

The Ages 1391

Chapter 1391 - The Battle At Aix Lake

"Is the fight intense?" Long Wanying asked.

After checking with Yin Chen, Tianming replied, "Both sides are battling on the lake. Apart from the small number of people left at the saplings, seven of the eight thousand Emyrean Sword Sect swordpupils are on the battlefield. There's about four thousand Blueblood Starocean totemancers on the other side. Both the Rain Swordlord and Lan Sha are participating in the battle. When the Rain Swordlord received the news that Shi Yan was dying from her severe injuries, the people of the Blueblood Starocean were in the midst of mocking and provoking them. Triggered by that, the Emyrean Sword Sect members were furious and charged into battle, slaying a hundred people. Aix Lake has been dyed red by blood."

The Emyrean Sword Sect was fifth on the myriad sect ranking, while Blueblood Starocean was tenth. They might have hesitated if their opponents were the wargodeans. Additionally, their numbers were almost twice their opponents'. As expected, a fight had been bound to break out in an area as sensitive as Aix Lake.

"The fire's burning, but we still have a chance to continue to fan the flames so it burns even hotter," said Long Wanying.

"You mean?" Gujian Qingshuang asked.

"Let's head over there and see if we can make it in time. We might be able to fish in troubled waters," Long Wanying replied.

"You're right." Gujian Qingshuang nodded. He would never forget that Li Wushuang murdered his younger brother, Gujian Daoyi!

Gujian Qingshuang and others remained at the Azuresoul Sword Mountain while Yang Ce, Long Wanying, Jiang Qingliu, Yan Nuxia, Tianming, and Yu Ziqian immediately set off in the direction of Aix Lake.

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Although Aix Lake was said to be a lake, it actually resembled an ocean. Hundreds of thousands of the Azurecloud Divine Tree's roots stretched down from the sky and burrowed into the water's surface. Bluish-green algae made the waters appear deep. In the seasons when the Azurecloud Divine Tree bore fruit, many divine herbs grew above the lake, so a strong fragrance permeated the air.

However, Aix Lake had turned blood red today and crimson waves roiled under the Azurecloud Divine Tree. The jade-like lake had been thrown into chaos and was covered in the corpses of lifebound beasts and humans. Most of the corpses were incomplete and had begun emitting a stench. The internal organs of many lifebound beasts floated near their corpses! What had once been a paradise was now hell.

The lifebound beasts' abilities and totemic calamities struck the divine tree. The gigantic beasts swept the lake waters across the sky, the totems ripped apart the branches, and swords flickered through its

leaves. Murderous roars and screams of pain were constant. There were tens of thousands of people in battle, their eyes red with fury; both lifebound beasts and totems had reached their most violent state. Amidst the carnage, many lifebound beasts had failed to locate their beastmasters.

Countless threads of sword ki shot toward the north, the gleaming swords tearing through the Blueblood Starocean's defenses. The blood of the Blueblood Starocean cultivators was blue. Although the blood spilled couldn't compare to the Emyrean Sword Sect's lifebound beasts, their blood still covered the lake.

"Kill!"

"Kill these running dogs!"

"Avenge General Shi!"

"Blue blood is so disgusting."

"How dare a mere tenth-ranked sect shoot off their mouths in front of us! Don't they know what death is?"

The Emyrean Sword Sect swordpupils were mad with rage. They had a numerical advantage and had been the first to attack, so the Blueblood Starocean was caught by surprise. Their swords cleared a path, lifebound beasts charging into battle. By the time the Blueblood Starocean cultivators finally reacted, chaos had already erupted.

Since Li Wushuang hadn't given a word of warning before taking action, the Blueblood Starocean was actually caught unprepared; one miscalculation had resulted in thousands of casualties. Almost every totemancer had immediately been besieged by two or three swordpupils alongside their lifebound beasts.

"Kill them!"

Blood dyed their vision red. When they saw their companions, relatives, and friends being slaughtered, bitten into pieces by lifebound beasts, and otherwise tragically dying, the people of the Blueblood Starocean went crazy. War stimulated them, and their hearts bled from watching dead bodies pile up around them.

"Kill them!"

"For revenge!"

"How dare the Emyrean Sword Sect make the first attack? Their entire sect will surely perish!"

Every time swords descended, heads would roll. Lifebound beasts and totems fought and crashed into the lake, causing water to splash everywhere. In a short period of time, the Emyrean Sword Sect had lost at least a thousand people. However, the Blueblood Starocean was faring no better; close to three thousand of their people had been slaughtered. There were only a thousand people left and they struggled to survive the siege. If the battle were to continue, they would be wiped out. This wasn't an offensive and defensive war, but an unexpected encounter where the Emyrean Sword Sect had managed to crush their opponents due to sheer numbers and initiative.

“Don’t spare any of them!”

"Avenge Shi Yan’s lifebound beasts!"

“Lan Sha, you must die!”

Although the Rain Swordlord was stubborn and argumentative, she wasn’t at all vague or hesitant when it came to her actions. Together with her lifebound beasts, the nine-sky celestial cranes, she led eight thousand swordpupils in a slaughter of their enemies. The flesh and blood of the Blueblood Starocean cultivators was splattered everywhere.

On the other side was Lan Sha with his shark-like countenance and totems, the cretaceous sharks. They were rather ferocious totems—tall and sturdy, with a human body and a shark head. Their enormous jaws could snap a lifebound beast in half. Since the start of the battle, Lan Sha, who was known for his brutality, had slain dozens of swordpupils.

“Die!”

The Rain Swordlord swooped down with her four cranes, their sharp beaks pierced down like spears and the flap of their snow-white wings setting off stormy waves across Aix Lake.

“She’s mad!”

A pale Lan Sha gnashed his sharp teeth. Shi Yan was dead? He was still dumbfounded. Li Wushuang should have told him about her plans in advance. If he was prepared, they wouldn’t have lost more than three thousand people. Right now, there were people of the Blueblood Starocean dying every second. These people were elites with extremely high status, their deaths were definitely a great loss. Never in his entire life had they lost that many people.

“We must leave now!”

"We can't hold on anymore. If we don't leave, we'll all die here. There's so many on their side!"

“Forget about the saplings, there’s no point guarding them now. We’re already fighting. We need to gather our people, catch them off guard, and slay every last one of them!”

The people around Lan Sha struggled to survive as they urged him to retreat.

"Retreat!" Despite the unwillingness he felt, Lan Sha gave the order, accepting the fact that this was a crushing defeat. However, it was an order given a little too late.

Chapter 1392 - Lan Sha’s End

With Lan Sha’s order, the people of the Blueblood Starocean finally fled. However, the moment they had turned their backs to their opponents, the red-eyed Empyrean Sword Sect swordpupils didn't care to spare the desperate people. Dozens of swordpupils chased after them, slaying the blue-blooded people in the midst of their escape. Totemancers fell one by one.

“Vengeance! We must have vengeance!”

The fiery-eyed Lan Sha was being chased by dozens of people led by the Rain Swordgod. If they hadn’t fled, even he would have perished here. At this point, he didn’t care about the others. Putting away his

totems, he jumped into Aix Lake. Relying on the cover of the water, he dodged the Rain Swordlord's attacks like a shark in the deep sea and finally escaped her pursuit. Even so, his body was covered in wounds and the one in his back was so deep it almost pierced through his body.

By the time he escaped from Aix Lake, one of his arms was about to fall off. He was a tragic sight, his whole body covered in blue blood. The Rain Swordlord was, after all, grade six and considered Lan Sha's senior. Her combat power was definitely stronger than his. Not to mention, she had dozens of aides by her side as well as all of their lifebound beasts. Having survived their attack was a testament to his ability.

With a sinister expression on his face, Lan Sha ran through the woods, frantically fleeing for his life. "Lady Wushuang, Tumulus Pill God, the Rain Swordlord, led eight thousand Empyrean Sword Sect swordpupils in an attack. Because we were slow to react, we were almost wiped out. We urgently request support! Lady Wushuang, you must kill the Rain Swordlord and avenge my companions!"

Lan Sha sent a transmission stone as he fled. He had also reported as soon as the battle began, but Li Wushuang and the others were still after Shi Yan at the time. There was no way they could have rushed there in time.

"Hold on, don't die! Reinforcements will arrive soon!" the Tumulus Pill God sent in reply. Only then did Lan Sha breathe a sigh of relief. He had finally thrown his pursuers off his trail.

At the thought of the support they would soon receive, Lan Sha turned around, his gaze gloomy and ruthless.

"You will all die!"

Because the wound in his abdomen was still bleeding, he had to stop and deal with it. Their people were basically guarding the sapling. There was no way they could efficiently allocate personnel in such a short period of time, certainly not as quickly as Tianming could. All Lan Sha could do was heal himself first. Otherwise, his injuries would only worsen.

"Dammit!"

He hid in the depths of the woods as he healed up, smearing medicine onto his wounds and cursing. Unfortunately, he missed the silver cockroach on a leaf, just one meter in front of him. It coldly looked at him with its two black eyes.

