

The Ages 1791

Chapter 1791 - Three Armies Head South

The core group still continued excluding the dreamless celestial emperor. The Dreamless Celestial Nation still had to be kept at arm's length and monitored as well. At the very least, the dreamless celestial emperor and Tianming had a death grudge.

The dreamless celestial emperor's addition to the alliance had brought great excitement to the myriad sects. Everyone was happily discussing their grand plans without avoiding the dreamless celestial emperor.

Of course, the core path had already been discussed by Tianming and the other leaders.

The sect masters couldn't stay away from their sects for too long, so they would be returning alone after the meeting concluded. But thanks to Yin Chen, at least they wouldn't have to worry about being assassinated on the way back.

For sects that still had their home base, they would stay there to protect the Myriadragon Mountains if there were reinforcements near them. For sects without home bases, they would move their whole army to the mountains.

There would be many moving to the Xuanyuan Dragon Sect, as many third and fourth-rate sects had lost their homes and territory. Tianming would be heavily reliant on Yin Chen to safely bring them here to join up with the Ninedragon Army.

"When all those cultivators are absorbed, the Myriadragon Mountains will have ten billion people. If it can be joined together into a unified whole that can be mobilized like a sect, the Xuanyuan Dragon Sect alone will then reach half of the celestial orderians' power."

A super sect that even the Dreamless Celestial Nation paled in comparison to was being born.

As for the first- and second-rate sects, their bases were still around, apart from the Azuresoul Palace and Supracloud Sanctuary. Tianming's suggestion to them for now was to protect their sects and defend. There was no need to give up territory and resources. If the celestial orderians wanted to continue swallowing up sects, their next targets would be the second-rate sects. Tianming could rely on Yin Chen and the Ninedragon Imperial Tomb to use sheer numbers to defend them. Then they would repeat the battle of the Azurecloud Continent and grind away at the celestial orderians' numbers.

The celestial orderians couldn't solve the problem of the Ninedragon Imperial Tomb providing reinforcements, nor could they solve the problem of Yin Chen seeing and hearing everything.

"I'll wait for my army of ten billion to form, then use the enemy's routes and targets to set up some traps!" Tianming's goals were very clear, and the alliance leaders greatly supported them. Once they returned, they would open up the ore veins for Yin Chen, whose eggs had stabilized at twenty-five million in number but could still increase in size!

After growing, the silver eggs would still transform into only one egg or locust, but it could transform into many more invisible cockroaches and bonegnaw ants. That meant the invisible cockroaches and

bonegnaw ants had no upper limit, as long as there was enough to eat. One, or even ten billion was a possible number.

“A storm is coming,” Tianming sighed as he sent off the sect masters. The dreamless celestial emperor was the last to go. “Try your best to monitor him. Send fifty million invisible cockroaches to the Dreamless Celestial Nation,” he instructed Yin Chen.

“Yes yes! Much water... for bathing... over there!” Yin Chen gladly accepted the task.

“You aren’t going there for bathing, but for work!”

Yin Chen snorted.

“Help me find out what he does after leaving the Myriaddragon Mountains.” Weisheng Moran was still in his hands. The dreamless celestial emperor knew that Tianming’s Azurespirit was gone and had become the carefree wonder.

“He’ll definitely be furious. He’s going to find a way to seek revenge, which won’t give me peace and may even drag in the myriad sects.” Tianming grit his teeth.

“So serious?” Long Wanying was startled.

“Yes. The warmer he acted today, the more utterly furious he had to be inside and the more he wanted to rip me apart limb from limb,” Tianming said.

“Could you feel it?”

“Yes, no one can hide their killing intent from me.”

“Then let’s make preparations for the Dreamless Celestial Nation to be the myriad sects’ enemy.”

“Sorry... this is my personal grudge, but it’s giving the sects trouble.” Tianming was gloomy.

“Don’t say that, silly kid. In the end, the dreamless celestial emperor walks a different road from us.”

Tianming thought about it. If the Azurespirit was a locator, did it mean the dreamless celestial emperor wanted to bring the divine wonderians over? If so, that wouldn’t be good for the sun, and it meant he had always been an enemy anyway.

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The Azurecloud Continent was the front line of the battlefield and the most desolate place in the world right now. The divine tree used to shield the continent from the rain of fire, but now it fell unimpeded onto the continent. Since the Azurecloud Divine Tree’s fall, this once lush and green land had been consumed by fire. Only a sea of flowers continued beautifully growing. That was because every flower had a corpse below it. While the corpses were rotting more and more every day, they still provided ample nutrients.

Three celestial orderian armies approached from the continent's north, numbering thirty million in total. Furthermore, each soldier’s strength was at least a fifth-level constellier with an average age of three hundred.

Theirs was a true elite army.

The Xuanyuan Dragon Sect's Ninedragon Army, which was of a similar tier in quality, had thirty million people.

Each of the three orderian armies were unique in their own way.

The leftmost army with ten million people were all beautiful, with appearances similar to Li Yunxi. They were the forces belonging to the celestial orderians' soul tribulators.

The rightmost army was filled with well-built people regardless of gender, similar to the wargodeans. They looked much fiercer than the soul tribulators. They were from the celestial orderian godblader clan. They had godblade totems and had always been the sharpest weapon of the celestial orderians on the battlefield.

The center army was composed of pure celestial orderians. Every person had golden hair that burned like fire. Their advance was like a sea of fire moving forward. It was an army that could compare to the celestial orderians' Flamefiend Army that had fought at the battle of Myriadragon Mountains.

The three armies were the Tribulator Army, Godblade Army, and Tianyi Army. They were elite troops that could sweep away hundreds of millions of riff-raff from the myriad sects, as the myriad sects had a lower quality of troops.

The three armies passed by the Azurecloud Continent they had already conquered. They split into three directions, heading to the three continents south of Azurecloud. Each of the three continents had defending second-rate powers; there were five of them in all, each ranked sixtieth or lower in the sect rankings.

As the armies advanced, a small group stayed behind and arrived at the sea of flowers in the Azurecloud Continent.

A middle-aged man with pure gold hair pointed at a corpse and mildly asked, "Say, do you think this red lump here is my fifth brother?" He looked slightly older than Li Wushuang. The space between his brows seemed marked by traces of the time, as well as the steadiness and wisdom that came with it.

"Yes, grand prince," someone at the side said.

"He died quite beautifully. It's better to be low-key if you want to live a longer life," the grand prince said. He plucked a flower and placed it on his ear before looking south. "Fifth brother, your path in life stopped here. Big brother will bring you farther south." The south was filled with endless smoke and clouds.

Before leaving, the grand prince gave one last instruction: "Burn the fallen Azurecloud Divine Tree."

Chapter 1792 - Lands of Three Skies

The fallen Azurecloud Divine Tree had completely darkened and wilted, losing all its leaves. After the celestial orderians had set it on fire, the flames spread quickly all throughout the continent, reaching even the flaming clouds above. Black smoke filled the area and caused the flaming rain to fall more heavily. The entire continent was now an apocalyptic hellscape. All over the place, from trees, to rivers,

to mountains, small metallic cockroaches roamed about. They looked around like cold sculptures, serving as Tianming's eyes. This was what happened to territories the enemy had taken over.

The Azurecloud Continent was the first continent to be completely occupied. As for the other continents, while most third- and fourth-rate sects had been uprooted, some second-rate sects still held on. They had also absorbed a lot of refugee cultivators from other sects like the Azuresoul Palace once had.

As for the first-rate sects, they concentrated their forces near the south pole of the sun. If all the ninety second-rate sects stopped holding their ground, the celestial orderians would have taken over eighty percent of the sun's territories, breaking the balance of power. What could the top ten sects do about it, especially when a few of them were traitors or fence sitters? To Tianming, it was crucial that the second-rate sects held on to ensure the outer territories remained unclaimed, ready for subsequent crucial operations.

The Xuanyang Army had only been the vanguard against the second-rate sects. The true backbone of the celestial orderian army was coming south, including thirty million troops from the Tribulator, Tianyi, and Godblade Armies, and that was only the first wave of more to come. Perhaps even more troops would be sent to ensure the wipeout of the remaining eighty-eight second-rate sects. It was crucial to organize an effective countermeasure for the battles to follow.

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The southernmost part of the Azurecloud Continent looked like a sea of magma. Past the flaming sea were three continents that used to be one, but had later broken apart. They were the Skygrand, Skysplendor, and Skyseal Continents, respectively, collectively known as the Land of Three Skies. The continents were easy to defend and hard to attack, yet the celestial orderians had to pass through them to head south. There were five second-rate sects across the continents that were still holding their ground.

After the celestial orderians had taken down the Azuresoul Palace and Supracloud Sanctuary, it would be a huge blow to the morale of the Myriad Solar Sects if these five sects were to fall as well. Their fall would open the floodgates for the enemy troops to enter the sects' core territories. As far as the celestial orderians were concerned, even before the changes Tianming had brought to the table, the Land of Three Skies was a strategic point they had to conquer. But with Tianming as the leader of the Myriad Solar Sects, he would serve as a single breaking point the celestial orderians needed to slaughter in order to crush the sects' final hope.

For the celestial orderian elites, he was naught but a fumbling toddler, yet that 'toddler' had put them in a difficult predicament. When news from the front arrived, their confidence had been completely broken. The commanding officers, some hundred of them, assembled near the sea of magma. These particular hundred were led by the generals of the three armies. One of them was Li Tianyi, the eldest son of the sun emperor. Even though he was the eldest, he was from a different generation than Tianming. In fact, he was even senior to Jiang Qingliu and Li Wushuang, being nearly a thousand years old. There was no longer any hope for him to become a sovereign. But even so, he was an incredibly competent commander.

