

The Ages 1401

Chapter 1401 - Miracle of the Wondersky Race

"The Azurecloud Divine Tree has been producing far too many divine herbs. Even though both sects mobilized all of their available manpower for the harvest and will finish in about a month or two, the total number is estimated to be twice the usual. At the very end, the tree could have produced up to ten billion divine herbs, while the two sects can each get around four billion or more," Gujian Qingshuang summarized. It was a figure that could completely change the continent and its history. By relying on all those divine herbs, the two sects could develop without having to bow their heads to others, eventually emerging as a new first-rate sect. That was now Tianming, Gujian Qingshuang, and Yun Tianque's goal. The young Tianming was a new hope for the continent to the two elder sect masters.

"Let's focus on keeping the divine herbs before we look at the saplings," Tianming said.

"Alright!" Whether the abundant harvest would be fortune or misfortune remained to be seen.

"Even more people from the celestial orderians' side have arrived at the Supracloud Sanctuary, some totemancers, others beastmasters. Most of them are middle-aged males. They all seem rather odd, but rather capable. Li Wushuang called them over as reinforcements, so they're probably in the elite class. Now, Li Wushuang has a far stronger combined force than the Emyrean Sword Sect," Tianming said.

"How many are there in total?" Long Wanying asked.

"Eighteen."

"So they're all here..." Long Wanying said with a look of gloom.

"All? Is there anything noteworthy about them?" Tianming asked.

"They're people that want to marry her in order to get on the good side of the sun emperor. They'll do anything to win her favor. These people are all from races and clans with unique talents, so we have to be ready."

"Alright. I'll pay close attention to them."

"Tianming," Yang Ce called out.

"What is it, Uncle Yang?"

"Would you dare to help me make Li Wushuang submit so we can use her as a hostage to exchange for the three Dragon Imperials on our side if we have a chance?"

Tianming was shocked. He had thought that Li Wushuang was off limits no matter what, but now their plans seemed to be growing more daring. The three Dragon Imperials' capture had greatly affected the Xuanyuan Dragon Sect. Even Li Haochen might not be a good enough hostage, as the sun emperor had a dozen other sons to replace him with.

"If we really intend to do that, it'd be the same as directly resisting the sun emperor. While we don't really have a choice, since he's already acted against our side, young Tianming here has no need to go

that far. But let's not talk about that for now. Li Wushuang is too big a target and the slightest mistake will ruin all our plans," Long Wanying said. She obviously didn't agree with that proposal.

Long Wanying had too many considerations to keep in mind while Yang Ce wanted swift and direct results, so he was willing to take more risks. Risks like going after Li Wushuang. Since Long Wanying had already made her opinions heard, Tianming said, "Uncle Yang, I definitely won't miss it if there's a chance. Let's see how it goes. The Xuanyuan Dragon Sect has helped me a lot, so we're already on the same side."

He knew that he wasn't just a normal junior to them. Without the care of their sect, there was no way he could realize his current ambitions and his status as a Sky Palace disciple would serve as nothing more than a pretty decoration.

"At the very least, Li Wushuang doesn't seem to be treading carefully at all. She probably hasn't even considered the possibility that she could be a weakness of the celestial orderians," Long Wanying said. She was the one who most wanted to kill Li Wushuang, but reason kept her fury at bay. She understood that once the secret was out, it would all be over. She couldn't let her hate boil over, but she couldn't let it be entirely quenched, either.

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The subsequent days were quiet as the harvesting came closer to a close. Both sects had stockpiled large numbers of divine herbs, billions of them in fact, but nobody had made an attempt to move them since the appearance of the saplings. The Emyrean Sword Sect was awaiting the formation of the alliance, and people were observing the saplings for any changes that would completely alter the situation once again. These days, Tianming had settled down and focused on cultivation.

"The eighth level of the Violetglory Pagoda is indeed impressive. The solarian caeli here are probably inferior to none other than the sun emperor, by Orderia's standards. They're probably more powerful than the Saintdragon Emperor, dreamless celestial emperor, and even the Warlord. But the caeli on the ninth level must be even better! I managed to easily defeat the ninth-level Li Haochen, so it's about time I challenge Ye Chen for first place."

The Violetglory ranking was like a game to Tianming. His actual body was so far away from the star itself, so he felt a strange kind of detachment from affairs over there, coming and going as he pleased. While a battle between 'Lin Feng' and Ye Chen was a hot topic that could shake the entire star, Ye Chen was nothing more than a stepping stone in Tianming's eyes no matter how impressive he seemed, being no different from an ancient idol.

Someone would notify him if anything happened on the continent, so he went back into the wondersky realm with Lingfeng and Xiaoxiao. Lingfeng was now a sixth-level constellier and was able to take on those on the eighth level, perhaps even ninth-level totemancers. His divine soul would soon rise to the fourth imperial soul level, which would only make him even more terrifying.

"I should be able to take on Gong Yin, the second ranker, by now. But I'll wait for you to get first place and test out Ye Chen's abilities," Lingfeng said. Gong Yin was only an eighth-level constellier, so he wouldn't be Lingfeng's match. The only reason Lingfeng hadn't made the challenge yet was that the loser and everyone beneath them in rank would be pushed back a place. In other words, if Lingfeng

defeated the second-ranking Gong Yin, Gong Yin would become third place and push Tianming to fourth place, which would mean he would have to fight Gong Yin to rejoin the top three before he could challenge Ye Chen.

Lingfeng would wait for Tianming to settle his fight before going for the second spot, first by challenging Gong Yin, then Ye Chen after that. Even though the second and third place both had access to the eighth level of the pagoda, Lingfeng wanted to take second so there would be room for Xiaoxiao in third place. She was now a seventh-level constellier, being the highest among them in terms of level. After Tianming and Lingfeng took the top two spots, it would be her turn to challenge Ye Chen to become the third ranker.

"It's too bad Ye Chen doesn't expect us to push him to fourth place," Tianming said. The other two laughed at the prospect.

"Brother Tianming, Ye Chen doesn't sound like easy pickings, according to rumors. It's best not to underestimate him," Lingfeng said.

"It doesn't really matter. It isn't like I'm at risk of dying here. Even if I lose, it's only a matter of time before I defeat him, then the two of you do, too." He didn't fuss over it too much. Winning in the wondersky realm had always only been a pleasant bonus, rather than anything crucial. He could lose a hundred times for all he cared, as long as he won when he really needed to. He had even been defeated by Liu Wanwan once at the Violetglory Pagoda, yet now he was akin to a god in her eyes.

Tianming told the wondersky fairy, "I'm making an official challenge to Ye Chen. Notify the duel committee and get them to arrange it for me."

"Will do. Your challenge is looked forward to by everyone in the wondersky realm. I'm sure you won't mind if I announced it, right?" the wondersky fairy said.

"I do mind. I want to keep it low profile." The sense of fighting before the eyes of such a large audience wasn't something he really enjoyed. He had only intentionally done so when he fought the princess because he wanted to resolve Liu Wanwan's trouble more easily, but now it was just a game to him.

"Your opinion has been taken into account. I'll still announce the challenge immediately," the wondersky fairy said cheekily.

"Then why'd you bother to even ask?!"

Immediately after, the announcement rocked the entire Violetglory Star, turning up the heat once more. The denizens of the distant star had anxiously been awaiting that announcement. Those who talked about the fight between the miracles seemed even more agitated than Tianming himself.

"Did he accept the battle?" Tianming asked.

"Ye Chen is currently in the Astraldome. You will receive a reply once he returns."

"I see... he's a busy man. Can I go to the Astraldome too?" By now, most lands of trials here were open to Tianming.

"You may not for now. The Astraldome is a battlefield that links many wondersky realms of other nova source worlds together, a true proving ground for people all across the cosmic aether. Only the best of

the best get to compete there. It's the miracle created by the wondersky race! We personally watch over that miraculous proving ground." The wondersky fairy was filled with zealous fervor every time it talked about the wondersky race.

Tianming found it rather laughable, as he was also someone who had crossed the vast distance between stars to dominate the people on the Violetglory Star. Though wars between worlds were common across the endless astralscape, there were also many worlds that remained hidden. However, they could fight at the Astraldome without worry and win the reputation of being the strongest of the strongest.

Chapter 1402 - Guardian Spirit

Since Ye Chen was currently occupied, Tianming didn't feel any rush either. He had only come to make the challenge when he was free on the continent himself, so it was only fair that Ye Chen answered the challenge on his own time, too.

"Wondersky fairy, if I defeat Ye Chen, will I be allowed to go to the Astraldome?"

"Not yet. You need the recommendation of either the Divineglory Dynasty or Violetcloud Imperium before you may represent the Violetglory Star in the Astraldome. Those two factions would never allow any average joe to represent them and lose face for them."

"I see. But nevertheless, becoming the top ranker is still a requirement, right?"

"That is correct."

Tianming was rather interested in the Astraldome, as it would allow him to be exposed to countless different peoples in the astralscape. It really seemed like there were many nova source worlds. If the Violetglory Star alone had so many different races, even the divineglorians that had divinesprings, then there must be so many more kinds of people on distant stars. The astralscape of order was indeed a marvel to be looked forward to.

Though, all of that was something for another day. For now, he was still benefiting from training on the pagoda's eighth level. While he wasn't progressing as quickly as he had been during his ascendant days, he was already far beyond the likes of a totemancer like Li Haochen just by virtue of being able to maintain his current rate of progress.

