

The Ages 871

Chapter 871 - Self Destruct

"Lin Xiaoxiao was probably controlled or tempted by the Archaionfiend. She probably didn't do all that by her own will. The previous assassination attempt on you was also probably a misunderstanding. This time around, the Archaionfiend almost wiped the city off the map. If not for her, all of us would be...." Feiling shuddered at the thought of all the lives that would be taken should that have come to pass.

"So that was the case!" Tianming slapped himself on the forehead. "I was far too angry back then. If she was actually tricked and didn't intend to do it, I bet she felt really hurt. Yet she was still able to look past that today and fight the Archaionfiend, heavily wounding it and saving countless people... I really owe her an apology."

"It's a shame we don't know how much of an edge she has over the Archaionfiend. If she's completely helpless, she'll be in for even more suffering..."

"It can't be helped. I can't do anything about it myself, it'll be up to her."

Lin Xiaoxiao was an upright girl, something that had earned Tianming's respect. He looked in the direction she had left one last time before rushing back to the city after hearing Yi Xingyin beckoning. While the city had been saved, it was still in a dire situation.

Right as Tianming descended, he saw Fu You attempting to attack the formation again after the blast had failed to destroy the city. Currently, Fang Shenyu, Jian Qingyuan, and their lifebound beasts were trying to stop Fu You, but they seemed to be at a disadvantage.

Fortunately, Tianming's Vitasteal had pushed their side closer to victory and few troops remained on all four sides of the city. The army of six million that Nonahall had mobilized to attack the city had almost completely collapsed, but samsarans were immune to Vitasteal, so the remnants wouldn't be that easy to deal with.

Not to mention, once the formation collapsed, the four ghoulish kings—Si Ling especially—would be able to massacre away with abandon without anything to stop them. Ensuring that the formation was able to get as much power as possible during the siege was the highest priority. Simply making judgments about the state of battle based solely on the number of troops was a naive mistake to make. Throughout history, formations had often played pivotal roles in sieges, and Yi Xingyin's exploits as a tribulation patternscribe would no doubt go down in the annals of history thanks to this battle!

If it weren't for the formations scattered across the Flameyellow Continent, Nonahall would've overwhelmed all the other powers long ago. The Sun-Moon-Star Formation, effective as it was, was something Yi Xingyin had devised. The Ninefold Formation of Taiji Peak Lake, on the other hand, was the culmination of generations of wisdom and cutting-edge pattern research. Even so, Sun-Moon-Star Formation seemed like it wouldn't hold for long.

Right after Tianming returned, Yi Xingyin said, "Tianming, stop Fu You immediately!"

"Got it!" He hurried forward with his beasts and joined the fray.

Yi Xingyin continued, "Even though the threat from above has been dealt with, the four ghoulish kings still loom over us. For now, Lan Yi and You Ying aren't able to enter from the east and west, but Fu You's lifebound beasts are about to enter from the north. Old Xie is heavily injured and at the brink of death, so there's nobody to stop them!"

The urgency in his voice could be heard even through the formation's communication channel. Now that the formation sun was no longer threatening them, Si Ling was unstoppable. While they weren't worried about her taking on the tribulation elders, they couldn't let her kill the civilians no matter what.

"Palace Lord, can you do anything about it?" Tianming asked as he fought.

"Help me check how many of the enemy's troops are left. I can still hold the formation for now, but I can't tell how many enemy troops have entered the city."

"There aren't many left. Most of those that rushed in have been killed. Some of them escaped from the formation. They've lost at least five million, even more if you account for lifebound beasts."

"Is this all thanks to that arm of yours?" he asked with awe.

"Kind of...."

Currently, Tianming was really worn out, thanks to using Vitasteal so often. Though there were more than ten people facing off against Fu You alone, it was still a difficult affair. If not for Vitasteal completely suppressing the other 'lower-tier' warriors, the city would've already fallen.

"Tianming, that technique of yours created a miracle. Now all we need is enough power to deal a heavy blow to the enemy. Even if the city's formation is breached, our mission will have been successful. To achieve a complete victory, I'd like to take another risk!" Yi Xingyin said.

"What risk?"

"Actually, the formation core was broken by Fu You at the very beginning. Even though it's just a small crack, it's a process that can't be stopped and there's no time for me to repair it. Even if the core doesn't get struck from now on, the formation will still crumble in two to four hours. By then, the city will be completely undefended. If the enemy has more reinforcements, then the edge we've managed to gain for ourselves will be lost," he said with a hint of courage that seemed enough to even stare straight at death.

"Then, what's your plan?"

"Back when I created this formation with my friends, we built a self-destruct layer into it. That layer has to be activated with an ever stronger force. I plan to have the troops from the two legions enter the formation core. Coupled with the civilians of the city, we'll gather enough power to initiate the self-destruct sequence of the Sun-Moon-Star Formation. We'll channel all the power of the formation into a simultaneous grand rising of both the sun and moon at the same time to eliminate all the enemy's peak elites at once. If it works, we'll have a complete victory, and even if it doesn't go completely according to plan, we'll still be able to deal a heavy blow and buy enough time for most of us to retreat."

"The enemy no longer has as many forces to spare, so it should work out, right?" Tianming asked.

"That's right. You all have dealt with five million troops already. Otherwise, the Origin Phoenix and Arcana Sword troops wouldn't be available to help initiate the self-destruction. It's actually a rather risky move, seeing as we have to divert quite a lot of our own forces for it. It wouldn't work if we had more than six million troops to face off against, but it's different now."

"So, what do I need to do?"

"Hold Fu You off and make sure he doesn't continue attacking the formation core while clearing up the enemy troops in the city as soon as possible to allow Arcana Sword and Origin Phoenix to enter!"

"Understood! By the way, can you hold on?"

"I'll tough through it. Tonight, I want to let the world know my name," he said with a smirk, though Tianming couldn't see his expression as they were communicating through the formation. However, Tianming had a feeling that making the formation self-destruct wouldn't be nearly as easy as it sounded, but he chose to trust Yi Xingyin since they were in such a predicament.

"Alright, let's get started, Palace Lord!" He mustered his resolve and used Vitasteal once more, despite how hard it was on him.

Chapter 872 - One Sun, Three Moons, Scattered Souls

During the desperate struggle, the remnants of the enemy troops within the city had completely collapsed.

"Everyone from Origin Phoenix and Arcana Sword, enter the formation core! Brothers and Sisters of Tianming City, hold the line and await my orders!" Tianming roared with everything he had, almost feeling like passing out.

"It's the imperial son!"

"The imperial son has instructions for us!"

With Xuanyuan Xie badly injured and Jian Wuyi busy with holding Si Ling at bay, Tianming was the one with the most authority. Only he could spur them into action, which was why Yi Xingyin had explained his plans to him.

Anyone could tell that it was Tianming who had controlled the enemy and enabled the killing of all five million troops. His prestige had soared through the roof. Eventually, he seemed to be able to see something new. When the millions of lives held the formation's spirit threads, a new thread seemed to sprout from their bodies and connect to his. The countless threads concentrated on him and connected to his Imperial Will. He felt their boundless strength nourishing his tired soul.

"Even if it's just a small burst of hope, it's more than enough."

The troops from the two legions heeded his orders and quickly marched toward the formation core. The power of the formation would no doubt get a great boost with them there. Meanwhile, the millions of civilians continued holding strong to the formation spirit threads as they waited for Tianming's next order.

"Tianming, it's ready! Come!" Yi Xingyin's spirited voice rang from within the formation core. Now, the handsome man stood alone on a tall, starlit platform.

"Palace Lord, let us go as well!" Dao Yuanyi said from beneath the platform, tears flowing from his eyes.

"It's no use. I shall be the sole sacrifice. Today is the day of my glory, I won't let any of you steal my limelight!" Yi Xingyin said with a hearty laugh.

"You must stay strong, brother..." Chen Cangshu said with a hoarse voice.

"Don't worry. I'm not ready to leave this mortal coil yet." Right after saying that, he sent a signal to Tianming and made a loud announcement to the whole city. "Everyone, a few days ago, we relied on our own power to deal a heavy blow to the Hexapath Swordfiend! Tonight, this city alone managed to kill five million enemy troops!

"We all know how powerful Nonahall and the other four divine realms are! However, we have no doubt shown our own power and courage, every one of us here! We took down the Hexapath Swordfiend and crushed an army of five million. We made history! This is proof that any and all life is able to exist in this world with dignity! We will not allow anyone to invade our homes! We will not allow anyone to rob us of our lives! Even though Tianming City will fall, we shall give our all one final time to show these invaders the power of our iron will! Trust me! We can do it! We shall eradicate them and scatter their souls!"

Tianming continued battling Fu You, defending the formation core with his own body. Then he looked at the ghoulish king with his black and gold eyes as the starlit city echoed the voice of his soul. "Right now, people all over the world are in awe of our achievements! We shall keep fighting!"

Every word he said came from his own heart and his feelings of awe at the dedication everyone in the city showed. Fine folks like them shouldn't be exterminated. No matter how weak or insignificant an individual life was, if tens of thousands of them worked together with an unbreakable spirit, they would be able to usher in overwhelming force that awed the world. While having too many people would make things a little more chaotic, they had Tianming to channel their explosive force. They also had Yi Xingyin and the other elites of Deepstar Hall within the formation core that could direct and concentrate their rampant forces into one overwhelming blow!

