

The Ages 681

Chapter 681 - Hexapath Swordfiend, Feng Qingyu

“Kill Li Tianming now?” Lin Xiaoxiao was dumbfounded. The demand was too sudden, and she wasn’t prepared for it.

“Are you mad? I’m not even in the Samsara stage, and Tianming has already killed a Heaven Branch disciple in the second death phase of the Samsara stage. How can I possibly kill him?” Lin Xiaoxiao asked.

“There’s tons of ways to kill someone!”

“Don’t even think about it. Tianming has the protection of the Tribulation Artifact Hall’s palace lord. Crushing you would be easy for them, just take Xuanyuan Yuheng’s fate, for example,” said Lin Xiaoxiao.

“You seem to be taking joy in others’ misfortune, Lin Xiaoxiao.” The Archaionfiend looked at her coldly.

“You’re overthinking it. I’m merely telling the truth—killing him won’t be easy,” replied Lin Xiaoxiao.

“Did you forget our agreement? Do you remember what will happen to ‘them’ if I don’t take my eye back? You want to pull yourself out of our agreement? You must be dreaming!”

“Then what do you suggest?”

“First, work harder in your cultivation. I’ll speed up the rate of your Heavenly Will fusion to get you in the Samsara stage and catch up to him. Second, you need to find a way to borrow Archfiend. You can’t let him know that I’m an Archaionfiend, and you have a chance as long as he doesn’t know my identity. If the Archfiend took my eye, I can just fuse with it when we get our hands on it.” The Archaionfiend sounded impatient.

“Work harder in my cultivation? I can barely take the current speed. Are you trying to kill me?”

“It doesn’t matter. I won’t have a future without the eye. Do you think I’ll be bothered by your death? You have no choice, whether you like it or not. Don’t think he will fall for you. Wake up your mind. He’s the one who killed your family, you cheapskate!” the Archaionfiend sneered.

“You want to brainwash me too?” Lin Xiaoxiao replied indifferently.

“You’re my beastmaster, so there’s no way I can brainwash you. But I’ve lived for millions of years, and you can’t imagine what I’ve seen and experienced. My ability isn’t something you can imagine. The eye is extremely important to me, and I’ll lose everything without it. I won’t be able to return to my pinnacle. If I’m at a dead end, I can bury this entire continent with you.” The Archaionfiend looked down on Lin Xiaoxiao from above.

“Wow, how impressive. Then why do you still need my help?” Lin Xiaoxiao laughed.

“You!”

“I’m not afraid of you because of how long you’ve lived, so you don’t have to try and scare me with it. I’ll try my best based on our agreement.” Lin Xiaoxiao took a deep breath then continued in a calm voice, “Wu You, I’m still a good person right now because I still have feelings for ‘them.’ But if you take it too far and make me give up on them, what are you going to threaten me with? You’re just a lifebound beast!”

.....

When Tianming left the Fiend Palace the next day, Archfiend had another tribulation pattern with dozens of saintly heavenly patterns. He couldn’t continue his task right then, though, since disciples would come at daybreak. He headed to the Old Deepstar Path, toward the Deepstar Pool.

I now have the Radix World Physique after Xian Xian hatched. Let’s give it a try and see if I can fuse with wood astralsources. When he came to the Deepstar Pool’s entrance, he saw a slender woman dressed in white. She turned around and smiled at him.

“How are your injuries? Why are you here so soon?” Tianming asked.

“I feel much better now,” said Xuanyuan Muxue.

“It’ll be better when you’ve recovered fully,” replied Tianming.

“No need. I have to work even harder since I’m incomparable to before,” said Xuanyuan Muxue.

“Sure. As long as you’re happy.”

She suffered an irreversible loss when the oceansoul fatedragon died. That meant she needed to work even harder to catch up with Tianming’s current pace. He didn’t say anything about it, since there was no way he could make it up to her right now.

“What was with the huge commotion in the Heaven Divine Hall yesterday?” Tianming asked. They were early, and the Deepstar Formation still wasn’t open. So Tianming might as well ask about it.

“The entire sect already knows about it. You still haven’t heard?” Xuanyuan Muxue replied.

“What is it?”

“The Hexapath Sword Sect caused troubles.”

“What’d they do?”

“Nothing much. They tried showing off their strength the moment they came.” Xuanyuan Muxue’s tone was calm, but Tianming could sense her rage.

“What exactly happened?” Tianming asked.

“Nothing much. Their Sect Master, Feng Qingyu, used sparring to fight with the Sect Master of the Human Branch, Jian Wuyi. He defeated Jian Wuyi and embarrassed us,” replied Xuanyuan Muxue.

“Feng Qingyu? Is he strong?” Tianming asked.

“You don’t know him?”

“Who is he?”

“The Hexapath Sword Sect only has one sect master. He possesses absolute authority, and no one can control him. He’s a rare genius who relied on his own ability to bring the Hexapath Sword Sect to rank in the middle among the divine realms. He’s called the Hexapath Swordfiend. My mother says that his strength can be ranked among the top three in the Flameyellow continent, and he has a chance to become a god in the future,” explained Xuanyuan Muxue.

“The Hexapath Swordfiend, Feng Qingyu?” Tianming was briefly stunned. He never expected the Hexapath Sword Sect to have such a powerful figure.

“Yeah. He’s known for his infatuation with swords, and he’s only been practicing his sword since two hundred years ago. He has no friends or family, so he devoted his entire life to cultivation. He might be the sect master, but he doesn’t care about their affairs except for major decisions. It’s rare for someone like him to lead the Hexapath Sword Sect’s disciples over instead of going into seclusion. Do you know what that means?” Xuanyuan Muxue’s tone was filled with concern.

“He’s naturally trying something big. At the very least, he’s here to intimidate us,” replied Tianming.

Ranked in the top three in the continent? That was truly terrifying. Now that someone like him had placed his attention on Feiling, it made the Heaven Branch’s disciples even more disheartened.

“He looked for the Human Branch’s Sect Master to battle the instant he came, challenging the Draconis House of Jian’s house king as a representative from the Tai’e House of Jian. His intention is clear. It’s rumored that he has always been a straightforward person. There’s no doubt that the Hexapath Sword Sect wants to kill Her Eminence. After all, their Hexapath Sword Insight Rock is still in Xuanyuan Lake. The Hexapath Swordfiend even dreams of obtaining it,” said Xuanyuan Muxue.

“What? Then can anyone in the sect hold him back?” Tianming guessed that Feng Qingyu was probably here for the Hexapath Samsara Sword.

“I doubt it. Maybe the Heaven Branch’s Sect Master. He has a decent reputation in the Flameyellow continent. On the other hand, our house king is lacking in comparison,” said Xuanyuan Muxue.

“Understood.”

“Furthermore, the Hexapath Swordfiend has a divine artifact left behind by the Hexapath Sword God, the Hexafirmament Eradicator. It’s a powerful weapon that not even a tribulation artifact can be compared to,” added Xuanyuan Muxue.

“Divine artifact?” The Grand-Orient Sword and Prime Tower were also called divine artifacts in the past, but that was back in the Grand-Orient Realm. Tianming wondered how the sword left behind by the Primordial God-Emperor would compare to the Hexafirmament Eradicator.

“It looks like the other divine realms will be arriving soon. The Hexapath Swordfiend already intimidated the sect, and it’ll only grow increasingly difficult in the future. But fortunately, there’s a limit to the masters from each divine realm. They won’t do anything at the Number One Summit. After all, this is our territory, and our elders aren’t pushovers.” Xuanyuan Muxue lowered her head.

“So we just have to hold our ground against the eight divine realms?” Tianming narrowed his eyes.

"I guess. But there's a possibility that everyone might target us, and we won't have any allies. If that's the case, our disciples will be in a tougher situation than the elders," Xuanyuan Muxue said.

Although they heard that the sect had a decent relationship with several divine realms, no one was sure if it was reliable. So the Number One Summit would also serve to probe the other divine realms' intentions. After all, it wouldn't be good news for anyone if Feiling returned to godhood.

The threat of a god was too significant, and no one wanted to put their faith in promises. But they were afraid that Feiling wouldn't die. After all, no one in the continent is capable of bearing the rage of a god.

"Muxue, I heard that there's rewards in the Number One Summit?" Tianming asked.

"Yeah. That's one of the highlights. Otherwise, why would people fight if the reward is just the title of Number One?" Xuanyuan Muxue replied.

"What are they?" Tianming asked.

"The rewards can be spirit ores, secret realms, or even territory. The Number One Summit was also used to resolve disputes between the divine realms by having their disciples fight on their behalf. It was an agreement between the divine realms. If a disciple obtains the title of Number One, he or she will be able to resolve the disputes among the nine divine realms.

"For example, if you receive the title of Number One, it means the treasures the nine divine realms have been fighting for over the past decades belong to you. Second place doesn't get any rewards. There's only one winner, and the winner takes all," said Xuanyuan Muxue.

Chapter 682 - Kilostar Domain, Supreme Tribulation Manna

"There's only one winner, and the winner takes all?" Tianming felt that arrangement would make the entire event even more exciting. There was only one reward, and everyone would be fighting over it.

"Yeah. For example, the last Number One summit was hosted by Nonahall Ghost Sect. Back then, the nine divine realms were fighting over an ancient battlefield. There were many tribulation artifacts in it, and the realms fought over it for a long time. Many people died. In the end, they decided to put it as the reward for the Number One Summit. In the end, a disciple from the host, Nonahall Ghost Sect, obtained the title of 'Number One.' So their sect benefited from the entire ancient battlefield," said Xuanyuan Muxue.

"Wow. So what's the reward this time?"

"It should be more intense than it was last time. After all, this 'reward' is related to us, and it's not a battlefield," replied Xuanyuan Muxue.

"So, what is it?"

"Roughly eight years ago, there was a phenomenon in the starry sky that attracted the masters from the nine divine realms. They soared into the sky and climbed to the highest altitude that cultivators in the Samsara stage could reach. There, they discovered a place called the Kilostar Domain. The Kilostar

Domain is the lowest secret domain in the starry sky. I heard there were five supreme tribulation manna there, and the masters from all nine divine realms fought for them.

