

## Battlefield 231

Chapter 231: Thousand Shadow Ghost Vine, Picking the Peach

When Qin Tian walked out of the house, night had already fallen.

As early as two thousand years ago, the Empire had mastered artificial sun technology and had promoted this grand project to all 星域 under its rule. The alternating patterns of day and night had long been deeply etched into the genes of the Empire's citizens—a memory from the era of the mother星, and the eternal rhythm of civilization's continuation.

Therefore, the Empire's law clearly stipulates: any colony planet with a permanent population exceeding one billion must build an artificial sun in synchronous orbit.

Although these artifices still cannot compare with the ancient star orbiting the mother星 in terms of scale, energy level, and stability, they are sufficient to simulate the most basic cycle of day and night in the cold deep space—reproducing perfectly the dim twilight at dawn, the radiant brilliance at noon, and the gentle evening glow at dusk.

These artificial suns are not just simple lighting devices but also a manifestation of the Empire's cultural care for its citizens.

They rise and set in a constant rhythm, maintaining the most primitive instinct of human routine, allowing travelers scattered across the Galaxy to feel warm and at ease like home, no matter where they are.

"The night has finally arrived."

Qin Tian's lips curled into a slight arc.

In the darkness, all his attributes increased by 100%, his presence became even more concealed.

The new game begins.

He walked down the street, invisible, with no camera or thermal device able to capture his existence.

His perception ability had significantly grown compared to the daytime, and almost the entire city was within his perception range.

Heat sources, scents, and sounds rapidly integrated, forming a bio-map.

Qin Tian hovered above the city like a ghost.

At night, the city was not quiet.

Each time in the genius competition, the first day is always the most intense and also sees the most eliminations.

This time was no different.

So far, more than 40 geniuses had been eliminated, nearly half of the total participants.

Among the remaining, some had superior combat abilities, like Four star and Five star geniuses, while others excelled in hiding, avoiding detection, or formed early alliances to protect themselves through numerical advantage and eliminate others.

The battles of these geniuses to come are the main highlights of this year's talent showdown.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Combat fluctuations came from several corners of the city.

Qin Tian sensed it and approached the place with the most heat sources.

However, during his flight, he saw a person.

The night was as thick as ink, and that person stood under the moonlight like an unsheathed sword.

The pure white Gilded Armor glimmered with a cold light in the cool moonlight, each piece of armor leaf seemed to be infused with 星霜, flowing with an unearthly cold glow.

The cloak fluttered in the night wind, its dark base absorbed all light, with only the crimson "God" character blazing brightly in the dark, like a mark of ancient judgment. His faceplate gleamed with metallic coldness under the moon, his heavy battle boots shattered the moonlight beneath him, and the gilded runes on the armor joints carved eerie trails in the night as he moved.

A-level Examiner, codenamed "God".

"This outfit is really cool~"

Qin Tian secretly admired, and casually placed a Hunting Mark on Examiner "God".

The purpose of the mark was not to have designs on "God". By regulation, examiners are not to make a move on each other.

Doing so was just to prepare for future plans.

The Hunting Mark is not a Spiritual Mark, but a breath locked by the Top Hunter, thereby activating the power within the bloodline, greatly concealing the breath, increasing speed by 70%, and attack power by 50%.

Therefore, the marked target feels nothing.

Qin Tian bypassed Examiner "God" and continued flying, and soon afterward, witnessed a very intense battle.

Below, there were three people, one man and two women.

Before the event started, Qin Tian reviewed the evaluations of the participants by various institutions and memorized the information of the one hundred geniuses.

These three were respectively:

Four star Genius, Celestial Wheel Arrow bloodline descendant, Zhong Liying.

Four star Genius, Fish Dragon Bloodline descendant, Ao Zihong.

Three star Genius, Cold Crystal Bloodline descendant, Ji Yufei.

They were battling against a very strange vine, which was semi-transparent and could merge into the darkness. Unlike the Deathwillows on Huxin Island fixed in one place, it slithered along the ground like a venomous snake, launching surprise attacks from shadowy corners at times, and splitting into dozens of illusions, making it hard to discern the true from the false.

"Watch the right side."

Zhong Liying's cold shout pierced the night sky, the Crimson Flame Longbow "Scorching Sun" in her hand emitted dazzling light, as nine Golden Red Arrows soared through the air like a phoenix spreading its wings, trailing fiery tails.

Where the arrows passed, the air twisted, precisely nailing into the wriggling vine in the street corner shadow.

As the flame ignited, the semi-transparent vine convulsed violently, emitting a piercing shriek like a baby's cry. The dark blue sap spurting from its wound, corroding white smoke onto the bluestone.

Ao Zihong leaped into the air, fully activating the Fish Dragon Bloodline.

His arms transformed completely into dragon arms, with green scales glimmering with cold light under the moon, and ten fingers extended into three-foot-long sharp claw glows.

"Cut it for me!"

With a bellow, the dragon claws sliced through the air with a tearing whistle, severing the wounded Ghost Vine at the waist.

The severed vine twisted like a dying venomous snake, spraying dark blue sap from the cut, which condensed into sharp spikes in mid-air, shooting towards the three.

Ji Yufei's eyes turned cold, her delicate foot lightly tapped the ground.

"Congeal."

Her red lips parted lightly, and the power of the Cold Crystal Bloodline surged like a tide. Icy frost spread rapidly around her as the center, covering the entire street in an instant.

The flying toxic spikes froze in the air and shattered to the ground with a series of crisp sounds.

More terrifyingly, the frost spread counter-current along the Ghost Vine's sap, freezing those remnant vines trying to burrow into the ground in retreat into a glittering ice sculpture forest under the moonlight.

The Thousand Shadow Ghost Vine was driven to its limit.

Just as the three thought victory was assured, a sudden mutation occurred!

The frozen vines suddenly exploded at the same time, countless ice shards spewing dark blue sap in all directions.

The shadows on both sides of the street began to writhe wildly, dozens of new vines burst from every dark corner in a surprise attack.

These new vines were even more peculiar, their surfaces covered in densely packed human face patterns, each face emitting a silent wailing.

"Watch out! It's burning its origin!" Zhong Liying quickly retreated, opening and closing her longbow rapidly, a curtain of arrows falling like rain.

Ao Zihong advanced instead of retreating, his dragon claws dancing a green light web.

Ji Yufei formed a seal with her hands, an ice blue barrier forming instantly around the trio.

The dying counterattack of the Ghost Vine came and went quickly.

With one of Zhong Liying's arrows piercing the core vine, Ao Zihong's dragon claws shredding the last line of defense, and Ji Yufei's extreme cold qi completely freezing its Power of Regeneration, the battle finally concluded.

The Ghost Vine let out an unwilling shriek, the core vine contracting violently, then exploded with a "bang".

This time, the dark blue sap condensed into droplets in the air, falling like rain, striking the bluestone floor with crisp sounds.

Under the trio's watchful eyes, a pair of blue boots fell from the shadows with a clang.

This was the Guardian Artifact of the Thousand Shadow Ghost Vine.

"Boots? I'll take this. As an Archer, I need a pair of Spirit Boots to enhance my dodging ability." Zhong Liying spoke.

"Agreed."

Ao Zihong and Ji Yufei nodded in agreement. Over the half-day of their alliance, a certain level of trust had been established between them, reaching a preliminary agreement on the division of spoils: if an artifact suited someone, they would get it first, but they would need to compensate with future spoils.

Seeing the two agree, a smile appeared on Zhong Liying's pretty face.

However, before she could approach the boots, a hand suddenly stretched out from the shadows, grabbing the boots and running off while the three were caught off guard.

What!!!

Seeing this, the three were first stunned, then almost exploded with anger.

The hard-earned spoils were snatched by someone else.

Who could tolerate that!

"Chase!"

Zhong Liying's pretty face was furious, her clear voice carrying a trace of icy chill.

Chapter 232: Ghostly Body Technique, Calamity Redirected East

The night was as dark as ink, with a cold moon hanging high.

Qin Tian moved like a phantom, darting through the narrow alleys with cat-like agility, each step precisely avoiding the lethal threats pursuing him.

"Whoosh—"

Nine Crimson Flame Arrows sliced through the air, tracing deadly arcs overhead.

Qin Tian's lips curled slightly as his body suddenly twisted, narrowly skimming past the arrows just in time.

The arrow rain nailed into the brick wall behind him, the explosive flames casting the entire street in a fiery red glow.

"A C-level Examiner? Does a C-level dare to snatch food from the tiger's mouth?"

Zhong Liying and the others noticed the Black Crow mask worn by the person ahead, feeling a surge of anger and shock.

At this moment, their live stream's chat exploded.

"Damn, how did the vibe change in a blink?"

