

## U. Warlord 1321

### Chapter 1321: The Final Trial

A pillar of light fell from the sky. Zhang Lie appeared on a platform surrounded with golden light, though one that seemed to be a little blurred.

A humanoid figure in silvery white walked down a staircase leading up to the heavens. Half his body was flesh, and half metal. He shone resplendently and with metallic luster.

Another silvery-white figure followed behind, perhaps in the manner of an attendant or servant.

"An alien from the Milky Way, a galaxy nearing its destruction? To think someone like you would dare to show up." One silvery man walked up onto the platform with the sound of ringing metal.

Zhang Lie: ? ? ?

What in the world was this?

The man rushed over while those behind him sat cross-legged in meditation, chanting from some arcane text.

"Something's wrong!" Zhang Lie was shaken. Somehow, space felt thick and sluggish here, making it difficult for him to move.

The silvery attendants had combined their efforts to summon an implement that seemed like a silvery sun, shining down on the region and sealing it in place.

Zhang Lie was astonished. Who knew what that silvery sun was?

It was no technology from the Milky Way, nor a soulshard from the dimensional world. Even with two lifetimes' worth of experience, Zhang Lie had no clue what it could be.

Was it an object that had been produced by the trial itself? No, that couldn't be the case. Mysterious and strange though the trial-taker's chamber was, all the trials had only replicated lifeforms that had truly existed.

This final trial, however, overturned all his expectations. This wasn't according to plan! Was this an unwinnable trial?

The silvery figure rushing over toward him was neither an alien nor a lifeform, without any sign of life whatsoever. It seemed more like a projection.

It was unaffected by the strange sluggishness of the space, and it arrived before Zhang Lie within moments. It punched straight at his skull with a silver burst of light.

"Open!" Zhang Lie shouted. Genetic energy surged through his body as he radiated light. Pale-blue genetic energy exploded all around him as he barely managed to hold up an arm in self-defense.

On impact, Zhang Lie was sent flying. He frowned. The silvery figure in front of him was no projection after all, but a physical being!

"To have survived the first ordeal..." The silvery figure likewise seemed shocked.

Zhang Lie trudged steadily onward against mounting resistance. Pale blue genetic energy surged all around him, flowing like a whirlpool, blazing like divine flames. Zhang Lie felt as though he was dragging a mountain behind him.

Dots appeared from all around the platform and transformed into figures of light, all of whom shouted in shock.

Zhang Lie shouted to bolster himself as he charged forward faster and faster, unable to be suppressed by the silver sun.

With explosive force, divine light radiated from him as he soared into the sky, causing everything around him to shake.

"[Fists of the Silent Sea: Soar]!"

Pale blue genetic energy rippled about Zhang Lie's arms. He flicked his wrists, causing a frightening aura to descend on the world. The sky began to darken, and a fish the size of a whale materialized in the air.

A howling gale swept over the space. As more and more genetic energy gathered around Zhang Lie's arms, it looked as though he were at the heart of a whirlpool.

A huge wave soared into the air. As Zhang Lie punched forward, the fish slammed its huge tail on the ground and sent a torrent of water surging.

Ripples of energy spread out from Zhang Lie, warping the space around him. The towering waves looked like enraged black dragons, flooding the space and striking the silver sun, knocking it flying.

The world reverberated with force. As the waves burst apart, the air filled with echoes of Zhang Lie's signature genetic energy, shattering space and swallowing up all life in its vicinity. Light and shadow danced in the air.

The silvery attendants were knocked back by tremendous force. The silvery figure remaining on the platform was naturally no match for Zhang Lie in this state. He was blown into the air by the wind as he rapidly deployed a shield, hoping to escape.

"[The Boundless Blade: Yawning Wave]!"

Water-attuned genetic energy encircled Zhang Lie's finger as he unleashed devastating sword energy.

One of the silvery figure's arms was chopped off.

Zhang Lie left afterimages behind him as he shot forward. He smashed into the figure, causing him to vomit out silver blood. His body was almost crushed; he fell to the ground, immobile.

"We're leaving!" the other silvery figures called out. The silver sun flashed as it was restored, sending silver light brimming through the space.

Zhang Lie was shocked. Perhaps this was some functionality of the relic or some unusual property of the trial space—he was certain he had sent it flying beyond the horizon.

The silver light shone down with glaring intensity. It broke apart at its highest point and unfolded to form a silver lotus, with formless runes that spread throughout heaven and earth. Silver roots extended from its base and into the natural law of the space.

The feeling of suppression returned in full force, stronger than ever.

Zhang Lie felt his body being restrained by the silver roots to such an extent that even moving became difficult.

"Scram!" Pale blue genetic energy exploded from him like a boundless ocean.

As Zhang Lie activated his blood ant and dragonwolf soulshards, he transformed into a dragonwolf with russet fur and limbs covered with dragons' scales. His aura became magnified as a hurricane of blood spawned around him.

The silvery figures shrieked in horror. Even the silver lotus was unable to restrain his actions!

They fled in panic. Zhang Lie rent the sky with bloody claws, causing a huge explosion. Two of the silvery figures fell, but were taken away by their comrades.

"Che—none of them were left behind!" Zhang Lie couldn't help but be annoyed.

The figures of light all around began to murmur to each other. One alien walked over, his body covered in golden scales, a pair of divine wings to his back, staring at Zhang Lie. He had three eyes, two where a human's would be, and a third, vertical one at the center of his forehead. His aura was immense, so strong it was almost physical.

In the stands, the figures of light cheered in excitement.

"He's Ling Gu, from the spirit race! His talent is astonishing, and he's considered a spirit king!"

Zhang Lie was utterly confused. The sight before him made him feel as though he were in a movie. A virtual reality?

"It's almost as though this is part of history, which I'm experiencing in person..."

Zhang Lie thought the idea of a virtual reality more believable. The second would be far too frightening.

"May we have a good fight." Ling Gu cupped his palms. He was over two meters tall, and his body shone in gold. He had the aura of a martial god, shining with a blazing corona of light whose might could be felt all over heaven and earth.

#### Chapter 1322: An Overbearing Foe

A huge noise resounded from the impact of fist against fist, as though an explosion had taken place.

Ling Gu howled, his golden hair standing on end. His wings forked open and slashed forward.

Zhang Lie released a flurry of palm strikes to resist the golden wings.

Within moments, the two combatants had exchanged dozens of blows. Golden lightning surrounded them; it looked as though two deities were duking it out in the heavens.

Zhang Lie was shocked. Who was this? He had never heard or seen such a race in the fourth realm—in fact, he was quite confident that none existed in the dimensional world at large.

While in battle, he scoured his memories and impressions. There were quite a few similar races, but none so frighteningly strong.

He should have had some impression of a race as strong as the so-called spirit race. He knew that he hadn't reached the heights of cultivation in the fourth realm in his past life, that countless mysteries had been locked to him, but he should still have been aware of a race so strong. At the very least, this information should have been in the packet handed to newbie hunters.

Even so, Zhang Lie hadn't heard of it at all, as though the race had suddenly sprung out of nowhere.

The scene before him was clearly a historic battle in some sort of arena, but he had never seen the races that appeared here, and he was certain some artifacts were neither of the dimensional world or of the Milky Way.

Ling Gu's vertical third eye, situated at the center of his forehead, opened. Runes formed a beam of rainbow light, with a deific chant that struck at Zhang Lie's very soul.

No one would be able to avoid such an attack at close range.

"[Ninecarp Transformation]!"

A black serpent materialized behind Zhang Lie, by now so large and so developed that it resembled the world-swallowing serpent Jormungandr. It let out a threatening hiss as its scales clicked together.

This would be a confrontation of epic proportions.

Pitch-black genetic energy hung around Zhang Lie like clouds, bearing corrosive power. It blocked the advance of the rainbow light with a sizzle.

The beam of light fizzled as the eye shut again.

"[Fists of the Silent Sea: Fade]!"

Zhang Lie punched forward, and the blood serpent behind him shot forth.

Within mere moments, Ling Gu's golden wings turned bloody as he was sent flying backwards.

Black corrosive energy dissolved the golden wings, continuing to spread around the wounds.

Just then, Ling Gu's left hand glowed with light. A spear of red light manifested over his palm, bearing immense power.

Red light flared across the heavens. In that single moment, everything else seemed to darken, leaving only a shining red spear the color of blood. It was only a meter long, but its light seemed to permeate the world.

It shone too brightly to be observed directly.