“Opening the Kilostar Domain’s gate was exhausting, and it requires at least half an hour without any disruptions. So anyone who tries to step in will be knocked down by others. The Kilostar Domain has been in dispute over the years, and they decided to put the five supreme tribulation manna as the reward this time,” said Xuanyuan Muxue.

“Supreme tribulation manna?” Tianming verified.

“That’s right. They’re ninth-grade tribulation manna. Each of them can allow a lifebound beast to possess nine hundred stars and reach the Flameyellow continent’s pinnacle. I heard that a tribulation beast with a thousand stars is equivalent to a god’s divine beast. Ninth-grade tribulation manna is also the best you can find out there.

“The five tribulation manna are of the metal, wood, water, fire, and earth elements, respectively. It’s rare to find all of them together, and the divine realms all wanted a piece of them. So that means the sect of the disciple who obtains the title of Number One this time will have the Kilostar Domain all to themselves,” replied Xuanyuan Muxue.

“Metal, wood, water, fire, and earth?” Tianming had most of those elements, so he could use them.

“Yeah, it’s indeed rare. Just think about it—who wouldn’t go crazy if they can receive resources meant for house kings as a disciple?”

“Didn’t you say that the reward goes to the sect instead of the individual?” Tianming asked.

“Yeah, that’s right. I’m not sure about the other divine realms. To encourage our disciples, the Tribulation Peak said the reward would go to the individual who takes the Number One title. The disciple can also swap it with the sect if the elements aren’t compatible,” explained Xuanyuan Muxue.

“Got it.”

The reward wasn’t complicated. All he had to do was to defeat everyone and obtain the title. Although he still had to visit the Kilostar Domain to retrieve the tribulation manna, it shouldn’t be a problem based on the Number One Summit’s rules.

“Muxue, how will the ultimate winner be determined?”

Tianming was making his final preparations, but he had no idea what to expect for the future. But since the Deepstar Pool still hadn’t opened yet, he could make full use of this opportunity to ask her questions.

“Our sect has about two hundred participants, while the other realms range from one to four hundred. That means there’s a total of sixteen hundred participants fighting for the title. The first round will be an elimination round in the Skyorigin Battlefield. Your opponents will be randomized, and there will only be four hundred disciples left after two rounds of elimination. Those four hundred disciples will receive the qualifications to enter the Nether Battlefield.

“The Nether Battlefield has nine levels in total. The nine divine realms’ disciples will be placed in the first level to fight. After the elimination round, I’m guessing that our Archaion Sect will have barely a hundred

disciples remaining, or even fewer. The other eight realms should have about three hundred or so remaining. If they're ruthless enough, we might lose all of our Heaven Branch disciples. Then again, that's the worst case scenario. The nine divine realms all have their own thoughts, and it's impossible for them to be unified," explained Xuanyuan Muxue in a trembling voice.

She felt that the Number One Summit was too dangerous, but no one wanted to give up as a member of the Archaic House of Xuanyuan. After all, they were the host of the event.

"What comes after the Nether Battlefield?"

"Thirty-two people will emerge and go into the final battle. The final battle will be simple—an elimination duel. Only the final victor will be the winner. The rules might be simple, but the disciples who make it to the finals are all powerful, and the grudges between the divine realms will also ignite. The last one standing will have his fame spread throughout the continent and win glory for the sect," sighed Xuanyuan Muxue.

"The rules aren't complicated, but it won't be easy to be the last man standing," commented Tianming.

"That's right. Furthermore, there are many different environments and spirit hazards in the Nether Battlefield, not to mention that it also emphasizes teamwork. It's a team fight between the strongest disciples of the divine realms. That also tests the disciples' leadership ability," said Xuanyuan Muxue.

The Skyorigin Battlefield, Nether Battlefield, and the Ultimate Battle. It was rounds of elimination until the last man standing.

"The Skyorigin Battlefield will open the day after tomorrow according to the schedule. But I heard that the other divine realms are putting airs and coming late, so it might be delayed. But I don't think it'll be too much longer. Honestly speaking, we'll be able to tell the divine realms' attitudes from the first round."

"Using the lives of Heaven Branch disciples to test the other divine realms' attitude towards us.... Why do I feel like Fang Taiqing is using us as cannon fodder?" Tianming snickered. After all, Xuanyuan Muxue said that Fang Taiqing was the one who had made the final decision.

"It doesn't matter. We're all willing to do it if we can differentiate our enemies from allies for Her Eminent," replied Xuanyuan Muxue.

"Why do I feel like you're not optimistic about the summit?" Tianming asked.

"I dreamed of our two hundred disciples all dying last night," said Xuanyuan Muxue.

"What about me?"

"You died the worst death. You were ripped into pieces. I even dreamed of them kidnapping the goddess and executing her in public. The divine realms only let us off after that as they left." Xuanyuan Muxue's face was pale with her eyes turning red.

"Don't overthink it." Tianming knocked Xuanyuan Muxue on the head.

"Don't die," said Xuanyuan Muxue.

"I won't. After all, I still haven't compensated you. How about this? I'll give you one of the five supreme tribulation manna if I manage to get them," suggested Tianming.

"Okay. That's a promise then," said Xuanyuan Muxue seriously.

"Can't you be a little more courteous about it?" Tianming smiled.

"Why should I be courteous when you have no hope of being the last man standing?" Xuanyuan Muxue asked.

"You're not afraid that you'll embarrass yourself by losing after speaking with such confidence?"

"I'm looking forward to being embarrassed. But can you even do it in the first place?"

"I'll give it a try."

"Do your best then, Li Tianming. You trash," smiled Xuanyuan Muxue.

"Don't look down on a lad while he's still young. I'll be waiting to see the expression on your face when the time comes," replied Tianming.

For some reason, those words sounded familiar to Xuanyuan Muxue and gave her *déjà vu*.

.....

Tianming entered the Deepstar Pool when it opened. His conversation with Xuanyuan Muxue had only made him even more motivated. He tried frantically absorbing the astralsources without any concern for pain or death. He absorbed different elements into his body, and the pain from the elements clashing was no joke. It felt like his body was being torn apart.

But he knew he had to persevere, or Feiling would be decapitated in public like in Xuanyuan Muxue's dream.

Seeing the beads of sweat rolling down Tianming's forehead and his face distorted by pain, Xuanyuan Muxue asked, "Are you insane?!"

"No. I'm just betting all my chips on changing destiny!"

The pain was nothing. If he couldn't protect his loved one, he would rather die. And since he wasn't afraid of death, why would he be afraid of pain?

But he only told himself that, not Xuanyuan Muxue. She stood beside the Deepstar Pool and stared at him for two hours. During this period, Tianming refined at least ten wood astralsources, which far exceeded his previous speed.

"How is it?" Xuanyuan Muxue asked.

Tianming crawled out of the Deepstar Pool. Covered in blood, he grinned and said, "That feels great. It feels even better than a massage!"

I'll rip you to pieces one day! Xuanyuan Muxue cursed. However, Tianming got up to his feet and ran out.

"Why are you so impatient?"

"Big Sister, I'm running out of time here. I can only take full advantage of the time until everyone's here," said Tianming, gasping for breath.

"You only know how to make a hasty last-minute effort," Xuanyuan Muxue said in a disdainful tone.

Tianming was long gone by the time she finished making her comment. He executed his top speed and streaked down the Old Deepstar Path. There were thousands of stars surrounding him; they were all Astral Wills left behind by the predecessors.

Chapter 683 - Eight Desolation Fienddragon Whip

The Archaion Sect had a history of more than two hundred thousand years, with various high and low points throughout. The countless Astral Wills gathered on the Old Deepstar Path was a representation of their aeons-old history. These samsaran seniors had long left the world, but their wills, experience, insight, and lives remained to inspire those that came after. In a way, they had been immortalized.

Tianming's Imperial Will had come from the Grand-Orient Sword as a legacy of the Primordial God-Emperor. Not to mention, whenever he went to the Old Deepstar Path, the stars would circle around him. He looked through them, seeing not only the cultivation insights but also the lives of those people.

"Seniors, you know how I feel too. You don't want your home to be plundered by invaders and your descendants to be suppressed, right?" he said softly.

The stars didn't respond to him; they were long dead. However, they preserved their sentiment. The seniors were all united in intent. During the last few days, quite a number of Heaven Branch disciples had managed to break through under the huge pressure placed on them.

Tianming's current level put him in the last phase of the Empyrean Saint stage. Normally, it would be really hard for his heavenly will to continue to grow at this stage, but the countless stars and the Grand-Orient Sword in his sea of consciousness continued growing.

Three days later, another tribulation pattern appeared on Archfiend. Now it was a tribulation artifact with two tribulation patterns. The aura of blood and dread that seeped out of it was really strong, while the many eyes on the chain were even more intimidating than they used to be. Most people would probably have a hard time looking directly at it.

"If this goes on, I should be able to use it in combat again!" He tested the chain out with the Nine Astral Art and was shocked to see how effective it was. "The Nine Astral Art is an empyrean battle art and can't really reach the tribulation level, though, so it's probably better suited for Three-Thousand Starfield. I should go to the sect master of the Earth Branch to ask for a battle art. Ling'er did say I could ask for anything I needed."

So he left for Xuanyuan Lake. The sect seemed a little dilapidated right before the grand battle. However, Heaven Divine Hall was rather busy. There was a lot of chatter and many beasts roaming about. It seemed that the geniuses from all over the other eight divine realms were having a great time.

"I heard that half of them are already here. Only four other divine realms' participants are still absent. They really are throwing their weight around, for them to make us wait for them to start."

The disciples of the Archaion Sect were nowhere to be seen. They were still cultivating hard up until the last moment, in stark contrast to the carefree geniuses at Heaven Divine Hall. As for the disciples from the Earth and Human Branches, they didn't even dare to show up lest they accidentally offended the visitors and suffer for it. As Taiji Peak Lake used to be the Biritual Demon Sect's base, their disciples would no doubt be itching to cause trouble after they arrived.

.....

