was completely blocked off. He desperately wanted to say that it was her hubris and obsession

with victory that had doomed him for good. She was the one who should have to die, not him! He knelt on the ground, face filled with despair.

"Big Brother Haochen...." Fortunately, pairs of arms wrapped around him from either side, dragging him back out from the abyss of death. Though life was often cold and lonely, from time to time, it could also be warm.

As they were leaving, Long Wanying called out to Li Wushuang. The frosty woman turned back and looked at her hateful enemies. "Are you trying to gloat over your minor victory, Long Wanying?"

"No. I just want to let you know that everyone you know hates you, no exceptions. There's a good reason that nobody has ever truly loved you."

"Hehehe...." Li Wushuang began laughing and Long Wanying joined her. One laughed coldly in a maniacal fashion, while the other laughed in a carefree manner. Long Wanying felt absolutely brilliant for saying that, but she had the right to say those words. She was well loved by almost everyone in her life and had experienced romantic, amicable, and familial love. People generally didn't dislike her.

As Li Wushuang turned around, her nails dug deep into her palms. 'Nobody has ever truly loved you'. Those words could cut deep for people of a certain age. That was nothing short of cruelty from Long Wanying.

"You must've been left really wanting for love. That's why you want to force everyone to bow down to you! Why can't you just accept that you've failed as a person? Everyone says that the sun emperor spoils you the most, but you know why that is, right?" Long Wanying continued.

Li Wushuang turned back and faced Long Wanying again, eyes bloodshot with rage. She uncontrollably shuddered, but Long Wanying was safely inside the formation. "So lots of people love you, is that it?"

"That's right."

"Fine. Once all of them die, you'll have no one left to love you."

"I'd expect a harsher threat than that from a three-year-old. It's simply laughable. Why don't you just admit it? You're a sick, twisted, venomous woman-baby that lives in her very own reality that's been shaped by another sick fiend. You know who I'm talking about." Long Wanying wasn't the least bit agitated when she said that.

No doubt, Tianming knew that she was talking about the sun emperor, Li Wudi, a name that was all too familiar. However, his identically-named godfather didn't have a younger sister.

"Hehe... Hehehehe...." Li Wushuang shot one last hateful glare at Long Wanying before finally leaving.

Long Wanying took a deep breath and stopped smiling. She turned back and patted Tianming on the shoulder, seemingly a little worn out. "Now that's got her cooked close to perfection. It's about time for the next step."

"Alright." Tianming gave her a light shoulder massage. "Don't worry, Aunt Ying. As long as the people that love us are still around, we'll definitely win."

"Yeah...."

"With Aix Lake and Inverse Peak in hand, Shi Yan should be heading out to claim them, right?"

"Looks like she already couldn't wait," Long Wanying said, noticing that Shi Yan was gone. Everything had gone according to plan, from how Li Haochen's rematch had played out to Li Wushuang's emotional state. There wasn't a time in Li Wushuang's life when she was more vitriolic and unstable than she was right now.

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Li Haochen's failed rematch had cost them two sapling sites. As the celestial orderians couldn't afford to lose any more face, they temporarily stopped their usual antics. As promised, the Blueblood Starocean and wargodean cultivators at the two sites had retreated after receiving transmission stones with orders to do so, but they didn't have to go far. Not far away from the two spots was another sapling site occupied by their allies.

As Tianming had expected, the greedy Emyrean Sword Sect immediately sent forces to take over those two dangerous sites that were within the Supracloud Sanctuary's territory upon receiving transmission stones from Shi Yan. The reason they gave was that the Group of Celestial Maiden Halls couldn't be tasked with defending the sites at the borders, as they simply didn't have enough manpower for the dangerous task, so they would help the Azuresoul Palace undertake this difficult mission instead. The reason was as justified as they came, and one didn't have to read between the lines to see that they meant to say they wanted everything that belonged to the Azuresoul Palace.

Now the Azuresoul Palace's side had twenty pairs of saplings in total, with the two sites near the sect being defended by the Group of Celestial Maiden Halls. Quickly, the Blueblood Starocean and wargodeans retreated from the two sites, allowing the two swordlords to send a large number of troops to occupy them. The ones who were forced to retreat were naturally displeased, so tensions were high. Even so, that still wasn't enough.

"The Emyrean Sword Sect is here to rob away everything valuable, so they won't hesitate to take the two sites we rightfully won. However, they won't attack if the enemy doesn't attack first, so real friction won't occur just yet—at least not until we light even more sparks."

The Rain Swordlord was now situated at Aix Lake. Lan Sha and a group of thousands of Blueblood Starocean cultivators were camped not far away. Now that the two swordlords were even further ahead, Shi Yan left with tens of her trusted subordinates to guard the other sapling sites behind the front lines.

"Tianming," Long Wanying called out as a reminder.

"I'll inform Yun Tianque immediately." The next phase was about to start!

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The trip back to the Supracloud Sanctuary was a quiet one, with nobody daring to utter a single word. They all followed behind Li Wushuang. Someone who had received a transmission stone bearing the news of his wife giving birth to a son couldn't stifle his joyous laughter, only to have his head cut off by Li Wushuang, his decapitated head still smiling, oblivious to its death. After witnessing that, nobody dared to so much as let their lips twitch. The one who'd been killed had a rather high standing among the

wargodeans, but the Tumulus Pill God kept quiet about it. Ruffling Li Wushuang's feathers would just be an invitation for heads to roll.

