

The Ages 1471

Chapter 1471 - Fight for Face

Almost immediately, people turned and looked at Tianming and the Seven Dragon Imperials, wondering whether he would agree and whether the rest would let him. The trap Li Shenjian had laid out was obvious, so there was a chance they wouldn't let it happen.

However, Long Wanying smiled and said, "So you're the ninth son of the sun emperor, right? Do you think you'll get your duel that easily? How old are you, eh? You're no doubt among the most talented people of your age, yet you're challenging someone half your age. Are the celestial orderians shameless or what? You sure are thick skinned for someone who's lost so much face. You might as well challenge a three-year-old to a fight to show off your talent." She didn't hold back her insults at all. They even made Li Shenjian speechlessly blush.

"Yeah! Pick a fight with someone your own age! Nobody's going to give you the Dragonblood Desecration for free!"

"If you can challenge Li Tianming, then you wouldn't have an issue with challenging the Whitedragon Empress too, right? Age is just a number, after all."

Those on the Xuanyuan Dragon Sect's side mocked and laughed at the notion. In fact, those insults were targeted at the celestial orderians, not the Veildragon Palace, much to the anger of Apothecary Li, Li Xiaoyan, and the rest.

Apothecary Li said, "For all the talk of talent, it's all a waste if they don't live to grow to their full potential." That was a veiled threat. He looked at Long Wanying, subtly hinting at the fate of her late husband, Long Junxuan. It was a long-time grudge.

"Alright, it's pointless. Let's go back!" Li Xiaoyan shrugged and personally grabbed the Dragonblood Desecration, suppressing it and fully intending to leave with it without fighting. Even though they couldn't use it, they had still managed to deprive Xiaoxiao of a divine artifact and the Xuanyuan Dragon Sect were the ones suffering a net loss from the exchange.

"Let's go!"

"The Flamefiend Lord is right. It's pointless to stay."

"Let's leave."

"The Lord Apothecary is right. Talent is pointless if they just lose their lives."

They all began turning to leave. Tianming knew that this was the moment. He had to be forced to accept the challenge for it to appear reasonable. No fool would willingly fight someone so much older than them if they didn't have a good reason. All of a sudden, he said, "Li Shenjian, I'm willing to fight you to decide which side gets to keep the Dragonblood Desecration, but there's a catch."

Everyone's ears perked up, especially the ones on the Xuanyuan Dragon Sect's side. They gaped at Tianming, completely taken aback by his courage. Talent had no bearing in a fight with someone twice his age. Even if Tianming lost, he would still be an undisputed genius. But if Li Shenjian lost, the sky

might even fall. Not even the elites of the Xuanyuan Dragon Sect would count on Tianming to be able to win due to the sheer age difference.

"Saintdragon Emperor...." Many people turned to the Dragon Imperials in the hope that they would stop Tianming. Even though this was the only way they could get the bow back, it also presented the risk of losing its blood arrows to the enemy, adding to their power. The Seven Dragon Imperials feigned a troubled look.

"I wish to give it a try," Tianming sincerely said. His performance was perfectly reasonable.

Li Shenjian and the rest tried suppressing the excitement they felt. Before the Saintdragon Emperor spoke, Li Shenjian asked, "What's your condition?"

Tianming waited for the Dragon Imperials to nod before he said, "I want you to be holding the Dragonblood Desecration during the fight."

"Haha!" Li Shenjian burst out laughing, fully knowing his intentions. Holding the weapon meant stopping it from running away. Essentially, it was a handicap. "Alright, I'll fight you with one hand tied then!"

The celestial orderians laughed at how cute, for the lack of a better word, the condition was.

"Tianming?" The Dragon Imperials still appeared hesitant.

"Everyone, please give me the chance to win back what rightfully belongs to Xiaoxiao," Tianming 'pleaded'.

"Alright, we have no other choice." The Seven Dragon Imperials continued looking troubled, and the other Xuanyuan Dragon Sect members were helpless to do anything about it as well. It wasn't that they didn't trust Tianming, but rather that everything about the battle was unfair from the beginning. Still, they had gotten into this predicament because they weren't able to keep Xiaoxiao adequately safe from the beginning. How could normal and uninvolved people like them be aware of the deeper battle that was going on?

After Tianming got their permission, he gently smiled at Xiaoxiao. Then, with masculine bravado, he stepped up and looked at Li Shenjian. "I've decided to accept your challenge! Seniors, please make way."

"Very well. However, fighting right here and now won't be that interesting, and there isn't enough of an audience. I suggest we pick a more formal place to suit the occasion. We'll give the audience at least two hours to come to watch our fight," Li Shenjian said.

"Are you trying to avenge your little brother's loss?" Tianming asked with a wry smile.

"You can think of it however you like," Li Shenjian nonchalantly said, knowing that it would be important for the confidence and morale of the young celestial orderians. No matter what, their race had to be number one and undefeated! Even though Li Shenjian was quite a bit older than Tianming, it would still be a good consolation for them if he defeated Tianming.

"Alright. Where do you suggest we fight, then?"

"The Infernal Dragon Purgatory."

The crowd burst into chatters after the revelation. Not only was that a formal ground, it was also a place with great historical significance where the Veildragon Palace had broken off from the Xuanyuan Dragon Sect. More importantly, it was where death duels were held. People who chose to fight there all went in with the full conviction of killing their foes.

In two hours, tens of millions of people across the Myriadragon Mountains would go there in anticipation of the duel. It was a sudden event that took place without any buildup, yet few knew that it was actually part of the script Tianming and the Seven Dragon Imperials had penned. The rest depended on Tianming's performance.

"Li Tianming, do you dare fight me there?" Li Shenjian's arrangement of bane-rings brightly shone, even more intensely than the gaze he shot Tianming.

"No problem," Tianming said, his response so quick that many seniors began worrying.

"I heard that the justice emblems are able to unleash even more power around a flaming environment."

"Li Tianming agreed too quickly. He fell for the trap."

"Why didn't the Dragon Imperials warn him about it?"

It seemed like they were falling for one trap after another. The situation was starting to look quite desperate.

"Alright, it's a deal. I'll wait for you there with the Dragonblood Desecration. Do make sure you show up." Li Shenjian turned and left for the arena with the elites. Many transmission stones were sent out to inform everyone in the mountain range about the duel that would decide the fate of the Dragonblood Desecration. Naturally, the more important stake was the face that would be won or lost. If Li Shenjian defeated Tianming and crushed his undefeated streak swiftly enough, he would at least be able to salvage the reputation of the celestial orderians somewhat.

"The Infernal Dragon Purgatory is under the Torchdragon Emperor's control. While the seniors might hesitate to kill a Sky Palace disciple like him, Li Shenjian could even claim that he couldn't adequately control his power enough to kill Tianming or even cripple him by killing his lifebound beasts. His relative youth is the perfect excuse."

"That's right. There's also the precedent of Long Wangyu's death. They'll be sure to bring that up."

"Li Tianming was too hasty when he agreed to the duel. It's like he was being led around by the nose the whole time! If he isn't able to defend himself properly, this will turn out badly."

"Did you see how dark the expressions on the Seven Dragon Imperials were? The Whitedragon Empress is chewing Tianming out about it."

"What a worrisome fellow...."

Now, the Ninedragon Army's morale was at a new low in anticipation of the worst. Tianming had been a symbol for the Myriad Solar Sects, and the Ninedragon Army had adopted him as a symbol of hope as well. However, even as worried as they were, they would still be on his side.

"Brothers, let's cheer for him! The Myriadragon Mountains are our territory! We can't let outsiders beat us in terms of fighting spirit!"

"Let's go! Call as many people as you can to come for moral support!"

Without the Saintdragon Emperor's explicit orders, the elites of the sect swarmed toward the Infernal Dragon Purgatory. The entire time, the sect had been trying to fend off the invaders. Even though this was a battle between juniors, it was still incredibly important and related to life and death. This could be the spark of a larger conflict!