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"Stop chasing, they're cornered. Return to Aix Lake!" The Rain Swordlord put away her sword, her gaze indifferent. Soon, she received the Wind Swordlord's transmission stone.

"Immediately reclaim Aix Lake and set up a defensive formation. I'll arrange for ten thousand swordpupils to head over, but that'll take time. Hold out for as long as possible. If that doesn't work, give up Aix Lake first." Putting away the transmission stone, the Rain Swordlord immediately did as she was told. She wouldn't hesitate on such an important matter like losing a thousand to kill three thousand of their opponent's army.

"They killed Shi Yan first and provoked the Emyprean Sword Sect. I'm just striking back so they know we can't be bullied. If they still try provoking us, let's just see who'll emerge victorious! The Swordsage is still working on an alliance. Our attack will be an example for our allies. These running dogs must die!"

The appearance of the saplings meant there was no turning back. There were still more than seven thousand Emyprean Sword Sect swordpupils remaining. They would defend Aix Lake and wait for the Wind Swordlord's reinforcements. The purpose of the battle had been to avenge Shi Yan, and as far as the Rain Swordlord was concerned, they had benefited from it. Li Wushuang would be the one to determine whether or not their opponents accepted the loss or continued fighting.

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"Dammit!" Lan Sha took a deep breath, his expression turning even more gloomy. He was poisoned. Perhaps it was someone's sword or a lifebound beast's ability. At the moment, Lan Sha's body was green because the color of his blood had turned. He tried several different kinds of divine pills, but to no avail. There was nothing he could do but keep trying.

"Forget it. I'll recuperate and leave revenge to them." Thus, he concentrated on healing his body and expelling the poison. In the blink of an eye, two hours passed.

"What the hell! Nothing's working! What sort of poison is this?"

In the chaos, he didn't know who had caused his injuries. He cursed while searching for a divine pill that might serve as an antidote, surging with irritability, anxiety, and indignation. Unbeknownst to him, it had grown dark, but Orderia was a fiery world without darkness. Clouded by his emotions, Lan Sha had failed to notice the change.

"Huh?" He froze for a moment, his hands stiff. When he looked up, a giant cauldron fell from the sky, trapping him beneath it. The earth rumbled. "The Divine Worldeater Cauldron?" Quickly rising to his feet, Lan Sha immediately materialized his totems.

In the darkness, terrifying shadows appeared, overwhelming the sharks. They were eight totems known as darknight truefiends.

"Yang Ce!" Lan Sha's expression drastically changed. He couldn't understand how they had managed to find him in an inconspicuous corner among the mountains and valleys. No one could have revealed information about his actions. As a totemancer, the last person he wanted to encounter was Yang Ce. Unfortunately, the man was already standing in front of him with eight darknight truefiends.

"He's not the only one," a female voice said from behind him.

Turning around in shock, Lan Sha began panicking. "Long Wanying, Yan Nuxia, and you... Jiang Qingliu!"

Out of the four opponents, Jiang Qingliu was the only one he could deal with. The other three were at least as strong as him. If it were any other time, these people wouldn't dare go against him. However, Li Wushuang was considered to have killed Shi Yan. The Blueblood Starocean and Emyprean Sword Sect had also clashed swords, resulting in an acrimonious falling-out. At the moment, Lan Sha wasn't just seriously injured, but also poisoned and trapped in the cauldron. The situation was anything but reassuring.

"The conflict is between us and the Empyrean Sword Sect, it has nothing to do with you. If you spare me, all of the Blueblood Starocean will be extremely grateful. Killing me won't do you any good. You'll only arouse the anger of my people. My brother Lan Huang will definitely avenge me. So think twice! This whole thing is merely a dispute over treasure. There's no need to cause a civil war." The tactful Lan Sha bowed his head, his voice calm.

"What civil war? This is a fight between the Myriad Solar Sects and lackeys of the celestial orderians," said Long Wanying.

"You've overstepped your authority. You don't represent the Myriad Solar Sects," Lan Sha retorted. Unfortunately, no one seemed to listen to him.

The four of them acted at once. It was almost too easy for Yang Ce to take down the severely injured Lan Sha. Jiang Qingliu's Azuresoul Tower suppressed Lan Sha's body, crushing his spine and smashing him into the ground.

"Jiang Qingliu, you dare attack me? So you've finally grown guts?" Lan Sha roared, but unfortunately, he couldn't move at all.

"Why can't I attack you?" Jiang Qingliu trampled on his face. Loud popping and cracking sounded as he made a dent in his bones. "You brothers ruined half of my life, yet you arrogantly walk around, laughing and mocking. But my, how the tide has turned! Luck is on my side... Lan Sha, I hope you savor what's about to happen. Both of you will get a taste of all the suffering I've experienced!"

The brothers had destroyed half of Jiang Qingliu's power in the Voidsky Realm. After that, all he had done was muddle along for the second half of his life. Witnessing his enemy being crushed to the ground, seriously injured and dying, Jiang Qingliu felt a sense of peace. He even threw in a few kicks, shattering his bones so his face was deformed. The pain had him screaming without end.

"Jiang Qingliu, I swear you'll die miserably," Lan Sha roared, veins bursting all over his body.

"It doesn't matter, you'll suffer a hundred times worse than me." Stretching out his hand, Jiang Qingliu ripped off Lan Sha's ear, causing him to convulse in pain.

"Does it hurt? This is just the beginning."

At that moment, Jiang Qingliu finally walked away and a white-haired young man appeared in Lan Sha's bloodied vision. He almost couldn't recognize him—it was none other than the junior, Li Tianming.

"You!" The young man's smile frightened Lan Sha.

"You were going to die, but I wanted to see if I can squeeze something useful out of you, so I'll let you live for a while longer," Tianming said.

"What do you mean?" Lan Sha asked.

The small silver egg in Tianming's hand suddenly turned into tens of thousands of metal ants.

"What's that?" Lan Sha's pupils constricted.

"The devil." Tianming smiled.

Looking at the ants crawling all over Tianming's palm, Lan Sha felt a chill. Then Tianming poured the bonegnaw ants into his ears.

A miserable scream echoed in the Divine Worldeater Cauldron.

This was the first time Tianming had been so rude. He was willing to cooperate with Gujian Qingshuang and Yun Tianque, but not Lan Sha. If Lan Sha didn't want to die, Tianming would treat him like a dog. But it also didn't matter if he didn't care to live; they would just cast the blame on the Empyrean Sword Sect.

Chapter 1393 - The Flames Of War Are Reignited

The subsequent development of the situation would determine how Tianming would use Lan Sha. At the moment, the Empyrean Sword Sect and Li Wushuang were gathering their people at Aix Lake. Tens of thousands of expert cultivators gathered, most of them elites at the Solar stage who had cultivated for hundreds of years, even thousands. Their combat power was incredible.

The Empyrean Sword Sect had yet to leave the lake, an indication of their confidence in their strength. It was also their sword dao. However, it was still uncertain if a greater conflict was in store. What Tianming and Long Wanying hoped for was a battle that resulted in casualties on both sides.

Tens of thousands of Yin Chens started dividing so the entire Azuresoul Tower was covered in bonegnaw ants. They spread toward Lan Sha's body like a flood of metal.

Lan Sha struggled and screamed, his face twisting into a painful grimace. He resisted with the last of his strength, but still couldn't stop the endless army of bonegnaw ants. Even if a small number of them entered his bones, their attack was enough to send him convulsing in pain and gradually lose the will to fight. He was powerless against the flood of metal ants that continued pouring into his bones.

With a look of indifference, Tianming pulled out the Grand-Orient Sword and stabbed Lan Sha in the abdomen. Sword-shaped heavenly patterns shot into his body, hiding in his bones, internal organs, and flesh and blood. The gold and black Imperial Sword Prison easily occupied his entire body in the absence of resistance. Tianming had ample time to plant it in him.

Lan Sha's eyes widened, his shark-like, murderous countenance no longer sinister, but filled with despair and fear, even defeat. The bonegnaw ants continue infesting his body. This was the first time Tianming had been so unreserved. Yun Tianque and Gujian Qingshuang didn't dare watch such a scene.

"Spare me please... I'm begging you, spare me." Lan Sha's breathing weakened as he pleaded. In the past, he never could have imagined such a desperate moment. It was a waking nightmare—it had always been others who begged him for mercy! People with whom he had engaged in tit-for-tat retaliation were now standing by the side, coldly watching, especially Long Wanying and Jiang Qingliu.

"The evils we bring upon ourselves are the hardest to bear," said Long Wanying.

Gasping, Lan Sha continued struggling; every moment had him convulsing in pain. Finally, nearly a million ants had settled in his body. Numerous Imperial Sword Prisons had invaded him as well; this was a two-pronged approach. Lan Sha would be easy to control and kill. The bonegnaw ants were a more formidable force as, despite the number of Imperial Sword Prisons, their effect was minimal. Their main function was to provide camouflage for the effect of the bonegnaw ants.