At that moment, Tianming City exploded. An unimaginable amount of force flooded into the formation core from the formation's spirit threads, coupled with another wave of power from the troops of the Arcana Sword and Origin Phoenix Legions within the core, as well as the twenty thousand first-origin tribulation elders. Three forces came together in the core to Yi Xingyin's position, where the self-destruct layer was.

With a great rumble, the boundless force was converted into starlight, completely enveloping Yi Xingyin. There was something he had left out in his explanation to Tianming: the self-destruct layer required an operator to target the enemies, and the one who received all of that energy would end up dead from the overload. That was the reason self-destruct layers in formations were so rare. Those who implemented it in their formations knew that they might one day perish if they ever had to use it, and Yi Xingyin was fully aware of what it entailed. But now, this handsome middle-aged man had stepped onto

a stage that was made solely for him, dressed in a brilliant starry robe, allegedly to 'not let others steal his limelight'.

When the starlight completely engulfed him, he seemed just as excited as he was nervous. He was an amazing tribulation patternscribe, and was ready to witness his magnum opus. Soon, the starlight enveloped his stage in its entirety. Now, he was the formation's core, its beating heart itself! Even Dao Yuanyi and Chen Cangshu, who were standing beside him, couldn't see him clearly anymore.

The next moment, the self-destruct layer activated, causing tremors throughout the formation. The stars shone brilliantly above Tianming City.

"Are you still alive, Old Yi?" Xuanyuan Xie said as he crawled nearer with his sole remaining arm, watching the man on the stage.

"How could I be dead if you're still alive?" Yi Xingyin said.

"Haha, you're so unfair. Guess your dream is about to come true. These crooks will be wiped out for sure!" Xuanyuan Xie laid down as he laughed. He calmly looked at the blinding stars, combing his messy hair with his arm. "Dearie, come look at the stars with me."

Su Wanfeng sat down beside him, covered in blood and holding his hand. The battle was finally over. Everyone on the battlefield stopped what they were doing and wiped their bloody eyes clean as they looked up at the sky, standing on mountains of corpses. The starlight was far too blinding. Even Xuanyuan Muxue couldn't help but shield her eyes from their brilliance. Further away, Beigong Qianyu hugged a heavily injured man tightly in her arms as they looked up at the sky together.

As everyone watched, the Sun-Moon-Star Formation exploded with a resounding boom. The remaining troops from Nonahall were probably relieved to see that the formation they had been trying so hard to take down was now gone. But was that all there was to it?

The next moment, half of the starlight from the explosion gathered at the formation sun near the south of the city, causing it to double in size and light up the night sky. The other half of the light split into three, forming three formation moons. Now there were three moons, one sun, and countless stars in the sky.

"Is this... the true power of the grand solunar rising?" Who could have imagined how much power it would have?

With the formation shattered, it was all down to Yi Xingyin to direct the power of the sun and moons at his enemies—the four ghoulish kings in particular! Si Ling, an eleventh-level death phase samsaran, had been held back by the formation sun the whole time. Now, the sun that had doubled in size flew straight toward her.

"Impossible!" She was completely dumbfounded. The formation was created by someone from her generation and couldn't possibly match up to the Ninefold Formation of Taiji Peak Lake. It couldn't possibly generate so much power! Yet the proof was undeniable. Her pride and arrogance was going to cost her! She was about to be attacked by a force even more terrifying than Feng Qingyu had suffered! It wasn't just her either; Lan Yi, You Ying, and Fu You, who was in the city, were the targets of the three formation moons.

"All of you, die!" Yi Xingyin's voice rang throughout the city. Of the two formation moons from before, one exploded and killed the lifebound beast of the twelfth-level life phase Hexapath Swordfiend, and the other took out the heartsourge fiend. While the three new formation moons were slightly smaller, they were only going to be used against the three ghoulish kings who were eleventh-level life phase samsarans.

Tianming, who was already familiar with the sheer power of the formation moon, hurriedly moved aside. While Fu You attempted to do the same, the moon homed in on him no matter how he tried to dodge. Yi Xingyin roared desperately, ensuring that the moon caught up to Fu You and caused it to explode.

Tianming saw Fu You's body immediately torn to shreds amidst the explosion with his own eyes. Then, the two other formation moons in the east and west exploded at the same time, sending deafening booms throughout the city. The formation's spirit threads and core were no more. The grand explosions caused everyone to blank out and tense up. Then everyone turned their gaze to the formation sun and Ghoul King Si Ling near the south gate.

Chapter 873 - Daybreak

A grand explosion was set off at the south gate. Smoke and fire rose to the clouds, forming a huge mushroom, and the aftershocks were no less deafening.

"Hahahaha!" Laughter blended in with the cacophony of sound from the starlit stage. It was Yi Xingyin's laughter.

"Palace Lord!" Tianming cried as he rushed to the formation nucleus. By now, the 'stage' was already dim. When he arrived there, the fabulous man from before looked like he had aged years. Despite still standing with great effort, there were cracks all over his body.

"Self-destructing formations is a forbidden technique for patternscribes. The fact that I didn't die is a miracle!" Even though it felt like a huge waste, Yi Xingyin was still laughing. "Well, it's a shame that my saint palace is now bust. I just earned myself a lot of fame, yet I already have to retire.... How troubling."

Tianming stood before him with a blank expression. Even though Yi Xingyin was crippled, he didn't seem the least bit troubled.

"Tianming, Tianming, come help me!" he said as he excitedly tugged on his hand. "Go to the south gate and see if that shitstain of a woman Si Ling is dead! Don't bother checking the east and west gates, they're definitely dead! Quick! I want to know whether I killed all four of them, or just three!"

"Alright!" Tianming nodded, giving him a last look. Yi Xingyin seemed to have forgotten the fact that he had traded his saint palace for this sacrificial move. Instead, he was bathing in bliss, having created a miracle. This was all he had wanted!

In fact, he suddenly knelt and tears began flowing as he bawled, "Dad, you said patternscribes were useless... I wonder if I've proven you wrong tonight?"

Tianming didn't know Yi Xingyin's story. Everyone had dreams and wanted to prove themselves to the world. As such, he held great respect for Yi Xingyin.

He quickly made his way to the south gate, eager to see if Si Ling was dead. By then, the entire city had quieted down. When the starlight began fading, the veil of dark night descended once more. But while he was still on his way, a ray of light was seen on the horizon. It was daybreak.

"I need to hurry!" Tianming felt the cold breeze of spring blow past him. Along the way, there were countless corpses of Nonahall warriors and their lifebound beasts. He stomped his way across the piles and piles of bodies and climbed up the south wall, seeing Jian Wuyi facing off against the necrofiend flare dragon. The former was completely fine, while the latter was carrying a badly battered lifebound beast. It was none other than the necrogale qilin.

Since Si Ling's lifebound beasts were there, where was she? Soon, Tianming spotted her in a crater, the same one that had resulted from the explosion of the formation sun. Si Ling had lost both her legs and one arm. Basically, only her upper body was left intact. As she struggled, the necrofiend flare dragon charged toward her, obviously intent on staging a rescue. It was apparent that right before the formation sun had exploded, the necrogale qilin took the blow and was blasted to pieces. Even so, what remained of the explosive force was enough to brutally wound Si Ling.

These injuries were far worse than what Feng Qingyu had suffered before. Missing legs aside, her whole body was now charred black, and exposed bone poked out from many parts of her body. Even her face was nothing but a bloody smudge. However, were she allowed to escape, she would no doubt rise again. Without another word, Tianming squeezed every bit of energy that he could still muster and charged in.

"Sect Master Jian, stop it!" he roared. Many others were still paying attention to this side of the battlefield. Tianming charged into the crater like a meteor and the dragon spat out green flames that burned his back before stretching its claw out, ready to strike him.

"Sect Master Jian?" Tianming abruptly turned back, his flesh already healing, thanks to the Greenspark Tower, and saw Jian Wuyi and his swordbeast engaging the necrofiend flare dragon and giving him space. He quickly drew the Grand-Orient Sword and charged toward Si Ling.

What he didn't expect, however, was that the flying dragon actually glared at Jian Wuyi and said, "What are you doing?! Li Tianming's about to kill her!"

"I'm sorry, but you failed. I have an even more important mission, so I'm afraid she'll have to be sacrificed." Jian Wuyi grit his teeth and continued keeping the dragon occupied.

All Tianming needed was an instant.

"Li Tianming...." Si Ling began levitating despite having only an arm remaining.

"I'll be sending you off to the afterlife!" Tianming made a rapid approach as she tried to escape, swinging his sword with both hands. "Farewell, Ghoulish King Si Ling!"

Arcing through the air in a spinning motion, Si Ling's head plopped onto the ground, rolling along while her eyes were still fixed on Tianming, albeit upside down. She had landed flat on the top of her head. Tianming approached and picked her head up by the hair. "Ghoulish King Si Ling, I hereby inform you that I

wasn't the one who killed you. It was everyone in this city and a man of little fame in Archaion, Yi Xingyin."

Si Ling was now dead, the light completely faded from her eyes. Tianming made his way back to Yi Xingyin with her head in tow. "Palace Lord!"

Yi Xingyin turned to look and broke out into laughter as the others held him up. "Hahahahahaha! If only Ouyang was here, I'd celebrate and drink with him."

"You can still boast to him when we get back," Tianming said.

The battle of Tianming City was finally over. The city walls had been breached, but the enemies were all killed. Yi Xingyin had paid the price of losing his saint palace. His life of cultivation ended then and there. This was something Tianming would be unable to forget for the rest of his life. Looking at the man who was filled to the brim with a sense of pride and accomplishment, he wondered what else he could do for him. Yet, to Yi Xingyin, he was lucky to get off with his life intact.

