

The Ages 921

Chapter 921 - Clash of the Titans

Tianming had made quite quick work of Fang Taiqing. Their encounter was an unavoidable one, and only one man was left standing. The twenty-four days of hard training with the guidance from the caeli of Great Emperor Xuanyuan and the specters allowed him to reach the eighth-level death phase. Now he was just a step shy of rising to the next life phase, mostly thanks to the new insights he had gained from the ascendant caeli.

Killing Fang Taiqing meant that he was now among the strongest fighters on the continent as a whole; at the very least, he was the strongest on Archaion's side. If it weren't for the specters, the battle today would have focused entirely on Dugu Jin and Tianming alone. Even so, he wasn't the slightest bit proud of it.

"All of us are still in deep trouble." He flew over the crowd together with Ying Huo, past the many who had fallen in battle. Their bodies slowly sank into Xuanyuan Lake. It was a battle of epic proportions and much death. Fortunately, Tianming's treasures had been incredibly useful.

In the days leading up to the battle, many among the six hundred thousand had managed to break through. Coupled with the support provided by the tribulation pattern tomes and Xuanyuan Lake's defenses, they were pretty well off. The only hitch in the plans was Dugu Jin.

Tianming already saw him on the battlefield. He, the strongest fighter of the Flameyellow Imperial Sect, was unstoppable with his sword baton, Godbane, and his two blood dragons. Li Yuntian and the other sect masters were three levels lower than him and unable to hold him back at all. It looked as if Dugu Jin alone would be able to kill countless tribulation elders and tear the sect's defenses apart.

The sect masters focused the attacks from their tribulation pattern tomes entirely on Dugu Jin. Tianming had heard the activation of the tomes when he was still fighting Fang Taiqing. When he charged toward that location, he saw streaks of fire, lightning, and ice flashing through the air. The power of the tribulation pattern tomes restricted the blood dragons of Dugu Jin quite handily, slowing Dugu Jin down.

"For now, the damage he's causing is still under control! However, the three tomes are almost expended. No matter whether or not I'm his match, I have to stop him! That way, neither Dugu Jin nor Di Zang will be able to do much, allowing our six hundred thousand troops to push their eight hundred thousand away!"

Even though the final results would be rather staggering, they had no choice. They were defending their final stronghold and no longer had anywhere to retreat back to.

"As long as we persist, there's hope! We must do it at all costs!"

Before he left, Tianming locked onto Dugu Jin and flew toward him. Meow Meow and Lan Huang were still going all out against the two remaining phoenixes who, upon seeing Fang Taiqing's death, were still putting up a final resistance to defend the Fang house. Though, given the current situation, they decided to retreat instead, so Meow Meow and Lan Huang didn't give chase. Instead, they returned to Tianming's side.

When Dugu Jin heard of Fang Taiqing's death, his expression immediately shifted. "What in the world?!"

He had just endured the powerful blasts of the tomes with his dragons and seemed rather haggard at the moment. "Fang Taiqing was killed by Li Tianming? But he was a twelfth-level life samsaran!"

It was utterly unbelievable. Half of his plans had been ruined from the outset! "As long as Li Tianming is alive, I won't be able to put any plans into action!"

He had planned to fight his way into Soulburn Hall to kill what he considered to be his most pressing threat, Xuanyuan Xi, only to discover that he should've been focusing on Tianming all along.

Enraged, the two of them locked gazes. "You have to die!" they simultaneously shouted.

Dugu Jin broke his way out of the tribulation elders' encirclement as his dragons pushed the others away from him.

"Feeling a little impatient, are we? And to think you claimed you could ascend to godhood. Laughable," Tianming mocked as he made his approach.

Dugu Jin had lain low for most of his life, then relied on the Blooddragon Sealing Formation to rise to sudden prominence. Later, he had managed to single-handedly win the trust of the ghoulish kings and even killed some specters himself, which allowed him to form the Flameyellow Imperial Sect that had even eclipsed Nonahall at its strongest. He was a capable fellow by any measure. However, even he felt a little mentally destabilized after witnessing Tianming's miraculous feats one after another.

With Xue Yi, Fang Taiqing, and many other experts dying by Tianming's hands, it only showed how much of a nightmarish threat he truly was. Growing increasingly anxious about Tianming, he rushed him with his dragons.

Their clash drew the attention of the entire battlefield once more. This was a clash of two titanic figures that would shake the entire continent. Who would be the last man standing? The oppressively powerful Dugu Jin or Tianming, someone who had become one of the strongest people alive before the age of thirty?

Right after their clash began, many people began losing the desire to fight altogether. The Flameyellow Imperial Sect was formed from four or five disparate sects to begin with, united solely by their leader, Dugu Jin. If something happened to him, the sect would no doubt fracture and dissolve.

While the members might have served Dugu Jin with all they had before witnessing Tianming's exploits, the fact that Dugu Jin didn't have a powerful, historic background was undeniable. As such, after Fang Taiqing's death, the sect's army no longer fought as hard and dragged the battle out, focusing on mainly defense instead.

Dugu Jin didn't fail to pick up on the changes. With his insight and wisdom, he knew that his dreams of solidifying his hold on the sect would amount to nothing if he didn't kill Tianming and exterminate Xuanyuan Xi. Today was the day he would prove himself to all of them for good. His surprise attack on Po Suo would only carry him so far.

"Li Tianming, your life shall be a tribute to my Flameyellow Imperial Sect. I'll use your blood to unite our sect and nurture its growth!"

"I know the idiots behind you might buy all your bullshit, but it won't work on me. Save it for the masses," Tianming said with a smirk. He could tell that Dugu Jin was trying to kill him, but he wouldn't give in so easily. Even if he couldn't defeat Dugu Jin, he was more than capable of holding him back. Using the Celestial Wings alone, he could even avoid combat altogether.

He immediately began flying around, messing with the new sect master. "Dugu Jin, your Blooddragon Clan betrayed Great Emperor Xuanyuan and humanity as a whole in an attempt to become specters themselves. They almost cost humanity our victory! Our founding ancestor exterminated your clan because of the combined rage of all humanity. How dare you smear him by calling him a tyrant?! Without the founding ancestor, humanity would've never achieved prosperity! Aren't you embarrassed for being nothing but a pathetic parasite?" he yelled as he fought.

"You don't have any proof of your claims," Dugu Jin coldly replied.

"Oh, but you do for your smear campaign on Great Emperor Xuanyuan? Talk about double standards." Tianming's argument shut Dugu Jin up entirely. He was challenging Dugu Jin's legitimacy in his newly formed sect step by step. "Your patchwork sect will fall after you die! After that, I will reign supreme! If someone like me, who's only in my twenties can kill Fang Taiqing, it's obvious which of us is stronger! I know you have a lot of people on your side now, but time will prove that they have chosen the wrong side!"

Tianming laughed heartily, robbing some of the courage from those from Nonahall, Heptastar, and the defeated Sterling House of Fang.

Chapter 922 - Shocking Change

While the comparison between the yet-to-be-seen Xuanyuan Xi and Dugu Jin made her look bad, the newly risen imperial son, who was recognized as the founding ancestor's reincarnation, and his bright future promised far more potential than Dugu Jin did. Tianming's defeat of Fang Taiqing seemed to inspire people more than the return of a god from a hundred thousand years ago.

Dugu Jin was definitely aware of the threat such a situation posed. Furrowing his brow, he figured he would only be toyed with by Tianming if he continued giving chase, and unable to do anything. There had to be something he could do to turn things around. As a result of Fang Taiqing's death, the Flameyellow Imperial Sect was now in a passive position.

Right then, something shocking transpired. Tianming had thought that the scales of victory were tipping in his favor, only to find out that something was happening to Xuanyuan Dao and the rest. He, Dugu Jin and everyone else turned to look in Xuanyuan Dao's direction after they heard a cry.

They all saw a black-robed youth appear on the battlefield near Xuanyuan Dao with unbelievably fearsome power. Perhaps it was due to his relatively weak cultivation level that Xuanyuan Dao hadn't noticed his approach in the fight against Di Zang. The youth clearly had two irises in each eye.

"Jiang Wuxin!"

Didn't he die? Everyone had witnessed him being killed by Feng Qingyu. However, Xuanyuan Dao didn't have the time to be shocked. He immediately summoned the dragon spirits of their ancestors to guard

him. Even so, Di Zang and Jiang Wuxin had already coordinated their attack beforehand. Right before Jiang Wuxin unleashed his full power, Di Zang had already done all he could to stop the dragon spirits, allowing Jiang Wuxin's fist to strike toward Xuanyuan Dao unabated.

"The key should be inside his saint palace! Break it and take it!" Di Zang roared. He had guessed it after fighting Xuanyuan Dao for a length of time.

Jiang Wuxin was fast as lightning, his every strike seemingly able to break through anything that blocked his way. Ignoring Xuanyuan Dao swinging the Kilostar Photondragon toward him, he struck the trident with his fist and glared at his enemy. Immediately, blood burst out from his left arm, but he managed to grab hold of the trident and pull Xuanyuan Dao toward himself.

Xuanyuan Dao's expression immediately changed as Jiang Wuxin's right hand curled into a fist and swung toward his saint palace. Then a dragon-shaped shield appeared in Xuanyuan Dao's hand, only to be broken by Jiang Wuxin's punch. The fist continued with its remaining momentum and struck Xuanyuan Dao's saint palace.