The other two were Li Mumu, commander of the Tribulator Army, and Situ Yin, commander of the Godblade Army. The celestial orderians had even more armies that were ten million strong. To those three, the young Li Xuanyang was just a dark horse with unrealized potential. His Xuanyang Army hadn't been that large to begin with, and the likes of him couldn't compare to the bigwigs with many years of experience behind them.

These three were the real deal.

Li Mumu and Situ Yin's statuses were comparable to Li Xiaoyan. Li Tianyi also had great status. Though he had a lot of hopes placed on him as the eldest son of the sun emperor, he no longer had any chance of becoming a sovereign, so he maintained a low profile. Instead, he had a close network of allies thanks to his incredible wit and planning. His modus operandi differed from most of the other, more impulsive celestial orderians.

The three leaders held a meeting with the other top elites as their armies stopped marching. Li Tianyi, who had just set the Azurecloud Divine Tree aflame, paced in front of the other two. "Our eight million informants were suddenly wiped out without warning, costing us our eyes. How could that have been achieved? Each spy was trained over the course of decades.... They know how to hide themselves, yet all of them were killed in one fell swoop!"

Li Mumu and Situ Yin shook their heads in confusion. The former had a head of dark green hair and the elegance of a soul tribulator. He was born near the forests and looked filled with vigor, appearing young despite his age. Situ Yin was a godblader and appeared incredibly huge. Knife cuts were visible all over his body and face. He seemed visibly older than Li Mumu and had some white hair. The two were about the same age as Gujian Qingshuang, yet they were far more powerful than him, or most second-rate sect leaders, even.

"What about the moles we have in the Myriad Solar Sects? Did they learn anything?" Li Mumu asked.

"There was quite a few of our own in the grand assembly, but all that Long Wanying announced was the result. She didn't explain how it was achieved. Though we managed to capture some Ninedragon Army troops who were sent to take out the informants, all they knew were the details of the informants and what they looked like. They had no idea how that information came about," Li Tianyi said, shaking his head.

"The only possibility is the presence of a mole among us who leaked the information," Situ Yin said.

"That's impossible. All our information contains are the names of the informants, their abilities, backgrounds, and their departments. We don't have any information about their precise locations. Even though we send them to a general region, the informants themselves decide where they hide and how they will blend in. It simply isn't possible, unless Li Tianming himself has eyes that can see every corner of the sun."

"How could there be such a power?" Li Mumu said.

"If it really exists, there's no point in even fighting. It's far too ridiculous. I believe there's some other method we just haven't figured out yet," Situ Yin said.

"Who can say for sure? That brat is weird in all kinds of ways. Even Li Haochen, Li Shenjian, Li Xuanyang, and others suffered at his hands. Some died, and some were crippled. We can't take him lightly," Li Tianyi angrily said.

"That's right. The most important step of our strategy is to take out the second-rate sects, yet we've run into an obstacle like this. We lost eight million pairs of eyes. The remaining three million or so are moles in the Myriad Solar Sects who only have limited access to information, and we can't expose them. If we rely on them, we won't have any initiative on the battlefield at all. They even have a divine astralship that can rapidly move troops. Taking the Land of Three Skies will be incredibly risky and difficult," Li Mumu said.

"We can be as careful as we want, but this isn't a fight we can run from. We gained so much ground in the past three years, and even took down the Azurecloud Continent. We must continue on to take the Land of Three Skies and fight our way south on five fronts. The wargodeans and Blueblood Starocean will work with us to curb the first-rate sects. It should've been an optimal chance for us. We can't afford to send no good news back, especially after we lost five million troops to the Azurecloud Divine Tree. If we stop now, the effort of the past three years would all go to waste," Situ Yin said. Victory was just within sight! Yet even so, the uncertain waters ahead still made them hesitant and fearful. They would be wandering in blind while the other side scrutinized every move they made.

"Will our moles be able to uncover the truth of how our scouts and informants got wiped out?" Li Tianyi asked.

"Temporarily not. I suppose only the alliance leaders will be aware of it, though I doubt the dreamless celestial emperor will be among those in the know," Li Mumu said.

"The dreamless celestial emperor? How are negotiations with him?"

"We might have a chance."

"He'll make the wise choice," Li Tianyi said, smiling.

"It isn't just him. We still have an opportunity to approach the other alliance leaders. Once we have them, the secrets of the Xuanyuan Dragon Sect will be revealed to us. The Northdipper Swordsage, for instance, is said to be quite ambitious and opportunistic. I doubt he has any grand and noble intentions, so we can probably sway him with the right price. With the Emyrean Sword Sect on our side, we won't even have to fight this war," Situ Yin said, smirking.

"The Northdipper Swordsage... really isn't an easy person to deal with," Li Mumu said, but without explaining further. "How about this—Tianyi, you decide what steps we take next. The emperor's original plan was to take the Land of the Three Skies to demoralize the Myriad Solar Sects. After that, our forces of three hundred million would head south on five different fronts. But now we're stuck at the choke point without any intel. What do we do?"

"I can't say for sure. It isn't my decision to make. I'll ask my esteemed father about it just in case. If I mess this up, I'll be wiped out, just like my younger brothers. I'd like to live a few more years if I can," Li Tianyi said before he entered a secretive formation.

"Didn't the sun emperor say that no disturbance was to be permitted during such a crucial time?" Situ Yin asked.

"Perhaps that matter worked out," Li Mumu guessed.

"Perhaps..." Situ Yin paused for a moment, then continued, "even though Tianyi is obedient, he's perhaps a little too obedient. He never has his own opinions and almost religiously does what the sun emperor says." In other words, he was carrying out the will of the sun emperor at all times, never his own.

"What do you think the emperor will decide?" Li Mumu asked.

"What else? The Divine Sun Palace has lost its control wheel. We only have one divine astralship. Now that we've lost our eyes, we can't afford to fight this war and waste the lives of our own troops."

"So we can only attack after we learn how our eyes were wiped out."

"That's right. If it weren't for that, our thirty million troops and those of the wargodeans and Blueblood Starocean could easily take the enemy down by encirclement." That was the key to their plan. It would be the first time in many years that the celestial orderians bore down with their full military might, yet even that seemed to be a non-starter given what had happened.

Li Tianyi ended his conversation and left the formation with a troubled look.

"What'd the emperor say?"

"We're to proceed according to our original plan."

Chapter 1793 - The Key to Success is in the Details

Li Tianyi was completely unaware of the terror that awaited them. As the three of them were discussing their plans, Tianming had heard everything, except for the secret conversation between Li Tianyi and the sun emperor. They wouldn't bother with a single invisible cockroach that was barely detectable in the forest around them, after all.

Yin Chen's bodies could lay dormant, effectively no different from a piece of lifeless metal. And thanks to the divine ores provided by the many sects, its number was still growing. By now, Tianming already had the territories of the dreamless celestial nation, wargodeans, and Blueblood Starocean under supervision. Tianming, together with the Saintdragon Emperor, Long Wanying, and the rest were analyzing the orderians' plans in the great hall.

"What we can be certain of is that the celestial orderians have sent thirty million troops to the Land of Three Skies. Secretly, they're also working with Blueblood Starocean and the wargodeans. The two first-rate sects probably have around thirty million troops to rival the defenders, so we might have a total force of sixty million. The defenders of the five second-rate sects, on the other hand, only have four million elites combined, all of whom are at least ascendants. They have another fifty million normal cultivators that will be capable of providing their defensive formations with energy. But that's far from enough to take on the enemy."

The enemy was going for overkill to swiftly settle things. Back then, the Xuanyang Army had almost taken over the Azuresoul Palace and Supracloud Sanctuary with only four million troops despite the

sects ranking far higher than those of the Land of Three Skies. Li Tianyi had made sure he had even more troops this time to make up for the loss of their informants. He had also taken into account the fifty million enemy reinforcements that could be transported by the Ninedragon Imperial Tomb.

"It isn't surprising that the wargodeans and Blueblood Starocean are part of this. What's weird is that the sun emperor still asked them to proceed even though we have reinforcements," Long Wanying said.

"Perhaps he's just that confident in his troops?" Long Xiqian said.

"Impossible. Having lost their informants and facing the looming threat of the Ninedragon Imperial Tomb, blind confidence will only lead to mistakes. They're still in an advantageous position, so there's little need for them to take risks. After their losses at the Azurecloud Continent, their morale might collapse if they suffer a similar loss."

"Aunt Ying, do you think the sun emperor finally had some kind of breakthrough after his seclusion? Will he have a move to play? While he failed back then, that was due to him not understanding the Primodragon Cave. He also didn't think my godfather would take away the Solar Wheel. As for what happened on the Azurecloud Continent, it had nothing to do with him. I'm sure he must have some kind of basis for insisting on continuing the attacks. He must have something that can turn the odds in his favor," Tianming said.

"That's right." Long Wanying had considered that. It was crucial to not treat the enemy as a fool. Even though the Myriad Solar Sects had the advantage when it came to surveillance, the enemy was also on high alert. Choosing to fight despite the clear presence of the Ninedragon Imperial Tomb was far from rational.

However, Tianming had wanted to properly unify the first-rate sects in the Myriad Solar Sects and wipe out the enemy's eyes at the same time, so it was a move he'd had to make. He would also watch for the sun emperor's response. Since he chose to fight anyway, that meant he had to have some way to win.