"This examiner is too shameless, taking the loot others worked so hard for."

"Thieves never meet a good end!"

"Hahaha, isn't this Black Crow? I thought he was eliminated, yet here he is back at it again."

"Laughing, the familiar scene plays out once more."

"This time it's different, with three people pursuing him, he can't get away."

.....

"Don't run!!!"

Ao Zihong roared angrily, his arms lit up with dragon-scale cyan light, pushing forward fiercely. Instantly, a solid dragon-shaped battle qi burst forth, with a fierce dragon head roaring, splitting slabs where it passed, sending waves straight at Qin Tian's back!

However, Qin Tian didn't stop. He only slightly turned his head. Suddenly, a thick black mist emanated from his body, swirling as if alive. As the dragon-shaped battle qi approached, the mist parted like a living thing.

The battle qi thundered through the black mist, shattering a stone workshop in front, yet not even grazing Qin Tian's clothes.

"He's fast, I'll restrict him."

Ji Yufei's jade hands flew, forming a Profound Ice Seal.

Her toes lightly tapped the ground, and instantly, biting cold surged forward like a tide, freezing the ground with a thick layer of ice, even the air crystallizing.

The cold rushed to Qin Tian's feet, threatening to freeze his legs.

At the same time, Zhong Liying's bowstring vibrated, nine Crimson Flame Arrows shot out in a fan shape, tracing brilliant fiery lines in the air, sealing Qin Tian's escape to either side.

The arrows' precise landing points seamlessly connected with the frozen area, forming a death trap of intertwined fire and ice.

Ao Zihong leapt into mid-air, his dragon-scale-covered arms fully extended, transforming into two three-zhang-long cyan dragon phantoms.

"Lock!" he shouted, pressing his palms down fiercely. The two cyan dragons roared as they dove down, spiraling in front of Qin Tian to form the final barrier.

Three deadly moves, an inescapable net!

Just as the deadly encirclement was about to close in, Qin Tian's form twisted bizarrely.

His movements became erratic, turning himself into a wisp of light smoke dancing gracefully in the death trap of ice and fire.

His left foot tapped lightly on an unfrozen ice surface, while his right foot stepped on a burning arrow, using it as a leverage point.

"That's impossible!" Zhong Liying cried out in disbelief.

Qin Tian's ghost-like figure twisted and turned within the confined space, sometimes sidestepping the whistling cyan dragon phantoms, other times narrowly avoiding the stabbing ice spikes.

His black-clad figure flew amidst the interwoven lights of ice and fire, each move precisely navigating the line between life and death, dancing as if on a blade's edge.

The most shocking thing was, his speed inexplicably surged again in this dire situation! He left behind afterimages, slipping through a scant inch-wide gap between the cyan dragon phantoms and the ice wall, hurtling into the distance.

What!!!

Zhong Liying and the others were utterly shocked; they never imagined a C-level Examiner could possess such ghostly agile body techniques,

At the same time, the livestream exploded with comments like a tsunami.

"Holy shit, what did I just see!!!"

"Oh my god, is that even a human body technique?!"

"So cool, even a movie's slow motion couldn't achieve this effect."

"I announce, from now on, Black Crow is my idol."

.....

"Don't let him escape, keep chasing!!!"

Ao Zihong gritted his teeth, knowing full well that at least tens of billions were watching them. If Black Crow got away, the three of them would become a complete joke.

"Chase!"

Zhong Liying and Ji Yufei were unwilling to give up either.

Swish swish swish~~

The three moved quickly, their spiritual power locked onto the fluctuating aura ahead.

As soon as the target entered range, Zhong Liying narrowed her eyes, her fingertips gently plucking the bowstring, fiery red light spiraling up as if alive. As the bow vibrated, she clearly saw circles of scorching ripples in the air.

"Go!"

The crimson arrow shot forth, trailing twisted light tracks.

As the arrow was about to hit, the black silhouette abruptly veered, but the arrow light traced out a strange arc in mid-air—though an inanimate object, it behaved like a blood-sensing red snake, unwilling to release its target.

Seeing no escape, the shadow dashed into a low house.

Boom!!!

As the arrow light penetrated the house, the entire structure crumbled like a paper box crushed by an invisible giant hand, flames bursting from every seam. Amidst the soaring flames.

Swish swish swish

Zhong Liying and her companions arrived, coldly smiling as they watched the vague shadow step out of the rubble through the fire, walking towards them leisurely.

You can't escape.

However, as the shadow became clearer, their expressions froze instantly.

Whoosh!

The blazing flames suddenly parted, like a curtain torn by an invisible hand.

The scorching tongues of fire licked the air, but when touching that figure, they suddenly grew tame, transforming into a swirling golden halo entwining his body.

"Tap, tap, tap—"

The sound of gilded battle boots crushing scorched earth was crystal clear. With every step, ancient runic glyphs at the joints of his armor lit up momentarily, casting eerie dark red patterns amid the sea of fire.

The large "God" character on his cape surged in the heat, its rash gold threads flowing like molten lava with a dangerous gleam.

A-level Examiner, "God"

How could it be him!

Not good, it was a trap!!!

Zhong Liying and her companions turned pale. The strength of an A-level Examiner was above any contestant, even a five-star genius couldn't be an A-level Examiner's match.

Traditionally, defeating an A-level Examiner required at least two golden level geniuses to lead, assisted by several four-star geniuses.

Yet, the three of them clearly weren't up to the task.

Moreover, A-level Examiners had a rule; they couldn't take the initiative against contestants and could only receive challenges passively to ensure the spectacle of the games.

If they actively attacked, hundreds of geniuses would have been eliminated long ago.

But their actions just now could certainly be considered a challenge to the A-level Examiner, meaning now was the time for "God" to retaliate.

In the distant shadows, Qin Tian's lips curled slightly, a touch of anticipation glinting in his eyes.

Let me see what the strength of an A-level Examiner truly looks like.

Chapter 233: Marquis Wu's Eight Trigrams Formation

On the blazing streets, the "God" examiner clad in Gilded Armor gazed at the three individuals.

In an instant, a heavy pressure surged towards them, making them feel suffocated, cold sweat breaking out on their foreheads.

"What should we do? Fight or flee?"

Ji Yufei asked in a very soft voice.

"Fight!"

Zhong Liying and Ao Zihong said simultaneously.

None of the three were agile Spirit Martial Artists. Facing an A-level examiner significantly stronger than themselves, they would die faster if they just turned and fled.

The only way to survive was to find an opportunity in battle.

Swish!

Zhong Liying was the first to act, the Scorching Sun Bow drawn to a full moon, nine Crimson Flame Arrows shot through the sky, the shafts entwined with intense Lieyang True Flame, heading straight for the "God's" throat.

However, just three feet from the "God," the arrows suddenly halted—as if they had hit an invisible Wall of Light.

The "God" merely lifted his hand lightly, his fingertip flashed with a golden light, and the nine Energy Arrows dissolved like snow, turning to faint sparks drifting away.

Ao Zihong roared, pushing his Fish Dragon Bloodline to the extreme, his dragon-scaled arms flaring with green light.

He leapt up, dragon claws tearing through the air, diving straight for the "God's" face.

However, the "God" did not even move his feet, merely tilting his head slightly, the eyes beneath the Gilded Helmet cold as ice.

Just as Ao Zihong's claws were about to touch—

"Bang!"

A blinding golden light erupted, Ao Zihong was struck as if by lightning, thrown back hard into the distant ruins, dust flying everywhere.

His dragon-scaled arms shattered inch by inch, blood dripping from his fingertips.

Seeing this, Ji Yufei's icy eyes narrowed, her hands swiftly formed seals.

"Extreme Cold Domain!"

She shouted lowly, frost spreading rapidly from her feet, the biting cold transforming into countless ice spikes, stabbing towards the "God" from all directions.

But as soon as the ice spikes approached, they were vaporized completely by the radiance surrounding the "God," leaving not even a trace of moisture.

At this moment, the "God" moved.

He slowly raised his right hand, palm up, a brilliant golden orb formed slowly, a calm and indifferent voice rang out.

"It's over."

Before the words finished, the orb burst forth, blinding light surging out like a torrent.

Ji Yufei only had time to construct an Ice Shield before the wave of light swallowed her.

The Ice Shield shattered instantly, she groaned, her delicate body flying out like a broken kite, landing heavily beside Ao Zihong, blood trickling from the corner of her mouth.

Two green lights lit up on them, indicating they had been eliminated by the "God."

Tap, tap, tap

The "God" walked forward slowly, the sound of Gilded Boots on the scorched earth clearly audible, each step seemed to tread on the trio's hearts.