Tianming crossed the snowy landscape and arrived at Xuanyuan Lake. He first went to the Sword Insight Rock to ruminate on Hexapath Samsara Sword a little more.

"I wonder if the Hexapath Swordfiend, Feng Qingyu, is trying to obtain the sword art...." Tianming continued pondering the Mortal Dao Sword in front of the figure of the old man.

"You're close," the Hexapath Sword God said.

"Understood."

"Yeah, you can go now," said the old man.

"Farewell, Senior."

Right after he left the passageway under the lake, he saw Xuanyuan Dao waiting for him with a heavy heart.

"Sect Master," Tianming greeted.

"I heard you were looking for me."

Tianming had asked the seniors at the entrance to see him when he came.

"Yes. Is the situation not looking good?"

"That is so."

They hadn't had much success trying to get on good standing with the other sects. Apart from having irreconcilable grudges with the Biritual Demon Sect and Hexapath Sword Sect, it was hard to say how the other sects regarded the Archaion Sect. Even if they appeared amicable on the surface, they could be planning to backstab them for all they knew.

"Sect Master, I want to procure a whip art," Tianming said straightforwardly. Since he had no say in the matter of the divine realms, he didn't ask too much about it.

"Alright. I'll take you to our house's Hidden Dragon Pavilion." That was where they stored battle arts exclusive to members of the Archaic House of Xuanyuan, normally forbidden to outsiders without exception. The battle arts held there were the crystallizations of the Xuanyuan seniors from antiquity to now, making them among the most prized treasures of theirs.

"Thank you, Sect Master!"

"No need. Her Eminence is going to make you her disciple soon, so you're one of us now. We must stand together," Xuanyuan Dao said.

"Yes. I'll remember to do so." Even though he felt a little estranged from the Xuanyuan House due to Xuanyuan Yuheng, he would fight together with them for Feiling's sake.

.....

Tianming soon arrived at the Hidden Dragon Pavilion with Xuanyuan Yuheng. It was a large, beautiful building under the surface of the lake, looking like a gold dragon that perched at the lake's bottom. When he entered the mouth of the dragon, he was greeted with a winding path ahead. He went straight in until he reached the tail portion of the draconic building.

"Pick any that you like. They're all samsara ranked arts, split into four sections. The first are normal samsara ranked arts suitable for disciples up to the third level of that stage. The second are first-origin samsara battle arts suitable for samsarans from the fourth life phase up to the sixth death phase. Few Heaven Branch disciples truly reach this level, but since you have great comprehension abilities, I suggest you choose from them."

"Sect Master, is the third section where the second-origin samsara battle arts are kept? And the last section has third-origin samsara battle arts?"

"That's right, but second-origin samsara battle arts are only for the seventh life phase and above, while third-origin ones are for those at the tenth life phase and beyond. Even if you pick them, you won't be able to fully channel the power those techniques require. After all, your phase and level play an important role in combat among samsarans. Though, it's already really impressive that you can defeat second-level samsarans before even reaching the Samsara stage yourself."

"Understood." In other words, samsara-rank battle arts were split into normal, first-origin, second-origin, and third-origin. The Ninenether Fiendgod Claw he had trained in before was but a normal samsara-rank battle art suitable for first to third-level samsarans. Only those with tribulation rings could use them effectively.

As for fourth to sixth-level samsarans, they mostly used first-origin samsara battle arts. The ranking of battle arts basically corresponded to the normal, first-origin, second-origin, and third-origin tribulation elders. Ouyang Jianwang was a third-origin tribulation elder and at least at the tenth level of the Samsara stage, making him among the strongest people on the entire continent. As for sect masters like Xuanyuan Dao, they were probably even more powerful than the third-origin tribulation elders.

All of them used to be super geniuses themselves who became third or fourth level samsarans around their thirties. Now, they were hundreds of years old. Having cultivated for literal centuries but only being at the tenth level or so showed how truly insurmountable the Samsara stage really was.

Either they lived long lives of mediocrity, or risked dying in a bright blast of power. There were far more people who chose to remain at the life phase rather than move onto the death phase. Even though the latter offered them more power, their lifespan would be ten times shorter, which only grew worse above the tenth level. At that point, they would be really close to ascending to godhood, but most people wouldn't make the cut. The biggest bottlenecks were what separated the first to third, fourth to sixth, seventh to ninth and tenth and above levels from each other. If someone was able to become a

fourth-level samsaran during their growth spurts, they would no doubt be hailed as geniuses. For instance, Fang Xingque, Xuanyuan Muxue, and Xuanyuan Yuheng used to be three people who stood a chance to become the most talented disciples to have ever existed in the sect's history, but none of them had a chance any longer.

"I'll go in first, Sect Master."

"Alright. Tell me when you've picked one out." Xuanyuan Dao proceeded to ponder the upcoming Number One Summit and no longer paid attention to Tianming.

Tianming bent down as he walked through the corridor, slowly taking in the view around him and the martial tomes that were beautifully encased in heavenly pattern formations. No normal person would be able to leave with anything there, but it was all too easy for Tianming and his hand.

He went straight to the section with the first-origin battle arts. "The Archaic House of Xuanyuan really isn't messing around...." Nobody else could possibly compare to their sheer catalogue of battle arts. Tianming wanted to give all of them a scan during this rare opportunity. Soon, he found thirty-seven whip arts in that section, impressive for an unpopular weapon like that.

"I wonder if I should try out the second-origin section. Those battle arts can only be utilized to their full extent at the seventh level of the Samsara stage, huh.... That's on the level of sect masters... The many divine mentors in the sect and second-origin tribulation elders must mostly be using these battle arts."

Though he had only planned to take a casual walk, he didn't think something that suited him to a tee would pop out of nowhere.

"The Eight Desolation Fienddragon Whip?!"

Chapter 684 - The Battle Starts Tomorrow

After giving the abstract a short read, he decided that was the technique he would pick. "Sect Master, I've made my choice."

"Second-origin? Are you sure?" Xuanyuan Dao asked.

"Yes. I'll give it a try. Even if I can't use it to its full potential, I can benefit from the insights I'll gain from trying to figure it out."

"It's best you pick a first-origin art to go along with it."

"Thank you Sect Master! I won't hold back then!" He knew that Xuanyuan Dao thought he was overestimating himself, but he didn't think he would be so generous as to offer him another technique rather than stop him from taking the second-origin one. He definitely held Tianming in high regard. Even though Tianming hadn't actually become the goddess's disciple yet, Xuanyuan Dao already saw him as one. Even though someone like him was nothing more than a joke to those that were trying to kill Feiling, he was second in terms of importance to the Archaic House of Xuanyuan.

The two of them left the Hidden Dragon Pavilion together.

"Tianming, I noticed that many disciples from the other eight divine realms know of your identity, looks, and level of power. Your status is far too sensitive and I feel like you're risking too much by going onto the battlefield. The Number One Summit will have more than sixteen hundred disciples and at least a thousand of them will be out for your life. Are you sure you don't want to reconsider?"

"Sect Master, I'm not afraid of dying. I'm afraid of drowning in my own patheticness," Tianming casually said.

"A true man. Her Eminence was right to pick you," Xuanyuan Dao said with a resigned smile as he patted his shoulder.

"Sect Master, does that mean I'll be quite famous among the crowd in the Number One Summit?"

"That's correct. The speed information travels through the nine divine realms is terrifying. The participants in the summit will definitely be the first to know everything, including what Her Eminence has given you, what you did here, and who you defeated. Many will try to approach you and even attempt to kill you. Do you know the gravity of the situation now?"

"Yes, I do."

"Are you sure you won't change your mind?"

"Nope."

"How courageous."

.....

When they returned to Soulburn Hall, Tianming saw Fang Taiqing and Fang Qingli talking.

"Tianming, are you really going to join?" Fang Taiqing asked.

"Yes."

"I believe in your abilities. Show your opponents what you're made of."

"I definitely will."

Fang Taiqing smiled and greeted Xuanyuan Dao, then left for Heaven Divine Hall.

"Why don't you go in and greet Her Eminence?" Fang Qingli casually said.

"I won't be. I'll come back after the fight."

Tianming bade them farewell and left in a hurry, filled with worry and intent on not wasting a single second he could use to improve.

"Her Eminence sure is open minded to let him participate in the fights."

"How could someone like you come close to knowing Her Eminence's intentions?" Fang Qingli said as she left.

.....

The past few days felt like years to most, but Tianming wished he had more time. His mission was a daunting one. He absorbed tribulation sword ki and astral sources like he usually did, and also made sure to use Archfiend to absorb more of the Archfiend Eye's essence. He had almost no extra time at all and didn't even return to his residence.

Ever since returning from the Hidden Dragon Pavilion, he also had to cultivate the Eight Desolation Fienddragon Whip. He was skipping the whole first-origin level and heading straight for the second-origin level. While he didn't have any tribulation rings, he would be stronger than anyone using a first-origin samsara battle art no matter how weak he was, assuming he could understand the move's intricacies. Not to mention, if he could even use the strongest sword art on the continent, why wouldn't he be able to use this battle art?

Before the Number One Summit, he managed to achieve a few main goals: the first was absorbing the essence of the Archfiend Eye every night. Now, Archfiend had three tribulation patterns and was possibly even stronger than the weapon Xuanyuan Yuheng had used. Second, he broke through to the eighth level of the Empyrean Saint stage.

"Last time, Xian Xian only managed to evolve with some help from the Astral Wills on the Old Deepstar Path. It looks like my cultivation speed in the Samsara stage won't be as fast as it was as an empyrean saint, but at least being in the eighth level will help me survive."

With the Prime Tower, he didn't really need to worry about dying unless he didn't even have a chance to run into it to hide. As for his third goal, he made up for the wood astral sources that he hadn't had a chance to absorb before. With more than three hundred astral sources now, he would be virtually unmatched in close combat.

His fourth goal was to absorb another eight hundred strands of tribulation sword ki. Ying Huo didn't lag far behind, managing to take in around five hundred. With all four goals complete, Tianming and all his lifebound beasts grew considerably in power.

"Hard work does pay off after all." Even with his talent, he made sure not to take it easy in the slightest. "Only those that give it their all have the right to claim to protect their loved ones."