"Things are developing rather abnormally, so there must be a trick to it. If Li Tianyi and the rest insist on attacking despite the risks, that alone isn't much of an issue. However, Li Tianyi actually consulted with the sun emperor before attacking." Long Wanying furrowed her brows in thought, holding her cheeks tight. "Tianming, how are the enemy troops moving?"

"They're gathering on five fronts and their numbers are still increasing. I think there'll be three hundred million in total, but they're all near the north pole of the sun so it'll take time for them to arrive at the Land of Three Skies. I'll surely notice if they make any moves."

"Logically, with Yin Chen around, we'll be able to learn of the sun emperor's methods no matter what they are. Even if we can't counter them, we can prepare ourselves against them. However, it's still important to learn why he can be so confident." That was the main issue Long Wanying was still considering. She was always someone that scrutinized the details and would feel unwell if there was something she hadn't properly figured out.

The enemy had taken the initiative to attack this time around and were nearing the sea of magma. Tianming and the rest had to act immediately, so they didn't have much time. Letting the enemy attack first meant losing the initiative.

However, the truth wasn't what they had imagined. They had thought that the celestial orderians would bide their time for a little longer, but instead, not only did they attack, they did so with such swiftness and ferocity that there was barely any time to react. That took place before the ten billion troops of Myriadragon Mountains had fully assembled. The thirty million celestial orderians and thirty million combined troops of the wargodeans and Blueblood Starocean cultivators mounted a pincer attack on them.

Tianming knew that the wargodeans and Blueblood Starocean were assembling their troops as Li Tianyi and the rest were conversing, so that much was clear. The question now was whether the sun emperor had made other moves that Yin Chen hadn't learned of yet. It wasn't able to infiltrate the Divine Sun Palace, after all.

Not to mention, Li Tianyi hadn't acted without care. He had used a privacy formation while communicating with the sun emperor, so Yin Chen hadn't been able to listen in. It was a small formation, after all, so it would be quite easy to detect Yin Chen from within.

Long Wanying also knew that they were pressed for time. By now, they'd assembled a large army, mainly headed by the Ninedragon Army, and had prepared to send them as reinforcements using the Ninedragon Imperial Tomb. They would be sending a total of sixty million troops. Part of them would cut off the escape route of the wargodeans and Blueblood Starocean, and the rest would be normal reinforcements. At the same time, the Fushen Clan and Frostsoul Imperium would launch an ambush on the main camp of the wargodeans and Blueblood Starocean.

That plan had been in the works for quite some time. No matter what, rapidly sending reinforcements would devastate the traitors of the Myriad Solar Sects. The Fushen Clan and Frostsoul Imperium, in particular, were rather powerful and would easily be able to crush the hollowed remnants of the wargodeans and Blueblood Starocean. Tianming wanted to use this chance to deal a heavy blow to the traitors. With both sides now prepared, he waited to see how the enemy would lose.

"They're going to lose for sure, yet they pressed the attack. Where does the real problem lie, then?" He wouldn't have any peace until he figured out how, but he didn't have much time left.

"What if we try thinking about our own advantages and see if they really work well for us?" Long Wanying suggested.

"We have two main advantages. The first is Yin Chen, which allows us to react to any move the enemy troops make, even new reinforcements, though that doesn't seem likely at the moment," Tianming said.

"In other words, that advantage seems fine."

"The second is the Ninedragon Imperial Tomb. It's a clear advantage that they know we have, yet they seem to not care. Do they have a way to neutralize it?" That was a crucial part of their plans. If something happened to it, things would spiral out of control.

"What method could they possibly have to overcome the Ninedragon Imperial Tomb's speed?"

Tianming didn't give it much thought and said, "Only the Divine Sun Palace with its two miniature nova sources. It's really fast, and can even be used to attack, while the Ninedragon Imperial Tomb is just a

troop transport. However, they already lost the Solar Wheel, so the Divine Sun Palace should be disabled. Even the Yin Chens nearby report that the nova sources aren't generating power, either."

"Where'd you hide the Solar Wheel?"

"We traveled for two months in the aether in a divine astralship before burying it on a dead planet. It isn't something the sun emperor could retrieve by traveling there with his physical body."

"Then it doesn't seem like the Ninedragon Imperial Tomb would be countered either...." Long Wanying felt the frustration mounting.

"What if he has another Solar Wheel?" Qingyu asked, having remained silent the whole time. That seemed to be the breakthrough they were all waiting for.

"Tianming, we don't know much about divine astralships. Is that possible?" Long Wanying asked.

"I... I can't be certain either." All he'd learned about these ships had come from the Ninedragon Imperial Tomb, so his understanding was limited. Not to mention, nobody else but him had any experience with divine astralships.

"For such an important ship, there can't be more than one formation core, right? I've never heard of there being a spare formation core," the Saintdragon Emperor said.

"However, the sun emperor hasn't shown up since the battle of the Myriaddragon Mountains. Maybe he was looking for another way to activate the Divine Sun Palace. While it's a bit of a stretch, we can't ignore the possibility and have to act as if such a thing exists," Long Wanying said. If it really did, it would be fatal for him. After all, the advantages Tianming had counted on the fact that the Divine Sun Palace couldn't be used.

"I'll ask someone about it. Give me half an hour," Tianming said.

"Be quick, we have little time," Long Wanying said.

"Got it."

Chapter 1794 - To Battle

Tianming wanted to ask Sovereign Starfeather about it, so he had to go to the wondersky realm. The sovereign had operated the Kilostar Capital for ages, so he would definitely know more about divine astralships than Tianming. If that didn't work, he could ask Sovereign Brightscorch about it since there was no way he would refuse a meeting.

Apart from using the Divine Sun Palace, Long Wanying didn't know what the enemy could be up to. With Yin Chen, no plans or plots would work out for the orderians and the conflict could no longer be fought behind dark curtains. It was a competition of whose arsenal was larger; it didn't matter if the enemy learned of one's guns if they were outgunned to begin with.

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Tianming went to a separate hall and used the heavenly locus formation to enter the wondersky realm. He went to Soulburn Hall; Feiling hadn't been there in quite a while. While he missed her, it was urgent,

so he reached out to Old Master Shengui right away, who just so happened to be in the wondersky realm. He showed up in an instant.

"What's the matter, young friend?"

"I have an urgent question for the sovereign. Can you see if he's free to come? This can't wait! Thank you in advance!" Tianming said in one go.

"No problem. Wait a bit." Shengui knew it must be a serious matter, so he hurried to the Kilostar Capital in the real world. Tianming didn't have to wait more than fifteen minutes for the sovereign to show up.

"What's the matter, Tianming? I wanted to ask you whether your voyage was successful."

Tianming asked about divine astralships as clearly as he could.

"You're talking about a backup formation core, right?" Sovereign Starfeather said.

"Does such a thing exist?"

"Of course. However, there's pros and cons to them. If the formation core of the ship is stolen, the backup core can be used, so the divine astralship would still be able to function. However, having more than one core means that more than one person would be the ship's caretaker, which might lead to internal conflict. As such, the Kilostar Capital only has one core."

"Are there many divine astralships with dual cores?"

"Not many. Based on my talks with other sovereigns at the Astraldome, about a fifth of ships have backup cores, essentially replicas of the original astralship core. They're forged over generations, thanks to their complicated divine celestial patterns. The subsequent generations have to perfect the cores over and over again until they're complete."

Tianming had his answer now.

"Is the matter related to that?" the sovereign asked.

"My seniors are in conflict with some other faction, so I took an astralship core and tossed it into the deep cosmic aether. They don't have other divine astralships. But after years of dormancy, they suddenly decided to attack us, so we feel that something's off."

"If that's the case, you should consider the possibility of there being a backup core."

"Understood! Thank you, Sovereign. I have to head back as there's no time!"

"Go."

Tianming thanked him again before hurriedly leaving. As Sovereign Starfeather had talked with other sovereigns at the Astraldome, his knowledge was no doubt rather reliable. For there to be such a specific figure like one-fifth of astralships meant that it wasn't just a random guess without basis. Tianming immediately reported what he knew to the others who were waiting for him.

"One-fifth! Even if there's an 80% chance that the sun emperor doesn't have a backup core, we have to be prepared for it nonetheless. Tianming, what's the situation near the Divine Sun Palace like now?"

"There's quite a few bodies there, so I'm having Yin Chen move for better coverage. But right now, the Divine Sun Palace is dormant."

"Got it." Long Wanying took a deep breath and continued, "Everyone, here's the facts. Even if we guessed the possibility of a backup core in time, we have no way to counter it and can only do our best to defend against it. We still have to deploy the Ninedragon Imperial Tomb to fend off the attack on the Land of Three Skies."

In other words, Tianming would have to go to battle either way. Guessing was one thing, but there would be no path to victory if the Land of Three Skies was taken.

"All we can do is constantly keep an eye on the Divine Sun Palace. Once it activates, we'll immediately retreat and give up on the Land of Three Skies. No matter how fast a divine astralship is, there's no way it can travel at full speed on the surface of a star. The Ninedragon Imperial Tomb will be able to make it back in time. If the sun emperor really has a backup core, he wouldn't be able to predict that we'd immediately be notified of the Divine Sun Palace's departure," Tianming said.

There was still a risk of whether they could retreat during the delay it took for the Divine Sun Palace to arrive. The Ninedragon Imperial Tomb was quite a fast transport. As long as all the troops could be loaded back into it before the Divine Sun Palace reached the Land of Three Skies, retreat was still possible.