The two groups lined up like two long dragons as they headed toward the arena, clashing with one another from time to time. Li Shenjian, being the son of the sun emperor, was naturally guarded by a group of celestial orderians. Tianming, however, had the entire sect's support as a result of his impressive performance at the Azurecloud Continent.

The temperature around them rose the closer they came to the venue. Tianming could already see the Infernal Dragon Purgatory, marking the border between the Skydragon and Earthdragon peaks. It looked like a short, broad mountain, one that was far shorter than the other peaks. At the top of the mountain was a huge hole, out of which burst raging flames. The flames looked like a miniature Voidsky Flame Pillar.

The Infernal Dragon Purgatory was located below the hole. The Veildragon Guard, celestial orderians, and the Ninedragon Army had gathered near the huge hole in advance; two hours were more than enough for people to come over. With a deployment of this scale, a full-scale conflict could easily be sparked. However, neither side could afford to hold back—the potential for real conflict was far too high. The duel's stakes were too high, almost as if it could affect the larger conflict as a whole. It was a symbolic duel that could greatly affect the morale of the armies on both sides, for the youths that represented them also represented the futures of their factions. The victories of the younger generation were analogous to the victories of the factions' future!

Chapter 1472 - A Glance for Ten Thousand Years

The surroundings were already heating up before the battle even began. People gathered outside the arena like swarms of ants, queueing up far into the distance. All of them were passionate and ready for the action they were about to witness.

In recent days, the celestial orderians had brought the Xuanyuan Dragon Sect lots of problems, but they had no choice but to endure it for the bigger picture. As such, their rage had festered to the limit. Tianming had never expected that this duel that he'd set up would be such a hot topic among the tens of millions of people on both sides. The hype could even rival that of a war between sects. The Ninedragon Army's rage was on full display, while the celestial orderians were coldly watching with obvious restraint. The entire situation was volatile, with the people on both sides resembling gigantic wild beasts, perched outside the Infernal Dragon Purgatory and waiting to pounce. Tianming and Li Shenjian were like two crickets fighting in a bowl.

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Long Renshe, dressed in black, rushed over to his father, the Torchdragon Emperor's side. "Dad, where's Shenjian?"

"He's already gone inside."

"Oh, I see."

"Come here." The father and son stood together and privately spoke with their army in front of them. "I heard your relationship with Shenjian has run into some issues. He didn't involve you in this grand plan of his, eh?" If Long Renshe was in it in the beginning, things would have gone much smoother.

"I don't think that's it...."

"Then why'd he do this?"

"He bears some animosity toward the goddess because of how much the sun emperor spoils her. I thought it was a little inappropriate. Right now, the goddess is at the Myriadragon Mountains, so I should be going there more often," Long Renshe said with his head low.

"I see...." The Torchdragon Emperor nodded and patted his shoulder. "Your logic is sensible, but the better thing to do is to offend neither of them. That's how the Veildragon Palace has survived for so long, understood?"

"Yes, Father."

"What of the goddess?"

"Same old. She didn't come to see me."

"You have to be patient."

"Will do."

The Torchdragon Emperor looked ahead at the warriors clad in golden armor. The celestial orderians they passed looked extremely respectful of them. "It's the Sunscorch Guard. I'm guessing the goddess is here."

As expected, the thousand guards were escorting Li Yunxi and Qingyu to the Infernal Dragon Purgatory. Crowds parted and bowed toward them.

"Even the goddess is here... the stakes are even higher now." Compared to the last time, Qingyu had shown up in person to witness this fight. Many celestial orderians were thrilled to see the Ninemoon Goddess with their very own eyes, some of them even stretching out their necks to get a better look at the girl. Words of praise incessantly escaped their mouths.

"As expected of the daughter that the sun emperor dearly loves."

"Her aura shows how much of a talented genius she is.... A nonabane indeed."

"If it weren't for her having wasted her earlier years of cultivation, there's no way the kids from the Myriad Solar Sects would be able to reach her height."

Had they known that she was actually Tianming's sworn sister, they would probably vomit blood. They all thought that she had come to support her so-called brother, Li Shenjian, but she'd only come to get a chance to see Tianming and Lingfeng. There were many copies of Yin Chen in her residence; though she

managed to establish contact through it, Yin Chen's words were monotone and packed no emotion at all, which was hardly a replacement for a proper reunion. Even being able to see the two in real life despite being separated by armies was important to her. Though, to hide it better, she did her best to look coldly at the Ninedragon Army.

Her arrival caused the crowd to grow even more incensed. The green-haired Li Yunxi was right beside her, so she couldn't speak to Yin Chen now.

"Tell them to have Li Tianming hurry up. The Ninemoon Goddess has personally come to witness the battle. How dare they make her wait?" The Torchdragon Emperor did as Li Yunxi said and smiled at her, much to her satisfaction. The suggestion to wait two hours before the fight was Li Shenjian's, but it wasn't strictly necessary.

Both sides had assembled at the arena in a short fifteen minutes, entirely filling the place. Tensions were already at their peak; on one side were the Seven Dragon Imperials, while the other was led by the Veildragon Palace's Three Dragon Imperials, Li Xiaoyan, Apothecary Li, and Li Yunxi.

Li Shenjian had already entered the arena in advance, and Tianming didn't delay any longer either. People parted for him to make way. Tens of millions of people watched the white-haired youth.

"Even though he was forced to join this fight, he's really impressive to have accepted the challenge."

"What a young age to be renowned as a hero. I wish him the best!"

Though they were impressed by his character, their worries still heavily weighed upon them. The nature of this trap was far too obvious.

"If Li Shenjian kills him, I don't think there's much the Sky Palace can say, given the precedent with Long Wangyu."

"If the Seven Dragon Imperials couldn't stop it, what can we do about it?"

Tianming left the Ninedragon Army and appeared in front of the Veildragon Palace and celestial orderians' troops, immediately subject to their pressuring looks. Despite how stressful it might seem, Tianming felt a warmth coming from his chest when he saw the look of his family far ahead. It was none other than Qingyu. He could tell she was trying hard to keep her expression stoic, hiding the yearning and hope she had for him. If it weren't for the people in their way, she would have wildly charged at him, no doubt. But now she couldn't even smile, much less move.

Tianming gently smiled, seemingly resolving the contempt the tens of millions of people felt toward him. Only Qingyu knew that he wasn't faking his calm. He was heartfully smiling at their reunion.

Tianming took a deep breath and gave Qingyu a signal with his gaze to where Lingfeng was among the army, not far away from the Dragon Imperials. Lingfeng had spotted Qingyu long ago, but she hadn't spotted him as he was mixed in with the crowd. But now she saw the red-eyed youth looking back at her from afar, with both hands tightly clasped. A single glance seemed to last ten thousand years.

Chapter 1473 - Raising You Right

Lingfeng and Qingyu couldn't remotely get close to one another, separated as they were by millions of people. Eventually, she couldn't keep the facade up anymore and broke into a smile, unable to bear

treating him so coldly. Fortunately, people had their eyes on Tianming and didn't notice her. The four youths, Xiaoxiao included, had all seen one another and Tianming resolved to keep moving.

"The celestial orderians are trash," he abruptly said as he entered the Infernal Dragon Purgatory, much to the shock of the twenty million celestial orderians there. It was rare for people to mock them outright like that, but they laughed instead of getting angry. It sounded more like a childish temper tantrum than an actual insult.

"No matter how talented he is, he's still a child at the end of the day."

"Well, he's already fallen for Li Shenjian's trap, so let's see how he gets handled."

The moment Tianming entered the arena marked the start of the duel. However, not everyone could get a good view of everything. They weren't standing right against the entrance, after all. But with the Infernal Dragon Purgatory essentially being a place where important duels took place, it naturally had projection formations similar to skyward eyes that more or less captured what went on within.