The stifling atmosphere was unbearable, but eventually, Yun Tianque took a deep breath and said, "Lady Wushuang, I'm still agonizing over having angered you the last time. Please allow me to make up for it."

"So?" She looked at him coldly as the others nervously watched in anticipation.

"As you instructed, I have our informants monitoring the movements of the other side. We're already pushing ourselves to the limits of our capabilities and reach, but I regret to say that things have been futile so far... until I got a surprising report just now."

"Out with it."

"Shi Yan of the Empyrean Sword Sect has left the sect alone with a small group of people, one of whom is my informant. He can give us pinpoint coordinates of their location. I'm guessing she's going to bring the good news to the two swordlords."

"I see..." Li Wushuang nodded, "go ahead."

"Where to?"

"Go kill Shi Yan." That was one of the items that had been on her checklist to begin with. She wouldn't hesitate to kill anyone that opposed her on the Azurecloud Continent, and as far as she was concerned, Shi Yan was on Long Wanying's side. She didn't care about the pros and cons of such an undertaking either. Not to mention, nobody dared to question her, especially not after she had just killed someone for the heinous crime of laughing.

"You've done well, Yun Tianque. I want them to dig out where the others are next! Once you find them, kill them!"

"Yes!" The group hurriedly turned around.

"Tianque, since when have you had informants in the Empyrean Sword Sect?" the Tumulus Pill God asked.

"It's a long story, but mainly, the Empyrean Sword Sect is the main sect that the Azuresoul Palace branched out from. I've always been worried that they would come to their aid, so I sent a few people to infiltrate them just in case. I didn't actually think it would come to good use," Yun Tianque convincingly said, relaying Tianming's exact wording.

"Impressive! If we let Lady Wushuang vent her rage in a bloodbath, she'll calm down. You've rendered us a great service."

"I had to make up for my... mistake... somehow. The Azuresoul Palace really pulled out all the stops when they tried enraging her, so let her vent. Though, I worry that this will cause us to clash in a full-on conflict with the Empyrean Sword Sect."

"Don't worry about that. Lady Wushuang has been intent on taking all the sapling sites from the very beginning, so it was only a matter of time until a full-on clash happened. Shi Yan's death was bound to

happen sooner or later. Among the three famous elites from the Emyrean Sword Sect, the two swordlords are famous buffoons. After we kill Shi Yan, we'll have made our lives much easier."

"I see. I suppose I can rest well now." I wonder who gave Tianming this idea? It's really vicious!

Li Haochen's challenge had been expertly carried out. The first step involved Tianming demanding to be given Li Ruoshi and Long Youyou to enrage the other side. Then they got Yun Tianque to suggest offering the two most volatile sapling sites as an incentive. As a result, the two swordlords were already facing off against Lan Sha's forces. Long Wanying had also fanned the flames of Li Wushuang's anger, causing her to be filled to the brim with killing intent. Then they got Yun Tianque to offer up Shi Yan on a silver platter. Once Shi Yan died....

"Forgive my ignorance, but how many birds did we just kill with one stone?" he asked Yin Chen.

"None of... your damn... business business..." Yin Chen said.

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Back at Fairman Peak, Gujian Qingshuang, Long Wanying, Yan Nuxia, Yang Ce, Gu Tao'er, Jiang Qingliu, Yu Ziqian, and others gathered around Tianming. Apart from Lingfeng and Xiaoxiao, who wouldn't be able to contribute to this project and were instead focused on cultivating, everyone else was there.

"How is it?" they asked him.

"They're already fighting," Tianming said. He couldn't see the battlefield himself, so he was going off Yin Chen's descriptions.

"What's the fight like?" he asked Yin Chen.

"Almost done."

Everyone waited with bated breath. Fifteen minutes later, Yin Chen finished its report and Tianming breathed a sigh of relief.

"So? How did it go?" the others urged.

"Shi Yan survived," Tianming said.

"How's that possible?" The Tumulus Pill God and Li Wushuang were there.

"They were fighting at Denserock Forest. Shi Yan is one of the stoneword race. Her four stoneword terradragons managed to hold on long enough for her to escape into a river in the forest. However, all four of her lifebound beasts are dead, and she's also at the brink of death. She only survived by using an ability unique to her race and turning to stone, but she's basically crippled now."

Shi Yan was an enemy who had been there to rob them to begin with, but at the very least, she was smarter than the two swordlords and hadn't attracted any unnecessary attention.

"Looks like we've more or less achieved what we wanted. Since she survived, the swordlords will be informed about the assault ahead of schedule," Long Wanying said.

"Looks like we can watch the play unfold now," Gujian Qingshuang said.

"That's right." Everyone nodded in agreement.

"Impressive work, Whitedragon Empress," Gujian Qingshuang said.

Long Wanying merely smiled. "It's all thanks to Tianming having a grasp of all this information. Our enemy is far too strong, so we're going to have to use our wits to avoid being crushed by them."

Even with all of that, Long Wanying had been quite adept at maneuvering everyone, even Li Wushuang, resulting in the current state of affairs. Her every word had been carefully chosen to push Li Wushuang's buttons and achieve the desired result. Now, Li Wushuang was fueled only by the desire to kill and lacked the slightest bit of reason.

Another fifteen minutes later, Tianming's eyes brightened. "It's here! The swordlords got Shi Yan's transmission stones. Lan Sha also provoked them into a conflict. Now Blueblood Starocean and the Emyrean Sword Sect are fighting at Aix Lake."