"[Fists of the Silent Sea: Fade]!"

As Zhang Lie punched forward, a blood dragon roared in outrage and shot forward.

A wave of annihilation exploded around the blood dragon as it struck the red light. Pitch-black energy swallowed up everything in the vicinity like a storm at sea. The surroundings were consumed by the black-hole like energy of annihilation.

The two forces fought for dominion over the sky, neither willing to relent. Zhang Lie's body was hidden within the roiling, pitch-black clouds. Ling Gu and his bloody spear merged with the bloody haze. Both darted back and forth amidst the clashing energies, exchanging blows in a melee.

Eventually, the energies dissipated. Zhang Lie's right hand bled. Ling Gu was sent stumbling back with the sound of breaking bones.

With each step he retreated, he coughed out a mouthful of blood. He had clearly been dealt a severe blow.

Even so, Ling Gu's aura was as strong as ever. He glowed in golden light, then took an immobile stance, as inevitable and unmoving as a mountain range.

"[Fists of the Silent Sea: Hundred Dragons Soaring]!"

Black genetic energy burst forth from Zhang Lie, as though there were hundreds, thousands of dragons surging throughout his body.

A horde of dragons launched out of Zhang Lie's left arm as he expended half his genetic energy in one supercharged attack.

Howling with the force of thunder, the hundred dragons soared through the air. They were fierce and domineering, and all hundred of them boasted the power of annihilation.

Ling Gu tossed out his blood spear once and again, piercing through the black dragon's body. Pitch-black energy of annihilation gushed out. As the battle dragged on, Ling Gu grew more and more wounded, golden feathers torn off his wings, his fresh blood anointing the ground. Even his golden glow seemed to dim.

"Greet the king of the netherworld for me!"

Zhang Lie unsheathed Guicang and slashed forward, intending to give Ling Gu a lethal blow when he suddenly turned.

Zhang Lie: ? ? ?

"Very well, I will!" Ling Gu turned to leave.

Zhang Lie stilled. You really know the king of the netherworld?!

Ling Gu had already taken two steps away when Zhang Lie came to his senses and made to attack him once more. He swung Guicang, but it passed straight through Ling Gu's body, as though it had only ever been an illusion.

Zhang Lie tried a few more swings, but none could strike him, as though they had never had a bout at all.

Zhang Lie suspected that he had fallen into an illusion array, but with his willpower, he could hardly have been affected by any such illusions in the fourth realm. Zhang Lie couldn't help but think of this like a scripted fight in a game.

As Ling Gu vanished from sight, another unexpected event occurred. A huge crash came from the sky as a set of golden doors appeared in a frightening burst of energy.

The figures of light all around knelt on the floor, suppressed by incredible pressure. They slumped to the ground, unable to resist.

Zhang Lie believed that those figures of light represented people that truly existed—or rather, had once truly existed.

Subsequently, a resplendent golden sun appeared, descending with a will so mighty it seemed as though the universe itself had been given physical form. Seated within the sun was a man who seemed like a god, his eyes shut, the source of all the illumination.

The sun bore down on Zhang Lie.

Formless will billowed out from the man, as though no one in the world would be able to halt his advance.

Zhang Lie raised his eyebrows. This new enemy was far too arrogant, to think that he could quash him by physical might alone.

Zhang Lie raised his sword into the air, manifesting a sword will that rose into the heavens, strong beyond human understanding, vast as the ocean.

The man in the golden sun was unmoved, his eyes closed.

What manner of pride was this? The man in the golden sun descended from the skies, suppressing Zhang Lie with aura alone.

The sun glowed with splendor. Golden runes patterned the air. Starlight shone through the heavens.

Zhang Lie's sword will struck the sun's divine glow in a resplendent explosion too bright to witness with the naked eye.

Any spectators would find their soul trembling.

Heaven and earth resonated with the will of the sword and the aura of the godlike being within the sun. This confrontation was one between two paragons.

As the divine light dissipated, the two figures could be seen once more through the blinding haze.

Zhang Lie stood on the platform, his robes shifting in the wind, silent and head unbowed.

In the sky was a resplendent golden sun, with a saintly man still meditating with eyes closed within.

Neither seemed to have won out in the confrontation; both parties retained their original stances.

The other entity's aura seemed almost deific in origin.

"I know who he is—he's from the clan of the solar gods, a divine stem!" one of the figures of light shouted, clearly recognizing Zhang Lie's opponent.

"Is it really him, Radiant Sun? The young lord of the Redgold, invincible and undefeated in battle?"

Zhang Lie frowned. It looked as though his opponent was famous.

"You're strong, stronger than I expected," Radiant Sun commented.

His body seemed to shine with divine light imbued into his flesh. When he attacked, the world itself would quake.

The void distorted as Radiant Sun made his move, forming seals with his hands. His left hand invoked the divine moon, his right the great sun.

The heavens glowed with divine light, dyeing the skies golden and scorching the air.

"[The Boundless Blade: the River Lethe]!"

Zhang Lie raised the blade in his hand high into the air, encircled by black genetic energy. The temperature of the air dropped to sub-zero values, and a strong wind buffeted the two combatants present.

Blood-colored frost appeared around them.

An underworld river materialized in the air. As though the doors to hell had just been thrown open, tens of thousands of serpents rushed out in a flood.

The two combatants struck each other in a clash of celestial wills.

Radiant Sun's right hand curved and sketched out a sun. He slammed his palm down, bathing the world in purifying radiance.

Zhang Lie shot forward, his hair fluttering.

"[The Boundless Blade: the River Lethe]!"

Waves surged forward, sounding like peals of thunder, like stampeding hooves. The surface of the sea frothed with angry waves, like dragons emerging with the tide. The entire sea roiled, and lightning crackled amidst the void.

Countless serpents swam across the raging sea as lightning flashed ominously overhead, a scene right out of an apocalypse.

As Zhang Lie struck, an underworld river hurtled into existence, roaring into the sea. The sword energy roiled like black waves. The sea had morphed into a boundless battlefield. The sea breeze was as a horn to action, and the serpents, thousands of courageous soldiers heeding its call.

The skies shone with radiant solar light, cleansing and scouring.

The earth was dark and chilly, where Zhang Lie had invoked a portal to the netherworld. Pitch-black genetic energy formed a boundless ocean over the platform.

The two combatants warred over heaven and earth themselves.

"[Celestial Convergence]." Radiant Sun formed the seals of sun and moon with his hands. Stars peeked out from amidst the void and descended on Zhang Lie with incredible might.

Zhang Lie stared up at Radiant Sun, both hands on his sword. "[The Boundless Blade: Dragon's Wrath]!"

Guicang unleashed a barrage of sword energy in the form of a blood dragon. A dragon's roar shook the void as the pitch-black genetic energy turned blood-red. The underworld river roiled, forming a gigantic blood-colored hurricane.

The sun and moon darkened; the falling stars shattered.

The two combatants' battlefield was foundational natural law itself.

Zhang Lie was shocked by the ferocity of his opponent. His blood dragon had torn apart the sun and moon's radiance, breaking through Radiant Sun's seals, but had fallen short of taking Radiant Sun himself down.

Radiant Sun continued to sit cross-legged in the void, encircled by an eponymous radiant sun, holy and dignified. His eyes closed, he formed seals with both hands and raised them high overhead.

#### Chapter 1323: Another Form of Power

Radiant Sun continued to sit cross-legged in the void, encircled by an eponymous radiant sun, holy and dignified. His eyes closed, he formed seals with both hands and raised them high overhead.

A vase manifested in his hands, red and shining all over. Fiery mist poured out of its top, pointed straight at Zhang Lie. It was an ornate vase with physical form and structure. Just like the silver lotus, it was neither a soul shard nor a piece of technology.

Zhang Lie felt as though he were facing an incredible foe.

"[First Form: Parting the River]!"

Bright sword energy radiated from Zhang Lie like brilliant rays of sunlight, illuminating the heavens.

A frightening force descended, energy rumbling and rippling around him. As Zhang Lie swung the blade in his hand, a huge slash of sword energy shot downward.

Radiant Sun moved. The vase lit up with light, blowing countless runes toward Zhang Lie.

A firebird flew out of the vase with a loud cry, terrorizing the spectators. The essence of the sun manifested in the form of a golden bird that swooped toward Zhang Lie. A phoenix manifested, its eyes glowing with flame. It bathed in the flames and revived stronger than ever, flying into the air with the authority of a monarch.

