

Ice Age 741

Chapter 741: All-Out War

Kanut never could have imagined that with his Zoan-type Blue Shark ability and maxed-out defense, he would still suffer such a devastating blow from Zhang Ye!

He roared at Phoenixin Ren in the distance,

“You lied to me! His strength is nothing like what you said!”

After that one move, the area where Kanut had just stood had been utterly wiped clean.

Other than Kanut, everyone else—hundreds of pirates behind him, including Chen Siyu, the ability user who cast the Imprisoning Domain—had been turned to dust!

The scene stunned everyone present.

Of the over a thousand members of the Dragon Pirate Crew, only about three or four hundred remained now.

Kanut had taken Zhang Ye’s Void Sphere head-on and was gravely wounded.

The rest of his underlings were paralyzed in fear.

Even the Celestial Hound Squad members were standing there, frozen.

Given their power levels, they couldn't even comprehend the magnitude of what they had just witnessed.

"This is... true captain-level strength,"

Ye He murmured as he stared at Zhang Ye.

Even Deng Shentong didn't possess such terrifying wide-range AOE destructive power.

This was undeniably captain-tier strength, no mistake about it.

And the benchmark for captain-level? An ability index of over 9000 points!

Phoenixin Ren, Shinguuji Seiichiro, and the rest of the Eclipse Moon members were also wide-eyed in disbelief.

"D*mn it, the intel we got was wrong!"

“There’s no way he’s just some vice-captain-level fighter with an 8200-point power rating!”

Back in Blizzard City, everyone at the Command Center wore identical looks of shock.

Zhu Zheng’s expression shifted from stunned to smiling in less than a second.

He settled back into his chair, folded his hands on the table, and said,

“I thought he was already hiding his true strength well...”

“But I didn’t expect—he never even showed us his real power.”

They had been worried Zhang Ye might get killed by the combined forces of Eclipse Moon and the Dragon Pirate Crew.

But now, morale in the command center soared.

“At this rate, Zhang Ye and his squad will definitely hold out until the Samsara Squad arrives!”

Since he couldn't contact Zhang Ye directly, Zhu Zheng once again reached out to Gao Changkong to speed up their deployment to Tianhai City.

"How's Zhang Ye holding up?"

Gao Changkong asked with urgency.

Zhu Zheng replied with a mysterious smile:

"No need to worry too much. As long as you get there in time, the victory's ours."

"Zhang Ye is way stronger than we ever gave him credit for!"

Gao Changkong was briefly stunned, then chuckled.

"Just like Baili said... He's like a farmer who's lived through too many famines—always hiding grain during the harvest season, just in case."

"Well, looks like he's finally hooked a big fish!"

Those who had underestimated Zhang Ye and tried to trap him were now eating their hearts out in regret.

At this point, perhaps only Baili Changqing and the members of the Black Robe Squad truly understood what was happening.

They remembered the battle from a few months ago in Tianhai City.

Compared to that fight, this current situation was nothing.

They had gone toe-to-toe with an actual Epsilon-level Awakened.

It was Zhang Ye who led them to victory over Yuan Kongye—and absorbed his essence.

So, no matter how strong Zhang Ye appeared now, they fully accepted it.

Suddenly, Wu Di exclaimed,

“The barrier’s gone!”

But Zhang Ye remained calm.

“The real battle... is just beginning.”

The Dragon Pirate Crew had never been considered a true threat by Zhang Ye.

The real pressure came from the ones standing on that hill—the members of Eclipse Moon.

Ye He, Xue Miao, and Lu Yinghao all locked eyes with them, barely able to suppress their hatred.

These were the ones who had wiped out the once-glorious Celestial Squad.

Even their captain, Deng Shentong, had been forced to self-destruct.

The hatred was bone-deep. Unforgettable.

Zhang Ye raised his head, staring coldly at the figures standing on the hill.

And Phoenixin Ren and his group were staring back with equal intensity.

Both sides knew—the key to ending this battle was to eliminate the other.

Just then, Baili Changqing received a communication from Zhu Zheng.

He hesitated but still relayed the message to Zhang Ye:

“Zhu Shuai says the Samsara Squad will arrive in thirty minutes tops. He’s asking you to hang in there.”

Zhang Ye glanced at him with indifference, saying nothing in response.

He wasn’t sure whether Zhu Zheng could be trusted.

Since he wasn’t sure, he’d trust himself.

“Phoenixin Ren is mine. The rest of you—take care of the others. Baili.”

As agreed, Zhang Ye left the tactical planning to Baili Changqing.

Now that the Imprisoning Domain had been lifted—

And with the enemies so close—it was clear: the situation would devolve into a massive free-for-all.

At times like this, everyone had to rely on their own strength.

Zhang Ye only needed to keep the enemy commander locked down.

Thirty minutes.

He'd give Zhu Zheng that long. But not an ounce more trust.

Baili Changqing took the command and immediately began assigning tasks to the Celestial Hound Squad members.

Zhang Ye gave instructions to those nearest to him:

“Liang Yue, I need you to stall one of Eclipse Moon’s elites.”

“Hua Hua, protect Xinxin. When it comes to speed, barely anyone here can match you. If needed—run. Keeping you and Xinxin alive is top priority.”

Liang Yue nodded firmly.

She gripped her Dragon Roar sword tight.

Almost as if drawn by some top-tier warrior's instinct, Tsukamoto Nobunaga—who was on the hill—locked eyes with her.

Even from hundreds of meters away, their battle auras clashed so fiercely it made the air around them feel sharp and oppressive.

“I've found my opponent,”

Liang Yue said.

Meanwhile, Hua Hua had already fully grown in size.

It nestled Yang Xinxin inside its thick fur, only exposing her neck and head.

Its steel-hard, razor-sharp coat served as the ultimate shield.

While Zhang Ye issued commands, Phoenixin Ren wasn't idle either.

Zhang Ye's explosive power had completely shaken him.

Ever since he had helped found the organization in the Kansai region, and with Takeuchi Mayumi's prophecies as guidance, Phoenixin Ren had never been caught off guard in battle.

Even when he met foes he couldn't defeat, he always sensed danger in advance and withdrew early.

But this time, across the sea, he had run into his nemesis.

When someone spends too long in their comfort zone, stepping out even once feels disorienting.

Like a techie lost in a no-internet mountain village.

That's how Phoenixin Ren felt when facing Zhang Ye: utterly unsettled.