As the existence of the backup core was just a guess, they still stood a winning chance. Tianming and the rest were unable to give up on the three continents and let them go the way of the Azurecloud Continent. While the retreat from the Azurecloud Continent had been a success, they'd still had to leave behind lots of people who were now living in a hellscape. Just because the top sects from that continent had managed to leave didn't change the fate of the continent itself.

This was Tianming's first time leading a war effort, so he had to take certain risks for survival. He would also have to pilot the astralship.

"Don't worry, Aunt Ying. While the Ninedragon Imperial Tomb might no longer be a competitive edge, we aren't without other means. I trust that we'll be quick enough," Tianming said. "Alright."

The Saintdragon Emperor said, "Very well, to battle!" He would be going with Tianming to the battlefield with sixty million troops, a third of which would be made up of Ninedragon Army soldiers. The other forty million would be fourth-level constelliers or above from the third- and fourth-rate sects, all of them elites.

"This army of sixty million will be split into two. One will stop the wargodeans and Blueblood Starocean where they'll pass through. The other will go to the main battlefield and reinforce the main sects of the three continents."

As those sects weren't gathered together, the troops would have to split again. For any sect, they could simply leave with caeli, divine artifacts, pills, and resources, but things like mines, defensive formations, historical legacies, and the handiwork of their ancestors couldn't be brought away. Those were likely to be lost forever once the area was conquered. For these five sects in particular, retreating without a fight wasn't an option, so it would be a fight to the death. It was crucial that the Divine Sun Palace be monitored throughout the battle.

Before Tianming set out, he had a large number of Yin Chens gather near the Divine Sun Palace, as well as areas it would have to pass through in a straight line to reach the Land of Three Skies.

The Ninedragon Imperial Tomb was already finished preparing as well. The sixty million troops Tianming had picked were all elite constellers, whose average age was four hundred. They were in the peaks of their lives, still relatively young yet with a lot of battle experience. Apart from the twenty million Ninedragon Army soldiers, the others were elites from many other sects who all had some degree of grudges against the celestial orderians.

A few days back, Tianming already had a drill on boarding the divine astralship. While they would have to squeeze, they efficiently organized themselves. The Ninedragon Army had extended their organizational structure to include the other forty million troops, forming them into cohesive units. Even if they weren't as organized as a proper army, they were no less willing to fight. That was why Tianming dared to take them to the battlefield himself.

This was a large-scale war across an entire star that included tens of millions of troops, not a small-scale battle between nations of a mortal world. It was a grand face-off between the celestial orderians and the new alliance. The enemy had three hundred million trained soldiers, while the Myriadragon Mountains had less than half that number—around a hundred and twenty million or so—but that number could still grow.

With the 'new' Xuanyuan Dragon Sect under Tianming's control, it was the basis upon which he could build his future empire. It also represented his first conflict against a sovereign-class figure, so winning was imperative. To prepare for the fight, he put all his attention into preparation, never taking a single break and constantly sorting through Yin Chen's reports, making plans to react. He couldn't afford any mistakes, as each could cost tens of thousands of lives. While the sun emperor might not care for such numbers, Tianming couldn't be the same.

"Depart!" Tianming piloted the ship using the formation. The warriors behind him were ready to fight to their deaths. "Even if there's only a 20% chance that the sun emperor has a backup core, I think it's likely, given that he's confident enough to press the attack," Tianming said.

"It's still a fight we can't avoid," the Saintdragon Emperor said.

"That's right."

Chapter 1795 - Gold and Blue Storm

Tianming couldn't just keep guessing forever. If they didn't launch a strike, it would be akin to giving up on the Land of Three Skies, even though the threat of the Divine Sun Palace hadn't even been properly established. Those of the Land of Three Skies could clearly see the fires that still burned on the Azurecloud Continent, and none of them were willing to accept having to leave their homes unless they had truly no choice left.

"I understand the sects on those continents. It wasn't easy for them to rise to where they are. Even if they're bound to lose, they'll use their defensive formations and make sure the enemy pays a price."

The Ninedragon Imperial Tomb was a ray of hope for the Land of Three Skies.

"The army of wargodeans and Blueblood Starocean cultivators have made their move. Their march isn't fast. The Tianyi, Tribulator, and Godblade Armies should be waiting behind for a pincer attack. We still have some time. Even if the Divine Sun Palace can start up, it'll only arrive after we do," Tianming said.

"What of the Fushen Clan and Frostsoul Imperium?" the Saintdragon Emperor asked.

"They've finished assembling their troops at the border and are ready to attack at any time. However, the home bases of the wargodeans and Blueblood Starocean are protected by defensive formations, so it won't be easy for them to break through."

"Those traitor sects have no secrets they can use to defend against us. Since they've sent out so many troops, their defenses are bound to be weakened. The deployment of the Fushen Clan and Frostsoul Imperium troops, on the other hand, was even kept from their own people. So, nobody really knows how many troops they sent out."

"Well, they actually sent out their main forces to curb the threat of the traitors. Each of them have at least ten million elites deployed," Tianming said.

"Then it'll be fine."

"Additionally, the Northdipper Swordsage and Ninesun Martial Lord both sent elite units consisting of around a million troops. All of them are ninth-level constelliers and above who've traveled in secret for a few days. If nothing goes wrong, they should be able to join up with the Fushen Clan and Frostsoul Imperium."

"It's about time those traitors got the lesson they deserve."

"Yeah!"

The leaders finished delegating tasks. The Saintdragon Emperor brought thirty million troops to stop the troops of the traitors from reaching the Land of Three Skies while Tianming brought the other thirty million to fight in the main battle. With Yin Chen and the Ninedragon Imperial Tomb, they had a huge advantage just being able to rapidly deploy troops at the right time.

The Saintdragon Emperor would only start harassing the enemies at the opportune moment when they couldn't advance or retreat. In fact, if the enemy learned that their homes were under attack, they would immediately turn tail and be chased down from behind.

This time around, the organized effort of the Myriad Solar Sects didn't rely on transmission stones. In fact, they were forbidden from carrying any to prevent leaks of their troop movements. Yin Chen also helped wipe out the informants the enemy had to further ensure that the enemy was blind. All of the troops inside the Ninedragon Imperial Tomb, as well as those of Frostsoul Imperium and the Fushen Clan, had adopted the same measures, united in purpose and led by a single leader. Without the alliance, that measure alone would be hard to properly execute. Apart from that, Tianming tried his best to make sure that the Ninedragon Imperial Tomb's movements were hidden with Yin Chen's coordination. While the measures might not necessarily work, it was worth trying. Uniting all the sects in one purpose was the first step to victory.

The troops of the traitors were still advancing, according to Yin Chen.

"The leaders are the Warlord and Deluge Emperor." The Deluge Emperor was the ruler of the Blueblood Starocean, so Tianming knew him well. As for the Warlord, he was the ruler of the wargodeans. His full title was the Goldring Warlord.

"Do they really trust the sun emperor so much? Couldn't they send fewer troops so that their homes are better defended?" the Saintdragon Emperor said.

"It's all a gamble. According to their talks, they did make some preparations against ambushes by the Frostsoul Imperium and the Fushen Clan. But like Li Tianyi, they received orders from the sun emperor to march according to plan. Fortunately, they have no idea about Yin Chen's existence."

Everyone, including Tianming, was making a gamble and walking on a knife's edge. Tianming wanted to use thirty million troops to hold back their forces, while the enemy wanted to use their defensive formations to hold back the Fushen Clan and Frostsoul Imperium until their main forces could return. In other words, the key lay in the main battle.

"Let's begin." Tianming couldn't care less about their secrets. If he could force them to use their trump cards, it would be his victory as long as the casualties were kept low.

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A wave of gold and blue was among the troops that marched across the desolate plains. The golden folk were all tall and huge, being wargodeans that were marked all across their bodies with golden patterns. They seemed to savagely roar at the skies, filled with a primeval aura of savagery. The bluebloods of the Blueblood Starocean were the opposite; like the divine lunarians, they prized elegance and refinement. They were like offshoots of the celestial orderians that didn't have their brash and battle-crazy attitude. Even as they slaughtered away on the battlefield, they did so with class. While they were kept separate from the celestial orderians and made their home in the south of the sun, they were still considered honorary celestial orderians.

The wave of blue and gold blended together on the battlefield as if both sides were competing against each other. There were so many people that one could hardly see the end, and all of them were elite troops from two first-rate factions. Even the Blueblood Starocean alone should have no problem taking out the sects of the Land of Three Skies, so this was beyond overkill.

The Warlord and Deluge Emperor met each other at the front of their armies. The Goldring Warlord stood at the head of the wargodeans, sporting an inhuman height of more than ten meters, much like specters. His entire body seemed coated in gold. The armor he wore was gold and black, with a blood-red cape hanging behind him. The most eye-catching part about him were his eight ears, each one wearing a golden ring that looked to be the size of a belt.

In stark contrast, the blue-haired Deluge Emperor was elegant and refined. His hair was waist length and he had an elegance and beauty similar to that of the dreamless celestial emperor. He didn't look in the slightest like Lan Sha at all, despite the two being blood brothers.

Chapter 1796 - Military Faceoff

It wasn't the first time these two top figures had met each other. They smiled as if it was the most natural thing to do as they led their troops toward the Land of Three Skies.