If I ever gain the power in the future, I'll make sure to allow him to continue pursuing his dreams, Tianming swore to himself.

By then, Jian Wuyi had also returned. He looked at Tianming, Yi Xingyin, and the others with an expression of awe.

"How was it?" Yi Xingyin asked.

"Amazing. I'm impressed," Jian Wuyi said, shooting them a thumbs-up.

"What do we do next, Sect Master?" Tianming asked.

"The four ghoulish kings are dead, and only one of Si Ling's lifebound beasts remains. It left with the lifebound beasts of the other three dead ghoulish kings. While they're still around, they've lost their beastmasters, so the most threat they can pose would be like the heartscourge fiend and skyscorch bloodfiend from before. They're nothing more than cannon fodder now."

"So with the four ghoulish kings dead and their army of six million gone, we've won! Even though we lost the formation, it's a miraculous victory!" Xuanyuan Xie and Yi Xingyin joyfully hugged each other.

"We won!"

Everyone started cheering and tearing up. Even though their casualties weren't that high, all of them knew the number of times they'd had a close brush with death. Again and again, different people had stood up to the occasion to pull them back to the world of the living.

"It's a miracle, and everyone in the city is a hero." Tianming pursed his lips and finally smiled. Lin Xiaoxiao had contributed to their victory as well. All of them knew how rare this short moment of peace they just got was, and everyone was worn out.

"Tianming City's formation is gone, and reinforcements might come from Nonahall soon. They have a lot of people to spare, after all. We can't stay here for long. Our mission here to deal a heavy blow to them was a success, and Tianming City has fulfilled its purpose. Now, we have to leave this place," Xuanyuan Xie said to Su Wanfeng. She was the city lord, and this was where she had grown up and fallen in love.

"Even though we have to give up on this place, nobody will forget the city! Let's go! We'll meet again if we're fated to!"

Everyone would have to head north. Some would be refugees, while others would return to Taiji Peak Lake to wait for their next orders, Tianming included. There was much more to be done after this momentous battle. One had to wonder what the five divine realms would do after their failure here; perhaps the worst was yet to come.

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Moments later, Tianming stood atop the north wall of the city and looked north. Those who had fought alongside him were fleeing north, though they were still relishing in the joy of victory. Many other cities would definitely open their doors to welcome these heroes.

Then he turned south, gazing over the bloodstained and corpse-ridden battlefield. The city was now the burial grounds of more than five million troops and four ghoulish kings. The city that used to bustle with life had become an antithesis to its former self, now filled with nothing but the dead. Those who fled north had gone with their injured, having little time to even clean up their homes before leaving. The war was still ongoing, and the heavily wounded enemy would no doubt strike back with even more intensity. However, Archaion had proven on this very day that they would not go down until their very last breath.

The sky suddenly brightened. Far away on the horizon, the real sun was peeking out through the mountains. Its red rays illuminated the clouds above, encroaching upon the land, dispelling the darkness and bringing back the light. The pools of blood sparkled eye-catchingly, almost as if they were works of art.

Chapter 874 - Qingyu

The light of dawn seemed to point the way toward a new tomorrow as a group of a thousand people headed north, leaving Tianming City behind. They were mostly tribulation elders of Tribulation Peak. To avoid being pursued by the enemy from behind, the tens of thousands of tribulation elders had split up into batches during their return to Taiji Peak Lake.

The Origin Phoenix and Arcana Sword Legions continued guarding the other cities beyond Tianming City. As for the Fienddragon Legion, it had more or less been decimated. Many members of the Xuanyuan house had perished on the battlefield. As such, their celebration didn't last long.

They were all too tired from all the fighting. Tianming managed to spot Xuanyuan Muxue among the group and was relieved to see that she had survived. "How are your injuries?"

"They're fine. I used a spirit herb to heal up."

Tianming looked at her face, illuminated by the sunlight. It was the visage of a woman with faith and courage. "So, you'll finally accept the Frosty Mercurius, right?" Tianming said, raising his brows.

"Of course. It's about time for evolution."

"Very good." He gave her a pat on the shoulder.

"What's up, big hero?" she asked.

"Nothing much, little hero," Tianming said, feigning a cough and doing his best impression of an old man. "Young one, if you work hard enough, even you will be able to mature into a real, upright man."

"Stop messing around, idiot." She rolled her eyes and ignored him.

"So, what're your plans now?"

"I'll go back to Taiji Peak Lake and see how things develop. What about you?"

"What a coincidence. I had the same thing in mind."

"How original."

Walking beside them were Xuanyuan Yucheng and Beigong Qianyu. After going through this life or death experience, they seemed to have fallen deeper in love with each other. Beigong Qianyu was bidding her mother, the coral fairy Beigong Linlan, goodbye. The latter had to return for the time being with the tribulation elders from her sect.

When they were more or less done, Tianming suddenly had a thought. He went over to them and asked, "Ladies, have you seen Sect Master Jian?"

"My dad? If I'm to guess, he probably returned to Taiji Peak Lake to make a report," Beigong Qianyu said with a slight look of disappointment.

"Is he in such a rush? Why wouldn't he at least meet up with your mother? A send off sounds in order," Tianming said.

"They've actually been separated for years..." she awkwardly said.

"Ah, I get it...." It's no wonder Tianming had a feeling the married couple didn't seem to talk much.

"Imperial Son, partings are just another common occurrence in life," the coral fairy said with a smile. She held her daughter's hand and continued, "Yu'er, come back to the sect with me this time."

"Are you sure it'll be any safer than Taiji Peak Lake?"

"Are you saying you don't want to come with me?"

"Not really, but—"

"It's because of this boy, right?" The coral fairy glanced at Xuanyuan Yucheng, causing him to stiffen up.

He came up and said, "Greetings, Coral Fairy. I am Xuanyuan Yucheng."

Beigong Qianyu pulled her mother's arm close and said, "Mom, I've made my decision. I'll spend the rest of my life with him."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes."

"What's so good about him?"

"Coral Fairy... I... admittedly, I don't have many strengths to speak of. All I can do is promise that I'll protect her with all I have, including my life. If I ever break that promise, you are always welcome to claim my head..." Xuanyuan Yucheng stammered, though not for lack of dedication. He was just too nervous.

"Alright, I'll mark your words. The others here shall be witness to your oath."

"No problem. I'll acknowledge them as witnesses," Xuanyuan Yucheng said.

"Sect Master, don't scare the poor young man with such formalities! Hahaha..." the tribulation elders of Triflair joked around.

"Very well." Beigong Linlan smiled and gave her daughter a hug with a conflicted gaze. Before she left, she whispered to her daughter, "He seems like a dependable young man. You have my blessing. Make sure to stand strong with one another."

"Mom, what about you and Dad?"

"Not another word of that. The days of us sharing the same bed and dreams are over." She smiled as she helped tidy up her daughter's hair before bidding Tianming farewell and leaving with the other elders.

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Some hundreds of kilometers east of Tianming City was Greensparrow Mountain. It was named that as it looked like a little bird mid-flight. The upper half of the mountain was snowy, while the lower half was a swamp forest.

The sun was rising in the east, giving the blanket of snow on the mountain a golden tinge. At the peak of the mountain was a figure clad in green, standing with his hands behind his back. The light from the rising sun completely drowned out the man.

This was none other than Feng Qingyu. Within a few short days, his heavy injuries had completely healed up and the charred skin from before was nowhere to be seen. Now he stood tall and straight, like a sharpened sword. His recent hardship had somehow sharpened his glare as he squinted at the sun.

He was among the most terrifying and cruel people of the Hexapath Divine Realm. He had complete authority over everything there and was used to wielding all that power, as was apparent from his ever-calculating gaze.

All of a sudden, a neatly dressed man in blue descended from the sky behind him. The pair, blue and green, seemed to blend together into one on the mountain peak.

"Took you quite a while," Feng Qingyu said with a dissatisfied tone as he turned around. The one who had just arrived was none other than Jian Wuyi.

"Qingyu, why didn't you act even though you recovered? They wouldn't have lost so badly if you'd been there." Jian Wuyi met his gaze, seemingly trying to figure out the answer to his question. Though he called him Qingyu, it sounded slightly different. It wasn't the usual characters for 'green' and 'hell', but 'green' and 'feather' instead. Most people had already forgotten that version of the name, which was last used by Feng Qingyu before he turned thirty.

Back then, he felt that his name sounded a little too soft and gentle, so he had it intentionally changed; then, using his new name, he rose to fame and stayed there for more than two centuries. Most people had forgotten his old name by now.

"Why should I have acted?" Feng Qingyu asked with a smirk.

"Wouldn't the two old folks come cause trouble for you for sitting and watching while they lost?" Jian Wuyi said, his brows furrowing.

"And how are they supposed to know I've recovered? Couldn't I just pretend I needed a few more days to recover? Not to mention, I was in seclusion here. There was no way I could've predicted that the pathetic ghost sect would lose so badly."

"Even if they don't directly bring it up, you can be sure they'll cause trouble for you in the future," Jian Wuyi said.

"It doesn't matter. The more they lose in the fight with the Monorigin Sect, the better. Ideally, I'd want Zi Xiao to die too, but only after they take the Monorigin Divine Realm. As for the two old fools, they're struggling against the tide of the twelfth-level death phase. They'll eventually die too. Once they're all gone, the world will be ours to rule."