And that unsettling feeling filled him with a powerful urge—to eliminate Zhang Ye.

“Shinguuji,” he said to the man beside him,

“Come with me. Let’s take down their captain first.”

Shinguuji Seiichiro adjusted his gold-rimmed glasses.

For once, he didn’t argue.

Because he understood—

For someone like Phoenixin Ren, who always exuded confidence, to ask for help meant only one thing:

He was no longer sure he could handle this enemy on his own.

Chapter 742: Their Respective Opponents

Taking advantage of the chaos created by the blizzard conjured by Zhuge Qingting and Fatty Xu working together, Zhang Yi shattered the barrier of **【Earthbound Prison】**.

Thus began the true grand melee!

Baili Changqing swiftly and methodically issued orders to his team members.

"Qi Guangming, Ye Jikang, Meng Siyu, Xue Miao, Lu Yinghao—you five handle the pirate crew!"

"The rest of you, with me! We'll eliminate the Ronin of the Moon of Corrosion first!"

Kanute's strength was not to be underestimated either. According to the headquarters' analysis of his abilities, his power was at vice-captain level.

However, his arrogance led him to recklessly take on Zhang Yi's Void Slash head-on, leaving him severely injured.

This drastically reduced the pressure the Tianlong Pirate Crew exerted on the Celestial Hound Squad.

Thus, Baili Changqing decided to concentrate their superior forces to annihilate the Moon of Corrosion first!

Those dispatched were the comparatively weaker members of the Celestial Hound Squad, though they specialized in clearing out weaker enemies.

The empowered individuals accepted their orders and immediately charged at the disoriented pirate grunts.

Meanwhile, on the Moon of Corrosion's side, Daiku Kai Enzu could no longer suppress his bloodlust.

As a maniac who thrived on slaughter, being forced to standby had worn his patience thin.

Especially after laying eyes on formidable opponents like Zhang Yi, he disregarded Phoenixin Ren entirely, tearing off his shirt and leaping down from the hilltop, his massive Tonbogiri in hand!

A surge of brown energy erupted skyward, lifting his long hair into the air.

Transformed, he resembled a terrifying beast, his mouth filled with savage fangs.

His gaze locked onto Zhang Yi.

"Hey, you—are you the strongest one here?"

"Come on, let this old man have a good fight with you!"

His Tonbogiri pointed directly at Zhang Yi's head.

Daiku Kai Enzu.

His name and appearance were known to everyone present.

In two separate battles, he had displayed staggering combat prowess.

He was a fearsome opponent—Jiangnan District's research division had analyzed his abilities, rating his power level at a staggering 7,200!

Faced with such an adversary, before Zhang Yi could even respond, Baili Changqing stepped forward.

"Ronin, how about I keep you company instead?"

Baili Changqing spoke coldly.

Daiku Kai Enzu's eyes shifted to him.

Between masters, one could gauge another's strength merely by their presence.

Zhang Yi was an exception.

From Baili Changqing, Daiku Kai Enzu sensed something familiar—the aura of a kindred spirit.

They were both empowered individuals who pursued the pinnacle of strength!

Daiku Kai Enzu smirked. Without a word, he lunged forward like a hurricane!

Raising his Tonbogiri with one hand, he brought it down in a devastating slash!

In the blink of an eye—before anyone could register his speed or even see Baili Changqing raise his Fangtian Halberd—a metallic CLANG! reverberated, sharp enough to pierce eardrums.

The ground beneath them, already hardened by earlier explosions, shattered. Within a fifty-meter radius, the earth caved in, forming a massive crater from the sheer force of their collision!

Baili Changqing blocked Daiku Kai Enzu's strike.

A cold smile tugged at his lips. "Is this all you've got? I expected more!"

With a flick of his wrist, Baili Changqing sent the Tonbogiri flying out of Daiku Kai Enzu's grip.

Daiku Kai Enzu staggered back three steps—but rather than anger, his face twisted into ecstatic glee.

He had finally found someone who could rival him in raw strength!

Wu Di crossed his arms, his expression brimming with confidence in Baili Changqing.

"Old Man Baili's epithet is 【Iron Wrist】! When it comes to sheer arm strength, he's never lost to anyone!"

He added after a pause,

"Not even to a captain-level fighter!"

Daiku Kai Enzu and Baili Changqing were perfectly matched—both were pure strength-type empowered individuals.

And when two fighters of identical specialization clashed, their battles were destined to be brutal.

Now positioned between both factions, they knew this wasn't the ideal battleground.

So Daiku Kai Enzu leaped away, putting distance between them.

Before disappearing, he threw a fierce glance back at Baili Changqing.

A challenge.

Baili Changqing frowned. He turned to Zhang Yi.

As one of the Celestial Hound Squad's top combatants, he couldn't recklessly abandon his post without orders.

Zhang Yi gave a slight nod.

Daiku Kai Enzu had to be dealt with by Baili Changqing—because among his subordinates, only Baili Changqing and Liang Yue stood a chance against him.

With Zhang Yi's approval, Baili Changqing hesitated no longer. Gripping his halberd, he charged after Daiku Kai Enzu like a raging tiger.

Seeing this, Tsukamoto Nobunaga no longer held back.

He wanted to choose his own opponent.

Clad in a dark blue kimono, his hands tucked into his wide sleeves, he descended gracefully before Zhang Yi's group.

Yet his gaze never once left Liang Yue.

Between elite martial artists, there existed an instinctive recognition.

This wasn't their first meeting.

Back in Jiangning City, had Zhang Yi not intervened, Liang Yue might have already crossed blades with Nobunaga.

At that time, Liang Yue would've stood no chance against him.

But now? Things were different.

Nobunaga said nothing, but the way he looked at Liang Yue had changed.

No longer the lazy indifference of before—now, his eyes were as sharp as a famed blade.

Even the Daihannya Nagamitsu and Ayanokouji Tantou in his arms emitted faint, eager hums.

"I'm going."

Liang Yue rested a hand on her longsword and spoke to Zhang Yi.

Zhang Yi nodded.

As she passed him, he murmured, "No matter the cost—win."

The words made Liang Yue freeze momentarily.

She understood exactly what he meant.

After a brief silence, she nodded slowly.

She and Nobunaga stared at one another—then, in unison, they vanished from the battlefield like startled hares.

They needed a quiet place to settle this duel as martial artists.