After Li Haochen had been defeated, he was planning to return to the celestial orderians. Tianming left a few cockroaches on Long Youyou's person, but he wasn't sure if they would be able to make it there with them in one piece. It wouldn't be surprising if they were shrugged off mid travel. After all, even though they were invisible, they could still be felt if they stuck too close to the body. Tianming wanted to use them to check on Qingyu. Right now, he only knew that she still lived, but had no other information.

"If the Azurecloud Continent can be stabilized and the Xuanyuan Dragon Sect is able to take back their lost dragonsprings, then I'll slowly become more capable of dealing with the celestial orderians." He continued working toward his goal of freeing Qingyu.

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During the night in the wondersky realm, the sound of music was coming from a pavilion near a lake. This was Princess Shen Yu's favorite spot; she was waiting for Ye Chen there. To enter the Astraldome, Ye Chen couldn't directly go there using a heavenly locus formation. Instead, he had to enter the formation in the real world and come to Violetglory Star's wondersky realm first, then go through a passageway within to reach the Astraldome. In a sense, it wasn't its own separate wondersky realm with its own star, but a node connecting many other wondersky realms that all had their own pathways leading there.

In other words, Ye Chen would have to go through the wondersky realm if he was on his way back from the Astraldome, so the princess waited for him there. She sat in front of her guqin, her fingers gracefully plucking its strings and producing the most moving of melodies, the sound of which sent gentle ripples across the lake.

After some time, a radiant youth in white robes appeared above the lake in a flash. He flew down, smiled as he sat on the stone bench, and laid down comfortably. Looking a little like a drunk, he took a deep breath and said, "Ah, my Wanwan smells the best after all."

"What's that supposed to mean? Did you encounter other women at the Astraldome?" She played her guqin with one hand and put her right hand on the youth's face, nudging it like an older sister.

"They're all uglies that can't compare to how good you look. There's even specters among the countless kinds of people there.... The astralscape is really huge, for there to be so much variety!"

"Now, watch your language." She pinched his lips shut.

"I can't help it. Crude words flow well from the mouth of someone as crude and thick as I am."

"What do you mean thick?"

"What do you think I mean?"

"Pervert...."

"Thanks for the compliment."

After messing around for a bit, the princess adjusted her messy clothing and said, "Hey, we can't just keep fooling around like this. Have you received the challenge?"

"I have."

"And?"

"What else? I accept, of course. Why else did I come back? The fight will take place three days from now."

"Just like that?" The princess didn't quite know how to react.

"Well, it won't be something to write home about. Let's not make it a big deal."

"So you're looking down on him, then? He's someone that managed to kill me in an instant, you know."

"Looking down? Far from it. He's capable alright, being a nonabane. I definitely won't take him lightly. I'll even take all the perks I got from the Astraldome there to face him, even my guardian spirit, which I'll register with the heavenly locus formation later."

"Guardian spirit?" The princess seemed rather taken aback. Though she had worried that he would look down on Tianming at first, hearing that he was going to use his guardian spirit meant he was going all out. "Looks like you know what you're doing after all. Beat him up and get even for me."

"Of course. He instakilled my beloved, so I'll return the favor. Nothing short of that would be enough."

"Ever since you defeated Gong Yin, you've never really had any challengers on the Violetglory Star. Are you excited that you finally got one?"

"Yeah, more or less. I hope he's comparable to those insane folks at the Astraldome. That way, the Violetglory Star will be in for a show."

"Well aren't you a wild one? Let's pray you don't lose as badly as I did."

"Hah! Now you're the one looking down on me! Looks like someone needs a spanking!"

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Tianming received a response to his challenge before he got to cultivate for any significant time at the pagoda. "Three days from now, eh...."

It would only be a blink of an eye. Even so, Tianming still planned to make his final preparations at the Violetglory Pagoda. Lingfeng and Xiaoxiao were there, too, but they were on the seventh level.

"Soon, all three of us will challenge Ye Chen. I have to set a good example for the other two."

When there were only two days remaining, he was summoned by Old Master Shengui to his beach house. Tianming wouldn't even bother going to the obscene place if not for the intel he could potentially get. When he left the pagoda, he noticed the atmosphere of the entire wondersky realm was bustling in anticipation for the match. Even though it hadn't started yet, they could already see the Violetcloud Battlefield above. It was still empty, but countless people were gathered around it, filling the audience area to the brim.

"Looks like people will be able to see the battle no matter where they are in the wondersky realm. Still, going to the battlefield to watch it is sure to be more exciting."

Chapter 1403 - Fishy from Afar

The wondersky realm was filled to the brim with countless caeli.

"Lin Feng!"

"It's him!"

"He looks quite similar to Ye Chen."

"Are you blind? Ye Chen's far more natural and radiant, while Lin Feng is cold and mysterious."

"You say that, but they behave the exact opposite. Lin Feng's the one who sacrificed many things for a normal friend of his, Liu Wanwan, whereas Ye Chen's path is covered in blood after the many people he's decisively killed. They tread completely different paths."

Tianming was rather interested in the discussions. He hadn't personally met Ye Chen yet, but comparisons between the two of them were already being made across the entire star.

"Similar, yet different, eh...."

It was just like eggs and bananas. Eggs had whites on the outside and yellow yolks within, while bananas had yellow skin and white flesh within. They were opposites, in a symmetrical sense. Tianming's aura made him seem like a raging lord of chaos that people didn't dare to approach, while Ye Chen was bright and young and famous for being youthful, childish yet ruthless. There was a stark contrast between their outer appearances and inner personalities, and it somehow caused them to be perceived as polar enemies. The two of them were each miraculous existences. The question was: who would be more miraculous? No doubt, the denizens of the Violetglory Star couldn't wait to find out.

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Tianming arrived at Old Master Shengui's beach using the wondersky fairy's teleport feature. He felt the warm ocean breeze brushing across his face. The clear seawater rushed to his feet, causing fine white sand to give way to his weight. There were even some crabs around the area, menacingly waving their claws at him.

"What a beautiful sight. It's a shame it's not real." The wondersky realm itself was no different from a dream, being situated within the xenomemory space. The only part of Tianming that was actually in it was his caelum.

"What makes what's real, real, and what makes what's fake, fake? There's falsity in everything that's real, and reality in everything that's fake. Young man, don't be too quick to judge," said the old man from behind.

Tianming turned around and saw the old man in colorful shorts and a singlet. He held a delicious-looking coconut in his hand. "You're just trying to sound cool using sophistry."

"As long as I can fake it convincingly enough, it might as well be real."

"Is that coconut real too?"

"Of course. Imagine you dreamed of a girl... and you did the deed with her, only to wake up and notice signs of it having happened. Who's to say that experience wasn't real? The wondersky realm is where dreams come to life."

"I can't be bothered to argue in circles with you. Why'd you ask me to come?"

"I have some advice for you, that's all."

"Let's hear it, then."

"I've heard of how Ye Chen has managed to easily defeat tenth-level constelliers at the Astraldome, 'easily' being the operative word. On the Violetglory Star, he's able to defeat enemies three levels above

him, so he obviously has many tricks up his sleeve. Now, his true level is the seventh. While that might not be higher than you, he's a few leagues above even the eighth-level princess you defeated last time. In other words, he's reached heights nobody of your age ever has. If he continues growing, he'll probably peak at a level above the two leaders of the top factions of the Violetglory Star."

The old man sighed as he suddenly felt that the coconut he was holding didn't smell as good anymore. So he tossed it away and it turned into a red dudou undergarment. In the wondersky realm, nothing was out of the ordinary. "If that day ever comes, he'll reach heights nobody on the Violetglory Star has reached in the past millions of years. The Divineglory Dynasty will definitely start suppressing the Violetcloud Imperium, and that would be troublesome."

"You don't need to tell me all that. It's still too early to worry about it right now. Still, I'm thankful for the information," Tianming said. How could a seventh-level constellier easily defeat tenth-level constelliers, the best of the best that fought in the Astraldome no less, who were top rankers on their own worlds? At the very least, they were sure to be much stronger than Li Haochen. The news caused Tianming to evaluate Ye Chen more highly, though he still didn't really care too much about it. It was just going to be a fight with no stakes, merely a part of cultivating and growing. He just had to try his best and didn't even have to worry about dying.

"Senior, would you believe me if I told you I was a fourth-level constellier?" Tianming asked.

"What was that? Tenth-level? Impressive. You stand a chance against him then," Shengui said. (TL Note: Ten and four have similar pronunciations in Mandarin.)

"Fourth, not tenth! Don't get it wrong!"

"Yeah, tenth, right? What part of that is wrong?"

There was no way to communicate it at all. Here, people couldn't really tell what his specific level was, though that might be different if he reached the Solar stage. Solarians had different qualities that showed which level they were at, unlike constelliers.

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After he left the beach, Yin Chen reported a minor change to him so he left the wondersky realm.

"Where is she?"

"Outside there."

"Lead the way."

Tianming left the Azuresoul Sword Mountain. Right after he emerged from the Azuresky Myriadsword Formation, he saw a girl that he easily recognized. She wore a light-green dress and held a paper umbrella. Her long hair flowed and fluttered and she looked just like a beautiful fairy. She was none other than Weisheng Moran, but Tianming couldn't be sure which Weisheng Moran he was dealing with now. Even so, the fish in his left eye looked a little excited and energetically swam around in his golden iris.

She stood near a small stream in the forest, her dress not failing to highlight her figure. When Tianming arrived, she was still intently looking at the stream.

