

## U. Warlord 901

### Chapter 901: The Origin of the Space Bugs

The Gu clan head cried out, "You're going to give up on us, the millions of lives right in front of you?" [1]

The Yang clan head added, "You'll be able to save us right away—but who knows about the rest of the civilians here on Mars? Can you really save them all?"

In sync, the Gu clan head continued, "And if you can't even save those of us gathered here, how will you save the rest of the planet?"

Yang Ze, who had folded his arms and was watching the scene play out from the side, commented idly, "Don't their words really get your heart pumping?"

Sun Mengmeng passed around some roasted seeds. "Would anyone like any?"

"Ah, thank you." Yang Ze accepted her offer gratefully.

Li Feng crunched on some seeds. "If not for what happened with Yang Ze, I might even have believed their words, too... but now, I wish I'd let them try to flee Mars and be eaten by all the bugs!"

Yang Ze nibbled on some snacks that Hong Xi had provided. "Haha, it really isn't obvious, is it? That's probably why they managed to remain in power for so long."

Zhou Ying commented, "Their speeches are powerful. It's clear that they're experienced at this."

Hong Xi asked, "Is anyone recording?"

Sun Xiaowu raised his hand. "I am!"

Zhang Lie was speechless. He shot them a glare—what're you all doing there, watching the show? Aren't you going to come help me?

The members of Team Zenith all pumped their fists as they cheered Zhang Lie on. They were confident that Zhang Lie would be able to deal with the issue himself—these clan heads were nothing compared to him.

The Yang clan head requested, "Why don't you send us away before coming back here?"

Zhang Lie scoffed. "Do you understand what you're saying at all? If we leave Mars, the bugs will continue to terrorize it. We came over from Earth in order to rescue Mars—all of Mars, not a few pushy people on it! Once we leave, who's going to hold the bugs back? You?" Zhang Lie pointed at the Yang and Gu clan heads.

"Or you?" Zhang Lie turned to the other clan heads, who were standing farther back.

None of the clan heads responded. They looked away and pretended that they couldn't hear Zhang Lie.

"Drop this matter now. Anyone who brings it up will be court-martialed!" Zhang Lie turned around and marched off, quickly followed by everyone else from Team Zenith.

Next, Zhang Lie tasked everyone with a few responsibilities. "Zhang Hong and Hong Xi, you'll work together with the Martian military to arrange lodgings for the disciples of the Zenith Dojo. Furthermore, distribute some of the food and resources on the titan-class shuttle to the civilians in need."

"Fang Yi, you, Jun Jiuxiao, and Ye Xianchen will guard the shuttle. If anyone tries to take it over, I'm sure you know what to do."

"They'll die before they can get on board." His gaze filled with killing intent, Fang Yi stared at the various clan heads, causing them all to flinch.

Zhang Lie continued, "The rest of you disciples, clean up and scout around the encampment."

Hong Xiao asked, "Master, what about the prizes?"

"I'll leave you in charge of the reward distribution. Tally up how many bugs everyone has killed, then have the disciples pick up their rewards from you."

Hong Xiao nodded.

Zhang Lie continued, "Everyone else in Team Zenith, you'll accompany me to speak with Marshal Li."

They found Li Pu in the infirmary, but were stopped by the guards outside. "The marshal is resting."

Within the infirmary, however, Li Pu called out, "Let them enter! They're heroes of Mars, and I could hardly make them wait."

Zhang Lie walked in with the members of Team Zenith and saw Li Pu lying in bed. Even though he had consumed the upgraded Yeluo restorative, it was no miracle potion. Li Pu still had to rest in order for his body to heal.

"I apologize for disrupting your rest," Zhang Lie began.

"There's no need. I know you wouldn't have come for no reason. If our positions were reversed, I would have done the same. Furthermore, without all of you around, I wouldn't even have an opportunity to rest. I'm thankful enough that you didn't storm my guards," Li Pu joked, but his words didn't have the desired effect. His time in the military had given him a stern and aloof demeanor, and the way his face contorted could barely be identified as a smile.

Zhang Lie laughed awkwardly.

Li Pu continued, "The situation on Mars is still worsening, and I can't continue to rest much longer."

"We've identified a dozen or so bug nests in the vicinity, and they've been cleared by the disciples of the Zenith Dojo. The remaining bug forces around the encampment won't be a threat, but I'd like to know about what's going on beyond the encampment."

"Thank you for your hard work. If you hadn't arrived, we soldiers wouldn't have been able to hold out—I truly can't thank you enough. Now, the rest of Mars... You've probably seen it from your shuttle, but the rest of Mars is doing rather poorly."

"The fact that I was here in this encampment already makes it among the more fortunate, and I don't know how many other encampments have managed to survive the bug invasion, nor how many civilians are still living in fear of the bugs."

Yang Ze summarized Li Pu's words crisply, "In other words, the situation on Mars is terrible and worsening by the day, and you don't know just how bad it is."

Li Pu began to cough so violently it felt as though he were about to cough his lungs out. "As you know, I was so overwhelmed with defending this encampment that I didn't have time to worry about the others. We should be able to communicate with the other encampments, however, so that might be worth a try."

Zhang Lie raised a hand. "Yang Ze, you're being too rude! Marshal Li's a hero of Mars. Before he gasps his last breath, you have to show him commensurate respect!"

Li Pu glared at Zhang Lie, who laughed. "It's a joke, Marshal Li. Do you happen to know where all these bugs came from?"

Li Pu countered, "Have you found a clue as to their provenance?"

"No, Marshal. I had no clue, and I was hoping you did."

The origin of these space bugs was mysterious, and no one had ever identified from whence they came. Their larvae were affixed to meteorites. When these meteorites crashed into a planet, the larvae would quickly reproduce and evolve, devouring all the resources that it contained.

Li Pu sighed. "Each larva is only the size of a thumb, so they're fiendishly difficult to detect. By the time we learn of a bug invasion, they've already grown into a massive horde. It's unbelievable how quickly they can reproduce.

"They don't seem like natural biological lifeforms, and there were scholars who proposed that they represented a weapon of biological warfare developed by some race or another. However, none of the races of the Milky Way have the capability for such extensive bioengineering, not even the four prime races."

## Chapter 902: A Recruitment Offer

Yang Ze had studied up on these space bugs before the trip to Mars, and he was ready to show off his knowledge. "Other scholars suggest that they're from an alien race in an undiscovered part of the universe, sent as an invading force against us—and others even think that these bugs came from the future, in an attempt to destroy the present!

"All sorts of hypotheses about the source of these bugs have been floated around, but none have ever been verified. These bugs seemed to have suddenly appeared from outer space without ever having left since."

Li Pu turned to Zhang Lie. "Dojo Leader Zhang, what's your plan for handling these bugs?"

"Without dealing with the queen, we can't eradicate the bugs once and for all. I intend to leave Sun Mengmeng behind to guard the encampment while the members of Team Zenith and part of the disciples of the Zenith Dojo head out to kill the bug queen."

Li Pu sighed. "This is a historic moment for Mars, but I can't be part of it. It's a pity that I won't be able to accompany you."

Zhang Lie laughed. "Better for you to remain here and maintain control over the encampment, Marshal Li. Without your presence here, the military may not be able to maintain control.

Even so, Li Pu was regretful that he wouldn't be able to observe the defeat of the bug queen himself.

"Rest well, Marshal Li," Zhang Lie said.

Li Pu suddenly looked up at Yang Ze. "Yang Ze, I'd like to have a chat with you to pass the time. Would you entertain my request?"

"Weren't you going to rest, Marshal Li?" Yang Ze knew what Li Pu would try to convince him of during this chat, so he wanted to push it off as long as he could. "I'm rather apologetic about having disturbed your rest just now, Marshal, and I would hate to take up more of your time."

Li Pu sighed. "After being wounded, it feels like no one values my presence. Even offering to chat with a junior got me rejected..."