Zhong Liying's pupils contracted sharply, the Scorching Sun Bow still in hand, but she dared not easily release another arrow.

At this moment, the comment section exploded again.

"Is this the power of an A-level examiner? Truly terrifying."

"Ao Zihong is also a Four Star Genius, yet he couldn't withstand even one move from an A-level examiner, that's outrageous."

"Get away from our Xiao Ying!"

"Get lost, scoundrel!"

"No, grievances have their origins, if these three were eliminated, isn't Black Crow to blame?"

"That's right, he's the biggest jerk!"

"Argh, Black Crow, I curse you to die horribly!"

...

"Wow, he's that strong~"

In the shadows, Qin Tian raised an eyebrow. In his view, the "God's" oppressive presence was almost equal to that of the Tier Six Dark Elf Kaelan from before.

Comparable to an Epic Level monster in a game.

At least two or more five-star geniuses must join forces, along with other genius lineups, to have a chance to defeat an A-level examiner.

Qin Tian felt no guilt for the "tragedy" he caused.

This is the event's rules.

Examiners and examinees can use various means to eliminate each other.

Shifting trouble, driving wolves to consume tigers, is also a strategy.

...

Under the suffocating pressure, Zhong Liying's fingers still trembled slightly. She took a deep breath, the bowstring of the Scorching Sun Bow stained red with blood, yet she stubbornly drew it back.

She could lose, but she couldn't lose the courage to resist.

"Whoosh—"

The last Crimson Flame Arrow flew through the sky, trailing a dazzling tail flame heading straight for the "God's" forehead.

However, the "God" merely raised his hand casually, the Gilded Glove precisely catching the arrow shaft.

"Snap"

His five fingers closed, the arrow infused with Lieyang Essence Flame shattered like glaze, scattering into a shower of fire.

The golden eyes beneath the "God's" helmet were calm as water, his right fist slowly gathering dazzling white light.

A blazing white pillar of light erupted, the air twisting and boiling in its wake.

Zhong Liying's crimson hair whipped wildly in the chaotic energy currents, the blinding light forcing her to close her eyes.

Crushing pressure enveloped her, yet she couldn't move a single finger.

At this critical moment——

"Eight Trigrams Array—Kun Character Secret, Earth Flow Wall."

A steady voice pierced the energy storm. The ground trembled violently, a thick earth wall rose, mysterious Eight Trigrams symbols flowing on its surface.

As the light pillar struck the earth wall, the entire block trembled.

"Crack, crack, crack..."

The earth wall's surface quickly cracked, yet it stubbornly resisted the devastating energy impact.

Taking advantage of this precious respite, a white figure suddenly appeared at Zhong Liying's side.

"Apologies."

A cold young voice sounded beside her ear, simultaneously a warm hand firmly grasped her wrist.

Before she could react, the voice sounded again:

"Kun Character Secret—Earth Split."

"Boom!"

The entire street suddenly surged like a living thing, countless sand and stones erupted from the ground, forming a sky-shrouding sandstorm.

The "God's" white figure was instantly swallowed by the rolling dust.

When the blinding light pillar finally penetrated the sandstorm, the hovering "God's" Gilded Armor was already covered in dust.

He looked down, the shattered street no longer bearing any trace of Zhong Liying, only a dirt escape trail stretching into the distance.

Beneath the helmet, those golden pupils showed a hint of fluctuation for the first time.

...

"So it was them."

Qin Tian's eyes flashed; those who just rescued Zhong Liying were the top genius of the five-star list, the Celestial Profound Sword Fu Ning, and another was Zhuge Yu, heir of the Marquis Wu and someone with whom he had crossed paths.

Zhuce Yu was also a five-star genius, though ranked below Fu Ning, but in Qin Tian's view, Zhuge Yu was far more troublesome than the Sword Cultivator Fu Ning.

"Wuhou Eight Trigrams Array."

Qin Tian looked into the distance, his gaze deep.

The Eight Trigrams rotate, silently in accord with the way of heaven.

Qian, Kun, Zhen, Xun, Kan, Li, Gen, Dui, the eight trigrams correspond to all things in the universe, evolving into infinite changes

Even in this era of Spiritual Energy dominance, this legacy of thousands of years old array still shines brightly.

"Ah, I really don't like having smart people as opponents."

Qin Tian shook his head, holding the boots he had just seized, vanishing into the shadows.

Chapter 234: Windwalker Boots

"Fu Ning, Zhuge Yu, you two actually joined forces."

In the room, Zhong Liying looked at the two with surprise. One was Fu Ning, the unparalleled Sword Cultivator topping the list of Five Star geniuses, and the other was Zhuge Yu, a descendant of the Zhuge Clan known for his cunning.

One excels in strength, while the other excels in strategy.

With these two joining forces, there's hardly any suspense left in the competition.

"Hmm."

Fu Ning nodded. Perhaps due to the pure nature required of a Sword Cultivator, this white-robed youth spoke little, exuding a faint sense of aloof coolness.

"Thank you for saving me."

Zhong Liying sincerely expressed her gratitude, as millions of her hometown's people were silently supporting her. She certainly did not want to be eliminated just like that.

"Zhong Liying, we saved you with a purpose."

Zhuce Yu looked at her, his voice somewhat languid: "I hope you can join our team."

"I am willing!"

Zhong Liying said without hesitation.

In her view, the combination of Fu Ning and Zhuge Yu was undoubtedly the strongest among all combinations in the genius battle, without a doubt.

Being teammates with these two, she had a great hope to persist until the final ten-person arena.

Only a fool would refuse.

Zhuce Yu was not surprised by Zhong Liying's choice, speaking to himself:

"Now we just need a tank, it's time to talk to Yue Shenghe."

What, Yue Shenghe!

Zhong Liying's eyelid twitched, Zhuge Yu's ambition was really big, actually intending to capture the top two Five Star geniuses, Fu Ning and Yue Shenghe, all at once.

If he truly succeeds in forming such a team, what chance would anyone else have?

At this time, a livestream focusing on the three also began to discuss.

"Wow, this lineup is too dreamy, Fu Ning, Zhuge Yu, Zhong Liying, now they're even pulling in Yue Shenghe."

"If these four combine, they'd be unstoppable."

"Zhuge Yu controls the field, Fu Ning is the main melee attacker, Yue Shenghe is the defensive gate, Zhong Liying the long-range firepower, this team composition is simply perfect."

"Too unfair, if these four successfully team up, what hope do others have?"

"What's wrong with that, if you have the skills, let your brother form a dream team too, see if the Five Star geniuses would even consider you."

"I really hope Yue Shenghe accepts Zhuge Yu's invitation. If these four coordinate, the battle would definitely be as beautiful as a painting."

...

"May I make a suggestion?"

At this moment, Zhong Liying spoke up.

"What suggestion?" Zhuge Yu asked.

Zhong Liying said seriously, "Once the team is successfully formed, we surely need to find a few opponents to nurture team rapport, to hone our coordination."

"Hmm."

Zhuce Yu nodded.

"Then I want to designate a target."

Zhong Liying bit her silver teeth, "Black Crow, a level C examiner."

Even though she inadvertently joined a stronger team, Zhong Liying couldn't forget the anger and frustration of battling for half a day with her former teammates, finally killing the Thousand Shadow Ghost Vine, only to have their equipment snatched by Black Crow.

Moreover, because of Black Crow's trouble-making, Ao Zihong and Ji Yufei were tragically eliminated by a "God" examiner, all because of Black Crow.

She could imagine how many people were laughing at her just now, how many were gloating over her misfortune.

If she doesn't vent this resentment, she might not sleep for days and nights.

"Black Crow."

Zhuge Yu understood why Zhong Liying would make such a request.

However, as Zhong Liying said, after forming the team, they indeed need several opponents to hone their teamwork, it doesn't matter who they choose as long as they choose someone, so they might as well go with Zhong Liying's suggestion.

Zhuge Yu held the compass, feeding it with weak Spiritual Energy, causing it to glow.

"Huh, strange, I actually have some intersection with him."

Zhuge Yu calculated something and looked slightly surprised.

"You have an intersection, could he be a friend of yours?" Zhong Liying asked.

"No, the intersecting line is very short, it might just be passing by."

Zhuge Yu explained briefly, then said: "Alright, once I invite Yue Shenghe to join, the first opponent will be him, Black Crow."

Hearing this, a cold smile spread across Zhong Liying's face.

Black Crow

There's no good outcome for angering a woman.

We'll see.

...

"Achoo!"

Qin Tian rubbed his nose, "Who's cursing me?"

He thought about it, there were quite a few people who might be cursing him, like Liu Yu, Shan Xiao, the three considered fools Mo Qingyu and company, and just now Ao Zihong, Ji Yufei.