Lan Sha lay limp on the ground, dripping with sweat. His lips were pale, his face blue, and his gaze was beaten—he looked lifeless. The moment Tianming had the ants attack again, Lan Sha began rolling around on the ground.

"You should know how that feels by now," Tianming said.

Lan Sha weakly nodded.

"There's only two paths before you. Your first option is to be at my disposal, and your other is to die at once. I suggest you choose the first one because you'll only have a chance to take revenge if you're alive," said Tianming.

The way he treated Lan Sha was naturally different from how he treated the others. After Yun Tianque and Gujian Qingshuang were under his control, Tianming had immediately shown them the bonegnaw ants and cockroaches, yet he refrained from revealing anything to Lan Sha. He didn't need Lan Sha's approval at all; what he wanted was fear!

"I choose the first," Lan Sha said.

"Fine then. You're a sensible one."

Lan Sha was certainly reluctant to die after all that suffering. After all, how would he have a chance to retaliate against Tianming if he was dead? How could his life just end like this? What he wanted was retribution.

Looking at the blue-blooded man whose killing intent was unconcealed, Tianming laughed coldly and thought to himself, I might've proposed two options, but in fact, I'm the one who makes the decision, not you. If I want you to be a dog, you're a dog, and if I want you dead, you have no choice but to die.

"Rest for a while, Lan Sha," he said.

"What?" Lan Sha froze. He didn't need rest. However, the bonegnaw ants began attacking again and his shrill screams reverberated in the cauldron until he fainted from the pain.

Upon seeing the tyrannical blue-blooded expert lying on the ground like a dead dog, Jiang Qingliu finally experienced karma.

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The Wind Swordlord arrived in Aix Lake after leaving behind more than two thousand swordpupils on Inverse Peak because this was where the fight was. The wargodeans that had been on Inverse Peak were also headed this way. Within the territory of the Azuresoul Palace alone, the Emyrean Sword Sect swordpupils that'd been guarding other saplings had also been transferred here. There were at least fifty thousand swordpupils gathered in Aix Lake at the moment.

There wasn't any change in the saplings for the time being. The Emyrean Sword Sect relied on its "small force" to protect the saplings. For fear that the Rain Swordlord might suffer a loss, he had dispatched reinforcements to Aix Lake. After the unforeseen turn of events, the Wind Swordlord had sent a message to Gujian Qingshuang, requesting that he lead their swordpupils in watching over the saplings within the Azuresoul Palace's territory. After all, they would still be able to drive away the swordpupils of the Azuresoul Palace and occupy the area once the battle was over.

The swordpupils who had been urgently deployed had arrived. In addition, there were other reinforcements on their way. It was clear the Wind Swordlord's familiarity with Li Wushuang's ruthless ways had led him to take precautions. In the eyes of the Rain Swordlord, slaughtering two thousand Blueblood Starocean cultivators in retaliation for Shi Yan's death was fair, but Li Wushuang might not think so.

However, the Wind Swordlord couldn't blame the Rain Swordlord for her actions. Not even he would hold back after such provocation from their opponents, as well as the news that Li Wushuang had practically murdered Shi Yan. Shi Yan had a rather high status in the Emyrean Sword Sect and was the Northdipper Swordsage's junior sister. She couldn't be compared to Gujian Daoyi. Li Wushuang's actions were tantamount to dismissing the Emyrean Sword Sect.

"They dare to kill Shi Yan! If I don't strike back, then what about our dignity? Even if we were to deliberate the matter, Li Wushuang would still be to blame! I've already reported this to the Sky Palace. The celestial orderians' actions in the Azurecloud Continent is in itself a form of provocation," the Rain Swordlord quickly explained.

"That's enough. Get ready for battle!" The Wind Swordlord descended upon Aix Lake.

Across the bloody lake, the Blueblood Starocean and wargodean armies had gathered.

"How many are there?" the Wind Swordlord asked.

"At least forty thousand. It looks like they also gathered cultivators from the other saplings," said the Rain Swordlord.

Their numbers were almost equal, making this a very dangerous situation. Turning to the other side, the Wind Swordlord swept his gaze across the bloody corpses floating on Aix Lake and saw their opponents' surging killing intent and fighting spirit. The bloody battlefield had provoked them to the point of madness.

"It doesn't look good. They think we've gone overboard." The Wind Swordlord frowned.

"Then who's to blame? Li Wushuang was the first to attack us. They've made their bed, now they can lie in it!" the Rain Swordlord cursed.

Chapter 1394 - The Conflict Escalates

"We both have tens of thousands of people, but in terms of individual strength, the wargodeans surpass us. No one benefits if we go to war. Let's see what Li Wushuang thinks!" the Wind Swordlord said. With how the situation had developed, it was impossible for the Emyrean Sword Sect to bow their head. Otherwise, they would be seen as a joke.

"The Swordsage asked me to buy as much time as possible. I thought there wouldn't be a problem, since the saplings wouldn't mature for the time being, but I never imagined they'd be the first to attack...." the Wind Swordlord helplessly said.

"If they continue behaving so arrogantly, we must fight to the end," the Rain Swordlord solemnly said.

The Wind Swordlord looked at his wife, his heart overwhelmed with complex emotions. Impulsiveness was the devil. This time, Shi Yan's death and the Blueblood Starocean's casualties had made it

impossible for either side to take a step back. Fighting to the death was indeed heroic, but the purpose of their presence in the Azurecloud Continent was the saplings. Even if they managed to defeat their opponents, any casualties they suffered would still be a great loss. Unfortunately, there was nothing the Wind Swordlord could do despite being aware of that. Li Wushuang's response would determine how the situation would unfold. But neither of them could have guessed that there would be an invisible hand fanning the flames from the very start.

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The atmosphere on the other side of the lake was extremely grim. When the aloof woman dressed in white entered the crowd and saw the corpses floating on the water with her own eyes, all forty thousand cultivators present were ashen and silent.

There were about twenty thousand wargodeans and the same number of Blueblood Starocean cultivators. They couldn't understand why Li Wushuang hadn't notified them before making the decision to slaughter Shi Yan. Perhaps she didn't expect such recklessness and cruelty from the Rain Swordlord. However, the death of more than three thousand bloodbloods was related to her decision.

The ones most resentful at the moment were the Blueblood Starocean cultivators. They stared straight at Li Wushuang with their dark blue eyes. Although they didn't utter a word, it was clear they wanted her to seek justice on their behalf. In the process of salvaging the corpses of their dead companions, many of the bluebloods had gone crazy and were surging with killing intent.

"Vengeance!"

"Destroy them!"

No matter what others said at the moment, they couldn't hear a word.

"Where's Lan Sha?" Li Wushuang hoarsely asked. She felt pleased after almost beheading Shi Yan, but the Rain Swordlord had delivered a blow in return.

"He was poisoned and seriously injured. He's on his way back now," said the Tumulus Pill God.

"We won't wait for him." With eyes as sharp as swords, Li Wushuang turned to the Emyrean Sword Sect swordpupils on the other side. Neither side was prepared to give an inch.

"Lady Wushuang..." Gritting his teeth, the Tumulus Pill God said, "shall we wait till another day? Our opponent is prepared. They have more people than we do. Even if we slaughter every last one of them, we'll lose at least tens of thousands."

"So you mean to say we should let them go after three thousand people were killed?" Li Wushuang sneered.

"That's not what I mean. Don't you have assistance, Lady Wushuang? The wargodeans and bluebloods can assemble more people. Once we're ready, we'll attack the Emyrean Sword Sect and drive them out of the Azurecloud Continent," the old man replied.

Although Li Wushuang felt nothing for the loss of lives, he did. Since they had people guarding the saplings, half of those gathered around the lake were wargodeans. The Supracloud Sanctuary wasn't

even present; if they were to fight, the wargodeans would suffer a large number of casualties. Why would Li Wushuang, a celestial orderian, care about their deaths? To her, they were all cannon fodder.

"No! Lady Wushuang, we mustn't wait!"

"The Emyrean Sword Sect is ruthless. They started the battle and killed our brothers and sisters."

"Before us lies a blood feud. We can't wait to crush them into smithereens!"

The Blueblood Starocean cultivators began roaring. After all, they were closer to the celestial orderians. If they didn't act today, when would they be able to take revenge? With the support of the wargodeans, the odds of their victory were rather high.

"If we wait, more Emyrean Sword Sect reinforcements will arrive and we'll have even less of an opportunity."

"Kill them!"

The Blueblood Starocean cultivators were outraged. Aix Lake was covered in the blood of their compatriots, and the unreconciled eyes of the dead filled their minds with violence. They all turned to Li Wushuang.

"You're asking me to wait? The thing I hate the most is waiting. A blood debt should be paid there and then. Do you expect me to suffer in silence? Who do you think I am?"