"The Frostsoul Imperium is making moves near our border. I believe they're trying to give my sect a huge blow," the Deluge Emperor said.

"The same is the case with the Fushen Clan. They're stupid pigs that don't know when death is coming for them," the Golden Warlord said in a low, metallic voice. The shaking gold earrings were what had inspired his title.

"The sun emperor asked us to send a little too many troops, don't you think? We left our homes quite empty. If we decide to give the fight our all, our homes will be in trouble. As the enemy has forbidden the use of transmission stones, we haven't managed to figure out how the troops of the Frostsoul Imperium are moving. I think it should be the same with the Fushen Clan, right? Aren't you worried?" the Deluge Emperor asked the giant beside him.

"There's no need to. Trust in the sun emperor. As long as you follow him like a child would, there's no reason to worry about every matter in the sun."

"That's true. It only went bad the last time because of that damned Ninedragon Emperor and the Primodragon Cave."

"People like us just have to do as we're told."

"You're a beastmaster, yet your trust and faith in the sun emperor is even deeper than mine." The Deluge Emperor shot him a thumbs-up.

"You flatter me. Even the Veildragon Palace was able to obtain respect from the celestial orderians. In the future, we'll be above all other beastmasters, so we can fill the void left behind by the Veildragon Palace. As we understand our own kind, the celestial orderians will no doubt need someone to manage the beastmaster slaves, so we're the best pick. Since the sun emperor isn't against forming alliances, he won't mind the diversity of races in the sun after he conquers it, either. If he did, wouldn't the sun be a really boring place?"

"That makes sense."

The reason the wargodeans had risen to prominence was no doubt in part due to the celestial orderians' machinations. As such, they were loyal to them, and the celestial orderians didn't have to worry about them turning. The loyalty of the wargodeans wasn't something racial differences could disturb. They were fervently faithful to the sun emperor and his plans, and didn't worry about their homes being threatened in the slightest. Thus, the warlord had taken eighty percent of his troops with him, leaving the rest of the elites to work with normal cultivators to defend their homes. The troops from the two sides no longer held back and tried to hide. The wargodeans released their lifebound beasts, standing out with their domineering aura. The gold-haired beasts roared, causing the skies to shake.

"It'll only take another two hours for us to reach the Land of Three Skies! After that, we'll return to fight the Fushen Clan and Frostsoul Imperium before joining up with the celestial orderian troops to take over the world!" the Warlord roared, inspiring his troops, as well as the bluebloods, who drew their weapons and manifested their totems.

Ready to kill, they finally stepped onto the Land of Three Skies. But just as they were about to go wild, they could hear a loud commotion from the mountains ahead of them. Countless dragons were rising

into the sky! The troops led by the Saintdragon Emperor suddenly showed up; they had brought a force of thirty million, far outnumbering the wargodeans and bluebloods.

Ever since the battle of the Myriaddragon Mountains, the Ninedragon Army had gained a lot of experience. In terms of spirit, they were the only force that could measure up against that of the celestial orderians. The dragon beastmasters rode their glamorous mounts into battle, filled with bravery and faith. Each beastmaster was like a mountain in their own right. Many cultivators from other sects were there for vengeance, and even they were infected by the fervor of the dragon beastmasters. Their morale was far higher than that of the traitors. After all, even the wargodeans, who were essentially beastmasters, didn't want to kill their own kind for no good reason.

Both sides could clearly see the hateful glares of the other. The Ninedragon Army didn't immediately launch an assault, as their mission was to hold the enemy back rather than exterminate them. As such, they formed an immovable defense. Even without attacking, they were terrifying to behold. The cold looks of the dragon beastmasters and their dragons made them look like they were on top of the food chain, much of it thanks to their deep legacy as the number one sect. It wasn't something the wargodeans and bluebloods could measure up against.

The Deluge Emperor and Warlord furrowed their brows at the Saintdragon Emperor's passive inactivity. Without the celestial orderians there to force them to act, it was hard to get into a proper fight without caring about their casualties. No matter how they looked at it, this fight was one that would cost lots of blood.

"Looks like the Ninedragon Imperial Tomb is quite capable of transporting troops," the Warlord said.

"Isn't this something we already anticipated?" said the Deluge Emperor.

"Now that they've shown up, it means that the Fushen Clan and Frostsoul Imperium have also attacked. What do you plan to do?"

"It depends on the sun emperor."

Things had turned out mostly as they had expected, except for the fact that the Saintdragon Emperor had brought more troops than they could have imagined. All they could do was stand there, unmoving. If the Fushen Clan and Frostsoul Imperium attacked their homes, they would suffer losses either way. The longer it dragged on, the worse it would be for them.

Even the Saintdragon Emperor wanted to know if the sun emperor would swoop in to save the traitors. He had informed the Northdipper Swordsage, Ninesun Martial Lord, Fushen Clan, Frostsoul Imperium, Long Wanying, and Tianming about it through Yin Chen. Nearly instant communication was too huge an advantage to have. The fastest transmission stones on the sun were treasures that only the sun emperor had, and they were capable of timely transmission as well. Li Tianyi, the Warlord, and Deluge Emperor all had one that allowed them to communicate with the sun emperor at any time. Yet while it could travel faster than a sovereign themselves, it was still slower than divine astralships on the surface of the star. It would take it around two hours to fly from the Land of Three Skies to the Myriaddragon Mountains.

As such, the celestial orderian side couldn't imagine how fast the Myriad Solar Sects could communicate with each other. They thought that the Saintdragon Emperor's ambush had been planned long in

advance instead of spontaneously. The speed of communication between Yin Chen's bodies was far faster than that of transmission stones, hence why Tianming still dared to make a move despite the possibility of the sun emperor having a backup core for the Divine Sun Palace.

The attack from the Fushen Clan and Frostsoul Imperium would take place far sooner than the enemy expected. It would take at least an hour after the start of the battle for the enemy leaders to be informed of it. Right now, the defensive formations of their bases were being destroyed one after another. The Northdipper Swordsage and Ninesun Martial Lord had each led half a million elites to attack the heartlands of the wargodeans and bluebloods, respectively, namely Wargod Valley and Oceanheart City. Thanks to Yin Chen, they were able to target the weakest parts of the defenses.

As for the Saintdragon Emperor, he wouldn't have to make any moves as long as the wargodeans and bluebloods didn't attack. It was quite a marvel to see armies on two sides bloodthirstily staring each other down without coming to blows. Heartbeats intensified as rains of embers fell from above. The Saintdragon Emperor was looking at the enemy, yet his attention was elsewhere, concerned about how the other regions were faring. Yin Chen reported that the attacks on Wargod Valley and Oceanheart City were proceeding well. It was only a matter of time before their defenses were breached. The only troublesome thing was that there were nearly two hundred million ascendants there to defend the place, so the defensive formations were rather powerful. That was the only reason the Warlord and Deluge Emperor had been willing to leave with so many troops.

In fact, the Fushen Clan and Frostsoul Imperium's territories were even more defenseless, but they had Yin Chen monitoring the situation so they would be able to retreat quickly enough to deal with threats. There was no worry that the ascendant defenders of the enemy would be able to chase them down, anyway. Even so, it would require some time to properly deal a blow to the enemies. Fushen Gongyi and the Frost Empress both said that they were capable of carrying out their objectives as long as Tianming and the Saintdragon Emperor could hold back the enemies' main forces. Whether it was the battle of the five sects on the three continents, the ambush of the enemy's homes, or the holding back of enemy forces, succeeding in even one of them would bring huge benefits.

"Yin Chen my friend, ask Tianming how the other side is going," the Saintdragon Emperor said.

"Tianming has... finished deployment... troops are... right at... enemy's door," Yin Chen said.

"Tell me if any problems show up."

"Old man... very annoying," Yin Chen insulted, though that only put a smile on the Saintdragon Emperor's face.

"Little bug, you're our savior, you know that?"

"Shut up... no praises... keep calm... just focus."

"Haha!" Yin Chen was rather fun to mess with; only someone like Tianming could have a lifebound beast like that. "Any movements at the Divine Sun Palace?"

He didn't think Yin Chen would quiet down after he asked that. The silence could only mean that it was communicating on all fronts.

Chapter 1797 - The Skyseal Sword Sect

The Skyseal Sword Sect was the strongest of the five sects in the Land of Three Skies, ranked sixty-third in the Myriad Solar Sects, somewhat lower than the Azuresoul Palace. Tianming had the final six million cultivators sent there to counteract the Tianyi Army, which also had six million troops on the attack. Tianming's reinforcements, coupled with the eight hundred thousand elites of the Skyseal Sword Sect, ten million normal cultivators, and a grade-seven defensive formation proved to be quite promising in driving the invaders back.

The battle was quite stacked in their favor, much of it thanks to Yin Chen. The enemy's total force of thirty million had split up to deal with five different sects, and Yin Chen had a clear picture of all of it. It could constantly monitor them without drawing any attention to its bodies. Thanks to that, Tianming could send just enough reinforcements to outnumber the enemy forces with great timing and precision. While the enemy was a large, organized army, second-rate factions like the Skyseal Sword Sect were no pushovers either. They were rather organized in their own right and stood to lose their homes if they didn't fight, so they were definitely just as motivated. Not to mention, with Tianming among them, their spirits had risen to new heights. At the same time, the Fushen Clan and Frostsoul Imperium had launched attacks on the traitors while the Saintdragon Emperor held back their reinforcements.