It was a complete ambush! Jiang Wuxin's combat power was far superior to Xuanyuan Dao, who didn't have the aid of the dragon spirits, not to mention that Jiang Wuxin wasn't afraid of dying at all. He ignored the Kilostar Photondragon's strikes, determined to get the key no matter what. Xuanyuan Dao wasn't able to stop that kind of dedicated assault. The strike immediately shattered his eleventh-level death phase saint springs, breaking his saint palace completely! With a cry of pain, he was slammed to the ground and spiritual energy immediately began gushing out of his broken springs. Even though the darknight imperial dragon and desolate imperial dragon came to aid him, they were sent flying away by a punch from Jiang Wuxin.

"Found it." Jiang Wuxin saw the black key that was floating above Xuanyuan Dao's saint palace. His palm turned into a tentacle and grabbed the key.

Having lost his saint palace, Xuanyuan Dao's cultivation was completely ruined. He was the only sect master remaining in the Archaion Sect, so that occurrence immediately chilled the hearts of everyone watching. The destruction wrought by Jiang Wuxin alone was horrific and nightmarish.

Seeing that caused the battle to come to a standstill, but Jiang Wuxin didn't stop there. He handed the key to Di Zang and said, "I've completed the mission," before turning to Tianming. Almost immediately, his eyes began to bleed tears once more. Having completed his mission, all that remained in his life was revenge.

Di Zang was surprisingly delighted. Together with his hell soulbeast, he charged toward Soulburn Hall while laughing maniacally, ostensibly going after the second key. Jiang Wuxin launched off at the same moment toward Tianming.

Now it was no longer just a matter between Dugu Jin and Tianming fighting for dominance. Instead, the revived specter, Jiang Wuxin, held the initiative. Everyone knew that once he got the second key, everyone was doomed.

"Dugu Jin, as the one who killed Po Suo, you'll be the one in the deepest trouble once the specters come back out!" Li Caiwei shrieked, her voice reverberating sharply across the battlefield. She was already heartbroken after seeing what had happened to Xuanyuan Dao.

Dugu Jin, unaware that Jiang Wuxin was still alive, cursed Feng Qingyu in his mind before staring at Tianming. For now, killing the brat wouldn't be his priority. What he needed to do now was to stop Di Zang from getting the second key!

"Stop him!" Dugu Jin ordered. The members of his sect immediately changed their targets, and the ones on Archaion's side did the same.

Those from the Xuanyuan house were already simmering with rage, chief of whom was Tianming. He had just killed Fang Taiqing and was beginning to turn the tables on Dugu Jin's sect, only for Jiang Wuxin to return and ruin his plans. What was worse was how Xuanyuan Dao joined Yi Xingyin's ranks after his saint palace was ruined. Seeing his current weak state, Tianming was filled with volcanic rage. They immediately locked gazes.

"Jiang Wuxin!" It felt almost like they were destined to face off once again, but this time Jiang Wuxin was even more fearsome than ever.

"Li Tianming, it's your turn!" Jiang Wuxin roared. His voice was so deafeningly loud that even the samsarans nearby were blasted away, opening a path up between the two of them. The pressuring killing intent weighed on Tianming's head like a mountain. The two of them were itching to kill each other.

Tianming respected Xuanyuan Dao dearly. While he seemed rather average, compared to Fang Taiqing and Jian Wuyi, he bore the burden of the entire Archaic House of Xuanyuan. Not to mention, he had offered Tianming much support throughout the time he was in the sect. Even though he was the one who most wanted to protect Xuanyuan Lake, he was the first to fall, and no doubt he felt worse about it than anyone else.

Even so, he still stood up, having not given up yet. The formation core of the Nine Dragon Formation was still on him. Even though he no longer had any powers, his lifebound beasts still did. The two dragons' powers were connected to his, managing to sustain him in this time of endless pain. Using the power of his dragons, he activated the formation core once more, summoning the dragon spirits of the ancestors. Carrying Xuanyuan Dao's will, they sent a loud roar throughout the entire formation.

As long as the formation core was active, the dragon spirits could be stabilized. The only difference now was that Xuanyuan Dao would no longer be able to fight alongside the dragon spirits. He would have to rely on the dragon spirits alone to stop any of the twelfth-level death phase samsarans. Thanks to his continued struggle to uphold the formation, the power of the formation wasn't affected that much.

Chapter 923 - Emperor of Humanity

"Tianming!" Xuanyuan Dao cried out in the midst of chaos.

"Sect Master...." Tianming saw how Xuanyuan Dao was looking at him with a passionate gaze while being guarded by the desolate imperial dragon.

"Don't fight with Jiang Wuxin, focus on stopping Dugu Jin and Di Zang! The specters must not be allowed to return! As for Dugu Jin, there'll be more than enough chances to kill him!"

"Got it!" Tianming nodded.

As they spoke, the dragon spirits charged toward Jiang Wuxin to hold him back and Li Caiwei doubled down with her Dreamheart World. They already had some experience from trying to stop Jiang Wuxin back then, and managed some degree of success this time around as well. The reason they didn't chase down Di Zang instead was because he and Dugu Jin had already made their way into the inner formation, making it hard for the dragon spirits to stop them.

"Come back!" Tianming glared at the rampaging Jiang Wuxin before having Ying Huo and the rest return to his side. Then he flapped all three pairs of his wings and zipped toward Di Zang and Dugu Jin as quickly as he could.

The wind was blowing strongly. Tianming used the Plundering Eye and located the two of them precisely. Fortunately, they were still entangled with one another. Dugu Jin was managing to hold Di Zang back, otherwise he would have already made his way to Soulburn Hall. Not only that, their lifebound beasts were also engaged in battle.

They sent the water in Xuanyuan Lake blasting all over the place, causing countless buildings to collapse. This was the home of the Xuanyuan house, and now it was experiencing unprecedented destruction. The hope of humanity now lay with Tianming alone.

As he made his way to the location of the battle, he recalled how Yi Xingyin had sacrificed himself to cause Tianming City's formation to self-destruct, protecting everyone in the city, then he thought of how Xuanyuan Dao had suffered the destruction of his saint palace in an attempt to hold Jiang Wuxin back. Even though the chances of victory were slim, many had already paid the price.

Then a blurry face covered in blood flashed across his eyes. Slowly, it began shifting with the winds. Tianming soon saw Great Emperor Xuanyuan standing in front of him on Xuanyuan Lake, his caelum shining brightly like the sun. While there were many things that were still mysteries to him, they seemed to begin shining in his sea of consciousness at this time of crisis.

"Only when one concerns themselves with the welfare of the entire world can they be the emperor of all humanity!" The memory fragments from Great Emperor Xuanyuan's caelum slowly became clearer and clearer. He was the brave rebel that had led his fellow slaves to rebel against the oppression of the specters. After countless deathly experiences, humiliations, and defeats, he still bore the heart of forging forward without ever stopping. Eventually, he had managed the grand feat and brought about two hundred thousand years of freedom.

"The founding ancestor didn't know the odds of success either. He had no control over most things and faced countless crises, including the betrayal of the Blooddragon Clan that had almost caused all he had worked for to fail. Even so, anyone who walks the true path of the emperor should be like him, keeping the flames of his bravery and fighting spirit burning no matter what! They should always be ready to upend the status quo! The reason everyone holds out so much hope for me is because they consider me to be Great Emperor Xuanyuan reborn! They treat me like a ruler that will never fall! Only then can a truly eternal clan endure through the ages! I have to be like him! This is the path I must tread!"

The Human Emperor's Dragonhide manifested around Tianming's body, as if it had been born for the first time ever. Like a shining beacon, Tianming illuminated the way through the battle. The time to rebel

would always come to everyone, and the only ones that emerged victorious were dedicated people with unquenchable righteous rage!

Tianming's chase made him feel like he had returned to the Old Deepstar Path. He wasn't chasing his enemies, but rather the emperor who had changed everyone's fates two hundred millennia ago! The moment he reached the burning sun, his Imperial Will once more reached the peak and crossed the borderline. He reached the ninth-level life phase!

During that rapid burst forward, his Imperial Will had grown to new heights, far exceeding any of his previous achievements! Nobody would ever be able to imagine that he would find the answer as he was giving chase. The foundation of cultivation was the psyche. Only true comprehension could lead to growth.

Usually, that took form as a result of endless observation, application, pondering, and repetition, the culmination of which would result in a breakthrough. Naturally, his current breakthrough was also thanks to the efforts of the past dozen or so days he had spent pondering the insights from the caeli of the specters. And just now, he had received the final spark of insight from witnessing Xuanyuan Dao's sacrifice and continued efforts to fight, mirroring what the founding ancestor had done himself.

"Having guides on the path of cultivation must be the luckiest thing ever!" Great Emperor Xuanyuan truly had a huge influence on the growth of Tianming's Imperial Will. He managed to convert his death tribulation force into life tribulation force as he continued flying, his body reverting in age once more as his vigor refilled. He had once more exceeded himself, a monstrous feat indeed. Now, his Aeonian Grandbane helped the samsara rings expand, giving him access to rampaging life tribulation force. He was far more powerful than he had been in the eighth-level death phase.

"With Ling'er by my side, I'm at the very peak of the Flameyellow Continent! Now, my fate is my own to shape!" All he hoped for was that he wouldn't let others down. "It would be ideal if there was a way I can help restore those two's saint palaces one day."

After his breakthrough, his speed received another boost. He rapidly approached Di Zang and Dugu Jin, leaving behind a trail of splashing water on the surface of the lake. Lan Huang leapt into the water and began moving faster with the spinning nine kui seas as well. Apart from Xian Xian, all his beasts were by his side.