The moment Tianming entered, a large flaming cloud appeared in the hole above the Infernal Dragon Purgatory, which formed a large battlefield. Countless flaming divine hazards gathered around the battlefield, making a magma-filled terrain that seemed to create a heat distortion effect on the light around it. However, the flames were merely illusions and didn't generate actual heat. They were there to allow the nearby audience to be able to see what happened in the arena. Through the divine hazards, sword ki and flames, they could make out Li Shenjian, who stood on top of the arena with one hand suppressing the Dragonblood Desecration. His other hand was curled into a fist as he waited for his opponent. Tianming jumped into the hole and a projection of him appeared, showing him descending toward his opponent.

Li Shenjian's eyes snapped open and locked on to Tianming. "To be honest, I've been through my fair share of battles among the celestial orderians, but none of them were nearly as grand as this one."

"You sure lucked out, didn't you?" Tianming said, rolling his eyes.

"Lucked out?" Li Shenjian was stunned. The implication was that Li Shenjian only got so much attention because he was fighting Tianming. "You think too highly of yourself. I didn't think defeating a mere Li Haochen would be enough to inflate your ego so much."

"Hmph." Tianming didn't bother to waste time. He wasn't even really here for the fight. He had Yin Chen immediately swarm out of his lifebound space, letting them turn into invisible cockroaches that he scattered all throughout the area. They were metal insects that didn't fear fire at all, allowing them to survive in this environment and give Tianming all the information he needed about unfamiliar terrain. He could use them to explore dangerous crypts in the same fashion. All the while, the people on the outside weren't able to see the small insects through the flaming formation outside at all. Soon, Yin Chen permeated the entire arena.

"Setup complete!" A million Yin Chen units blocked Li Shenjian in front of Tianming, immediately turning into countless silver spiders that spun countless Infinite Silverthreads, forming a large web that blocked Li Shenjian's way.

Li Shenjian didn't know what Tianming was planning, but this was the signal to start. Even though he only used one hand to suppress the bow, it still represented a significant part of his combat power, but he didn't really mind it. "To think a young brat like you grew so arrogant after a few minor victories.... I'll do your parents a favor and raise you right this time!"

"Not every old person is mature, you know. Least of all you, and you're twice my age for heavens' sake!" Tianming said as his spiders continued spinning a larger and larger web. Though the silver threads looked really fine, they were formed using the astralforce of the Myriadworld Immortabeast, which could cut deep into all kinds of flesh.

"Your mouth's pretty foul, huh. Very well, let's start from there, then." Li Shenjian felt his anger rising. He knew that the celestial orderians were watching his performance through the projections and immediately struck, manifesting a grade-seven divine artifact in his free hand. The golden mace looked not one bit inferior to the Dragonblood Desecration and resembled a spinal column covered in golden spikes. Complicated divine patterns filled its insides, and its handle was wide and cubical. It was named the Oriental Despot.

Like the Crimsoncloud Dragonbane, it was a top-tier divine artifact. Only the children of the sun emperor got access to weapons of this caliber. Li Shenjian held the Oriental Despot in one hand and Dragonblood Desecration in the other. Naturally, his greatest trump cards were still his eight justice emblems, which came bursting out of the square array of bane-rings on his forehead. All in all, he radiated a stark imperial aura.

It was clear to see that his totems began absorbing the fire in the environment, heating up to bright red and radiating even more power. That was why he had chosen to fight at this place, being the careful and deliberative person he was. Coupled with his near-solarian astralforce, he was far stronger than Ye Chen. Every moment of his fifty years of life had been used to the utmost for his cultivation.

The moment the totems appeared, countless flaming pillars burst out around the battlefield, obscuring the scenery for many people outside. Being three levels above Li Haochen, Li Shenjian's justice emblems were far more powerful. Fortunately, Tianming had never planned to directly clash with him. The instant the Oriental Despot appeared, Tianming sent the web flying toward the justice emblems, blocking Li Shenjian's path forward at the same time.

"Break!" Li Shenjian tried tearing apart the threads with as much force as he could, but it was like using stone against cloth, a horribly bad match. The threads eventually entangled him and his totems, making the web incredibly hard to pull off. The clash of the justice emblems sent sparks flying and created loud sounds, resulting in instant chaos around Li Shenjian.

"Aargh! You annoying little...!" Even then, this obstacle would only be temporary. Eventually, he had his emblems fly in different directions and tore the web apart. "Li Tianming...."

Right as Li Shenjian charged out of the web, he noticed that the million spiders were spreading apart into the surroundings. They looked to be only the size of thumbs and were impossible to chase down. By the time Li Shenjian changed his focus, Tianming was nowhere to be seen. The only thing he was certain of was that he hadn't left the arena.

"Where've you gone? Don't tell me you're chickening out?!" Li Shenjian mocked.

"Chickening out? That's for my Chicken Bro to do. Oops, I have to relieve myself. You don't mind if I use your head as a toilet, do you? Try to catch me if you can," said a voice from above him.

Li Shenjian looked up and saw a little black cat teasing him. Though it looked small and cute, the black lightning bolts surrounding it were terrifying to behold, each of them with black text flowing through them. He immediately recognized it as Tianming's lifebound beast.

"Hah!" He ignored the cat and began looking around with his justice emblems, mocking Tianming as he scattered the columns of flame around the area. Then stream after stream of lightning-infused liquid splattered towards him at great speed. He thought they were hidden weapons and tried swatting them away with his mace, only for the liquid to splatter all over the place, some even touching his face.

"How's the smell?" the cat said, appearing in front of him in a flash with a mischievous expression.

"Fuck off!" Li Shenjian's rage exploded as he gave chase. He unleashed a terrifying beam from his bane-rings, but the cat easily dodged it.

"Man, I didn't think you could be any slower."

The justice emblems continued rampaging above Li Shenjian, threatening to crush any man or beast in their trajectories. "Li Tianming, stop messing around! Come out if you dare! What's the point in pulling tricks like these? You were the one who accepted the challenge, yet now you're hiding like a coward! So much for all that arrogance you spouted! Aren't you embarrassed for the poor Ninedragon Army that has to watch you fight like this?!"

Chapter 1474 - Blackfiend Dragongorge

Li Shenjian felt himself going mad as Tianming continued ignoring him. What was the point of getting his supporters to watch the duel if all he was going to do was play hide-and-seek? "This is the Infernal Dragon Purgatory, the most important battlefield of the sect! Only heroes get the honor of fighting here, yet you're turtling up right at the start? I bet the Xuanyuan Dragon Sect didn't think they'd be completely embarrassing themselves after protecting and nurturing you like that!"

He continued sweeping the entire battlefield with his totems, scattering every concentration of fire divine hazards he could find, but he still wasn't able to find Tianming. This was completely out of everyone's expectations. Putting Li Shenjian aside, even the audience on the outside was astonished at Tianming's erratic behavior. The celestial orderians began joining in the mockery.

"Is that kid serious?"

"Is he planning to slowly drag things out?"

"I'm impressed!"

"What a way to ruin the history of the Infernal Dragon Purgatory. This makes it look like the Xuanyuan Dragon Sect is just lying about how important it's supposed to be! Well, looks like their 'devilishly talented genius' is going to ruin the reputation of these sacred grounds."

"What a joke."

Some of them even broke out laughing nonstop.

"This is a historic embarrassment."

"No, I think Li Tianming's actually pretty smart. He knows he isn't Li Shenjian's match, so he's planning to run around and buy time while he secretly cultivates. Give it a year or two and he'll grow powerful enough to crush Li Shenjian!"

That joke was followed by a long bout of laughter. The celestial orderians were already bothered by Tianming's victory over Li Haochen, and even if Li Shenjian won this duel, it wouldn't be out of the ordinary, given the age difference. Yet Tianming was embarrassing himself without any effort on Li Shenjian's part, allowing them to finally expel all the negative feelings they had been holding this entire time. It was a breath of fresh air for the celestial orderians and those of the Veildragon Palace.

"That kid's reputation's fallen to rock bottom. Now, he's just a cowardly mouse," Li Xiaoyan said with a gleeful look.