Oh wow, just in one day, so many made enemies.

Amitabha Buddha, so many sins.

Qin Tian held the snatched boots in his hand, his Spiritual Power touching the Spirit Pattern on the boots.

Soon, a stream of information surfaced in his mind.

Windwalker Boots, a speed-type Spiritual Artifact.

Its effect is simple, stressing one word—fast!

Wearing the Windwalker Boots not only saves energy during long-distance dashes, increasing speed, but also greatly enhances close-range maneuverability.

"Let's try them on."

As soon as Qin Tian slipped on the Windwalker Boots, a cool airflow swirled up from the soles of his feet. The inner lining of the boots was as soft as clouds yet had unique resilience, fitting his foot shape as if alive, enclosing every inch of skin snugly.

"Buzz—"

With Spiritual Power injected, the Spirit Patterns on the boot surface lit up one by one, emitting a faint cyan glow.

Qin Tian felt his feet suddenly lighten, as if shedding a thousand-pound burden.

He tentatively moved his toes, the ground surprisingly gave a peculiar buoyant sensation, as if stepping on an invisible air cushion.

More amazing, when he slightly focused his mind, the Spirit Patterns at the boot sole resonated with his Spiritual Power.

Threads of tiny whirlwinds formed around his ankles, gently lifting his body. Qin Tian could even clearly sense the airflow's direction around him, as if suddenly gaining the ability to converse with the wind.

He tried taking a step forward—

"Whish!"

His body uncontrollably shot over three yards forward, nearly crashing into the wall.

Qin Tian hurriedly steadied himself, the Spirit Patterns at the boot sole flickered, seemingly mocking his clumsiness.

Only then did he realize, these boots had an exceptionally sensitive feedback to Spiritual Power, a slight carelessness would cause speed to go out of control.

"Interesting."

An excited glint flashed in Qin Tian's eyes. He took a deep breath and started cautiously tuning the Spiritual Power output.

Gradually, he found that subtle sense of balance—like taming a rebellious Wind Element Spirit Beast, neither overly suppressing, nor leaving it unmanaged.

When the first ray of dawn pierced through the clouds, Qin Tian's figure had already turned into streaks of afterimage in the courtyard.

Each step left faint cyan wind marks on the bluestone slab, vanishing in an instant.

He would sometimes soar and somersault, sometimes suddenly stop and change direction, the whirlwinds stirred up by the boots sweeping through the fallen leaves on the ground, dancing in graceful trajectories in the air.

"Now this is more like it."

Qin Tian stopped on the eaves, gazing at the first sunrise in the east.

The Spirit Patterns on the surface of the Windwalker Boots gradually faded, but that wonderful feeling of merging with the wind had already been deeply imprinted in his body's memory.

## Chapter 235: Stellar Armor – Black Demon

Before getting familiar with the Windwalker Boots, Qin Tian circled around Shuiyue New City, not only memorizing the scent and aura of each genius and examiner, but also mapping out the locations of the wild monsters.

The Dongfang Clan invested quite a lot of Spirit Beasts and Spirit Plants as wild monsters in Shuiyue New City. Among them, Spirit Beasts were the easiest to find, so by the end of the day, most Spirit Beasts had been eradicated, but there were still quite a few Spirit Plants left.

On the Dongfang Clan's territory, strange plants are not uncommon, so many people, even if they walked beside a Spirit Plant, would be unsure whether it was an ornamental plant or a wild monster NPC.

And this gave Qin Tian the opportunity to collect items.

### Light Distortion

Qin Tian entered an invisibility state, and after daybreak, the 100% All Attributes bonus of the Night Demon disappeared. However, with the boost from the Windwalker Boots, his speed increased instead of decreased.

Soon, he found the first Spirit Plant wild monster.

This was a bamboo forest, all the bamboo towering and standing tall, with lush green leaves. Looking at it initially, Qin Tian didn't notice anything unusual about this bamboo forest. Later, Jie La reminded him.

Below this bamboo forest, there was something Jie La wanted, which was the Green Crystal Stone she had previously consumed.

Where there was a Green Crystal Stone, it indicated the presence of a Spirit Plant wild monster in this bamboo forest.

Qin Tian stepped into the bamboo forest, his feet floating as if walking on a cushion of wind, making no sound as he moved.

The aura of the Sovereign of the Verdant Wilds spread out, and almost instantly, a consciousness responded to him.

"Found you."

Qin Tian found the source of the consciousness; it was a bamboo located at the very center of the bamboo forest, with a half-meter diameter, seventy meters tall, completely exhibiting a strange cyan-purple color, with fine silver patterns entwined around the bamboo joints, and sharp golden edges on the bamboo leaves, standing there silently yet transmitting a sense of intimacy to him.

Qin Tian directed his Spiritual Power underground, reaching tens of meters deep, and finally discovered the hidden Green Crystal Stone and Treasure Chest underground.

The Green Crystal Stone intertwined with the bamboo roots, emitting light that varied in brightness, while the Treasure Chest was nearby the Crystal Stone. Without noticing the abnormality of this bamboo or by fortunate chance probing his Spiritual Power underground, the Treasure Chest would have been nearly impossible to find.

However, this setup also enhanced the event's entertainment value.

Qin Tian placed his hand on the bamboo, using a Spiritual Link to communicate with it.

"I will take some of the Crystal Stones and the Treasure Chest below. In return, I'll infuse you with power to help you evolve."

During the communication, Qin Tian channeled the Sovereign of the Verdant Wilds' power into the bamboo's body.

The next moment, the bamboo conveyed emotions of joy and excitement, readily accepting Qin Tian's proposal.

"Jie La, you can move now."

Swish swish~~

The vine on his wrist grew rapidly, burrowing into the ground.

After entering underground, the vine split into several branches, wrapping up more than eighty percent of the Green Crystal Stones, greedily absorbing their energy, while Jie La broke through the soil, delivering the Treasure Chest to the surface.

"Let me see what's good inside."

Click

The box opened, revealing a black metal belt before Qin Tian.

"A belt, is it a Spiritual Artifact?"

Qin Tian picked up the belt, enveloping the Treasure Chest and belt with Spiritual Power, soon receiving a stream of information into his mind, causing a look of surprise to appear in his eyes.

This turned out to be...

Stellar Armor!

In the era of interstellar navigation, the balance of victory on the cosmic battlefield often hinges on the interplay of two forces—clashes of iron-fleet armadas and life-and-death struggles between Spiritualists.

In the vast and boundless space, while the main guns of warships can certainly obliterate enemy forces, the direction of the battlefield is also heavily reliant on those Spiritualists traversing between the artillery.

They can, with extraordinary Body Technique, breach warship defenses, tear through thick alloy armor, and engage in bloody slaughter within the hull; far more powerful Spiritualists can even engage in direct confrontations in vacuum, causing spatial shocks with every move.

However, the harsh environment of the Cosmos poses a deadly threat to Spiritualists.

Cultivators below Tier Six cannot survive long in a vacuum and oxygen-deficient environment. The zero-gravity state further severely restricts their combat methods.

Even High tier Spiritualists would gradually weaken with prolonged exposure to cosmic radiation and particle storms.

Thus, Stellar Armor—a revolutionary combat gear—was born.

Stellar Armor blends the forefront of human technology with the essence of Spiritual Energy civilization:

**Nano Metal extension technology:** The armor can instantly transform in shape, expanding from a close-fitting light armor to a full-coverage heavy armament, or even generate special combat units according to battle needs.

**Quantum Energy storage matrix:** Storing energy within a micro core through energy compression technology.

**Bio-Force Field adjustment system:** Simulating planetary gravity environments to ensure users can perfectly leverage their battle power even in weightless states.

**Cyclic life support unit:** Internal nano-scale oxygen synthesizer and radiation filtering membrane, supporting users for continuous combat in space for several days and nights.

Spiritual Energy amplification device: Amplifying user Spiritual Energy fluctuations through quantum entanglement principles, achieving up to 300% energy output enhancement.

Space stability anchor: Resisting dimensional tearing during space jumps, ensuring users can safely perform short-range transitions.

The most advanced Stellar Armor is even equipped with a "Mimic Core," capable of automatically evolving into exclusive combat forms according to the user's Spiritual Energy traits.

For example, armor of Thunder Element Spiritualists will develop plasma channels, while Ice Element is equipped with absolute zero generators.

The emergence of Stellar Armor has rewritten the rules of cosmic warfare—every Spiritualist may become a key variable influencing the outcome of the battle.

Of course, there is a distinction between low-end and high-end Stellar Armors.

The Stellar Armor prepared by the Dongfang Clan is naturally not low-end, and its name is—Black Demon.