The vase had already spat out countless divine flames, each of which seemed poised to burn the arena down.

Zhang Lie's strike was burned clean through as the flames spread toward him.

Zhang Lie was shaken by what he had seen. The enemies he faced bore a power he had never seen before, alien to both the dimensional realm and the Milky Way. His eyes lit up with divine light.

"[Shadow and Light]!" Zhang Lie pointed his longsword straight ahead. Time suddenly sped up in his vicinity.

The firebird swooped down with incredible speed.

Zhang Lie's sword replicated itself again and again, forming hundreds, thousands of copies that lit up the space all around.

The golden sunbird cried out, heavenly monarch that it was. Its wings sliced down like the blades of heaven, its claws sharp and penetrating, imbued with the essence of divine flame.



Zhang Lie countered with Hanguang, obliterating the divine essence. Simultaneously, he slashed above him, striking at the golden bird's feathers and claws.

The phoenix descended next, its every action filled with echoes of life, death, and rebirth. Zhang Lie sprayed out a breath of essence.

"[Syzygy]!"

A pitch-black sun appeared behind Zhang Lie, and a blood moon by his feet. His aura was magnified tenfold, and a halo of black sun appeared above his forehead. Natural law seemed to warp around him. Runes likewise appeared on the bloody moon by his feet, forming an intricate array.

Struck by the bloody moonlight, the divine birds' radiance grew dim. Under the black sun, the fluctuations in Zhang Lie's genetic energy were enhanced.

Zhang Lie crossed his twin blades. The blood moon resonated with the blade in his left hand, and the black sun with the blade in his right. He simultaneously slashed forward with both blades, forming a huge celestial web.

The divine flames descended.

The next moment, the sun itself shook. It grew brighter and brighter. Radiant Sun suddenly shifted, rousing torrential flames all around.

The vase he held in his hands suddenly grew larger. It was glazed bright red, almost like the color of blood, and sprayed out flames of even greater incandescence.

The next moment, the firebird, golden sunbird, and phoenix all merged into one cohesive whole. Firelight swamped heaven and earth.

The three birds perished together in an attack of overwhelming strength and force.

At the same time, before the three divine birds, the color of the flames changed. They turned black, then deep purple, then the color of blood.

The three birds had vanished, leaving pure flame behind. The flame spread like dripping blood, heading straight toward Zhang Lie with overwhelming strength.

The bright red light seemed to contain some otherworldly, sinister power, enveloping Zhang Lie and turning the skies bright red.

"[Blade of the Heavens: the Sea Swells]!"

Energy poured out of Zhang Lie in waves, honing the edge of his blade. The pulses of energy struck the sea like a tsunami, devouring everything within.

The sea of blood cut off the demonic flames.

The next moment, incredible aura radiated from Zhang Lie. It looked as though a deity had manifested in his body.

"[Blades, Reverberate]!"

Zhang Lie extended his arms, his twin blades pointing at heaven and earth. Guicang and Hanguang shone with blazing light, like the sun and the moon, the yin and the yang. The energy that radiated from the two swords transformed into a heavenly raiment of yin and yang.

The robe combined the light of a black sun and of a bloody moon.

A blood dragon materialized around Zhang Lie. Energy poured out of him in waves, honing the edge of his blade. The pulses of energy struck the realm like a tsunami, devouring everything within.

The twin blades Guicang and Hanguang emitted a fearsome aura, shining as brightly as the sun and moon.

A blood-red and a black dragon manifested, bearing down on him with the might of Zhang Lie's spiritual sea between them. The two blades shone in unison, then gave off dazzling light as the twin dragons shot forward in unison like a twister toward the golden sun.

The golden sun was obliterated. Swift as lightning, Zhang Lie charged forward. Guicang slashed at Radiant Sun's neck, while Hanguang pointed between his brows.

Radiant Sun's body transformed into fire, resisting Zhang Lie's peerless blow. He defended himself with his bejeweled vase, forming a screen of light before him.

Guicang struck the vase with a clear, resonant ring, a strike targeted at the spiritual rather than the physical.

The red vase's light swiftly dimmed. Divine fire was snuffed out as the vase trembled violently. With the vase handled, Guicang struck at Radiant Sun's neck, drawing blood with a golden slash.

Radiant Sun brimmed with flame as he swiftly retreated, a battered golden sun shrouding him.

Chapter 1324: Radiant Sun

The spectators raptly watching the fight were dazzled by the speed at which the combatants moved. Too much had happened too quickly; no one could catch all of what had happened.

Zhang Lie stopped short. He wiped at a trickle of blood by his mouth. Any wounds he sustained healed quickly thanks to his status as an emperor-grade lifeform.

On the other hand, Radiant Sun was no longer seated cross-legged as though in meditation. He stood, a frightening wound horizontally across his neck, brimming with blood. He had almost been beheaded.

He wiped at his neck with his hand, healing himself as he blazed with fiery light.

Zhang Lie's black hair fluttered in an evanescent wind. He looked like a deity. The powers of yin and yang suffused him. His eyes glowed with moonlight and sunlight, then transformed into dragon's pupils, which pierced through the very soul. He strode forth, charging up for another attack.

"[Second Form: Piercing the Soul]!"

Zhang Lie's disaster-grade mistmeld clam soulshard activated as he infused its energy into his swords, causing them to shine radiantly with multicolored light.

He could see that Radiant Sun didn't have a soul of his own; this was some illusory manifestation, nothing more.

A rainbow arc accompanied Zhang Lie's slash, as though an aurora borealis were visible in the sky. It shone in all the colors of the rainbow, momentarily hypnotizing anyone who looked at it.

With Guicang in hand, Zhang Lie flew through the heavens. His sword shone as brightly as the auroras overhead, bringing him momentarily out of the physical into the intangible.

"[Solar Null]," Radiant Sun called out.

He stepped through the void, his actions brimming with dawn light. Golden flames burned overhead like a blazing sun. Flames poured out of him, shielding his body and blocking Zhang Lie's ethereal attack.

Zhang Lie's [Second Form: Piercing the Soul] was a spiritual attack at heart. Although the physical component of the attack was still a strong one, it only served to cover up the damage that it dealt to his opponent's very soul. Even so, against an opponent whose soul did not exist, [Second Form: Piercing the Soul] was easily nullified.

Radiant Sun counter-attacked. This time, his flames didn't burn blood-red, but white-gold. Sword energy manifested around him, and the ground seemed to shine with radiant, divine light, as though a sword of the heavens had descended to the mortal world.

His bejeweled vase, like a divine sword, sent out tens of thousands of blades of sword energy that drowned Zhang Lie.

Zhang Lie crossed Guicang and Hanguang before himself, summoning celestial radiance. The energy of the blood moon and black sun twined around himself in the form of a shield, deflecting the attack. Zhang Lie dashed forward, holding the shield protectively before him.

"[Endless Slash]!" Radiant Sun shouted, aiming the vase at Zhang Lie and sending a torrential burst of sword energy toward him.

Zhang Lie's clothes shone with light, protecting himself. He held his palms together, causing radiant moonlight and sunlight to explode forth.

"[Ninecarp Transformation]!"

Red scales formed a natural suit of red armor around Zhang Lie. He was surrounded by what looked like scarlet flames, but was actually steaming, blood-red water-attuned genetic energy. A black sun rose behind his back, and a blood moon shone at his feet.

A long tail grew out of his back. His black hair took on a red tint, as though they were lit up by an inner fire. Interlocking rings of black and red that warped natural law surrounded his body, and a domineering aura exuded from him.

Red water-attuned genetic energy surrounded Zhang Lie, manifesting in the shape of a dragon.

Red energy of chaos exploded from Zhang Lie as the moonlight and sunlight combined, then drifted into the air like water vapor.

The chaotic energy struck the bejeweled vase, causing it to explode in a burst of golden light, igniting even the heavens themselves.

Both combatants stood amidst a raging sea of golden flames, each focused on the other.

Zhang Lie grinned. "It's time to show my full strength."

"[Blades, Extinguish]!"

Guicang gleamed brightly in Zhang Lie's hands as he infused more and more spiritual energy into it. From the surface of his spiritual sea came waves charging forward, sounding like stampeding hooves, like raging dragons.

Zhang Lie's spiritual sea expanded greatly, past the confines of his own body. As the mistmeld clam soulshard's energy was infused within the blade, it began glowing with multicolored light, simultaneously illusory and real. A sea seemed to rest in the crack between the two domains, unable to be touched or otherwise sensed.