"I bet the Seven Dragon Imperials didn't expect this. Look at how sullen they all look," Apothecary Li said. Everyone turned and saw the Dragon Imperials fanatically arguing over something.

"The Whitedragon Empress seems rather brave. She seems to be arguing with the Saintdragon Emperor in defense of the kid," the Voiddragon Emperor said.

"Who knows? I heard that she's been pretty loose since the death of her husband. Rumor is that her relationship with Gujian Qingshuang, Yang Ce, and Yun Tianque isn't simple. Judging based on how strongly she's coming to Li Tianming's defense, I doubt it's just as simple as her seeing a son in him," the Blooddragon Emperor said.

At the end of the day, those were all baseless rumors. In the current climate, such accusations were all too common for women who stood out from the pack, especially a beautiful widow like her.

"I wonder how long Li Tianming will keep hiding for. He's capable of that, at least. We haven't seen him once since he went into hiding," the Torchdragon Emperor said with a look of worry.

"It matters not. The longer he lets it drag on, the more embarrassing a display it'll be. With how much they're arguing over there, the Ninedragon Army will collapse without us having to lift a finger," Li Xiaoyan said.

"True. It's embarrassing, to say the least," Li Yunxi said, not able to hold back.

Qingyu gave her a look. She really wanted to tear off that mouth of hers, but she stifled her rage. Just you wait. My brother will smack all your faces so hard you'll be unrecognizable.

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The argument between the Seven Dragon Imperials was only a show they put up to buy Tianming more time. As long as the celestial orderians didn't think that this was suspicious, they wouldn't catch on to Tianming's plans. However, making the tens of millions of troops in the Ninedragon Army feel a little uncomfortable was unavoidable. They could do nothing but lower their heads in shame at the mockery caused by Tianming's apparent actions.

"Grandpa, couldn't Li Tianming just fight his best and lose? That's less embarrassing than what he's doing now. What's the point?" Long Longlong asked the Saintdragon Emperor. Naturally, he felt just as

bad as the rest of the sect. Even the others in the Redlotus Worlddragon Formation could hear it. The disciples had been burning with support for Tianming, only for him to hide away and leave his cat to play with Li Shenjian. It felt like they had been doused with chilling water all of a sudden.

"Just wait," the Saintdragon Emperor said.

"Alright...." Long Longlong grit his teeth and said, "I hope he'll at least stand his ground whether he wins or loses."

"That's right," many echoed. Hiding in the Infernal Dragon Purgatory was undoubtedly a bad look. The longer he did it, the more shame he brought upon the Xuanyuan Dragon Sect.

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"Even though the infernal dragon sword ki suits me the best, it's at the outermost layer, so I'll give it a try at the very end." Tianming had already reached the lowest part of the Infernal Dragon Purgatory, where the grade-seven infernal dragon sword ki was. It was the king of the fire divine hazards in the area; the others were merely byproducts of its existence.

That strand of sword ki took the form of a flaming dragon ten kilometers long, coiled up at the bottom. The power it radiated caused Tianming's scalp to tingle.

"It's grade seven!" He grit his teeth and endured the pain as he crossed the sword ki to reach the formation at the bottom of the arena. "This is a grade-six divine formation...."

He stretched his black arm out. It had been quite some time since he used this unique talent of his, so he was feeling a little rusty. However, it worked like a key in a lock. He wasn't busting his way through the door, so it wouldn't alert the Torchdragon Emperor that held the azure dragonspring. He successfully passed through and entered a completely different world.

"This is the second level of the Sworddragon Ocean Purgatory, the Blackfiend Dragongorge!" There was another grade-seven divine hazard there called the blackfiend dragongorge sword ki. The world beneath him was pitch-black without a trace of light. Tianming looked down and saw a sea of black smoke, or rather magma, that incessantly flowed around. The roar of a mighty dragon also rang in the air, seemingly able to shatter eardrums and pierce souls.

"I guess you'll be it!" Time was of essence. He closed his eyes, charged straight down, and was immediately swallowed up by the darkness.

"Finally, found it!"

Chapter 1475 - Human-shaped Sword Ki Pool

The strand of sword ki was also located at the bottom layer of the level. When Tianming spotted it, his albi shuddered. It was also another ten-kilometer-long dragon that was as black as ink. Every part of its body was formed from strands of blackfiend dragongorge sword ki about an arm's thickness. It was tens of thousands of individual strands as well as one composite whole.

All of that sword ki seemed to emanate from a dragon that had two heads, one at each end. The heads were emanating some kind of black mist that could even corrode Tianming's constellier body, permeating it like some kind of poison. The corrosive nature of this sword ki made it perfect for use with

the Blackdragon Abyss thrust. Once it was integrated into his sword body, Tianming would be able to stand at the peak of Orderia.

The size of the dragon made him shudder, but according to Yin Chen, he couldn't turn back. They were mocking him outside, so it was too late to quit. He took a deep breath and charged toward it. "I'll just do it! If you don't kill me, I'll swallow you up!"

There were three main reasons why he was challenging grade-seven divine hazard sword ki. First, his sword body had been considerably strengthened after he'd integrated grade-six sword ki from before. Second, he had the Greenspark Tower, which allowed him to sustain a certain level of bodily damage. Third, he had the scale left behind by the Ninedragon Emperor infused in his sword. Similarly, the Sworddragon Ocean Purgatory was also a creation of the Ninedragon Emperor, with most of the divine hazards within having been collected by him.

Tianming summoned the Greenspark Tower and wielded the Grand-Orient Sword as he charged toward the black dragon. As if it were sentient, the sword ki in the form of a dragon seemed to notice Tianming's intentions. Just like a divine artifact, it picked its own master, so Tianming would have to pass its trial first.

The people outside couldn't know, but the commotion in the second level was much louder than the first's. But thanks to the formation separating them, they didn't notice it at all and continued with their mockery. This challenge was one that would push Tianming to his limits. This was the hardest time he'd ever had integrating a sword ki into his sword body. As he tried assimilating it, it tore away at his body. Thankfully, the Greenspark Tower and the protection of the nine-colored dragon scale mitigated the damage that was done to him. He kept going, stubbornly forging ahead.

"The Xuanyuan Dragon Sect is my base. If they fall, I'll be squashed like an ant on the roadside, let alone saving Qingyu and my godfather. If I want to survive, I must persevere and triumph!" He had a feeling that things would only get harder from now on, so there was no turning back. "Godfather, compared to your fourteen years of despair, my pain here is nothing!"

Meter by meter, Tianming forced the dragon into his albi, restructuring them from the ground up. When he was done, his sword body would be stronger than ever before! "Ying Huo, here's some for you!" He was already at his threshold.

"Aaaah, no! Don't! Aaaaah!" Ying Huo's shrieks reverberated throughout the level.

"Haha!" Suffering together felt the best, after all. Tianming didn't know how long it took, but he held on for as long as Yin Chen said things were fine up there. When he finally finished swallowing the entire dragon, he felt completely transformed. All the albi in his body were now black and seemingly radiated spikes of sword ki. Thick black mist came swirling out of his body, making him look like a human-shaped sword ki pool. The sword ki strands were all shaped like dragons and contained their stunning will, making them incredibly suited for the Ninedragon Tribulation.

He seemed composed of tens of thousands of swords, and even his gaze could kill. Ying Huo also got a seventh of the divine hazard sword ki and appeared quite different from before. Its Blazebane infused feathers were going wild with sword ki; even the slightest thrust from its wings could unleash a really powerful attack.

"We can finally catch a breather!" Ying Huo said.

"Breather your ass! We're thieves here! We have to act quickly!" Tianming dragged it down to the next level, unbeknownst to the audience outside. The blackfiend dragongorge sword ki was only the start. They would continue absorbing the others as well.

"I'll go insane before you do!" Ying Huo cried, but it had no choice. The two of them were the oldest in their family, so they had to take the brunt for the rest. Pain of the flesh was temporary, while pain of the soul was eternal.