But the others? They lacked such chivalrous notions. Neither Zhang Yi nor Phoenixin Ren cared for one-on-one heroics.

Their minds held only one thought:

By any means necessary, kill the other as swiftly and efficiently as possible!

"Scatter!"

Zhang Yi barked the order.

But as they moved to obey—gravity within their vicinity suddenly increased tenfold!

Those unskilled in mobility stumbled under the abrupt weight.

Fortunately, Zhang Yi had warned his team beforehand about the gravity-manipulating empowered individual among their enemies, advising them not to cluster together.

Thus, the effect lasted only briefly before everyone dispersed in all directions.

Yet even that momentary disruption created an opening—one the Moon of Corrosion seized immediately.

Shinguuji Seiichiro and Phoenixin Ren moved in unison, launching a decapitation strike against Zhang Yi!

Chapter 743: Demon-Subduing Karmic Flames

The Moon of Corrosion member, heavy artilleryman Kurozawa Wagou, flung open his oversized trench coat to reveal the massive black hand cannon on his right arm.

He aimed it directly at Zhang Yi and his group below and opened fire!

The hand cannon condensed a massive beam of energy, targeting Zhang Yi head-on!

Yet the result was like mud oxen entering the sea - the energy attack was instantly absorbed into the Alternate Dimensional Space.

Shinguuji Seiichiro's hands formed seals at speeds too fast to follow, then he swiftly produced dozens of paper talismans.

Amidst swirling smoke, over a dozen enormous Shikigami materialized before him!

Aside from his core five Shikigami, the rest were specially crafted Explosive Demon Dogs designed specifically to counter Zhang Yi!

"His Alternate Dimensional Space has limits. Overload its energy capacity, and his ability becomes useless!"

This intelligence had been recorded in Zhang Yi's personal file at the Jiangnan Region headquarters.

The information originated from a battle about half a year prior, when the Western Mountain Base attacked Zhang Yi's shelter.

Zhang Yi's Alternate Dimensional Space first experienced energy overload from 500kg of TNT explosives.

From then on, the weakness was exposed - his space wasn't bottomless in energy absorption.

This secret had been thoroughly leaked to the Moon of Corrosion by moles within Blizzard City.

However, there was one critical oversight.

The moles didn't know Zhang Yi's power had reached Captain-level.

And the energy capacity limit of his Alternate Dimensional Space was now far beyond its original parameters!

"Attack!"

Shinguuji Seiichiro commanded his Shikigami to assault Zhang Yi!

The pack of Explosive Demon Dogs led the charge.

His strategy was simple - break through Zhang Yi's Dimensional Gate, and Zhang Yi's combat effectiveness would plummet by over 70%!

Then they could easily finish him off!

Zhang Yi clearly understood their plan.

But Shinguuji Seiichiro was using an overt strategy.

If Zhang Yi didn't use his Dimensional Gate to block, he lacked the personal power to withstand these Shikigami explosions.

Even if he escaped, his companions would be blown to pieces!

"Hua Hua, get clear!"

Zhang Yi waved everyone back and unhesitatingly opened his Dimensional Gate to absorb the Explosive Demon Dogs.

Then he allowed them to detonate within his Alternate Dimensional Space.

Shinguuji Seiichiro's face broke into a triumphant grin.

He had plenty more of these explosive Shikigami in reserve.

For months, he'd been devising ways to counter their most troublesome opponent - Zhang Yi.

But just then, he noticed Zhang Yi's lips slowly curling upward too.

"You really think you've got me figured out?"

Zhang Yi's smile grew increasingly pronounced.

Then he extended his palm toward the Moon of Corrosion empowered individuals.

"Seems your intelligence isn't quite complete."

"I can reflect any form of physical attack."

"And explosive energy counts as a physical form!"

From his palm, the Dimensional Gate suddenly reopened.

All the explosive energy from the absorbed Demon Dogs found its release, transforming into a colossal energy beam that pierced toward the mountainside!

The combined force of over a dozen Explosive Demon Dogs turned the entire battlefield white with its radiance!

This single strike nearly matched the power of Zhang Yi's Condensing the Void technique!

The Moon of Corrosion members paled in terror - a direct hit from this energy would be fatal!

At the critical moment, Phoenixin Ren intercepted the energy beam.

The Phoenix blood within him burned wildly as a gigantic three-headed phoenix apparition manifested behind him.

Facing Zhang Yi's devastating attack, he spread his arms and physically blocked it with his bare body!

"BOOM!!!"

The massive energy wave detonated across the mountain peak, yet Phoenixin Ren absorbed every ounce of impact.

His body nearly disintegrated, clothes incinerated completely to reveal skeletal structure and internal organs.

Then, utilizing his Undying Phoenix ability, his body rapidly regenerated.

But his expression darkened dangerously.

Zhang Yi had reflected Shinguuji Seiichiro's Explosive Demon Dogs back at them - proving their intel on Zhang Yi's abilities contained critical flaws!

They'd assumed Zhang Yi's Alternate Dimensional Space was like a water vat - pour in enough to eventually make it burst.

Instead, it functioned more like a spring.

Unless overloaded beyond its elastic limit in a single attack,

it could simply rebound any absorbed energy within capacity!

Standing naked, Phoenixin Ren glared at Zhang Yi with visible irritation.

Shinguuji massaged his temples in frustration.

"So this is the legendary #1 defensive empowered individual?"

Any ability, when developed to its extreme, manifests terrifying power.

Zhang Yi had focused his research not on offense, but defense.

After witnessing numerous powerful empowered individuals perish, his conviction only grew stronger.

If even elites like Deng Shentong and Yuan Kongye could be killed, what true safety existed in this world?

Only by wrapping tight in his protective measures, stepping cautiously, and avoiding unnecessary risks could one survive this brutal apocalypse.

"This one's mine to handle. Deal with the others," Phoenixin Ren declared gravely.

He glanced at Nishijou Satoru and Takeuchi Mayumi.

"Nishijou, protect Mayumi!"

Nishijou Satoru nodded firmly. "Understood, boss! I'll defend Miss Mayumi with my life if necessary."

Behind him stood ten towering figures shrouded in black cloaks, silent and imposing, radiating sinister power.

Phoenixin Ren turned back toward Zhang Yi on the battlefield and launched himself forward!

Crimson patterns flowed across his skin like liquid blood.

From his fingertips, he fired ten glistening blood pearls toward Zhang Yi.

Each orb pulsed with eerie, writhing sigils.