Yang Ze could hardly refuse Li Pu after hearing this. He sighed and agreed to the chat. "Very well, Marshal Li."

"Yang Ze, have a good chat with Marshal Li. The rest of us will prepare to set off." Zhang Lie tossed Yang Ze to the wolves, then shut the door behind him.

Yang Ze sat down by Li Pu's side. "What did you want to talk about, Marshal Li?"

Li Pu replied, "You're stronger than I am, and you're more famous in the Milky Way. Even when the bugs are gone, Mars will need a guardian."

Yang Ze smiled. "But what about you, Marshal Li?"

Li Pu sighed. "You can tell the difference in our strength, can't you? What sort of guardian am I if I can't even protect Mars?"

Yang Ze was able to defeat even a six-star bug, whereas Li Pu wouldn't even be able to run away from it in time."

Yang Ze clarified, "Are you asking me to return to Mars, Marshal Li?"

Li Pu's eyes filled with hope. "When a disaster broke out on Mars, you thought to return immediately, and you even brought the rest of your dojo with you. I know you've had a falling out with the Yang clan, but it's clear that you still hold Mars in your heart. After this disaster, I hope you'll remain on Mars and consolidate a base of power here."

Yang Ze had clearly demonstrated his strength in battle, and Li Pu was certain he still had a lot of untapped potential. He couldn't believe that the youth who had left Mars would come back so much stronger in so short a period of time.

Yang Ze shook his head. "Marshal Li, as you know, I'm affiliated with the Zenith Dojo."

"You can both be part of the dojo and remain on Mars, surely? Your dojo leader's an understanding and rational man. If you make this request, he won't refuse you."

Yang Ze shook his head again. "I apologize, Marshal Li, but the only reason I've made it this far, the only reason I'm this strong, is because of Zhang Lie..."

Li Pu raised his hands and cut Yang Ze off. "No, no, don't refuse my offer right away, will you? Think about it. Perhaps it might unlock new doors for you. You can't remain in the Zenith Dojo forever, and the Milky Way's a large place. Do you really not want an opportunity to leave the dojo and set off on your own?"

Yang Ze replied with some embarrassment, "Well... I'm so busy running around with my captain all day fighting and training that I haven't thought about my future."

Li Pu replied, "In that case, why not take some time to think about it? If you're willing to remain on Mars, I'd be willing to hand off my position to you right away, no questions asked. As a native of Mars who made a name for yourself during the Void Cup, you're a source of pride for many a Martian. I don't think anyone would reject your appointment as the next marshal."

Yang Ze sucked in a deep breath. Offering his position as a marshal of Mars... Li Pu really was serious. If Yang Ze accepted, he would have considerable control over the Martian military from the outset.

There were multiple such marshals, but each of them boasted incredible authority and power.

Yang Ze was tempted, very much so. Just like how young girls dreamt of becoming princesses, young boys grew up aspiring to become spacefarers and hunters.

If Li Pu were to transfer his position to Yang Ze, Yang Ze would become a marshal of Mars immediately. He could simultaneously be a marshal and also part of the Zenith Dojo. In fact, he would even be able to open a branch of the Zenith Dojo on Mars.

He could be the dojo leader of that branch, or have Zhang Lie send a manager over—and as the name of the Zenith Dojo spread far and wide, all those on Mars would be able to receive the training and privilege that came with such a position. Wouldn't becoming a marshal of Mars be a good choice?

Just then, however, he suddenly thought of the Yang clan head's vile face, and all his plans of remaining in Mars evaporated.

"I'm sorry, but I'll have to refuse."

Li Pu was shocked. "Can I ask why?" These were lavish conditions that no other recruit could have received. Even so, was Yang Ze going to refuse?

"I thank you for your offer, Marshal Li. I've always dreamt of being in your position since my childhood, but Zhang Lie has shown me how large the universe truly is compared to Mars."

Li Pu didn't know how to respond to Yang Ze's words—he had barely considered the possibility that Yang Ze would refuse. Furthermore, he could tell that Yang Ze's refusal was genuine and heartfelt, that he really did find Mars too small and constraining for the likes of him.

Yang Ze knew that he couldn't leave. The war in the third realm wasn't yet over, and he wasn't about to ditch his team halfway through. The reason Zhang Lie had put the invasion on hold was to help support him, and if Yang Ze were to leave Team Zenith the moment a good offer came to him, he didn't deserve to be a member of Team Zenith.

If he were a regular disciple of the Zenith Dojo, he might have considered the offer more seriously, but as a member of Team Zenith, it was clearly a disadvantageous offer.

Yang Ze deeply believed that he could grow far faster as a member of Team Zenith than as a marshal of Mars. Within a few years, he had grown from a talentless youth to a hunter at the peak of the third realm, and all his success could be attributed to Team Zenith, to his mentor and friend, Zhang Lie...

#### Chapter 903: A Family Drama

Yang Ze had made up his mind, and Li Pu knew that it would be difficult to change it. "What a pity that Mars couldn't secure a talent like you... Honestly, from the very beginning, I should have beaten the clan leaders into submission. If you ever change your mind, let me know. As long as I'm a marshal of Mars, I'll be willing to uphold the offer I made to you."

"Thank you, Marshal. I won't disrupt your rest any further, then." Yang Ze bowed, then left the infirmary. He saw Zhang Lie waiting outside for him.

Zhang Lie asked, "Are you done?"

Yang Ze nodded.

Zhang Lie met his gaze. "If you want to leave, I won't stop you. Make the choice that works best for you."

"Thank you." Yang Ze headed off to make preparations for the bug invasion, only to find his path blocked by members of the Yang clan once again.

The Yang clan head was rather ashen-faced, and the other members of the Yang clan all had tattered clothes and bruises all over.

Yang Ze frowned. "What's going on?"

The Yang clan head knelt down on the ground, followed suit by the rest of the Yang clan.

Yang Ze's frown deepened. "What are you up to now?"

The Yang clan head slapped himself harshly on his cheek. "Yang Ze, I was wrong. I shouldn't have forced you out of the clan on the basis of mere rumor. I was mistaken!"

Yang Ze laughed dryly. "Are you trying these tricks again? Do you think you can rope me back into the clan like this?"

The Yang clan head cried out, "No, of course not! It's all my fault. If you're angry at the clan, hit me, scold me, kill me, even! But please, save those disciples of the Yang clan behind me. Among them are your cousins and even your brothers—they're all innocent, and they all have a future waiting ahead of them. Please, don't let them die here."

Yang Ze frowned. "Now that the Zenith Dojo is here, Mars has the ability to deal with the bug invasion. Stay put in the encampment and don't try anything, and you'll all survive."

"I was wrong to have let you go. Never could I have expected that you would have such success, Yang Ze, and I regret my decision more with each and every moment that passes." The Yang clan head was close to tears.

Yang Ze was indifferent to the Yang clan head's show of regret and guilt. Impatiently, he asked, "Just what do you want? I don't have time to deal with the likes of you. Stop wasting my time!"

The Yang clan head crawled forward and tugged on the leg of Yang Ze's pants. "Yang Ze, please return to the Yang clan. Give me an opportunity to make up for my mistakes!"

Yang Ze's frown deepened again. So this was what the Yang clan head had been planning.

The Yang clan head continued, "Please give me a chance."

Yang Ze's lips formed a thin smile. "Clan Head Yang, just what sort of relation do we share?"

"We're blood relatives!" the Yang clan head cried out.

"We share the same blood, but we might as well be strangers. If not for the limit-breaking potions that my captain engineered, you wouldn't even remember my name, would you? You have to take responsibility for what you did, and some choices can't be redeemed even with a lifetime's worth of regrets. I won't return to the Yang clan, not now, not ever. If not for the fact that I've grown used to my name, I wouldn't even mind changing it."

Yang Ze extricated himself from the Yang clan head's prying grasp, then marched off quickly. He didn't want to listen to another word of nonsense from the Yang clan head's mouth.

"Not even a sliver of a chance?" the Yang clan head pleaded.