"For our side, we'll hold the battle at a standstill as long as the enemy doesn't engage. If they do, we'll crush them." That was the conclusion Tianming had reached with the other leaders in the alliance. He stood within the defensive formation and looked at the flaming army of six million facing them, organized in neat formations with their totems manifested. It felt like the battle of the Myriaddragon Mountains all over again. The sea of flaming totems seemed about to swallow the Skyseal Sword Sect whole.

"Looks like the enemy is trying to go through with their attack regardless of the losses," the sect master of Skyseal Sword Sect, Du Wujian, said, stroking his beard. He was a rather casual person, but also swift and decisive. He also happened to be the strongest person in the Land of Three Skies. It was said that he never needed more than five sword strikes to take out his enemy, hence his name. Thanks to his fame, he had quite a bit of sway in the Land of Three Skies. He had come to the grand assembly to personally meet Tianming and discuss their plans.

During the battle of the Azurecloud Continent, Du Wujian had helped out with a small group of escorts. He had also seen Tianming's amazing show of power, fully convincing him of the white-haired youth's abilities. With Tianming beside him, he was confident in how things would turn out.

The enemy troops made their move shortly after that. Six million totemancers swarmed toward the forces of the Skyseal Sword Sect with a resounding war cry, sparking the battle. The other four factions were probably also under attack now.

Thanks to their careful plans, Tianming wasn't worried about the five factions being unable to stand up to the thirty million invaders. He drew the Grand-Orient Sword and led the six million elites and tens of millions of other fighters to start the fight. At the same time, he had Yin Chen continuously monitor the Divine Sun Palace.

At that moment, something suddenly changed. The six million troops of the Tianyi Army changed the direction they were marching in, passing the Skyseal Swordsect and giving up on the rich territories it

encompassed. They headed toward the rear of the sect, instead. Yin Chen also reported something similar at the four other factions.

"So they were faking their attack and intent on going around them?" Normally speaking, as long as the grade-seven defensive formations were present, the celestial orderian troops would be marching straight into an enemy stronghold. The deeper they went, the more dangerous it would be. That was why conquering cities along the way was important to secure a way back. If they couldn't take the Myriaddragon Mountains, they would never be able to take out the entirety of the Myriad Solar Sects. No doubt, the sun emperor must have ordered the feint during his secret conversation with Li Tianyi, displaying obvious concern toward an invisible listener.

"The only ones waiting for them behind the five factions are the thirty million troops of the Saintdragon Emperor. In other words, the sun emperor knew we'd be sending them there and played along with it?"

The troops of the Saintdragon Emperor had no defensive formation, so if they were sandwiched by sixty million troops front and back, their casualties would be massive. It would be a painful blow to the entire alliance. However, this wasn't a possibility that Tianming hadn't considered beforehand, so he'd made preparations in advance. The location that the troops had been dropped off at was as far away from the Skyseal Sword Sect as possible. The thirty million troops of the enemy would need time to regroup before they could proceed, and that would take at least four hours. That was enough time for Tianming to gather the thirty million troops of the five factions to support the Saintdragon Emperor's reinforcements, and that wouldn't take more than two hours. It made the sun emperor's tactic rather pointless.

"What do we do? Is the Saintdragon Emperor in danger?" Du Wujian asked.

"There's no need to panic for now. The Ninedragon Imperial Tomb is able to travel much faster than those armies. We can deal with this if that's all there is," Tianming said.

As long as the thirty million celestial orderian troops didn't besiege the factions, they would be safe. The rest of the troops in the north were also not marching south, so Tianming could just have the reinforcements retreat and move them to a more advantageous position in advance.

"If that's the case, when the Tianyi, Tribulator and Godblade Armies regroup at the desolate plains, all they'll be able to do will be collecting the corpses of the bluebloods and wargodeans." War was about logistics, after all.

"So far, the moves of the enemy seem smart, but they're pointless as long as we have the Ninedragon Imperial Tomb." Tianming wasn't celebrating just yet. He knew the sun emperor wouldn't make such a pointless move as this. The tension mounted more and more as he pondered his response. He couldn't afford to waste time reinforcing the Saintdragon Emperor if that wasn't the main play.

"What in the world is the sun emperor's true aim?" Yin Chen was constantly monitoring the Divine Sun Palace, and whether it moved or not would be the key deciding factor. Though, at the end of the day, either case was good. If the Divine Sun Palace remained dormant, that meant the enemy would suffer huge losses. If it didn't, however, then this trump card of the enemy would have been revealed and Tianming would be able to prevent further losses.

He continued waiting. "Yin Chen!"

"Still monitoring."

He asked it constantly at almost every breath so that there would be no delay.

"Yin Chen!"

This time, it didn't respond. The silver egg in his hand seemed to fall silent before it suddenly shrieked, "It's moving! Shining eyes... two eyes! Already flying! Divine Sun... Palace is... already activated!" The same notification was shared with the Saintdragon Emperor, Long Wanying, Fushen Gonyi, and the Frost Empress.

"He had a backup core after all!" Tianming abandoned the notion of an easy victory, though there was no fear. This was something they had anticipated, along with its consequences. The Divine Sun Palace was a war machine that not even a hundred million elite troops could compare with. Its activation meant that the Myriad Solar Sects would once more live under the shadow of terror cast by the celestial orderians. No doubt the golden-haired man at the north pole of the sun was maniacally laughing as his palace whirred to life, venting the pent-up frustrations from the battles of the Myriaddragon Mountains and Azurecloud Continent.

The entire northern hemisphere of the sun shook from the shockwaves. Thankfully, Tianming had considered this scenario and had talked with the five factions in advance about retreating. With Yin Chen, he would have constant updates about the movements of the Divine Sun Palace. Had they resorted to using spies among the celestial orderians, the transmission stones would be even slower to travel than the Divine Sun Palace.

"In other words, the sun emperor pressed the attack because the Divine Sun Palace was usable. Without Yin Chen, we wouldn't be able to get an advance warning about it and I would've sent thirty million troops to help the Saintdragon Emperor. Then the Divine Sun Palace would show up mid fight and there'd be no hope of retreating at all. When the Tianyi, Godblade, and Tribulator Armies caught up, the troops we sent there would be entirely wiped out. Even the Fushen Clan and Frostsoul Imperium would be too late to retreat when the enemy troops went for them!"

If that was really the case, that showed how ruthless the sun emperor was in wanting to eliminate him and the sixty million troops to utterly crush the hope of the alliance. Perhaps the Ninedragon Imperial Tomb would even be destroyed as well. Without Yin Chen and the Ninedragon Imperial Tomb, the Myriad Solar Sects would have no way to resist at all. The sun emperor was also ruthless toward the wargodeans and bluebloods.

"If we didn't know about the Divine Sun Palace's activation, we would've sent thirty million troops to counteract the thirty million celestial orderians that were sent to attack the troops of the Saintdragon Emperor. I would definitely have joined up with him first, and we would've wreaked havoc on the wargodeans and bluebloods. By the time the celestial orderians regrouped, they'd have been sure to suffer debilitating losses. We wouldn't be able to let them escape, either.

"Wargod Valley and Oceanheart City are already under siege. They're only helping the sun emperor hold our troops back as cannon fodder!"

Chapter 1798 - The Divine Sun Palace's Activation

There wasn't a problem with the loyalty of the bluebloods and wargodeans at all, nor was it that the sun emperor thought they were beneath him. Instead, it was a simple process of elimination. If someone had to be sacrificed for his victory, why not sacrifice outsiders first? To serve someone, one had to first prepare to be betrayed.

Tianming believed that the Warlord and Deluge Emperor would never expect that the sun emperor had plotted against them before they'd even managed to contribute. The celestial orderians had never needed them that much, apart from their lives and homes. Even the bluebloods, a distant branch of the celestial orderians, were considered nothing more than a sacrifice for the greater goal. The logic was clear to see. The sun emperor had never cared much about losses as long as his goal of wiping out the Myriad Solar Sects would be achieved, even those of the celestial orderians who had perished fighting the third- and fourth-rate sects. Perhaps he had never even cared for his celestial orderian troops either and was fully prepared to lose them all.

"Sacrificing the bluebloods and the wargodeans to conquer the Myriad Solar Sects is a rather savvy move to make, though I bet the sun emperor didn't consider the fact that we could be notified of the Divine Sun Palace's activation at any time! We even have time to retreat."

If it weren't for the backup core, the five sects would only have started packing up their goods and the evacuation would take even longer. However, everything had already been in place thanks to their preparations. They could leave at a moment's notice.

Tianming finally felt the terror of the sun emperor. The entire thing only took up a few breaths of time. He opened up all the entrances of the Ninedragon Imperial Tomb and hovered above the Skyseal Sword Sect. Then he said to Du Wujian, "I hereby order you to evacuate everyone in your sect and your crucial belongings as fast as possible."

"Why?" Du Wujian seemed quite shaken. He was Tianming's ardent follower and respected him quite a bit, but abandoning his home to retreat was still shocking to consider.

"The Divine Sun Palace has a backup core. It's been reactivated and is on the way here." There was no way a grade-seven defense formation could hold up against the Divine Sun Palace.

Du Wujian's expression immediately changed. Being a native Orderian, he knew better than Tianming how terrifying the Divine Sun Palace was. It was a looming nightmare for all the factions. Being able to retreat at all was a luxury few were afforded. "I'll get to it immediately!"

He swiftly organized a retreat. Tianming also made similar preparations with the other four sects, and Long Wanying spread the news at the Myriaddragon Mountains.