Qin Tian fastened the belt to his waist, channeling Spiritual Energy into it, then melodramatically shouted in his heart:

"Black Demon, transform!"

The moment Qin Tian silently chanted in his mind, the black belt at his waist suddenly lit up with dark purple energy patterns, a cold mechanical voice echoing in his mind:

"Spiritual Energy authentication passed, Black Demon Armor—activated."

"Snap! Clang!"

The dark core at the center of the belt instantly unfolded, countless nano-level black metals extending swiftly over Qin Tian's body like living organisms.

The armor first spread over his legs, presenting a matte black sheen, while energy conduits embedded with dark purple energy covered the joints; then the chest armor formed, streamlined armor plates etched with ancient Demon Patterns pulsating with each breath; finally, the helmet—the moment the faceplate descended, Qin Tian's vision was overlaid with streams of data, transforming the whole world into a grid of tactical analysis.

The whole armor transformation took only 0.3 seconds to complete, resulting in a set of intimidating black battle armor.

Purple energy patterns constantly coursed over the armor's surface, resembling the dark night energy surging through veins. The shoulder armor presented sharp reverse spikes, with three pairs of dark wings formed purely from energy suspended at the back, scattering purple glimmers with every subtle quiver.

"Armor complete, Spiritual Energy amplification rate 280%, vacuum combat duration: 96 hours."

Qin Tian lowered his head to look at his hands, with black gauntlets embedding miniature energy matrices at the knuckles, a slight clenching of the fist producing purple arcs jumping between the fingers.

He tried moving his body—surprisingly nimble, with the nano armor perfectly integrating every motion.

What pleased him most was the helmet's design: the fully covered faceplate had a tusk-like respirator grill at the mouth, while the eye positions were sharp purple light bands, creating a look that was both fierce and elegant.

"Not bad..." Qin Tian's lips curled up, his voice transmitting through the armor's resonator, carrying a deep echo,

"Quite dashing."

He was extremely satisfied with this treasure.

Chapter 236: Ambush

Crack, crack, crack

The Stellar Armor retracts and transforms back into a belt.

At this moment, Jie La finishes absorbing the energy from the Green Crystal Stone, and the vines sway as if dancing happily.

"Alright, transform back for now, let's head to the next location," Qin Tian says with a smile.

Whoosh~~

The vines retract, quickly turning into a bracelet wrapped around Qin Tian's wrist.

Now Qin Tian is really packing a lot of equipment.

Black Frost Blade, The Qingtan Holy Branch Bracelet, Windwalker Boots, Black Demon Stellar Armor

Jie La can even be considered half a piece of equipment, the self-aware kind.

"Let's go, Little Bamboo."

Qin Tian infuses the final trace of the Sovereign of the Verdant Wilds' energy into the bamboo, and then, under the bamboo's reluctant farewell, heads to the next location.

There is a Spirit Plant—a Cannibal Flower

Azure winds flow beneath his feet

With the Windwalker Boots on, Qin Tian can freely fly in the air without deploying the Night Demon Wings, and his flying speed is not slow at all.

A dozen minutes later, he lands in a forest park.

The park is in full bloom, with a variety of beautiful flowers, which also conceals the dangerous presence within.

The Cannibal Flower hides in the shadows of a rose bush, with dark red petals edged with purplish-black like rotting flesh, at first glance resembling ordinary flowers infested with worms.

However, when the tip of Qin Tian's boot crushes a fallen leaf, all the petals suddenly curl inward like a convulsing stomach, revealing layers of serrated mouthparts—rather than stamens, they are seven spirals of transparent fangs.

Qin Tian plans to use the evolutionary power of the Sovereign of the Verdant Wilds to exchange for the Green Crystal Stone and items guarded by the Cannibal Flower.

However, just as he takes his first step, the world changes abruptly!

The originally soft soil underfoot suddenly lights up, with mysterious runes surfacing on the ground like serpents, forming a massive Eight Trigrams Array in the blink of an eye.

Qian, Kun, Zhen, Xun, Kan, Li, Gen, Dui—the eight trigrams light up in sequence, golden light flowing, array patterns interwoven, forming an invisible cage.

And Qin Tian stands right at the array's center!

"Buzz——"

A vast Power of Imprisonment descends with a rush, as if the laws of the entire world are mobilized, firmly suppressing his limbs. The air becomes as heavy as lead-mercury, even his Spiritual Power begins to stagnate, as if bound by invisible chains.

"Swish! Swish! Swish! Swish!"

Four shadows break through the ground, standing ghost-like in the four corners, firmly positioned at the key nodes of the Eight Trigrams Array.

Their entire bodies radiate Spiritual Power, resonating with the array, further elevating the power of the entire formation, even causing the space to distort slightly!

What!

Qin Tian's face changes slightly; he prides himself on his sensing abilities—hearing, smell, vision, heat perception... Yet, he was still caught in this ambush.

No, my perception abilities were blocked.

Qin Tian looks around; the four people are clearly standing beside him, but he can't pick up any scent, and his heat perception fails as if a layer of fog covers them, erasing their presence.

This must be his handiwork.

Qin Tian looks at the man standing ahead, Zhuge Yu, the Marquis Wu's heir.

"Black Crow, we meet again."

The left node, Zhong Liying's pretty face shows a smile, although it carries a peculiar coldness.

Qin Tian doesn't respond, instead, he shifts his gaze to the burly figure on the right.

Number two on the Five Stars Genius list, Panlong Battle Body, Yue Shenghe

What promises did Zhuge Yu make to manage to draw both the first and second of the Five Stars Genius into one team together?

Seeing Black Crow ignoring her and looking towards Yue Shenghe, Zhong Liying feels even more infuriated, a touch of anger flashing in her beautiful eyes.

At this time, the live broadcast room becomes especially lively.

"Haha, let the show begin."

"To be the first target of this team, this C-level proctor must feel honored even in death."

"Black Crow, oh Black Crow, after waiting a whole day, you're finally going to be eliminated."

"This thief better leave quickly; seeing him is annoying."

"Hilarious, a C-level proctor actually offended fans of several geniuses, provoking billions to rush him."

"Trapped by the Eight Trigrams Array, let's see how you plan to escape."

...

"Black Crow."

Zhuge Yu looks at Qin Tian, squinting, speaking lazily:

"The Celestial Engine shows that our fates have intersected before, yet in my impressions, there isn't a character like you."

Qin Tian meets Zhuge Yu's eyes and slowly speaks:

"Does everyone from the Zhuge Clan lack respect for others?"

Upon hearing this, Zhuge Yu frowns.

What does he mean?

This accusation—how have I been disrespectful?

"Can you at least open your eyes when speaking to people!" Qin Tian raises his voice.

The moment the words leave his mouth, Zhong Liying, Fu Ning, Yue Shenghe first freeze, then Fu Ning's lips quiver, curling up at the corners, and Yue Shenghe glances at Zhuge Yu, showing a smile.

Even Zhong Liying, who was just angry, can't help but burst out laughing but quickly restrains herself, though her eyes still carry a smile.

Zhuge Yu's face freezes, blue veins throbbing on his forehead.

Damn it, who said my eyes aren't open?

My eyes are just this big, okay?!

By now, the live broadcast room is bursting with laughter.

"Hahaha, I can't, I'm going to laugh myself into a coma."

"Open your eyes before speaking; why is Black Crow so funny, cracking jokes even now."

"My abs are going to burst out from laughing; I strongly suggest giving Black Crow his own live room, I'd send him a ton of gifts."

"I can already foresee this 'open your eyes' joke will follow Zhuge Yu his entire life, even if he becomes a Tier Eight or Tier Nine powerhouse, people will still tease him with it."

"Black Crow is definitely a talented candidate; after elimination, quickly start streaming, he'll get rich overnight."

"I'm now hoping Black Crow doesn't get eliminated; such a funny person should be kept until the end."

"Strong support!"

...

"Sharp-tongued!"

Zhuge Yu sneers, "Make your move!"

Whoosh—

Fu Ning's figure blurs, leaving only a dissipating shadow where he once stood.

The next moment, he tears through the air, ghost-like, flashing to Qin Tian's face, with Profound Iron Sword in hand, the sharp light surges, even before the Sword Qi arrives, the sharpness already pricks the skin painfully.

The sword points directly at Qin Tian's chest, and it's as fast as a thunderbolt!

Whizz—

At the same instant, Zhong Liying's arrow has already left the string! The crimson arrow, engulfed in scorching spiritual energy, shoots like a meteor, directly attacking Qin Tian's back.

As the shaft passes, the air twists, with even faint crackling sounds of fire bursting. This arrow's timing is perfect, precisely blocking Qin Tian's retreat, leaving him in a dilemma!

From front and back, the killing intent is fully revealed!