"You have a point. Everyone's plotting to gain an edge over each other. Let's just hope the alliance holds up for the time being. Now that Nonahall has lost so many, they'll have far less sway and pose less of a threat than before." Jian Wuyi relaxed a little after coming upon the realization.

"You're right. Might is right. As long as we keep the charade going, they'll direct their desire for revenge toward Taiji Peak Lake," Feng Qingyu said with a smile.

Chapter 875 - Let The Sword Dao Sweep Across The Realm

"Just pretend when they ask you," said Jian Wuyi.

"Of course. We can't let them find anything. Wuyi...." Feng Qingyu descended, looked at him and said, "This time, you've contributed a great deal to the Archaion Sect. Your status should've improved, and the voices questioning you will disappear. When the time comes, you won't have any trouble entering the Ninefold Formation's core, will you?"

"It shouldn't be a problem. I'm already in control of the trifold formation. It'll still be to our advantage even if only the trifold formation is broken. I'll probably gain control of much more after this. In fact, if it weren't for the Nonahall Sect's lack of confidence in my ability and their fear of betting on me, they wouldn't have needed to push forward on the ground. Their powerhouses could've besieged Taiji Peak Lake directly," said Jian Wuyi.

"These people are too cautious. After all, betting on you breaking the formation core is indeed risky. They want to attack from within and without. With both sides guaranteed, it'd be more certain. Unfortunately, they didn't expect to be so badly defeated in what was supposed to be an easy battle. Their most crucial army of corpse puppets is completely gone. And now those two old ghouls have yet to appear. Who knows what they're doing?" Feng Qingyu replied.

"Anyway, they're the ones who suffered a loss. I couldn't care less."

"Alright, we'll follow the original plan. You break the Ninefold Formation from the formation nucleus, leaving Taiji Peak Lake undefended, then immediately head to Xuanyuan Lake to take the Hexapath Sword Insight Rock. Fang Taiqing and Xuanyuan Dao will be too busy fighting Nonahall to deal with you," said Feng Qingyu.

"Don't worry, it'll be fine. After my contribution this time, these matters will be easy to handle," said Jian Wuyi.

"Very well." Feng Qingyu looked at him with fiery eyes. "Wuyi, you're my biggest trump card and the key to everything. You must hide well. This is an opportunity for the Flameyellow Continent to shuffle the cards. You'll be the one to determine if the Jian clan becomes kings or criminals!"

"Yes. After breaking the Ninefold Formation, we'll leave the Nonahall and Archaion Sect to kill each other. The more lives the Nonahall Sect loses, the harder it'll be for them to deal with us. The two old ghouls will die from the death phase sooner or later. Without them, the Nonahall Sect won't be able to sustain themselves. By that time, Dugu Jin will be our only enemy." Jian Wuyi narrowed his eyes.

"He's overconfident. He too has entered the twelfth-level death phase and won't last long. Moreover, Quadform Sect's foundation is too weak. We have Sixpath and you!" said Feng Qingyu.

"In this case, the Nonahall Sect's crushing defeat is our greatest advantage. With such a shameful defeat, it's impossible for them to stop fighting." Jian Wuyi smiled.

Despite the surprise, everything seemed to fall into place perfectly.

"This world will be ours and our clan will stand above all." Feng Qingyu looked up at the sun, his heart boiling with passion.

"By the way, why do you think Dugu Jin tried to assassinate Xuanyuan Xi during the Number One Summit?" Jian Wuyi suddenly recalled the incident.

"I don't know. According to the rumors, he tried killing the goddess to stop the war. But this is what ordinary folk think. Xuanyuan Xi is merely the trigger, not the reason. Dugu Jin has many secrets. He might even know the secret of the five-colored star. Unfortunately, he's very hostile toward me, so there's no way he'll tell me anything. He's the one we need to guard against the most. You've been in the Archaion Sect for so many years—do you know him well?" asked Feng Qingyu.

Jian Wuyi shook his head.

"Speaking of the assassination attempt, I'm very annoyed by the Nonahall Sect. At the time, I'd just informed them that you and I are on the same side. They just couldn't wait for you to test Xuanyuan Xi to see if she really was just a sky saint. Would you have been able to live if Xuanyuan Xi wasn't so weak? Back then, Xuanyuan Xi had just returned, so no one knew the details. Attempting to assassinate her to test her strength was extremely risky," said Feng Qingyu.

"If she was pretending and actually had divine power, the Nonahall Ghost Sect wouldn't dare make a move and my existence would be useless to them. They don't care," said Jian Wuyi.

"Therefore, we can't believe their promises. If Archaion falls, they'll still be strong and it'll be our turn, sooner or later. With their numbers, they used to be powerful, so I didn't have the right to speak. But now we'll see," Feng Qingyu said coldly.

"Alright then. That's the plan for now. I'm leaving," replied Jian Wuyi.

"Wait." Pointing at the rising sun, Feng Qingyu added, "It's been a long time since I've seen you. Let's talk for a while."

"Alright."

On the peak of the snow-capped mountain, two figures, one green and one blue, faced the rising sun like two swords that shone brightly.

"Wuyi, remember when we were young and the two of us were trapped in the Oceanwind Sword Realm for ten years?" Feng Qingyu looked at the sun with a smile on his lips.

"How can I forget the secret domain the Sword God left behind?" Jian Wuyi replied.

"Many decades have passed in my life, but youth is fleeting. It's probably because I'm growing old that I recently recalled those bits and pieces. After leaving the Oceanwind Sword Realm, I've lived according to what I believe is my destiny. Although I can't say I'm lonely, I've certainly been alone for a long time. Oftentimes, I go for an entire year without speaking. I sometimes think of the days when we cultivated together. It seems that's the only color in my life," Feng Qingyu sighed.

Jian Wuyi nodded.

"Wuyi." Narrowing his eyes, Feng Qingyu continued, "I've made millions of enemies in my life, but you're my only confidante."

"It doesn't have to be this way. After being alone for a long time, you'll lose a balanced mind. Seeing the world may be useful for you when you take that last step. Marrying and having children is also part of sword cultivation," said Jian Wuyi.

"You're married and have children. So I ask you, have you succeeded?" Feng Qingyu smiled.

"No." Jian Wuyi lowered his head

"Not only that. You were once evenly matched with me back then, yet now you're still stuck at the eleventh-level life phase. Aren't you ashamed?"

"You're strong, and gave me trouble as soon as you arrived for the Number One Summit." Jian Wuyi shook his head.

"I wanted to see if you regressed after all these years," said Feng Qingyu.

"Better than some, worse than others. If necessary, I'll enter the eleventh-level death phase. Perhaps I may be of more help." Jian Wuyi replied.

"Yes, do your best. Do you still remember the Sword God's final wish?" asked Feng Qingyu.

"I'll never forget it."

“Although he grew up in the Tai'e House of Jian, he had roots in the Draconis House of Jian. His long-held wish was that our two clans can be united as one. But unfortunately, when he became a god and swept across the continent, the former Tai'e House of Jian couldn't let go of their arrogance and didn't respect him. After he left, our clans were further separated from each other. Now, the world has drastically changed. The Tai'e House of Jian has you as its king. As long as we make significant contributions in this troubled world, our clansmen will no longer be stubborn.”

"It's been over a hundred thousand years. It's time to let go. Who cares about the original clan or its branch? There's no Tai'e or Draconis House of Jian! There will only be one Jian clan. Only such a clan can become the greatest. We've followed the Archaic House of Xuanyuan for so many years. We've already exhausted everything and fulfilled all of our duties. It's time to stand on our own," said Jian Wuyi.

“Very well.” Feng Qingyu stretched out his hand.

After staring blankly for a moment, Jian Wuyi held his hand.

“Let's work together and sweep the world with the sword dao!" Feng Qingyu shouted.

“Qingyu, you said the same exact thing when we were in our twenties. You look just as silly now.”

Roaring with laughter, Feng Qingyu shook his head helplessly. “Yes, I didn't expect it would take two hundred years to realize this.... “

“We might be old, but our hearts have never changed,” Jian Wuyi uttered as he looked out at the mountains. The dazzling sun reminded them of their lost youth.

.....

In front of the Tribulation Hall, tens of thousands of tribulation elders gathered together and waited with bated breath. The battle reports came in from the four borders one by one.

There was good news and bad news. Under such circumstances, they were tormented because all they could do was wait.

“If I'd known I'd be here waiting in agony, I would've gone to Tianming City!”

“Not being able to do anything feels awful!”

“We have no choice. We must prevent the enemy's peak powerhouses from attacking here.”

At present, a third of the tribulation elders had already left to support Tianming City, while others had headed east and west.

There were three battlefields in Archaion. In the east and west, they were attacked by Sixpath and Biritual respectively. In the near future, perhaps Quadform and Heptastar would join the battlefield. The entire divine realm was at stake.

Because Tianming City had recently fought a fierce battle, the atmosphere in Taiji Peak Lake was rather depressing. Even on Tribulation Peak, where the strong were gathered, sighs could be heard all around. The Heaven Branch sect master, Fang Taiqing, stood in front of Tribulation Hall with his hands behind his back, motionless as a mountain.

At this moment—

"It's Chen Cangshu! Chen Cangshu is back!"

"Hurry up!"

Upon hearing that, Fang Taiqing opened his eyes and saw a man descend into the crowd. His face was filled with joy.

"Do you have good news?"

They were all anxious.

"Chen Cangshu, tell us!"

"What's the hurry? I rushed all the way here to report the news," Chen Cangshu laughed.

"Stop beating around the bush! Tell us what happened in Tianming City!" the crowd chattered.

"Silence!"