The transient, illusory nature of the light captivated everyone who saw it.

The sword in Zhang Lie's hands burned with scarlet water-attuned genetic energy. Billowing clouds of red-tinted steam surrounded him as though he were a burning pyre.

The high-temperature steam was so hot that it vaporized much of the blood-colored water-attuned genetic energy. The dark clouds all over the world began to burn, and the moisture in the air vaporized near-immediately.

This domain of scarlet steam was so dangerous that an ordinary lifeform would likely be vaporized without a trace.

The temperature around Zhang Lie grew so hot that his surroundings began to warp. Mirages formed all around him.

One of Zhang Lie's blades glowed with radiant light; the other shone scarlet with water-attuned genetic energy.

The illusory sea combined with the scarlet ocean of reality, the attack simultaneously in the boundary between the real and the illusory, linking together the physical and metaphysical, the real and the abstract.

The two halves of the attack clashed with each other.

The spiritual sea began to burn, as though it had been ignited by the scarlet steam, forming spiritual flame. The scarlet steam, bolstered by the spiritual sea, grew even hotter. Contact with the steam seemed to sap at one's very soul.

Zhang Lie had allowed these two disparate sources of energy to combine, but just as he was about to strike, something happened.

Chapter 1325: Parents' Letter

The golden sun struck with a whip of fire, tearing apart the sky.

Zhang Lie was ready for another exchange of blows when the golden sun suddenly turned illusory, then vanished into thin air.

"Is this all you've got?" Having observed his opponent enough, Zhang Lie was right about to strike at full force when his opponent, Radiant Sun, vanished on the spot. It was as though he had punched at full force, intending to strike flesh, only to hit a wad of cotton instead. It felt unbearably uncomfortable.

"Come back! Don't run away—what sort of hero are you?!" Zhang Lie taunted.

Just then, a voice could be heard from the platform. "The sixth trial is complete. All trials have been cleared."

Zhang Lie was startled for a moment. "Hold on, I haven't dealt with the enemy! Is that it?"

No one responded to Zhang Lie's question. A pillar of white light enclosed him. Zhang Lie could sense the surrounding space fluctuate. The next moment, he had vanished. By the time he regained his senses, he was in another independent space with a small table in front of him. On the opposite side was an old man dressed in white. He pointed at the cup of tea before him. "Please, have some tea."

Underneath his feet was an ordinary thatched mat, and to his left, a tree of overwhelming proportions. Before the tree was a huge stone tablet engraved with names. Above them was the starry sky.

Zhang Lie glanced at the old man before him. He looked like an ordinary old man, but Zhang Lie was stupefied by his aura.

Despite the fact that he was standing before Zhang Lie, he seemed almost to be out of this world—as though he existed in the void, beyond space and time. His mere existence alone was difficult for Zhang Lie to comprehend.

The old man had a sip of tea. "To think that someone would be able to smash the bejeweled vase of the sun to pieces—and from the looks of you, you were almost able to kill Radiant Sun himself. As far as I can tell, he might not have been your match back then."

Zhang Lie snorted. "If not for the fact that the trial terminated, he would long since have died."

Zhang Lie was very dissatisfied by the fact that the trial had prematurely ended before victory was decided.

The old man praised, "Until now, only fewer than fifty challengers have made it to the sixth trial, and only five have passed it. Among them, three of them drew out the match and barely managed to survive the bejeweled vase's ultimate attack, and the other two managed to perish together with Radiant Sun in the final explosion that resulted."

Zhang Lie frowned. "Was all that just a trial?"

The old man said, "This might only be a trial to you, but it's an unforgettable memory to me. I perished to that bejeweled vase's final attack."

The vase was strong enough to force Zhang Lie to use his draconic transformation, but if they were to keep fighting, he was confident that he would have been able to defeat Radiant Sun.

The old man sighed, clearly still harboring regrets from the match of his memories. "If I had had your strength back then, the Milky Way would hardly have landed in such dire straits..."

Zhang Lie's eyes widened. "Hold on, what did you say?"

The old man suddenly seemed a little flustered. "Ah, I forgot. You shouldn't be aware of this information just yet."

Zhang Lie pressed, "What did you say about the Milky Way?"

The old man changed the topic. "I must say, you seem very much like someone, like someone I met a long, long time ago."

Zhang Lie frowned. "Elder, may I ask who you are?"

"Ah, I almost forgot my self-introduction as well. It's been too long since anyone made it here, and I don't remember what I was called. My name is Bu Wentian. Others used to call me Heavenly Monarch Wentian, but I'm nothing more than a remnant of a soul in the trial-taker's chamber, now."

*Bu Wentian, Martial Sage Wentian?*

The old man murmured, "It's been too long since anyone last managed to pass all six trials and make their way here."

Zhang Lie hurriedly asked the question that he had long since wanted to know the answer to.

"Elder, you mentioned you saw someone similar to me before?"

"It was a married couple, who came long, long ago..."

Zhang Lie shook visibly. "Where are they?"

The old man smiled. "It looks like you are closely related, then."

"When did they come?" Zhang Lie asked.

"Let me think. It's been too long, and I'm starting to lose track of time. I'll check the records of the chamber." The old man flipped through a set of documents. "About three hundred years ago."

Three hundred years ago, considering the time dilation between the dimensional world and the Milky Way... was almost precisely when his parents had vanished. His parents really had made it here! It was even possible that their disappearance was related to this trial-taker's chamber.

The old man's next words shocked Zhang Lie even further.

"They left a letter behind before they departed."

Zhang Lie immediately extended a hand to request it.

The old man cocked his head curiously. "Why should I hand it over to you?"

Zhang Lie revealed his identity. "I'm their son."

"But this letter might not be for you."

Zhang Lie seemed startled. Well, that was true, the letter might not be for him—but who else could it be for?

"Furthermore, why should I believe you when you claim to be their son?"

Zhang Lie didn't know how to answer. There was no such thing as a DNA test here, after all.

The old man continued, "However, if you want the letter so desperately, I can give it to you."

Zhang Lie sighed in relief. Regardless of whom the letter was intended for, he needed to get the letter and read its contents. Zhang Lie was sure that it would be related to their disappearance.

"If you can finish the final trial and obtain the golden chest, I'll hand you the letter as an additional gift."

"There's a final trial?"

"Well, of course. However, the final trial is optional. To date, of the five people who have passed the sixth trial, only two have chosen to participate, and neither were able to make it."

Zhang Lie raised his head. "Did my parents participate?"

"If you mean the married couple, the husband participated and failed to pass the final trial."

"In that case, I have to take the trial." Zhang Lie's decision had been all but made for him: he needed the letter, and he wanted to follow in his father's footsteps.

"Very well. The final trial it is."

#### Chapter 1326: Challengers of the Past

Bu Wentian slowly stood up. "I'm a little curious how you managed to find your way to the trial-taker's chamber. I left four disparate clues that would guide prospective challengers to the chamber, three in the fourth realm, and the final one in the third."

"Is that so? There are many methods of finding this chamber, then?"

Bu Wentian shrugged. "One alone would have dramatically reduced the number of challengers."

Zhang Lie asked curiously, "Why not release information on this chamber to the public?"

Bu Wentian shrugged. "Challengers that are far below the minimum standards would only perish. It takes both intelligence and strength to make it to this chamber."

Indeed, just the seven lifeforms guarding the entrance to the chamber wasn't something that an ordinary hunter could take down.

Bu Wentian asked, "The fourth realm's clues are hidden in a nursery rhyme, a mural, and a stone cliff. Which clue guided you to the chamber?"

"I found the clue in the third realm, rather than the fourth."

Bu Wentian gaped. "The 500,000-piece puzzle? I made it out of boredom to mess with third-realm hunters, but you actually managed to use that clue to find the trial-taker's chamber? I really have to praise your perseverance..."

Zhang Lie asked, "I've been very curious as to the purpose of this chamber."

"To pick out the strongest hunters of the fourth realm, of course."

"And then?"

Bu Wentian shrugged. "That's it."

Zhang Lie hesitated.

Bu Wentian sighed. "I was hoping to cultivate any hunters with potential, but there were slim pickings. Of the five challengers who passed the sixth trial, only the couple went beyond the fourth realm. I have to say, the husband of the pair was quite interesting, only barely weaker than I was at the time. Now, however, I do wonder why I bothered constructing this chamber."