"As long as we protect those we love, we'll never suffer any pain in our souls!" With that in mind, Tianming forged ahead. At the fourth level of the purgatory was the silverstream hell sword ki. It was sharp and fast like a silver blade, piercing Tianming tens of thousands of times. But when he finally integrated it, it seemed like he had turned into a blade.

At the tenth level lay the soulscourage azure dragon sword ki, which was suited for use with the Whitedragon Exaltation, greatly increasing the damage the strike dealt to totems and souls. The dragon was pale white and similarly large and also able to hook onto souls directly. At the fifteenth level was the bodhi bloodnourish sword ki, and it was clear that it was a good fit for the Blooddragon Sacrifice.

Those four strands of grade-seven divine hazard sword ki were more powerful than the others, and all of them were suited for use with the Ninedragon Tribulation. Apart from those four levels, there were fourteen others with top-tier sword ki as well, but Tianming couldn't bring them with him. Even so, his sword body was more powerful than ever before and his albi were brimming with sword ki. Even without special moves, he would be able to unleash boundless power. All he needed now was the infernal dragon sword ki on the first level.

He looked up, shooting four beams of sword ki out from his eyes to test it out. Then, he made his return—everyone had been waiting far too long for him to show up.

Chapter 1476 - Return

The audience was already losing patience with how much time had passed. The celestial orderians and Veildragon Palace kept up their mockery, but even they were anxious about Tianming's disappearance in the Infernal Dragon Purgatory. They no longer cared about this fight between juniors and simply wanted to know how this would turn out at the end, but as long as Tianming was missing, there would be no end to this. It wasn't just them, even many people from the Ninedragon Army left to do other things rather than waste their time waiting. Both sides were growing more and more angry at the situation.

"Torchedragon Emperor, could Li Tianming have gone deeper? I heard that the Infernal Dragon Purgatory is only the first level of the Sworddragon Ocean Purgatory," Li Yunxi said.

A little surprised, he said, "Impossible. Every level is separated by a formation. I have the dragonspring in my hand, so I'd know if the formation was breached."

"But this can't go on forever. Why don't you let me go down there and drag him out so that he fights Li Shenjian properly?" she impatiently said.

"That won't do. It goes against the rules of the Infernal Dragon Purgatory, and the other side won't want that either. We'll let them deal with this embarrassing affair themselves."

Li Yunxi simply felt that it was offensive for them to make Qingyu wait for so long. Right as they were still talking about what to do, someone suddenly yelled, "I see him!"

"That bastard finally showed himself!"

"Did he disappear into his mother's womb or something? How could Li Shenjian not find him despite going through the entire Infernal Dragon Purgatory?"

"He's finally out, but I don't think Li Shenjian's seen him yet."

"What's he doing? Challenging the infernal dragon sword ki?"

Tianming's reappearance caused quite a lot of commotion, much of it thanks to the sword ki, which even Li Shenjian didn't dare to mess with. People watched as Tianming charged toward the infernal dragon with sword in hand.

"Is he insane?"

"What kind of childish behavior is that?"

"Does he think he's a kid in a sandpit playing with a worm or something?"

The yawning celestial orderians were suddenly startled into wakefulness and were even shocked to see that Tianming was managing to suppress the sword ki!

"He's insane if he thinks Li Shenjian will let him get his way."

"Li Shenjian spotted him!"

The battlefield began growing heated once more.

.....

"Hurry up!" Tianming continued suppressing the sword ki, which had quite a fiery temperament. Fortunately, he had the benefit of prior experience from his previous assimilation attempts. The grade-seven divine hazard sword ki tore through his body. As fire was his most familiar element, it was also the easiest for him to absorb. The only trouble was that Li Shenjian would definitely disturb him. As expected, he showed up soon enough.

"So the tortoise finally peeks out of its shell." Li Shenjian's patience had long run out. He immediately swung his huge mace toward Tianming's head.

"Hold him back!" Tianming ordered. His lifebound beasts appeared. Even Meow Meow finally got into position after having messed around with Li Shenjian for quite some time.

"The fight's finally starting for real."

"Li Tianming won't be able to run now."

While the celestial orderians and Veildragon Palace's excitement rose, the Xuanyuan Dragon Sect felt more and more nervous. Tianming charged straight into the body of the flaming dragon sword ki while Li Shenjian paved a way through with his mace, obstructed by Tianming's beasts and the sword ki's indiscriminate attacks. Chaos once more filled the battlefield, then the audience had their jaws drop

when they realized that Tianming wasn't just running away from Li Shenjian, but absorbing the sword ki in the process.

"Is he forging his sword body?"

"He's crazy! His enemy's right beside him! And this is a grade-seven divine hazard sword ki!"

Though the visibility of the battle was quite poor, thanks to the sword ki's volatile attacks, the audience could tell that Tianming was trying to buy time. Even more shockingly, they could see that the sword ki was losing its potency as time passed. Li Shenjian, on the other hand, was held at bay time and again, unable to harm Tianming at all despite his overwhelming advantage.

"What in the...."

"Is this a joke? A grade-seven divine hazard sword ki can't be that weak, right?"

People gaped at the sight, completely baffled. It was unbelievable!

"His greed will lead him to ruin."

"His lifebound beasts are amazing for being able to hold Li Shenjian back, those bugs especially.... Then again, the cat, tree, and bird are all pretty potent, too."

Thanks to them, Tianming had managed to avoid being caught by Li Shenjian. Yin Chen's many Infinite Silverthread webs, in particular, had saved him much trouble.

"The fact that he's even able to hold Li Shenjian at bay at all is a sign of his competence."

"If he was that capable to begin with, why would he bother hiding then?"

None of them knew the truth of the situation. They watched as Li Shenjian got even more desperate in his pursuit. Shockingly, the infernal dragon sword ki seemed to be shrinking at a rate that was visible to the naked eye as Tianming fought it, and the shrinkage was even accelerating. Eventually, Tianming got the upper hand and began dominating it, then assimilated it into his body. The illusion of a great flaming dragon appeared behind him, adding to his glorious appearance. The beams of sword ki that shot out of Tianming's eyes looked even more terrifying now.

"That's crazy!"

"He really did assimilate the sword ki!"

"What the hell? Am I going blind?"

At that moment, everyone on both sides were completely flabbergasted, unable to believe their eyes. The ones who had been mocking Tianming moments before couldn't utter a single word.

"That doesn't change how he tried to run just now!"

"So what? He'll get shown his place in a bit."

That was the only thing they could say to console themselves, though they still felt a bad omen coming from Tianming. Those from the Ninedragon Army saw Tianming as a miraculous figure once more when he dominated the infernal dragon sword ki. The worry they had felt before seemed to evaporate

without a trace as they cheered fervently for him. Long Longlong and the other young disciples were completely entranced by what they saw.

"Li Tianming!" His name reverberated loudly through the Myriaddragon Mountains.

Chapter 1477 - Ultimate Sword Body

The remnant flames from the infernal dragon sword ki still swarmed around; Tianming had only just finished assimilating the sword ki. He turned back and saw that Li Shenjian was hammering away at Lan Huang's back with some of his justice emblems while using others on Xian Xian, smashing its Radiant Daffodil quite thoroughly.

Ying Huo and Meow Meow were directly fighting Li Shenjian. The enemy had far too big of an edge, so they had no choice but to split up to adequately protect Tianming, but that gave Li Shenjian the opening he needed to pierce through their defense.

"At least your lifebound beasts have more balls than you! Li Tianming, you're nothing but trash from the beginning to end! So much for a Sky Palace disciple!" Li Shenjian couldn't be angrier after having been toyed around with by Tianming for so long. He used three of his totems to open a path, forming them into a triangular formation. Finally, he managed to get close to Tianming while blocking off his beasts with his other totems.