"No. You owe me nothing. I owe you nothing."

"But your blood—"

"Silence!" Yang Ze cut off the trembling Yang clan head. "Would you like me to undergo a blood transfusion, then? Give all your Yang clan blood back to you? I'll submit to that if only to sever all ties with you. Given my current status, it won't be a difficult feat."

"No, I don't mean it that way, Yang Ze!"

"No? Good. Everything I have now came from Zhang Lie's benevolence— and even before that, I had to fight for any belonging I wanted. My blood is my mother's. There's nothing I need repay the Yang clan."

The Yang clan head tried one last tactic. "The Zenith Dojo doesn't belong to you, Yang Ze! Won't you prefer your family legacy? If you're willing to return to the Yang clan, you'll be the next Yang clan head!"

Yang Ze whirled back around and glanced at the husky-like members of the Yang clan, who were still kneeling on the ground. "I'm doing very well in the Zenith Dojo, thank you—thousands of times better than in the Yang clan."

He stalked off into the distance. As the members of the Yang clan glanced at Yang Ze's back, they barely checked their malice, anger, and... envy.

No one else in the Yang clan would dare to speak to the Yang clan head in this fashion, and all would jump at the opportunity to be the next clan head. And yet Yang Ze completely resisted that temptation—he really did already have something better.

The Yang clan head stood up and shouted hoarsely, in anger, "Leave, then! But even if you leave, don't forget that Yang blood still flows in your veins!"

Yang Ze called back without turning around, "You must be mistaken. Don't forget that I'm no longer a member of the Yang clan—you said so yourself."

Yang Ze vanished from sight, his head held high.

"Y-You!" The Yang clan head clutched his chest. In his anger and shame, he spat out a mouthful of fresh blood.

The members of the Yang clan all clambered up to help support the Yang clan head.

"Clan Head!"

"Clan Head, what's the matter?"

"Are you ill or wounded, Clan Head?"

"Yang Ze made the clan head so mad he spat out blood..."

The Yang clan head pointed in the direction in which Yang Ze had departed, his voice hoarse, his hand quivering in mid-air. "He would have belonged to the Yang clan; the honor of the Void Cup would have been shared by the Yang clan! The kingdom of Limit would have harbored the Yang clan..."

A moment's folly had cost the Yang clan a hunter who surpassed even the marshals of Mars.

A moment's folly had cost the Yang clan a genius.

A moment's folly had cost the Yang clan the chance to take over Mars.

The Yang clan head, whose head was filled with such thoughts, spat out another mouthful of blood and fainted.

Yang Ze smiled as he left the scene, his steps light. He ignored the commotion that had occurred behind him—but the moment he turned the corner, his smile crumpled. "What are all of you doing here?!"

The members of Team Zenith stared back at him with grins on their faces.

The members of Team Zenith had just watched Zhang Lie worm his way out of a sticky situation; Yang Ze was the next victim.

Yang Ze asked, "Were none of you guys going to help me out? Are we truly teammates? Is this all our camaraderie was worth? And to think that I proclaimed my undying loyalty to the Zenith Dojo! Is this all my faith and dedication is worth?!"

Li Feng laughed at Yang Ze's antics. "Our captain called me over to watch the show," he claimed, selling Zhang Lie out.

"I passed by, and Zhang Lie flagged me over," Sun Mengmeng reported, selling Zhang Lie out for a second time.



"Captain mentioned that there was a family drama taking place," Zhou Ying said, chewing on some snacks.

"My sister brought me over," Sun Xiaowu declared. He glanced at his hands in astonishment.

"My goodness, when did all these recording devices appear? I certainly am not responsible for them, and we never discussed that we'd upload this footage of the invasion of Mars to the hunters' forums!" Sun Xiaowu hastily stowed his equipment in his soul space as Yang Ze watched on in growing astonishment.

#### Chapter 904: Bug Evolution

"Fang Yi, weren't you and the others going to guard the shuttle?" Yang Ze didn't know whether to laugh or cry at the interest the other members of Team Zenith were showing in his family drama.

"How's the shuttle? Are you neglecting your duties?"

"Ah, Captain..."

Fang Yi turned to Zhang Lie, only to be met with a death stare. "I only left for a bit! Nothing could have gone wrong in that time, surely? We're not robots, after all, and we need to rest as well. The shuttle has its own defenses, so even if something were to go wrong, we'd be able to head there in time."

Yang Ze folded his arms playfully. "I must say, you sound quite uncertain. Should you really be asking me this?"

Fang Yi, Jun Jiuxiao, Ye Xianchen, and Hong Xi all sighed.

Yang Ze turned to Zhang Lie. "Captain, why did you call everyone here?"

"Ah, I was simply curious about what was going on. This is private clan business, and I would hardly feel comfortable stepping in!" He clasped his hands behind his back and continued seriously, "At any rate, our preparations are complete. We can set off now!"

Yang Ze blinked, as did the other members of Team Zenith. "Our preparations are complete?"

Zhang Lie coughed. "Ah, I mean, we have to complete our preparations quickly!"

The next moment, Zhang Lie vanished from sight, having teleported away.

Deep in the underground caverns of Mars, countless bugs were crawling on the walls of the cavern. The ground was littered with all sorts of bug parts.

In the center of the cavern was a cocoon of unimaginable size, which was thumping like a heart. Capillaries appeared over the surface of the cocoon, as though something was gestating within.

The cocoon glowed with faint light, which grew brighter and brighter with every passing moment. The bugs surrounding it began to move with every pulse of light, as though it were some sort of command center that was controlling the bugs' motion.

A crack appeared on the carapace of one of the bugs. Subsequently, a pitch-black arm, one as hard as steel, cracked the carapace from within. The arm was still sticky with fluid.

The figure widened the crack in the carapace, then emerged from within it as though the carapace had been an egg. It boasted a solid, sturdy humanoid body.

If anyone had witnessed this scene, the entirety of the Milky Way would have been abuzz. Never had a humanoid bug made an appearance in the universe.

After the first humanoid bug appeared, the carapaces of the surrounding bugs also began to crack. More and more humanoid bugs emerged as the cocoon itself began to crack. From within the crack, one could see an existence of unparalleled strength, almost fully developed...

Zhang Lie explained, "According to our scouts, the bugs are surprisingly intelligent. After this defeat, they understand that there have been reinforcements sent from outside Mars. They're already starting to consolidate their forces and focus them on specific fronts.

"As though they were planning to settle everything with a big fight..." Yang Ze murmured.

Zhang Lie shook his head. "Not them, us."

Yang Ze immediately understood what Zhang Lie meant. "The bugs understand that we're here to slaughter them, so they're responding in kind."

Zhou Ying frowned. "I believe there's one more possibility."

Everyone had learned as much as they could about these bugs in their downtime here. Yang Ze asked, "Do you mean that they're about to evolve?"

Fang Yi frowned. "Surely not? We've only been here for a day and won a single battle. Would that be enough to prompt such rapid evolution?"

A rapid evolution had been reported as an emergency measure taken by the bugs in times of crisis. If they were about to suffer defeat, they would pool all their resources together to create a few particularly strong superbugs to counter a force that would otherwise have annihilated the entire invasion force.

Zhou Ying shrugged. "We killed two five-star bugs and even a six-star bug. I expect that the bugs have re-evaluated the danger of this planet and are taking measures accordingly."

Each race had a path toward strength. These space bugs, who were invaders that were a blight on the universe, naturally had one of the best such paths: evolution.

Unlike genetic lifeforms, these space bugs only needed to consume enough matter from other lifeforms and accumulate strength within their body. Once that strength exceeded a certain threshold, evolution would occur. In other words, they were basically stealing the best genes from the creatures they devoured, and were, in some sense, similar to the hunters of the Milky Way.

The difference was that the bugs were able to manifest the physical characteristics of the prey they devoured. For instance, if they were to hunt down a pack of scorpions, they would be able to grow a poisonous stinger from their backs. If they were to consume a flock of birds, their bones would grow lighter, and they could develop wings. After hunting down a variety of prey, these bugs would essentially turn into chimeras.