Yue Shenghe doesn't move; against a C-level proctor, Fu Ning alone is sufficient, with Zhuge Yu handling control and Zhong Liying attacking from a distance. If he joins in, it would be overestimating the opponent too much.

The crisis arrives

Qin Tian's eyes flash, it's time to fight desperately.

Chapter 237: Battle Against the Genius Squad

Boom—!!!

The black robes billowed, and a wild and fierce aura suddenly erupted around Qin Tian. On the surface of his skin, ancient battle patterns awakened like dragons, emitting blinding green light. His muscles knotted, bones crackled, and spiritual power surged within him like magma, instantly breaking through the suppression of the Eight Trigrams Array!

Overlord Body—Activate!

All negative states were forcibly dispelled, and his strength, speed, and defense increased by 300%. Qin Tian's eyes burned like torches, his battle intent soaring to the heavens. The Black Frost Blade in his hand, imbued with overwhelming sword intent, fiercely struck toward Fu Ning's Profound Iron Sword!

Clang!!!

Metal clashed, sparks flew, yet the expected balance of power did not appear—on Fu Ning's sword blade, hundreds of intricate Sword Qi suddenly erupted, pouring like a river of stars, instantly shredding Qin Tian's sword intent into pieces!

Qin Tian's pupils shrank suddenly, feeling an incredibly sharp force transmitted along the blade, causing the web of his hand to crack, almost losing grip of the Black Frost Blade. He stumbled back, barely steadying himself when a scorching gale came from behind—

Boom!!!

Zhong Liying's Flaming Arrow struck his shoulder precisely. The violent fire spiritual power exploded, flesh splattering, and Qin Tian grunted, his left shoulder instantly burned into a charred, bloody hole, bone visible.

"Cough..." Blood seeped from the corner of his mouth, but his eyes remained unusually calm. The immortal power of the Desolate Battle Body circulated, and his wound healed visibly.

"Again!"

He shouted loudly, reversing the blade to slash at Fu Ning's throat.

However—

Swish!

Fu Ning's sword was even faster! The sword tip flicked lightly, parrying the blade's trajectory and straightly stabbing toward the heart!

At the same time, Zhuge Yu coldly formed a seal:

"Kun Character Secret—Earth Binding!"

The ground suddenly cracked open, and two gigantic stone hands erupted, viciously clamping Qin Tian's ankles!

Qin Tian's gaze turned cold, his talent "Sandstorm Control" activated, instantly disintegrating the stone hands into flowing sand, but the momentary delay allowed Fu Ning's sword tip to reach his chest—

Splurch!

Blood flowers bloomed!

Qin Tian twisted his body as far as possible, yet the sword tip still pierced through his right chest. He gritted his teeth, grasping the blade just as a dazzling red light illuminated the sky—

Zhong Liying released three arrows in rapid succession, sealing off all escape routes in the shape of a pin.

"Li Glyph Secret Art—Heaven Burning!"

Zhuce Yu altered the formation again, and the Li Gua within the Eight Trigrams Array ignited, flames rising from the ground!

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Arrows and flames exploded simultaneously. Fu Ning had dodged long ago, but Qin Tian was engulfed in the overwhelming sea of fire.

In the sea of fire, the figure staggered but never fell. Blood soaked through the black robes, leaving bloody footprints with each step. Yet beneath the Black Crow mask, those eyes fueled by battle intent burned ever fiercer.

Beside him, Yue Shenghe watched Qin Tian with admiration. Despite being opponents now, he respected warriors who remained unyielding and spirited under disadvantageous conditions.

Qin Tian walked out of the sea of flames. His once black robes now tattered from sword Qi and fire, revealing a body full of wounds and charred skin. However, in the next second, under the astonished gazes of the three, his wounds quickly healed, returning to their original state in the blink of an eye.

Such strong physical regeneration ability.

Zhuge Yu's eyes narrowed sharply.

At this time, the viewers in the live stream room of the four also began to discuss.

"Whoa, I thought Black Crow would be KO'd in one round, but I didn't expect him to hold on for so long."

"What a terrifying physical body. He's at least a Silver Level Bloodline Martial Artist, and his talent is related to his physique."

"I thought Black Crow relied on speed, but his strength and regeneration are also astonishingly strong. With this ability, why choose to be a thief?"

"If he can be a thief, why choose to confront others head-on?"

...

"Ding ding ding——"

Blades and swords clashed, Qin Tian and Fu Ning moved at incredible speed, leaving behind afterimages in the air. Even professional cameras couldn't capture their movements, only the dense sounds of metal clashing and occasional sparks could be heard.

However, in Zhong Liying's eyes, Qin Tian's every move was crystal clear.

Her lips curved slightly as her fingers lightly pulled the bowstring, arrows locked onto their target like venomous snakes. No matter how Qin Tian dodged and weaved, the arrows always struck accurately at his vital points!

"Boom!"

The flaming arrow exploded, the scorching waves engulfing Qin Tian's figure.

Simultaneously, Fu Ning's sword Qi tore through the air like a silver dragon, viciously ripping through Qin Tian's chest! Blood splattered as Qin Tian staggered backward, almost turned into a bloody figure.

Zhuge Yu naturally wouldn't miss this opportunity. Forming a finger technique, he shouted:

"Kan Character Secret—Freeze!"

The Kan Gua in the Eight Trigrams Array lit up, piercing cold swept through, instantly forming thick ice crystals on the ground, even the air seemed frozen. Qin Tian let out a muffled sound, his legs immobilized by the ice.

The battle patterns on his body glowed with green light, immortal power surged, shattering the ice binding forcefully.

However, the freeze was just a decoy!

Zhuge Yu suddenly changed formation, formed a seal with both hands, and the Eight Trigrams Array spun wildly, causing the five elemental powers to rampage!

Wind, fire, thunder, earth, water!

Five elemental magics simultaneously converged, spiritual power in the heavens and earth rallied wildly, forming five destructive energy torrents, crashing down on Qin Tian!

"Five Elements Annihilation!"

The gale turned into blades, fire formed into massive pythons, thunder interwove into electric nets, the earth thrust up sharp stone spikes, and ice formed chains—all blocking Qin Tian's retreat comprehensively!

"Rumble—!!!"

The deafening explosion resounded through the sky, blowing a massive crater into the ground, sending dust billowing into the air. The violent energy currents raged, even distorting space faintly!

"He's definitely going to be eliminated this time."

Zhong Liying's red lips curled, a flicker of pleasure in her eyes. The opponent who had thwarted her multiple times was finally going to fall; she could even imagine his humiliating exit.

However, Fu Ning's cold voice suddenly rang out: "He's fine."

"What?" Zhong Liying's pupils contracted sharply, looking incredulously at the area ravaged by the elemental storm.

The dust gradually cleared, revealing a wall of vines covered with mysterious patterns standing proudly at the center of the crater. The vines were an eerie dark green, with peculiar energy ripples flowing on the surface, greedily devouring the remnants of flames, ice, and thunder.

"How is this possible..." Zhong Liying's fingers gripped the bow unconsciously.

The vines slowly parted like living things, revealing the unharmed figure within. The Black Crow stood calmly amidst it, the tattered black coat fluttering in the elemental chaos, his steady gaze meeting the four through the mask.

"This is... a symbiotic spirit plant." Zhuge Yu's eyes narrowed into slits, his voice carrying unmistakable surprise, "Not only can it autonomously defend, but it can also absorb and convert elemental energy..."

The patterns on the vines grew brighter with the energy absorption, faintly revealing the spiritual power flowing within. Even with the Zhuge Family's resources, such spirit plants were extremely rare.

Qin Tian raised his hand slightly, the vines instantly entwining around his arm like loyal guards. He glanced at Jie La, who was digesting the energy, a subtle smile forming at the corner of his mouth.

"Thank you for the treat."

Chapter 238: Demon King Domain, Escape

The symbiotic spirit plant that absorbs energy

I don't know if he brought this with him or if it's a trophy set by the Dongfang Clan.

Zhuge Yu's gaze was deep as he noticed that this C-level examiner, Black Crow, was much more troublesome than the B-level examiner.

Even though he, Fu Ning, and Zhong Liying hadn't fully exerted themselves, with the strength of the three of them, they should have easily dealt with a B-level examiner.

Who would have thought, this Black Crow managed to deflect their attacks using various methods.

Now, there must be many who are surprised by Black Crow.

Just as Zhuge Yu expected, the live stream audience was astonishingly shocked by the sudden appearance of the vine barrier.

"Wow, is this a symbiotic spirit plant that can withstand an attack from a Tier Five expert?"

"No way, this is too unfair, relying on external help."