Bu Wentian opened a portal. Zhang Lie followed him to a raised platform, one similar to that of the sixth trial.

Before the platform was a stone tablet on which six names were carved. The name on the very top was Zhang Lie; the second was Zhang Yangyan, his father; the third was Han Lingxin, his mother; the fourth was Azathoth; the fifth was Aforgomon; and the sixth was Bast.

Bu Wentian continued, "I've replicated the eidola of the five successful challengers based on their records during the trial. The strength of each eidolon corresponds to their combat strength when they took the trial. Just like some games from the Milky Way, the rewards for this final trial will be provided in stages. Defeating the first eidolon yields a copper chest, defeating two yields a silver chest, and..."

Zhang Lie asked, "You came from the Milky Way?"

Was Bu Wentian a genetic hunter?

"You'll learn about all this later. Don't interrupt needlessly. If you want to receive the letter left behind by that couple, you'll have to defeat three eidola and receive a gold chest. Defeating four grants you a platinum chest; all five, a diamond chest. Your father only received a platinum chest."

Zhang Lie nodded and stepped forward.

"Of course, you may choose not to participate in this optional trial. The rewards from the first six trials will still be provided as stated. If you fail this optional trial, however, and do not defeat even a single eidolon, you will lose all prior rewards. Do you wish to continue?"

Zhang Lie didn't stop moving forward. He had participated in this trial largely because he wanted to investigate his parents' whereabouts, and since he knew that they had left a letter behind, Zhang Lie would get that letter at any cost.

"You said that, of those challengers who passed the sixth trial, three did so by drawing out the match and barely surviving the bejeweled vase's ultimate attack. The other two managed to perish together with Radiant Sun in the final explosion that resulted. I was the only one who could smash that vase apart, and I see no reason I will lose to their eidola." Zhang Lie stepped onto the middle of the platform.

Bu Wentian nodded in satisfaction and waved his hand.

"Let the final trial begin."

On the stone tablet, Bast's name lit up. The projection of a silvery cat of light appeared, one that seemed to be made of starlight and moonlight. It gradually took on a human's form with a cat's head.



The human body was a female one. A gold lion-headed shield was held in her left hand, and a bell in her right.

Starlight and moonlight gathered around the relics.

Bast began to dance in an unusual fashion, and the bell in her right hand started to chime.

The sound of the bell was a pleasing one. Zhang Lie saw her transform into a beautiful lady, and her cat's head into Li Qianlin's head. Zhang Lie jumped up in shock—the bell had a mysterious ability to charm others.

Zhang Lie struck immediately, not holding back.

Pale blue genetic energy rippled about Zhang Lie's arms. He flicked his wrists, causing a frightening aura to descend on the stage. The stage seemed to darken, and a fish the size of a whale materialized.

"[Fists of the Silent Sea: Soar]!"

A howling gale swept over the arena. As more and more genetic energy gathered around Zhang Lie's arms, it looked as though he were at the heart of a whirlpool. A huge wave soared into the air. As Zhang Lie punched forward, the fish slammed its huge tail on the ground and sent a torrent of water surging. Ripples of energy spread out from Zhang Lie, warping the space around him. The towering waves looked like enraged black dragons, flooding the area.

Bast defended with the golden lion shield. Pale blue genetic energy crashed into the shield, resulting in a huge rumble that caused the arena to shake and the void to tremble.

As the waves burst apart, the air filled with echoes of Zhang Lie's signature genetic energy, shattering space and swallowing up all life in its vicinity. Bast's bell rang violently and incessantly.

It was no wonder that Bast had managed to survive Radiant Sun's ultimate attack—her defenses were impeccable.

The golden lion shield glowed with light, as though absorbing the strength of Zhang Lie's attack. Starlight and moonlight filled her with surprising strength, like that of an erupting volcano.

"[The Boundless Blade: Yawning Wave]!"

Zhang Lie extended his pointer finger like a sword, and water-attuned genetic energy gathered around it. As he waved his finger, sword energy erupted like a wave, tearing apart the starlight.

A raging shark swam forth toward Bast, who leapt up high to evade. The shark swam after her, forcing Bast to defend with her shield once again.

While she was occupied, Zhang Lie had transformed into a bolt of light, appearing behind her as the shark attacked from the front.

The golden lion shield radiated light once again, shattering the manifestation of the shark. Bast clawed at her assailant with her bell-wielding arm.

Chapter 1327: White Cutout

"[Ninecarp Transformation]!"

Zhang Lie caught the cat's claw. A black serpent appeared behind him. The black serpent, which resembled the world-swallowing serpent Jormungandr, let out a threatening hiss as its scales clicked together.

Pitch-black genetic energy spread out all around Zhang Lie, corroding at Bast's form of starlight and moonlight.

Bast swung its other claw, holding onto the golden lion shield, at Zhang Lie, who leapt up to avoid it and pulled away. At the same time, pitch-black genetic energy gathered around his arm, twining around it like a black serpent.

"[Fists of the Silent Sea: Fade]!"

Zhang Lie punched forward, and the black serpent behind him shot forth.

Bast transformed fully into a cat and leapt into the air to avoid the serpent's attack.

Even when the serpent turned back in mid-air, it was unable to strike Bast, who had become far more agile after the cat transformation.

As Zhang Lie activated his blood ant and dragonwolf soulshards, he transformed into a dragonwolf with russet fur and limbs covered with dragons' scales. His aura became magnified as a hurricane of blood spawned around him.

The next moment, Zhang Lie vanished from the spot. Just as Bast avoided the serpent's attack, Zhang Lie appeared in the guise of a dragonwolf and kicked at Bast's waist.

Bast's waist was soft and supple, and Zhang Lie's kick did little lasting damage.

"[Fists of the Silent Sea: Fade]!"

As Zhang Lie punched forward, a blood dragon roared in outrage and shot forward.

Bast rolled in order to avoid the blood dragon's rampaging attack, then leapt several times in succession, causing the blood dragon to miss again and again. Then, Bast swiped her claws with a steely flash.

A wave of annihilation exploded around the dragon. Pitch-black energy swallowed everything in the vicinity like a storm at sea. Pulses of energy spread over the arena.

The pitch-black energy formed a black hole that devoured its surroundings. Bast was quickly overwhelmed and devoured, and her name turned dark on the runic tablet, indicating her defeat.

Bu Wentian clapped. "Excellent! As expected of the one who smashed apart Radiant Sun's bejeweled vase. The first eidolon didn't pose a challenge."

"Is this it?" Zhang Lie asked. How could a challenger with such limited strength ever have survived against Radiant Sun's attack? Even Ling Gu should have killed her!

Bu Wentian shrugged. "It's an eidolon, an imperfect reflection of an ancient challenger. There's a significant difference between the level of skills that could be conveyed—say, this eidolon only has 30% of the strength of the real thing."

"No wonder."

Bu Wentian continued, "The Bast of the present is surely far stronger than in this eidolon. After all, she was the first alien to have passed the sixth trial, and her strength has only grown since. If I'm not mistaken, she's already created an organization of her own in this realm, called the Ancient Gods' Abode."

Zhang Lie gaped. "She's the creator of Ancient Gods' Abode?"

That was one of the three largest organizations of the fourth realm!

Bu Wentian scoffed. "That said, the organization is entirely useless. If you ever meet her, give her a good beating from me. She's turtled up in the fourth realm thinking that it'll be safer, draining its resources and fearing the stronger existences from beyond the realm! A piece of trash—I had to be blind to have picked her."

Zhang Lie dissolved his dragonwolf transformation. "It looks like you once harbored high hopes for this Bast."

Bu Wentian snorted. "Do you intend to rest, or to continue the trial?"

"Let's continue. I didn't exhaust a significant portion of my strength during the last bout. I could handle twenty more such eidola."

Bu Wentian laughed. "The next eidolon will be far stronger. I rated Bast as one star. She's agile, but rather than focusing on that strength, she chose to use some strange shield, ruining both her defense and agility. She has no offensive ability to speak of; second-rate reflexes, third-rate defense, fourth-rate offense—this is how I would rate her."

Zhang Lie asked, "What about me?"

Bu Wentian refused to answer. "I haven't probed the limits of your abilities, so I can't evaluate you."

Zhang Lie then raised his head and looked toward the stone tablet. "How strong is this Aforgomon?"

"I rated him two stars. You'll see for yourself soon enough."

The stone tablet shook, and Aforgomon's name lit up. A pillar of light summoned another figure onto the arena.