"Kill them and restore peace to the world!"

While Dugu Jin was trying to stop Di Zang from leaving, the two of them turned back when they felt a presence approaching them from behind.

"Li Tianming?" Dugu Jin said with a worried look.

"Why does he look like he's back in the life phase? Did he grow stronger again?" Di Zang muttered.

"That monster!" Dugu Jin's expression turned grim.

"Wonderful. Now even if I lose, your grand design is done for," Di Zang mocked.

"Didn't you say that this brat was the most unpredictable variable of all? Even if you let your specters out, as long as he lives, he'll eventually end up like Great Emperor Xuanyuan and vanquish you once more," Dugu Jin snapped.

"So you evaluate him so highly, huh?"

"Think about it. It started from the Number One Summit, then Qing Ming, Xue Yi, and eventually the twelfth-level life phase Fang Taiqing. They fell to him one after the other, and he's only in his twenties. When he's a hundred years old, no matter how many specters there are in the Ninefold Hell, you'll be wiped out for sure. As long as he lives, his potential is limitless. What I regret now is not having paid him any attention when he was still a sky saint."

"So? What're you trying to say?"

"Let's team up to kill him first. After he's dead, we'll fight it out to see who's the last one standing. How does that sound? I can promise that neither of us will live, let alone win, if he's alive, Di Zang."

"Fine, let's do just that," Di Zang finally agreed.

Immediately, they stopped fighting and turned to Tianming together.

"Hand over the key," Tianming said.

"I'll trade it for your life."

"Fine." Tianming glared at Dugu Jin.

Dugu Jin shrugged and said, "You have fun. I'm fine with anything."

"You won't get to leave either," Tianming said.

"So you're going to force us to work together to kill you first?" Dugu Jin said. As he spoke, his blood dragons returned to his side. His black and red robe began fluttering with force.

Down in the lake beneath Di Zang, a gigantic beast with countless tentacles spread them all over, seemingly turning half the surface of the lake black. In a hidden corner of the lake, one of the hell soubeast's tentacles suddenly broke off. The tentacle was holding the black key and was headed in the direction of Soulburn Hall. Neither Tianming nor Dugu Jin had expected that Di Zang would have another helper near Soulburn Hall.

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Within Soulburn Hall were Ouyang Jianwang, the sect master of Pentaphase, Jiang Yuanjun, as well as some tens of tenth-level death phase tribulation elders, including Xuanyuan Xiao and Xuanyuan Yu. It was the safest spot in the hall.

"I heard when the formation here is active, it can only be broken by someone in the twelfth-level death phase," Jiang Yuanjun said.

"Of course. It's where our goddess is protected, after all," Ouyang Jianwang said.

"I wonder what's going on outside."

They all looked outside worriedly. At that moment, a black beast poked out of the lake and appeared outside the formation.

Chapter 924 - Fiend Disaster

Those standing guard in Soulburn Hall immediately spotted the huge black beast. It had a dragon-like head, but looked even more savage thanks to its spikes and long fangs. Its body was huge and powerful. It had a back covered fully in black spikes that stretched all the way to its spear-like tail, which looked like a scorpion's stinger. Apart from that, it had a pair of bat-like wings that would block out the sun when fully expanded. It was as if its body had been built for combat! Having shown up in the sect and at Tianming City before, almost wreaking absolute destruction, everyone recognized it.

"It's the Archaionfiend!" Soulburn Hall was in trouble now. They all seemed incredibly worried.

"Wasn't it blasted to smithereens at Tianming City?"

"How could it recover from those injuries? What kind of monster is it?!"

It wasn't just them, even Tianming didn't know what kind of creature it was. Though, even if they did know, there was nothing they could do about it. The sect was already incredibly short on defenders, especially taking Jiang Wuxin into account. Those in Soulburn Hall had no choice but to arm themselves and fight the Archaionfiend to the death.

"Ouyang, if the inner formation breaks, we'll stay to fight with all we have! You have to run!" Jiang Yuanjun said.

"Nowhere is safe! Where am I to run to?" Ouyang Jianwang said. Soulburn Hall had the protection of the inner formation, so it was already the safest place available. If his luck was the slightest bit bad, he might well run into specters outside and end up worse off. He would easily be recognized, given his fame.

"We can just pray that it can't break the inner formation, or we get reinforcements from outside," Xuanyuan Yu said.

"Fat chance. Dugu Jin and Di Zang are outside, not to mention Fang Taiqing. Xuanyuan Dao and the imperial son already have enough on their plate," Ouyang Jianwang said, drawing his sword and patting his canine beast's head. "Get up and fight. Let's hope Sect Master Xuanyuan endures."

Little did he know that Xuanyuan Dao had already lost his key, which the Archaionfiend now held. The moment the fiend appeared, countless bolts of blood lightning gathered in its mouth and blasted out, forming a pillar and descending onto the inner formation from the sky.

Blood lightning spread all over the surface of the formation. Using the caeli it had consumed, the Archaionfiend had grown in power alongside Lin Xiaoxiao to the twelfth-level life phase, unbeknownst to others. That was the difference of having memories; it was able to form its own heavenly will and easily retrain itself, for retraining was just a matter of gathering energy. However, that also had its own risks, as evidenced by how the Archaionfiend and Lin Xiaoxiao didn't get along at all. Had Ying Huo and the rest had all of their memories from the get-go, Tianming might have had a really hard time. The

Archaionfiend's terrifying attacks caused the inner formation to shake rather profusely, and seams started forming around the formation's structure.

"Damn, it's at least at the twelfth-level life phase," Ouyang Jianwang said with worry.

"Listen up. Run once the formation collapses. We will hold it back!" Xuanyuan Xiao snapped.

"Forget it. It is three phases above me in power, and two phases above you, Sect Master Jiang. You won't be able to stop it," Ouyang Jianwang said.

"Are you going to submit?"

"No. It's better to let me try stopping it while the rest of you run. The only one who needs to die is me! Let's just hope Sect Master Xuanyuan can protect his key," Ouyang Jianwang said. Once more, they were in dire straits.

The Archaionfiend was snickering outside the formation. As the lightning bolts cracked down on the formation, it continued using its claws and tail to attack the inner formation. Despite the number of dragon patterns that showed up, they were constantly scattered by the powerful lightning.

"Stop making a fuss, everyone. Once I get in, none of you can run." The Archaionfiend made another charge, ramming into the formation and causing it to rumble again. "Relish in your despair! Swim in fear before you die! You're the lucky ones... lucky enough to be cowards without knowing your own cowardice! Before me, you're nothing but insignificant specks of dust! A light breath from me will be enough to scatter your so-called dignity!" it mocked and taunted. That was its style. It had been suppressed for far too long, and needed an outlet for its frustrations.

"Die!" it roared as it came in for another ram. Despair once more filled their hearts. Ouyang Jianwang's eyes were bloodshot.

"If only we'd known it would come to this, we would've stayed at Heaven Cauldron and fought to our deaths!" the nether cloudsky dog said angrily.

"Don't say that, Dog Bro. This wasn't something we could've predicted," Ouyang Jianwang said. Between the Heaven Cauldron and Xuanyuan Lake, they could only make one choice.

Once more, the Archaionfiend used its ability, blasting even more blood lightning at the formation. "Break!"

Their demise finally came: the formation broke apart!

"Kill!" Those on the inside had already made their preparations. Right as the Archaionfiend was about to charge through the formation's broken shards, it suddenly slowed down as if it was being dragged from behind.

"What the?" They saw the Archaionfiend suddenly go wild with rage. It flapped its wings and turned back, glaring at its tail.

Ouyang Jianwang and the rest saw a small figure appear there, holding the sharp tip of the tail with her two hands. It was the black-robed girl!

"Lin Xiaoxiao, are you looking to die?!" the Archaionfiend snapped.

As it raged, a huge force coming from its tail actually pulled it hard and spun it around. The ground itself rumbled as the Archaionfiend was dragged along it.

"What in the world is going on?!"

"Who is that?!"

"Apparently she's a disciple called Lin Xiaoxiao. I think she's related to Li Tianming in some capacity."

As they spoke, the Archaionfiend haggardly got back to its feet. The girl before it was bathed in blood lightning and covered in bloody marks from head to toe from the binding chains. The wounds she had seemed to fit her bloodshot gaze and purple lips; she looked incredibly savage and ruthless.

"Aren't you afraid of dying?! How were you able to escape after I bound you like that? How did you survive the Trisoul Boltchains? If your willpower was really that strong to begin with, you never would've fallen to such a degree if only you listened to me!"

Lin Xiaoxiao's sole response was drawing a long, black spear with fifteen tribulation patterns from her spatial ring.

"You're trying to take me on with the tribulation artifact I gave you?" The Archaionfiend chuckled.

"You really never shut up, do you?" Lin Xiaoxiao bit her lip and stood in front of Ouyang Jianwang and the rest.

"Move aside!" The Archaionfiend was about to lose its mind.

"You're the one who should move."

The beast flapped its wings, soaring into the sky and whipping up a cloud of dust. "Everything you know was taught by me. How dare you use it to fight back against me?! Are you worthy?!"

In another rampage, it rained down countless bolts of lightning. However, Lin Xiaoxiao moved quickly, avoiding them and making her way toward the beast, then clashed with it in an explosive flash. Lightning bolts randomly shot out all over the place. While the Archaionfiend was powerful and had many abilities, Lin Xiaoxiao was faster and more agile, and even knew how to use battle arts. She was actually able to hold back its rampage.