If not for the fact that they would have to reach higher and higher energy thresholds to evolve, these bugs could grow stronger indefinitely—and that limitation was essentially immaterial. Their

frightening digestive systems meant that they were able to replenish their energy by consuming just about anything.

Even more astonishingly, the bugs essentially had a telepathic network and evolution database set up. When a given bug evolved into a two-star bug, its genes and evolution would be documented and uploaded into the database, which could subsequently be downloaded and emulated at will by other bugs in the vicinity.

As a result, the appearance of a two-star bug frequently heralded a huge swarm of them.

The only restriction to this sort of unbridled growth was the need for energy. This was why these space bugs invaded every planet they could come across.

In some sense, they were like players in a game. The mobs they hunted down were converted into experience and equipment, and once they reached certain level thresholds, they could evolve. Some of these players would post walkthroughs and strategy guides on the relevant game forums to be copied by others, thereby producing a huge wave of high-leveled players.

Zhou Ying explained, "I've just read a report that analyzed the conditions under which these bugs can evolve. Allegedly, these bugs have a highly developed system for predicting danger. There were quite a few case studies documented in the report of such evolution occurring more frequently than expected, not just when their opponents were too strong for them."

This sort of evolution was a response against danger. When the bugs were forced to confront a strong foe, they would consolidate their strength in just a few superbugs.

The lower-tier bugs would willingly give up their bodies as nutrition and energy for higher-tier bugs, who were then able to choose the best evolutionary outcome from the database that they had compiled.

Subsequently, a mass evolution would occur.

"If a given planet's strength is far higher than the bugs had originally predicted or could account for, they will also evolve in order to take care of such threats."

The members of Team Zenith were listening to Zhou Ying attentively.

Zhang Lie summarized, "Our appearance on Mars has catalyzed these bugs' growth, then."

## Chapter 905: Against the Space Bugs

The space bugs' ability to evolve to deal with a stronger threat was so difficult to deal with that only a rare few hunters would be willing to counter a bug invasion.

Yang Ze sighed. "The most troublesome aspect about all this is that, during the evolution process, a large number of mutated bugs or even a bug monarch will appear."

Zhou Ying added, "According to the reports I perused, these bugs may even make use of the evolution process to selectively breed a bug monarch."

"A bug monarch? To lead the bugs in times of trouble, is that it?" Zhang Lie thought out loud.

None of the members of Team Zenith were able to confirm this guess. The hunters of the Milky Way had tried to study this species in earnest, but there was still much that was unknown about these bugs.

Li Feng's outlook was more optimistic. "We don't know for certain that these bugs are evolving, do we?"

Zhou Ying replied, "I can feel a lifeform of unparalleled strength gestating. It's in some sort of stasis at the moment, but once it becomes active... It's already giving off a terrible stench to my senses, and we're heading straight toward it."

The hunters fell silent. Among the hunters present, Zhou Ying was surely the authority on such matters.

The shuttle flew toward where the bugs were most concentrated. Because the bugs had fallen back after their disastrous defeat, the skies were no longer covered with dense clouds of bugs.

The shuttle shot forth without encountering any resistance. It quickly entered the bugs' territory. The hunters could see that the land that the bugs had claimed was now devoid of all life—all that was left behind was barren ground and a few bloodstained rocks.

Upon witnessing this sight, Zhang Lie swore that he would destroy the bugs here—he couldn't let such devastation strike Earth.

Eventually, they finally reached the bugs' nest, an ink-green, bulbous structure shot through with narrow tunnels, like a piece of moldy cotton. Merely looking at the nest made the hunters nauseous.

As the shuttle approached the nest, a titanic swarm of bugs appeared from within. Land and sky was dyed black by their arrival.

"Disciples of the Zenith Dojo, prepare for combat!"

A high-energy laser shot out from the shuttle, scattering the bugs and clearing a patch of sky. The beam was so wide that even the bugs on the ground were annihilated, leaving a path straight toward the nest. Countless bugs were burning from having been incidentally struck by the beam, both in the sky and on the ground.

The members of Team Zenith were standing by the head of the shuttle. Zhang Lie stood at the front, followed by the other five hunters of Team Zenith, and then Hong Xi's four-hunter party.

"We attack!" Zhang Lie waved a hand as all the hunters manifested their weapons.

"I'll go first!" Fang Yi jumped down from the shuttle, a spear in his arms. He launched his spear, crackling with wind and lightning, with incredible force. It sent wind howling and lightning flashing through the sky.

Fang Yi thrust his spear forward once more, so quickly it left dozens of afterimages in all directions. Huge swathes of bugs were cleared out from the vicinity.

Waves suddenly appeared in the sky, shimmering like a mirage. Spatial fluctuations rippled as Yang Ze activated [Mirrored Refraction]. Dozens of crystalline lotuses surrounded him, all of which he had been manifesting during the flight over. Even while engaged in conversation about these bugs with the rest of Team Zenith, Yang Ze hadn't stopped creating more of these lotuses with his genetic energy.

"Take this!" Two dozen lotuses were swept forth by the tides of genetic energy. They burst apart in mid-air like bombs.

"[The Boundless Blade: Shark Frenzy]!" Pale-blue sharks appeared in the sky, consuming all the bugs they came across. Yang Ze allowed one shark to carry him through the sky. Whenever any bugs drew near, the crystalline lotuses surrounding him would explode into a ball of mist as shards of ice fell toward the battlefield.

Sun Xiaowu leaped high into the air as gold-attuned genetic energy radiated from him like a second sun. "[Blinding Flash: Hundredfold Echo]!"

Sun Xiaowu's body split into over a thousand clones, so many they seemed to fill the sky. Each was simultaneously real and illusory.

"[Golden Divide]!" The thousand clones used [Golden Divide] simultaneously, coloring the sky in gold and raining down golden feathers in such numbers that it seemed as though a thunderstorm had just formed out of thin air.

All the bugs in the vicinity were shot down by the feathers, both in the sky and on the ground. Sun Xiaowu was the splitting image of a radiant sun.

"Hey, watch it, Sun Xiaowu!" Li Feng scowled as he defended against Sun Xiaowu's feathers. A blinding pillar of white shot out of his body, competing with Sun Xiaowu's golden light in terms of brilliance. Half the sky was gold, and the other half silver.

As a dragon roared in the air, Li Feng cried out, "[Light Dragon's Remnants]!"

Li Feng marshaled his genetic energy into the form of a large number of white dragons that dive-bombed the battlefield.

Zhou Ying stood at the front of the shuttle, her hair blowing in the wind. Vitality surrounded her, so concentrated it manifested as a green barrier. Her hair had turned the color of sparkling jade, and she was so beautiful no one could look away.

As motes of green light surrounded her, she took two bounding steps forward and leapt off the shuttle, her hands extended.

"[Avatar of the Fae: Earthbound Prison]!" Zhou Ying released all her stored vitality at once, causing the ground to quake as thousands of jade-green wood dragons rushed out of the earth.

Giant vines broke through the earth, and dragons of wood appeared over the battlefield.

Their bodies were made of thick bark, and they were surrounded with jade-green leaves. As Zhou Ying fell from the sky, the wooden dragons reached out to support her. Zhou Ying landed atop the head of one dragon and surveyed the battlefield from her vantage point.

As Zhou Ying pointed forward, the wooden dragons surged forth in a tide, crushing any bugs in their way. The fierce wooden dragons easily overwhelmed the bugs.

The hunters of Team Zenith were able to block the bugs' advance and simultaneously tear an opening in their defense.

Hong Xiao cried out, "Sister, it's our turn next!"

Beneath the Hong siblings' feet appeared white moonlight; to their backs appeared black suns.

Hong Xi activated all her combat-oriented soulshards. A fan of feathers materialized in her left hand, and a moonlit sword in her right. Behind her, multicolored light flared.