"Hey, why're you here?" Tianming asked from a distance at the border of the formation. He didn't dare to approach before he could be sure she wasn't a danger to him.

She turned back, slightly surprised. One of her eyes was empty while the other was ink-black and deep like jade, looking like a precious gemstone.

"Your little fish has come to find you," she said, hesitantly lowering her head.

"Bro, why'd you look for me?" Tianming asked.

Her expression was a little odd at being called 'bro'. She seemed a little angered and exasperated. "I'm a woman. You can check if you don't believe me," she said as she began stripping off her top and working downward, revealing her fair skin.

"Hey, stop!" Tianming felt himself going insane. "Fine, I believe you're a woman!" Not only that, he believed that she was the original Weisheng Moran and not the one he had fought. Their behaviors were far too different.

"Big Brother, I managed to escape... but I don't know where I should go. So, I came to you. I broke something, so he won't be able to find me for now. Can you take me in?" she asked, biting her lip and looking at him like a pitiful little puppy.

"No way in hell! Goodbye!" Tianming immediately backed off.

Chapter 1404 - Projecting Dominance

It was one thing for Weisheng Moran to put the Azurespirit into his eye, causing him to get on the bad side of some great figure in the Dreamless Celestial Nation, who wanted him to dig out his eye to return it. But now she had come to him for refuge after escaping, bringing even more trouble with her. Tianming was going to make an enemy out of the celestial orderians, so how could he afford to be at odds with the dreamless celestials as well? She even addressed him as 'big brother'!

That's only for Ling'er to use! If she finds out, she'll never let me hear the end of it. The mere thought of that caused him to shudder.

"I'll hide and won't bring you any trouble. I'm useful to you. I can help you absorb all the energy of the Azurespirit. Let it plant its seed. Eventually you'll get all the fruits," Weisheng Moran desperately said.

"I don't want it! Can you take it out?"

"It can't be done. It's already grown into your eye, your brain, too, in fact. It's no longer a simple matter of digging out your eye. If you hadn't become a Sky Palace disciple, he wouldn't have let you walk away like that. He's still contemplating some other way to get it out, but if it doesn't work, he won't hesitate to sacrifice you."

"Aren't you causing trouble for me for no good reason at all?"

"I'm sorry... but you're the only one who can help me," she said in a begging tone.

"Who's this person that you're talking about?"

"The dreamless celestial emperor."

"Fucking hell."

If that really was the case, it was bad news. He looked at the pitiful girl, frustration brewing. Her good looks did give her quite an edge. It would feel horrible if he refused to help her. But considering the current circumstances, he couldn't afford to go against the dreamless celestial emperor yet. Sighing, he said, "I'll get in contact with him and do my best to return it. Please go back, Bro."

Weisheng Moran continued blankly staring at him "I don't have anything. If you really want, I can give my whole self to you." Just like that, she began undoing her belt again.

"Stop, I can't stand that kind of shock!" He turned around and zipped back to the Azuresoul Sword Mountain. She was a hermaphrodite! He surely didn't swing that way. "Thankfully I ran fast enough. Otherwise she would've latched onto me for good."

As he ran, the fish in his left eye suddenly let out a howl and began unnervingly moving about. "What's she doing out there?" Tianming asked.

"She's sad... feeling despair... jumping into... river to... drown herself..." Yin Chen said.

"What? Is she dead?"

"Not dead... river water... only up... to her... knee height."

Before he went back to the wondersky realm, he said, "Yin Chen, watch her for me and tell me if there's anything noteworthy, especially when she turns into her male form." He was interested in the Azurespirit, but he wanted to talk to her male form at least.

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Three days passed in a flash. Everyone across the Violetglory Star had been eagerly awaiting the start of the battle. What kind of impact would this historic face-off between 'Lin Feng' and Ye Chen have? One was a nonabane totemancer while the other was the best of his peers, even among those from other stars. Both of them had the potential to become stronger than the leaders of the biggest factions on the Violetglory Star in the future if they were allowed to develop! They were geniuses that only showed up once in a million years without any stretch of the imagination, miracles in their own right, but for both of them to be born in the same era, it was a statistical impossibility made manifest in the real world.

The fight would be a duel between two miracles, both of them under thirty and unprecedentedly powerful. It was ten times more hyped than Tianming's duel against Princess Shen Yu. Only the top figures of the Violetglory Star got to watch the duel from the starlight viewing booths above the battlefield and it was rumored that the two sovereigns would be present as well, though Tianming didn't know for sure.

The level of hype surrounding the battle even made Tianming's blood boil even though he didn't treat it like a big deal at first. He felt like the countless people in the audience were calling out his name. Even though they were referring to his alias, Lin Feng, it didn't matter; they were crazy for him. The battlefield was surrounded by nobody but those on the level of gods.

Nothing could describe how excited he was right now. All those fervent gazes were looking at him like he was an almighty deity, which just so happened to suit Imperial Will. Tianming felt its growth start

anew, a side benefit of controlling the Azurecloud Continent and spreading his name across the wondersky realm. The more people that watched him fight, the more pressure he faced. A normal person definitely wouldn't be able to endure this kind of pressure.

The number of caeli that entered the wondersky realm had hit a historic new record, a number even higher than the grand opening days of the realm when it'd first been formed. If it weren't for the fact that Tianming simply refused to show up in the real world, they would have loved to see him fight out there, since fights tended to play out differently. For instance, in the wondersky realm, Tianming couldn't really use his constellation or Yin Chen to their full potential. While the system processed beast abilities well, Yin Chen didn't really have any to show, and its morphing capability and what the bonegnaw ants could do didn't really play well within the wondersky realm.

Tianming told himself to relax. This was supposed to be all a game to him. The agitated mood surrounding the battle was at a stark contrast with his nonchalance. He wasn't part of the hype, yet when Ye Chen made his appearance, the commotion seemed to become ten times greater than before. The world itself seemed to boil over with excitement as waves of cheers crashed into Tianming's body. He truly felt that the denizens of the Violetglory Star saw this duel between juniors as a fight that would define the current era.

Unending cheers reverberated outside, but the inside of the battlefield was really quiet. The limelight on Tianming dimmed and shifted to the white-robed youth with black hair and eyes. He didn't look eye-catching at first glance, but repeated viewings would cause one to discover the innate feeling of comfort he gave them. It was hard for others to even feel malice toward him. Even though he was only passably good looking, he seemed capable of absorbing all of the radiance around him, making him the brightest star in a sea of stars.

Tianming finally got to see the so-called 'first miracle'. Even though it was only his caelum, Tianming was certain this was the most talented and fortunate person he had seen apart from Lingfeng. Even the children of top sovereigns like Li Haochen and Princess Shen Yu seemed to be one league beneath him. This was someone whose path of growth would resemble Tianming's own.

Ye Chen smiled and looked at Tianming without the slightest bit of arrogance, as if he was looking at an old friend he hadn't seen for ages. Relaxedly, he approached Tianming and said, "I heard of you a long time back, Brother Lin. You're even more impressive in person."

"Before you, I seem plain in comparison, Brother Ye. You've already started fighting at the Astraldome with people from other worlds, yet I'm still playing around on Violetglory Star," Tianming said.

"Haha, I didn't think we would be similarly humble as well."

"How about we get to know each other better with our fists?" Tianming didn't want to talk too much.

"That's a most splendid idea, but let's not rush things. We finally got to meet, so I want to know more about you. Hearing Wanwan talk about you so highly all the time made me curious. So, let's have a short, friendly chat before our spar."

"Who's Wanwan?"

"That would be Princess Shen Yu."

"I see.... Chatting is fine and all, but there's a lot of people waiting to see us fight."

"Let's ignore them. They've waited for three days, so a few moments more isn't a big deal. To be frank, I consider it rather good fortune that I was able to meet someone similar to me. If it weren't for the fact that we are in the wondersky realm, I would've loved to go drinking with you."

"Similar, you say?" Tianming looked closely at him and did find some points that they shared. He was a pleasant and polite person that called him his brother, yet Tianming felt a little discomfited by it. There was something about Ye Chen's offer of friendship that felt a little invasive and impure, almost like he was trying to pressure Tianming in some sense.

While the gaze he shot at him was similar to the gaze Tianming had when he looked at Lingfeng, it wasn't the same. When Tianming had first met Lingfeng, the latter was still too young and weak. Not to mention, he had saved Lingfeng twice. As such, the two of them had developed a close bond of mutual reliance.

However, no matter how polite he and Ye Chen were, that didn't change the fact that they were both really sharp swords. A clash of swords created sparks, and it was only a question of which sword was sharper. Yet both of them were favored sons of fate who couldn't afford to be subdued by the other.

The act of befriending him was only an attempt for Ye Chen to take the initiative and project his dominance, putting on a show to the audience. He was trying to dictate the pace of their interaction, a carefully thought-out plan. If Tianming allowed him to continue what he was doing, he would be giving Ye Chen a huge psychological advantage. Tianming would feel like he was a guest that had been invited there to duel Ye Chen, so he knew he couldn't let this continue. Right as Ye Chen was about to put his arm around his shoulder, Tianming backed off a few steps and said, "Time's running out, and I'm sure the audience members have squeezed tightly against each other for long enough. So let's settle the fight before we talk about other things."

Ye Chen was stunned; his rhythm had been disrupted.

Chapter 1405 - Ye Chen's Lifebound Beast

Tianming didn't even bother hiding his hostility toward Ye Chen. He was an obstacle that he had to overcome to reach the ninth level of the pagoda, after all. While he didn't hate him, he felt that this conversation was pointless for now, so he didn't bother entertaining him either. Not to mention, he probably wouldn't meet him for the rest of his life in the real world, so there was no fear in antagonizing him.