He didn't ever want to experience something like losing Midas ever again.

"I notice that the air around you is different lately. You've grown from boy to man," Ying Huo said.

"Stop flattering me, it won't work."

"Haha, if only Ling'er would help you finally graduate from the last bastion of boyhood...."

"Graduate?" Where did that shameless chicken learn the use of that word?

"Half-daddy, prepare more food for me! We're about to fight soon, and I'll strike if you make me do it on an empty stomach!" Xian Xian's spiritform said from where it lay on Tianming's head.

"Didn't you just eat your fill? You eat more than your cat brother sleeps! Did you even practice that whip art like I asked?" Tianming said.

"I forgot... It just takes time away from my feeding. I won't do it!" she said shyly.

He turned to Ying Huo and said, "I just noticed that you're the only one I can remotely count on."

"Don't obsess over me... I'm just a legend," Ying Huo confidently said.

"Oh no... your narcissism's gonna make me puke..."

.....

At dawn in the Deepstar Pool, Xuanyuan Muxue asked, "The others from the eight divine realms are here. The battle starts tomorrow. Are you ready?"

"Yes." Tianming was still refining astral sources and seemed to be sweating from the pain.

"My eldest brother, Xuanyuan Yucheng, is the strongest disciple in the sect so far. You two should look out for each other."

Tianming had heard about the man who was at the prime age of thirty. Had he been born a year earlier, he wouldn't be able to participate in the summit.

"Why would your brother need me to look out for him? He should be looking out for me, if anything."

"Enough. He's facing ten times more pressure than you are, and has been really high strung lately. Just like you, he bears a huge burden," she said, biting her lip from the worry she felt. The whole sect was worried about what was to come, let alone her.

"Anyone that can bravely bear the burden of that responsibility is someone worthy of respect," Tianming said.

"Yeah. I asked him if he'll let go of the matter concerning Brother Yufeng and Brother Yuheng. He told me that he's impressed that you were willing to participate in the summit, so he'll treat you as a comrade during the battles and come to your aid."

Chapter 685 - Nonahall Divine Realm

"Oh really? If your brother intends to help me as a comrade even at the cost of his life, then I will also do the same," Tianming said as he exited the Deepstar Pool, his body glowing like a star.

"Good!" Xuanyuan Muxue's eyes glowed as she relaxed. "Then I can rest assured. Even though things might still be a little awkward between you two, it's good that you can fight side by side."

"Don't worry. A gentleman like me won't settle personal grudges when we have other enemies to worry about." He knew that he was a little distant from the disciples of the Archaic House of Xuanyuan, but it didn't matter at the Number One Summit as his fate was intertwined with theirs. He would do his best in the fight, and if they didn't mind him joining, he would gladly help out.

Xuanyuan Muxue was rather relieved to hear it. "Don't worry. My brother is very open-minded and reasonable. He always keeps his word, which makes him admired by many."

"Alright, it's a deal." He immediately began to leave.

"Where are you going?"

"To cultivate at the Old Deepstar Path."

"Shouldn't you relax a little? The grand battle is starting tomorrow."

"How could I relax? You want to help me out with that? Give me a little squeeze?"

"Scram!"

"Then don't bother saying anything if you never intended to help out to begin with." He glared at her before leaving.

.....

The next day, the Number One Summit officially began. Tianming left the Fiend Palace and headed straight for Deepstar Hall. Today, Yi Xingyin would be bringing the two hundred plus Heaven Branch disciples to Skyorigin Battlefield, where the disciples from all nine divine realms would engage in a bloodbath.

As for the audience, everything that happened in the Skyorigin Battlefield could be observed by all nine sects through the Skyeeye Formation. In other words, the fight between the participants could be watched throughout the whole Flameyellow Continent. In the Archaion Sect alone, there was a Skyeeye Formation in all three branches. The other eight sects also had their own ways to broadcast the battles as well.

"Both the Skyorigin and Nether Battlefields are parts of the Number One Battlefield, which itself is a large formation, but it isn't an illusion formation. It's the real deal. The Skyeeye Formation is also part of the Number One Battlefield, and ten of them are spread out across the Flameyellow Continent. It was also jointly created by all nine divine realms to ensure fairness. The divine realms will be able to individually inspect it to ensure it hasn't been tampered with. Since there's a Skyeeye Formation where Ling'er is, I bet she'll be watching!"

The fight for the title of Number One was one that would shock the whole continent. The amazing performance would be broadcast for all to see through the Skyeeye Formation.

"Even though the participants themselves can't see the audience, billions of people are watching them."

That was probably for the benefit of the participants who might get nervous from seeing the large audience.

"I bet the three sect masters are watching it from the Dimensional Battlefield in Heaven Branch." Heaven Branch's Dimensional Battlefield was the largest battlefield in the Archaion Sect. Only thirty-two of the participants would make their way there and fight for the title of Number One. Tianming was completely oblivious to what the audience was talking about or what they were looking forward to. He and the other two hundred plus Heaven Branch disciples stood before Yi Xingyin.

"I won't give a long-winded speech. I'm sure you all know how important this battle is. This is the day your dreams come true. The Archaion Sect needs geniuses like you. Thank you for standing here so bravely. You will not be forgotten!" Yi Xingyin said.

"Understood!" they replied in unison. They were the cream of the crop. Since they dared to come, there was not a trace of fear within them. They all knew how dangerous it would be, but it didn't deter

them—especially those from the Archaic House of Xuanyuan. There were around forty of them, all willing to fight to their deaths.

"Let's go!" Yi Xingyin led them into the sky toward the Skyorigin Battlefield. The Number One Battlefield had been deployed south of Xuanyuan Lake. It was split into two parts; the top was the Skyorigin Battlefield and the bottom was the Nether Battlefield. The top was really wide while the bottom was deep, making it look a little like a mushroom from a distance. Near the top of the mushroom was a cloud-filled area that made up the Skyorigin Battlefield. The stem of the mushroom was a gray and black pillar that made up the nine layers of the Nether Battlefield. Tianming thought it was quite an impressive sight.

"I guess I could only expect the nine divine realms to settle things in such a grand manner."

The Deepstar Formation was far inferior to Number One Battlefield. The first battle of the day would begin in the Skyorigin Battlefield. As they approached it, Tianming saw eight other groups made up of second-level samsara disciples from the other eight divine realms also heading to the same destination. Even though they weren't a united force, they still seemed really domineering, especially with how casual and relaxed they looked.

The nine groups eventually gathered together, but somehow the disciples of the Archaion Sect felt that they didn't belong with the rest. The way the others mocked and looked down on them said as much. Some didn't even bother to hide it, while others only let hints of mockery leak from their stares.

Tianming knew that they were probably stronger with a single glance. Even though the Archaion Sect was the host of the Number One Summit, the outsiders didn't seem to take them seriously. It was almost like they were here for a field trip. They also had someone as powerful as Yi Xingyin leading them.

Soon, they queued up and entered the Skyorigin Battlefield one by one. As the hosts, those from the Archaion Sect entered last as a matter of ceremony; it wouldn't give them any advantage or disadvantage.

The first group to enter had the most people, around four hundred of them, which was twice the number of the Archaion Sect's group. The sheer number of second-level samsaran disciples might make them the strongest sect of all.

"Is that the Nonahall Ghost Sect?" Tianming said. The Nonahall Divine Realm was the last one to form. Even though Xuanyuan Xi was the last to ascend to godhood, she didn't bring much to the Archaion Sect. The last to establish their descendants as one of the rulers of the Flameyellow Continent had been the ninth god, the Nonahall Specter. Even though the Nonahall Divine Realm's power had slightly decreased after a hundred thousand years, they were still at the top of the hierarchy.

"You're right," someone behind him answered.

Tianming turned back and saw a muscular man with a stubby beard. He seemed a little rough around the edges, and looked like someone who had been around the block. There was a black third eye between his eyebrows, marking him as one of the Trioptic True Dragon Branch. Naturally, Tianming knew who he was. This person had been in the Fiend Palace ever since the first time he visited. He was Xuanyuan Muxue's eldest brother, Xuanyuan Yucheng, the current top disciple in the Archaion Sect. He

was among the eldest participants, and also the strongest. Being an honorable man who kept his word, he was respected by many. However, he couldn't lead all the disciples of the Heaven Branch, as those from the Draconis House of Jian and Sterling House of Fang had their own agendas.

"Li Tianming, I heard from Muxue that you're aware that many of them will be out for your head," he said in a deep voice.

"That's right."

"Since you still dared to come, I believe that you're truly willing to serve Her Eminence. Since that is the case, we're comrades. If you can pass the battle at Skyorigin Battlefield and enter Nether Battlefield, all disciples of the Archaic House of Xuanyuan will consider you as one of us and look out for you."

"No problem. Let's not make too big a deal out of it."

"Alright." All of the Xuanyuan disciples had heard them. Since they hadn't objected to it, that meant they had accepted him. "Muxue also mentioned that you made more progress."

"Yes, a little."

"Then, try your best to enter the Nether Battlefield. You'll be assigned two random opponents during the battle in the Skyorigin Battlefield today. Only by defeating them will you be allowed to go to the Nether Battlefield. I hope you're lucky and won't run into the most powerful disciples."

He was referring to those that were third-level samsarans and above, which the top five of the Heaven Ranking were. The Heaven Ranking only concerned itself with the combat capabilities of Heaven Branch disciples and didn't take into account age or talent. All of them on the ranking were here, but they didn't come talk to Tianming like Xuanyuan Yucheng had.

One of them was Fang Yuwei, who was ranked fourth at the age of twenty-seven. She was Fang Xingque's elder sister, and had personally witnessed him die.

Chapter 686 - Come and Die

The number of teams outside the Skyorigin Battlefield started increasing. The second smallest team had about two hundred people, the same as the Archaion Sect. They were disciples of the Biritual Demon Sect, also known as the Yinyang Demon Sect.