The domain of [Eclipse] spread out beneath her feet. She walked forward, moonlight radiating from her every move. A black sun appeared behind her, sparking where it touched the moonlight at her feet.

Wind howled. The sword in her right hand gleamed like the radiant moon. As she waved her fan, she summoned a twister in the air, devastating all the bugs ahead of her.

Hong Xiao charged forward in a silver breeze. The two siblings strode into the battlefield with hard-earned coordination.

Jun Jiuxiao and Ye Xianchen were determined to make a strong showing themselves.

Wind and storm buffeted Jun Jiuxiao's body as [Wind's Spirit] propelled him forward. [Floating Clouds] allowed him to teleport between patches of bugs, each of which he cleanly sliced in half.

As Ye Xianchen made her move, the skies turned dark. Darkness descended on the land as her genetic energy manifested in the shape of demons, which barreled forward and clawed apart everything in their path. Ye Xianchen's hands morphed into twin claws, raking apart the bugs in the sky.

Zhang Lie was very satisfied with the hunters' performance. Although there was still much they could improve, they clearly had a good grasp of the basics.

As the cabin doors opened up, the members of the Zenith Dojo launched themselves from the titan-class shuttle.

## Chapter 906: Humanoid Bugs

"We're going in, boys!"

"I'll kill a hundred bugs by myself—don't snatch my kills!"

"Bugs, this day will be a nightmare for you all! Learn who your opponents are—the disciples of the Zenith Dojo!"

The disciples of the Zenith Dojo fell from the sky and charged forward in combat against the space bugs.

The members of Team Zenith led the charge at the forefront.

Suddenly, Zhang Lie felt an overwhelming aura. He looked toward the depths of the bug nest, from which a million unusual bugs had emerged.

Their black carapaces were bright and shiny, with the metallic luster of steel. Muscles bulged over their bodies. They strode upright on two legs as they walked toward the disciples of the Zenith Dojo. Their two-meter-tall bodies were so sculpted that they looked like bodybuilders at their prime.

"Humanoid bugs...?" The disciples of the Zenith Dojo and even Zhang Lie himself were taken aback.

The bugs took on the racial characteristics of the species they devoured—and the most populous and developed species on Mars was, without a doubt, the humans. After all, human hunters were able to enter the dimensional realm and obtain strength by means of gene fragments.

Because of the unusual nature of human genes, the bugs had never been able to reproduce human characteristics faithfully, and none had ever appeared before. However, the bugs that had just appeared before them all had clearly done the unimaginable.

Humanoid bugs had appeared on Mars—the bugs had successfully secured human characteristics.

Many scholars who studied these space bugs had hypotheses and predictions about when the bugs would be able to manifest the characteristics of the hunters of the Milky way, who were able to enter the dimensional realm, but they had largely been ignored, their research neglected. Now, however, their theories and hypotheses seemed to have finally borne fruit.

This was terrible news.

If the bugs were able to obtain gene fragments by killing Milky Way hunters, they would be able to ascend and evolve rapidly without ever having stepped foot in the dimensional realm.

Zhang Lie's eyes widened in alarm. None of the bugs could be allowed to leave Mars—all of them would have to be exterminated.

The disciples of the Zenith Dojo had also come to that realization. If these bugs weren't destroyed to the very last, the solar system and the Milky Way at large would fall into an unprecedented crisis, one on a galactic level.

Some of the disciples of the Zenith Dojo charged forward, not realizing their recklessness.

"Stop!" Fang Yi commanded.

The humanoid bugs punched forward with their fists. The air boomed like a clap of thunder, and a cavity formed in the ground.

The disciples of the Zenith Dojo who had led the charge fell into the ground. Although these humanoid bugs didn't look particularly large or dangerous, they were each at least at the level of six-star bugs.

The other disciples of the Zenith Dojo reared back in shock, unable to believe that these bugs could be so strong.

The humanoid bugs leapt forward, tracing black arcs in the air, as they landed in front of the disciples of the Zenith Dojo.

One bug grabbed a disciple by the head and squeezed. His head pulped like a watermelon.

The disciples around him froze in fear.

Another bug bisected a disciple's body horizontally. Blood fountained out; the lower half of the disciple's body stumbled, then fell to the ground.

The overeager disciples scrambled to flee, but it was already too late.

Despite the humanoid bugs' bulky muscles, they moved astonishingly quickly, catching up to the fleeing disciples in the blink of an eye. As they reached out for the hunters, a strong breeze blew by. Lightning flashed in the air as Fang Yi appeared before the humanoid bugs.

The humanoid bugs glanced down at their chests in shock. Where their pectoral muscles had once been, there was now a large hole so deep they could see what lay to their other side.

The humanoid bugs were fast, but there were hunters who were faster. As lightning flashed, Fang Yi's spear unerringly pierced the chests of all the humanoid bugs around—but despite what would be a life-threatening injury to a human, the bugs seemed unruffled. They kicked at Fang Yi.

"[Tiger's Howl, Dragon's Bellow]!" Fang Yi's spear took on the aspect of a dragon of the winds and a storm tiger as he charged forward. The combination of the dragon and the tiger tore apart all the bugs within range.

"[The Boundless Blade: Dragonwhale]!" Behind him, genetic energy exploded forth from Yang Ze's body. In the blink of an eye, Yang Ze was surrounded by a patch of ocean.

The lapping of waves echoed through the battlefield. They grew and grew, reaching a crescendo and rising into the sky like a tsunami, manifesting in the form of a huge whale.

The whale's body was long and streamlined, with long whiskers and scales patterning its body. It surged forward, squashing the humanoid bugs with its bulk as it fell to the ground. The water-attuned genetic energy that made up its body exploded in the form of tides, swallowing the humanoid bugs up.

The dragonwhale made such a massive commotion on the battlefield that it caught everyone's attention. The disciples of the Zenith Dojo, who were running away in panic, quickly calmed down under the realization that their side boasted equally strong firepower.

Yang Ze commanded, "Hong Xi, Hong Xiao, Jun Jiuxiao, and Ye Xianchen, you'll lead the disciples of the Zenith Dojo forward against these bugs. Zhou Ying, you'll be responsible for healing and support. Everyone else, charge forward with me!"

Li Feng and Sun Xiaowu shot forward.

"[Goldenscale Palm]!" Sun Xiaowu's right arm glowed with resplendent light. An aura of intense strength emanated from Sun Xiaowu's body...

#### Chapter 907: Burgeoning Killing Intent

Frightening shockwaves of energy radiated through the battlefield as Sun Xiaowu punched a humanoid bug, sending it flying like a bullet. Its trajectory caused it to smash into a few of its kind, but its momentum didn't seem to dissipate.

"[Dance of the Incandescent Wyrms]!" Li Feng summoned dozens of serpents, flaring with blinding light. They criss-crossed in mid-air and attacked the humanoid bugs.

The golden and silver hunters strode onto the battlefield, their backs to each other.

Hong Xi shouted to the disciples of the Zenith Dojo, "Form five-man parties! Seniors, guide your juniors! Quick, the enemies aren't going to wait for us!"



The hunters of the Zenith Dojo immediately moved into action. The more experienced hunters, who had participated in large-scale battles in the second and third realms, quickly helped guide the junior hunters into appropriate formations.

Yang Ze transformed the water-attuned genetic energy expelled from the dragonwhale into a mist that covered the entire battlefield. Hordes of sharks condensed in the air, biting at the humanoid bugs.

However, the humanoid bugs were far stronger than any of the bugs that came before them, and they were able to destroy each shark with just a single punch.

Yang Ze continued manifesting them out of the mist. Though the bugs were able to destroy them quickly, it cost him barely any energy to replenish their numbers.

The experienced hunters of the Zenith Dojo knew how to fight efficiently. Although they might not be a match for the bugs in a one-on-one battle, they were easily able to suppress a bug with five or six hunters working in tandem.

Hong Xi and Hong Xiao's presence supported the entire battlefield. They activated [Eclipse] at full strength, sapping away the humanoid bugs' reserves of energy.