That was the reason the beast had wanted to keep her bound; it had discovered that it was having a harder and harder time controlling Lin Xiaoxiao as a result of the master role played by beastmasters in symbiotic cultivation. Even Di Zang's Trisoul Boltchains could be easily transferred to it. But as it didn't want to be bound to the chains, it resisted, and the more it did, the more it had helped Lin Xiaoxiao escape them.

The Archaionfiend had gone through a lot of trouble, thanks to symbiotic cultivation, and today Lin Xiaoxiao was here again to ruin his plans. Even though it had many tricks up its sleeve and knew all the cards in Lin Xiaoxiao's hands, they weren't able to outplay each other, thanks to the telepathic connection between beastmaster and beast, much to its fury.

"Lin Xiaoxiao, you've gotten on my bad side! Once I kill those pitiful wretches, I'll make sure you suffer the worst pain possible!"

"Odd. I thought you'd already done that." Her lips curved into her smile as she fought, still covered in blood and wounds, her black hair fluttering in the storm of blood lightning.

The beast continued howling. It had almost had victory within its grasp, yet Lin Xiaoxiao had come in at the last moment to stop it again. The feeling of dread it felt from before its stomach had blown up the last time was coming again.

"Die, die, die!" Its frustrated howls spread out from Soulburn Hall.

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"The Archaionfiend?!" Tianming heard the commotion coming from Soulburn Hall. Thanks to the relatively flat terrain around Xuanyuan Lake, he was easily able to see far away with his Plundering Eye.

The Archaionfiend seemed to be engaged in combat, rather than trying to destroy the formation. Who in the world was it fighting against?

Chapter 925 - High-Pressure Jet

Tianming spotted Lin Xiaoxiao fighting the Archaionfiend. "It's her again...."

Seeing that made him feel rather relieved. It seemed that she hadn't let him down after all. He wouldn't dare to imagine what kind of peril Ouyang Jianwang and the rest would be in if Lin Xiaoxiao hadn't stopped the Archaionfiend.

"Jiang Wuxin already has one key, and now the Archaionfiend is back and recovered. It must definitely be after the other key!" That realization immediately sent chills down his spine and reminded him of what he saw from Fatesteal.

The first vision he had was one of the Archaionfiend, while the second was Jiang Wuxin. The Archaionfiend had almost destroyed Tianming City, while Jiang Wuxin was one of the main enemies at the battle of Taiji Peak Lake. However, they were each pointing to a key. In other words, the ones Tianming really had to be careful of were those two. He'd thought that he was revealing the arcane secrets of fate that pertained to Tianming City, but little did he know that they were actually referring to what was happening now.

"Once Jiang Wuxin and the Archaionfiend get the keys, the specters will return to the human realm!"

As Feng Qingyu wasn't able to kill Jiang Wuxin for good, and Dugu Jin and Fang Taiqing drew most of the attention, Tianming had been distracted from the plot that would ruin humanity.

"So you had someone else ready to grab the other key for you?!" Dugu Jin abruptly turned to Di Zang, panicking.

Tianming was also desperate. "Let's fight after we kill the specters first!" Tianming yelled.

Dugu Jin was furrowing his brow even more. While he was indeed worried about the specters' return, how could he take Tianming down without Di Zang? What he wanted was for both Tianming and Di Zang to die! He wasn't able to accept Tianming's offer at all. Though he wanted to hold off and watch the situation at Soulburn Hall first, since it wouldn't be too late for him to act if Lin Xiaoxiao really couldn't hold on, Tianming couldn't wait! The specters were a much higher priority for him than Dugu Jin.

The appearance of the Archaionfiend had truly complicated the situation beyond imagination. The more Tianming wanted to go to Soulburn Hall, the more Di Zang tried intercepting him. Right now, he couldn't afford to make that gamble. "Xiaoxiao, you really have to hold on...."

"What about us?" Ying Huo asked with an angry look as it perched on his shoulders.

"Kill them all!" Tianming decided, fully confident in his abilities. Di Zang was trying to stop him, while Dugu Jin was trying to drag things out. No matter what, he just had to kill both of them and settle it once and for all.

"That's exactly what I was thinking!"

Tianming and his beasts were all there. Combined with Feiling, they were in peak fighting form. He exchanged glances with all of them, fighting with their hearts united. This was something Lin Xiaoxiao could only envy.

From Xuanyuan Lake, Lan Huang used Primordial Soundwave on their foes, namely Di Zang, his beast, Dugu Jin, and his two dragons. Meanwhile, Xian Xian took root in the lake and spread its countless black roots all over, causing its three flowers to bloom. Then Radiant Vines began spreading out. At the very top of the Evernight Rose, countless starry sparkles began to spread.

"I'm already full! Now it's just killing!" Xian Xian's spiritform said, appearing in front of Tianming in its blood lily fighting form. It was engaged with Di Zang's hell soulbeast, their appendages fighting for domination of Xuanyuan Lake. The hell soulbeast's spiky tentacles wrapped around Xian Xian's vines and roots in an attempt to consume it. However, Xian Xian returned the favor, and even used its roots to tear through its opponent's body. It was a bloody battle between the two beasts, but Xian Xian had the advantage of the Greenspark Tower, allowing it to maintain an edge despite being slightly weaker. All the wounds it suffered would only be temporary, while the hell soulbeast's were permanent!

"Meow Meow, help Xian Xian!" Tianming calmly assigned their roles based on their individual specialties. Ying Huo was a sneaky, hard hitter, while Lan Huang was a gigantic shield, but their combined power was greater than the sum of their parts. Lan Huang was even tougher as well, thanks to the Greenspark Tower's constant regeneration. It alone was bigger than the two blood dragons combined, allowing Ying Huo to hide among its Kilofold Rings unseen.

Perhaps due to the bloodline of legendary dragons, the ancient bloodvoid dragons were really proud. Lan Huang was far too young, in comparison to them, so they believed they held an absolute advantage. While they acknowledged that Tianming was strong, they didn't think much of Lan Huang.

"You're just two little worms! What's with the posturing? You think you look really cool being all bloody and red? Look at my Tortoise—I mean Dragon Bro! That's what a real dragon looks like! You're just two worms that know how to squirm around in the sky! Come into the water and wrestle with Dragon Bro! Let's see who's the most powerful dragon!" Ying Huo taunted with its wings at its waist.

"Are you daft?" said one of the blood dragons.

"I outgrew childish provocation tactics like that when I was two years old," said the other. They merely looked down coldly from high above.

"Chicken Bro, why aren't those two old husks coming down? Are they afraid I'll crush their balls?" Lan Huang asked naively.

"Of course not. Their old balls have long dried up and shriveled up. There's nothing left to crush," Ying Huo nonchalantly said.

"Ah, that's too bad. I thought they looked rather impressive. Who knew they were ball-less freaks? Even Cat Bro has balls!" Lan Huang's booming voice made its whisper sound no different from an outright proclamation.

"That's normal. You're too young, brother. We call dragons like them ball-less dragons. They're as cowardly as mice. They wouldn't dare to make a sound even if I cursed their ancestors," Ying Huo said.

"Oh, I can totally see that. Compared to the ugly, puny worms, you're far more handsome!"

"Hey, keep that to yourself! Don't hurt their feelings! Besides, ugly dragons like them wouldn't understand the woes of being as handsome as me." Ying Huo patted Lan Huang's head and continued, "Brother, since they aren't coming down, let's show them your high-pressure piss jets. I bet old folks like them can't remotely do the same."

"Alright!" Lan Huang turned around, drank gallons of water, and shot its urine skyward with impressive force and precision. Before the two dragons could react, they were splattered all over their faces.

Chapter 926 - Six-eyed Specter

The two dragons exchanged glances, stunned.

"Tortoise Bro, run!" Ying Huo laughed and entered the lake along with Lan Huang.

The proud dragons in the air were fuming from being splattered in urine and immediately charged into the lake. They chased Lan Huang and roared with all their might at the bottom of the lake, having completely fallen for the bait.

Ying Huo had no choice but to resort to something like this, as Dugu Jin was a dastardly person who wanted Tianming to fight to the death with Di Zang. This was the only way to get Dugu Jin himself involved in the battle instead of sitting it out.

The lake was Lan Huang's turf. It was ten times faster in the water, and with its Kilofold Rings and the Greenspark Tower, it managed to counterattack even while being pursued. It rammed into the two blood dragons with absolute force. At the same time, an agile wisp of flame lay in ambush beside Lan Huang, constantly watching for a chance to deliver a fatal blow to the two dragons.

They had already started a little late, for the battle at the other part of the battlefield was already reaching its climax. Tianming had engaged both Di Zang and Dugu Jin. As he had proclaimed, he would

kill both of them. Meow Meow changed into its Regal Chaosfiend form and fought the hell soulbeast with Xian Xian; the battle between the Radix World Tree and the hell soulbeast had been going for quite some time and had turned rather savage.

Meow Meow used its lightning abilities to blast open a path of blood and prevent being hit by the tentacles or abilities of the hell soulbeast. It then dove into the water with Ninefold Chaos Thunderscape, tearing the hell soulbeast apart by allowing the lightning to flow through the water. When it finally got on the body of the hell soulbeast, it began tearing away at its body using its enhanced claws and fangs. No matter how huge its opponent was, it would always be able to cause them to shed tons of blood.