To Ye Chen, Tianming's disinterest was a kind of provocation. He thought they were both residents of the Violetglory Star, so they would meet in real life soon enough. Thus, Tianming's aloof reaction to his efforts to befriend him felt rather disconcerting, a rare thing for Ye Chen to experience. Naturally, he wouldn't try befriending most people in the first place.

Though they were going to fight from the get go, Tianming's words caused the atmosphere to considerably cool down. Ye Chen stopped smiling and said, "Alright, let's see what we can do before anything else. We'll have more than enough time to talk at a later date."

Tianming didn't want to even talk to Ye Chen, but he couldn't be bothered to say it. "Alright."

A storm started brewing at the Violetcloud Battlefield as the two began to show hostility toward each other, causing the cheers to intensify.

"Fight!"

No matter how calm Tianming tried to be, the countless onlookers seemed to spark something in him. His albi began reverberating as astralforce surged out of his five-layered astral discs and formed a storm in his body. When his wide and heavy Grand-Orient Sword appeared, a sixth layer of force from the Grand-Orient Vortex surged into his body. Now, his fourth-level constellier astralforce was comparable to that of the likes of Princess Shen Yu, and that was thanks to his techniques and the Primordial Chaos Beasts.

Ye Chen's said to be able to fight opponents three levels above him. Maybe he has some special technique or lifebound beast. At the very least, he's definitely no pushover. Tianming watched Ye Chen carefully. His opponent was a seventh-level constellier who could defeat tenth-level constelliers, making him more or less as talented as Lingfeng, who had inherited the legacy of the Primordial Demonlord and the eighty thousand souls of his race. Lingfeng was still at the sixth level, so he was probably still inferior to Ye Chen, but once his soul reached the fourth imperial soul level, he should be able to take on tenth-level totemancers as well.

Either way, being able to fight above one's level was a sure sign of extraordinary talent. Even Xiaoxiao, who had the Archaionfiend, could only fight a level above her at most. Naturally, that wasn't her specialty. Instead, the Archaionfiend allowed her to grow by consuming caeli.

For Ye Chen to have more talent than the daughter of the dynasty's sovereign, he must be far more talented than anyone on the Violetglory Star. What makes him stand out? Tianming had gone through the information on Ye Chen before, but they only had vague descriptions of his lifebound beasts. Even his own files as 'Lin Feng' didn't cover his lifebound beasts in detail, but focused more on his nine totems.

When the Archaionfiend read the description of Ye Chen's lifebound beasts, it had some guesses based on its ancient memory. It was time to see if it'd guessed right. First, Tianming had his beasts emerge from the tattoos on his body, all five of them. Ying Huo perched on his head as usual, Meow Meow was still snoozing away by his feet, Lan Huang began to run circles around them, Xian Xian's tree bloomed all five kinds of flowers and stretched far and wide, and Yin Chen's many bodies scattered across the battlefield. Tianming had registered around two million of Yin Chen's bodies with the system. Once they were all deployed, Tianming's skin was normal again.

"Those are Lin Feng's blood-pact lifebound beasts!"

Countless gazes fell on Ying Huo and the rest. While his beasts weren't the thing that stood out about him the most, the onlookers were still awed by them.

"These five beasts are far too similar to Ye Chen's, both in terms of type and species."

"They're almost like weaker versions of Ye Chen's beasts."

"Lin Feng has nine totems, and that's where his talent shines the most. It's enough for him to have these weaker beasts."

"If his beasts were as terrifying as Ye Chen's, there wouldn't even be a fight."

Tianming smirked at hearing others describe his beasts as weaker versions of Ye Chen's.

"I heard that Ye Chen was rather weak when he was in his teens and his original lifebound beasts died. Back then, his talent was rather low and he didn't stand out at all, and even now, I hear his lifebound beasts were made through blood pacts. I wonder if that's true."

"I also heard that rumor before. He suddenly showed up ten years ago and became a saint right away. It took him less than ten years to reach where he is now, and he seems to be improving faster and faster."

People were all too happy to compare the two of them.

"Lin Feng is eager to fight, and it looks like Ye Chen's getting ready too."

"The two of them have such old-fashioned names... To think they're actually top talents. I'll name my son Ye Fan and pray it works!"

"Stop messing around. Ye Chen's lifebound beasts are showing up!"

The spotlight was completely focused on Ye Chen, who still regarded Tianming with a smile. The black tattoos on his body traveled to his palm in an eerie fashion before emerging as a black mist that turned into a black divine bird. It was far too dark without a hint of white, as if it was drenched in black ink. When it formed, there were sparks of black lightning around it, but not the same kind of chaos lightning Meow Meow had. Instead, it surrounded the bird like a vortex. Though it was a small bird, it had an impressive aura and gave off a similar sensation to the Archaiionfiend. Even though it looked different, it was similarly fiendish, dark, and savage.

The bird stretched its wings, glared at Tianming, and cried out sharply. Though the bird was small, its voice was so loud that it even seeped past the battlefield's formation and out to the audience, forcing them to cover their ears.

Seeing the bird, Tianming understood why they said his lifebound beasts were weaker versions of Ye Chen's. They looked similar, but that wasn't the only reason. They considered Tianming's beasts inferior because his totems had stolen the spotlight, not to mention that he was at a far lower level.

At the same time, four other lifebound beasts appeared—Ye Chen was a penta beastmaster as well. All five of his beasts were small enough to fit in his palm, but that definitely wasn't their final form. The second lifebound beast looked like a qilin covered in black flames. It had a large mouth and was similarly pitch black, making it look like an ink painting that had come to life. The most eye-catching part of it was its abyssal black eyes that didn't have any visible whites. Tianming looked back at the bird and saw that it didn't have any sclera either, only little black beady eyes, making them look even more sinister.

The third beast was an ink-black squid with many mouth-like suckers on its tentacles. While they looked rather small now, no doubt they would look like tens of thousands of huge mouths when the squid was in its true form.

The fourth lifebound beast was a little black bug that wrapped around his neck like a necklace. There were only two orifices, one at its head and another at its tail. It looked like a broodmother-type beast.

But unlike other beasts, there was a black mist surrounding it. Not to mention, its wriggling motion was rather grotesque and unnerving.

The fifth lifebound beast was a black man-eating plant that grew on his arm. Its head looked like that of a beast, and it had a mouth about as large as its whole body. While it was technically a flower, it had as many teeth as a shark and its mouth was filled with black liquid and meat scraps.

"How coincidental," Tianming said. He had a bird, and Ye Chen had a bird too. Tianming had a more traditional mammalian beast, and Ye Chen's counterpart was his black flame qilin. While Ye Chen didn't have an amphibious beast like Lan Huang, he did have a squid with countless tentacles. No doubt it thrived in the sea and probably used some kind of poison. As for the man-eating flower, it was a plant-type beast like Xian Xian. He even had a broodmother-insect-type beast.

Their beasts almost seemed to mirror each other when it came to type, but the only difference was Ye Chen's beasts had hatched at the same time while Tianming's had hatched one by one. There was another thing that caught Tianming's eye. Based on their types alone, they didn't look nearly as impressive as the princess's galaxy grandbeasts, but Tianming could tell that they were nothing like any other lifebound beasts he had encountered before.

Chapter 1406 - Spectral Progenitor

Ye Chen's lifebound beasts were cold and fierce like wildbeasts; but not just any wildbeasts, however. In fact, the beast Tianming felt was closest to what they were was the Archaionfiend.

Right then, the unexpected happened. Ye Chen loosened his hand and allowed the bird to soar. As it did, it grew in size. When it reached Ye Chen's head height, its wingspan had grown to a kilometer, a match for Ying Huo. Its eyes were still black vortices through which no stars were visible. Tianming only had reports of it being a seven-star divine beast to go on, making it equal to Ying Huo and superior to the rest. In terms of star count and level, Ye Chen took the cake.

Dense black lightning formed black clouds as the bird flapped its wings. Once more, an ancient cry came from the bird, causing it to give off a wild, desolate aura. At the same time, the black qilin turned into a giant beast that was even larger than Meow Meow's Regal Chaosfiend form. The black squid, unsurprisingly, took a form that was even larger as well, making its tentacles about the size of Xian Xian's branches. Every single one of them was covered in suckers, within each of which was a black vortex. The bug at Ye Chen's neck burrowed into the ground, causing it to rumble for a while before countless black bugs burrowed out from the ground. Every one of them was surrounded by a black mist and had a horrifying face with gigantic serrated mandibles. The man-eating plant also took root, growing at a speed visible to the naked eye till it reached a size comparable to Xian Xian.

All of them turned into gigantic beasts, seemingly filling the battlefield with their characteristic black mist. Their entrance looked far more impressive than that of Tianming's beasts. Every single one of them inspired a chilling fear, yet even now, Meow Meow was still snoozing away like an idiot. Quite a lot of people were cheering for Ye Chen's beasts.

"They look far too fierce."

"That's why they're impressive!"

"Lin Feng's beasts look too gentle. They don't fit his image as a genius at all. It looks like he's being completely overshadowed by Ye Chen."

"It's fine. Lin Feng need only use his totems to even the odds."

"This is fundamentally a battle between a beastmaster and a totemancer. Lin Feng is definitely on the Violetcloud Imperium's side."