In just a few words, the Tumulus Pill God was bereft of speech.

"Yes." All he could do was bow his head. The realization hit him—he still didn't know her. On the sun, Li Wushuang stood above billions, bowing only to one. How could he speak of delaying tactics when her own people had been slaughtered?

"Hear me!" Li Wushuang shouted, attracting the attention of all forty thousand cultivators. "Together we will slaughter every last one of the Emyrean Sword Sect and avenge our friends from the Blueblood Starocean! Those who are afraid to fight will be killed without mercy!"

The battlefield exploded with excitement. Most of the wargodeans were hot-tempered and considered fighting to be their purpose in life. They couldn't stand this kind of grievance. None of them feared death or agreed with the Tumulus Pill God because they assumed they had an absolute advantage. How could they endure the attack of their opponents under such circumstances?

Totems and lifebound beasts appeared.

"Kill them!" A thunderous roar shook the sky.

The wargodeans shone with golden light while Blueblood Starocean's totems filled the sky. Forty thousand ferocious warriors, tens of thousands of lifebound beasts, and more than a hundred thousand totems formed an unstoppable torrent that rushed into Aix Lake, attacking the Emyrean Sword Sect.

Although the Emyrean Sword Sect was ready for battle, the Wind Swordlord didn't think their opponents would be so decisive. It was clear they didn't understand Li Wushuang well enough. With her

temper, how could she hold off on revenge when her enemies were right in front of her? At that moment, the proud daughter of the celestial orderian clan was at the forefront.

Chapter 1395 - Sacrifice The Shark

“Empyrean Sword Sect, we’ll meet our enemies head on! They were the ones that made the first move, destroying General Shi Yan and provoking us. The running dogs of the celestial orderians ride roughshod over us in our territory while these madmen continue aggravating us. Swordpupils, obey my order. Kill these running dogs and drive them out of Azurecloud!” Although the Wind Swordlord didn't want to go to war, there was nothing he could do but put on a bold face and fight. But in fact, his mind was blank. Had the war broken out just like that?

When the tall wargodeans with their lifebound beasts and the strange bluebloods with their totems charged across Aix Lake and collided with the Empyrean Sword Sect swordpupils’ sword ki, flesh and blood splattered. There was no doubt that war had begun. The scale of this battle was just as impressive as one that involved hundreds of thousands of troops; it was ten times as spectacular as the previous battle.

The tremendous vibrations instantly triggered a massive earthquake. If one were to look down from the Azurecloud Divine Tree, the entire battlefield would appear extremely chaotic. The ethnic characteristics of the three races were particularly obvious, so it was unlikely they would slaughter their own. It was as if a torrent of white, gold, and blue shot had slammed into one another, creating blood-red waves that reached the sky.

Before the lifebound beasts of the wargodeans and Empyrean Sword Sect met, their abilities exploded across the battlefield. Flames swept through, storms crashed, lightning struck, and frost swirled. In addition to the lifebound beasts’ attacks, all kinds of totemic calamities flooded the battlefield. The roars of beasts and the sound of clashing weapons filled the air. As soon as the two sides met, they were red-eyed and completely mad. War was carnage, a bloody quagmire! Once they sank into it, their minds were occupied by one thing: slaughter.

"Die!"

"Scram!"

A large part of the ground was scorched, and the branches, leaves, and roots of the Azurecloud Divine Tree were destroyed during the battle. There was blood everywhere as corpses piled up in Aix Lake. Even top lifebound beasts ended up as mutilated and dismembered corpses. The scene was so horrific that it was suffocating.

Because their numbers were nearly equal, they were evenly matched for the time being and it was impossible to see who had the advantage. But in just a short period of time, there were a large number of casualties on both sides. If Tianming were to set foot on the battlefield, he would be torn apart in an instant. In the center of the battlefield were gigantic beasts thousands of meters in size; the place had become hell on earth.

"As soon as a war begins, everyone is pulled into it. The more they kill, the stronger the flames of hatred burn. There’s no end to it."

Unless the Rain Swordlord retreated, the battle would continue.

"The more they fight, the more brutal they become." From the Azurecloud Divine Tree, Tianming could almost see caeli ascending into the sky. This kind of battle was exactly what he wanted.

"Kill...." He watched coldly. They were both his and the Azurecloud Continent's enemies.

"They're still holding back. They haven't completely lost it yet," Long Wanying commented.

"I can see that. The wargodeans have begun retreating due to casualties, and so has the Empyrean Sword Sect. The Wind and Rain Swordlords seem a little hesitant," said Tianming. Their position gave them a better view of the changes on the battlefield.

"This is a good opportunity to hit them hard. I don't think there's any use in keeping Lan Sha alive, is there?" Long Wanying asked.

"Alright." Tianming understood what she meant. "Uncle Yang, please light another fire."

"Of course." Yang Ce was carrying the unconscious man. Upon listening to the conversation between Tianming and Long Wanying, he carried Lan Sha into the chaotic battlefield without another word, easily moving through the wave of abilities and totemic calamities. During the process, Tianming awakened Lan Sha via the bonegnaw ants.

Lan Sha opened his eyes in a daze, but was suddenly deafened by the battle around him. Out of nowhere, a thread of sword ki stabbed at his eyes.

"Where am I?" Amidst the fear, he recalled Tianming's torture. After several glances, he was certain this was Aix Lake. The armies on both sides formed dense hordes, and as far as the eyes could see, there were corpses on the ground.

"That's Lan Sha!" someone shouted.

Lan Sha turned his head abruptly, only to see several Empyrean Sword Sect swordpupils staring back at him, among them a grade-four swordpupil named Feng Guiyu. He was the Wind Swordlord's chief disciple and was about as strong as Jiang Qingliu. Yang Ce had specifically placed Lan Sha in front of him.

On the other side, the wargodeans and people from the Blueblood Starocean had also discovered his presence. Although they didn't understand why Lan Sha had suddenly appeared in the middle of the battlefield, one glance was all it took for them to notice his sorry state. The bluebloods immediately rushed toward him.

"He's severely wounded. Kill him and avenge General Shi Yan!" Feng Guiyu shouted. He was also covered in blood and wounds, and many of his compatriots around him had died in battle. At this moment, Feng Guiyu's mind was dominated by hatred and violence. Being the closest to Lan Sha, he made the first move, slashing with his sword.

"Die!" Feng Guiyu roared.

"You think you can kill me?" Lan Sha sneered. Despite his injuries he was still stronger. In his eyes, Feng Guiyu was no match for him.

Sword ki surged as the white sword flickered. Lan Sha let out a low roar, retreating as he prepared to block his opponent's sword. But at that moment, his expression drastically altered.

"Li Tian—" Before he could finish cursing, the bonegnaw ants and Imperial Sword Prison in his body attacked at the same time, unleashing exquisite agony. Lan Sha instantly lost all his strength, his limbs and torso twitching uncontrollably. Even without any enemies attacking him, he would perish in no time at all.

In a duel between experts, a moment made all the difference. Feng Guiyu didn't expect his sword to slash Lan Sha's neck with such ease. Although there was barely any sound, it was extremely harsh to the ears of the people around him. With wide eyes, they witnessed Lan Sha's large, iconic shark-like head fly off. A stunned Feng Guiyu held the severed head in his hand. Even though he had been severely injured, Lan Sha should have been difficult to kill, yet he had shown no resistance.

Feng Guiyu hovered in mid air with Lan Sha's head in his hand. Lan Sha's mouth was open, his sharp teeth exposed and eyes desperate. He had died in pain; however, no one had noticed the metal ants crawling out of his broken neck and into Aix Lake.

Many gasped. Feng Guiyu and Lan Sha weren't at all equal in strength. He never imagined he would ever slaughter such a powerful person that was known for their ferocity. Lan Sha, a brave warrior, had perished at the hands of a man he scorned. It was unbelievable to everyone present.

Lan Sha's death caused an unprecedented shock. Feng Guiyu was surging with blood. Having accomplished such a great feat on this bloody battlefield, he was so excited he couldn't help but raise Lan Sha's head and shout, "The Blueblood Starocean's Lan Sha is dead. I killed him. Surrender at once!"

His words were earth-shattering, attracting countless stares. Many saw the fear and unwillingness in Lan Sha's eyes. This outcome was something Lan Sha never could have foreseen. He had thought Tianming would use him, but he was different from Yun Tianque. A strategic death was more valuable.

"It's Lan Sha!"

"My God, Feng Guiyu...."

"I heard he fled after being severely injured earlier...."

The wargodeans were speechless.

With that one kill, the Emyrean Sword Sect's morale had greatly increased, while the bluebloods went mad at the sight of their commander's death.

"Avenge him!"

Feng Guiyu hoped the bluebloods would surrender once their leader had been killed. However, Lan Sha's death only ignited their anger. Still immensely proud of himself, Feng Guiyu held up the head for all to see when a cold white light hit him from behind, piercing a bloody hole more than ten centimeters wide in his chest. When he weakly turned around, an indifferent Yun Tianque snatched Lan Sha's head from him.