Mid-flight, they transformed into ten flaming ravens!

"[Demon-Subduing Karmic Flames]!"

Seeing Phoenixin Ren personally attack, Zhang Yi's gaze turned deadly serious.

From Deng Shentong's final intelligence transmission, he knew fragments about Phoenixin Ren's abilities.

But the intel remained incomplete.

Similarly, Phoenixin Ren lacked full understanding of Zhang Yi's capabilities.

In a deathmatch between them, the outcome remained uncertain.

Yet retreat wasn't an option for Zhang Yi here.

If he fled, his companions would face indiscriminate slaughter.

So Zhang Yi chose his strategy - stall!

Phoenixin Ren knew about his spatial abilities yet still attacked with these fire ravens, indicating something unusual about them.

Rather than absorb them into his Alternate Dimensional Space, Zhang Yi opened two consecutive Gates to instantly relocate hundreds of meters away.

But the ten fire ravens pursued relentlessly as if possessing sentience.

They would hunt him to the ends of the earth.

Chapter 744: Taking to the Skies

Zhang Yi's heart stirred as he adjusted his microphone to amplify his voice across the entire battlefield.

"In twenty minutes, the Reincarnation Squad from neighboring Linhai City will arrive!"

"We just need to hold out for twenty minutes, and you'll lose for sure!"

"So we won't fight you desperately—because victory is impossible for you!"

Psychological warfare was key.

He wanted to instill urgency in both the Tianlong Pirate Crew and Moon of Corrosion members.

Unexpectedly, Phoenixin Ren shouted coldly: "Then we'll just have to kill you faster! We won't give you any chance to regroup!"

Phoenixin Ren moved like a dragon, darting toward Zhang Yi with lightning speed.

Ten fire crows formed a massive cage in the air, blocking all possible escape routes.

Zhang Yi drew White Owl and began firing at the crows.

The Sacred Silver bullets possessed demon-breaking properties, offering some countermeasure against such creatures.

Bang! Bang!

Two shots, two crows dispersed into nothingness upon impact.

But the momentary delay allowed other crows to close in.

Three fire crows attacked simultaneously from different directions, completely surrounding him.

"What the hell are these things?"

Zhang Yi had no choice but to deploy the Absolute Barrier Between Two Realms to absorb the attacks.

The three phoenix-like creatures dissolved upon entering his Dimensional Space, transforming into bloody mist.

An intensely uncomfortable sensation gripped Zhang Yi's heart.

He clearly felt his Dimensional Space being corroded!

Like three drops of filthy water contaminating pristine seawater, rapidly spreading!

Worse, this wasn't energy-based damage but more like an ability toxin—impossible to expel!

Only the vastness of his Dimensional Space prevented total collapse.

But sustained attacks like this would eventually seal his dimensional gate.

"So this is what killed Deng Shentong!"

Even someone as powerful as Deng Shentong couldn't resist this corrosive ability toxin.

It was essentially toxic fire fueled by supernatural energy!

"Can't take these head-on!"

Zhang Yi remained calm—this amount couldn't shut down his space yet.

But continuous exposure would inevitably disable his ability.

Yet without opening the dimensional gate, he couldn't face Phoenixin Ren's close-quarters assault.

These thoughts flashed instantly as reality allowed no hesitation.

Phoenixin Ren charged with an entire flock of fire crows.

Zhang Yi's left hand flicked, producing another White Owl pistol.

Aiming at Phoenixin Ren, he unleashed a twenty-times accelerated shot!

Phoenixin Ren likewise dodged the hypersonic bullet with an aerial roll.

Seizing this moment, Zhang Yi pressed a button on his wrist.

His Deng Group-specialized captain-grade combat suit expanded at the back, revealing powerful thrusters.

With blue flames erupting backward, he rocketed skyward like a missile!

This technology had existed for half a century.

Originally developed for infantry combat.

But humans proved too clumsy in aerial mobility.

Deploying such equipment just made soldiers easy targets, leading to its obsolescence.

Except in one scenario—when the user needn't fear enemy snipers.

Someone like Zhang Yi, with his Absolute Barrier, perfectly suited this flight system.

He'd long pondered creating a sniper's vantage point on flat terrain.

His visit to the Deng Group provided the answer—flight capability!

So he'd requested their tech department to modify his suit accordingly.

The implementation was simple.

Though extreme cold increased energy consumption, one hour of flight posed no issue.

Thus, an extraordinary spectacle unfolded on the battlefield.

Amidst the ground melee, one figure suddenly shot skyward, leaving the fray behind.

Even Phoenixin Ren gaped upward in shock.

No matter his speed, he couldn't leap high enough to attack Zhang Yi midair.

"Bastard! What's the point of flying so high?"

Phoenixin Ren grinned viciously.

"If you don't come down, I'll just slaughter your precious teammates!"

From his aerial vantage, Zhang Yi surveyed the ant-like figures below.

Only his tactical visor let him discern individual features.

The entire battlefield lay mapped beneath him.

Any gunfire aimed his way got absorbed into his Alternate Dimensional Space.

Then his gaze locked onto a perfect target—

Takeuchi Mayumi, hiding behind a low hill.

"Found you!"

Before dying, Deng Shentong had relayed crucial intelligence to Blizzard City HQ.

Takeuchi Mayumi possessed future-sight capabilities.

This explained how Phoenixin Ren could pinpoint Deng Shentong's location and attacks even when deprived of his five senses.

Meaning—to kill Phoenixin Ren, Mayumi had to die first!

Zhang Yi's right hand flicked, storing White Owl in his dimensional space.

Then he drew his signature weapon—the massive sniper rifle, Thunderbolt!

"Ronin! I'm killing your shrine maiden!"

Zhang Yi laughed loudly.

Phenixin Ren had been moving to attack the Celestial Hound Squad members.

But Zhang Yi's declaration froze him in his tracks.

His intel confirmed one thing—Zhang Yi was a god-tier marksman with extreme-range sniping capability!

Mayumi had to remain near the battlefield.

Only then could she apply her [Blood Bestowal] ability to Phenixin Ren.

This power let the recipient see all enemy movements within a five-second future window from their perspective, enabling preemptive counters.

Otherwise, he'd never have brought her to the battlefield.

Losing Mayumi wouldn't just cripple Phenixin Ren's combat power.

It would reduce Moon of Corrosion to a second-rate team.