The white humanoid cutout seemed to have come from a two-dimensional world.

The cutout waved a hand, as though it bore a huge sword that was slashing toward Zhang Lie's front. Zhang Lie hurriedly evaded as the space where he had been was cleanly snipped apart, just like a scissors cutout. A clear black line scored the arena in two. This was an incomprehensible ability.

There was little question that Aforgomon was a two-star challenger, to have caused Zhang Lie to treat it seriously from its very first attack.

"[Ninecarp Transformation: Golden Tiger]!"

The image of a golden tiger appeared behind Zhang Lie's back, and its roar echoed through the air. A golden aura suffused Zhang Lie. A mountain of blades rested atop the tiger's back, and Zhang Lie's body itself underwent a transformation. His hair turned silvery-white, until they became akin to silver needles.

His genetic energy likewise became more honed. Silvery-white genetic energy gathered over his body, and tigers' stripes appeared on his arms. His eyes became those of a tiger's, and steely sharpness erupted from every pore.

Zhang Lie pounced forward like a fierce tiger. Aforgomon repeated its previous action, waving its hand as though a formless blade were cutting apart the air.

"[Fists of the Silent Sea: Fade]!"

Concentrated genetic energy solidified into sharp silver crystals. White crystalline shards struck the black shadow with a clear ring. The shards were cleanly cut in two.

Sharp though Aforgomon's cuts were, and long its attack range, the attack itself didn't span a significant distance, and it was relatively easy to avoid if its direction of advance was known.

"[Fists of the Silent Sea: Fade]!"

After avoiding the attack, Zhang Lie pulled back. A crystal wall appeared behind Zhang Lie, reflecting light in five colors, so dazzling it dazed any who looked at it, so beautiful it sparked their desire.

As Zhang Lie manipulated space, that crystalline genetic energy shot out of the wall behind him in the form of sharp daggers, in a rain of crystals that were able to penetrate anything thanks to Zhang Lie's mastery of space.

The daggers tore through space in a storm of silver.

Eyeballs appeared over the paper cutout, floating above its surface. They looked toward the silver daggers, as if penetrating space and time. Aforgomon seemed to have an ability akin to predicting the future and was able to avoid the daggers' trajectories.

It was almost as though the daggers were avoiding Aforgomon. Aforgomon's eyeballs seemed to allow him to manipulate the surrounding space and time to some extent.

Chapter 1328: Aforgomon

"No matter what your power is, I'll be able to overcome it with brute strength!"

Zhang Lie condensed his genetic energy. Sharp white crystals floated around his body.

"[Fists of the Silent Sea: Hundred Dragons Soaring]!"

As Zhang Lie cocked his fist, dozens of crystalline dragons formed behind his back, roaring in unison and causing the sky to tremble. The next moment, they shot out through his fists, causing hundreds of crystalline dragons to weave through the skies in glowing radiance.

They pierced through space and time as Aforgomon continued to evade them time and again.

Just then, a chilling flash took place as Zhang Lie leapt over the crystalline dragons and slashed at Aforgomon with Guicang.

Aforgomon waved its hand, sending a two-dimensional cut back at him even as it was forced to defend against the barrage of attacks from hundreds of crystalline dragons from all directions.

"[The Boundless Blade: Yawning Wave]!"

Pale blue genetic energy flooded the arena like a waterfall. A sword slash struck at Aforgomon in conjunction with the hundreds of dragons in an explosion of water and crystalline shards. As the crystalline powder spread through the air, one of Aforgomon's arms and half its body exploded.

"As expected." Zhang Lie had seen through Aforgomon's trick. It wasn't able to manipulate space and time; all it could do was control the trajectories of projectiles.

This was why it had been unable to defend against Zhang Lie's barrage of attacks completely. The density of attacks forced it to only misdirect them to avoid its vitals, losing an arm and half its body in exchange.

"Perhaps I would find it more challenging if it were here in person."

Being able to manipulate trajectories was already an extremely annoying skill to deal with. All attacks had trajectories; none could simply arise out of thin air. Such an ability would be able to handle the vast majority of attacks.

"No wonder it survived Radiant Sun's ultimate attack unscathed..."

Compared to the cat, Aforgomon was far stronger, and had managed to survive Radiant Sun's onslaught fully, without any tricks.

Its incredible defense and two-dimensional cuts for offense was far more than sufficient to rank it among the top hunters of the fourth realm.

"It would have been a difficult fight with your actual body around, but an eidolon at 30% of peak strength is nothing compared to me. I would be far too weak and laughable if I couldn't even defeat that."

"[The Boundless Blade: the River Lethe]!"

Zhang Lie raised the blade in his hand high into the air, encircled by black genetic energy. The temperature of the air dropped to sub-zero values, and a strong wind buffeted the two combatants present.

An underworld river materialized in the air. As though the doors to hell had just been thrown open, tens of thousands of serpents rushed out in a flood.

Aforgomon raised its mostly-whole arm and snipped at the underworld river.

However, the river itself was composed of countless netherworld serpents, and as long as they weren't all simultaneously defeated, the river couldn't be stalled.

The serpents rushed forward in a flood. Aforgomon's countless eyes redirected their paths and motion, preventing them from closing in on it.

"[The Boundless Blade: the River Lethe]!"

Waves surged forward, sounding like peals of thunder, like stampeding hooves. The surface of the sea frothed with angry waves, like dragons emerging with the tide. The entire sea roiled, and lightning crackled amidst the void. Countless serpents swam across the raging sea as lightning flashed ominously overhead, a scene right out of an apocalypse.

As Zhang Lie struck, an underworld river hurtled into existence, roaring into the sea. The sword energy roiled like black waves. The sea had morphed into a boundless battlefield. The sea breeze was as a horn to action, and the serpents, thousands of courageous soldiers heeding its call.

Aforgomon was able to deal with a single underworld river, but what about an entire underworld ocean? It would be impossible for Aforgomon to manipulate such a large quantity of serpents at once, and it would easily be overwhelmed.

Aforgomon's cutout figure trembled. Many cuts appeared over its body, which were mirrored in the space around itself. Countless two-dimensional cuts pierced through the underworld ocean, killing a large number of black serpents.

"[The Boundless Blade: Dragon's Wrath]!" Guicang unleashed a barrage of sword energy in the form of a blood dragon.

A dragon's roar shook the void as the pitch-black genetic energy turned blood-red. The underworld river roiled, forming a gigantic blood-colored hurricane.

The blood dragon's sword slash tore apart space and time, suppressing Aforgomon's cuts. A blood twister formed, heading straight for Aforgomon like a meat grinder.

Zhang Lie, hidden amidst the twister, slashed forward. Guicang pierced through Aforgomon's two-dimensional figure.

"[First Form: Parting the River]!"

Bright sword energy radiated from Zhang Lie like brilliant rays of sunlight, illuminating the heavens.

A frightening force descended, energy rumbling and rippling around him. He shattered Aforgomon's body from within, turning it into nothing more than crystalline shards that filled the air.

Zhang Lie sheathed his sword. "Aforgomon is interesting, but it likely wouldn't have survived Radiant Sun's triple bird attack."

Bu Wentian rolled his eyes. "Do you think everyone can clear the sixth trial as easily as you can? It just barely managed to make it—but of course, even that was a better performance than the half-dead Bast displayed. Otherwise, it would hardly have been able to create an organization that could counter Ancient Gods' Abode."

"Hold on, are you saying that it's the creator of Eternal Sun?"

Chapter 1329: Father of Chaos

Bu Wentian replied, "Eternal Sun, Everlasting Sun, Unfallen Sun... there are too many names for me to remember."

Zhang Lie frowned. "Among the three large organizations of the fourth realm at present, the leaders of two have passed through this chamber. Could Azathoth be the leader of the third, a purported rising star?"

Bu Wentian replied, "I don't know, but Azathoth was very interesting."

"In what way?"

"The reward he requested was very interesting."

"What did he request?"

"I'll tell you once you beat him," Bu Wentian replied.

"Why not now? It's hardly going to make a difference. Don't forget, they barely survived Radiant Sun's attacks, while I had the ability to defeat him outright!"

"Since you're so confident, let's get started." With a wave of Bu Wentian's hand, Azathoth's name began to glow on the stone tablet.

A beam of light shone from the tablet onto the arena, and a giant clam formed.

The clam had sixteen straw-like legs. This giant clam seemed very familiar, as though Zhang Lie had seen it somewhere before. It gave off huge quantities of pitch-black fog, which transformed into a palm that swiped at Zhang Lie.