Xian Xian's Bloodrain Swords also embedded themselves in the body of the hell soulbeast, causing countless explosions across the bloodied surface of the beast's body. Even though the hell soulbeast was managing to put up quite a fight against those two, the wounds it had inflicted weren't fatal at all and were rapidly recovered thanks to the Greenspark Tower. The Primordial Chaos Beasts were even more terrifying with it.

More importantly, the hell soulbeast wasn't as powerful as they had imagined. It was even a little weaker than an ancient bloodvoid dragon, which was a sign that it wasn't Di Zang's true lifebound beast. The fact that it had been able to grow to this level of power meant that it had used some secret technique of the specters. For instance, Po Suo's beast had been killed by Ouyang Jianwang with a single strike.

"It isn't strong, so it's the weakest link. I'll kill it first, then Meow Meow can come help me. As for Xian Xian, go help Ying Huo and Lan Huang!" That was Tianming's plan. Currently, he was only feigning holding the alleged allies, Di Zang and Dugu Jin. He wanted to stall for a little before he took out tens of tribulation pattern tomes at the moment he flew past the hell soulbeast. While they weren't third-origin tribulation pattern tomes, they were second-origin and in the highest damage class. Tianming had kept them precisely for situations like these. Even if they couldn't compare to the chaosblitz tome, their numbers made them easier to use.

"Xian Xian!" Tianming immediately marked those tomes with blood and slammed them down, causing the combined power of some ten of them to erupt at the same time. This was a huge advantage, especially considering how rare tomes like them were on the Flameyellow Continent. While their elements were different, namely fire, ice, lightning, wind, seal, and weaken, they posed a fatal threat when used together like that.

Meow Meow and Xian Xian had already seen it coming. Xian Xian forcefully raised the body of the hell soulbeast toward Tianming and let it take the blow. The great explosion was followed by a rain of blood and flesh, accompanied by agonized cries. The huge body of the hell soulbeast just made it an easier target to hit. Even if it didn't die from that huge blow, it would definitely be badly injured.

Next, Xian Xian and Meow Meow would team up to deal with it. What Tianming lacked the most now was time, but he realized that both Dugu Jin and Di Zang seemed rather unmoved by the massive damage the hell soulbeast had just suffered. Instead, they kept looking toward Soulburn Hall, seemingly still trying to stall. The battle was definitely shifting toward there.

Tianming had summoned the Dragonhide and was wielding the two Grand-Orient Swords. Above him, his soul servant was helping control the Prime Tower. Even so, the one he relied on the most in the one-on-two fight was Feiling. Her spatial-temporal powers could help him partition the battlefield effectively. When he took on Dugu Jin, many of Di Zang's attacks would be stopped by the Millennium Fortress and he would even get hit by Temporal Lock from time to time. Tianming felt that she was getting better and better in those aspects.

"Big Brother, Xiaoxiao won't be able to hold on for long. She got so powerful because of the Archaionfiend in the first place, so it definitely has a way to deal with her," she said as she observed Soulburn Hall.

"Got it!"

They were definitely running out of time. Even though Tianming wanted to kill these two, that didn't seem realistic. Fortunately, he had reinforcements. After tipping the balance with tribulation pattern tomes, the hell soulbeast finally fell. Its gigantic body was fully torn apart from Meow Meow and Xian Xian's unending bombardment, the chunks of which spread all over Xuanyuan Lake. The final cry of the hell soulbeast didn't sound agonized, but tragic.

"Di Zang, thank you for giving me this life! I pray that you specters will one day return. Don't forget to erect a gravestone for me!" Its voice began subsiding. Despite its power, it was rather weak in actuality. That kind of power wasn't something it had in the first place.

After it died, Di Zang took a deep breath and said, "Farewell, old friend! Once I complete my mission, I'll go to the Yellow Springs to find you so that we may spend our next life together!"

He didn't feel sad about the beast's passing at all. He already didn't have long left to live, so he only had to focus on completing his mission. With the Archaionfiend beginning to suppress Lin Xiaoxiao, the specters had finally taken the initiative.

Di Zang turned back and glared at Tianming. Meow Meow had reverted from its Regal Chaosfiend form into a small cat and returned to Tianming's side. Meanwhile, Xian Xian sank into Xuanyuan Lake and made its way toward the blood dragons to help Ying Huo and Lan Huang. With Ying Huo around, they managed to hold their ground against the dragons, and Xian Xian's arrival only made things even harder for them.

"Die!" Tianming and his four beasts were on a killing frenzy. Now that the hell soulbeast was dead, they were searching for their next target. When Tianming's gaze fell on Di Zang, the disguised specter started laughing instead.

"Li Tianming, I really have to thank you for removing the chains that bound me. Now, I can return to being myself! I wasn't able to kill my own cherished friend myself, after all. Since you look down on me so much, I'll show you the true power of the first ghoulish king! Specters are so powerful we don't even need lifebound beasts. One could say we're beastmaster and beast in one!"

As he laughed, his body began transforming like Po Suo's, rapidly contorting and expanding. His bones grew to match his new stature and he even grew black scales. In a flash, he seemed more than four meters tall and had two more arms, both of which were huge and ended in sharp claws. His face was no

longer human-like at all; instead, he had green skin and tusks. Four new eyes opened above his former eyes, giving him six in total. All six of them were focused on Tianming.

His aura was far more terrifying than before, and there were nine hundred and ninety-nine stars in his eyes. This was Di Zang's true form, and unsurprisingly, he was slightly stronger than his old self and the hell soulbeast combined, though not by too much or he would have sacrificed the hell soulbeast long ago. Now that the beast was dead, its power was transferred back to him.

Tianming's foes were stronger than ever before. Di Zang now had four arms and six eyes. All four arms held peak-level tribulation artifacts of the blade and spear variety. The stars in his eyes also meant he could use abilities.

Smirking, Di Zang said, "Let me introduce myself again. I'm from the Six-eyed Specter Clan. We submit only to the royal family in the Ninefold Hell, nobody else!"

Beside him, Dugu Jin wielded Godbane and looked down at his blood dragons, who were in deep trouble, then back at Tianming, still wary and filled with killing intent. It was obvious that this youth was the one who would ruin all his plans.

"So, even you look down on me, eh?" Di Zang said.

It appeared that Dugu Jin thought Tianming to be a more pressing threat than Di Zang and wanted to kill him first.

"As long as that brat lives, I'm dead for sure! And if I die, the specters will return! What does that have to do with me at all?" Dugu Jin fought for nobody's benefit but his own! So he no longer hesitated and made his decision. It was almost laughable how his wariness for Tianming was more than he held for Di Zang, Jiang Wuxin, and the Archaionfiend combined.

Chapter 927 - Ninefold Slaughter Tower

Dugu Jin wasn't wary for no reason. He knew Tianming's rise to prominence far too well for it to be a mistake. It took him only one or two years to grow from a sky saint into one of the top three most powerful elites on the continent. If I give him another half a month, he might even rival a god. To some degree, even he believed that Tianming was the reincarnation of Great Emperor Xuanyuan. If I don't kill him for good today, even if I exterminate Xuanyaun Lake, I'll only be at the top of the Flameyellow Continent for a month at most!

He would work with Di Zang to kill Tianming first, before turning on him and facing off against Jiang Wuxin and the Archaionfiend as well to stop the specters from returning. At the very least, he could be sure that Xuanyuan Dao, Li Caiwei, and the rest would work on his side to hold Jiang Wuxin back. Lin Xiaoxiao would also do her best to stop the Archaionfiend. This is the only possible way for me to reign supreme!

He no longer hesitated and surrounded Tianming with the specterized Di Zang. Unlike before, he was no longer stalling and was going all out! Fang Taiqing's death and his lifebound beasts fighting at a disadvantage had forced him to stall as an insurance policy at first. After all, the weaker two had to face

off against the strongest by working together. Not to mention, it was clear to see that Dugu Jin's ancient bloodvoid dragons were faring rather badly against Tianming's lifebound beasts.

Xian Xian's black roots had already wrapped around them and Lan Huang was engaging them in close combat, not letting them escape, not to mention Ying Huo's near-lethal ambushes. Every time it used the Hexapath Samsara Sword, the sword ki from the sword formation would tear at their flesh. Xuanyuan Lake had long been dyed red with their blood.

The ancient bloodvoid dragon's ability, Bloodvoid Fiendsun, burned brightly within the lake, causing lots of water to steam away as a misty haze. Then, the explosion of the sun caused quite a number of buildings in the lake to be swallowed up by flames—even the Hexapath Sword Palace had collapsed. Lan Huang and Xian Xian had also suffered quite a lot of charring and perforation from the explosion and were bitten and clawed at by the dragons.

"Foolish youngling, you'll learn true terror when you finally—aaaah!" One of the dragons was suddenly pelted by Ying Huo's Sixpath Infernal Lotus as it was rambling. When the flames swallowed it, Ying Huo charged out and used Animacorpus Eradication to pierce its tongue while Infernal Blaze burned at its feathers. The flames exploded once Ying Huo retreated from the site.

The dragon howled in pain after the blast, half of its head broken from the explosion. Its voice had changed completely. More importantly, Lan Huang's heads bit down on it and it started a death roll in the water, much like a crocodile. The poor dragon was dragged straight into the muddy depths of the lake, being ground by the Kilofold Rings in the process.

"Move aside!" The other dragon was anxious and used Ninefold Slaughter Tower. Its body was set alight with bloody flames as it seemed to turn into a tall, burning tower that tore through the lake water toward Lan Huang. The ability combined with the dragon's amazing physical capabilities, making it a rather powerful attack that seemed like it would be able to crush Lan Huang's head.