By Blizzard City's ability metrics:

With Mayumi's [Blood Bestowal], his ability index reached a terrifying 9,300 points!

But losing that five-second precognition would plummet his rating to 8,500 points.

Any captain-level opponent could easily defeat him then!

Thus, Zhang Yi had seized his Achilles' heel.

Chapter 745: Hostage Exchange

Phoenixin Ren hesitated for a fleeting moment.

Zhang Yi couldn't kill him, but he could kill Takeuchi Mayumi.

This was a consequence he had to carefully consider.

Yet this hesitation lasted barely a second before Phoenixin Ren snapped out of it.

What kind of Moon of Corrosion leader would he be if he got intimidated by Zhang Yi's words?

Moreover, Takeuchi Mayumi wasn't alone right now.

She had Nishijou Satoru protecting her.

Shinguuji Seiichiro suddenly leaped beside him as a massive Blue Bird circled overhead.

"Take the Blue Bird and kill him! We can't afford to waste time here."

"If what he says is true and another investigation team arrives as reinforcements, we're all dead!"

Without wasting words, Phoenixin Ren immediately jumped onto the Blue Bird's back.

Blood blossoms erupted from his fingertips, transforming into dozens of crimson fire ravens that shot straight toward Zhang Yi!

Seeing his threat had failed, Zhang Yi's heart hardened with resolve.

"Fine! Let's see who's more ruthless then!"

"You really think I won't fight back? You little Japs, open your fucking eyes and watch!"

Zhang Yi raised Thunderbolt - that massive white anti-material sniper rifle over two meters long - its thick, elongated barrel aimed directly at Takeuchi Mayumi over three thousand meters away!

Origin Bullet, twenty-fold velocity enhancement, precision shot - this trifecta of power turned an ordinary snipe into a lethal killing intent!

Dozens of karmic fire ravens crashed against Zhang Yi's Absolute Barrier Between Two Realms.

Ignoring them completely, he pulled the trigger.

"BOOM!!"

The deafening roar of the oversized sniper rifle echoed like thunder across the battlefield.

Meanwhile, Nishijou Satoru had anticipated this shot.

With a wave of his hands, ten black-robed figures instantly lined up as human shields before Takeuchi Mayumi!

These were ten Awakener puppets - living corpses he'd created by hollowing out their brains.

Yet each had been formidable Awakeners in life.

Even in death, their mutated cells retained activity, allowing them to wield their former powers.

All they needed was sufficient nourishment.

In essence, they shared a single brain with Nishijou Satoru.

But when those ten puppets stood before Takeuchi Mayumi, a single bullet obliterated the first five instantly!

The next three were pierced through, while the fourth puppet's skull finally stopped the Origin Bullet!

"Hiss!"

Within Zhang Yi's Dimensional Space, dozens of karmic fire ravens began dispersing into toxic mist, corroding his dimensional barrier.

Though troublesome, this erosion couldn't completely destroy his spatial defense.

As his spatial control strengthened, he could now partition space into distinct sectors.

Simply dividing current space into ten thousand fragments and sacrificing one portion to neutralize Phoenixin Ren's toxic energy would suffice.

Zhang Yi calmly reloaded with practiced ease - firearms had long become muscle memory for him.

Yet Nishijou Satoru knew the next bullet would undoubtedly kill Takeuchi Mayumi.

"Leader!!" he shouted desperately.

Phoenixin Ren snapped to awareness. Originally charging forward to ignite his phoenix flames and annihilate Zhang Yi, he suddenly halted.

Instead, he redirected the Blue Bird to intercept Zhang Yi's next Origin Bullet head-on.

Reload. Aim. Fire.

With his five-second precognition, Phoenixin Ren had already witnessed Takeuchi Mayumi's death and the bullet's trajectory.

He positioned himself directly in its path.

"BOOM!"

His crimson lotus-flame-wreathed body and the massive Blue Bird were sent flying hundreds of meters.

A bloody hole gaped in his chest.

Zhang Yi kept Thunderbolt trained on his head: "I warned you not to act rashly! Maybe I can't handle you, but your weak point is another story!"

Phoenixin clutched his bleeding chest.

Bare-chested, his sculpted musculature looked almost deliberately showcased, as if he'd intentionally torn his clothes.

Just as Phoenixin smirked to retort, sudden dizziness struck him.

Realizing what happened, he immediately drove a knifehand strike through his own temple.

Scarlet lotus flames erupted as he resurrected anew.

Zhang Yi inwardly cursed.

"Caught on, did you?"

He produced another bullet shimmering with icy blue light.

This batch of Origin Bullets contained potent anesthetics.

Since he couldn't kill Phoenixin Ren yet, his plan was to sedate then seal him away.

But the man's vigilance proved extreme - at the slightest abnormality, he'd chosen suicide.

Zhang Yi raised Thunderbolt again, aiming unerringly at Phoenixin Ren.

This bullet, Phoenixin couldn't dodge.

Even if he avoided it, Takeuchi Mayumi behind him couldn't.

Both men now stood in terrifying equilibrium.

Zhang Yi knew his rifle alone couldn't kill Phoenixin Ren.

Yet Phoenixin dared not abandon Takeuchi Mayumi to attack recklessly.

Even with that determination, succeeding quickly remained impossible.

Destroying Zhang Yi required first breaching his dimensional gates -

A feat more difficult than Zhang Yi killing Phoenixin multiple times to exhaust his regeneration!

As equals, neither could easily break the other's defenses.

It was then Shinguuji Seiichiro devised a solution.

"Zhang Yi's offensive power isn't exceptional. I'll block his attacks while you kill him!"

With that, he had Golden Maru carry him back to Takeuchi Mayumi.

Of his summoned Shikigami, only the Blue Bird remained for Phoenixin's mobility - the rest were replaced by Golden Maru!

Summoning ten Shikigami simultaneously was his limit.

Golden Maru represented the [Power] archetype among Shikigami - possessing supreme physicality and top-tier defense.

Nine massive golden apes formed an impenetrable sphere around Takeuchi Mayumi, leaving Zhang Yi no openings.

Now unshackled, Phoenixin Ren charged at Zhang Yi again!

"Pah!"

He bit his own wrist, blood vessels rupturing as crimson arcs sprayed through the air -

Transforming into a sky-blotting swarm of flaming ravens!

"Demon-Subduing Karmic Flames: Three Thousand Murderous Crows!"

The colossal murder shrieked with ominous cries as it descended!