It was said that the Biritual Demon Sect had enmity with the Archaion Sect with regards to the Taiji Peak Lake. After the Nonahall Ghost Sect was destroyed eighty thousand years ago, the Archaion Sect had seized control of Taiji Peak Lake. Now that the Sterling House of Fang was the strongest house in the Archaion Sect, the Biritual Demon Sect's grudge with the Archaion Sect was written in their sect rules.

The two oldest divine realms fought countless times, and their grudges spanned history. Their hatred of the Archaion Sect and Sterling House of Fang ran deep in their bones. So the Biritual Demon Sect's disciples didn't bother concealing it. They laughed without restraint as they entered the Skyorigin Battlefield. Their intentions were clear based on the look in their eyes.

“Brothers of the Monorigin Divine Sect, pray that you don’t encounter us. Otherwise we’ll let you have a taste of despair.”

“Stop scaring them. Just look at them tremble. Where will we find playthings if they run away?”

“Will they? Do you think they’ll run like cowards after coming here?”

“Speaking of which, that’s always been the Monorigin Divine Sect’s tradition. Hahaha!” the Biritual Demon Sect’s disciples laughed.

“Don’t put it that way. Their god is in the sect. Be careful of attracting her rage and drenching us in urine.”

“Then I’ll strip the pants off their God!”

“A god in the Heavenly Will stage?”

“Shut it!” The Archaic House of Xuanyuan’s disciples raged. “They deserve to die for profaning Her Eminence!”

Disciples of the Archaion Sect would be sentenced to death if they said those words. But there was nothing they could do about the disciples from the other divine realms. Feiling was the Archaion Sect’s god, not the Biritual Demon Sect’s god.

“Cut it out,” said Yi Xingyin. His words restrained everyone from charging forth and starting the battle ahead of the Skyorigin Battlefield. But their hatred was rooted deep in their hearts. Even Tianming was going insane from the rage in his chest.

“You can only defend your honor with strength,” said Yi Xingyin. Using strength to prove themselves was more straightforward than anything else.

“Got it!” Everyone nodded. Right at that time, the Biritual Demon Sect entered the Skyorigin Battlefield.

“Disciples of the Monorigin Divine Sect, come face your death!” The Biritual Demon Sect’s disciples jeered. It was common for disciples of the two sects to kill each other, due to their grudges.

“You guys can go in now. Good luck,” Yi Xingyin said with his hands behind his back. The Archaion Sect’s disciples stepped into the battlefield under the witness of the Skyeye Formation. When everyone was on the battlefield, it signified the beginning of the Number One Summit.

.....

The Heaven Branch’s Dimensional Battlefield was separated into nine districts, with one being the main and the other eight the subsidiaries. The main district held the three Sect Masters, eight Palace Lords, and the tribulation elders. Fang Taiqing sat in the center, Xuanyuan Dao on the left, and Jian Wuyi to his right.

The eight districts before them held the authorities of the eight divine realms. It was said that six divine realms had even dispatched their Sect Masters.

The divine sects were the Monorigin Divine Sect, Biritual Demon Sect, Triflair Celestial Sect, Quadform Oceanic Sect, Pentaphase Earth Sect, Hexapath Sword Sect, Heptastar Aerial Sect, Octagram Heart Sect, and the Nonahall Ghost Sect.

They only came together during the Number One Summit. There weren't many of them, but they were intimidating. If all eight of them were added together, it was more than enough for them to suppress everyone from the Archaion Sect.

Right at that moment, all of the strongest masters in the Flameyellow continent had their eyes on the Skyeye Formation.

"In reality, this is the beginning of war," someone muttered.

.....

Tianming stepped into the Skyorigin Battlefield following the party. It felt as though he had walked into cotton. Wherever he walked, the surrounding people would vanish. Very quickly, Tianming was all by himself.

His vision was filled with fog, and he couldn't see the other people in the Skyorigin Battlefield. It felt like he was all alone in the world. When he stepped forth, the fog started dimming down. But even so, he still couldn't see anyone.

Right at that moment, the clouds beneath his feet floated up and formed a round stage three hundred meters wide. Tianming knew that every disciple had a similar stage. They were all made of white clouds, and the toughness wasn't any different from the ground.

These cloud stages were their battlefields.

Now, he just had to wait for the cloud stage to bring him to his opponent. When two stages collided, they would merge into one and only one person could remain on it.

"Leaving the stage meant defeat. With the stage at this size, it won't be difficult to kill someone." The Number One Summit had been held for tens of thousands of years. It was a tradition set by their ancestors.

The nine divine realms' disciples didn't come here to spar. They came to seize treasures and territories for their sect. If there was no danger, then there would be no meaning to the Number One Summit. But it was rare for a sect to be targeted by everyone.

Tianming would encounter two opponents in the Skyorigin Battlefield, and he would receive the qualification to enter the Nether Battlefield by defeating them. He stood with his hands behind his back, waiting for the arrival of his opponents.

He could vaguely hear the sounds of battle coming from his surroundings. There were hundreds of battles taking place simultaneously, so the first round was progressing with excellent efficiency.

"I wonder how many divine realms will kill our disciples." Tianming closed his eyes. There was nothing he could do to help anyone in the Skyorigin Battlefield.

“There are rumors outside that I’m Feiling’s disciple. So I bet there must be many eyes on me now, right? I wonder how many people in the Flameyellow continent are looking at me?”

As the battle would soon take place, Tianming released his four lifebound beasts. Xian Xian couldn’t take root in the clouds, but its roots covered the entire cloud stage and used it to conceal itself to a certain degree.

Even so, the appearance of such a massive wood-type lifebound beast attracted many people’s attention. Compared to it, no one paid any attention to Lan Huang’s size, not to mention Ying Huo and Meow Meow, who were hiding in the clouds.

The five of them stood and waited for their opponent. It didn’t take long before they saw a cloud stage in the fog up ahead. As the other stage slowly approached and the two merged, Tianming finally saw his opponent.

“The Yinyang Demon Sect?” Tianming instantly recognized his opponent. “It looks like I’m pretty lucky.”

A woman had shown up before him. She had an oval face, stunning features, and her hair was tied back with a pink ribbon.

Chapter 687 - Decapitating with One Sword

The woman had two lifebound beasts, and she was seated on one of them. They were two snow-white foxes with at least three hundred and sixty stars in their eyes. The male fox had a robust figure with sharp claws and was covered in crimson flames. The female fox was charming and slender, leaning on the male. The two lifebound beasts were a pureyang fiendfox and blackyin dreamfox.

The woman belonged to the strongest house in the Yinyang Demon Sect, the Demonic House of Yinyang. Most of the house’s descendants were twin beastmasters, and their lifebound beasts were of different genders. The two genders complemented each other, like yin and yang. Their fighting prowess wasn’t any inferior compared to a triple beastmaster.

Because of this trait, they would often bask in ‘joy’ during their growth. After all, they were a perfect match made in heaven.

“Wow!” The woman’s eyes lit up when she saw Tianming. She seemed somewhat surprised. When the two stages combined, the woman charged at Tianming with her lifebound beasts.

“I know you! You’re that goddess’ disciple. You’re an odd person who can defeat someone in the second death phase of the Samsara stage in the Empyrean Saint stage. Holy shit! Aren’t I lucky?” The woman blinked her eyes in pleasant surprise.

“What do you want?” Tianming asked.

“Isn’t it obvious? I want to claim the bounty! The Archaion Sect are all fools to put you in such a high position. In our eyes, you’re no different from a pile of shit. The brothers and sisters of my sect have taken out treasures and created a prize pool. Anyone who takes your head will be able to claim the pool. You’re unlucky to encounter me, Dong Jingjing!” Dong Jingjing’s eyes lit up as she spoke.

“You’re so confident that you can claim the prize pool?” Tianming smiled.

“Well, I still have to give it a try regardless.” Dong Jingjing laughed.

It wasn’t easy to tell the level in the Samsara stage, and Tianming could only determine that she was using death tribulation energy. This meant that she might be in the second or third death phase, but not the fourth.

If she was in the third death phase of the Samsara stage, Tianming could only try his best to protect himself. But he still had to test her strength to determine her cultivation. In the blink of an eye, Ying Huo had already charged over.

“Adulterous couple, watch my sword!” Ying Huo was very unhappy with the pair of foxes and stabbed out with five hundred tribulation sword ki, attacking with the Hexapath Samsara Sword right at the beginning.

Among the Infernal Haze, Ying Huo stabbed its sword at the pureyang fiendfox, and the fox retaliated by turning into a scarlet sun and smashing at Ying Huo. However, the penetrative ability of Ying Huo’s Sky Piercer Ki stabbed into the fox.

“Second death phase of the Samsara stage.” Ying Huo determined Dong Jingjing’s cultivation from the might of her lifebound beast. But since she was at the same level as Xuanyuan Yuheng, there was nothing for Tianming to be cautious about.

“Go!” Tianming’s four lifebound beasts attacked together. Meow Meow’s lightning ability enveloped the entire stage and Xian Xian had already unleashed its Radiant Vines along with the crimson petals, forming a Bloodrain Sword hiding within Meow Meow’s Chaos Disaster.

This left Dong Jingjing dumbfounded. She knew that Tianming had killed someone in the second death phase of the Samsara stage, but she had no understanding of Xuanyuan Yuheng’s strength. Now that Tianming’s lifebound beasts began unleashing their abilities, the entire stage instantly fell under Tianming’s control.

She was an illusion-type beastmaster, and she would usually try confusing her opponent with the blackyin dreamfox while the pureyang fiendfox would tangle with the opponent. But now, how would the pureyang fiendfox be able to withstand the ability bombardment?

“Hold on a little longer. We’ll throw our enemy into an illusion!” Dong Jingjing’s face suddenly changed when the Bloodrain Sword struck the pureyang fiendfox and countless Radiant Vines wrapped themselves around it. Then, Lan Huang held the pureyang fiendfox down under it and started biting the fox. Right at that moment, Ying Huo appeared once more and left a massive gash on the fox’s stomach.

The pureyang fiendfox wailed out in pain. It hadn’t even moved before it died. It might be in the second death phase of the Samsara stage, but there was nothing it could do after being surrounded by Tianming’s lifebound beasts.