Ye Chen looked completely radiant, but his white robes contrasted against the dark, fiendish miasma that his lifebound beasts gave off. It was a clash of black and white between the beastmaster and his beasts. How could someone surrounded by so many savage-looking beasts seem so pure and harmless?

"How does it feel?" Ye Chen asked.

"A pure person with five inner demons, eh? That's interesting," Tianming said.

"Demons? There's no such thing as good tools or bad tools, only how they're used and who uses them."

"Makes sense." Tianming didn't doubt that line of thinking in the slightest. However, he was certain that the bloodline of lifebound beasts could influence the personality of the beastmaster somewhat. The same was the case with his Primordial Chaos Beasts' bloodlines, but thankfully his Imperial Will could suppress the wild personality fluctuations. Not to mention, his Primordial Chaos Beasts had been changed in some way by his Aeonic Grandbane. He didn't know how Ye Chen controlled his beasts, but he was sure that the Archaionfiend's guess was right.

"These are Desolate Chaos Progenibeasts, right?" Ying Huo said, rolling its eyes.

"That's right, they're a kind of spectral progenitor. It's almost certain now," Tianming said. Spectral progenitors had something to do with the specter race. Specters weren't considered to be a branch of humanity. They differed from humans far more than beastmasters and totemancers differed. Most specters strengthened their own bodies by consuming the flesh of beasts, an ability that came from spectral progenitors, or in other words, their ancestors. Though they had only inherited a small portion of their bloodlines, it still made them more beast than human.

Some legends spoke of sentient astral beasts that roamed the nova source worlds and could even survive in the astralscape. They loved to eat other beasts, and even their own kind, for growth. Not to mention, they didn't need divine wills to control their powers, only pure physical prowess. That was something even their distant descendants, specters, couldn't do; specters also needed divine wills.

As for the Archaionfiend, it also grew through consumption, but it used caeli. Consuming caeli was a far more efficient process, making it some kind of cousin of spectral progenitors. It came from a line of super beasts from the far reaches of the astralscape. Though the number of Archaionfiends wasn't that high, there were many spectral progenitors. Even in the present day, they still roamed the astralscape as wildbeasts, but spectral progenitors that still retained sentience had almost entirely been exterminated. Now, they were just relics of an ancient time.

Sentience was the core difference that separated spectral progenitors from wildbeasts. Ancient spectral progenitors were said to be incredibly powerful, with the strongest of their ranks comparable to Archaionfiends. In fact, Desolate Chaos Progenibeasts were a kind of spectral progenitor, making them

distant cousins of the Archaionfiends as well. They were just more powerful in terms of physical combat prowess, thanks to their savage nature.

Tianming could imagine the sight of a large wave of spectral progenitors consuming and destroying nova source worlds, devouring countless lifebound beasts. Though the thought was savage, it was on a whole other level from the dreamscapes of Primordial Chaos Beasts. But still, the Primordial Chaos Beasts seemed to have encountered some kind of being that forced them to devolve to such an extent. Somehow, these Desolate Chaos Progenibeasts also had their evolution progress reset. But even so, they were capable of unleashing a terrifying aura like the Archaionfiend. That said, Tianming and his beasts were quite calm, despite knowing about their true nature.

"Even if he has five Archaionfiends with him, we'll still be able to beat him all the same! Perhaps they might even be inferior to Archaionfiends!" Say what they will, their levels were quite inferior compared to Ye Chen and his beasts'. Tianming knew that Ye Chen would be far tougher to deal with now that his guess had been confirmed. Ye Chen had practiced symbiotic cultivation with his beasts for at least a decade, so his experiences would be quite similar to Xiaoxiao's. In fact, his beasts were bound to him through real blood pacts.

The synergy and combat experience they had accrued over a decade was no doubt terrifying, but the key still lay in their levels. If Ye Chen were at the seventh level, Tianming would be three levels inferior to him, putting the astralforce he and his beasts could use at a huge disadvantage. As for the quality of their bloodlines, it was completely different. For instance, one look at Yin Chen was enough to surmise that Primordial Chaos Beasts had limitless growth potential, far more than Desolate Chaos Progenibeasts. Either way, Ye Chen's Desolate Chaos Body had at least ten years of refinement behind it.

"Spectral progenitors from billions of years ago are what gives Ye Chen the advantage against his foes in the Astraldome. However, what did these Desolate Chaos Progenibeasts and Archaionfiends encounter to cause them such great losses that they've been forced to work with humans?"

That was a secret that not even the Archaionfiend knew. Its memories were completely messed up. As such, it desperately wanted to ask the Desolate Chaos Progenibeasts about it, but before that could happen, Tianming would have to be able to hold his own in the fight. He still had no idea how powerful Ye Chen was.

"At the very least, those beasts knew to look for a partner in a nova source world, unlike the Archaionfiend, who came to the weak mortal world below...." That fact alone made them many times stronger than Tianming and Xiaoxiao had been at the start. "But if we manage to catch up to them, that'll prove how much more terrifying Primordial Chaos Beasts are compared to them."

He took a deep breath, then all five of his beasts changed. Ying Huo soared into the sky and completely spread its wings. The two divine birds, covered in lightning and flames respectively, faced off against each other in the skies.

Meow Meow's nap was disrupted and it lazily took the form of a Regal Chaosfiend. "Meow?" It still seemed half-awake, so it didn't look comparable to the black qilin at all. Even so, it seemed to be a good enough match for now. Tianming's beasts pressed on as the battle started.

"Where are your totems?" Ye Chen asked.

"I'll take them out once I think you're capable enough," Tianming said.

Chapter 1407 - Unfettered Astralord

The reason Tianming didn't want to use his totems yet was that Ying Huo and the rest wanted to fight their counterparts one on one. However, they might end up being pushed back, given the difference in levels. Though Tianming had kept a low profile most of the time, his words sounded completely insane, prompting countless people to blankly stare at him.

"He's going to let his lifebound beasts compete with Ye Chen's?" It was inconceivable.

"He probably hasn't seen the power of the lifebound beasts with the top bloodlines on the Violetglory Star before. Ye Chen's lifebound beasts are the most insane among the crazier ones. That's been proven time and again. Not even the divineglorians' galaxy grandbeasts can compete!"

Ye Chen's beasts were regarded with heavy superstition. The only one who smiled when Tianming said that was Ye Chen. He nodded and said, "That's fine. Your lifebound beasts seem rather interesting too."

"Of course! I might even be the ancestor of you lot!" Ying Huo proudly said, though the Desolate Chaos Progenibeasts didn't react despite the provocation, acting as coldly as they ever had. It was almost like they were waiting for Ye Chen's signal to tear their enemies apart. It would only take a simple look from Ye Chen; the five beasts were already itching to fight, their ancient aura swooping toward Ying Huo and the rest like a tidal wave.

"Who's the weaker version, eh?"

Both sides charged into combat, though people kept their eyes on the two beastmasters. They had already seen Tianming's Grand-Orient Sword, but couldn't see what was so special about it. However, they cheered when Ye Chen took out his weapon.

"It's a grade-eight divine artifact! Grand Godless Liberty!"

"That halberd used to belong to the Unfettered Astralord!"

"Without the exalted blood, even solarians might not be able to make it submit!"

Such a weapon was among the very best. Not even the likes of Li Haochen had a grade-eight divine artifact. Apart from the two divine artifacts that came from the Ninedragon Imperial Tomb, only people on Li Wushuang's level could obtain grade-eight divine artifacts. Even a powerful faction like the Xuanyuan Dragon Sect had only had one grade-eight divine artifact before the Ninedragon Imperial Tomb had appeared!

Yet here, a junior below the age of thirty was wielding such a weapon. It was no surprise that he had been able to rise up in the Astraldome. Tianming had also heard quite a lot about the Grand Godless Liberty. It was something Ye Chen had obtained from an astralcrypt in a battle similar to the Voidsky Skirmish. During that competition, he obtained the weapon, as well as the legacy of the Unfettered Astralord, who was said to be someone that had come to Violetglory Star from an even more powerful nova source world. No doubt he was a powerhouse in the astralscape.

Thanks to the legacy, Ye Chen's cultivation foundations were firmly built. He looked like a celestial being descending from the heavens with his pure white halberd in hand. The appearance and color of the

weapon really suited the image he gave off. With a few swings, the halberd seemed to trace tens of thousands of arcs in the air, each of them containing arcane mysteries within. The weapon had a spear tip with a blade on each side, giving it a three-pronged structure. Having been forged using a steel called godless libertium, it contained a few different kinds of grade-eight divine hazards, allowing him to unleash strikes of many varieties.

His Desolate Chaos Progenibeasts coupled with the Grand Godless Liberty made Ye Chen look like the protagonist of a story. In fact, a small fry like him had become the protagonist of the Violetglory Star thanks to all these legacies. Countless young women shrieked and cheered for him as he used his radiance to suppress Tianming.

"Wow, so he has a lot of stuff to back up his rank after all." Tianming had the Primordial Chaos Beasts, while Ye Chen had Desolate Chaos Progenibeasts. He also had the legacy of the Unfettered Astralord to match up against Tianming's legacy of the Primordial God-Emperor. However, were those legacies on par with each other? There was only one way to find out.

The instant Ye Chen took out his weapon, both sides charged toward one another for the fight. The skies suddenly darkened and the other Primordial Chaos Beasts that had relatively lower star counts immediately faced a disadvantage, especially with Yin Chen not being able to fight optimally in the wondersky realm.