Zhang Yi's pupils contracted, white light flashing in his right eye.

"Divine Power!"

Space visibly distorted before him as hundreds of meters ahead were instantly erased!

The karmic fire swarm disintegrated completely, leaving nothing behind!

Chapter 746: Full Metal Jacket

Zhang Yi, Phoenixin Ren, Shinguuji Seiichiro, and Takeuchi Mayumi.

These four individuals had formed a delicate balance.

At the core of it all was Takeuchi Mayumi.

Due to the unique nature of her ability, she couldn't leave the battlefield.

Attempting to rely on physical barriers to defend against Zhang Yi's sniping was utterly impossible.

The only means currently capable of countering a top-tier superhuman sniper were the defensive abilities of other superhumans.

All fortifications, armored vehicles, even mountain terrain—nothing could stop Zhang Yi's shots.

Thus, Shinguuji Seiichiro couldn't leave Takeuchi Mayumi's side and had to protect her personally.

Even with Takeuchi Mayumi's [Blood Bestowal], Phoenixin Ren could only manage to fight Zhang Yi to a standstill on the battlefield.

To put it simply:

Phoenixin Ren's greatest ability was [Undying], while Zhang Yi's [Alternate Dimensional Space] leaned more toward defense.

When these two clashed, it was like two shield-bearers colliding—neither could quickly overcome the other.

But Phoenixin Ren was clearly growing more impatient.

Zhang Yi had mentioned that the Reincarnation Squad was on its way.

If things dragged on like this, the battle would turn very unfavorable for them.

What he didn't know was that Zhang Yi was merely bluffing.

At this point, Zhang Yi didn't fully trust anyone—not even Gao Changkong's promised reinforcements. He wouldn't rely too heavily on them.

His eyes quickly swept across the battlefield as he calculated:

"I've already tied down two of Moon of Corrosion's top combatants and put time pressure on them."

"Combined with home-field advantage, this gives us a natural edge. Now it's just a matter of whether I can kill Phoenixin Ren before my dimensional space gets corrupted by him!"

Currently, he was under Phoenixin Ren's relentless watch.

Neither Phoenixin Ren nor Zhang Yi could make a move against the other members of the Celestial Hound Squad.

When masters dueled, even the slightest distraction could give the opponent a fatal opportunity!

.....

The battle between Zhang Yi and Phoenixin Ren raged fiercely in the skies.

Yet neither could gain the upper hand in a short time.

Meanwhile, the ground battle was equally brutal.

On the Tianhai City allied forces' side, Xiao Honglian, Xing Tian, Old You, and Fatty Xu had secured a strategic high point.

Old You took out the GPW Type 2 anti-materiel sniper rifle Zhang Yi had given him, loaded with Origin Bullets, and began providing sniper support.

At this moment, he was like a pay-to-win player—his superior weaponry posed a massive threat to any superhuman below Delta-level.

Nearly every shot claimed the life of an ordinary pirate or low-level superhuman.

The tremendous recoil caused the ground beneath Old You to crack instantly.

An ordinary person firing this weapon would have their shoulder shattered in one shot, but for Old You, this wasn't an issue at all.

When Kanute noticed this squad, he immediately dispatched one of his captains with over a hundred pirates charging toward them!

Xiao Honglian exchanged glances with Xing Tian.

"We can't break through the main battlefield, so let's help Zhang Yi by cleaning up the mobs on the periphery!"

"My thoughts exactly!"

They were well aware they couldn't compete at the investigation team or Moon of Corrosion's level.

But dealing with pirates? That they could handle.

A milky white glow enveloped Xing Tian as his [Xing Tian Legion] ability empowered the hundred men around him!

Xiao Honglian methodically instructed her subordinates to prepare for the assault!

The gunners behind her climbed onto armored vehicles, their doors swinging open to reveal over a dozen artillery pieces aimed at the incoming pirates.

"Fire!"

At Xiao Honglian's command, the cannons roared in unison!

Yet one of the pirate captains, a one-eyed man, merely sneered.

With a wave of his hands, a transparent gelatinous barrier materialized before the pirates.

Every bullet and shell was harmlessly stopped.

This made even Xiao Honglian's expression turn grave.

This pirate captain was clearly stronger than them!

But then Old You's sniper shot arrived.

The gelatinous barrier couldn't stop the Origin Bullet, which tore right through and struck the captain's body!

"Pfft!"

His upper body exploded instantly, leaving only his legs standing.

The sight left Xiao Honglian and Xing Tian dumbfounded.

Were Origin Bullets really this powerful?

Truthfully, these southern pirates simply didn't understand how Origin Bullets worked.

This cutting-edge military technology from Huaxu's major military districts was specifically designed to counter superhuman abilities.

Especially against emission-type superhumans who lacked strong defenses—they stood no chance.

After killing a pirate captain with one shot, Old You's eyes lit up with excitement.

It had been so long since he'd felt this exhilarated!

Even as a Gamma-level superhuman with limited growth potential, he could still make a difference on the battlefield.

With limited Origin Bullets, Old You couldn't afford to waste them.

He stood up, stowed his sniper rifle, and retrieved a massive black case from a nearby snow vehicle.

Meanwhile, the enraged pirates charged even more fiercely toward their position after losing a captain.

Bullets streaked across the snowy sky toward them!

Xiao Honglian and Xing Tian quickly organized their counterattack.

But in terms of numbers—especially superhuman numbers—they were at a clear disadvantage.

If the pirates closed in and surrounded them, it could mean the end for everyone here!

Just then, Old You's booming voice rang out:

"Everyone step back! Let me handle this!"

When Xing Tian and the others turned to look, the sight made their eyes widen in shock.

Old You was wearing an extremely bizarre outfit.

Rather than clothing, it was more like multiple heavy firearms assembled together into an incredibly weighty and intimidating suit of armor!

This black armored battlesuit had two gatling guns mounted on the arms, micro-cannons on the shoulders, and four rapid-fire machine guns at the waist.

Every other visible part of the suit carried backup heavy weaponry, with ammunition belts wrapped all around his body.

This entire arsenal had to weigh over a thousand pounds!

Old You's legs sank deep into the snow as he moved.

He strode forward, letting the pirates' bullets bounce harmlessly off him like mosquito bites.

Even when heavier firepower did manage to wound him, his body rapidly regenerated.

"Fatty Xu!"

Old You bellowed.

Fatty Xu shouted back: "On it!"