Tianming looked at him with a teasing expression. "I'm trash? That doesn't sound right. You sons of the sun emperor seem far trashier. None of you can compare to the Ninemoon Goddess. No wonder the sun emperor doesn't care about you at all. One look and he could tell that you're destined to be nothing but wastes." He laughed heartily, knowing full well what their insecurities were thanks to his eavesdropping. Those words sent Li Shenjian into a blind rage.

"Die!" His roar was so loud that it shook the whole area as he manifested his myriadsaint constellation. Thousands of astral bodies got into formation and covered the sky before applying an overbearing weight on Tianming. He had already used the move on Ying Huo and the rest to great effect, but back then, Tianming hadn't been there to help them. This time around, Tianming charged toward him with the Grand-Orient Sword. Things were getting serious.

"So what if he loses? You're twice his age and the son of the sun emperor! Even if he loses, he's still an undisputed hero!"

"That's right!"

Regardless of whether Tianming won or lost, it was enough that he even stepped up to fight. Nobody expected him to win in the first place. At that moment, Tianming felt the power of all sentient life once more.

"That's right, this is the feeling!" What he needed was to become the symbol of hope for the Myriad Solar Sects—even the juniors needed an inspiring leader they could look up to. The Omnisentient Will coming from tens of millions of gods was on a whole other level compared to the mortals of the Flameyellow Continent. Not to mention, he had just broken through, bringing his divine will to a whole new level as well.

When he used that power to activate his pandemonium constellation and link up with his five lifebound beasts, he was far more powerful than before. The black and gold imperial star rose up and instantly crushed the stars of Li Shenjian's constellation that were arranged in a square formation. Then it applied a huge pressure on Li Shenjian's head. This was the greatest strength of Tianming's formation; it allowed him to nullify others' constellations and suppress them! Tianming regrouped with his beasts, his aura domineering.

"Here's another one!" Tianming used his cyclic constellation for the first time in battle. The yin-yang fish appeared under the imperial star, forming a vortex of black and white that spanned more than half of the area in the arena. The constellation spun faster and faster with his totems' power at their core. While he couldn't openly use his totems, he could use part of their powers by tapping into them through the cycle of power that flowed between his body and totems, allowing him to use the totem ki generated by them as astralforce when it cycled back into his body, explosively increasing the amount of power he could output and closing the gap between his and Li Shenjian's astralforce.

The two constellations immediately powered him up and weakened his opponent, evening the playing field. The people watching couldn't even tell that part of his ten totems' power had been channeled into his Grand-Orient Sword, allowing him to fight at almost full capacity. While using totem ki in his body would prevent him from manifesting the totems to take advantage of their numbers, it was more than enough for this match. On top of that, he had five strands of grade-seven divine hazard sword ki in him.

When Tianming manifested his sword ki, Li Shenjian used his totemic calamity: Worldly Descent of Justice's Light! The eight justice emblems connected with each other to form a gigantic pillar that resembled his mace, the Oriental Despot. The words 'justice' and 'light' were visible along all surfaces of the pillar. As Li Shenjian waved his mace to strike, the gigantic pillar came smashing down as well. It wasn't any fancy trick to speak of, just pure brute force. Putting the totems aside, the mace in his hand alone was terrifying enough, propelled forward as it was by the energy of a twelfth-level constellier. It should have been a move that could wipe out Tianming in one strike and its power caused the audience to anxiously fidget. Even the Seven Dragon Imperials could only pray that this wouldn't result in Tianming's death. The only thing they could hope for was that Li Shenjian's power would be held back thanks to suppressing the Dragonblood Desecration.

"Can he take it?"

As they anxiously looked at him, the five strands of grade-seven sword ki surrounded his sword. Their great roars echoed out of the large opening of the volcano. Everyone including the Seven Dragon Imperials were shocked that Tianming had actually succeeded. They had put up the act for so long, and had been under so much pressure. Long Wanying couldn't help but tear up in relief.

"He did it!"

This was a moment filled with elation. That youth had ignored all the mockery people threw his way and dove into the abyss, enduring unspeakable pain only to resurface even stronger than before! Respect was the least people could give him. The others of the sect finally understood what was going on and their fervent feelings were converted into Omniscient Will for Tianming to use.

On the other side, those of the Veildragon Palace and the celestial orderians were completely stunned. They saw the five strands of grade-seven sword ki and recognized that they had come from the

Sworddragon Ocean Purgatory; it felt like thousands of spikes had pierced their hearts. They were all speechless as they watched the youth's power build up. Qingyu alone secretly pumped her fist with excitement. The two sides of the battlefield were now polar opposites as it was the Dragon Imperials of the Veildragon Palace and the other celestial orderian elites' turn to freeze.

No doubt, the twelfth-level Li Shenjian was immensely powerful, but Tianming was going to retaliate with his enhanced sword body and two constellations! His lifebound beasts used their best abilities, and even Yin Chen's millions of bodies swarmed toward the fused justice emblems, greatly slowing their descent with their threads.

"Let's fuck him up!" Tianming roared. His slash caused five illusory dragons to manifest and smashed the gigantic pillar aside when combined with the beasts' abilities. Sword ki continued pouring out of him in raging fashion, the soulscourge azure dragon sword ki leading the others in the attack and destroying two of the justice emblems outright.

"What?!" Before Li Shenjian could react, his mace had bounced back from the sheer force of the clash. Raging sword ki tore apart his grade-six divine armor, sending him flying as he spat out blood. The Dragonblood Desecration managed to escape his grasp and Tianming instantly caught it with Lifesteal Silverdragon as he used it to pierce Li Shenjian's thigh.

"Aaagh!" he cried, then knocked away the chain with his mace. "Come back!" He hurriedly surrounded himself with his remaining totems. Even with only six of them, he could put up an airtight defense, guarding all four cardinal directions and his top and bottom. Within the formation of totems, he raggedly breathed with his face pale. His thigh was still bleeding and two of his totems had been taken out of the fight, much to his frustration.

"Aaaaagh!" He was at such a loss he almost started crying. His mind was blank. Did he just lose? How could he lose when he was twice Tianming's age? "If the ones outside see this, they'll...."

Would they despair as they struggled to accept the reality of the situation? What was even worse was the fact that he had sunk the reputation of the celestial orderians even more with this loss, affecting his father's plans of taking over the Xuanyuan Dragon Sect. He had messed up royally! He didn't dare to imagine what their faces looked like.

Tianming's voice entered his ears like salt being rubbed on his wounds. "Li Shenjian, you called me a cowardly tortoise, yet you're the one that built a shell for yourself using your totems! Who's the tortoise now?!"

Li Shenjian felt his entire body shudder.

Chapter 1478 - World God's Path

Every generation of the celestial orderians were de facto rulers of Orderia. Among them, few, if any at all, could possibly compare to the sons of the sun emperor. The only exception to that was the Ninedragon Emperor's generation. Yet Tianming had surpassed even that, all while being less than half of Li Shenjian's age!

Li Shenjian had hidden himself among his justice emblems. Though his injuries were far from severe, his emotions were already crumbling from the crippling pressure. Like Li Haochen, he wasn't built to last

under stress and a single loss would shame him for life. When Li Haochen returned to his kin, he had lost all sway and wasn't even able to leave his home, and now Li Shenjian's loss was even worse than that.

"No, I still have a chance! I haven't lost yet!" The injury on his thigh was nothing for someone with an astral physique. Not to mention he still had six of his eight totems. "I just underestimated him, that's all!"

Once more, he mustered the courage the sun emperor's son should have and acted. "Li Tianming, that didn't count. I truly underestimated you. Our fight isn't over yet."

He opened up his justice emblems and let his power surge once more. His totems could absorb the divine hazard sword ki that the infernal dragon sword ki left behind and they began glowing bright red. Right as he was about to get back into the fight, he found that Tianming and his beasts were out of sight. "Did he run again?"

Just as he was about to laugh, he noticed something above him. Looking up, he saw that Tianming had left the battlefield from the opening of the volcano long ago. "Don't leave!"