"I'll deal with that spicy chicken wing first!" Ying Huo cried as it targeted the black divine bird. It looked like a phoenix, like Ying Huo, but radiated a savage and dark aura. Ying Huo didn't want to waste words and immediately used Sungod's Wrath. Its improved Infernal Blaze had empowered all of its abilities. It soared into the sky as black flames flared around it, then it came crashing down toward its foe like a falling sun.

"Hehe!" The black bird smirked, seemingly not caring about Ying Huo's attack at all. It spread its wings to gather black lightning bolts and knit them into an electric net, which it attempted to use to stop Ying Huo. This was its ability, Chaosbolt Net. While it looked similar to the Myriad Thundernet, its effects weren't quite the same. The two seven-star divine birds' fight created countless explosions in the sky as lightning clashed with flames, forming mushroom clouds throughout the battlefield. Wild embers and bolts rained down from the sky nonstop.

"Damn, it's quite strong after all!" Ying Huo was zapped to the point it was black and toasty as it returned to Tianming's side. Despite saying that, it still seemed resolute and was itching to fight. The black bird was just as roasted as it was and was emitting smoke from all parts of its body. But at that instant, the Greenspark Tower began healing Ying Huo, though the effect was dampened as they were in the wondersky realm. Those wounds would recover so fast outside that they wouldn't affect it in combat at all, unlike here.

"Are you alright?" Tianming asked.

"I'm fine for now, but our siblings might fare worse as they aren't evolved enough."

They didn't have access to a seven-star universal manna, unlike Ying Huo, who had undergone a complete transformation. That was one of the things that Tianming lacked compared to Ye Chen, not to mention that the latter had already been cultivating using caeli imperius for quite some time.

The constant explosions endlessly awed the audience. As Ying Huo was fighting, Meow Meow clashed with the black qilin. Their battle was also one fought between lightning and fire beasts! Meow Meow usually wouldn't let its opponents approach it, especially once it obtained wings after its evolution. It could easily fly away while it continued launching its lightning attacks. However, the qilin wouldn't let it off that easily. One of its abilities, Voidgulf Firehole, manifested a huge vortex of black flames with great suction power. As a result, Meow Meow's flying speed was throttled.

Lan Huang, on the other hand, chose to use its crocodile death spiral in its fight against the black squid, taking advantage of the spikes on its body to pierce the many tentacles. However, the suckers on the tentacles tightly latched onto it, and even had black spikes within that could pierce through its scales, allowing the squid to inject venom into its body at a rapid rate. Even after Lan Huang used its Azure Oceanic Purgatory to drag the squid into the water, it wasn't able to shake off the spiky tentacles. Not to mention, it could regrow the tentacles that Lan Huang bit off almost instantly, making it seemingly immortal. It seemed that this close-combat-loving squid was a rather troublesome opponent, able to counteract Lan Huang's brute force by gently redirecting all that energy.

On another side of the battlefield, Xian Xian fought the man-eating flower. While the flower's devouring abilities were impressive, it paled in comparison to Xian Xian's roots. The Radix World Tree was the ancestor of all plants, and naturally the flower's ability to devour was only derivative of the original.

Finally, there was the fight between Yin Chen and the black broodmother beast with its impressive populating capabilities. But thanks to the limits of its bloodline, it seemed unable to deal with the silver insects. Coupled with the effects of Xian Xian's Evernight Curse, the broodmother unit and its children's souls were heavily affected, giving Yin Chen a chance to start hunting them down.

Even though it had been less than ten breaths' time since the beasts first clashed, Tianming could more or less see that he had the overall advantage, thanks to the purity of Xian Xian and Yin Chen's bloodline powers. Meow Meow and Lan Huang, on the other hand, weren't faring too well. The endlessly regenerating squid would be tough to deal with even if it was fighting someone other than Lan Huang.

"Looks like it isn't possible for me to take him down with my lifebound beasts alone." Tianming had only wanted to test out what they were capable of, but now that it wasn't working too well, he wouldn't just sit there and do nothing.

Ye Chen came charging down with his weapon raised. Tianming responded by lashing out with the Lifesteal Silverdragon in his left hand, forming it into a shield to block the attack. Ye Chen's fighting style was in stark contrast to his appearance. He fought fiercely, like a wargodean. Almost instantly, the chain-cum-shield shattered, causing a force to rebound to Tianming. The crushing feeling told Tianming that Ye Chen's body had been thoroughly enhanced by the Desolate Chaos Progenibeasts, making him as fierce as a spectral progenitor. His physical combat prowess had been greatly enhanced.

Chapter 1408 - Chaos Dijiang

Even though Ye Chen wasn't a specter, he possibly had a stronger body than them, and could perhaps even devour more beast flesh. Even Mu Sha, a proper specter that mainly cultivated his physical body, was probably only less than a tenth as tough as Ye Chen. This harmless, radiant youth actually had a body that was comparable to that of a beast and was seemingly able to exert the same force as Lan Huang, which was one of the reasons he was able to fight people so much more powerful than him. In a

one-on-one fight between beastmasters, Ye Chen would definitely dominate. The crowd wildly cheered at the sight of him.

"Lin Feng looks like he isn't able to hold on!"

Fortunately, Tianming didn't push forward, but backed off. Then his arms brightly shone as his nine unique totems manifested. "Go!"

Four of the godswords separated from the rest, namely the Eastdivinity Acme, Westvoid Progenifiend, Southsky Chaospit, and Northapex Perpetuity. The Westvoid Progenifiend flew to Meow Meow and Tianming telepathically coordinated the attack with his beast on the black qilin. The black-and-white Southsky Chaospit shot toward the black squid and slashed at its head. The beast's weak point seemed to be its gigantic eye, which it dutifully protected from Lan Huang.

However, the sudden appearance of the godsword diverted its attention away from Lan Huang enough for it to counter with a huge bite. It managed to pin down the black squid and began wildly slashing at it with its Starfiend Sword. Then, it used Dragonprison Hell, causing many scale dragons to manifest around the squid. No matter how quickly its tentacles regenerated, it couldn't keep up with the rate of Lan Huang's destruction. The squid let out a hiss from all the suckers on its tentacles in an attempt to confuse the dragon, but it had met the worst possible match. Lan Huang easily overcame the noise attack by using Primordial Soundwave with both of its heads.

Xian Xian also managed to fare better with Tianming's totem helping it. It wielded the Northapex Perpetuity with its branches like a swordsman, swinging the frosty godsword toward the head of the man-eating flower and leaving a wound that gushed blood out nonstop.

Lastly, the Eastdivinity Acme flew toward Ying Huo, executing the Ninedragon Tribulation with it in tandem and dealing horrendous damage to the black bird. The black bird howled in pain, immediately losing the advantage.

Tianming had immediately turned the scales back in his favor. This was an almost peak performance for him, something he couldn't even do in Orderia. The combination of his totems and beasts was perfect and flawless. As for Yin Chen, it didn't need the support of the swords as it wouldn't die and would only lose some bodies. The fight between it and the black broodmother was a war between insect armies. Locusts and bugs covered the ground, crawling over one another. There wasn't much that Tianming could do to help out.

"Brothers, sister, victory's in sight! Kill them all!" Ying Huo bellowed. Their rampage caused Ye Chen's five beasts to accrue more and more wounds. It was quite impressive for the Desolate Chaos Progenibeasts to be pushed back to this extent. "Hah! These rowdy beasts only have an advantage of three levels."

The level difference wasn't the only factor. Four of Tianming's beasts were six-star divine beasts, which also had quite a huge impact.

"That isn't right.... Why isn't their astralforce as powerful as we expected?" the black bird said, surprised.

The rest were also shocked. They had always been the ones fighting foes above their level, but now it seemed that they were the ones who were of much higher level and being suppressed.

"Impossible. It's just the totems evening the odds. His real skills must lie in his totems," Ye Chen said. This was the very first time he had faced an obvious disadvantage in combat.

The crowd was already going wild from the battle.

"Having nine totems is impressive after all!"

"Not only can Lin Feng's beasts hold their own, two of them even have the upper hand! That's not what I expected!"

"They're too powerful."

"It isn't over for Ye Chen yet. Look."

In this battle to the virtual death, the combatants let out all of their fighting spirit without holding back. After a few clashes, their rage reached its peak. They charged toward each other with all the malice they could muster.

"Ye Chen, is this all you're capable of? Looks like your reputation was exaggerated," Tianming said. He still had five godswords that he could use in tandem with his Grand-Orient Sword in the fight against Lin Feng. With the added advantage of combining the powers of his totems, sword body, and sword art, he began pushing Ye Chen back and dominating the matchup.

People watched as the white-robed youth looked up, blinding white light radiating from his eyes as boundless power was unleashed from his body. "You're really impressive. You're probably much stronger than many top rankers from other worlds in the Astraldome. You're worthy of me going all out!"

With that said, Ye Chen's aura rose once more, completely changing. He turned from a carefree wanderer to a bloody slaughterer. He seemed like a rampaging berserker, admittedly a much better fit for his savage beasts. His former refinement had all been a disguise; he may feign harmlessness, but he wouldn't allow anyone to get in the way of his growth and triumph. The path of cultivation was winner-take-all! He wouldn't let anyone take anything from him. Had he not encountered someone with the same mindset like Tianming, he wouldn't have been so direct. Tianming wasn't one to pretend to be something he wasn't, after all, and preferred facing everything as himself.

"Everyone, let them see your true form. You're Desolate Chaos Progenibeasts, so don't let these wild critters push you back," Ye Chen telepathically said to his beasts.