With a feathered fan in her left hand and a longsword in her right, with white moonlight by her feet and black sunlight by her back, Hong Xi manifested [Syzygy]. Wind howled. The sword in her right hand gleamed like the radiant moon. As she waved her fan, she summoned a twister in the air. Her sword traced a brilliant arc, launching crescent blades at her foes.

Strengthened by his sister, Hong Xiao launched a devastating blow that swept away a whole swathe of humanoid bugs. "[Heaven-Splitting Blade]!"

Wind and storm wrapped around Jun Jiuxiao, condensing on his blade. The silvery-white blade glowed resplendently. It tore apart the heavens, cutting apart even space itself and leaving a thin line of void behind. More and more humanoid bugs died.

"[Darkbane Claws]!" Black smoke surrounded Ye Xianchen, covering up the battlefield like Yang Ze's white mist. Black claws spawned from the smoke, tearing apart one bug after another.

Motes of vitality surrounded Zhou Ying. As she stretched out a palm, a clean breeze swept over the battlefield, and a wave of vitality surged toward the wounded. Their wounds healed at a rate visible to the naked eye, raising the hunters' morale and steadily providing support to the disciples of the Zenith Dojo.

With Zhou Ying present, the disciples didn't have to worry too much about getting injured. As long as they didn't perish from their wounds, Zhou Ying would be able to heal them quickly.

Zhang Lie nodded from his vantage point at the head of the shuttle, satisfied by what he saw.

The reason he hadn't struck was because he didn't want the disciples of the Zenith Dojo to become flowers carefully cultivated in a greenhouse, always shielded by stronger hunters from the front. Their trip to Mars was meant as a learning experience and a trial for the disciples involved.

The hunters of the Zenith Dojo responded effectively and efficiently, and it was clear that their training had paid off. Even so, Zhang Lie frowned as he looked toward the bug nest, where six humanoids had just appeared.

These humanoids were even larger than the ones already present on the battlefield. They were three meters tall, and the muscles on their bodies went even beyond what a bodybuilder could handle.

"Mutated bugs?"

As Zhou Yin had hypothesized, the bugs had already undergone a rapid evolution to counter the threat known as the Zenith Dojo. These mutated bugs were at least half a star stronger than their ordinary counterparts.

"Seven-star bugs, then..." Zhang Lie murmured to himself.

Even with the appearance of these bugs, Zhang Lie didn't intend to step in. They were strong opponents, but he trusted in the strength of Team Zenith.

The mutated bugs moved with a speed that belied their size. They vanished from sight; in the blink of an eye, they appeared before the members of Team Zenith. It was only expected that the members of Team Zenith would be their targets—they were the ones who were most flagrantly destroying the balance of the battlefield.

One appeared before Fang Yi, punching forward with a fist. Fang Yi blocked with his spear, but the humanoid bug was so strong that Fang Yi was pushed back, his feet forming long furrows in the ground.

The humanoid bug drew closer and punched forward once more.

Fang Yi launched his spear, crackling with wind and lightning, with incredible force. It sent wind howling and lightning flashing through the sky. He thrust his spear forward, so quickly it left dozens of afterimages in all directions.

Astoundingly, the mutated bug managed to catch the tip of Fang Yi's spear with its bare hands, forcibly stopping the attack.

Although the bug was only gripping the spearhead with one palm, Fang Yi felt as though he were trying to crack a diamond with his spear. It was completely stuck in place; he couldn't move it at all.

"[Heaven's Judgment]!" As he infused genetic energy into his spear, wind and storm began to wrap around it. The combination of the elements generated a frightening force that seemed to be able to penetrate space, allowing Fang Yi to forcibly free his spear from the humanoid bug's grip.

The humanoid bug whirled around and sent its arm flying horizontally in an arc around itself.

"[Floating Clouds]!" Fang Yi drew back with his movement technique, turning illusory for a mere moment.

"[Heaven's Judgment]! [Tiger's Howl, Dragon's Bellow]!" A dragon's roar resounded through the air like peals of thunder. Wind and storm combined and crackled at the tip of Fang Yi's spear, and a howling gale manifested around him.

Fang Yi leveled his spear. Wind and lightning surged forth.

The mutated bug held its palms up. The next moment, Fang Yi was shocked stiff.

Even Zhang Lie, watching the battle play out from his vantage point, was so surprised that he turned pale.

The mutated bugs had activated some form of genetic energy, a sticky, ink-green fluid that looked somehow wrong, a disgrace to physical reality.

The killing intent in Zhang Lie's gaze deepened.

Fang Yi's spear, imbued with the power of wind and storm, clashed against the mutated bugs' palms brimming with genetic energy. The resulting explosion blew apart the disciples and bugs in the vicinity, leaving just a single hunter and bug clashing against one another.

The spear didn't pierce through the palms, but neither did the palms manage to quell the wind and storm powering the spear. The two combatants drew apart.

"[Floating Clouds]!" The wind and lightning formed a loop around Fang Yi's body, then pushed Fang Yi back as though it were a rocket thruster.

#### Chapter 908: Unexpected Powers

"[Born of Lightning, Swallowed by the Wind]!" As Fang Yi shouted, his spear traced a half-moon in the air, surrounded by an aura of time. Light and shadow flashed by its tip, just like the wind and lightning that made up the core of Fang Yi's techniques.

The spear pierced space abruptly, spawning a rift that turned its surroundings gray. All movement was locked in time. The wind, the disciples of the Zenith Dojo, the humanoid bugs—everything had frozen.

The only one who could move in this world of gray was Fang Yi. The spear penetrated through the humanoid bug's chest before the gray receded. Time began to move again.

"It's too late to be learning how to use genetic energy now, don't you think?" Fang Yi smiled coldly.

It was arrogant beyond belief for the bugs really thought they could use something they had just picked up to defeat the humans, who had been cultivating genetic energy for centuries.

Fang Yi was already able to break the confines of time with genetic energy; could the bugs, who were simply emulating humans, do any better than the original thing?

Although Fang Yi's long spear pierced the mutated bug's chest, the bug didn't die. It suddenly reached out, gripped Fang Yi's spear, and sent a punch straight toward his face.

Beside him, Yang Ze was also being attacked by a mutated bug. The mutated bug careened toward the ground like a meteor, expelling all mist in the vicinity, exploding all sharks, and leaving a huge crater in the ground.

"As expected, these bugs aren't so easy to take down... [The Boundless Blade: Shark Frenzy]!"

Waves suddenly appeared in the sky, shimmering like a mirage. Spatial fluctuations rippled as Yang Ze activated [Mirrored Refraction].

The mutated bug punched forward, exploding yet another horde of sharks.

Behind those sharks, Yang Ze was ready. He shot forward, [Mirrored Refraction] hiding his true location. By the time the mutated bug noticed him, it was already too late. Yang Ze's blade slashed across its throat and sent golden-yellow ichor flying through the air.

Yang Ze flicked his blade to clean it of the vile fluid. "Is this all you've got?"

Suddenly, he felt a presence behind him. A black figure stood to his back, having appeared there out of nowhere. It was standing there silently, as though waiting for a signal.

Despite what seemed to be a life-threatening injury, the mutated bug whose throat Yang Ze had slashed appeared not to care about its injuries. Even as ichor fountained out of the wound, the bug remained expressionless.

A few disciples from the Zenith Dojo noticed what was behind Yang Ze. "Be careful!" they yelled, but it was already too late.

The bug behind Yang Ze clapped its palms together right where Yang Ze's head was, making a wet squelch like a watermelon being crushed.

Liquid covered the mutated bug's palms as its face fell slack. A sword had pierced through its chest. Yang Ze was standing behind the bug. "As I said, you're all just inferior copies of us."

Yang Ze certainly had no intention of being careless on this battlefield. The body whose head the mutated bug had crushed was none other than one of his illusions.