Everyone calmed down upon hearing Fang Taiqing's order. Otherwise, Chen Cangshu wouldn't have an opportunity to speak.

"Speak," said Fang Taiqing.

"Yes, Sect Master."

As he looked at Fang Taiqing, Chen Cangshu succinctly described everything that had transpired in Tianming City

"Sect Master Jian Wuyi resisted Ghoul King Si Ling?"

"The imperial son used a terrifying technique for soul control and, combined with the power of the formation, led the Arcana Sword Legion and Origin Phoenix Legion in killing more than five million enemy troops, annihilating the enemy's entire army?!"

"The palace lord of Deepstar Hall killed four ghoul kings by condensing the strength of the common people and detonating the formation!"

Chapter 876 - I'm The Only Normal One

If they hadn't heard the news in person, they wouldn't have believed it.

"Chen Cangshu, are you dreaming? Tell the truth, did we lose miserably?" asked one of them.

"Fuck off! Old Yi's saint palace was destroyed in order to detonate the formation. He almost lost his life and you stand here saying this? Is it hard to admit that he turned the tide?!" Chen Cangshu shouted.

"Don't get me wrong. I'm just so happy I can't believe it. I was afraid it's all nonsense!"

"Don't worry, the others will be back with their reports soon."

Turning to Fang Taiqing, Chen Cangshu said, "Sect Master, I rushed back to report so you can prepare and plan your next move. Nonahall and the other four divine realms must be outraged by the crushing defeat. We must deal with them as soon as possible."

"Alright, go rest. Gao Yue, take ten people with you and bring Yi Xingyin back safely. He's Archaion's hero." Fang Taiqing's voice was a little hoarse.

"Everyone, let's welcome our heroes together!"

Since the Heaven Branch sect master had spoken, his words were obviously credible. At this moment, Tribulation Peak was in shock. Turning around, Fang Taiqing entered Tribulation Peak.

"Where are you going?" Leaning against a pillar, Fang Yuqing asked softly.

"Looking for Xuanyuan Dao. What else would I be doing? Fuck! Everyone's so excited."

"As the Heaven Branch sect master, you shouldn't use foul language," said Fang Yuqing.

"If this continues, I might go crazy." Fang Taiqing replied.

"Yes, now that Yi Xingyin has come forward, you can't surrender." Fang Yuqing pouted.

"Who would've thought he possessed such talent and courage! What a pity. I do admire him, though," said Fang Taiqing.

"What do you think will happen next?" asked Fang Yuqing.

"The Nonahall Sect is bound to try destroying Taiji Peak Lake, but with the Ninefold Formation, their odds of winning seem to be much lower than originally expected. Did you hear about Li Tianming?" asked Fang Taiqing.

"I heard. He killed a million by manipulating their souls," Fang Yuqing replied.

"That's the most frightening part! Now that he has such means, and with Ghoul King Si Ling and her army of corpse puppets gone, the legions of the five divine realms have lost their advantage. They'll lose their entire army in the war. In fact, the legions of the five divine realms and the army of corpse puppets were their strongest weapons against us. But now we don't have to fight such low-level battles with Li Tianming around. It looks like it'll be a battle between the samsara powerhouses of both sides. Without their warriors and army of corpse puppets, they'll have to pay a heavier price if they attack the Ninefold Formation. Even if they manage to take down Archaion, the Nonahall Sect would be crippled." Fang Taiqing cursed. He had never been an irritable man. But this had left him speechless. It was all so unbelievable!

"So the Archaion Sect has a chance of winning?"

"Even if Archaion doesn't win, we won't lose either," said Fang Taiqing.

"Then what should we do?" asked Fang Yuqing.

"What can we do?" I'll have to let the old woman down! Fuck, they're all monsters, I'm the only normal one!"

Fang Taiqing left gloomily.

.....

In one corner of Tribulation Peak—

“Yi Xingyin, you bastard....”

As soon as he heard the news, Ouyang Jianwang fell on his bottom. The entire Tribulation Peak was celebrating, but he opened a jug of wine with tears in his eyes. He swallowed the wine that was mixed with tears.

“Damn it! You risk your life in order to be a hero. And after you became a hero, you became useless!”

He was upset. In his heart, that buddy of his had always been a free and easy man, but he was obsessed with heavenly patterns to the point of neglecting everything else.

“I’ll just have to watch over you in the future. What should I do? I can’t be a dissolute man anymore. Fine then! I’ll take care of you for the rest of my life. If I have a mouthful of wine, half of it is yours.”

.....

Xuanyuan Xiao left Soulburn Hall just as Fang Taiqing arrived.

“Heaven Branch Sect Master,” Xuanyuan Xiao greeted.

“Have you reported the outcome of the battle to Xuanyuan Dao?” asked Fang Taiqing.

“Yes,” said Xuanyuan Xiao.

“Alright.”

Fang Taiqing nodded and entered Soulburn Hall. Xuanyuan Dao stood at the door with his hands behind his back.

“You’ve heard everything?” Fang Taiqing looked up at him.

“Yes, they reversed the tides of battle and made a name for themselves.” Xuanyuan Dao smiled.

“I have an idea I’d like to share with you,” said Fang Taiqing.

“I’d like to hear the details.” Xuanyuan Dao replied.

“With the imperial son’s heaven-defying means, ordinary battles are no longer effective. Additionally, a third of the Nonahall Sect’s army has been destroyed and six ghouls are dead, so they lack commanders. I don’t think they’ll continue attacking the cities. Their original plan was to bulldoze the cities to create hundreds of millions of corpse puppets to use in attacking the Ninefold Formation. But now there’s no point in attacking the cities. The only thing they can do right now is stake it all on one battle, gather all the samsaras, and attack Taiji Peak Lake,” said Fang Taiqing.

“And your point is?”

“Disperse those in the cities, get them to enter the mountains and spread out. After all, our enemies no longer have the troops to chase and kill the citizens throughout Archaion. Even if they wanted to, our

intelligence agents will be able to find them when they've gathered a million-strong army. We can send the imperial son to slay every last one of them. Additionally, we must quickly find a hundred million empyrean saint cultivators and have them gather at Taiji Peak Lake to provide power for the Ninefold Formation. That was their strategy in Tianming City. When the time comes, the Ninefold Formation will be invulnerable to attack." Fang Taiqing voiced all his thoughts in one breath.

Before this, the cities couldn't be cleared out for fear that the enemy would march straight ahead, and at the same time they couldn't remain to be refined into corpse puppets. However, they didn't have to worry about that now, because the enemy's legions were useless.

"I agree, it's a good idea. Taiji Peak Lake will be the ultimate battlefield. Let the masses hide in the mountains," said Xuanyuan Dao.

"Since you agree, I'll start implementing it," said Fang Taiqing.

"Shouldn't we wait until Jian Wuyi returns? He's done well this time."

"There's no need. He's never had any opinions," said Fang Taiqing.

"Has the imperial son returned?" asked Xuanyuan Dao.

"Not yet. When he returns, I'd like him to head to the east and west borders immediately. Regardless of how the Nonahall Sect in the south responds, let's get him to destroy the Hexapath and the Biritual legions first. After all, speed is crucial in war, right?" said Fang Taiqing.

"I hear that the imperial son is stronger than a third-origin tribulation elder?"

"Yes, no one can kill him now," Fang Taiqing replied.

"Alright. When he returns, we'll ask him if he's willing to go."

"He's given his all for the sect. Would he refuse?" Fang Taiqing pursed his lips.

"That's true. After all, it won't take much time, anyway," said Xuanyuan Dao.

"With him around, there's no need for an army."

At the thought of that, Fang Taiqing was tempted to swear again. After muttering several expletives inside, he waved his hands and was about to leave.

"Do you remember what Her Eminence said?" asked Xuanyuan Dao.

"What're you referring to?"

"What she said after your mother's death," said Xuanyuan Dao.

"I remember." Fang Taiqing replied.

"In truth, I think it's good to have a pure heart. The heavens won't forsake those who sacrifice."

"I'm in control of my own life. I don't believe in fate!" Fang Taiqing laughed.

"So?"

“You don’t have to test me. I’ll live and die as a member of the Archaion Sect. You can choose whether to believe me or not,” said Fang Taiqing.

“I believe you,” Xuanyuan Dao replied.

“I’m leaving.” Fang Taiqing turned and left, disappearing in the blink of an eye.

.....

On Specter Mountain, the All Saints Hall beneath the Nineghoul Skypalace was huge and magnificent. Within the hall itself, many tribulation elders had gathered. They were the peak powerhouses of the Nonahall Ghost Sect, and their only goal was Taiji Peak Lake.

The purple-robed ghoulish king, Zi Xiao, sat in All Saints Hall. Just as everyone was in the midst of discussion, a murky beast descended in front of the hall—it was the necrofiend flare dragon.

Everyone in the hall was excited, smiling as they chatted.

“I knew good news was on its way.”

“I wonder how many tribulation elders the four ghoulish kings killed.”

Chapter 877 - To Destroy

In the battle of Tianming City, the strength of the two sides had been unequal. So for the Nonahall Ghost Sect, it was a war they were destined to win. Thus, the elders present were almost grinning from ear to ear. Even if they noticed the necrofiend flare dragon’s hostility, they continued discussing their ideas in a harmonious and joyful manner.

“Silence, everyone.”

The gigantic dragon landed in front of the hall, its green phantom fire burning. The surrounding atmosphere suddenly became gloomy and cold.

“Were there any losses?” Zi Xiao asked calmly.