"Yin Chen, where's the Divine Sun Palace now?" Yin Chen's bodies had gathered along the potential paths of the palace in advance. It wouldn't be too hard to track the movement of such a large structure. Only Yin Chen would be able to keep track of its speed, however.

"It's a... tenth of... the way... there there."

Tianming made a rough estimate. "It'll be here in two and a half hours, then." His nervousness abated somewhat. While the Divine Sun Palace was fast, the advance preparations had still afforded them enough time to retreat. Du Wujian had his people take everything crucial into their spatial rings before

sending them off to the Ninedragon Imperial Tomb. During the competition at the Voidsky Flame Pillar, countless youths had fought within the Ninedragon Imperial Tomb. From that, it was clear to see how large the divine astralship truly was. If it weren't for the saplings that took up considerable space, it could fit around two or three hundred million people. Even now, it could fit the sixty million folk from the five factions as well as the sixty million troops Tianming had brought with him. They were running for their lives, anyway, so nobody would complain about it being slightly cramped.

"Squeeze in a bit more." They were only boarding the first faction, so there was more space. When the retreat started, Tianming had also issued orders to the Frost Empress and Fushen Gongyi. "Immediately retreat into your defensive formations!"

The main goal in the event of the Divine Sun Palace's reactivation was minimizing losses; it would be insane to want more than that. Thankfully, the five sects had packed up in advance, just in case. The Skyseal Sword Sect even managed to bring away their whole hoard of divine herbs as well. The mere fact of how quickly they retreated was a clear sign of fear and respect for the might of the sun emperor. When the boarding was complete, Tianming shut the entrances without hesitation.

"We're departing!" The Ninedragon Imperial Tomb rose into the sky and shot toward the second sect.

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Near the southern plains of the Land of Three Skies, the Warlord received a golden transmission stone that projected the visage of the sun emperor. "The two of you, it's been more than two years, but the Divine Sun Palace has reactivated. It is time to counterattack. Your task is to wipe out the troops before you and hold back the Ninedragon Imperial Tomb that's soon to come. I'll come to you with the Divine Sun Palace. Another thirty million celestial orderian troops are also on the way. If we can take down these six million enemies, as well as Li Tianming and his divine astralship, the Myriad Solar Sects will fall for good. The two of you will have rendered great service, and I'll grant you double the rewards I promised."

The Warlord and Deluge Emperor's eyes burned bright. It was the Divine Sun Palace! Only now did they know that it was the trump card the sun emperor had been holding back. It was almost like an object of faith to them. They had been rather crestfallen when the Solar Wheel had been stolen, which greatly diminished the advantage the celestial orderians had and had caused them to enter a stalemate. But its return immediately caused the troops' morale to rise. Even the bluebloods and wargodeans saw victory on the horizon.

"Wargodeans, fight!"

"Bluebloods, give it your all!"

The leaders of the two groups were filled with fighting spirit, but they failed to account for one fact: the Divine Sun Palace was on its way, but the question was when. No doubt it would take some time, but they didn't know how long. While they didn't expect it to take too much time, it was easy to forget how much time had passed during battle. Who would be left to celebrate the victory once they were wiped out? The celestial orderians that arrived late? The two traitors were nothing but bait for Tianming and the sixty million troops of the alliance. If they took the time to fight it out there, they would find themselves hard-pressed to leave, especially the thirty million troops facing the Saintdragon Emperor.

The sun emperor's troops would be able to wipe out the survivors. Everything, even the reactions of the traitors, had been within Tianming and the Saintdragon Emperor's expectations. They were still some ways away.

"No need to fight to the death. Just get into defensive formations and wait for the Ninedragon Imperial Tomb to arrive," the Saintdragon Emperor said. What he truly feared was the Divine Sun Palace, not the rabble in front of him.

"Yes!"

They got into proper formations, but even so, this battle wasn't one they could avoid.

"We'll fight defensively and wait for the Ninedragon Imperial Tomb!" The Saintdragon Emperor didn't announce the reactivation of the Divine Sun Palace to the other troops, however. All they knew was that the Tianyi, Tribulator, and Godblade Armies were on their way to launch a pincer attack on them and that Tianming was coming with reinforcements to bail them out. He would arrive earlier than the enemy troops, and that would be the time for them to counterattack. While announcing the incoming Divine Sun Palace would cause some to be nervous, he wasn't worried if the enemy announced it either; not that they would. The only ones who knew about it were the Deluge Emperor and Warlord, and they wouldn't dare to make that announcement. If they did, there would be no way the Ninedragon Army would stay behind and wait until more enemy reinforcements came, and the ambush would fail. As such, the troops of both sides fought without knowing of the incoming Divine Sun Palace.

"The enemy's stalling for time!"

"No worries, we will too. Let's take it easy," the Deluge Emperor said.

"Understood!"

The mindset of stalling for time on both sides meant that they were careful not to sustain heavy losses. The Saintdragon Emperor was waiting for the Ninedragon Imperial Tomb, while the Deluge Emperor and Warlord waited for the Divine Sun Palace. However, the former had to first evacuate the five factions before they could come so as to suffer minimal losses.

"Tianming was right. We would've been eliminated now that the sun emperor used the Divine Sun Palace, yet knowing in advance has allowed us to be spared the losses. It's already a great win for us." It was thanks to both luck and cooperation.

Unsurprisingly, the Ninedragon Imperial Tomb arrived first. Tianming steered it straight through the enemy troops. "Out of the way!" The impenetrable ship was like the prime wonder, but tens of thousands of times heavier. It was a harmless transport ship, unlike the Divine Sun Palace, but its mass alone could wreak incredible havoc on masses of people. The ship left a long trail in its wake, having splattered countless bluebloods, wargodeans, and lifebound beasts alike.

Chapter 1799 - One Hour

It took quite some time to accelerate the Ninedragon Imperial Tomb to its top speed, so ramming attacks could only be used once. Yet it alone had caused more than three hundred thousand deaths and a million injuries!

"Stop it!"

Blood and meat chunks splattered all over the place. Many brave wargodeans charged in with their lifebound beasts, intent on stopping the ship, yet the ship's mere turning motion allowed it to tear apart the enemies ahead of its sharp front. While Tianming was reveling in the carnage, the passengers felt sick from the sudden turn, so he brought it to a halt.

"Wow, I didn't think my piloting skills were that good!" He had parked the ship in the middle of the two armies and cut off the armies from each other.

Angry troops were about to charge at it, but the Deluge Emperor ordered, "Don't move! Let the ones inside come out first!" The more troops left the ship, the harder it would be for them to escape when the Divine Sun Palace arrived. What the sun emperor wanted them to do was to hold as many enemies back as possible.

"Yes!"

As they had expected, the Ninedragon Imperial Tomb's nine entrances opened. They also felt a shocking pressure from the troops packed within. No doubt, Tianming would use them to fight the bluebloods and wargodeans, since he supposedly didn't know better. That made the Deluge Emperor and Warlord short of breath. They looked each other in the eye, resolved to pay the heavy price. Tianming knew from their gazes alone what they had just realized: how much longer would it take the Divine Sun Palace to arrive now that the Ninedragon Imperial Tomb was here? The golden transmission stones they had were just sub bodies, so they couldn't initiate communication with the sun emperor and could only wait.

"Defend as best as we can! Hold the enemy back. They won't leave before they wipe us out! The longer we hold, the more we'll be rewarded!" The Deluge Emperor felt a little weird saying that.

"Do you feel the same?" the Warlord asked, his voice chilling.

"Somewhat. We don't know how much longer it'll take. Let's hope it isn't too long."

"Yeah, otherwise we'd have been nothing but cannon fodder," the Warlord said, his brows furrowing. They were already deprived of choice, all they could do was hope for the best.

"Defend!" They changed their mindset and huddled together, expecting the sixty million enemy troops to swarm them. All the traitors felt their heart rates increasing. Yet something even weirder took place. After the doors of the ship opened, nobody came out. Instead, the thirty million troops outside erected defenses. They had tier-two solarians stand at the outermost circle with their lifebound beasts, forming a defensive perimeter. The remaining troops quickly retreated into the Ninedragon Imperial Tomb. Though there were those that also left the ship, the number of people entering it was far higher. Only the strongest solarians exited the ship for defense, among whom were Tianming and the Saintdragon Emperor.

"Why're they retreating? There's only two hours left before Li Tianyi's reinforcements arrive. The enemy has twice our number and they're unaware of the incoming Divine Sun Palace," the Deluge Emperor said, puzzled.

"Did they learn about it somehow?" the Warlord asked.

"Impossible. The speed of the Divine Sun Palace is faster than any transmission stone. The sun emperor wouldn't miss out on this chance to crush them in one go."

"If they really retreat, then the sun emperor would've revealed his trump card without any benefit...." If they failed to hold the enemy troops back, they would be blamed for ruining the plans.

"No, we have to stop them!" the Warlord said.

"Yeah!" They immediately informed their troops to prepare for an all-out attack.

"Allow me to enlighten you!" Tianming suddenly appeared near the two traitorous leaders with his hands behind his back, casually speaking without an ounce of fear. His divine intent seemed to be of a higher caliber than theirs, too, like he was someone of their age.

"What're you trying to say?" the Warlord asked.

"The Divine Sun Palace will take another hour to arrive, which is time enough for me to take out ten or twenty million of your troops. However, that'll also cost me my opportunity to retreat, so I'm not interested in that. Think about it, you two—it's one whole hour. Even if the celestial orderians win, how many of you will survive?" Tianming asked.