The mutated bug suddenly kicked at its back as Yang Ze hurriedly stepped back. Because of the intensity of the bug's motions, the wound on its neck widened. Half its head hung off its neck, connected by only a layer of skin. The mutated bug lifted up its head, put it in proper position, and then applied a layer of genetic energy to seal the wound.

Yang Ze frowned. "What ridiculous vitality for you not to die even with such a wound. Are you a zombie or a cockroach?"

Answering his own question, Yang Ze surmised, "As a bug, you have to be a cockroach, I suppose. On Earth, the cockroaches in the south are far more threatening than in the north. Not only are they about the size of your palm, they can even fly. It looks like the cockroaches on Mars are even more annoying to deal with!"

The mutated bug rushed forward like a rocket, cocking its arm and throwing a punch at Yang Ze. Yang Ze didn't dodge. He allowed the fist to land on his face—but it thrust through it without any resistance instead.

"Do you bugs just have enhanced physical strength? Is that it?"

Even though his head should have been flattened by the bug's fist, Yang Ze continued to talk as though he had sustained no injuries at all.

The mutated bug looked at its own chest once more. Yang Ze's sword had penetrated it again, sending a steady stream of ichor leaking from the wound.

Based on physical strength alone, these mutated bugs were stronger than even a third-realm hunter with maxed out gene fragments. They would be at warlord-level simply based on their physical strength.

The hunters of Team Zenith, who had maxed disaster gene fragments from the second realm and limit fragments besides, nonetheless found themselves unable to compete with the mutated bugs in terms of physical capabilities—and this was despite the fact that they were physically stronger than just about any warlord in the third realm.

Only Zhang Lie could beat the mutated bugs in a contest of brute strength.

"Even so, physical strength is only one dimension of strength. If you're lacking any understanding of space and time, you're nothing more than a baby."

Fights in the third realm were determined by such abstract concepts more than with physical strength alone, and Yang Ze had gained a deeper understanding of space after having fought with so many kings of the realm.

"Half the warlords on the warlord leaderboard would be able to defeat you easily, even with your grossly superior physical abilities." Yang Ze's blade cut a long slash through the mutated bug's chest with another spray of ichor.

Rather than tending to its injuries, the mutated bug punched forward again and again. Its impressive physical abilities made its flurry of punches seem like a black storm, the impact of which shattered the ground and sent boulders flying through the air.

Even so, no matter the force with which the bug punched forward, Yang Ze was like a reflection in a mirror—immune to the bug's attacks.

"Remember the name of my technique: [Reflected Sight, Refracted Vision]." Yang Ze bisected the mutated bug with a slash to its waist. Subsequently, he bisected its body again vertically, cutting the bug into four pieces.

The bug's quarter-bodies struggled intensely, but they were ultimately unable to combine.

Meanwhile, Fang Yi was so surprised by the fact that the mutated bug hadn't perished that he gave up on retrieving his spear and distanced himself from the bug instead.

The expressionless bug pulled the spear out of its chest and was just about to toss it at Fang Yi when Fang Yi reached forward. The spear vanished from the bug's hand and returned to Fang Yi.

The bug looked at its hand a few times and flexed experimentally, not understanding what had just happened.

Fang Yi laughed dryly. "Shocked, aren't you? This is what we call a soulshard. [Tiger's Howl, Dragon's Bellow]!"

Fang Yi's spear took on the aspect of a dragon of the winds and a storm tiger as he charged forward. A thunderstorm raged toward the mutated bug, but it defended against the attack with its thick, sludge-like genetic energy.

Subsequently, with a low shout, Fang Yi dashed forward with his spear in hand...

Chapter 909: The Hunters' Specialties

Fang Yi launched his spear, crackling with wind and lightning, with incredible force. It sent wind howling and lightning flashing through the sky. He thrust his spear forward, so quickly it left dozens of afterimages in all directions. He clashed against the mutated bug once more, striking with his spear as the mutated bug defended with its fists. A howling gale surrounded them, and flashes of lightning blinded those in the vicinity.

"[Shadow and Light]!" Fang Yi morphed into countless clones, each of which thrust their spears at the mutated bug. The combined spear strikes, landing like a burst of rain, finally pierced through the bug's thick layer of genetic armor.

Fang Yi exploded into action. Wind revolved around his body, and lightning discharged into the air. "[Heaven's Judgment]!"

The combination of wind and lightning generated a frightening force that made his spear look like an electric saw.

The mutated bug held out two palms brimming with genetic energy, preparing to halt the spear's advance.

Fang Yi found the bug's actions ridiculous. Perhaps the mutated bug could have accomplished such a feat at full strength based on its offensive capabilities and supported by its unusual form of genetic energy, but certainly not when it was injured. The power of wind and storm tore apart its hands, and the chitinous exoskeleton that enclosed its shoulders and body cracked and split.

The mutated bug failed to stop Fang Yi's advance. Its body was sent hurling back with the momentum from Fang Yi's spear.

Given that it hadn't died even after its chest had been pierced cleanly through, Fang Yi wasn't certain if his attack was enough to kill it. When he walked closer, he found to his amazement that the mutated bug was still alive. Its shell had been completely cracked, its hands limp and paralyzed.

The huge corkscrewing hole in its chest was so large it was a miracle its body hadn't collapsed. Not only that, the bug was still alive, and it was even able to stand up on its own. However, it had lost all its combat ability.

Even so, although its life was about to be snuffed out, it refused to stop fighting. War was its life's purpose—Fang Yi understood that much.

After all, these mutated bugs had been produced in response to an elevated threat that could wipe out the entire bug invasion force. In some sense, it was a pitiful existence, but these bugs could hardly be pitied at all. They were an invasive species that devoured whatever planets and lifeforms they came across. If Fang Yi didn't stop the bug incursion now, his home, Earth, would be the next victim.

The mutated bug poured the remnants of its genetic energy into its palms. It was filled with some strange vitality, an amalgamation of the life force of all manner of lifeforms. It was unable to restore others' vitality like Zhou Ying, but it demonstrated impressive self-regenerative ability.

Using its genetic energy, the mutated bug was shockingly able to restore its arms to a usable form.

There was no way the arms could be restored fully. The bug's hands and arms had been crippled by Fang Yi's genetic energy. Although these bugs didn't seem to have bones, their very cells had disintegrated. The bug had to continuously prevent the spread of this foreign genetic energy to prevent further destruction of its body, and it was shocking that it had restored its arms to the level that it did.

The next moment, Fang Yi was even more shocked. The punches that the mutated bug threw manifested the power of wind and storm—no, it reproduced the power of wind and storm with its strange brand of genetic energy.

Fang Yi's eyes widened. "To think this fellow can learn such techniques so easily..."

The bug wasn't so foolish as to think it would be able to survive Fang Yi's attack unharmed; it simply wanted to gain a deeper understanding of Fang Yi's attack!

The bug was trying to learn from Fang Yi in battle, even at the cost of its life.

The mutated bug possessed sufficient defensive ability to block even [Tiger's Howl, Dragon's Bellow], so there was no reason it couldn't have done the same to the weaker ability [Heaven's Judgment]. The reason it hadn't defended itself and chose instead to face the technique with its bare hands was to understand Fang Yi's skill on a corporeal level.

The first time its human opponent injured it, the mutated bug realized how strong it was. The human possessed strength that it didn't, something that it couldn't compensate for with physical ability alone.

To Fang Yi, the technique he had used was no more than one among many. The mutated bug, however, was shocked by what it had observed. Fang Yi hadn't seemed to move at all—time had frozen.

One moment, the bug sensed that Fang Yi was about to attack; the next moment, a spear had pierced through its chest.

Fang Yi's ridiculous speed had left a deep impression on the mutated bug, who understood that the hunter before it possessed arcane knowledge it was unaware of, something it couldn't hope to overcome by pure physical strength alone.

As a result, the mutated bug decided to take a risk in an attempt to acquire Fang Yi's power for itself.

Fang Yi's eyes glinted with killing intent.