“That’s impossible. We have the Archaionfiend and the four ghost kings serving as commanders. Even without the corpse puppets, we still have six million warriors.”

“Logically speaking, even with Jian Wuyi supporting them, we can easily take down the city without any losses.”

Up until that point, most elders weren’t concerned.

The necrofiend flare dragon looked up to the sky and let out a heartrending roar. That desolate sound made their scalp tingle. The entire hall fell completely silent.

“All the warriors and ghoulish kings are dead. That’s it, you may continue!”

Looking at their self-righteous attitude made the dragon even more irate. After it finished speaking, it turned and flew away before anyone could catch up to it, leaving behind a confused crowd.

“Has the flare dragon gone mad?”

“What’s wrong with it, spouting nonsense and losing its temper at a time like this!”

“God knows.”

However, the strange situation made it hard for Zi Xiao to sit still. Just as he rose to his feet, the other ghouls’ lifebound beasts, as well as a few third-origin tribulation elders who had escaped from death, returned from the north. As soon as they returned, they collapsed to the ground, their faces pale.

“What on earth is going on? Is anyone still sane? Explain what happened!” Zi Xiao shouted.

“I’ll speak.”

An old man walked out from the crowd. Voice hoarse, he described everything that transpired in Tianming City with grief and shame.

“This is all very much like Ghouls King Xue Yi and Qing Ming’s deaths—they’re all facts! Even if it’s hard to believe, you have to accept it. What a humiliating defeat! The fact is that, as predators, we’ve been played with by our cunning prey.”

With that, All Saint Hall descended into dead silence. Every peak powerhouse was crimson-eyed, their fists clenched. There was no doubt how gloomy, heartbroken, and tormented everyone was. This was perhaps the most humiliated they had ever been or would ever be. Many elders began venting their anger. They want to curse at someone, but who could they blame?

“First the Kilostar Domain, and now Tianming City! Enough is enough!”

“This can’t happen again!”

“The Archaion Sect must pay a hundred times the price!”

“With just Yi Xingyin!”

As the news spread, the Specter Mountains were shrouded in a bleak stillness.

“Do you realize that we’ve been losing miserably ever since the Number One Summit. We’ve now lost three times in a row. We’re a total mess.”

“All of this has something to do with one man, Li Tianming!”

“What on earth are Ghouls Kings Di Zang and Po Suo doing?”

“We’ve already been so miserably defeated. Why haven’t they done anything?”

“Are we going to continue being a laughingstock?”

Many remained doubtful. At the end of this day, the entire Specter Mountain range was enraged. They had been preparing for a long time and were merely waiting for an order to rush to Archaion in their most frightening form.

“Ghouls King Zi Xiao, please tell us what to do,” they begged.

However, Zi Xiao remained silent for a long time. Out of nine ghoulish kings, only three remained? He could never have imagined such a reality. No one was more heartbroken than him.

At this moment of agony, he stood up and was about to speak when a huge movement on the north side of the All Saints Hall suddenly interrupted him. If the Specter Mountain was a giant, this movement happened in the position of the giant's eyes.

"Jiang Wuxin!"

Zi Xiao's eyes lit up and he told the others to stay there while he rushed in the direction of the Blood Cauldron. A bloody ray of light shot from somewhere in the abyss into the clouds, dyeing the clouds crimson.

"It's a success!"

Zi Xiao looked happy as he arrived before the bloody light, standing on the nose of the "giant", staring at the bloody mist in the position of the "eyes." From within the mist, out walked a young man covered in black patterns. When he opened his eyes, two pupils were visible in each eye, lending a strange air to his ordinary appearance.

However, his gaze was rather vacant. It wasn't a look one would expect from a person capable of rational thought. And beneath the blankness was a deep hostility. His body twisted as he walked unnaturally, then finally landed with his hands on the ground like a beast, crawling toward Zi Xiao. Then, he blinked, raised his head, and looked at Zi Xiao in a daze.

"Who are you?"

Crouching down, Zi Xiao wiped the blood from the young man's face and smiled.

"Jiang.... Jiang Wuxin..." he said, rocking his head.

"Why were you born?" asked Zi Xiao.

"To destroy?" Jiang Wuxin replied.

"You're right. Not bad, you passed the test." Patting him on the shoulder, Zi Xiao stood up and added, "Come with me, Jiang Wuxin."

"Yes, Master."

With vacant eyes, Jiang Wuxin followed Zi Xiao.

"I'm your third master. You have two others. Listen to them. They made you. They're like your parents, understand?" asked Zi Xiao.

"U-understood."

Zi Xiao took him across the sky until he reached the giant's abdomen.

"Open the Myriad Beast Hell," Zi Xiao ordered the tribulation elders who were stationed there.

"Yes!"

It took several tribulation elders to open the formation.

A dark abyss with a huge entrance appeared in front of them. As soon as the formation was opened, a deafening bestial roar sounded from below. Upon hearing this roar, Jiang Wuxin sniffed the smells. Bloody mist filled his eyes and his entire being became restless.

"What's wrong?" asked Zi Xiao.

"I'm hungry...."

"Hunger is the most beautiful sign."

Zi Xiao's smile grew wider. It almost seemed as if he had forgotten the news of the four ghoulish kings' deaths. With that, he pulled Jiang Wuxin and jumped into the abyss. After they descended, the tribulation elders quickly closed the formation once more.

"What's the use of cultivating this Jiang Wuxin?"

"I heard that he can be turned into a killing machine. It seems like it's succeeded, but Jiang Wuxin appears to be at the fifth- or sixth-level samsara at most."

"Yes, there isn't anything special about him."

"We'll wait and see. Perhaps Jiang Wuxin is the key to reversing our situation. We've suffered humiliation for underestimating them!"

"I wonder what the other two ghoulish kings are doing."

"What could be more important than breaking the Ninefold Formation?"

"That's enough. How can we understand what they're thinking? It's better not to speak too much."

Chapter 878 - Scorched By Fire

When the two came to the Myriad Beast Hell, the place finally started lighting up. There was a darkness formation in the very depths of the place, sealing it off entirely. When light appeared within the formation, one could see the densely packed beasts, avians, insects, and fish. All of them had stars in their eyes, which meant they were intelligent lifebound beasts. There were just far too many of them there.

Even as large as Myriad Beast Hell was, it was stuffed to the brim, and as a result the beasts fought each other. The more they fought, the closer they grew to despair. Eventually, they didn't dare to keep fighting and huddled together to await their deaths; until today, that is, when two people came and looked at the seven million plus beasts from above.

"These are captives from Pentaphase. Their beastmasters were all tossed into the Blood Cauldron to refine your Regal Specterbeast Physique. Those that remain will be your food," Zi Xiao said.

"Food...." Jiang Wuxin looked at the lifebound beasts with bloodlust in his eyes. His teeth began chattering as his two hands shook.

"Who are you?!"

"Let us out of here!"

"Quick! If we take them down, we might yet escape! There's only two of them!"

Most of the seven million beasts had fewer than a hundred stars, but they still charged toward that ray of hope for survival.

"Jiang Wuxin, unleash your body and utilize the talent of your Regal Specter Bloodline to the maximum! Go!" Zi Xiao pushed him into the horde of beasts. He seemed immediately swarmed, but he was far from a goner.

"Aaagh! Aaaaah!" He let out gutwrenching shrieks as the black patterns snaked about on his body, causing it to expand. Soon, he lost his human form. There was only a blob of black flesh in front of Zi Xiao, devoid of any limbs. It looked a little like Qing Ming's greenwater ghoul and had a diameter of about ten meters. It continued to morph and change into hundreds of squid-like tentacles. Right after that, a huge bloody mouth cracked and formed, taking up a third of the blob's surface area. The sight of someone turning into an eldritch monstrosity like that made Zi Xiao feel a little numb. But when he saw the tentacles throwing the lifebound beasts into its mouth, swallowing them whole, and continuing to grow at a rate visible to the naked eye, he smiled.

"This is the true form of the specter race! It's royalty, too! This brat is truly lucky to have inherited the blood of the Nonahall Specter. However, he's not a true specter, so the Regal Specter Physique only made him a wild beast, albeit one we can control. Of the bloodlines left behind by the specter race on the Flameyellow Continent, only one royal bloodline was produced: that of the Nonahall Specter. Back then, he relied on his bloodline to easily ascend to godhood. It's a shame that he died so early. The Kilostar Domain was impenetrable back then and the Xuanyuan house was in hiding, so he wasn't able to undo the Blooddragon Sealing Formation and the Skysource Hellshaker Formation within the Ninefold Hell to let the specters return to the human realm.

"But now the sealing formation is gone and the Ninefold Hell has returned to the human realm. As long as we properly guide the specters, destroy Great Emperor Xuanyuan's divine body, and crush the Skysource Hellshaker Formation, the specters will return! I, Zi Xiao, am not a specter like the other two. But when they return, I'll definitely be given the bloodline of a specter and have my lifespan extended! It's a shame Xua Yi, Si Ling, and our other siblings left before we could complete our grand design. The tragedy of it all!" He fell into a fit of zealous frenzy as he passionately watched the black blob's actions. Jiang Wuxin's terror made him even more convinced of his decision.

"The specter race was meant to enslave humanity. Two hundred millennia ago, humanity was merely livestock and the specters used lifebound beasts to strengthen their own bodies. It was said that symbiotic cultivation was taught to humans by the specters so that they would produce stronger lifebound beasts for them to feast on, yet Great Emperor Xuanyuan managed to use such a plain technique to change history. In the end, he was credited with the creation of symbiotic cultivation instead.