If Tianming left just like that, the battle would end with Li Shenjian's loss! He could never accept that, but Tianming had achieved his goals and even got the Dragonblood Desecration back so there was no need to stay there any longer. He left the arena, holding the Grand-Orient Sword in one hand and Dragonblood Desecration in the other as millions of people looked at him. As someone close to Xiaoxiao, Tianming was recognized by the weapon's artifact soul as someone who would bring it back to her, so it didn't resist.

Currently, his black and gold eyes brightly glowed and his white hair fluttered behind him. The five great strands of sword ki emanated from his body in the form of illusory dragons; even their piercing roars could vaguely be heard. He was divinity incarnate! Even though Li Shenjian didn't want the fight to end, he had already lost his chance when he turtled up in his totems. Even the celestial orderians silently admitted that Tianming had won the duel, voicing no opposition to it at all.

More than twenty million people chanted his name. The sound was like a tidal wave that crashed against him before hurling toward the celestial orderians and Veildragon Palace. The moment he came out, he felt a wild rush of faith. It was as if his soul had clashed against twenty million others and his divine soul was growing at a rapid rate. Their faith seemed to convert into Omniscient Will that filled his albi and nurtured his Imperial Will. Every single sword in his albi grew larger and stronger, stabilizing the astral discs they were impaled into more and more. "Maybe this is the start of the path to becoming a world god!"

He felt completely transformed. The growth of his Imperial Will caused his aura to resemble an emperor's more and more. "Come!"

He didn't dare to show himself before everyone else. With the recent progress of his divine will, he could now breakthrough to the seventh level of the Constellation stage. This victory had been unimaginably huge—it had single-handedly raised up the morale of the oppressed Xuanyuan Dragon Sect. Even though he and Li Shenjian were considered young disciples, their statuses were far too symbolic. Now, Tianming had become the mental pillar of support for the entire Ninedragon Army.

He stood at the top of the volcano with his arms wide open as he turned to face the celestial orderians and those of the Veildragon Palace. He was absorbing nova source, his body like an invincible vortex. Despite being a youth in his twenties, the energy in his body was infinitely nearing that of his centuries-old seniors. Rampant nova source condensed into flame as it flooded into his body from all directions, clashing wildly against his sword ki. The vortex of flame and sword ki looked like subjects surrounding their emperor.

Li Shenjian had just managed to catch up and was about to strike, only to see Tianming absorbing nova source. He was stunned at being relegated to the background once more. Even though he wanted to win, there was no way he could attack now. Something like that would be beneath a person of his so-called stature.

"What are you doing? We haven't decided the victor yet, stop putting on a show!" Li Shenjian said, but there was no reply. The situation became really awkward.

Tianming was still absorbing nova source on his own accord, increasing his reserves of astralforce. The Ninedragon Army wildly cheered as they watched him while those on the other side coldly watched the scene. Li Shenjian merely stayed nearby without fighting; the sun emperor's son was being made to wait like an idiot.

"Li Tianming, I'm giving you one last chance. If you don't stop, don't blame me for not warning you." However, people still ignored him. In the eyes of everyone, he had already lost.

"You are shameless!" People from the Xuanyuan Dragon Sect began mocking him. After the first insult was thrown, the rest followed.

"Leave, Li Shenjian! You already chickened out just now. So why feign bravery now?"

"He just wants to quit on his own terms."

"What shameless behavior coming from the son of the sun emperor."

"He's already more than fifty years old, double Li Tianming's age! Yet he was completely defeated. Is there anyone else among the celestial orderians that can possibly step up to Li Tianming?"

"Li Tianming was right. The sons of the sun emperor are just pushovers."

Every word felt like a knife to Li Shenjian's heart. "No, the fight isn't over yet!"

Chapter 1479 - Nobody Left to Step Up

Li Shenjian still insisted on fighting, but no one from his camp spoke out in support of him. They probably didn't want to feel more embarrassed than they already were.

"Lord Ninth, please come back for now," Li Xiaoyan said, unafraid of offending Li Shenjian. His expression was deathly calm like still water, but anyone who was familiar with him would know that he, just like the other celestial orderians, had suffered a huge mental blow.

"That's right." The sentiment was echoed by Apothecary Li, the Torchdragon Emperor, and the rest. If Li Shenjian were allowed to cause more trouble, things would look even worse for them. Everyone had seen Tianming use his sword ki to crush two justice emblems. The near thirty million of them were

completely stone faced, as if they had been utterly humiliated. First Li Haochen, now Li Shenjian! The youths of the celestial orderians seemed to be completely defeated. Even though the one remaining genius on their side, Long Renshe, was the most impressive genius in the history of Veildragon Palace... having him defeat Tianming was pointless when he was easily twice his age.

"Ugh..." Li Shenjian looked back at his kin, seeing the faces of disappointment and humiliation he had imagined. It was worse than he thought. He had single handedly lowered the morale of those on his own side, achieving nothing and screwing up instead! His mind blanked out.

No!" He glared at Tianming and roared, "Die!"

It seemed that only killing him would absolve him now. This looked like the move that would salvage his mistakes. The cold reception of the celestial orderians had pushed him to his utmost limit. He swung his mace toward the back of Tianming's head—if it hit, Tianming's head would burst.

The crowd cried out in shock.

"Shameless!"

However, nobody could stop it now. People anxiously widened their eyes. That instant, Tianming turned back and ended his cultivation before slashing with the Grand-Orient Sword, parrying the mace without backing off from the shockwaves. He had clearly grown in strength.

"You're annoying," he said as his eyes flashed. Then he split his sword into two and carried the bow on his body. He used the golden sword to block the incessant mace strikes and the black sword to rapidly and fiercely slash. Once more, their fight built up to an intense crescendo.

"Since you chose to embarrass yourself, I'll make sure you get your wish!" Tianming had almost reached the seventh level, so he was much stronger than before. All five strands of sword ki gathered in his black sword as he executed the Blackdragon Abyss thrust while applying the power of his two constellations on Li Shenjian. He intertwined the attacks with more strikes from his golden sword, putting his melee talent on full display.

Li Shenjian struck with his justice emblems again, but Tianming channeled totem ki and sword ki into both hands to defend himself as quickly as lightning. When the golden sword deflected the totem attacks, the black sword went in for a rapid counter, his thick black arm that was holding it piercing the sword through Li Shenjian's defensive aura and even his throat!

"Ugh!" Li Shenjian's eyes widened as he stretched his hand out to touch the black sword that had pierced through his neck. Tianming pulled the sword out. "You...."

He widened his eyes so much that his eyeballs were about to pop out. He had fought with his full power and without any handicap, only to lose even more thoroughly! It seemed that Tianming had truly made another breakthrough, much to his horror.

"Do you admit your loss now?" Tianming immediately retreated after drawing his sword out. Then, he swung the Lifesteal Silverdragon toward Yang Ce, who rapidly pulled him over before Li Xiaoyan and the rest could arrive. The moment Tianming was pulled out, the gold-robed man appeared in front of Li Shenjian.

"Save... save me..." he said, struggling to hold his throat tight.

"Don't worry, you won't die," Li Xiaoyan said, shaking his head as he brought Li Shenjian back. The whole arena was silent. It no longer mattered if Li Shenjian survived this. Losing that horribly was no different from being killed, after all, not to mention how bad it looked when he was pushed back the second time even after such a shameless attack. Tianming could have killed him, but he left some face for the celestial orderians and chose not to. It was already debilitating enough for the celestial orderians' reputation after Li Shenjian tried to sneak an attack on him.

When both sides parted, the audience broke into an uproar. The Ninedragon Army seemed even more passionate, their fighting spirit rising to new heights. If war really broke out now, their enemies wouldn't get off with light casualties.

Tianming returned to the Seven Dragon Imperials after being dragged by the chain. "Xiaoxiao, here you go." He tossed the bow in her direction and it returned to her right away, marking an end to Li Shenjian's failed ploy.