But then, Xian Xian's Radiant Vines wrapped around the spinning tower. Even though the vines burned away into ash, Xian Xian still managed to drag the dragon away. Then, countless Bloodrain Swords shot into the tower and exploded. Ying Huo also appeared at the same time and used the Ninesky Beastsoul Formation, targeting nine spots on the tower and causing endless carnage.

That dragon's reinforcement attempt had been intercepted by Ying Huo and Xian Xian. In fact, it had even suffered a heavy blow from Ninesky Beastsoul Formation, too. Had Ying Huo been the size of the aether white phoenix, it might have been able to kill the dragon, though that would also make it far less agile than it was now.

Either way, the two dragons had been forced to the losing side since Xian Xian had joined the battle, much to their frustration. Even though they had wounded their enemies, such as the bone-deep wounds and the kui mountain on Lan Huang's back that seemed on the verge of breaking, they looked completely fine moments later. The Greenspark Tower's abilities were far beyond the dragons' imagination.

Tianming and all his beasts were able to make up for their lack of cultivation level with the many other methods at their disposal. It was only a matter of time before Dugu Jin's beasts lost, something that made him even more anxious. While Di Zang had grown even stronger after the hell soulbeast died, the

same couldn't be said for Dugu Jin. Losing either of his dragons would extinguish his hopes of ascending to godhood for good!

Tianming's beasts' constant barrage on the two dragons had finally forced Dugu Jin into a corner. He was already far too powerful. Based on his performance, even if Dugu Jin didn't interfere, Tianming and his beasts would be enough to kill Di Zang. After that, Tianming would no doubt go to kill the Archaionfiend, then he would definitely come for Dugu Jin. Kill him, kill him! he howled in his mind.

Di Zang also considered Tianming a target he had to kill no matter what. The two strongest fighters on the Flameyellow Continent working together against a shared enemy was a terrifying prospect. But strictly speaking, Tianming wasn't taking the two of them on alone. He had Meow Meow and Feiling helping him out.

"Make sure to hold Di Zang back for me!" Tianming instructed. Di Zang could use abilities and battle arts at the same time, and also had four weapons to choose from. Comparatively, Dugu Jin was the weaker one, especially with his lifebound beasts out of the picture. Since he was being ganged up on, he decided to go after the weaker link first!

Meow Meow, now in its cat form, countered Di Zang with its abilities from a long range. Chaos Disaster, Misty Hellthunder, Soulchasing Hellthunder, and all of its other abilities were launched against the specterized ghoul king. At the same time, Feiling applied Temporal Field to the whole area and focused Temporal Lock on Di Zang, slowing down the already gigantic and bumbling figure even more. She also erected most of Millennium Fortress's walls around Di Zang, ensuring that he would have to break through the walls to get to Tianming no matter which direction he picked. In such a chaotic fight for life, letting the four-armed Di Zang, who could use both abilities and battle arts, approach Tianming was a really bad idea, so Feiling used everything she had to keep him at bay, constantly erecting new Spatial Walls no matter how many Di Zang shattered.

"Hold him back!"

"Meow Meow, he's over here!"

Tianming trusted those two with his back. Lin Xiaoxiao was still barely holding on; Tianming saw that she was covered entirely in blood, but she didn't give way to the Archaionfiend one bit. Her wild, unyielding attitude was almost like his own, but no matter how stubborn she was, her fall was only a matter of time! Given these circumstances, Tianming had the soul servant use the Prime Tower to harass Di Zang while he chased down Dugu Jin with his pair of swords. He didn't have to care about Di Zang at all and was focusing his full attention on Dugu Jin.

He crossed blades with Dugu Jin's Godbane countless times. Dugu Jin was a level above Tianming in terms of cultivation, sending sparks flying every time his Godbane struck the swords. Soon, he began smirking when he noticed that Tianming saw him as the weaker link. The more desperate he seemed, the happier he felt. "Well, show me what you're made of then! Aren't you really capable?"

Godbane exploded with force as he ferociously doubled down on the barrage. "Is that all you have to offer?" he mocked.

Among his many techniques, his most powerful was the Deicide Mantra. The third eye on his forehead that had absorbed the power of the Blooddragon Sealing Formation was also something to be wary of, and his explosive barrage of attacks was incredibly hard to defend against.

The sight of their battle was so epic that it stunned everyone at Xuanyuan Lake. Tianming, now protected by the Dragonhide, was seemingly surrounded by tens of thousands of dragons. The Imperealm Sword Formation also raged on beside him. He was now in peak fighting form. Even so, Di Zang lived up to his name as someone who used to be the strongest fighter on the continent, and Dugu Jin was also deserving of his title as the first sect master of the Flameyellow Imperial Sect. The two were old and experienced fighters, and they could easily coordinate with each other with but a single glance.

Just as Dugu Jin was about to corner Tianming, Di Zang used four peak battle arts to shatter Feiling's Millennium Fortress. Even being slowed by Temporal Lock, he managed to rush to Tianming's back rapidly. The four battle arts that used four different weapons were namely Ghostly Bladeworks, Cherry Blossom's Dreamlance, Grandslaughter Soulsword, and Ninefirmament Skyslash Halberd. Di Zang had executed them all at once; a feat far more impressive than using two Grand-Orient Swords independently.

Ghostly Bladeworks made the blade really hard to follow even after it was slowed down by Temporal Lock. Cherry Blossom's Dreamlance, on the other hand, seemed instilled with a hallucination in the form of a landscape with countless cherry blossom petals falling. Grandslaughter Soulsword was the most ferocious attack, one that threatened to bind his soul, and was targeted toward Tianming's head. Finally, Ninefirmament Skyslash Halberd came striking down from the sky with a force that was enough to break through nine layers of heaven.

Chapter 928 - Battle of Rulers

Tianming was indeed looking down on Di Zang a little when he used that technique. After all, Po Suo had perished rather quickly, which gave the wrong impression that the same would happen to Di Zang. Little did they know that even though his lifespan was almost running out, he had exchanged it for a final burst of power. In his last moments, he would be at peak power. Now, the Archaionfiend already had one key, so it only needed to be able to defeat the girl and take the other key, then Di Zang would win.

"So what if I die? It matters not as long as my kin are able to return. It's been two hundred thousand years. We underestimated our enemy back then and have suffered too much for it. Li Tianming, you're just like Xuanyuan from way back. The two of you are capable of defying fate. People like you have to perish, or it would be pointless even if the specters return. We'll never repeat this mistake a second time!"

As Di Zang was rampaging, Dugu Jin smiled. Even though he hadn't gone all out, he was still applying pressure on Tianming so that he would be unable to fully defend against the ghoulish king. Once Li Tianming is killed by Di Zang, his lifebound beasts will surely go mad for revenge. Then, my two brothers and those four can kill Di Zang together! Di Zang's already burning himself out. Killing Li Tianming shall be his final act! Once he is dead, Li Tianming's lifebound beasts might even help me take out the Archaionfiend. They're more fearful of the specters returning than me, after all. I'll benefit the most at the end of the day! It was all a bet on fate.

"Hundred-thousand Bloodfiend Eyes, open!" Dugu Jin spread his arms wide the moment Di Zang went in for the kill. The eye between his brows glowed bright crimson, sending out a hundred crimson dragons that turned into ropes that bound Tianming, stopping him from moving.

At the same time, Di Zang weathered Meow Meow's abilities and turned charred and black before he charged to Tianming's back while executing four battle arts. "Young man, you were too prideful! Your love of the spotlight will be the reason for your doom!"

Di Zang's eyes arranged themselves in a circular ring, letting out a terrifying glow. It was his ability, Sixeye Reincarnation, a terrifying mental ability! It could instantly lock an opponent's vita in a loop. After the ability hit Tianming, Di Zang came striking with his four arms. "Die, Xuanyuan's reincarnation!"

This was the most crucial moment. He was about to complete his mission. Unsurprisingly, the black cat turned into a gigantic Regal Chaosfiend and tried to act as Tianming's shield.

"You shall perish too!"

Tianming was now completely bound by both the Hundred-thousand Bloodfiend Eyes and Sixeye Reincarnation, so Di Zang would only need one weapon to kill him. He shattered Meow Meow's Ninefold Chaos Thunderscape with his Ninefirmament Skyslash Halberd and slashed down on its spine with Ghostly Bladeworks. The strike caused a huge sound to ring out, seemingly slashing halfway through the cat's spine and causing it to howl in pain.

"Don't touch him!" Meow Meow's eyes sparked with black lightning as it sent Soulchasing Hellthunder striking at Di Zang's chest, blasting large chunks of flesh away. However, the ghoul-king-turned-specter had long been ready for it and still had a sword and a lance on the way. Cherry Blossom's Dreamlance was really hard to grasp, and coupled with Grandslaughter Sword and Sixeye Reincarnation, it was nigh impossible to block.

Abruptly, the Prime Tower came smashing down on Di Zang's head, causing him to bleed profusely. Meow Meow then turned around and sent its tail piercing toward the hole in Di Zang's chest, but not even that stopped him from approaching. After shattering countless Spatial Walls, he came to Tianming's back.

That instant, Tianming broke the bindings on him and grabbed the lance with his left arm, then blocked the Grandslaughter Sword with the Grand-Orient Sword in his right hand. However, that move's main power lay in the piercing spiritual damage it dealt. Sixeye Reincarnation was also a spiritual attack like that, but both of them had been neutralized by the Soul Tower. Once more, the mysterious tower had saved Tianming's life.