The fact that these mutated bugs had somehow obtained an ersatz version of humanity's genetic energy, and was even able to learn from its foes, meant that it was an unbelievably threatening foe. Fang Yi had never felt so frightened by a race, not even the sura of the second realm, and he had never felt the need to eradicate all the bugs so keenly.

Physical strength alone could be countered, but if these bugs had both physical strength and incredible learning aptitude... Fang Yi shook his head. The bugs had to be eradicated at all costs, or they would bleed humanity dry and construct their own civilization atop the corpses of mankind.

"[Heaven's Judgment]! [Tiger's Howl, Dragon's Bellow]!"

Wind and storm combined and crackled at the tip of Fang Yi's spear, and a dragon's howl echoed resoundingly in the air.

Fang Yi leveled his spear. Wind and lightning surged forth.

The bug's replicated technique was only a replica, and an inferior one based on incomplete understanding at that. Fang Yi would be able to defeat it easily.

The bug's [Heaven's Judgment] was fully enveloped and consumed by Fang Yi's version of the attack. It corkscrewed toward the bug's chest, where it exploded and split the bug's body into multiple fragments, each crackling with lightning.

On another part of the battlefield, Sun Xiaowu and Li Feng were facing an onslaught of bugs. A mutated bug punched at Sun Xiaowu. When the punches landed, a sound like tolling bells rang out from Sun Xiaowu's body, and a layer of golden runes appeared on the surface of his skin.

"[Adamantine Aegis]!" The golden runes glowed, shining brightly like brands.

"[Goldenscale Palm]!" Sun Xiaowu's arms glowed with resplendent light, and a layer of dense golden scales emerged over his skin. An aura of intense strength emanated from Sun Xiaowu's body.

Frightening shockwaves of energy radiated through the battlefield as Sun Xiaowu punched forward, leaving a cavity in the bug's chest and sending it flying into the distance...

#### Chapter 910: An Arresting Sight

The next moment, Sun Xiaowu leaped high into the air as gold-attuned genetic energy radiated from him like a second sun.

"[Blinding Flash: Thousandfold Echo]!"

Sun Xiaowu's body split into over a thousand clones, so many they seemed to fill the sky. Each was simultaneously real and illusory.

The thousand clones all used [Golden Divide] simultaneously, coloring the sky in gold and raining down golden feathers in such numbers that it seemed as though a thunderstorm had just formed out of thin air.

The humanoid bug punched all around itself in a flurry in an attempt to defend against the golden feathers. So great were its physical abilities that it actually succeeded in surviving the onslaught.

"[Goldenscale Palm: Split]!" Golden radiance struck the land. Sun Xiaowu's palms brimmed with golden light as a dense layer of golden scales covered his skin.

His aura suddenly shifted, and his right arm glowed with resplendent light. Frightening shockwaves of energy radiated through the battlefield as Sun Xiaowu punched forward.

The entire battlefield shook. The bug nest in the distance wobbled as though it were about to collapse. The attack struck like a nuclear warhead, sending the golden light flaring up for thousands of meters, so bright that it felt as though the sun had fallen to the ground.

The aftershock sent golden beams of light scattering across the battlefield.



The disciples of the Zenith Dojo glanced at the devastation that Sun Xiaowu had wreaked with no small amount of trepidation and fear. Fortunately, they had retreated in time. If they had been struck by such an attack...

Only now did they have a good understanding of Team Zenith's strength. They had never witnessed it for themselves in close quarters. Now, however, after fighting alongside the members of Team Zenith, they understood how strong the members of Team Zenith really were. The aftermath of their attacks was a disaster in its own right.

If Fang Yi were a human cyclone, then Sun Xiaowu was a walking disaster. It wasn't that Sun Xiaowu was stronger, but that Fang Yi didn't dare to use his trump card on the battlefield while any allies were present.

After all, his trump card didn't distinguish between allies and enemies.

Once the golden light had cleared, there was nothing left of the ground but a pit.

The mutated bug, which had tried in vain to block the attack, had fallen inside. Its carapace was cracked, and it was leaking ichor from all over its body.

"[Blinding Flash: Thousandfold Echo]!" Sun Xiaowu's body split into over a thousand clones, so many he could field an entire battalion of soldiers by himself. Each clone was simultaneously real and illusory.

Sun Xiaowu had no intention of stopping just because his opponent was lying at the bottom of a ditch. On the contrary, he wanted to use his strongest attack to finish the battle in one fell swoop.

"[Goldenscale Palm: Qilin]!" Sun Xiaowu and all his clones leapt up into the air, performing exactly the same action.

They cocked their arms. A golden glow radiated from all their bodies, basking the world in light. Thousands of clones merged into Sun Xiaowu's main body, and the countless activated copies of the technique merged into one.

Golden scales covered up Sun Xiaowu's arm as it grew thicker and thicker, and the image of a golden qilin appeared behind him.

As he swung his fists forward, the golden qilin materialized. It swooped down toward the ground in a golden storm that cracked the ground.

The pit in the ground widened a hundredfold, and the mutated bug trapped within perished with Sun Xiaowu's devastating combination of attacks.

"[Light Dragon's Remnants]!" Li Feng marshaled his genetic energy into the form of a large number of white dragons.

The mutated bug that was his opponent punched each dragon as it approached, shattering each one within moments. It kicked out with its scythe-like legs.

"[Dance of the Incandescent Wyrms]!" Li Feng dodged the attack, then retaliated with a technique of his own. He summoned hundreds of serpents flaring with blinding light, but even those were torn apart by the mutated bug with brute force.

However, there were over a hundred such serpents, and even the bug wasn't able to take them all down at once.

"[Arclight Dragon's Imprint]!" With a shout, Li Feng waved his left arm, around which a torrent of light-attuned genetic energy was gathering. It took the form of a gigantic dragon's claw.

While the mutated bug struggled under the onslaught of the serpents, the claw knocked it flying.

However, the moment the mutated bug touched the ground, it stabilized itself.

"[Arclight Descension]!" Li Feng waved his left arm, around which a torrent of light-attuned genetic energy was gathering. A gigantic light dragon's head appeared to his back, exhaling white light with every breath. The ground cracked. Instead of retreating, the mutated bug charged forward like a bullet.

"[Light's Bulwark]!" Li Feng clenched his fist. His right arm, clad with light, was covered with scales. The scales began to move as an arclight dragon materialized, howled, and rushed toward the mutated bug.

Ink-green genetic energy pooled over the mutated bug's fist as it punched forward and forcibly dispelled the dragon.

Upon seeing that the mutated bug had broken through his defense, Li Feng charged up for a stronger attack. Concentrated light-attuned genetic energy surrounded him.

"[Light's Bulwark: Dragon's Claw]!" As Li Feng punched forward, a dragon coiled around his arm. Highly concentrated light-attuned genetic energy morphed into a spiked point, much like the incisor of a dragon.

The mutated bug's fist, wrapped in ink-green genetic energy, clashed against Li Feng's attack.

Although the mutated bug was able to make use of genetic energy, its inexperience clearly showed. It wasn't able to use genetic energy as effectively as even a disciple of the Zenith Dojo, let alone the members of Team Zenith.

It wasn't able to compensate for its lack of skill with physical ability.

If physical strength determined everything, the dominant species on Earth wouldn't be humans, but rather elephants, tigers, lions, or leopards.

The concentrated light-attuned genetic energy pierced through the bug's fist like a sharp sword.

The bug remained expressionless, as though it was unable to sense pain, as though it didn't have a nervous system at all. It kicked forward with its leg, having exchanged its arm for this one opportunity to launch a blow.

Li Feng stepped backward immediately after launching the attack. With his light-attuned framework, he was able to skirmish effectively, and there was no need to participate in a melee exchange.

"[Light's Bulwark: Meteoric Fist]!" An arclight dragon appeared behind Li Feng. He punched forward rapidly, each punch morphing into a silver bullet, sending waves of cascading silver light raining down on the battlefield...