"You—" Feng Guiyu fell into Aix Lake. Others watched as Yun Tianque took away Lan Sha's headless body, but no one noticed the inconspicuous metal ants that fell below and disappeared.

Lan Sha's death was like a bomb that blew up the battlefield, breaking the impasse. His status was just as important as Shi Yan's. After all, Lan Sha was the Deluge Emperor's younger brother. Not to mention, Shi Yan wasn't actually dead, but Lan Sha had breathed his last. It was far more serious than having lost three thousand bluebloods in the previous battle.

The eyes of the Blueblood Starocean cultivators turned dark blue. Even the wargodeans were enraged by the Empyrean Sword Sect's show of arrogance.

"Kill them all!!!"

The battlefield exploded into chaos.

Chapter 1396 - The Skymoon Holyfiend

Due to Lan Sha's death, the chaos, violence, and recklessness on the battlefield had once again risen to a new level. Corpses of lifebound beasts piled up like mountains and the bloody waters of Aix Lake seeped into the land under the Azurecloud Divine Tree. Blood stained its branches, leaves, and roots. There were all kinds of enormous lifebound beasts fighting under the divine tree, unleashing abilities of wind, fire, water, earth, and storm that made it impossible to see. The world was engulfed by a vortex of death.

Lan Sha's death had led to more deaths. However, none of them were aware that the battle had been incited by a third party. All they could see was their enemies. As long as they suffered heavy casualties, it didn't matter who had instigated the conflict. An irreconcilable blood feud existed between both sides.

The Tumulus Pill God watched all of this unfolding with a deep frown.

"Tumulus Pill God, Brother Lan is...." Yun Tianque placed Lan Sha's corpse in an ice coffin.

The Tumulus Pill God caught sight of Lan Sha's miserable expression.

"It was Feng Guiyi, a disciple of the Wind Swordlord, who killed him. I've taken his life," said Yun Tianque.

The Tumulus Pill God couldn't accept the fact that a man as great as Lan Sha had perished at the hands of a nobody. He sighed. "What happened to him? What went wrong?"

"Lan Sha said he was hiding to heal himself after being seriously injured and poisoned. He must've noticed the fight and been eager to contribute. Perhaps he overestimated his physical condition, giving his opponent an opportunity." Yun Tianque shook his head.

"This is bad." The Tumulus Pill God was rather depressed, but not distressed by Lan Sha's death. It meant the wargodeans would suffer an even greater loss. He had his reservations about the fighting, but now there was no going back.

"Lady Wushuang must know that he's dead. The Blueblood Starocean is part of the celestial orderians. She must be furious to have a subordinate die under her nose," said Yun Tianque.

"If the Empyrean Sword Sect doesn't suffer heavy casualties, we'll have lost. Under the current circumstances, we can't fail even if it means throwing caution to the wind!" Retreat was no longer an option.

"Yes!"

The Tumulus Pill God took a deep breath. Compared to other wargodeans, he wasn't as tall, but he let out a thunderous roar that shook the sky. Bolts of golden lightning shot out of his mouth and transformed into shock waves that swept across the entire battlefield. "Wargodean warriors, wreak our vengeance and slaughter these bastards!"

"Kill!!!"

That was a signal to the wargodeans who had previously been slack. Due to the Tumulus Pill God's restraint, the wargodeans had held back from the beginning of the battle to avoid casualties. Although their numbers were equal to the bluebloods, their combat power far surpassed them. Their strength alone was equivalent to about forty thousand Empyrean Sword Sect swordpupils. With the Tumulus Pill God's words of encouragement, the wargodeans entered a fighting frenzy. Each of them was a god of war who had fought countless battles since childhood. The arena of war made them fearless.

Not only did the wargodeans and Blueblood Starocean cultivators fail to surrender, they descended upon the Empyrean Sword Sect's swordpupils like ferocious beasts. They were unstoppable. From up above, it was clear that the Empyrean Sword Sect was at a disadvantage. Many wargodeans could take on two opponents, so the slaughter of swordpupils was a common sight. Rage had only made the wargodeans more brutal and bloodthirsty.

The entire battlefield was covered in blood. As the fighting continued, the earth trembled and the Wind and Rain Swordlords were forced to cover two separate areas, defending while slaying their opponents. With them in charge, the Empyrean Sword Sect's defense was relatively stable for the time being.

"Lan Sha is dead?" When the Rain Swordlord heard the news, she coldly laughed. "I failed to slaughter you, but you were poisoned with the greenghost venom. Yet you returned to seek death? You deserve it!" In spite of that, she was alarmed by their red-eyed enemies and the Empyrean Sword Sect's heavy casualties.

"It's fine. They've lost just as many as we have. We won't be defeated as long as the number of casualties is about the same. This is our first great battle in the Azurecloud Continent. We can't afford to lose it." She knew very well that once the sect retreated, their morale would be affected.

"Kill them! Don't stop!"

Countless wargodeans and bluebloods fell beneath her sword as a piercing birdsong sounded from the beaks of the ninesky celestial cranes beside her. They attacked with their wings, claws, and sharp beaks, manipulating the clouds and rain to shoot droplets of white raindrops that seemed gentle, but could pierce through numerous bodies as well as the hard scales of lifebound beasts.

"Die!" the Rain Swordlord arrogantly shouted, completely unaware of the danger that was approaching.

At that moment, she looked up and saw a white-robed woman standing on one of the branches of the Azurecloud Divine Tree, her hair fluttering in the wind. It was Li Wushuang. Blood stained her frosty face and clothes.

As she locked on to the Rain Swordlord, Li Wushuang wiped off the blood with her sleeve. Then, rolling up her long sleeves, she smiled, the corners of her mouth curling in a cold and bloodthirsty smirk. She raised her hand, pointing a curved, crimson blade at the Rain Swordlord. It was a slender blade, as wide as a sword but with a sharper tip. It was extremely light and flat, and almost transparent like the wings of a cicada. There was no doubt it was a weapon that could kill. After absorbing a great amount of blood, it was even more sinister and gloomy. Just one glance of the ghostly eyes that dotted the crimson blade sent shivers up the Rain Swordlord's spine.

"The Skymoon Holyfiend...."

The Rain Swordlord gasped at the sight of the crimson blade. It was one of the celestial orderians' grade-eight divine artifacts, a weapon on par with the Ninedragon Imperius. Long Longlong couldn't bring out the power of the Ninedragon Imperius, but Li Wushuang was definitely able to turn the Skymoon Holyfiend into every cultivator's nightmare. The sword devoured souls, so the more it killed, the stronger it became.

The cold weapon in Li Wushuang's hand and killing intent in her eyes struck fear into those around her. And at that moment, she was staring at the Rain Swordlord. The latter seemed to disapprove. In terms of age, she was much older than Li Wushuang, and also an elder in terms of seniority.

"Trying to scare me with a grade-eight divine artifact?" Despite her words, she immediately notified the Wind Swordlord that she was being targeted by Li Wushuang.

"I can't explain Lan Sha's death to the Blueblood Starocean. Since you're the ones who caused all this, all fifty thousand of you will pay with your lives. I'll use the blood of an old hag like you to make up for Lan Sha's grievances." With that, Li Wushuang jumped into an attack.

Chapter 1397 - Ghostface Moongod

"Me? An old hag? How could you?! You were the one that crippled Shi Yan! You started it all! You're the one that doesn't know what's good for them!" The Rain Swordlord was the third most powerful elite in the Emyrean Sword Sect. When she encountered Li Wushuang, the others quickly backed away in fear of being caught up in their fight. The next instant, the Rain Swordlord charged in with her ninesky celestial cranes, ushering in one of the most explosive battles on the battlefield!

Li Wushuang's totems emerged from her bane-rings and turned into eight gigantic moon goddesses that radiated a holy aura. However, their faces were incredibly ugly, being covered in fiendish fangs. All eight pairs of their devilishly red eyes looked straight at the Rain Swordlord. The aura of death that came from them far overpowered their holy aura, making it so that others would perceive nothing but hostility from her totems.

That was a rather weird manifestation of totems. Usually, the totemancers of the sun emperor's line had totems that radiated auras of justice and righteousness. Li Wushuang's totems, faces aside, had beautiful and shapely figures fit for the holy aura they exuded, but all of it completely paled in comparison to their bestially violent faces. In some ways, totems were manifested in accordance to the

cultivator's personality. These totems were rather rare among celestial orderians throughout history and were known as ghostface moongoddesses. Their demonic visage reflected Li Wushuang's inner psyche, completely offsetting the beauty and elegance of their figures but enhancing their combat abilities. People always had to think twice before fighting Li Wushuang.

Currently, she wielded her bloody sword with an expression of ferocity beside her gigantic totems. Together, they looked like female demons that guarded the gates of hell. Their fiendish aura concentrated to form a blackish red miasma that came assaulting toward the Rain Swordlord.