"Pushing back? If it weren't for the totems, we would've made easy work of these beasts!" Though the beasts said that, they had to admit that Ying Huo and Tianming's other beasts had outperformed their expectations. It wasn't like they'd had a huge edge over Tianming's beasts before the totems came to help, either.

"Come!"

Ye Chen's five beasts swiftly escaped their enemy. With the black flesh bug at their center, the beasts turned into black mist and collided.

"What're they doing?" Ying Huo and the others watched as the unthinkable happened. The five beasts blended together and fused, flesh to flesh. Each of their bodies had a black vortex that served as a connection point that seemingly welded them to each other. A gigantic cocoon formed around their bodies, within which blood and flesh pulsed. It almost looked like a new lifeform. It didn't take long before the cocoon burst, revealing a gigantic black beast to the world.

"What the hell is that?" Tianming and everyone else was stunned as they saw a huge, four-legged beast that was covered in armor-like scales. Its legs resembled the black fire qilin's, but were a few times thicker. The beast was covered in black flames like before. Three pairs of lightning bird wings sprouted from its center abdomen where the broodmother insect used to be, causing countless lightning bolts to surround it. To its front was a head that looked like a transformed man-eating flower. It had no eyes, just a gigantic, bloody mouth a few times larger than before with even more gruesome teeth. On its back were thousands of tails, every single one of them the same as the tentacles of the squid. The suckers and spikes were still present on the tails. It looked horrific, eerie, and even more sinister than the Archaionfiend.

"They can even fuse into one?!" Tianming was flabbergasted. Ye Chen had never shown this form to anyone else before, either. The shock the people of the Violetglory Star experienced was probably even greater than what Tianming felt now. "Can you guys fuse too?"

"No way!" Ying Huo said, rolling its eyes. Each Primordial Chaos Beast was unique. In antiquity, they had never gotten along and often fought among themselves. On the other hand, the Desolate Chaos Progenifiends were of the same lineage and even used an identical source of power: desolate ataxium, an ancient and primal power. No doubt, their fusion form would be stronger than the five beasts were individually. Otherwise, there would be no point.

"What is that?" Tianming asked.

"You want to know?" Ye Chen said cheekily.

"It's called the Chaos Dijiang." Ye Chen didn't seem to mind revealing the name at all.

"So this is its true form, right? You've always only had one lifebound beast, not five... though you're probably stronger than a penta beastmaster," Tianming said.

"Not bad! To think you'd get that much right. But it doesn't matter. It isn't like this is a secret I'm trying to keep."

"Truly wondrous!" That was Tianming's honest feelings. A lifebound beast that could split into five was just as good as having five beasts. It was a little similar to his Myriadword Providence; splitting his totems into many had its advantages as well.

Chapter 1409 - Myriadword, Decide

"Now that you've seen your fill, it's time to end it. Lin Feng, you were worthy enough to make me use something I haven't even shown in the Astraldome. You should be proud," Ye Chen said.

"Now that's arrogance, if I don't say so myself," Tianming replied.

"The root of arrogance is power." Ye Chen's glowing body changed once more. All of a sudden, a white star appeared in his hand. It gradually rose up as it changed, exploding in size until it became a gigantic white star, then took the form of a white-haired old man. This was a spiritform! It looked just like a totem, but in a way, it resembled the Soulfierd more.

"What in the world is it this time?" Tianming asked. He could hear gasps of shock from the outside.

"Unfettered Astralord!"

The old man seemed to have come to life. He glared at Tianming, causing him to feel like he was being analyzed.

"It's a guardian spirit," Ye Chen casually said. The next moment, his body entered the part of the old man's head before the spiritform turned into light and entered the albi in his body, making every inch of it glow like a white star.

Looking at Ye Chen, Tianming felt like he was seeing things. Sometimes, he looked like Ye Chen himself, but other times he looked like the Unfettered Astralord! During some moments, he was an arrogant and spirited youth, but during others, he was a lofty sage looking down through a veil of superiority. Tianming felt like he was going to fight the Unfettered Astralord himself. The pressure had considerably mounted.

"Guardian spirit and Chaos Dijiang, huh? Looks like this won't be easy." He gathered his beasts and totems around him. No doubt, Ye Chen was the protagonist of the chronicles of the Violetglory Star, having more than enough trump cards at his disposal to awe everyone again and again.

Ye Chen held his Grand Godless Liberty and looked at Tianming. From the moment the guardian spirit had assimilated into him, he could cover a distance of ten thousand meters in a single step. Instantly, he zipped in front of Tianming. "Come, let's have a good fight!"

The gigantic dijiang flapped its wings and accelerated its charge, each step causing the ground to shake. Its wide mouth let out a roar like a tidal wave. Then, lightning from its wings and venom from its tail, as well as the flames from its legs, gathered near its mouth and formed a black ball, which it blasted toward Tianming and the rest. The sheer force of the resulting explosion sent Ying Huo, Meow Meow, and Lan Huang flying off. Quite a few of Yin Chen's bodies were vaporized and Xian Xian lost more than half of its Radiant Vines. The fusion had made it more powerful than the sum of its parts, after all.

"Keep it up!" Ying Huo wasn't willing to relent just like that. At the same time, the four godswords covered them, immediately appearing on all four sides of the dijiang and circling it. The Chaos Dijiang could be said to be a single beast that was also five at the same time. They could each absorb seven-star universal manna.

The totems' appearance had evened the odds, at first, but now the fused beast managed to hold off Ying Huo and the rest. Despite being attacked from all sides, it showed startling vitality and explosive power. Right now, even Lan Huang was only a third of its size, and it still had its broodmother capabilities. It was producing even more child bug units than before, covering the ground with tens of millions of them.

All kinds of abilities were unleashed in a blinding flash. Ying Huo shrank its body and pierced its way through the Chaos Dijiang unabated. It was the only beast the Chaos Dijiang had trouble with. The four godswords protected one beast each, blocking any attacks. Even if they were destroyed, it didn't matter.

"This battle is epic!"

"Lin Feng's four totems and five beasts are just barely able to hold back Ye Chen's fusion beast."

"Let's see if he can take on the powered up Ye Chen with only five totems."

"Forget it! The battle was over the moment the guardian spirit was used!"

What made the guardian spirit so terrifying was that it made Tianming feel like he was fighting a senior who had experienced countless battles over thousands of years. Each and every move he executed with the halberd was filled with mystery. Once more, Ye Chen had gained the upper hand on him.

He used a seventh-realm divine art, Unfettered Wandering. It used to be a skill used by the Unfettered Astralord. Those who weren't solarians couldn't even fully utilize sixth-realm battle arts, yet Ye Chen was able to use a seventh-realm attack in combination with the guardian spirit. Unfettered Wandering, Cold Draft was followed by Unfettered Wandering, Yearning. Both moves seemed gentle, but were in fact savagely damaging. Fortunately, fighting in the wondersky realm allowed one to go all out without worrying about death on either side. Ye Chen looked like a mighty god descending from the heavens. Even while using his five totems with the Grand-Orient Sword and Lifesteal Silverdragon, Tianming wasn't able to withstand the rampage.

"Are there any more surprises you can offer me? Do you have no other trump cards apart from your nine totems?" Ye Chen gleefully provoked.

"Why would I need trump cards to deal with you?" Tianming took a deep breath and let the divine hazard sword ki in his body surge, forming a vortex of sword ki around him.

"If you have no other tricks, this will be your end," Ye Chen said with a smirk. It was almost like a practiced script. First, he would give his opponent the upper hand, then he would ultimately overcome them. The audience would be completely unsurprised by the result. He tightly gripped Grand Godless Liberty with both hands as his black hair turned white, thanks to the illusion. He had completely transformed into a terrifying old sage.

"Standing at the top of this universe is my birthright! If you're willing to roam the stars with me, you might get a chance to strive for the top as well!" he yelled as a divine light gathered around him. This was his true vocation. He didn't care about ruling the world, only that he would become the strongest person ever and have the most say.

However, Tianming completely ignored him. He gripped his sword as the five totems around him began spinning faster and faster. Each of the swords began splitting apart into countless small totem swords. It was his totemic calamity, Myriadword Providence. A sea of swords surrounded him, making him like a sword god that ruled everything within his domain. The many swords undulated like waves of the sea, making for quite a puzzling sight. He intentionally provoked Ye Chen more by not even responding to his lofty speech.

"If you refuse to listen, forget it." Ye Chen's eyes exuded a killing aura, which he channeled into his halberd. The snow-white weapon let out an even brighter light as it was used to execute Unfettered Wandering, Deicide, the strongest move of his seventh-realm divine art. "Why would I, someone unfettered and untethered, bother to kill gods? It's because I refuse to submit to anyone, not even them!" That was the core will underpinning his move, the desire to enjoy life and all the sights it has to offer, only to remember that even greater powers lurked behind the scenes.

The move embodied the will of slaying the gods that would seek to oppress him. It was the perfect move to use to show off, but all of that was really laughable to Tianming. It felt like Ye Chen was just trying to sing his own praises. Even so, the power behind the move wasn't fake; stripping apart the sanctimonious decorations of the move revealed raw, crude power that was like nothing he had ever seen before.

The moment the halberd came crashing down, waves rose and storm winds blew. The radiance coming from Ye Chen and his halberd was so bright that it looked like a white sun was crashing down on them. The power of the move seemed even more impressive thanks to the guardian spirit's enhancement. It seemed like Tianming would lose if he had nothing he could use to counter it. Yet, the reason Tianming said he had no trump cards was that no trump card he could obtain would ever compare to how powerful the Primordial Chaos Beasts and decapath era godswords were.