"Idiot, haven't you read the rules? Except for certain specific items, participants and examiners can carry any spiritual artifact or tool, and symbiotic spirit plants count as one of those tools because after all, they are painstakingly cultivated by Spiritualists and can be considered part of their strength."

"Exactly, if symbiotic spirit plants weren't allowed, then that summoner kid next door might as well go home."

"This Black Crow is impossibly resilient, no matter how hard they try, they can't kill him."

"I'm wondering now, maybe we should let him escape later."

"Impossible, don't forget, Yue Shenghe hasn't even made a move yet, and Fu Ning was only testing; Fu Ning's strength is anything but simple."

"Exactly, the Taurus B-level examiner was defeated by Fu Ning in three sword strikes, and compared to that battle, Fu Ning is clearly holding back today."

"Why, is it because all three of them attacked simultaneously, that he wants to take it easy?"

"Who knows~"

...

"Time to retreat."

Qin Tian's eyes flickered; just now, he stayed only to gauge the gap between himself and the realm's strongest genius. After a brief confrontation, he's now gained a clear understanding of it.

Fu Ning is a Tier Five Six star Spiritualist, a level higher than him by one tier and two stars. Moreover, Fu Ning is a top-notch descendant of the Golden Clan. Judging by the talent light sphere, Fu Ning's talent is likely deep orange, while his Barbaric Dominator Body and Night Demon have just reached the medium orange level. His talent level is also slightly inferior to Fu Ning.

In a one-on-one situation, he's probably not Fu Ning's opponent.

But that's normal because he doesn't believe that less than a year's effort could match the twenty-plus years of hard work that the Golden Clan put into nurturing a talented heir.

However, his advantage lies in having versatile techniques.

If he can't win head-on, running away is still doable.

"Let's finish this quickly."

Zhuge Yu said, considering the strength of the three of them, if they couldn't take down a C-level examiner in a few rounds, it would be embarrassing.

Of course, this is their first battle as a team of four. Their coordination isn't smooth yet, and everyone is holding back a bit, so this situation is understandable.

But it must be said, this Black Crow is indeed extraordinary, more troublesome than the Zodiac B-level examiners.

"Okay!"

Fu Ning nodded lightly. In the next moment, a stunning sword intent surged to the sky, tearing through the clouds.

He's getting serious.

Zhugue Yu formed a spell with his hands, and Zhong Liying drew her bow, preparing to end the battle with this strike.

But at that moment, a dense black mist, like a tsunami, erupted from Qin Tian's body, instantly engulfing the surrounding land for miles.

Demon King Domain—activate!

In an instant, all four felt like they were sinking into a quagmire, their movements exceptionally slow, and their spiritual energy severely suppressed.

Most fatal of all, everyone's perception abilities were drastically compressed—whether it be sight, hearing, or spiritual power detection, they were limited to within a few feet.

Zhugue Yu frowned deeply, and his Celestial Engine abruptly shone with brilliant green light, while intricate formation patterns rapidly changed in the air.

"Wind Howl!"

A violent hurricane arose in response, trying to disperse the eerie black mist.

However, to Zhugue Yu's surprise, no matter how the fierce winds raged, the mist stood motionless as if bound by an invisible force.

"Watch out!"

He just voiced a warning, only to find his voice completely absorbed by the mist. An ominous feeling flooded his mind—what on earth is this strange ability?

Meanwhile, Fu Ning slightly squinted his eyes. Despite losing his senses, his Celestial Profound Sword Heart could vaguely perceive a silhouette hidden in the darkness.

"Clang—!"

A sharp sword cry pierced the stillness, a dragon-like sword qi sliced through the mist, leaving a hideous crack over a dozen yards deep in the ground. Yet, this sword ultimately fell on empty air.

Buzz

Zhong Liying's taut bowstring emitted a subtle vibration—this master archer looked tense. Losing her sight was like breaking her wings, and anxiety spread in her heart.

Yue Shenghe was enveloped in a bright yellow spiritual light, standing unmoved as a mountain. Although he was confident in his defense, the lack of perception left him passive; he could sense his companions nearby but couldn't detect Black Crow's whereabouts at all.

Just as everyone was on high alert, the black mist covering the heavens suddenly dissipated as abruptly as it had come.

And when their vision cleared once more, Black Crow's figure was already nowhere to be found.

"He got away."

Zhuge Yu frowned slightly. Even with the combined efforts of the three of them, Black Crow still managed to escape alive. This was certainly a blow to the newly formed team.

At this point, the live chat exploded.

"Damn, he still got away!"

"What's the deal with this Black Crow? Four people couldn't handle him!"

"Actually, it was just three people; Yue Shenghe didn't act, but still, it's absurd. I thought Fu Ning could take him out with one sword strike."

"Amazing, absolutely amazing. I declare that I officially become a fan of Black Crow from now on. I'm going to look for his figure in every live stream."

"Come on, three Five star geniuses, plus a Four star genius, and they couldn't take down a C-level examiner. What are they doing? Just disband already; it's embarrassing."

...

"Zhuge Yu, can you calculate once more?"

Zhong Liying walked to Zhuge Yu's side, asking with an unwilling expression.

Zhuce Yu didn't reply, holding his Celestial Engine, he had already started calculating Black Crow's location when a strong sense of crisis washed over him. Continuing the calculation would have dire consequences.

"Heaven's secrets must not be casually revealed."

Zhuce Yu shook his head, "One calculation is the limit, we'll have to find another way to track him."

Hearing this, Zhong Liying bit her lip but had no choice but to let it go.

Just then, Fu Ning turned to the side, his brow slightly furrowed. He felt as though something had been watching him earlier, but after probing carefully, he found nothing.

In the sky, a phantom soul body gazed at the ground before transforming into a streak of light, traversing several streets, and finally entering someone's mouth.

"Fu Ning, Zhuge Yu, Yue Shenghe."

Beneath the Evil Ghost Mask, a trace of blood-colored light flashed in those pitch-black eyes.

Chapter 239: Raking in the Profits

"Celestial Secret Bloodline, truly lives up to its name."

Qin Tian hid under the shade of a tree, not moving far; his exceptional hearing could catch Zhuge Yu and Zhong Liying's conversation.

It turned out the ambush set for him was predicted by Zhuge Yu, who knew he would appear here and used an array to block his keen perception.

But the same trick wouldn't work on him twice.

If Zhuge Yu wanted to pull the same stunt, he would let Zhuge's Disciple experience the style of the King of Assassination.

The treasure chest and the Green Crystal Stone from the Cannibal Flower were unreachable, but Qin Tian could still obtain items and stones either by eliminating examinees or hunting other monsters.

"First, I'll develop slowly, and see if I can make a big move later on."

Qin Tian's eyes flickered.

.....

The next three days, the genius battle entered a fierce stage.

Most contestants chose to form alliances, grouping up in threes to fives to confront other groups and accelerate the elimination of examiners and monsters.

By the third day, almost all C-level examiners were eliminated.

Examiners dressed in Zodiac attire, the B-level ones, became the primary targets for the geniuses to hunt.

The guardian artifacts of B-level examiners were more advanced, and defeating them brought more recognition from the audience, showcasing one's strength and increasing one's fame.

In two days, B-level examiners were also entirely eliminated.

However, during combats, B-level examiners demonstrated combat prowess no less formidable than five-star geniuses, earning a lot of applause.

The standout among all the examiners, however, was undoubtedly a C-level examiner — Black Crow.

His craftiness and shameless demeanor reached the pinnacle.

At first, he played the role of the mantis stalking the cicada while unaware of the oriole behind, letting geniuses eliminate examiners or monsters, then unexpectedly snatched away guardian gear and left.

Later on, he resorted to all sorts of tricks.

Knocking someone out when they went to the bathroom

Poisoning the drinking water

Exposing contestant locations, leading other competitors to attack, then sneaking away with the guardian artifacts amidst the chaos

Disguising Symbiotic Spirit Plants as monsters and setting ambushes

...

In these few days, Black Crow's fame and popularity surpassed any genius, even the five-star geniuses couldn't compare.

Each day, the audience's most anticipated spectacle wasn't the fight between geniuses or the battle with examiners, but watching how Black Crow tricked these geniuses.

Seeing the geniuses grinding their teeth and twisted faces made the audience highly amused.

Supporters of the geniuses eliminated by Black Crow turned from hostility to fandom upon seeing many geniuses being badly fooled, hoping he would oust a few more geniuses.

Meanwhile, Black Crow's notorious reputation spread among the contenders, making some afraid to act alone; whether eating, sleeping, or going to the toilet, they needed company, even teams of five-star geniuses were no exception.

It can be said that Black Crow single-handedly changed the course of the event, greatly increasing the excitement and interest of the genius battle, allowing organizers and advertisers to profit immensely.