The Deluge Emperor and Warlord fell silent. They didn't think Tianming would really know about the Divine Sun Palace.

"An hour? So the Divine Sun Palace comes at your beck and call now?" the Deluge Emperor said, smirking.

"You're trying to stall for time by speaking nonsense. How childish," the Warlord said.

"You can work it out yourself whether an hour is accurate. You'll be dead either way. Thankfully, I don't wish to fight you today, or it'd be over for you," Tianming said with a chuckle. "Last warning: if you stall us, you'd better be ready to be wiped out." He turned away and left.

"You think we'll let you leave?!" The Deluge Emperor turned into a blue shade.

All of a sudden, Tianming turned back and struck with his decapath era godswords. Though his Omnisentient Threads mostly stemmed from the Myriadragon Mountains, he could use them here, too. His totems were supercharged ten times over and shot out to impede the Deluge Emperor's path, sending him flying back. The sheer intensity of the strike was shocking to behold for both sides. The wargodeans and bluebloods immediately began wondering whether the rumors they had heard about were true. Tianming, a cultivator in his twenties, had actually sent a sect master like the Deluge Emperor flying back!

"Kill him!" the Warlord and Deluge Emperor cried, though it was clear to see that the morale of the troops had dropped. The troops on Tianming's side continued defending. The strong gathered near the outer perimeter, allowing the weaker troops to board the ship. The Ninedragon Army's discipline was on full display yet again. It didn't take too much time for thirty million to board thanks to the large entrances, allowing the retreat to swiftly take place.

Some combat took place near the outer perimeter, but it wasn't on a large scale. The traitorous side didn't seem too resolute in fighting. They were turncoats, after all, so they wouldn't fight with their lives

on the line. All they did was put on a show. Then the news of attacks on their homes finally reached them, further demotivating them. Even after the Deluge Emperor and Warlord told them about the impending arrival of the Divine Sun Palace, it didn't change anything.

Thanks to the Ninedragon Imperial Tomb, the troops on Tianming's side had a firm foundation for their defense to build upon. Coupled with Tianming's rampage, the Ninedragon Army was really putting up a good showing. The difference in the two sides' morale put their abilities in wholly different leagues. Only those who were at risk of dying in the first place would fight with their lives.

Eventually, the sixty million troops and the five sects of the Land of Three Skies were fully aboard the Ninedragon Imperial Tomb. They would be retreating behind the Aeonidragon Formation right away. The Divine Sun Palace was only half an hour away, so if they didn't leave soon enough to not be pursued on the way back, things would turn out horribly for them.

"Retreat!" With a loud burst, the divine astralship soared into the sky, leaving behind clouds of dust. The wargodeans and bluebloods haggardly stood there as they watched them leave. The normal troops didn't even know what happened and were completely oblivious to how heart-wracking all of this was to Tianming.

The Divine Sun Palace's activation was a fierce move on the part of the sun emperor that was basically a declaration of his comeback. But thanks to Yin Chen and the others who helped in the planning, they were adequately prepared, which greatly reduced their losses and helped them avoid total elimination. The only loss was the territories of those second-rate sects, but that was far better than the total elimination of the Myriad Solar Sects.

"We were almost taken out by the sun emperor in one fell swoop!" Many people felt rather perturbed when they learned the truth during the voyage.

"While we managed to avoid disaster this time, the return of the Divine Sun Palace is a problem that'll continue to haunt us. If we don't deal with it, we're done for all the same."

The celebratory mood after escaping total elimination didn't last long at all.

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"Just in time, one hour." The Deluge Emperor and Warlord had been counting the time. They looked ahead and saw the Divine Sun Palace approaching them like a miniature star, setting the ground and sky around it on fire. They didn't feel any agitation at all, only endless dread. If Tianming hadn't left, all thirty million of them might have fought to the death, leaving only the celestial orderian troops that came later to claim victory while trampling over their corpses.

Chapter 1800 - Pointless Effort

The golden hair on the gigantic head fluttered in the wind, each strand looking like a flaming dragon as it emanated waves of heat. The head's eyes were two miniature nova sources, burning so strongly that even the rocks nearby caught fire. The commotion of the Divine Sun Palace could be heard from afar. It seemed to project a field of absolute savagery around it, making every celestial orderian, blueblood, and wargodean near it feel a dry thirst as their hearts beat faster and faster. It felt like countless mountains were bearing down on them from above, and that included the Deluge Emperor and Warlord. Even the

two strongest elites from those factions felt like they were being cooked by the Divine Sun Palace. Even though they had been mentally prepared for its arrival, they were still completely overwhelmed.

"Just looking at the Divine Sun Palace instills an instinctual fear even in us, let alone its prey," the Deluge Emperor said, his voice hoarse. The dread in his eyes gradually cleared up and gave way to savage passion. As one of the exiled celestial orderians, his purpose was to bring the bluebloods closer to the celestial orderians until they truly returned to their embrace, much like the soul tribulators and godbladers. The Deluge Emperor finally had a chance to do just that.

"The Ninedragon Imperial Tomb is huge, but it's only a beast of burden compared to the Divine Sun Palace, which is an outright apex predator," the Warlord said, his eyes shining bright. While beasts of burden could charge and ram, they didn't have the claws needed for the hunt. Even so, the two of them were quite nervous, as they had failed to complete their task. No doubt, the sun emperor had witnessed all that had happened.

"The sun emperor wanted to take care of the Myriad Solar Sects in one go...." And they ruined it! However, what really perturbed them was Tianming's one-hour prediction.

The gigantic head descended and slammed into the ground, causing fractures to form. Terrifying heat wafted over everyone present as the ground turned into a sea of golden flames. While the wargodeans were still fine, the bluebloods couldn't really stand the fire despite being totemancers. The thirty million troops felt like their hearts were being burned away. Even though they knew they were being used as cannon fodder, they were still fearfully respectful of the sun emperor. They all looked as the man descended!

The golden head opened its mouth, revealing endless flames within, out of which a man with flaming golden hair stepped. Each step he took caused the ground to quake. After two whole years, they had finally seen Sun Emperor Wudi once more! His aura was quite different from those of Sovereign Starfeather and Sovereign Brightscorch. He seemed far more feral and savage, and his pure domineering aura tended to make people kneel and look down. It was a little similar to the air the Warlord and wargodeans gave off, but it was clear which side was superior. Despite the Warlord's huge physique, he seemed like a mere servant of the sun emperor.

"All hail the sun emperor! May Your Majesty's mighty conquest sweep the lands unabated!" The Warlord and Deluge Emperor knelt alongside their subordinates, greeting the sun emperor in unison.

The next instant, the sun emperor came to the Warlord and Deluge Emperor. His flaming eyes made him look like an ancient divinity. With a resonant, booming voice, he asked, "Where's my prey, gentlemen?" The question was filled with a hint of discontent. He had held back his tricks until the last moment and rushed all the way there. He hadn't come to see those two at all! Yet they were all that remained, while Tianming and his sixty million troops were nowhere to be seen. That made his previous preparation and patient waiting quite awkward.

"Your Majesty, after you notified us about the plan, we did our best to stop them. Li Tianming soon arrived with the Ninedragon Imperial Tomb and obtained numerical superiority over us, yet they didn't engage us in combat. Instead, he took the thirty million troops with him even though we did our best to prevent it. We were unable to stop them from boarding their divine astralship, as they had far too many people," the Warlord said.

"The reason he was so careful is because he'd learned of the Divine Sun Palace beforehand. The troops of the Fushen Clan and Frostsoul Imperium also mounted a retreat, even though the Divine Sun Palace can catch up to even the fastest transmission stones. We believe that Li Tianming might have a way of initiating instant communication, as well. He probably received word of the Divine Sun Palace's departure the moment it happened and reacted," the Deluge Emperor added. He had considered the possibilities for a long time and finally came to the only reasonable explanation.

The main problem was that Tianming had known about the Divine Sun Palace's activation in time for a retreat to be mounted. The sun emperor fell silent at those words. It was a heavy silence that the Deluge Emperor and Warlord found rather hard to bear. They knew that the sun emperor seldom fell silent like this. The last time it happened was the battle of the Myriadragon Mountains; he hadn't even fallen silent after the battle of the Azurecloud Continent. The only explanation was that a brat like Tianming had managed to give him real trouble.

"Hehehe, that's interesting. I wanted to wipe out the Myriad Solar Sects in one go with the Divine Sun Palace, yet it was all for naught. Is this a joke?" He broke out in a cheerful laugh, yet those around him didn't dare to join in. They knew that this situation was displeasing for the sun emperor, to say the least—embarrassing, in fact. He was just trying not to express those feelings.

"Your Majesty, please rest assured. With the Divine Sun Palace, the Myriad Solar Sects are already in shambles and are no longer something to fear," the Deluge Emperor said in a congratulatory tone.

The sun emperor didn't respond positively or negatively to that. Instead, he looked beyond the Deluge Emperor and the Warlord toward the south. "It probably isn't instant communication. Based on what happened, I believe the brat has eyes that can see anything and ears that hear everything everywhere, including this conversation we're having now."

"How could that be possible?!" The two were completely stumped and terrified. That wasn't something even gods were capable of.

However, the sun emperor didn't seem intent on digging deeper. If there were no more secrets to be kept, planning for a strategy in battle was a pointless effort. He had come up with elaborate plans like this twice, once with the Veildragon Palace and the other with the Divine Sun Palace, yet they had both been laughably useless. He didn't want to play the game by Tianming's rules anymore.