Having worked together many times before, they had excellent coordination.

Fatty Xu immediately activated his [Blizzard] ability, conjuring a massive snowstorm in the pirates' path.

While it lacked killing power, it created utter chaos and obstructed their vision.

Alone, Old You advanced to the front line.

Then, with a mighty roar, he unleashed his arsenal!

Chapter 747: Frenzied Duel

Xing Tian immediately withdrew the full empowerment of his [Xing Tian Legion] ability, channeling all its power into Old You instead.

Though they weren't using Origin Bullets, firearms still maintained formidable lethality against ordinary pirates and low-level superhumans.

Especially this kind of heavy weaponry!

Under Fatty Xu's ability enhancement, the pirates in the blizzard became like lambs to the slaughter.

High-Energy Bullets mercilessly pierced through their bodies, reducing swathes of pirates to mangled flesh in moments.

Old You roared with exhilaration, his heart brimming with savage joy.

This specialized combat suit had naturally been custom-forged for him by Lu Keran at his request.

Xiao Honglian watched as the enemy's battle formations were ruthlessly torn apart, cold killing intent flashing in her eyes.

"Leave the superhumans to us!" she declared.

Old You could handle clearing out most of the small fry.

But many of the pirate officers were formidable superhumans in their own right.

Xiao Honglian and Xing Tian led their own superhumans to the frontlines.

Sure enough, within moments, a dozen pirate captains came charging through the snowstorm toward them!

...

On another battlefield, Daiku Kai Enzu and Baili Changqing had withdrawn to a secluded area far from the main fighting.

Neither wanted any interruptions for this duel.

Daiku Kai Enzu had already activated his beastman transformation, his three-meter-tall Tidal Tiger form resembling some primordial ape-man, every inch of him bulging with explosive muscle!

His massive Tonbogiri spear stood planted in the ground like a battle standard beside him.

Though Baili Changqing was himself a large man, he seemed almost petite in comparison.

"You're Baili Changqing, right?"

Daiku Kai Enzu grinned widely. "I've heard you're one of the Jiangnan Region's top power-type fighters!"

Baili Changqing's eyes darkened.

"You even know about me? Just how much intel do you have on Blizzard City?"

This confirmed his suspicions - Moon of Corrosion had moles within Blizzard City.

Otherwise, there was no way they'd have such detailed information about him and the former Celestial Squad members.

Daiku Kai Enzu laughed heartily. "Want to know? Then come beat it out of me!"

He extended his massive left palm toward Baili Changqing.

"I only respect those stronger than myself. Defeat me, and I'll tell you everything!"

"That is... if you're capable!"

Baili Changqing studied the battle-crazed warrior before him, his expression grave rather than excited.

"Sumo wrestler, you and I are different. I'm a soldier - obedience is my duty."

"Completing missions and defending my homeland - that's my true purpose!"

"So you must die here today!"

With that, Baili Changqing flipped a pill from his pocket straight into his mouth.

"We must win this battle!"

As the Compound-5 dissolved on his tongue, terrifying energy suddenly erupted from Baili Changqing's body!

Crimson vapor, blood-red in hue, seeped from his pores to swirl around him like a deadly aura.

Even for captains, Compound-5 was dangerously unpredictable - not something to use lightly.

But Baili Changqing understood the stakes.

With traitors in Blizzard City, they could rely on no one.

To survive and annihilate Moon of Corrosion required burning all bridges - leaving zero room for retreat.

Even if it cost him his life!

Images flashed through Baili Changqing's mind - Bian Junwu, other fallen comrades - bringing sudden clarity.

"Death is but death," he stated calmly.

This abrupt transformation made even Daiku Kai Enzu's pupils constrict.

A lethal premonition gripped him.

For the first time, he realized Takeuchi Mayumi's prophecies were now useless.

The future was truly unknown.

"Die!"

Before the word finished echoing, Baili Changqing was already before Daiku Kai Enzu.

A devastating straight punch hammered into the sumo warrior's chest!

"BOOM!!"

Caught completely off-guard, Daiku Kai Enzu went flying hundreds of meters, his massive body tumbling across the frozen ground before finally skidding to a stop.

But as he lifted his head, Baili Changqing's boot was already descending toward his face!

Several teeth went flying as Daiku Kai Enzu was kicked airborne like a ragdoll.

"Cheater! You're doping!!"

Daiku Kai Enzu suddenly understood what had happened.

He bellowed in outrage.

For a sumo wrestler, performance enhancers were the ultimate disgrace!

What infuriated him more was that as a ronin, he lacked access to such high-tech augmentations.

"I'm a soldier," Baili Changqing said coldly.

Soldiers weren't martial artists bound by foolish notions of fairness - only results mattered.

In life-or-death combat, survival was the only fairness that counted!

His attacks came relentlessly before Daiku Kai Enzu could even land.

The speed, the power - Daiku Kai Enzu was being toyed with, battered bloody without chance to counter!

"RAAAAAGH!!!"

Daiku Kai Enzu's roar contained utter humiliation and frustration.

Baili Changqing's mocking voice continued in his ears:

"Japanese trash, and here I thought you were tough! Without your little fortune-teller, you're nothing special, are you?"

Over their long preparation, Zhang Yi's team had analyzed Moon of Corrosion's capabilities exhaustively.

To Baili Changqing, Daiku Kai Enzu might as well have been transparent.

Suddenly, realization struck Daiku Kai Enzu.

"The drugs only give temporary strength! If I outlast them, victory is mine!"

With this epiphany, he abandoned thoughts of direct confrontation, turning to flee instead.

For the first time in battle, fear had taken root.

And once fear enters a warrior's heart, no amount of bravado can undo its poison.

"Running? You think you can escape?"

Crimson vapor wreathed Baili Changqing as he intercepted Daiku Kai Enzu with impossible speed.

A whipkick smashed into the sumo's chest!

"THUD!"

Daiku Kai Enzu went flying like a sack of meat.

Blood trickled from his lips.

Yet somehow he managed to regain footing in the snow.

Though Baili Changqing's assault was ferocious, Daiku Kai Enzu's natural padding - hundreds of kilograms of blubber - served as organic armor.

Gritting his teeth, he tightened his grip on Tonbogiri.

If he couldn't match Baili Changqing's speed, he'd have to counterattack through defense!

Chapter 748: The Warrior and the Blade

"Clang!"

The metallic clash echoed across the snowy plains.