Pale blue genetic energy rippled about Zhang Lie's arms. He flicked his wrists, causing a frightening aura to descend on the stage. The stage seemed to darken, and a fish the size of a whale materialized.

"[Fists of the Silent Sea: Soar]!"

A howling gale swept over the arena. As more and more genetic energy gathered around Zhang Lie's arms, it looked as though he were at the heart of a whirlpool.

A huge wave soared into the air. As Zhang Lie punched forward, the fish slammed its huge tail on the ground and sent a torrent of water surging.

Ripples of energy spread out from Zhang Lie, warping the space around him. The towering waves looked like enraged black dragons, flooding the space and striking the palm of fog.

The clam emitted even more black fog, which formed a whirlpool that blocked the flood of pale blue genetic energy, resulting in a huge rumble that caused the arena to shake and the void to tremble.

As the waves burst apart, the air filled with echoes of Zhang Lie's signature genetic energy, the tide causing explosions that shook the air and dissipated the clam's black fog.

"[The Boundless Blade: Yawning Wave]!"

Zhang Lie extended his pointer finger like a sword, and water-attuned genetic energy gathered around it. As he waved his finger, sword energy erupted like a wave.

The sword slash left a scar on the clam's shell.

A raging shark swam forth and bit down on the giant clam, which emitted even more black fog to drown the shark and destroy its structure. The shark dissolved into ripples of genetic energy.

"[Ninecarp Transformation]!"

A black serpent, which resembled the world-swallowing serpent Jormungandr, appeared. It let out a threatening hiss as its scales clicked together.

Pitch-black genetic energy spread over the arena in corrosive dark clouds. However, the clam seemed to be resistant to this sort of attack. Its body hurled itself toward Zhang Lie like the head of a freight train.

Zhang Lie leapt high into the air to avoid the clam's attack.

Huge quantities of black fog seeped out of the crack in the clam's shell, forming dozens of hands that attempted to catch Zhang Lie.

As Zhang Lie activated his blood ant and dragonwolf soulshards, he transformed into a dragonwolf with russet fur and limbs covered with dragons' scales. His aura became magnified as a hurricane of blood spawned around him.

Bloody claws rent the black fog in the air.

The next moment, Zhang Lie vanished from sight. He appeared above the clam's shell, then swiped downward, his claws imbued with a bloody glow.

The clam was smashed against the stage, and Zhang Lie's bloody claws left scars on the clam's shell.

"[Fists of the Silent Sea: Fade]!"

As Zhang Lie punched forward, a blood dragon roared in outrage and slammed into the shell..

A wave of annihilation exploded around the dragon. Pitch-black energy swallowed everything in the vicinity like a storm at sea. Pulses of energy spread over the arena.

The explosion was like a black hole that sucked up everything in sight, devouring the entirety of the clam.

By the time it dissipated, all that was left was a clam whose shell was cracked and about to shatter. As the shell fell away, a strange and ugly lifeform was revealed from within.

It had claws that seemed to behave like tentacles, and a screaming face embedded in its chest. It looked like a cross between an octopus and a beast, and its screams affected one's will and soul. Zhang Lie couldn't help but feel that the creature in front of him was very familiar, just like the shell he had seen.

Quickly, Zhang Lie realized what he was reminded of—the king of chaos and his summons.

As though having found an important clue, Zhang Lie looked at the shattered fragments of the clamshell on the ground, then thought of the seal that the king of chaos had placed on him.

"Could this Azathoth be the father of the king of chaos...?"

Azathoth emerged from the shell, then made to claw at Zhang Lie.

Black genetic energy burst forth from Zhang Lie, as though there were hundreds, thousands of dragons surging throughout his body.

"[Fists of the Silent Sea: Hundred Dragons Soaring]!"



A horde of dragons launched out of Zhang Lie's left arm as he expended half his genetic energy in one supercharged attack.

Howling with the force of thunder, a horde of over a hundred black dragons flew toward the octopus-like entity, directed by Zhang Lie's punch. They were fierce and domineering, and all hundred of them boasted the power of annihilation.

Azathoth was swamped by the bombardment of over a hundred dragons, but as expected of a challenger who survived Radiant Sun's ultimate attack, he didn't die even when subject to such bombardment. New flesh quickly grew from its battered body.

Azathoth seemed to possess far more vitality than even a cockroach.

Zhang Lie struck with Guciang, tearing apart Azathoth's limbs, but it simply reconstituted them.

"[The Boundless Blade: the River Lethe]!"

Zhang Lie raised the blade in his hand high into the air, encircled by black genetic energy. The temperature of the air dropped to sub-zero values, and a strong wind buffeted the two combatants present.

An underworld river materialized in the air. As though the doors to hell had just been thrown open, tens of thousands of serpents rushed out in a flood.

Chapter 1330: Chaos Itself

As thousands of black serpents attempted to devour Azathoth, he struggled and squirmed, crushing one serpent after another. However, the serpents could regenerate endlessly from genetic energy.

Azathoth had no access to a wide-ranged attack, and he ultimately perished after suffering from the corrosion of thousands of serpents that had attached themselves to it.

Zhang Lie sheathed his blade as Bu Wentian clapped once more. He looked toward Zhang Lie with glowing light. "Of the six challengers who have passed the sixth trial, I consider you the strongest."

"Thank you."

Zhang Lie turned to Bu Wentian.

When he saw Zhang Lie looking straight at him wordlessly, Bu Wentian asked, "Shall we continue?

Do you want to rest?"

Zhang Lie asked, "Do you remember what you said at the start of the battle?"

"Ah, yes. Azathoth's very interesting wish: to be able to be remade. Yes, you heard me correctly—to be remade."

"Is he related to the king of chaos?"

"I don't know who this king of chaos you refer to is, but you don't seem surprised at all. You've seen how strong Azathoth is; the fact that he could make it through Radiant Sun's ultimate attack is proof of that. Of course, he's a far cry from the present you or the past me, but his accomplishments are ones that could not have been accomplished without overwhelming effort."

Azathoth had chosen to give up on it all and start again from scratch—just how much would he have to suffer in order to do so? It was like getting accepted into a top college, and then having to start high school over!

Zhang Lie didn't seem at all interested. "He had to have his own reasons. Perhaps he felt that he was no longer able to advance, so he chose to restart."

Bu Wentian waved a finger at him. "Well, you've got that part wrong. He didn't do so willingly; he was forced."

"Someone forced him to reincarnate?"

"When I met Azathoth, he was being chased. Perhaps he did it in order to avoid his pursuers."

"Is that so? Did you fulfill his wish?"

"Of course. I had found a pill of nascent chaos along my travels, which would transform a cultivator's physical form into chaotic energy. Forming an infant out of that mess of primordial chaos would satisfy his wish and augment his talent and potential, increasing his limits."

Zhang Lie honed in on the details. "Hold on, what does this pill of nascent chaos have to do with the king of chaos?"

"As I said, I don't know of this king of chaos."

"He was a superior king I saw in the third realm—well, perhaps not a superior king. A strong entity whose entire body was covered in a fog of chaos."

"Tell me more."

Zhang Lie described the king of chaos to Bu Wentian, causing him to clap. "There's no need to guess. It has to be Azathoth."

"How can you be so certain?"

"He asked for the pill of nascent chaos after finishing the first three trials. On finishing the sixth trial, he asked for a stable environment for growth. I gave him a flying ship that would be able to transport him from the fourth realm back into the third, expecting him to do so to free himself from his enemies' pursuit."

Many of Zhang Lie's questions were resolved at this point. Azathoth wasn't the king of chaos' father—he was the king of chaos himself!

Zhang Lie had been very curious just why the king of chaos wanted to forcibly bring the entire halls of chaos into the fourth realm. With his current strength, it would be trivial for him to ascend alone.

Ordinary lifeforms from the dimensional world would, after their ascension, be weakened temporarily as they felt the weight of the natural laws of the fourth realm, but the king of chaos was decidedly abnormal.

His strength was equivalent to Zhang Lie's strength when he had maxed out all his peak gene fragments, and he had evolved to become a peak-grade lifeform.

He would be able to do whatever he wanted in the fourth realm.

Zhang Lie had initially guessed that the king of chaos was trying to bring his retinue up to the fourth realm with him because he didn't want to search for talents from scratch there, but now, it seemed that that wasn't the case. The king of chaos had done so in order to confront his enemies.