"Come to think of it, I'm also a human. But once I become a specter, I'll gain a far longer lifespan and stand a chance of becoming a god. I don't have to struggle painfully like them. There's no downside at

all! Then again, how did Great Emperor Xuanyuan manage to single-handedly go against the entire specter establishment that had existed for millions of years and allow lowly humans to rise?"

That period was far too long ago, and many secrets and mysteries had faded into the sands of time. Either way, Zi Xiao's only wish right now was to cast away his human form and inherit the blood of the specters, becoming a higher-order lifeform.

"According to legend, specters are terrific physical fighters, and the royal bloodline was even unmatched among all who hadn't reached the realm of god! The original plan was to conquer Archaion so that corpse puppets could be made and Jiang Wuxin could be nurtured by the flesh of all those lifebound beasts, but that was ruined. All we have now are these seven million beasts... I really hope he can get strong enough from this. If we want more, we'll have to get them from Taiji Peak Lake.

"We don't have the luxury of a corpse puppet army now, so we might have to pay a huge price to take down the Ninefold Formation. We've already missed the best window of opportunity, so there's no turning back. I only hope Jian Wuyi can finally show his usefulness. Then again, no matter the price we have to pay, even if everyone of the Nonahall Divine Realm has to die, they're just humans. Those two wouldn't mind at all, and neither would the specter race! And once the Ninefold Formation falls, I'll no longer be human anyway. The Nonahall Divine Realm will no longer be my concern. Jiang Wuxin is ready, and all we need now is to communicate the right time for the specter race to attack the Skysource Hellshaker Formation from within while we bombard it from without! The final battle is about to start."

Zi Xiao could no longer contain his excitement as he watched Jiang Wuxin devouring the seven million lifebound beasts. While he was rather slow initially, he grew bigger and bigger as he devoured away and was now eating at a really fast rate. The number of lifebound beasts began dwindling to the point he was able to toss a thousand beasts into his mouth using his tentacles at once and chow down on them. His body had grown from ten meters in diameter to seven hundred, making it look even larger than the slender thousand-meter-long nightmare soulworm.

"Is this how a true specter feeds? With their natural strength, there's no need at all for complicated things like gaining insight into heavenly will. They're no doubt higher-order lifeforms! The Regal Specter Bloodline can grow stronger than anyone who isn't a god just by eating and growing. How terrifying! It's truly the pinnacle of life!" Zi Xiao was moved to tears by the sight. Though he was human like any other, he fully considered himself one of the specter race. In the end, Jiang Wuxin consumed all seven million beasts without spitting out even a single bone.

"This brat really lucked out by inheriting the drop of the Nonahall Specter's blood. It's said that this royal bloodline is rare even among those in Ninefold Hell. Then again, losing his reason like this doesn't seem conducive at all."

Zi Xiao flew down as the blob began shrinking. "That's just his feasting form. His actual combat form is like before! Only by shrinking can his body truly grow powerful."

The black blob snapped audibly as it shrank, as if countless bones were being broken. Eventually, it reached a hundred meters in diameter and still continued shrinking. Zi Xiao could feel the blob growing ever stronger throughout the process. It didn't stop until Jiang Wuxin resumed his humanoid form.

Though his gaze was blank, he was like a gigantic, heaven-devouring beast. His every movement seemed to reflect the struggle of millions of beasts.

"This aura is far too strong!" If Zi Xiao were being honest, even he would want the royal bloodline if it didn't come with the side effect of becoming essentially mentally invalid.

"Come, give me a punch," he said.

"Yes, Master." Jiang Wuxin's body flashed as he appeared in front of Zi Xiao and struck him. Zi Xiao made a simple effort to block with his capabilities as an eleventh-level death samsaran, only to be slammed against the ceiling of the formation. He coughed and held his hand behind his back, but it still shook from the force.

"Jiang Wuxin!"

"Yes, Master?"

"You're the only piece of good news we've received today. It only took seven million beasts for your power to grow close to mine. I can't wait to give you fifty million more! Child, you'll be the nightmare of the human race."

He descended and hugged Jiang Wuxin as a father would, giving him pats on the back.

All of a sudden, Jiang Wuxin looked up and saw that the formation was opening up. He seemed to see two girls in the blinding light and felt like his heart was being scorched by fire.

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When Tianming and the rest returned to Taiji Peak Lake, they were given a dramatic welcome. All the way to Tribulation Peak, everyone who saw them shot worshipful gazes at him and Yi Xingyin, the latter in particular. He was the star of Tribulation Peak and a true powerhouse that wasn't from the three great houses. He had made those of Tribulation Peak proud.

Chapter 879 - Back to the Stars

The elders of Tribulation Peak that didn't belong to the three great houses felt even more like they were part of the sect now. But as the war hadn't yet ended, it was no time for excessive celebration.

"Sect Master Jian, you made your way back so soon," Tianming said when he saw Fang Taiqing and Jian Wuyi together.

"Yes. I came back as soon as I could to deliver the good news," Jian Wuyi said.

"Imperial Son, we truly owe you all a lot," Fang Taiqing said.

"It's thanks to all our efforts."

"That's right. By the way, we're short on time, so I have to briefly consult you about two things."

"Please do, Sect Master Fang."

"The first is about disbanding the cities." He paused to collect his thoughts. "I've already given the order to disband the cities. Do you have any objections to that?"

"No."

"What about your soul-controlling power? Is it stable?"

"It's fine."

Tianming's responses reassured Fang Taiqing. "Alright. Currently, the Yinyang Demon Sect and Hexapath Sword Sect are applying lots of pressure on our east and west. As the cities there are still besieged, we can't really disband them now. We might need you to head there to help overwhelm the enemy troops. Once the cities are safe, we'll have all our troops retreat to Taiji Peak Lake."

"Alright. Where should I go first?" Tianming's thoughts were more or less aligned with Fang Taiqing's on the matter. Using Vitasteal to help those in the cities retreat to Taiji Peak Lake was a given. Before, they couldn't exactly do that as there was a concern that they would pursue the civilians into the wilderness to kill them. Now that the enemy was short on manpower, however, the cities could be temporarily abandoned. Also, having large groups of people gathered together made them easier targets.

Right before Fang Taiqing had an answer, a new report came. "Imperial Son, Sect Masters, the Hexapath Sword Sect mounted a total retreat back to their divine realm!"

That news wasn't a surprise to Tianming.

"Feng Qingyu was heavily wounded at Tianming City, so he definitely knows about the trick you have that can kill a million troops at once. The fact that he's retreating means he feels threatened by you," Fang Taiqing said.

"Then I'll go to the Yinyang Demon Sect's side," Tianming said.

"Alright. Li Caiwei and Qin Fengyang are there, too. Their forces and elders are also much stronger than Hexapath's. Their attack is fierce, and if they don't retreat, it's about time you showed them who's boss."

"Li Caiwei, huh?" Tianming had wanted to give her a wallop for a long time. She had given him a lot of trouble back then, so he'd show her what he was capable of now.

"That's right. They are currently attacking Fuling City. The Snowsprite Legion is currently stationed there. They're really ferocious and have already taken three cities. They also have quite a lot of captives," Fang Taiqing said.

"So I have to send them running and help the captives escape into the wilderness?"

"That's right. Can you do it?"

"No problem."

"Do you need any help?"

"I can do it alone."

"Impressive, Imperial Son!"

"Of course. We already won at Tianming City. Currently, they're trying to gather at Taiji Peak Lake. I'll make sure to cut off their escape route. You Sect Masters are tasked with defending the Ninefold Formation, so leave the small matter of the Yinyang Demon Sect to me." It wasn't that he was proud, he just really did have the power to back up his confidence and was making sure Fang Taiqing knew it.

"Alright. It's a shame you won't get much of a rest after coming back."

"I'd even die for the sect, let alone lose a bit of rest." Tianming could tell that the whole Sterling House of Fang was even more loyal to the sect after their victory at Tianming City. When he left the hall, he didn't leave for the battlefield immediately.

Looking down from Tribulation Peak, he could see the entirety of Taiji Peak Lake preparing for the final battle. Many empyrean saints and above were flooding into the area. By now, the spirit threads of the Ninefold Formation were spread all over the place. Everyone who dwelled in the area was ready to fight, knowing that Nonahall was one to remember their grudges. The war would eventually come to Taiji Peak Lake.

"Before going to Fuling City, I have two more important matters to take care of." He sat down in the mountains and began cultivating. Feiling parted from him and materialized beside him. Though they were short on time, she didn't seem particularly worried, messing with her hair as she watched the white-haired youth train under the sun.

"Did you get good karma for being the one to deal the final blow to Si Ling?" she asked.

"Yes. It was a huge haul," he said with his eyes closed and a smile on his face.

"Then it was more than worth it." Almost a little unfairly so, since he didn't do the heavy lifting.

"It's certainly nice, but there'll be no more chances like that in the future. I doubt there'd be anyone who's accumulated as much sin as Si Ling had. Not to mention, breaking through the later stages of the Samsara stage will only get progressively more difficult. I believe we can no longer count on good karma alone."

He had a feeling that this was the last blessing he would receive from the heavens. Si Ling's death was a blessing to the masses—who knew how many more people would be turned into corpse puppets otherwise? The nightmare soulworm was only an accomplice, while she was the mastermind. And all the good karma from killing this unspeakable evil had gone to Tianming. His Imperial Will had been constantly growing on the way back.