After Xian Xian was born, its powerful control ability had significantly strengthened Tianming’s team. The pureyang fiendfox was caught up in the Radiant Vines right from the beginning, not to mention that the Bloodrain Sword was absorbing the fox’s blood. It had lost the initiative right from the start, and death had taken it in an instant.

The blackyin dreamfox was only able to execute its Cloudpeak Dreamland after the pureyang fiendfox's death. It was a powerful ability that instantly swept Ying Huo and the rest into an illusion. On the other hand, Dong Jingjing sang an enticing song with her dreamy voice.

Her illusion was all in her voice, which was a perfect fit for the blackyin dreamfox's Cloudpeak Dreamland. If the pureyang fiendfox had lasted a little longer, their combat prowess in the second death phase of the Samsara stage wouldn't be weak. But it was a pity that everything was too late.

Just when the Cloudpeak Dreamland was formed, a figure appeared beside the blackyin dreamfox and slashed down with the Grand-Orient Sword. The fox was surprised; it had never expected that Tianming would be immune to its illusion. The strike contained eight hundred strands of tribulation sword ki.

When Tianming's sword descended, the blackyin dreamfox was decapitated. Blood splattered and sprayed on Dong Jingjing, leaving her stunned. When she turned around, she was restricted by an enormous net of lightning that even her death tribulation energy couldn't resist. In addition to the sword-shaped petals and Ying Huo's Skyscorch Featherblast, how could she possibly withstand it?

"You!" Dong Jingjing's defensive tribulation artifact shattered. As fear rose in her heart, Tianming charged over. She wanted to escape, but she was covered in wounds from the flames, petals, and lightning.

"I heard that you want my head?" The cold voice sent chills down Dong Jingjing's spine.

"It's a misunders—" Before she could finish her words, the Grand-Orient Sword swept past, and her head flew.

"Get lost." Tianming waved his sword and sent Dong Jingjing's corpse off the stage. At the same time, the Radix World Tree threw the two foxes' corpses out. Dong Jingjing's death meant he had successfully passed the first round.

"You want to kill me? Then you must be prepared to die." This wasn't only for Dong Jingjing, but all his enemies. He hadn't come to the Number One Summit for a friendly spar.

Tianming tidied up briefly, then the cloud stage continued onward. He needed to defeat another person to make it through the Skyorigin Battlefield. His next opponent would be strong, because it would also be someone who had defeated one enemy.

"If the other eight divine realms know that I'm Feiling's in-name disciple, they should've witnessed my methods." Tianming looked up ahead with the four lifebound beasts.

Xian Xian's spiritual body flew above his head and hugged Tianming's neck. It then spoke out in a pampered voice, "Half-daddy, Xian Xian is hungry..."

"Don't lie. None of your branches were damaged." Tianming smiled.

"Xian Xian don't care! Xian Xian is hungry!" Xian Xian began rolling around unreasonably.

"Eat, eat, eat. All you know is eat!" Tianming took out the barbecued meat he had prepared in the spatial ring. Xian Xian started gobbling up its food.

"Can I take a short nap, too?" Meow Meow's eyes lit up.

“Sleep your head!” Tianming lifted Meow Meow by the neck.

“No fair! You value females over males! There are no cat rights around here!” Meow Meow grumbled.

“Suck it up even if you’re unhappy with it.”

“I’ll start throwing tantrums!”

“Shut up.” Tianming clamped Meow Meow’s mouth together. The cat could only struggle by swinging its claws around, but Tianming’s left hand wasn’t afraid of them.

“Haha!” Ying Huo laughed with its wings on its waist.

“You too!” Tianming clamped Ying Huo’s beak shut. In the end, Ying Huo could only glare with its eyes open and flap its wings about. They were having fun playing, but many people in the Flameyellow continent were coldly watching them through the Skyeeye Formation.

Did they think that killing Dong Jingjing was impressive? There were sixteen hundred disciples, and plenty of experts hidden among them. If he was unlucky and encountered one of the stronger disciples, his corpse would be the one being thrown down.

As the spectators discussed among themselves, Tianming finally met his second and last opponent for the day. His stage was larger after having fused with Dong Jingjing’s stage. The Skyorigin Battlefield would eliminate three-fourths of the participants, reducing the numbers to four hundred.

Tianming looked at his second opponent. It was a young man dressed in azure clothes with his hair tied in a bun. He stood straight like a sword, and sword ki emanated from his body. He seemed pretty young, probably only a few years older than Xuanyuan Yuheng, putting him around the same age as Tianming.

But for him to have such strength at his age meant his talent was outstanding. At the very least, he was a genius on the same level as Tianming. When the youth saw Tianming, he said in an indifferent voice, “Li Tianming, I’ll be able to obtain a sixth-grade tribulation manna by killing you. Don’t you think that’s a great deal?”

“The Hexapath Sword Sect? Tai’e House of Jian?” Tianming asked.

“That’s right. My name is Feng Daoyi.”

“I believe your rank isn’t low, right?” Tianming asked.

“It’s nothing compared to yours,” said Feng Daoyi. He drew out his sword and continued, “It’s perfect for me to enter the Nether Battlefield wielding your head.”

“Then do you need to exclaim that you’ve got good luck?” Tianming asked.

“That’s right. How do you know?”

“Because the last person who did that’s dead,” replied Tianming.

Chapter 688 - Die!

Entering the Netherworld and the Nether Battlefield were completely different things. Feng Daoyi indifferently said, "You have guts, but what a pity. Your sect only has fifty people left."

"It seems that you have some inside information?" Tianming asked.

"That wasn't it. A god in the Saint stage is meant for everyone to kill. We're all here just to kill your so-called god. But it's a pity, Li Tianming. You won't live to see it," laughed Feng Daoyi.

"Neither will you." The two stared daggers at each other. It turned out that Feng Daoyi was a quadruple beastmaster. His beasts were four eagles representing four different elements: wind, fire, thunder, and metal. Every single one of the eagles possessed at least three hundred and ninety stars.

The stars meant that Feng Daoyi's had quite a significant background in the Hexapath Sword Sect, and his elder must be on the level of Yi Xingyi. The Tai'e House of Jian was a branch of the Draconis House of Jian.

Feng Daoyi was like Jian Lingchen, a Quadrasword Talent. His four lifebound beasts could transform into powerful swordbeasts and execute their abilities with all five of them as one.

Feng Daoyi was a cold person, and didn't utter a single word. He triggered his Daounion Sword and gathered his lifebound beasts, fusing them into his longsword. The white sword was suddenly dyed with four colors, which separated into four different segments. The tip was flickering with a metallic luster and the body was stained with wind, fire, and thunder.

When Feng Daoyi raised his sword, his sword ki pierced through the horizon and the wind raised by it caused his hair to flutter.

"Life tribulation energy?" Tianming judged that Feng Daoyi's cultivation should be in the third or fourth life tribulation of the Samsara stage. Disciples of the swordbeast lineage could fuse their lifebound beasts into their swords to strengthen their attacks' lethality.

But there were pros and cons to this method. The pro lay mainly in the fact that they could execute their lifebound beasts' abilities through their swords. This was equivalent to having five energies fused together, and it was difficult for opponents in the same stage to withstand their attacks.

"Dog of the Archaion Sect, open your eyes wide. Only the Hexapath Sword Sect can give birth to true gods, not a ghost from a hundred thousand years ago!" Feng Daoyi charged forth with his sword, executing the first-origin samsara battle art, the Windslaughter Sword.

When he swung his sword, it also contained the sword aura from his four lifebound beasts. Violent gales began forming into wind blades that headed toward Tianming on the cloud stage.

"Third life phase of the Samsara stage!" That meant Tianming could still put up a fight.

"Brothers!" Tianming was already on the verge of losing it, listening to them humiliating Feiling. "Kill him!"

The Grand-Orient Sword in his hand separated into two. As tribulation sword ki raged within the sword, Tianming's Ancient Deepstar Godbody started glowing with astral lights.

Meanwhile, Meow Meow dashed at lightning speed with the Soulchasing Hellthunder, reaching Feng Daoyi in the blink of an eye. There was no need for Meow Meow to go up; it simply threw out the Misty Hellthunder, which formed a vortex before Feng Daoyi's attack. Even if the sword ki managed to destroy the lightning pythons, it was blocked by a white shield created by Xian Xian's vines right after.

However, Feng Daoyi merely smiled and changed his attack to a firestorm. The Fourpolar Cloudwind Sword could only be comprehended at the fourth life phase of the Samsara realm, and that meant Feng Daoyi had high comprehension.

This time, flame followed as the violent storm swept out. The attack combined the fire-type eagle's ability with the wind-type eagle's ability. The attack was strong, and the power of the combined abilities nearly forced Xian Xian's Radix World Tree into a dead end.

But in this battle, Ying Huo and Meow Meow had the advantage of speed. Tianming slashed down at the firestorm with his tribulation sword ki and split it into two with them at the sides.

"Not bad!" Feng Daoyi moved among the Bloodrain Sword petals and cut down Xian Xian's vines. The ability granted by his swordbeasts' lineages was his greatest advantage.

"Not bad?" Tianming sneered. There was a demonic charm in his voice, which sounded as if it came from hell.

"Yeah. Not bad." Feng Daoyi charged forth once more. This time, his sword's power was a lot stronger than before as he used the third move, the Heaven Calamity Sword. This time, the wind, fire, and lightning abilities fused with the sword strike.

When he executed this technique, Ying Huo's Infernal Haze appeared behind him and stabbed out. The chick's tribulation sword ki was fused with its Sky Piercer Ki, while Meow Meow's Myriad Thundernet was before him.

However, that wasn't all. Lan Huang unleashed the Primordial Soundwave at Feng Daoyi's ears. The three beasts combined attack might not be as powerful as Feng Daoyi's union, but they had many variations to their attacks. Aside from Tianming, no one could face Feng Daoyi's attack head-on, but they didn't have to face Feng Daoyi head-on.

"I'll break your sword first!" With four swordbeasts fused into his sword, Feng Daoyi was confident of breaking another tribulation artifact with his Daunion Sword. Beastmasters like him often killed their opponent beastmasters first.