When the king of chaos was still Azathoth, he had managed to survive against Radiant Sun's assault. The only entities in the fourth realm that would be able to go against Azathoth had to be from the two largest organizations of the fourth realm—in other words, Azathoth was bitter rivals with at least one of the organizations. The king of chaos had ascended with the entirety of the halls of chaos in tow in order to combat them.

Essentially all the lifeforms in the fourth realm were aware of how frightening the two largest organizations were, and they would never assist the king of chaos with his impossible goal. In order to challenge the two organizations, not only had the king of chaos suppressed his strength in the third realm to delay his ascension as he accumulated more and more power, he had also tried to identify as many talents as he could in order to resist the two major organizations of the fourth realm after ascending.

His return to the third realm from the fourth was exactly when the former will of the third realm had shattered. The king of chaos had steadily been growing stronger since.

Zhang Lie said, "Although I am shocked by that information, that's not what I'm looking for."

"What is it that you want, then?" Bu Wentian asked curiously.

"The letter."

Bu Wentian blinked. "Ah, I had almost forgotten! I'll do it once you defeat the two remaining challengers on the stone tablet. It won't be too late then."

Zhang Lie frowned. "That's not what you promised."

As long as Zhang Lie obtained a golden chest, Bu Wentian would hand him the letter his parents had left him.

"I said that I'd do so as soon as you obtained a golden chest, but you haven't obtained a single chest yet, have you?"

"I've already defeated three of the eidola."

Bu Wentian shrugged. "Don't worry, I'll hand you the letter, along with the other rewards, once you defeat the remaining two eidola."

"You won't back out of your promise, will you?"

Bu Wentian grumbled, "Why would I? What good does the letter do me in my possession?"

"Let's hurry up, then. I'd like to read the letter as soon as possible."

"You aren't going to rest?" Bu Wentian asked.

"The first three eidola weren't difficult to deal with, and I still have plenty of stamina. Let's continue."

On the stone tablet, his mother's name lit up. A pillar of light shone on stage, and a glowing projection of his mother appeared.

She was a beautiful woman, as exquisite as the snow, as eye-catching as a gemstone. It was impossible to tell that she was a mother of two.

Upon seeing his mother appear on stage, Zhang Lie couldn't help but tear up. He hadn't seen his parents for over a decade, and he couldn't help but be moved upon seeing his mother once more.

His mother channeled bitter cold. Cold air froze everything around her. A layer of frost covered the ground, and snow began to drift down from the heavens. Frost surged forward like the tide.

A frosty wind drifted toward him, with flecks of snow like icy blades.

Zhang Lie was no longer a child that would let his emotions control him. He reined in his emotions and mentally prepared himself for the upcoming fight.

"[Ninecarp Transformation: Golden Tiger]!"

The image of a golden tiger appeared behind Zhang Lie's back, and its roar echoed through the air. A golden aura suffused Zhang Lie. A mountain of blades rested atop the tiger's back, and Zhang Lie's body itself underwent a transformation. His hair turned silvery-white, until they became akin to silver needles.

His genetic energy likewise became more honed. Silvery-white genetic energy gathered over his body, and tigers' stripes appeared on his arms. His eyes became those of a tiger's, and steely sharpness erupted from every pore.

The image of the golden tiger behind him roared as his water-attuned genetic energy transformed into gold-attuned energy. The energy thrummed and rippled, hard as steel. As the tiger roared, the chilly air was repulsed. The frost on the ground shattered, and icy shards filled the air.

What lay before him was nothing more than a remnant. He needed to defeat that remnant in order to obtain the letter his parents had left him.

He breathed in, then breathed out. His heart turned harder than steel.

He flicked his wrists, causing a frightening aura to descend on the world. The skies began to darken, and a fish the size of a whale materialized in the air.

"[Fists of the Silent Sea: Fade]!"

He summoned sharp white crystals that pierced through the blizzard.

Han Lingxin leapt forward, dodging the crystals. Her body floated in the air as over a hundred needles of ice shot toward him like rain.

"[Fists of the Silent Sea: Fade]!"

A crystal wall appeared behind Zhang Lie, reflecting light in five colors, so dazzling it dazed any who looked at it, so beautiful it sparked their desire.

As Zhang Lie manipulated space, that crystalline genetic energy shot out of the wall behind him in the form of sharp daggers, in a rain of crystals that were able to penetrate anything thanks to Zhang Lie's mastery of space.

The daggers tore through space in a storm of silver.

The silver daggers struck the needles and overwhelmed them. However, icy flowers suddenly formed out of nowhere, each a deadly weapon. Within moments, the tides of battle changed again. The silver daggers struck down the needles of frost, only to be struck down by the icy flowers in turn.

Han Lingxin stood at the center of the icy flowers, beautiful and impeccably graceful.

"[Fists of the Silent Sea: Hundred Dragons Soaring]!"

Zhang Lie condensed his genetic energy. Sharp white crystals floated around his body. He cocked his fist, causing dozens of crystalline dragons to form behind his back.

The next moment, they shot out through his fists.

Hundreds of crystal dragons criss-crossed through the air, beautiful and dazzling, radiating multicolored light. The snowflakes struck the crystal dragons with metallic clinks, like bullets striking titanium, to no avail. Even the sharp snowflakes could leave no trace or mark behind on the dragons' bodies.

Han Lingxin transformed the frosty air around her into a hundred giant frost dragons.

They surged forth like the tide, intense and domineering, swallowing up Zhang Lie's crystal dragons.

As Zhang Lie activated his blood ant and dragonwolf soulshards, he transformed into a dragonwolf with russet fur and limbs covered with dragons' scales. His aura became magnified as a hurricane of blood spawned around him. The ice on the ground melted as the temperature rose again.

With his bloody claws, he swiped at the snowscape before him, tearing apart the snow and the heavens.

Han Lingxin's eyes flared with flames of ice. Cold air continuously emanated from her body as her eyes turned into orbs of ice. A tide of ice preceded her. Flowers of ice manifested underneath her feet, spreading out from her as she walked.

Time and karma froze at this moment as everything turned pale white. Fleet covered everything, even Zhang Lie himself.

Compared to Fang Yi, Han Lingxin's mastery over time was clearly superior. Fang Yi only locked time superficially, but Han Lingxin froze it completely. Put simply, what Fang Yi did was akin to locking a box, whereas Han Lingxin did the equivalent of putting it in a safe.

She stepped forward slowly across the frozen land, right up to Zhang Lie. She didn't notice that Zhang Lie's body was vibrating, that his palm had begun to crack.

Han Lingxin pressed her fingers against his forehead and was right about to pierce through it when the frost on Zhang Lie's palm suddenly shattered. Guicang appeared in his hand. With a slash of his sword, Han Lingxin's figure was cut apart at the waist, unsealing the world of frozen time in a shower of icy shards.

Zhang Lie panted as he escaped from the frozen time. The battle hadn't consumed a significant portion of his resources and strength, but it was truly perilous.

If not for the fact that Zhang Lie had some small accomplishment of his own with respect to time, the eidolon of his mother might have killed him for good.

"As expected of Mother..."

The eidola possessed about 30% of their original selves' combat power. Han Lingxin wasn't much stronger than the other three combatants when it came to raw strength, but her understanding of time and ice was immense. Her understanding was essentially on par with his own, and he had almost fallen prey to her.

Zhang Lie was very happy to have been able to exchange blows with his mother.

Seeing how strong she was, he believed that his parents were very unlikely to have been in mortal danger.

Bu Wentian commented, "This couple's understanding and analysis of time is beyond anyone I've seen before. They were the two most impressive among the challengers that passed the sixth trial, as well as the writers of the letter you seek. Will you continue?"

"Of course. I don't want to waste any more time."

Victory was right within sight!

"Her husband is stronger than she is. The only reason he lost to her during this trial is because she countered him completely. If I were to rate them all, Bast would be a one-star challenger, Aforgomon two-star, Azathoth 2.5-star, Han Lingxin 3.5-star, and Zhang Yangyan unabashedly 5-star."

Bu Wentian clearly rated his father very highly.

Zhang Lie sucked in a deep breath to calm himself. "I'm ready. Let's start."

Bu Wentian nodded. "We begin now."

On the stone tablet, Zhang Lie's father's name lit up. Zhang Yangyan's name shone as fiercely as fire, glowing incandescent like the sun. As a pillar of light beamed on stage, the glowing projection of his father appeared.