No matter what tricks you have, you can't escape the fundamentals. You must be really ignorant to think that the Chaos Dijiang and legacy of the Unfettered Astralord alone are enough for you to be the most talented person in the universe! There's at least four people on Orderia that are comparable to you! Tianming didn't feel the need to speak those words. Ye Chen didn't scare him, nor could he crush his willpower. "Come!"

The five thousand providence swords began spinning as fast as they could. Using five thousand providence swords against a single target was like using five totems against a normal human. Though, with how powerful Ye Chen's body was, he could almost be considered a specter, albeit one that couldn't use any abilities.

The vortex of swords continued rapidly spinning. Then Tianming suddenly appeared, executing a shocking slash with a cold glare and a spirited war cry. It was a five-fusion strike of the Ninedragon Tribulation, now incorporating the fifth strike, the Whitedragon Exaltation.

"Your guardian spirit manifests as a spiritform, so the move my sword totems executes will surely be effective against it!" The flash of the silver dragon, ferocity of the blood dragon, roar of the blaze dragon, insidiousness of the black dragon, and sanctity of the white dragon blended together to form a brand new move that was incredibly damaging to souls and totems. The divine hazard sword ki strands blended together around the Grand-Orient Sword; at the same time, the little providence swords shot toward Ye Chen, each of them using the Whitedragon Exaltation to target the guardian spirit.

"Perish!" The sword move unleashed boundless power. The Grand-Orient Sword thrust forward alongside the five thousand smaller swords around it. By now, the guardian spirit looked like a sea of white from all the Whitedragon Exaltation attacks. The five thousand swords gathered to form a gigantic white sword that instantly pierced the sky.

"Whoa!" The audience was awed once more. Those five thousand providence swords seemed to exert far more power than the nine godswords had when Tianming had fought Princess Shen Yu last time. The

totems swarmed Ye Chen's guardian spirit before Tianming's sword clashed with the halberd, sending sparks flying. A loud boom echoed throughout the Violetcloud Battlefield and rampant winds blew all over the place. People widened their eyes as they watched the Grand-Orient Sword seemingly disintegrate the moment it clashed with Grand Godless Liberty. Then, the halberd pierced through Tianming's head!

"Did Lin Feng lose?"

At the same time, the five thousand totems pierced into Ye Chen's body and reduced him to ash! One had his head pierced through, while the body of the other was gone. They had both died in battle! Not far away, the four totems and five beasts were still battling it out with the Chaos Dijiang, but they stopped after Tianming and Ye Chen's momentous clash. There would no longer be a point for them to keep fighting with both of their beastmasters 'dead'. This was the wondersky realm, after all; the results would soon be revealed.

"They both died from one another's strikes!" Even the moment of death seemed to be identical. This battle seemed to have been fought to a draw. Though it wasn't unheard of in the wondersky realm, it was still exceedingly rare, and it was even more troublesome thanks to the rankings. It would be hard to say who ranked higher if both of them had died at the same time. The entire audience fell silent, then finally remembered to breathe. All kinds of emotions assailed them; nobody had expected this would be the outcome.

"Still, I really didn't expect it to turn out this way."

"They're both miraculous!"

"Lin Feng definitely proved that he wasn't weaker than Ye Chen, not one bit."

"Ye Chen's beasts fused and he even has a guardian spirit... but Lin Feng's beasts were capable, too, and he even has nine totems.... They're both powerful!"

"But this still has to be said: Ye Chen has the advantage when it comes to weapons. Lin Feng's sword was obviously lower grade. That's why it shattered during the final clash. If the sword hadn't shattered as a function of the wondersky realm's parameters, Lin Feng might've been able to counter that move. That still doesn't change the fact that Ye Chen wasn't able to stop Lin Feng's totems at all!"

"That doesn't matter. Your arsenal is also part of your power."

People began arguing about the specifics of who won. Regardless, everyone was no doubt impressed by what Tianming could do. Either way, the battle was over and there was no changing the outcome.

"A draw?" Tianming was stumped. He had wanted to win, not tie! He didn't think the Grand-Orient Sword would be the thing that held him back.

Chapter 1410 - Eighteen Daughters

To be fair, the wondersky realm's limits were the real reason Tianming hadn't won. There was no way that the Grand-Orient Sword would be any more fragile than the Ninedragon Imperius even though it wasn't that powerful in regard to divine hazards. It definitely wouldn't shatter in a clash with the Grand

Godless Liberty, yet the rigid parameters of the wondersky realm had to specify a breaking point for it no matter what. There was nothing he could do about it.

If I could fight him in the real world, I would've won even without using my pandemonium constellation. It was good enough that he knew the truth himself. It wasn't like the wondersky realm would heed his complaints anyway, though it still troubled him. I wonder if I'll still get to train in the ninth level of the Violetglory Pagoda?

Would a tie be enough? It was a troubling predicament, but at least Ye Chen hadn't come out of the duel much worse off. It was true that his power was on par with Tianming's, to the point that Tianming wasn't able to overwhelm him, though Tianming didn't expect what Ye Chen would say to him the moment they left the battlefield. "The wondersky realm wasn't able to assess my true power, so there's things that I had to hold back. If we could fight in real life, I would've been the winner. You were lucky. Lin Feng. To be honest, I wasn't too satisfied with our duel. If you don't mind, let's meet up in the real world for a proper contest."

Tianming was almost struck speechless. "We'll talk about it if an opportunity surfaces." He didn't bother arguing about it. What he cared more about was how the administrators of the wondersky realm would regard this result. As people were arguing, they both turned to look at the ranking. Tianming didn't care about the fame that came with being at the top, only whether he could train at the pagoda's ninth level. That was the only thing that mattered to him in the wondersky realm, while everything else was nothing more than an ethereal dream, including fame and respect.

Even so, being able to tie with Ye Chen had already impressed the audience to no end. Now, even normal folks were curious about this up and coming star. At that moment, the 'Lin Feng' name surpassed Gong Yin's. Then, Ye Chen's name moved away slightly to make way for 'Lin Feng' as the names grew to be the same size. Now, the two names floated at the very top of the ranking, looking like really bright binary stars. The crowd immediately cheered with fervor.

"That means he's ranked number one!"

"There's two top rankers, so there won't be a runner-up. Gong Yin fell to third place!"

Such a thing had seldom happened in the top ten.

"So having both of them in first place is the best possible outcome, right?"

"Probably. Both of them are powerful enough to rank first. There's nothing wrong with considering them equals."

"Does that mean both of them will qualify to enter the Violetglory Pagoda's ninth level? It used to be that only one junior was allowed to enter at a time."

"That should be the case. The only qualification required should be that they're ranked first, after all."

An old man from the duel committee appeared to clarify the situation. "As a result of the draw, both contestants have been deemed worthy of being ranked first. The committee has decided to let them share the rank for one year, during which time both of them will be allowed to cultivate at the ninth level and enjoy other benefits pertaining to the top ranker. However, they'll have to duel again a year

from now to settle the score. Should another draw happen, they'll continue sharing privileges for another year, then the next, and so on until the victor is decided."

Everyone seemed supportive of the motion.

"That's fair."

"A good decision indeed!"

"I'm in favor of it."

"Let them keep fighting then! Who knows, love might just spark between them! Haha!"

Countless gazes of envy landed on the two of them. Many young women were thirsting after 'Lin Feng' now, as he didn't have someone like Princess Shen Yu around him.

"One year, eh..." Ye Chen furrowed his brows. "Alright. Let's fight again a year later. It'd be even better if we could fight in real life."

"Alright." Tianming gave a non-committal nod. Either way, his biggest goal of gaining the privilege to enter the ninth level of the pagoda had been achieved. What happened a year later was something he would worry about when the time came. No matter the commotion, the wondersky realm would always only be a small part of his concerns. While he was sure that countless people, including those from the Divineglory Dynasty and Violetcloud Imperium and their sovereigns, would love to meet him, he really didn't care. The matters of the Azurecloud Continent were far more pressing, so he immediately disappeared from the battlefield, having left the wondersky realm completely. That left everyone else there completely silent.

"Where is he?"

"Did he leave just like that?"

"It's such a glorious moment! Why didn't he stay for the afterglow?"

Tianming was a complete oddity to them, and even Old Master Shengui was stunned by his abrupt departure. He had prepared a lot of congratulatory verses and had even finished discussing the conditions to recruit him into the Violetcloud Imperium with his sovereign, only for Tianming to just disconnect.

"I guess it can't be helped. That kid simply does everything at his own pace. I'll just seek him out later. I heard the imperial marshal of the Divineglory Dynasty has also requested to meet him, but he didn't bother, so we'll still have a chance," Old Master Shengui said to a figure in the dark.

"I see...." The figure nodded. "Tell him that my eighteen daughters are still unwedded, so he's free to pick one."

"What if he wants all of them?"

"He can have them."

"How generous of you, Sovereign."

"I don't have a choice. I can always make more daughters, but the Violetcloud Imperium can't make even a single epochal genius."

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There was another reason Tianming had quickly left the wondersky realm: Yin Chen informed him that Shi Yan wanted to see him and was waiting outside. The fight with Ye Chen had taken most of the day, so she'd been waiting for quite a while. When he went out, he saw a worn-out, tired woman that was completely unlike her former fierce self. Her stone-like skin seemed to have vanished, making her seem prettier and more gentle than before.