Even so, the sheer power of Cherry Blossom's Dreamlance still forced the weapon through Tianming's grip until it pierced his body and aimed straight at his saint palace! However, the tip was blocked by the Purple Tower, which caused it to swerve a little sideways. The sensation of being pierced by a spear was something that could only truly be understood after one experienced it. Comparatively, however, it wasn't as damaging as almost having one's spine severed, like Meow Meow.

"What?!" Two of Di Zang's ultimate moves were blocked by the Soul and Purple Towers respectively. Then the Greenspark Tower began to heal Tianming's body with unlimited vigor. The fact that Tianming

was still able to pull the lance out and Meow Meow could still attack Di Zang's flank with Chaos Disaster was a sign that Di Zang hadn't managed to harm him for good, let alone kill him.

Di Zang was sent blasting away, stunned. "He's still alive after all that? He took Sixeye Reincarnation! He isn't an ascendant and doesn't have a divine soul yet. How could that be possible?"

Interesting to note was that everyone who knew about Tianming's 'strong' soul had already perished.

"Not to mention, how did his saint palace stay intact?"

The toughness of a saint palace was mostly dependent on fate itself, not defense. Even a normal sword strike would be able to pierce through a saint palace. Di Zang was suddenly filled with doubt and rage at Tianming's lucky escape from death.

"Meow Meow, are you alright?" Tianming asked as he caught it, now in its small form once again. It was covered in blood. Had it not been for its tough bones, its head would've been cut off already.

"How could I be?! I almost went to sleep for good! I wouldn't be cute anymore without my head!" it snapped. It had taken that strike for Tianming, saving his life. By now, its bones were starting to reconnect thanks to the Greenspark Tower, but at a slower rate compared to its flesh's recovery.

The wound Tianming had suffered in his abdomen was more or less fully healed by now. Meow Meow struggled out of his hand. "What're you doing?"

"Getting revenge! I want to cut his head off! Those six eyes are really bothering me!" Despite just having a close brush with death, this Primordial Chaos Beast seemed even more ferocious than before.

It was one thing for Di Zang to want to kill him, but another for Dugu Jin to not even be willing to do the deed himself! Dugu Jin's plans were clear to him. Even though Di Zang had almost succeeded, Tianming turned to Dugu Jin all the same. After that mistake, he was even more careful than before.

Not to mention, Di Zang was hurt. He was entirely charred, and even had a bloody hole in his abdomen out of which blood leaked, having paid a huge price in his attempt to kill Tianming. His head had also been slammed into by the Prime Tower. Right now, he was no longer as threatening as he was before.

Dugu Jin was a little surprised to see Tianming turn towards him once more. "I thought you were dead for sure. You sure are a tough one."

"Satisfied now, Dugu Jin? Accept your fate. You aren't capable of ruling the world. I am Tianming, the fate of the heavens!"

What Dugu Jin hated the most was fatalistic proclamations like that. He turned and saw that his lifebound beasts were still being badly suppressed by Ying Huo and the rest. Who wouldn't be afraid of an undying super genius? Di Zang had almost died trying to kill Tianming, only for his wounds to recover in almost an instant. Instead, the ghoulish king himself seemed to be on the verge of falling from the effort! They hadn't known true terror until now!

Tianming, having just had a close brush with death, was even angrier and more frenzied than before. Meow Meow and Feiling began limiting Di Zang's movements again as Tianming's eyes turned bloodshot and his rage boiled. Seeing his partners fighting with all they had and Lin Xiaoxiao being slammed to the ground time and again by the Archaiionfiend, his rage reached a boiling point.

"Dugu Jin, you've messed with people for your own profit for far too long. You didn't care about the wellbeing of others at all. You accuse the founding ancestor of being a tyrant, but all I can see after someone as selfish as you becomes a ruler of the Flameyellow Continent is becoming a tyrant yourself!"

Tianming raised his two Grand-Orient Swords and summoned the Dragonhide once more; its main purpose was still to boost his combat power. "You think you're invincible, but you're nothing more than a parasite of the world! You can do nothing but eat up all the rot! You don't even know how to go with the flow. All you have is tricks and manipulation! You're not worthy enough to fight me for supremacy!"

Only those who walked the path of the saint and garnered the support of the population as a hero deserved to reign as the sovereign emperor of humanity. This was a battle for rulership. Only the one who wins the hearts of all shall be sovereign!

Tianming had garnered quite a lot of popular support and rendered many good deeds along the way. His power contained the blessings and hopes of countless people, completely unlike Dugu Jin. What Tianming wanted was eternal peace and stability, while all Dugu Jin cared about was absolute domination!

Chapter 929 - Uniting Under Tianming's Rule

The difference between the two showed in their clash of wills. There were some people who only wanted an end to all the fighting, while others wanted to rule no matter what, even if that meant risking the return of the specters. Dugu Jin had formed the Flameyellow Imperial Sect to get others to work for his cause. However, it was nothing but a pipe dream. Nobody would truly bother defending his plans and ambitions.

Compared to that, Tianming's firm will was exuded with full force from his eyes and sword, igniting the flame of passion in the hearts of many. Everyone all turned to look at Dugu Jin, who had the support of nobody but the hundred thousand dragon souls of his ancestors.

"Your ancestors have betrayed humanity for their own ends! Their demise was well deserved!"

Even though Dugu Jin claimed that his ancestors weren't that sort, he had shown that he was willing to work with specters to kill Tianming through his actions. At the end of the day, he was no different from them. Even if Dugu Jin was currently stronger than Tianming, it was a close difference. Di Zang was being held back by Feiling and Meow Meow. The aura of the Primordial God-Emperor coming from Tianming made Dugu Jin feel that while he was standing on the peak, he didn't have a stable foundation.

No matter what, even if Tianming fell, the Archaion Sect would still fight to its death. That was the key difference that shook Dugu Jin to his core. It was as if Tianming was destiny incarnate.

"Two hundred millennia ago, your ancestors betrayed humanity for glory and earned their righteous punishment. Now you're working with the specters for your own glory, but even so, you're fated to be crushed by me! Do you understand now? The Xuanyuan house is the true eternal clan!"

Tianming once more felt the power coming from the masses. His proclamation seemed to resonate with the whole of humanity, giving him a rush of power so huge he had never felt it before. He felt like he was about to explode from the sheer will of the masses that flooded into him. It felt like the souls of

billions of people were flooding into his sea of consciousness, making him shine like a true sovereign that dominated and blessed all of his subjects. The sovereign existed for his subjects; every one of them made up part of his authority. There would be no ruler if there was nobody to be ruled, and that was the epiphany Tianming had gained.

"Humans are no doubt weaker than specters, especially when we talk about our bodies. However, we have a long legacy of culture and wisdom. We have kindness and empathy. We aren't afraid of hardship, and we work hard and persevere. In times of disaster, we band together and let our souls resonate! True strength lies in the spirit of humanity! When we put our powers together, we'll never have to fear all manners of ghosts and demons!"

Two hundred millennia ago, Great Emperor Xuanyuan was there to lead humanity in a rebellion against their fate. Now they had Tianming, inheritor of the legacy of the Primordial God-Emperor, to lead the masses in a fight for their own lives! His will alone was enough to cause other humans to spiritually resonate with him. Such was the power of a true sovereign! Tianming's swords began humming as he charged toward Dugu Jin. "I'll send you off to the afterlife, Dugu Jin!"

He struck with his swords and executed the Asura Fiendgod Formation with the boost granted by the Dragonhide, causing two kilometer-tall fiendgods to manifest. They were both formed of sword ki alone. Had the Hexapath Sword God witnessed it, he would realize that Tianming's Hexapath Samsara Sword was already different from the one he had invented. His fiendgods looked cruel and savage, while Tianming's seemed to brilliantly glow with gold and black. Each strand of sword ki seemed to contain part of the people's will and had resonated to form a completely different Asura Fiendgod Formation. While it wasn't as savage and terrifying, it seemed stronger in comparison.

That resonance made Tianming feel that a being like the Primordial God-Emperor was definitely far beyond the Flameyellow Continent. He seemed to bless and nourish this sword strike. Amidst the dense sword ki, Tianming glowed bright and gloriously, as if he was truly the reincarnation of Great Emperor Xuanyuan, and swung his swords down. The amazing display had long extinguished the flame in Dugu Jin's heart. He had never had the will to rule in the first place; all he had was untamed power and dissatisfaction.

"You're truly laughable! Do you think saying all that bull will make you strong?!" Blood seemed to leak out of his eyes. First his third eye let out a blast of bloody light toward Tianming. Then he swung Godbane as the blood within him boiled, using Deicide Mantra. The first move, Ashless, contained the will to destroy everything with such thoroughness that no ash would remain. It was followed by the second move, Insurmountable, symbolizing the state of achieving peak and unrivaled power. Finally, the third move, Godless, was the most terrifying.

"There are no gods, so only I reign supreme!" Dugu Jin's moves were actually a little stronger than Tianming's Asura Fiendgod Formation, yet he would never understand the fact that a person so much younger than him understood the true meaning of being a sovereign far more than he did.

The two titans were just about to clash. Boundless sword ki gathered and descended from the skies towards Dugu Jin. Shades of black and gold swallowed up the entire Xuanyuan Lake, causing endless destruction and vaporizing much of the lakewater.