Many tried to uncover Black Crow's true identity, intending to leverage his popularity for publicity after the competition, but alas, no matter how capable, no one could obtain even a scrap of information about Black Crow.

Three days passed, and the genius battle approached its end.

.....

Zzzzzz

Lightning in the room gradually faded.

Qin Tian opened his eyes, a smile played on his lips.

Crack crack crack

He stood up, stretched his body, producing a series of explosive sounds from his bones, powerful strength surging within him.

In these days, he obtained seven types of elixirs from competitors and monsters, like the All Things Essence Enhancing Pill enhancing Spiritual Energy, the Celestial Thunder Body Refining Pill strengthening Physique, the Five Dragons Transformation Pill, and the Purple Leaf Spirit Profound Pill increasing Spiritual Power.

With these elixirs, he expects to advance to Tier Five within half a year.

Moreover, he acquired a Spiritual Dagger, a Spiritual Weapon Long Sword, and a Silver Level Martial Technique "Gale Eighteen Hammers".

The dagger and longsword could be given to Li Qi and Feng Mochuan upon his return.

As for the Silver Level Hammer Technique, as long as he doesn't activate the Spiritual Thought inheritance within, he could exchange it for a cultivation technique or martial technique of the same level after the event.

He plans to exchange it for a Dark Element cultivation technique to use as a universal technique for an Apostle of the Night Demon.

Besides these items, Jie La absorbed many Green Crystal Stones.

From the geniuses, he learned that Green Crystal Stones are called Wood Crystals, a natural stone aiding Spirit Plant evolution.

Having absorbed a substantial amount of Wood Crystal, Jie La seems to have reached a critical point in her evolution, her consciousness entering a state of sleep, the awakening time remains unknown.

Qin Tian stood by the window, gazing into the distance.

Based on heat source perception, there weren't many geniuses left in the city, only four teams, totaling 17 people.

In terms of strength, teams of Fu Ning, Yue Shenghe, and Zhuge Yu naturally stood as the strongest, being five-star geniuses.

The other three groups each had two five-star geniuses, and the strength, whether weak or strong, hinged on the final competition.

With C-level and B-level examiners almost eliminated, Qin Tian predicted that these four teams would likely negotiate, each dealing with one A-level examiner, eliminating them, before competing for a spot in the final ten-person grand arena list.

"I haven't had the chance to sneak away amidst chaos again."

Qin Tian stroked his chin, truth be told, he was very interested in the guardian artifacts of the A-level examiners, especially since they were the highest-level rewards set by the Dongfang Clan, possibly more valuable than all his current items combined.

However, now these geniuses were on guard against him; snatching food from a tiger's mouth would be much harder than before.

"Forget it, let's play it by ear; if there's no chance, just take what I can."

Qin Tian thought to himself.

Speaking of A-level examiners, there was one thing he found surprising.

There are four A-level examiners, God, Demon, Monster, and Ghost.

He encountered the first three and even left Hunting Marks on them, but he never saw the last one, the Ghost Examiner.

During the night, despite his heat source perception covering the entire city, the Ghost Examiner remained undetected.

This point might impact the course of upcoming events.

If the Ghost Examiner cannot be found, the four teams would have only three A-level examiners to split amongst them, leaving out one team, depending on their abilities.

Before engaging in battle with A-level examiners, a massive clash could occur.

For Qin Tian, this might be an opportunity.

Chapter 240: God Defeated, Ominous Divination (Triple Combo)

Empty Street

Crossroad

Four teams stood at different roads, staring at each other from a distance.

"Everyone, there are only 17 of us from 4 teams left now."

Zhuge Yu looked ahead and said calmly:

"Just right, there are four A-level examiners too. Let's eliminate them first before we compete as the final ten. What do you all think?"

"I agree."

Wu Ziyang, ranked third among the five-star geniuses, spoke up.

"I agree!"

"I agree too!"

The remaining team leaders also expressed agreement.

The rule of the competition is that when only the last ten contestants remain, they directly enter the next stage of the arena match. At that time, neither examiners nor participants are allowed to fight anyone else.

If we cannot eliminate the A-level examiners before the arena battle, the high-level artifacts they guard will be unreachable for everyone, which no one wants to see.

"Then let's each pick one."

Zhuge Yu said, "God once wounded Zhong Liying, so our squad chooses the God examiner."

"We choose the Demon examiner."

Wu Ziyang said second.

Ranked fifth among the five-star geniuses, Shangguan Lei followed: "We choose the Demon examiner."

"Then let's choose the Ghost examiner."

Ranked sixth among the five-star geniuses, Lei Yao said.

The stronger teams choose opponents first, this is the unspoken rule everyone understands.

However, for each team, it doesn't really matter which examiner they choose.

The examiners' strengths don't differ much, there's no easy target to pick.

As for what artifact they are guarding, no one knows, but their values should be similar, so no one gains an advantage.

"Alright, but before we make any moves, I must remind everyone of one thing."

Zhuge Yu scanned the surroundings, seemingly looking for someone, "Make sure to guard your spoils well, don't let someone steal them."

With this remark, everyone knew who Zhuge Yu was hinting at.

Black Crow

This notorious figure, whose very name makes people grit their teeth.

Among the 17 people, quite a few fell victim to Black Crow, having their hard-earned spoils snatched away, becoming a joke to billions, even hundreds of billions of viewers.

"Don't worry, if he dares to show up, I'll make sure he never leaves!"

Wu Ziyang gritted her teeth angrily, implying she had suffered at Black Crow's hands too.

"Alright, let's take action then, after eliminating our opponents, we'll have our final battle here."

"Alright!"

"Alright!"

The four teams parted ways to find their respective opponents.

Meanwhile, the livestream's popularity hit its peak.

"The best part is finally here, the genius teams against God, Demon, Demon, and Ghost!"

"Got my popcorn ready, hoping the A-level examiners make it exciting for everyone."

"A-level examiners are all Tier Six experts, can the geniuses handle them?"

"Are you kidding? Faced with four or five Tier Five geniuses with golden and silver bloodlines, a Tier Six expert can't hold out."

"Anything else is fine, but Zhuge Yu's warning about Black Crow really amused me. Who would've thought a C-level examiner could be more feared by geniuses than an A-level examiner."

"In this event, Black Crow is the MVP!"

.....

"Have they begun acting?"

Qin Tian floated high above, stealthily, with all four groups' movements under his control.

Now, it's finally the stage for the geniuses to confront the A-level examiners.

But eliminating A-level examiners isn't so easy.

First of all, accurately finding someone in a medium-sized city is a real test of skill. Either you possess extremely strong perception abilities like him, or you can calculate someone's trajectory like Zhuge Yu.

The examiners are not fixed NPCs who stay in one place, they also engage in guerrilla warfare with the geniuses.

The rule for examiners is, the longer they survive, the richer the post-match rewards. This applies to A-level examiners too.

If they can eliminate a contestant and acquire their guardian artifact, great. If not, then guerrilla warfare or simply hiding is a good strategy.

Therefore, Qin Tian judged that aside from Zhuge Yu's squad, the remaining three squads might not have smooth operations.

Especially the squad that chose the "Ghost" examiner.

Even he hadn't been able to find the "Ghost" examiner these days, let alone these guys.

.....

Nameless Street

"Eight Trigrams Array, arise!"

The ground suddenly lit up with mysterious runes, and the "God" encased in gilded armor suddenly realized he was trapped in the center of an array.

Wuhou Eight Trigrams Array, Zhuge Yu's ultimate skill, Sealing Heaven and Earth, entrapping the enemy without form!

"God's" eyes turned cold, blazing white Spiritual Energy surged in his palm.

"Celestial Sword, slash!"

Swish—!

Fu Ning's silhouette manifested from the sky, where his sword pointed, a hundred-meter Sword Qi poured down like a galaxy, unmatched in ferocity, slicing even the space into fine cracks!

"God" snorted coldly, meeting the attack head-on with his right fist, the blazing white Fist Seal rising against the skies to collide with the Sword Qi!

Boom!!!

Energy storm exploded, Sword Qi shattered into countless light feathers falling down, each like a cannonball hitting the ground, the street collapsed instantly, dust soaring up the sky!

Whoosh whoosh whoosh!

Just as "God's" previous strength was exhausted and new power hadn't arisen, three crimson arrows shot through the air, aiming for his back! Zhong Liying's arrows, fast, accurate, vicious, timed perfectly to the finest detail!

"God" erupted Spiritual Energy around himself, forming a shield to take the arrows, however—

"Roar!"

A dragon's roar exploded by his ears, Yue Shenghe charged like a mountain, dragon patterns glowing on his right arm, Power of Rock gathered at his fist, heavily punching towards "God's" chest!