"From life to death!" Once more, entering the death phase saw a terrifying and dark power flood his body, augmenting his aura to be even more terrifying. "I'm now at the seventh-level death phase! Even though this might be the last time I break through using good karma, it's just about right. I can take on those at the level of sect masters now!"

He could even rival Jian Wuyi, Long Cangyuan, Qing Ming, and many others. His recent breakthroughs had come far too rapidly.

"It doesn't feel like I've really grown stronger myself. Instead, it seems like there's a force pushing me to slay those sinners. It's like the invisible hand of heavenly justice. But in the end, I still have to rely on myself to change my fate!"

He stood up and waved to Feiling. They all sat on Meow Meow's back. He let Feiling sit in front of him and hugged her waist from behind. "This feels pleasant."

Meow Meow seemed a little disgruntled. "Are you monsters? I'm a minor!"

Tianming slapped its head and said, "Enough nonsense. Let's go!"

"To Fuling City?"

"No, we'll go to the five-colored star first." He looked up at the multi-colored star that hung in the sky.

Meow Meow angrily charged up to the sky and into the clouds, causing the strong winds to spur Feiling into Tianming's embrace.

"Oh, I swear that wasn't intentional," Tianming said.

"Want me to use Spiritual Attachment instead?"

"Please don't. Being able to see and touch you is much better."

Meow Meow, as if feeling a sting for still being single, kept charging ahead with abandon. Tianming continued to look at the star with a gloomy expression.

"What's wrong?" Feiling asked.

"Ever since the battle at the city, I feel far less pressure on me. It seems like victory is within our grasp. However, this star will be the thing that changes everything. I can't rest well until I know what in the world it is."

"I wonder if the two ghoulish kings are there," she said.

"Guess we'll find out."

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Soon, they arrived at the star. Tianming alone made the approach. "Where was the ninth black hole star again...."

He followed his memories to the location and almost did a double take. The ninth black hole star still looked embedded in the formation, but there was a formation on top of it. The first and second ghoulish kings were also standing guard beside it.

Chapter 880 - My Overlord

"What are they doing?" Tianming furrowed his brow. It was a little too far, so he couldn't see clearly with his own two eyes. He could only get a rough image with his Plundering Eye.

Di Zang and Po Suo were mumbling something in the middle of the monochrome formation, causing a black and white mist to form and snake around them. The mist soon gathered and fused into the five-colored formation. Tianming couldn't hear what they were saying, either.

"I heard these two were twelfth-level death samsarans, the strongest people on the Flameyellow Continent who are only a step away from godhood. Even though I can fight normal ghouls now, I might not even be able to escape from them if they discover me, let alone chase them away and destroy the formation..."

After a bit, he was sure that they didn't seem like they were about to leave soon.

"Big Brother, since you saw those two using Fatesteal, does that mean you'll have to deal with them to stand a chance to survive?" Feiling asked.

While it didn't really matter what Nonahall's actual goals were, they would definitely have Feiling killed immediately the moment they breached Taiji Peak Lake. Tianming and Archaion's fates had been entangled long ago.

"That's likely to be the case. The question is how to stop them. The two of them are far too strong, so even if the three sect masters come to help me, we might not be able to deal with them."

"What about luring them away?"

Tianming gave it some thought and shook his head. "You're underestimating them too much. If what they're doing is really that important, there's no way they'll be lured away so easily. Still, what in the world is within this formerly grey star?"

He couldn't figure it out no matter what.

"Whatever. I'll give it a try, at least. Let's see if I can breach the formation with my Plundering Arm," Tianming said.

"So we'll go to the other side of the star?"

"Yes. If we can enter, let's see what's inside."

"Won't it be dangerous?"

"It's better than knowing nothing about it."

Right as he was about to do so, the monochrome formation suddenly showed a huge change. It began flashing with a strong black and white light that pierced through the star. The two pale eyeballs within the formation began furiously shaking.

All of a sudden, something emerged from within the five-colored star that caused Tianming to forget to breathe. Eventually, a pure-white figure appeared in the formation with the eyeballs taking the place of its eyes. The figure was a vague apparition, but it looked at Di Zang and Po Suo using Ye Bodhi's eyes.

"The ritual was successful! All hail the overlord!" Di Zang and Po Suo immediately knelt. While Tianming couldn't exactly hear what they were saying from where he was, he did find it weird that people on their level would ever kneel to somebody else. The figure gave Tianming a bad feeling.

The agitation felt by the two ghoulish kings was overwhelming. They seemed to be shedding tears of joy, as if they had been waiting for this moment for far too long.

Just as Tianming was about to make his approach, he thought, this figure looks bald too. Reminds me of Ye Bodhi.

Then, the white figure in the distance turned towards him. He was discovered! "There's a fly nearby," the figure said.

"Understood, My Overlord. I shall chase it away," said the white-robed Po Suo. The young girl turned to Tianming with a gaze that could kill. "Oh, you came here to serve yourself up even though we haven't come hunting for you yet."

She turned into a blur and rapidly approached.

"Let's go!" Tianming flapped all six of his wings and flew downward. The prospect of facing off against a twelfth-level death phase samsaran was far too terrifying. The difference in their levels alone gave Tianming a feeling of approaching death.

In terms of acceleration, the Celestial Wings was better than Meow Meow. Fortunately, they were quite some ways apart, so he still had some hope. However, he couldn't even turn back to look. The threat from Po Suo seemed to constantly linger behind him and he just couldn't shake her off. His plan to try entering the star from the other side had also failed.

"Stop wasting your effort, Li Tianming. I've wanted to kill you for a long time." Her old and husky voice sounded like grating dry wood.

Tianming had an epiphany that not all fates could be changed, even if he saw it coming.

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Within the monochrome formation, the figure asked, "Are you the one who woke me up?"

Di Zang only stood up after the figure waved, his tears flowing and mouth shaking. "My Overlord... it's been two hundred thousand years, and this day has finally come! It's been far too long!"

"Don't make a big deal out of this. It's pointless. Once the Skysource Hellshaker Formation collapses, our race shall return to the human realm. As for the pain and despair we've suffered throughout the two hundred thousand years and thousands of generations.... We'll make sure to settle the debt with this continent and the world." The voice of the figure sounded young and firm. He could already see the boundless land stretching out in front of him, his eyes shaking from sheer agitation. He was born in a world devoid of hope, sustained only by the ancient records passed down through the generations.

"Is... is this the human realm?" he asked with a shaky, pain-filled voice.

"My Overlord, all those generations suffering in despair was all for this day! I can only imagine how it feels! Our race shall cleanse this world with blood and pay back these mere mortals for the tens of thousands of years of suffering!"

"Leave those words for the day of our arrival. The ritual won't last forever, so let's get to the main topic."

"Yes, My Overlord. There are two keys for the Heaven Cauldron held by two different people. All we need to do is steal them and open the cauldron to destroy Great Emperor Xuanyuan's divine body. Then, the cauldron's power will rapidly dissipate into chaos. All that'll be left is for those of us within the Ninefold Hell to attack the formation at the same time. We'll definitely be able to break open the Skysource Hellshaker Formation!"

"The chaos that results from the destruction of Great Emperor Xuanyuan's divine body is our only chance. Otherwise, we'll have to wait thousands of more years for the Heaven Cauldron to run out of power!"

"How in the world did a body he left behind sustain the formation for more than two hundred thousand years?" Di Zang said.

"Did you lose a lot of history?"

"The constant chaos across the continent caused much of our history to be lost to time. Among those of us left on the continent, only one person with the royal bloodline emerged, which brought us back to prominence."

"The matters back then weren't that simple. The humans came from the cosmic aether... and with help from other races."

"I see..."

"Listen well. When you destroy the divine body, those of us on the inside will have to launch a concentrated attack on the formation at the same time. Most of us have chosen to enter hibernation to survive to this day. We need a month's time to wake them all up. Let's choose the day a month from now to put the plan into action. We'll destroy the formation and finally free our race from the sea of pain!"

"Understood!"

Waking up their overlord to agree on a set time for their plan was the purpose of the ritual. It was obvious that they had no way of knowing from within the formation if the divine body was destroyed.

Now that they had established contact, it was time for the final battle. Even though the events in the Kilostar Domain and at Tianming City had gone against expectations, the two ghoulish kings seemed unfazed, as they weren't afraid of the 'dead'. So what if six million warriors from the Nonahall Divine Realm perished? Even if billions died, they wouldn't bat an eye, for they weren't humans to begin with!

"A month should be enough time to destroy the divine body, right?"

"Definitely, My Overlord! By the way, someone of the Blooddragon Clan of the Archaic House of Xuanyuan absorbed more than a hundred thousand dragon souls from the Blooddragon Sealing Formation. He's rather capable, and wishes to inherit our bloodline."

"Blooddragon Clan? It shall be permitted."

Soon, his body began dissipating, but he was actually laughing. "It took two hundred thousand years of waiting for the destruction of the Blooddragon Sealing Formation and Kilostar Domain! The Ninefold Hell shall descend again! A month from now, the true rulers of the Flameyellow Continent shall return."

Then, the eyeballs suddenly burst and the figure within the formation disappeared. Di Zang knelt and kowtowed until the figure completely vanished before standing back up and taking a deep breath.

"Now that we've confirmed the time with the overlord, it's about time to flatten Taiji Peak Lake. A month is enough for us to destroy it ten times over! The changes in Tianming City put a dent in my perfect plan. So, Li Tianming alone was enough to destroy my whole army, huh? If that's the case, I'll show you what a royal specter's bloodline is like! What's the difference between an army of millions and a person who's consumed millions of lifebound beasts?"