"He reaped what he sowed! Hahaha!"

Laughter began spreading across their ranks. It went without saying that this fight had polarized the two sides even more, but at the very least, the oppressive efforts of the celestial orderians up until now were all for naught. Tianming was a beacon of hope for the Ninedragon Army, and the more respected he was, the more Omnisentient Will he would receive. On the other hand, the celestial orderians were even more sullen after Li Shenjian returned to them, half-dead by then.

"Let's take our leave!" Li Xiaoyan ordered without saying anything else.

"Let's go back," the Torchdragon Emperor said.

This humiliation wasn't something they could take any longer. This loss had come out of nowhere, and it was all so... unnecessary. They all left, faces flushed red with anger and embarrassment.

"Looks like the celestial orderians no longer have anyone capable of stepping up for them!" someone from the Ninedragon Army cried as they were retreating. Li Shenjian vomited another mouthful of blood from the anger as he was carried away. They returned to the inner sect while everyone else celebrated Tianming's victory at the outer sect. His divine will only continued growing more potent.

"If I can be the ruler of a nova source world one day, wouldn't I be able to power an astralguard formation with Omnisentient Will alone?" The day he'd been hoping for had arrived, but he knew that there was so much more that he had to learn to become a truly eternal ruler.

Chapter 1480 - Auspicious Joy

Within the Saintdragon Shrine at Great Saintdragon Peak, a bloody mist permeated the area, surrounding the dragon pillars and throne; the place looked like a microcosm of hell. The three Dragon Imperials of Veildragon palace, Li Xiaoyan, and Apothecary Li stood side by side within the hall with Li Shenjian kneeling in front of them. His face was pale and his wounds had yet to recover. He was even shuddering, his expression faint.

"I'm sorry, Aunt... sorry..." he said as he held his throat. Too many albi near his throat had been crushed and his spine was nearly severed. He had to hold his neck to make sure it wouldn't sway around.

As he spoke, a ghostly figure emerged from the bloody mist. Li Shenjian looked up at Li Wushuang and stifled some vomit. His scalp tingled with eerie disgust at the ugly visage he saw. The fanged green face wasn't something he could put into words. She was no human, but rather a corpse that had been left to rot for years.

He lowered his head and said, "Aunt, I never wanted to embarrass our kind. My abilities didn't fail me either. I just don't understand how Li Tianming could possibly overpower me. Perhaps he isn't even in his twenties...."

As he spoke, he heard a clear ringing sound. He looked up slightly and saw Li Wushuang holding her Skymoon Holyfiend. The ringing sound was her dragging the weapon across the ground. Li Wushuang's feet were already in front of him, along with her weapon.

"Aunt!" Something occurred to him, but it was interrupted by a whoosh. It felt like something had swept across his neck in an instant. He looked up and saw that Li Wushuang's blade was dripping with blood. "Huh?"

He felt like the world was tilting until he saw his headless body. "Am I dreaming?"

Feeling tired, he slowly closed his eyes, thinking that he would feel much better after waking up later. Perhaps nothing had actually happened. He did notice some commotion before he fell asleep, however—the Dragon Imperials, Li Xiaoyan, and Apothecary Li seemed to be arguing about something. What was it? It didn't matter, he was too fatigued to care. Drip. Drip. Crimson droplets flowed off the blade at an arrhythmic pace, sending ripples across the pooling blood beneath.

Li Shenjian was the best of the sun emperor's sons, the envy of everyone. However, his fate was stranger than fiction. "Did my aunt kill me?" He smiled at how implausible that notion was as his mind faded into eternal sleep.

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"Enough blabber. Just say that his wounds were too severe and he didn't survive. Blame it on Li Tianming," Li Wushuang said, crossing her legs as she sat on the dragon throne. She was closely looking at her wrinkled, charred fingers, apparently used to her new appearance.

"Yes.... But Lady Wushuang, how should we relay this to His Solar Majesty?" Apothecary Li said, feeling a chill at the sight of Li Shenjian's smiling head. That was the sun emperor's child, and not even the most vicious beasts would eat their children! Surely the sun emperor wouldn't allow his sister to kill his son, right?

"What're you worried about? Even if he freaks out over it, he'll come to me for answers, right? It's got nothing to do with you." She glanced at him and smiled. "Not to mention, he owes me. This is only a son, one of many. It probably won't matter if a few more die, too. Those pieces of trash won't be able to inherit the legacy he forged anyway."

"Understood...." The rest lowered their heads in agreement.

"Let me arrange for Lord Ninth's corpse to be shipped back to our territory. That way the others can share in the rage and mourning," Li Xiaoyan said through clenched teeth.

"That's right. See how much more worth he has to us now that he's dead?" Li Wushuang said, smiling so wide that her lips eerily curved toward her ears, chilling the other five elites in the room.

"Hehe...." Li Wushuang seemed accustomed to seeing expressions such as theirs and had stopped caring about it. She had more or less forgotten what she used to look like. "Give me the azure dragonspring. Seal off the Infernal Dragon Purgatory and investigate how Li Tianming managed to get down there. Maybe there's some other hidden path toward the lower levels."

"Understood." The Torchdragon Emperor had no choice but to hand it over. Upon receiving the dragonspring, Li Wushuang chuckled and nestled into the dragon throne that used to belong to the Saintdragon Emperor. She stared at her ugly fingers once more like they were treasures. Even as she looked at her own face through her reflection in a mirror, she chuckled like a young girl.

The others in the room felt a chill throughout their entire bodies at the sight, exchanging glances from time to time. Fortunately, a transmission stone came flying into the Torchdragon Emperor's hand. Then the figure of a golden man appeared abruptly.

"Your Solar Majesty!" The five of them immediately knelt, not daring to raise their heads. They were aware that the sun emperor had definitely seen the head of his son being parted from his body. Only Li Wushuang alone remained engrossed with her fingers like a newborn child.

"I just heard that Shenjian was pulling something. I didn't think he'd fall asleep so quickly." As expected, he'd seen all that had transpired, but he appeared far too calm. It was almost like he had shrugged at hearing his son's death and moved on to the next thing.

"Co-father-in-law," said the golden man. Nobody replied.

The Voiddragon Emperor quickly nudged the Torchdragon Emperor. Only then did he realize that the sun emperor was referring to him. Hastily, he said, "Your Solar Majesty, I'm ready to serve."

"Congratulations. The wedding date of my daughter and your son has been decided. I've set it on the Origin Festival of the Xuanyuan Dragon Sect forty-four days from now. That's when my daughter will officially marry into your sect. We'll hold it at the Primodragon Cave. Many important figures of this world will be there. Naturally, I'll be there personally as well."

"Thank you for the honor, Your Solar Majesty! We're also grateful to the celestial orderians and the Ninemoon Goddess!" the Torchdragon Emperor said, prostrating himself with the other two Dragon Imperials.

"No need for all that. We'll be one family soon, understood?"

"Yes!" Though the Torchdragon Emperor said that, he knew that no such equal standing existed after the sun emperor mentioned the Primodragon Cave. That was a special ancestral land of the sect where their forebears were buried. Holding a marriage ceremony in a graveyard told the Torchdragon Emperor all he needed to know about the standing of a sun emperor's subordinate like him.

"Forty-four days isn't a lot of time, so I trust that you'll swiftly see to the preparations. My daughter wishes to have a ceremony grander than any other that has been held in this world. As the first-ranking faction on the myriad sect rankings, I trust that you all will be able to live up to this expectation. Make sure it's perfect, understood?"

"Yes, Your Solar Majesty! We'll make sure that the fanfare of this ceremony echoes through the next millennium!" He was so moved that he was almost in tears.

"Very well. I'll wait for the auspicious day. This will mark a grand occasion in Orderia." The golden figure began vanishing. Then the transmission stone fell to the ground and melted into bloody red, forming a character that represented 'auspicious joy' right next to the head of Li Shenjian, whose smile almost seemed to perfectly fit the joyous occasion.