"Reign supreme my ass," Tianming mocked. It hit far harder than ever. Asura Fiendgod Formation's amazing suppression not only broke through the Hundred-thousand Bloodfiend Eyes, but also continued pushing back against Dugu Jin's three strikes. Despite the heaviness of Godbane, it seemed easily deflected and swayed by the Grand-Orient Swords.

"Decide? You think that'll make you king?"

That was the core reason for Dugu Jin's loss! Tens of thousands of sword ki strands washed over him, much to his shock; he didn't have any time to ponder it at all. Those words seemed to burn painfully in his mind. "Was I... destined to die by the fate of the heavens?"

The looming reality of the matter seemed to cause him to shudder once more. "No, fuck this fate! Fuck Tianming! I will—"

Before he could finish, his heart was pierced through by a sword that was followed quickly by all the sword ki strands.

"So you still didn't understand at the very end. Or rather, you understood, but refused to acknowledge it and continued to lie to yourself!" Tianming appeared from the sea of sword ki, standing before Dugu Jin, who was nothing more than a bloody pincushion now.

He glared at Tianming with all three eyes wide open, completely unconvinced of his loss. "You... you!"

He raised his finger and pointed at Tianming, his gaze filled with hate as he fell into Xuanyuan Lake. Once submerged, he seemed to see Tianming's three bloodied lifebound beasts appear. However, they were carrying two huge dragon heads and attempting to join up with Tianming above. The two ancient bloodvoid dragons had lost at the same time he did. "It's... it's completely over for me...."

He sighed and closed his eyes for good. "The eternal clan...."

Back then, he would laugh whenever he heard something like that. It was nothing more than a self-praising fantasy of humanity, he'd thought. Yet now, he could no longer scoff at the notion.

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Back above Xuanyuan Lake, Tianming turned around and faced the six-eyed specter, Di Zang, who was staring back at him in fear. "It's your turn."

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A loud cheer erupted from within the Nine Dragon Formation, causing the battles in the surroundings to stop. "Everyone, our imperial son killed Dugu Jin!"

Everyone looked at the battlefield with blank gazes. Some felt their hearts skip a few beats and their legs shudder, while others were completely wide-eyed and had their jaws agape, unable to believe their eyes. Weapons slipped from grips and fell to the ground. They were just as shocked as they were basking in joy.

Many of them immediately relaxed and hugged one another. The death of Dugu Jin meant the squabble between humans was over, just as Tianming had predicted. With Dugu Jin and Fang Taiqing both dead at the imperial son's hands, the Flameyellow Imperial Sect that had just been formed twenty-four days

prior had collapsed. Their submissive gazes were a sign that they had given up, including those of the Sterling House of Fang and the former Nonahall Ghost Sect.

"The battle has been decided!" Xuanyuan Dao yelled passionately with all he had. "Do you understand now, everyone? The Flameyellow Imperial Sect is gone! From now on, the Flameyellow Continent has a new ruler: Li Tianming!"

Chapter 930 - Vortex Hell Mantra

The infighting between humans had finally stopped. Those from the former Nonahall, Quadform, Heptastar, and even Archaion Sects were now banded together and watched as Tianming faced off against Di Zang. With the Flameyellow Imperial Sect now gone, the sects that had made it up were also effectively dissolved. Now faced with the terrifying Tianming, many were thinking about their future path twice. No sensible person would allow the specters to return.

"Kill Di Zang!"

"Quick!"

"If Li Tianming can kill the ghoulish king, those of the Yanbei Clan will join the Archaion Sect and support their rule over the entire continent!" said someone from a clan from the Nonahall Divine Realm. His words were echoed by many others as well.

Tianming's name now reverberated throughout Xuanyuan Lake. Yet, what many of them didn't notice was that Jiang Wuxin, who was trapped inside Dreamheart World and Nine Dragon Formation, also heard the name and started shaking with hate. The fact that the people were cheering Tianming on made something clear to Jiang Wuxin: the person he hated most was still rebelling against fate and had won over the masses. The more glory Tianming got, the more hateful he became, to the point that Jiang Wuxin had lost all reason. Ever since Xuanyuan Dao had lost his saint palace and was unable to personally wield the Kilostar Photondragon, he couldn't perfectly maintain the formation core even with the help of his two lifebound beasts, causing the ancestral dragon spirits to be slightly unstable. If it weren't for Dreamheart World pulling Jiang Wuxin into countless hallucinatory worlds of pain, the Nine Dragon Formation would have failed to keep him at bay.

"If I lose here, there's no longer any hope...." He thought about his two girls and the happy times they had. Now, it was all but a fleeting dream. All the bliss he'd experienced had turned into a curse on Tianming. He kept suicidally charging at the nine ancestral dragon spirits, causing them to begin losing ground. There was nothing Xuanyuan Dao could do about it, already being at the fringe of death. He was growing more and more pale.

Right then, loud shrieks came from within the formation. They were actually Di Zang's ability, Inhumate Cacophony. The sound shot toward Jiang Wuxin like a beam. "Wuxin, I'm about to lose. You're our last hope! I will hold him back using what's left of my life, so you have to break out and help the Archaionfiend! Don't forget that if we lose today, you'll never be able to get your revenge and you'll live in pain forever, Jiang Wuxin!"

Di Zang's tragic cries seemed rather solemn. His dedication to the point of death was moving indeed. Jiang Wuxin knew what he had to do. Di Zang had risked everything he had and used the ultimate forbidden art of Nonahall, Vortex Hell Mantra, and was just able to barely hold Tianming back, a testament to the hateful brat's current strength. Vortex Hell Mantra continued burning away at Di Zang's lifeforce, allowing him to squeeze out every ounce of remaining power he had. He was as good as dead after using that move.

"Failure! Failure!" Those words were akin to a nightmare for Jiang Wuxin. He cried out madly, using everything he had to try to break out. No matter how heavily the dragon spirits were attacking him, he wanted nothing more than to escape. Injured though he may be, he would always get back up and charge toward Soulburn Hall in a suicidal manner. With the Archaionfiend having been intercepted, Di Zang wanted him to break the inner formation.

"Stop him!"

"Die!"

Now, everyone, regardless of sect, had their eyes on him and was launching countless attacks on him.

"Those who stop me shall die!" Jiang Wuxin hated his real form with passion. It was a vomit-inducing ugly pile of flesh that he rejected with every fiber of his being. However, he no longer cared. As he charged, he turned into a large ball of flesh five kilometers wide and swiped countless tentacles at the heads of his attackers, prompting many to fearfully avoid them.

Even more abilities blasted away at his fleshy body, but didn't seem to do much given his current sheer size. The dragon spirits were also having a hard time keeping up with the chase, given Xuanyuan Dao's current weakened state, allowing Jiang Wuxin the time to morph into the form he hated so much to charge out of the encirclement. Then he immediately returned to his human form and entered Xuanyuan Lake, the dragon spirits still on his tail. Li Caiwei and her cloudveil illusory fox also gave chase, but Jiang Wuxin was able to speedily zip through the surface of the lake with the sheer power of his physical body alone.

"Die, die, die!" His eyes were completely bloodshot. With his tough body, he didn't feel a thing even as his back was being blasted apart. The way he charged toward Tianming now was just like the time Tianming had charged toward Lin Xiaoting. By the time his sea of hatred boiled over and filled his mind, nobody was able to stop him.

When he finally got close to Soulburn Hall, he was taken aback when he saw a black, hellish vortex hanging above Xuanyuan Lake. It looked almost spherical and had drawn Tianming and his lifebound beasts within itself. The sound of the rampaging vortex shook the entirety of Xuanyuan Lake.

The moment that ability was used was the moment of Di Zang's death. He had burned the last vestiges of his life just to hold Tianming back and give Jiang Wuxin one final chance to turn things around. While the ghoulish king himself was already dead, the vortex kept spinning with great force. It was so large in the sky that it almost looked like a demonic sun that nobody dared approach. Many believed that Tianming might just die inside it, but Jiang Wuxin knew better than anyone that that was far from the truth.

Even though he had only taken a short glance, the dragon spirits and his pursuers were already catching up to him once more. At the same time, the Archaionfiend had Lin Xiaoxiao pinned to the ground and

was blasting her with blood lightning bolts. The haggard beast looked at Jiang Wuxin and smirked. "Did you think I need your help?"

As it spoke, Jiang Wuxin ran even faster, charging straight into the shaky inner formation like a meteor. With one punch, the inner formation immediately collapsed; without delay, Jiang Wuxin locked on to Ouyang Jianwang, who was now completely undefended.

There was only one word to describe what happened: swift! The instant the formation collapsed, Jiang Wuxin appeared in front of Ouyang Jianwang, punched through his saint palace, and took the key within. The Archaionfiend tossed Xuanyuan Dao's key to Jiang Wuxin at the same time. Those two keys were intended to be held by a descendant of the Xuanyuan house and the guardian of Heaven Cauldron. Great Emperor Xuanyuan had no way of knowing which of these would be stronger two hundred thousand years after his death, but it no longer mattered. Now, Jiang Wuxin already had both keys.

"Quick, let the specters return! Hahaha, damn the Flameyellow Continent! Damn humanity!" The Archaionfiend laughed wildly. With Lin Xiaoxiao pinned on the ground, it stamped and clawed at her a few more times. Had it not been for it not wanting to kill her outright, she wouldn't have lasted that long either. It turned out as Fatesteal had shown in Tianming's vision: Jiang Wuxin and the Archaionfiend were being most troublesome to deal with.