Each of the totems had differently featured, but similarly garish faces. Some were filled with red eyes of fury; others had gigantic, bloody mouths; and there were even those that had rotting faces with maggots sprouting from them. No amount of beauty from their limbs or torsos could cover up their vomit-inducing faces. Other people aside, even Tianming felt his scalp tingle at first sight. They were the logical combination of goddesses and fiends!

Though the Rain Swordlord was older than Li Wushuang, she looked far more pleasant, especially considering the elegant combination she formed with her ninesky celestial cranes. Li Wushuang was so horrifying that it almost made the Rain Swordlord seem far less annoying than usual.

Li Wushuang came bearing down with her totems and weapon, the Skymoon Holyfiend.

"This battle...." Tianming noted Li Wushuang's boundless hostility. When she began her slaughter, most people from the Empyrean Sword Sect hadn't dared to approach her. The chaotic battle between the strongest solarians sent shockwaves across the land, damaging many branches of the divine tree. The ninesky celestial cranes' ability was unleashed to counter the ghostface moongoddesses' totemic calamity, causing radiant white light and a thick, bloody mist to envelop the whole battlefield. Tianming only heard the sound of the fight and couldn't quite see through all the mess, so he didn't know which side was winning.

The swordlords, Li Wushuang, the Tumulus Pill God, and Yang Ce were among the strongest people currently on the continent, far stronger than Gujian Qingshuang and Long Wanying. However, the gap between Tianming and those elites was incredibly wide, to the point that he couldn't even tell what the difference between them was. The only thing he was sure of was that Li Wushuang fought furiously to the point that her totems' killing aura made him feel uncomfortable even from tens of thousands of meters away. It was like he had been dragged into hell.

"Actually, her totems weren't always ghostface moongoddesses. They started off as brightmoon goddesses, but their faces gradually morphed into what they are today. It's like they've been switched out. It probably reflects the changes in her psyche. When she was younger, she was much better, but now she's fiercer than she ever was," Long Wanying lamented.

"Totems can change?" This was news to Tianming.

"When people's hearts and minds change, there's a chance their totems will reflect the changes. Even if they don't completely change, you can't avoid some fundamental adjustments. The terra is the basis for totems, after all, and it's part of the soul," Yang Ce said.

"I see." Though the two women were fighting harder and harder, Tianming still couldn't tell who was winning. At the very least, he could tell that the Rain Swordlord's swordsmanship was impressive, and that her lifebound beasts paired rather well in the fight against Li Wushuang.

"Who'll win this fight?" he couldn't help but ask Long Wanying.

"Yang Ce, I'll leave that to you," Long Wanying said.

Yang Ce squinted and said, "Li Wushuang has her weapon, the Skymoon Holyfiend, and her totems are stronger than I expected. I believe she's about as powerful as me or the Tumulus Pill God."

"I see," Long Wanying said, taking in a breath of cold air.

"It's no surprise, considering her status," Yang Ce said. Li Wushuang had everything she could ever need as the sun emperor's sister.

"In other words, she might defeat the Rain Swordlord, right?" Tianming asked.

"She's not trying to defeat her, but to kill her," Yang Ce said.

Tianming exchanged glances with Long Wanying, who said, "Lan Sha already died today. If the Rain Swordlord dies, too, the stakes for the Emyrean Sword Sect will be even higher. The conflict will grow to a whole new level. If the Rain Swordlord dies, there's no way the Northdipper Swordsage will just sit and watch."

"Will we lose control of the situation?" Tianming asked.

"No. Fundamentally, we, the Azuresoul Palace, and the Supracloud Sanctuary aren't related to this. All we have to do is to stay out of it. The Saintdragon Emperor told me that if we really require it, he can temporarily send some people to our side." Even a suppressed Xuanyuan Dragon Sect was nothing that could be made light of. They were the second strongest faction, so they still had tricks up their sleeves if the circumstances really required it.

Tianming and the others' goal was simple: protect the saplings and obtain most of the divine herbs. They would be fine as long as they stayed out of this conflict, no matter how badly it turned out for those involved.

Long Wanying looked at the battlefield in deep thought. After a while, she said, "At the end of the day, Li Wushuang, Blueblood Starocean, and the wargodeans are our main enemy. The Emyrean Sword Sect is just our second priority. We have to deal with the former first before we'll have a chance to deal with the latter. If the Rain Swordlord is killed by Li Wushuang, given Li Wushuang's status, the Northdipper Swordsage might have a good justification for forming an alliance with other factions in the Myriad Solar Sects.

"The alliance's first priority might be to eradicate Li Wushuang and her lackeys, so we'll be left with our second-priority enemy. In that case, the many other factions within the alliance will complicate how the divine herbs are distributed. We'll also be facing two issues: first, Yun Tianque has to cut ties with Li Wushuang and the rest before the Northdipper Swordsage steps in to protect himself and the sect. Without 'help' from the outsiders, there's a chance that they can defend their divine herbs by relying on

the defensive formation of their sect. After all, Li Wushuang's forces don't seem too powerful based on what we can see now.

"Second, we'll have to deal with things on our side. There'll be too many factions wanting a cut of the divine herbs the Azuresoul Palace has. Not even the Northdipper Swordsage will have a good solution for that, so I can have the Saintdragon Emperor and the rest come here. After all, our sect was invited to come and help according to the regulations dictated by Sky Palace, just like the Emphyrean Sword Sect was. Otherwise, the divine fruits are rightfully supposed to belong to only the Supracloud Sanctuary and Azuresoul Palace. The Xuanyuan Dragon Sect can help us secure more divine herbs than our forces are currently able to. Even if that doesn't work, the Supracloud Sanctuary still gets to keep most of their divine herbs, and all of that combined is still a far larger share than they got to keep in previous harvests."

The fight between Li Wushuang and the Rain Swordlord was quite an unexpected one, yet Long Wanying had already started to make plans in the event of the swordlord's death. It was clear that if the Emphyrean Sword Sect were to suffer heavy casualties in this battle, it might trigger the formation of an alliance, which would be convenient for wiping out Li Wushuang's faction, their first-priority enemy.

It was crucial for Yun Tianque to cut ties with them before that happened, and given the pressure the Northdipper Swordsage would no doubt apply to Li Wushuang's faction, there would be little she could do about the Supracloud Sanctuary. If Yun Tianque were ever to take action for his own benefit, it would only be a matter of time before he turned his back toward Li Wushuang.

"That's all just a preliminary analysis, anyway. Whether things turn out as I expect isn't something I can promise. We can only keep watch by relying on Tianming's unique talent." The developments on this continent would affect the future of Orderia as a whole.

"The divine tree is already at its blooming prime. For now, the saplings aren't really doing anything, not that we're even able to take care of them for now. We might as well get the two sects to focus on harvesting divine herbs while the outsiders' attention is focused on the saplings. That way we'll be able to react quicker when the time comes. Apart from that, we'll keep watch for any changes concerning the saplings," Tianming said.

"That's right." It was impossible to want both the saplings and the divine herbs. That was beyond the ability of the two main sects of the continent.

"Let them continue slaughtering each other over the saplings. At the very least, they don't seem too keen on destroying them." The Azuresoul Palace and Supracloud Sanctuary couldn't dip their toes into the matter of the saplings no matter what, for they would risk destruction. "The Blueblood Starocean, Li Wushuang, and the wargodeans can only be crushed if the Northdipper Swordsage manages to form his alliance. The conflict could keep escalating after that, so we have to tread carefully."

Coupled with Shi Yan's crippling and Lan Sha's death, the Rain Swordlord's death would be more fuel on the fire.

"We must walk on a tightrope between two abysses and try to survive this." All of them anxiously waited to witness the fate of the Rain Swordlord, which could greatly alter the fate of the continent.

At that moment, the Wind Swordlord was already coming to her aid from behind.

Chapter 1398 - Mourning for Rain

As the Wind Swordlord was about to join in to team up with the Rain Swordlord against Li Wushuang, a huge cauldron came smashing down, sending him flying off.

"Is that the Divine Worldeater Cauldron?" Tinaming asked.

"No, it's a sub cauldron," Yu Ziqian said.

The celestial orderians and wargodeans were each said to possess one sub cauldron, one of which was in the Tumulus Pill God's hands. As expected, Tianming saw the old man near the cauldron.

"I heard the two swordlords are unmatched when fighting as a pair. Even the Northdipper Swordsage has to be wary against you two. Impressive... however, I won't allow you to do something like that today," the Tumulus Pill God said.

"Get out of my way!" the Wind Swordlord roared, charging forward in a fury. Yet another epic duel unfolded, sending sword ki off in wild directions. However, the old man managed to keep the Wind Swordlord at bay.

By now, the battle had heated up to its peak, with countless dead. The center of the battlefield was where the battle was the most chaotic. All of a sudden, the sharp cry of agony of a crane rang out. Then a bloodied crane carcass fell from the sky, its stomach cut open. The bloody glint of a blade flashed across the area as the six remaining ghostface moongoddesses surrounded a woman in a bloodied robe. She was dripping with blood from head to toe, even down to her blade.