Feng Daoyi's eyes glowed with confidence as he gathered the power from the swordbeasts into his sword. "No demons shall remain standing in the path of my sword!"

Feng Daoyi swung his sword. This time, all four elements had gathered together for the attack. The strike was powerful, and the life tribulation energy was endless.

But Tianming was indifferent as he faced the attack. "You want to compete with me in sword strikes?" Feng Daoyi seemed relatively confident in his sword, but it was a pity that he was facing Tianming!

The Grand-Orient Sword had merged with the strongest sword art in the Flameyellow continent. The Hexapath Sword God had always felt that his sword was still lacking. But right at this moment, Tianming's sword pierced through the sword ki of this Tai'e House of Jian's genius.

He found what he lacked from his enemy, and Tianming was fully immersed in comprehending the sword.

"The sword's soul doesn't lie in killing, but protecting. Killing goes against heaven's will, while protection is righteous. I don't have many people to protect with my sword, but Ling'er can be considered one of them. This is only the beginning, and with great power comes great responsibility. One day, I will sweep my sword before everyone. The power of my sword comes from all lives!"

This was what the Mortal Dao Sword wanted to tell him.

He could only comprehend it when he wanted to protect someone with all his heart. There had to be a small sword before there could be a big sword. This was the sword of mortals.

With an indifferent gaze, Tianming stood mighty like a deity as his tribulation sword ki gathered and he swung his sword out. When the golden Grand-Orient Sword clashed with Feng Daoyi's sword, his lifebound beasts didn't slack either.

Xian Xian's Bloodrain Sword had already covered Feng Daoyi's back while Meow Meow's Soulchasing Hellthunder coursed through his veins and affected his speed. Ying Huo also executed the Hexapath Samsara Sword in combination with Tianming.

When Feng Daoyi's sword clashed with Tianming, Ying Huo appeared once more and stabbed the Infernal Blaze at Feng Daoyi's legs and ripped them to pieces. There was nothing left of Feng Daoyi's legs except a cloud of blood.

Then again, Ying Huo wouldn't have had this opportunity without Tianming's Hexapath Samsara Sword strike. The pain from his legs left Feng Daoyi with his confidence shattered.

"What sword technique is this?" Feng Daoyi was shocked that he couldn't break Tianming's sword after three clashes.

"The sword that will claim your life!" Tianming hacked down with the black Grand-Orient Sword, and the Daounion Sword snapped.

That shocked everyone, because no one had expected that the Daounion Sword would break. Having swordbeasts fused into the sword had further increased the Daounion Sword's durability, but it still snapped. So what did that mean? It meant that the swordbeasts fused into the sword would die with the sword!

When the Daounion Sword crumbled, the four swordbeasts burst into a massive cloud of blood. This was the power of the Hexapath Samsara Sword after being empowered by tribulation sword ki. It also meant that Feng Daoyi was crippled.

"Arghhh!" Feng Daoyi yelled and threw up a mouthful of blood. Flames gushed from his eyes as he glared furiously at Tianming.

“You’re dead! My master is the Hexapath Swordfiend—” But before he could even finish, Tianming’s golden Grand-Orient Sword pierced his head.

“Hush. You’re too noisy.” Tianming drew his sword out, and Feng Daoyi collapsed on the ground with his eyes wide open. Blood rained down and drenched Tianming and his four lifebound beasts in red.

“Sob... I want to take a bite....” Xian Xian was depressed upon seeing delicacies and not being able to eat. With a bitter expression, it hung around Tianming’s neck.

Drenched in blood, Tianming stood among the dismembered corpses wielding the two Grand-Orient Swords. He took several steps forth because he knew that many people must be looking at him right now.

He raised the golden Grand-Orient Sword and decapitated Feng Daoyi, then stabbed into his corpse again with the black Grand-Orient Sword. Following that, he raised the sword into the sky and roared, “Listen up, you motherfuckers! DIE!”

Chapter 689 - Dying for the Goddess

The battles in the Skyorigin Battlefield were only appetizers for what was to come later. During the Number One Summit, nothing but the Number One mattered, not even the runner up. Only the powerful would stand a chance, so there wasn't really a need to show all of one's tricks during the first phase.

Yet Feng Daoyi, the disciple of the Hexapath Swordfiend, was facing off against Tianming in an amazing clash. While they weren't the cream of the crop among the participants, they both had notable backgrounds, especially considering the grudge between the Archaion Sect and the Hexapath Sword Sect.

Many people wanted to see how an empyrean saint like Tianming could deal with a third-level samsaran genius, though Feng Daoyi was a little disadvantaged in terms of age. Had the Number One Summit been held five years later, he would be ranked in the top ten or twenty, especially considering the tutelage of the Hexapath Swordfiend. Perhaps he would even get a chance to become Number One. It was a shame that he ended up being killed by Tianming on the spot. There would be no more future for him; he was no more than a stepping stone for Tianming to make his debut as the only disciple of the goddess in the entire Flameyellow Continent.

.....

The fifth sector in the Human Branch's Dimensional Battlefield was where those from the Hexapath Sword Sect viewed the battles. They were all top figures from the sect, and the one who sat in the grandest seat was a man in a gray robe. He seemed rather young, and even a little petite. His facial features and aura were so average that he would blend in perfectly with any crowd, but his average appearance made him stand out among the swordmasters of the sect.

However, his gaze was clear and flowed like spring water, giving him an almost childlike innocence without a hint of impurity. His appearance made it hard for most to even imagine that he was the Hexapath Swordfiend, Feng Qingyu. Sometimes demons just didn't look particularly demonic.

Sitting atop his tall throne, he had his eyes on the Skyeeye Formation, which was broadcasting many battles that were taking place. The largest viewpoint, however, showed a white-haired youth pointing directly to the viewers with his sword and cursing.

"Impudence!" the higher ups of the Hexapath Sword Sect behind Feng Qingyu cursed.

"That accursed thing!"

"How dare he kill Feng Daoyi?!"

"Even though Daoyi was talented, his power is only average. Does that fellow think he's a bigshot after defeating him?"

"He doesn't even know the predicament he's in.... How truly tragic."

"Even if nobody can deal with him in the Skyorigin Battlefield, he'll come to learn true pain in the Nether Battlefield."

"Is the Archaion Sect filled with naive people like that? How amusing."

They were full of rage for the loss of a genius from their sect. Gingerly, they looked at the grey-robed man, who was holding his chin in thought.

"My Dear Qian," he called out.

A woman wearing a black veil walked out from behind him and gently asked, "What do you need of me, Sect Master?"

"Daoyi is your son. What do you think?"

"Sect Master, I believe we should proceed according to the plan."

"Alright."

Most of the rest didn't dare to approach the woman he had addressed so affectionately. They were all too aware that their sect master cared nothing for managing the sect and only focused on cultivating his swordsmanship, leaving her in charge of everything else.

.....

The Swordsoul Mountains within the Hexapath Divine Realm was a huge mountain range that was filled with dense spiritual energy, thanks to the multitudes of ley lines underneath it. There was also a Skyeeye Formation there, broadcasting the fight between Tianming and Feng Daoyi. Hundreds of thousands of disciples gathered around to watch, either laughing or cursing at the turn of events.

"Kill him! Kill him!"

"May the disciple of the goddess die!"

"Cut off this mutt's head and impale it on his sword! Bring it back and hang it at our doors!"

"Hahaha!"

"Feng Daoyi, kill him!"

At the most exciting moment, everything suddenly changed. Using his Grand-Orient Sword and working with his four lifebound beasts, Tianming managed to kill Feng Daoyi, someone with Quadrasword Talent. He waved Feng Daoyi's head around and mocked the audience watching the battle, instantly enraging the disciples of the Hexapath Sword Sect. The entire battlefield seemed to shake from the sheer commotion.

"Kill him!"

"Tear him to shreds!"

"All the disciples of the Monorigin Sect should be ground into meat paste!"

That kind of mockery was even able to cause the calm disciples studying the way of the sword to lose their minds in the group frenzy.

"Li Tianming will die for sure!"

.....

Fang Taiqing, Xuanyuan Dao, and Jian Wuyi were also watching the battle from the Human Branch.

"Brilliant!" Ouyang Jianwang cheered and clapped. "I have a poem to dedicate for this occasion.... Ahem.... O' goddess's disciple Li Tianming, merciless to his foes, ruthless in his culling!"

The others merely talked quietly among themselves without loud proclamations like Ouyang Jianwang's.

"Even though Li Tianming did well, the other disciples aren't faring as good. They're pretty passive for the most part," Jian Wuyi said.

"Look down there," Fang Taiqing said.

Xuanyuan Dao silently grit his teeth and looked at the Skyeeye Formation.

While Li Tianming's killing of Feng Daoyi was a joyous occasion for the Archaion Sect, it was only the beginning. Something far worse would happen that would sour all their faces....

.....

Having dealt with his two opponents, Tianming took out a venomspike ironplate warpig and roasted it for Xian Xian, as the Nether Battlefield hadn't opened up yet since there were still battles ongoing. Soon, the fragrant smell of cooked meat wafted all around.

"Aaaah, the smell!" Xian Xian was already drooling.

"Flower Sis, if you eat so much, you'll grow fat," Ying Huo said.

"Waaah! Chicken Bro is being mean to me!"

"Ouch!" Before Ying Huo could react, Tianming's palm came slapping toward it. "Hey! You're violating my avian rights!"

After Xian Xian finished eating and restored its vines, it stroked its belly satisfactorily. Tianming then had all of them return to the lifebound space while he sat on the cloudy platform and listened for sounds of battle from afar. "Soon, we'll know how we are doing relative to the other divine realms."

He was all too aware that while he was having a good time, the same couldn't be said for the other disciples of the Archaion Sect. They were probably at risk of losing their lives, too.

Around an hour later, the first phase of battles finally ended. The cloud he was sitting on vanished and he descended along with the other participants that passed through the first phase. As for the other people or corpses that fell without slowing themselves down, they had been eliminated. Tianming turned to Yi Xingyin and approached him as the other disciples returned to their respective camps.

Even from afar, he could see bloody corpses all around Yi Xingyin, all covered in bloodstained white cloth. There were people and beasts alike who had left this world for good. Many people rushed there and hugged their bodies as they cried. Even Tianming felt a little uneasy at the sight of all that lost young talent. Agonizing cries sounded out from all over. As Xuanyuan Muxue had said, this was the worst case scenario. He saw Fang Yuewei hug a cherished friend's corpse as her shoulders shook.

"Come here, Li Tianming," Yi Xingyin said with some relief.

"Palace Lord, the losses...."

"More than forty are gone for good. There's also more than a dozen crippled," he said with a hoarse voice.

That was a staggering number. A quarter of the Heaven Branch disciples were out of commission after just the first phase. Of the total number, more than a hundred and fifty had been eliminated, with eighty-nine lucky survivors that hadn't suffered huge losses. Tianming's body shook with killing intent.

"Five of the eight other divine realms killed our disciples specifically without any mercy."

"Which ones are there?"

"Biritual, Quadform, Hexapath, Heptastar, and Nonahall."

It wasn't surprising that the Biritual and Hexapath Divine Realms were doing so, but the actions of the Quadform, Heptastar, and Nonahall Divine Realms were equivalent to a declaration that they were in the camp that was trying to kill the goddess, leaving only the Triflair Celestial Sect, Pentaphase Earth Sect, and Octagram Heart Sect on the Archaion Sect's side. They had always had rather good relationships with them, the Triflair Celestial Sect especially. If not for the Archaion Sect, they wouldn't have been able to reestablish their rule in their divine realm.

"Those five...." Tianming committed them to memory. The sight of the motionless dead and the despairing living filled him with volcanic anger. His blood boiled as the smoke of death was visible through his eyes.

"They died for the Archaion Sect.... For Her Eminence...." If Feiling had a choice, she never would have wanted to become the goddess. That was a cruel twist of fate. "I can't even call myself a human if I don't avenge them!"

Chapter 690 - Earth Branch Sect Master's Plan

Tianming looked to the disciples of the other five divine realms and only saw around a dozen casualties. They were still casually chatting and laughing, and even provoking them from afar. The disciples from the Quadform, Heptastar, and Nonahall Divine Realms no longer hid their intentions. They had been instructed by their seniors to come here to do exactly that.

"It's still too early to cry!"

"That was only the appetizer! The main course starts in the Nether Battlefield. Anyone related to you lot won't be spared!"

"That's right. The real dishes will be served later. Only a few small fries died just now. You'd better save your tears for later."

More and more people started mocking and laughing.

"The Monorigin Sect really is delusional. They're still trying to protect their pathetic goddess."

"My dad asked me to tell you that you shouldn't waste your lives protecting a goddess who's a mere saint! She can be easily crushed like a bug! Don't let your families die over her!"

"Stop trying to persuade them. They'll know how foolish their actions are after they lose everything."

If the one who said that was only one person, it would be much easier to deal with. But nobody could tell who among the noisy crowd had said that. The brewing storm had finally come. Apart from those five divine realms, the disciples of the other three watched from afar before leaving in a hurry. Perhaps they didn't know what to do about the situation, since their seniors hadn't told them anything in advance. When they were gone, only the hundred plus surviving disciples of the Archaion Sect remained in the snowy landscape, the ice freezing their boiling blood.

"It's over..." many echoed as they looked in the direction of Xuanyuan Lake. The many elites of the sect approached from all over and hugged their children, dead or alive. Tianming witnessed it all with bloodshot eyes before he turned to leave.

.....

Before the first phase had even ended, the intentions of the other sects were clear.

"Those animals of the Quadform Sea Sect took the treasures and land and still know no shame!"

"Heptastar Celestial Sect, huh? I knew from the beginning that they were only playing nice on the surface! There was no way they wouldn't take advantage of our plight, those sneaky bastards!"

"Stop being so naive! I think the other three divine realms are the same. They just haven't bared their fangs yet because they're afraid of losing face by turning against us, their benefactors!"

"Nonsense. Triflair, Pentaphase, and Octagram are our close allies!"

Arguments could be heard from the tribulation elders at the Human Branch's Dimensional Battlefield.

"The troubling part is that the Nonahall Ghost Sect has joined them. Their realm isn't far from ours, and if they declare war against us, they'll be more powerful than Birtual and Hexapath combined!"

"There's no need to be so pessimistic, right? They still haven't deployed their armies so far. They also have their own scores to settle with the others, and they're not about to send their troops and risk losing them. We'll defend our goddess to the death, after all, whether we succeed or not."

"The best they can do is to force us to submit during the Number One Summit. That way, they won't suffer any real casualties and will also be able to neutralize the threat Her Eminence poses to them."

"As for the other three divine realms, even if they don't send their troops out against us, they're probably hoping that we'll give up on our own accord."

"We lost so many disciples in the Skyorigin Battlefield alone.... Will we lose the rest of the generation in the Nether Battlefield?" "I said that we shouldn't bother hosting the Number One Summit! These are desperate times—"

"Shut up, all of you!" someone roared. The one who spoke wasn't Fang Taiqing, but rather Xuanyuan Dao, the sect master of the Earth Branch.

"Is there anyone else who wants to surrender? If the young ones who aren't even thirty dare to fight to their deaths, who are you to say that? How could our mighty sect that's lasted over two hundred thousand years have cowards like you?!"

The whole place gradually quieted down.

"Earth Branch Sect Master, quell your anger. The truth is plain for all to see. Among the participants in the Number One Summit, we only have around forty from the Heaven Ranking remaining. They're the hope of our sect's future, and our lifeline. If you have any way to save them, please let us hear it," said a white-haired old man.

Xuanyuan Dao pondered for a moment. "After the first phase, the disciples will be given a few days to rest, according to the rules. That's also when preparations for the Nether Battlefield will begin. I suggest that we extend the preparation time as the hosts."

"How long can we extend it?" Fang Taiqing asked.

"Historically, what is the longest recovery time?"

"About half a month," Jian Wuyi said.

"Then half a month it will be," Fang Taiqing said.

Everyone listened attentively to the three sect masters' discussion. They had done much to win as many allies for the sect as they could. They weren't afraid of the openly hostile Birtual Demon Sect or the Hexapath Sword Sect; what they were most fearful of were the other sects that pretended to be their allies. What if they paid them off, only to be backstabbed in the end?

"Earth Branch Sect Master, what's the point of the extension?" someone asked, prompting everyone to look to him for an answer.

"Don't ask too many questions. Trust me on this one."

"Then we'll do as the sect master says," Fang Taiqing said.

"Agreed."

There were many tribulation elders in Tribulation Peak who held some semblance of authority that they could use to delay the start of the second phase of battles. At the very least, they would have some buffer time.

"But the other divine realms will have to agree to it first, right?"

"They have no say in it. If they can come late and delay the start of the summit, we are well within our rights to extend our preparation time. If they're unhappy about it, our disciples won't keep fighting in the summit," Xuanyuan Dao said. Usually, he was the least outspoken of the three sect masters, but his strong attitude, backed by the might of the Archaic House of Xuanyuan, gave his words weight.

"We'll discuss it with them together," Fang Taiqing said.

The three sect masters then left to announce the delay of the second phase's start. As they had expected, the other divine realms didn't really care about a small matter like that.

"Sect Masters, since you have more time now, make sure to think things through carefully," said a tempting female voice from the side of the Biritual Demon Sect. The voice was so enchanting it sent tingles through anyone listening to it. "We will," Xuanyuan Dao said.

And so it was decided. While the Archaion Sect used the time to recover, the other sects would take advantage of it to form alliances and optimize their combat effectiveness.

.....

After they left, Fang Taiqing stopped and turned to Xuanyuan Dao. "Don't tell me you're making an extension to give Tianming time to cultivate."

"What? I can't do that?"

"It's not that you can't, but doing so for a single disciple is a little ridiculous. Are you going to drown him in treasures to help him grow?"

"Based on his performance today and his recent rate of growth, coupled with my evaluation of his fighting spirit and determination, I believe we should."

"Are you going to personally help him break through to the Samsara stage?"

"Yes."

"Even if that happens, will he be able to turn the tables single-handedly and ensure that our other disciples survive the Nether Battlefield?"

"How will we know if we don't try?"

"Let's give it a try, then," Fang Taiqing said.

"Regardless, even if all our disciples perish, the Archaion Sect will protect Her Eminence to our deaths."

"I don't need you to remind me of that. Without times when sacrifices are called for, we'd never know who our true allies and foes are," Fang Taiqing said before leaving. Only Xuanyuan Dao and Jian Wuyi remained.

"Do you have any thoughts about this?" Xuanyuan Dao asked.

"No," Jian Wuyi said with a wave.

.....

Tianming knew that he had a few days of rest after the first phase, so he went straight to the Old Deepstar Path.

Before long, a man in a golden robe with dragon patterns called out to him. It was none other than Xuanyuan Dao.

"Sect Master," Tianming greeted.

"We lost quite a lot. Did you see it?"

"Yes."

"What do you plan to do?"

"I'll do my best and give it my all."

"Alright. Also, the next phase starts in half a month. You still have time to prepare."

"Wasn't the rest period only four or five days?"

"I suggested an extension."

"Why?"

"It'll be time enough for you to break through to the Samsara stage. Hopefully, your power will grow rapidly and you'll be able to change our sect's destiny."

"Sect Master, why are you placing so much hope in me?"

"I trust Her Eminence, as well as what I've witnessed myself. While most people have a limit to how much they can grow, that doesn't seem to apply to you."

"I appreciate the kind words, Sect Master."

"Now come with me. I'll bring you into the interior of the Heaven Cauldron. There's a method you can use to skip straight to the Samsara stage, though it'd be more accurate to call it a challenge. If you fail, you'll die on the spot, but if you succeed, you'll save lots of time."

"Right now?" Tianming said with a troubled look.

"Any problem with that?"

"Sect Master, I'm actually only at the eighth level of the Empyrean Saint stage. I'm not at the ninth yet."

Shocked, Xuanyuan Dao said, "An eighth-level empyrean saint killing a third-level life phase samsaran like Feng Daoyi? What kind of monster are you?"