"Hehehehe...." She held a human head in her other hand, its expression still one of horror and despair. The rest of the body had probably long been vaporized. There were quite a lot of people paying attention to that fight, and they had all witnessed the Rain Swordlord's death. Still surrounded by the totems, Li Wushuang was coldly laughing as she wiped her face with a bloody sleeve, coloring it even redder. It was a ghastly sight for sure.

Many cultivators of the Empyrean Sword Sect felt their morale completely collapse. Pain, despair, and fury all surged as they let out groans of utter agony. Many of them raggedly breathed in disbelief of what they had just seen. They'd been feeling on top of the world when Lan Sha had been killed, but now it was a different story. No doubt, the Wind Swordlord was the one who was suffering the most.

"Rain!" His white hair flared up with anger. He had lost the partner he'd been with for around a thousand years; she was killed right in front of him. On a cruel place like the battlefield, any other killer wouldn't feel the slightest bit bad for the people they'd killed, who no doubt had their own families and friends. It took until their own loved ones were killed for them to realize the barbarity of it all. It was like an immutable law of the heavens. With resources being limited, only the powerful got to make the rules. Those who were strong enough were able to obtain the necessary resources to keep themselves alive, and perhaps even siphon away the resources of others. Wherever there was conflict, there would be death. The two swordlords had won almost every battle in their lives, but now it was their turn to be on the losing side.

Justice was a fickle thing; everyone laid claim to it to justify their cause. Tianming's justice was his care for his loved ones. Such was no doubt the case with other battles as well. As such, the others couldn't

quite empathize with the Wind Swordlord's pain. His eyes were reddened with fury, his breathing ragged.

"You're next, Wind Swordlord. Come take your woman's head," Li Wushuang said, tossing the head into the air and impaling it upon her weapon. She heartily laughed and gleefully looked at the Wind Swordlord, seeding despair into the hearts of the many cultivators of the Emyrean Sword Sect.

"The Rain Swordlord is dead and their army is demoralized! Everyone, follow me and slaughter these fifty thousand swordpupils! Avenge Brother Lan Sha! Let's help our fellow fighters of the Blueblood Starocean even the scales!" the Tumulus Pill God yelled. His rallying cry was quite effective, and the wargodeans and Blueblood Starocean were now filled with even more murderous fervor.

"Kill them!"

"Slaughter them!"

"Death to all!"

Crazed war cries shook the entire area as the cultivators of the Blueblood Starocean and the wargodeans doubled down in the killing. Li Wushuang had opened the floodgates, causing blood to burst from the dam. Many swordpupils were killed in their despair, causing them to fall like dominos. There was nothing the Wind Swordlord could do to help their morale, unless he could kill Li Wushuang, but that was impossible. Not to mention, Li Wushuang and the Tumulus Pill God were trying to kill him. If he lost his cool today, the Emyrean Sword Sect would end up losing two swordlords and he would never get to avenge his lover.

"Rain...." Tears of blood flowed from his eyes. They had been in love since their teens, and it had lasted about a thousand years. And now he was completely heartbroken. Before the battle, he had come to a final decision. He had planned to retreat from Aix Lake and give up on the saplings after reuniting with the Rain Swordlord, finally seeing it for what it was: a hot potato he had taken from Tianming. However, the Rain Swordlord didn't know what Li Wushuang was made of and thought that she alone was enough to lead the Emyrean Sword Sect to resist, which ended up costing her life. The causal chain was the root of much pain and hurt.

"It's all my fault...."

However, his realization came too little too late. Once more, he looked at the Rain Swordlord's eyes as tears of blood flowed. Luckily, he retained one last strand of reason; if he charged in, the rest of the Emyrean Sword Sect's fifty thousand swordpupils would be completely eradicated in this battle. Seeing how eager Li Wushuang was about the fight, she must have been confident of her victory. Even the Tumulus Pill God was impressed by her capabilities.

The Wind Swordlord announced with a grieving voice, "Emyrean Sword Sect, retreat!" That exclamation used up all his remaining energy. Then he abandoned the body of his beloved and fled on his own as the rest of the swordpupils ran in all directions. The more dispersed they were, the more of them would survive. They had suffered a debilitating loss.

"Chase them down! You get to keep any spoils you take for yourself!" Li Wushuang ordered. The pursuers gave chase, some even going as far as hundreds of miles. Corpses continued falling from the

sky before only ten thousand or so of the fifty thousand swordpupils managed to escape, some of whom had lost many lifebound beasts to the point that they were crippled.

This was the worst loss the Empyrean Sword Sect had suffered in the past hundred thousand years, something that would shake Orderia to the core. They had lost at least thirty-eight thousand people, including the Rain Swordlord. The wargodeans had also lost five thousand of their twenty thousand troops, and the Blueblood Starocean lost around twelve thousand. Though it wasn't even half of the Empyrean Sword Sect's losses, it was still nothing that could casually be brushed off by the Tumulus Pill God or the leaderless cultivators of the Blueblood Starocean. At the end of the day, Li Wushuang was the only one that hadn't lost anything.

Only Tianming knew that the true winner of this battle wasn't Li Wushuang, but his group. It was the result of their elaborate plan, starting with the provocation of Li Haochen and resulting in the deaths of Lan Sha, the Rain Swordlord, around forty thousand Empyrean Sword Sect cultivators, and some twenty thousand on Li Wushuang's side.

"An even bigger storm is brewing... sit tight."

Chapter 1399 - Alliance of Anger

There was no night on Orderia, and the constant heat and light only intensified the rage, fury and bloodlust the Empyrean Sword Sect swordpupils felt after the Rain Swordlord's death. The Blueblood Starocean and wargodeans were also filled with fervor and morale. They made Aix Lake their base and continued fighting their way south, staining the divine tree with the blood of the dead along the way, littering corpses of beastmasters and lifebound beasts all over.

The climate on the sun had forged a rather jumpy temperament in many of its residents, making them unconsciously crave conflict and battle. War was always a cruel reality. Fortunately, Tianming and the rest were hiding backstage, not drawing the attention of the Empyrean Sword Sect or Li Wushuang at all.

It used to be that 'helper' sects that joined the conflict between the Supracloud Sanctuary and Azuresoul Palace profited greatly from such ventures, but today I managed to prevent these two sects from getting involved in the fight. Now the outsiders are the ones doing the fighting, and tunnel vision has made them prioritize short-term goals, Tianming thought. The deaths of Lan Sha and the Rain Swordlord would definitely usher in even greater conflict on the continent, but Tianming and the rest could just keep hiding by the wayside. In other words, as long as Li Wushuang's here on the continent, conflict is inevitable. She'll definitely try escalating things in an attempt to take everything here.

Initially, her goal had been Long Wanying's death, but she had instead been dragged into the conflict by Tianming. Not to mention, she also wanted the saplings, so there was no way she was going to willingly extricate herself from this quagmire. Right now, she was still basking in the elation of her victory.

"She did win this time around, but no doubt, her appetite is growing. I believe she'll be eyeing the saplings the Empyrean Sword Sect is guarding." Tianming and the rest would divert the Empyrean Sword Sect's rage to help them get rid of their biggest enemy.

"Matters have grown bigger than we expected, but it's still going along the course we plotted," Long Wanying said.

"That's right. Let's go back for now."

They secretly left the battlefield. Nobody at Aix Lake recognized them. The wargodean and Blueblood Starocean combatants were cleaning up the bloody battlefield, collecting the corpses of their allies and healing the injured while delivering the final blow to the defeated, but living enemies. Naturally, looting them was also a highlight of the cleanup. Precious resources shouldn't just be wasted, after all.

Yun Tianque looked south as he helped with the cleanup, knowing well that Tianming and the rest had left. "Let's hope that the Azurecloud Continent will truly be able to rise one day!" He'd had enough of serving Li Wushuang on his knees like a pathetic slave.

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The Empyrean Sword Sect cultivators at Aix Lake had retreated, giving the site back to the enemy. Only around ten thousand of their swordpupils made it back to the border of the territory between the Azuresoul Palace and Supracloud Sanctuary, and they had lost a swordlord to boot. Such a horrifying defeat left a mark of despair in the survivors, who either sat flat on the ground or leaned against their lifebound beasts, their eyes reddened from tears. Some of them even straight up bawled. They had come fully confident, thinking it was nothing but a casual field trip, yet now they were heavily battered before they'd even collected any dues. Many of their spirits were completely crushed.

"Swordlord...."

Everyone gathered around a white-haired old man who was leaning against the trunk of the divine tree with a deathly silence. He looked like a corpse that had been steeped in a marinade of despair and grief. Even as he looked up, it was hard to see any of the radiance he'd had before; all that was left was festering rage and fury.

"If the swordsage finds out about what happened here, we...."

They were all feeling too guilty for having been overwhelmed despite having more people on their side. They used to be so confident about taking down their enemies and creating history.

"Li Wushuang is far too cruel. She thinks no one can stop her because she's the sister of the sun emperor. But with what she's done to us, the swordsage will definitely want nothing short of her death!"

"It's a shame, what happened to the Rain Swordlord.... We have to avenge her!"

Their sullen spirits began burning once more.

"Swordlord, let's regroup the troops that are guarding the saplings. We still have a total of seventy thousand swordpupils. That way, we can avenge our fallen brethren!" Many people positively responded to that suggestion, as if they'd forgotten how pathetic their retreat had been.

At that moment, the Wind Swordlord received a transmission stone from the Northdipper Swordsage, a reply to the one he had sent when the battle fell apart. Reading it, he grit his teeth and said, "The swordsage instructed us to stay calm. He'll deal with what happens next. He promised that he would answer for the deaths of our comrades."

"Long live the swordsage!"

Hearing that, the swordpupils were reassured. They had worried that the reputation of their sect would sink to a new low if they didn't avenge their fallen, especially the Rain Swordlord. Bowing to their loss was their worst fear.

"It's fine. We also killed Lan Sha from the Blueblood Starocean. They also lost quite a lot as well."

That was the only thing they could say to console themselves. The Wind Swordlord's hands were still shaking; merely closing his eyes made his lover surface in his mind's eye, the sight of her lifeless eyes looking back at him. He clutched his chest in pain, tears flowing nonstop. "Rain...."

They had been together their entire lives, leaving lasting marks on each other. Even now that she was dead, the specter of her presence still hung around him. The grief made him crawl to a corner with nobody else and break down crying. What was worse was that she didn't even have any remains. Even her head was still in the hands of Li Wushuang, no doubt being mutilated. They'd had quite a few nemeses over the years, but someone as cruel and sadistic as Li Wushuang, who didn't fear their sect in the slightest, was the first of her kind.

Currently, the transmission stone he had received from the swordsage was his only hope. The message read, 'Brother, still your grief! The alliance rages at the news of the Rain Swordlord's death. Now we're finalizing the details of the alliance. On the day the allied army arrives, we'll make the celestial orderians and their traitorous mutts pay the price for killing our precious brothers and sisters, as well as the Rain Swordlord. Before that day, please keep the saplings safe.'

He didn't say when that day would come—not specifically—but the Wind Swordlord believed it would be soon. The death of his partner was the spark that caused the alliance to form. "Rain... I won't let you die in vain. Now, there's no longer anything holding me back. I'll cast away my humanity until the day I manage to kill Li Wushuang!"

Chapter 1400 - Perfect Match

The grand victory had caused the morale of the wargodeans to soar. They were the fourth-ranked first-rate sect, and thanks to Li Wushuang, they had managed to deal a heavy blow to the Emyrean Sword Sect, the fifth-ranked sect. It was a crushing victory that had allowed them to vent. If it weren't for Lan Sha's death, which had been a heavy blow, this would have called for a celebration.

Now that the Emyrean Sword Sect had retreated, Li Wushuang assigned new people to take over Aix Lake. The battlefield was still covered in corpses and blood, but the victors saw it as a beautiful and welcome sight, or at least Li Wushuang did. Standing atop a blood-drenched branch of the divine tree, she looked into the distance. Her helpful aides, Yun Tianque and the Tumulus Pill God, stood beside her.

"Lady Wushuang," the Tumulus Pill God said, seeing that she was in a good mood. However, he didn't feel like he could just say it outright.

"What is it?" she asked, smiling. Despite still being drenched in blood, there was an innocence to her smile, though that in turn chilled him.

"I was only going to say that there's no way the Emyrean Sword Sect will accept taking such a loss. Now that the Rain Swordlord is dead, the Northdipper Swordsage will definitely act. We have to make some preparations in advance."

"They're only going to send reinforcements. Can't your sects do the same? Needless to say, if they send more people here, I'll speak to the Warlord and Deluge Emperor about reinforcements myself. If the Northdipper Swordsage comes himself and wants to deal with me, we'll have the Warlord come. Isn't he your disciple?" she matter-of-factly said.

"Yes... this old man is just worried that they will launch a surprise attack on us. Given my understanding of the Northdipper Swordsage, he isn't the type to mount an attack personally, given how slimy he is. He's afraid of the Warlord."

"Then it won't even be a problem. Don't you understand? Nobody in this world dares to touch me. Fools like the Rain Swordlord don't understand that simple principle, though, and now she's dead." She'd even had the former Whitedragon Emperor killed by the sun emperor with a flimsy justification that he'd 'violated' her, and nobody had said a word about it. This was a world where might made right, and it just so happened that the celestial orderians and the sun emperor were the real mighty ones.

"I just worry that they won't attack us with conventional methods and resort to... less savory ones," the Tumulus Pill God reminded her. There were far many more ways than one to kill a person.

"I understand your point. With how ruthless my actions today were, some people will try to force my brother away to teach me a lesson. But if I already don't fear a frontal attack, why should I fear a surprise attack? My people are already here, and they're waiting for me back at the Supracloud Sanctuary."

"That's perfect!" he said. Li Wushuang would be fine, alright, since she had the best celestial orderian elites to protect her. He was 'happy' for her, but he felt rather bad about this. Li Wushuang hadn't called upon many average cultivators to come, so the fodder in future battles would still be from the wargodeans and Blueblood Starocean. In future conflicts, those two sects would be the ones suffering casualties, Lan Sha being a chief example of that. Yet Li Wushuang had gone past him to directly reach the Warlord and Deluge Emperor to get more protection for herself.

It went without saying that she would take all of the saplings too. As for how many divine herbs she would leave them, it completely depended on her mood. The main goal of the Blueblood Starocean and wargodeans had been to get some divine herbs to begin with, without suffering too many casualties in the process, but Li Wushuang had completely ruined those plans. Now the two sects were branded as full traitors, and they didn't even have much to show for it.

Even if a bigger conflict is sparked, she'll still be able to roam free while our two sects suffer. She can leave at any time, and nobody can touch her.... What a great plan on her part, the Tumulus Pill God lamented. The Warlord had put him under a lot of pressure to get Li Wushuang to tone down her actions, but he knew that there was no way he could just tell her to stop. He couldn't take it any more and made an attempt. "Lady Wushuang, the scale of the conflict is considerably rising. Shouldn't we consult the sun emperor about this matter just in case?"

He immediately regretted it the next moment. Li Wushuang's smile immediately vanished, replaced by an icy-cold glare.

"Shut up."

"Understood!" He hurriedly looked down without saying another word. Li Wushuang had a complicated relationship with the sun emperor; she was like a stubborn child that caused trouble because of her affluent family, yet she absolutely loathed snitches who told on her to her guardians. Then again, how could the sun emperor not be aware of all that? Perhaps he was closing one eye and pretending not to see it. If not even the sun emperor cared, there was nothing he could do but mourn the fallen, those who would never rise again, even as those that survived cheered and obliviously danced above the corpses of their comrades.

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After the bloody battle, the entire continent was embroiled in a deathly storm that allowed grudges, rage, and hatred to fester like magma. The day the volcano blew would be the day the continent was swallowed in conflict. Would anyone be able to change the fate of the Azurecloud Divine Tree? One thing was for sure: Tianming and the rest couldn't show up in the open until the two warring factions left the battlefield.

"Li Wushuang and the rest still don't know about the Northdipper Swordsage's alliance, so they might underestimate the number of reinforcements they need. At the same time, she'll no doubt underestimate the desire of the swordsage to help his sect supersede the Xuanyuan Dragon Sect to become the leading faction of the Myriad Solar Sects. In the next battle, we need Li Wushuang and the rest to lose, and perhaps even retreat from the continent, so we have to side with the Empyrean Sword Sect."

That was the consensus between Tianming, Long Wanying, Yang Ce, and Gujian Qingshuang. Li Wushuang's victory today would no doubt make her feel good and let down her guard.

"Next, we'll rely on Tianming to massage in the finer details. Keep an eye on all of their troop movements and reinforcements," Long Wanying said. Information was their greatest advantage, and Long Wanying and Yang Ce were a huge help. They didn't want any saplings or divine herbs, just an opportunity to drive away the traitors and give the Xuanyuan Dragon Sect a chance. The biggest problem the Xuanyuan Dragon Sect had now was that three Dragon Imperials' lives were at risk of being taken by the Veildragon Palace.

Long Wanying knew that if they had a breakthrough victory on this front, she would be able to bring Tianming to the Xuanyuan Dragon Sect and fight the Veildragon Palace together. No doubt, they would also greatly benefit in that struggle with Tianming supporting them. Apart from them, Gujian Qingshuang was fighting for the Azuresoul Palace, while Yan Nuxia and the rest were helping out of friendship. They were the perfect match, and Tianming's ability was the core that bound them all together. He needed them just as much as they needed him, each in their own struggles against fate.