The Fangtian Halberd smashed violently against the Tonbogiri spear, generating a terrifying shockwave that instantly flattened all snow and ice within several hundred meters!

Daiku Kai Enzu was sent flying backward, his tiger-mouth grip trembling uncontrollably.

For the first time, he felt his inferiority in raw strength!

Baili Changqing strode across the snowfield, dragging the Fangtian Halberd behind him with one hand.

The halberd's blade scraped against rocky ground, sending sparks flying in its wake.

"You Japanese always try copying everything from Huaxu Nation," he sneered.

"Creating some legendary warrior like Honda Tadakatsu to rival our Three Kingdoms' Lü Bu? Ridiculous!"

"How can a race of dwarves barely reaching one and a half meters tall—shorter than ponies—claim to produce peerless champions?"

Baili Changqing's lips curled in contempt as he glared at the three-meter-tall Daiku Kai Enzu.

"Truly, people flaunt what they lack most."

He'd specifically switched to the Fangtian Halberd to counter Daiku Kai Enzu's Tonbogiri.

Time to teach this upstart how real warriors wielded ancestral weapons!

This was what a true champion's armament looked like!

"Raaaaagh!"

Enraged beyond endurance, Daiku Kai Enzu charged with his Tonbogiri.

"Let me educate you further," Baili Changqing said coldly. "Ancient Huaxu generals settled battles through sheer power! Overwhelming strength decides everything!"

Against absolute might, all else was illusion!

Baili Changqing raised the halberd with both hands and launched his assault!

He had to admit—this former yokozuna possessed exceptional fundamentals.

Whether in combat technique, defense, or endurance, the man was first-rate.

Even while being overpowered, his thick hide and fat layers prevented Baili Changqing from delivering a quick kill.

Those 200+ kilograms of blubber served as perfect natural cushioning.

"Clang! Clang! Clang!"

Halberd and spear collided violently.

Baili Changqing dominated the exchanges, his blade repeatedly slicing across Daiku Kai Enzu's body—only to meet layers of greasy fat instead of blood.

His expression darkened.

If this dragged on until the drug's effects faded, he'd be left severely weakened.

He needed to end this—fast!

Meanwhile, at the central battlefield...

Zhang Yi and Phoenixin Ren's duel remained the focal point.

Though unable to spectate, every soldier silently prayed for their respective leader.

The defeat of either would instantly tilt the entire battle's balance—such was a top-tier superhuman's battlefield supremacy!

Both combatants harbored private doubts.

Neither could gain decisive advantage over the other.

The battle's outcome now hinged on two factors: whether Celestial Hound Squad reinforcements would arrive, and how the other team members fared below.

Chaos had long since engulfed the battlefield.

Zhang Yi never anticipated being backstabbed by the joint forces of Moon of Corrosion and Tianlong Pirate Crew.

Conversely, Moon of Corrosion found their precognitive edge nullified by Zhang Yi's presence—Takeuchi Mayumi's prophetic abilities were completely sealed.

None could predict the battle's trajectory.

Zhang Yi especially had demonstrated power exceeding all expectations.

The two hovered midair, exchanging rapid fire. Zhang Yi wielded his dual White Owl pistols, evading Phoenixin's close-quarters assaults.

Forced to rely on his Hellfire Crows for attrition, Phoenixin watched helplessly as Zhang Yi picked them off one by one with Origin Bullets and Sacred Silver rounds.

Simultaneously, both arrived at the same conclusion—if they couldn't kill each other, they'd slaughter each other's subordinates!

Zhang Yi's gaze swept across the battlefield, lingering on distant figures—Daiku Kai Enzu, Tsukamoto Nobunaga, and the Tianlong Pirates' Western Squadron Captain Kanute.

"Using Thunderbolt against them directly would be difficult... but a well-placed snipe during their fights could work."

Just as this thought formed, he sensed malicious eyes targeting Liang Yue and Yang Xinxin.

His brow furrowed as he turned to Phoenixin Ren—now wearing a sinister grin.

"Those two women following you everywhere... they're yours, aren't they?"

Rage flared in Zhang Yi's chest.

Nobody touched his people!

Yet he betrayed no emotion.

Showing anger would only make them bigger targets.

"Just subordinates," he said coolly. "Planning to kill them?"

His lips curved into a mocking smile as he glanced toward Takeuchi Mayumi.

"How about we trade kills? You take mine, I take yours?"

Phoenixin's smirk vanished.

Takeuchi Mayumi wasn't just a comrade—she was his strategic lynchpin.

"Think you can bypass Shinguuji?" he challenged.

"Only one way to find out."

Distorted light swirled in Zhang Yi's right eye—Divine Power could activate anytime.

Should Shinguuji Seiichiro intervene, the consequences remained unpredictable.

Even if he succeeded, the price would be catastrophic.

Phoenixin pulled his hat lower, hiding his eyes.

He weighed the risks—was this gamble worth taking?

But the potential loss paralyzed him.

Losing Takeuchi Mayumi meant losing everything—plummeting from elite superhuman to second-rate nobody.

Too steep a wager.

Meanwhile, Zhang Yi's mind crystallized around a daring, perilous plan.

Yet as no risk-taker, he waited—for the perfect moment to strike.

Elsewhere on the battlefield...

Liang Yue faced Tsukamoto Nobunaga in a duel of master bladesmen.

Tsukamoto wielded Daihannya Nagamitsu—a legendary katana with glorious history, once borne by Japan's greatest swordsmen, even those revered as Sword Saints.

Liang Yue's weapon was Longming—a modern-made tang dao forged from Adamantine Metal.

Straight, slender, razor-sharp yet weighty, it resembled Tsukamoto's blade but weighed over twice as much.

In Huaxu's military history, blades were battlefield tools designed to cleave through armor—thus requiring heft.

Japanese samurai, however, prioritized dueling agility. Their one-on-one duel culture favored lighter, faster blades.

Chapter 749: A Single Move Between Martial Arts Masters

The two stood facing each other across a hundred meters of snow-covered ground.

Snowflakes swirled through the air, and the earth was blanketed in white—a scene that held a certain tragic beauty.

For the first time, a glint of battle lust appeared in Tsukamoto Nobunaga's dead fish eyes.

Never before in previous fights had he felt this level of seriousness and excitement.

Because from Liang Yue's every movement, he could sense she was a top-tier master!

In this era of martial arts decline, true masters were rare.

True martial artists never neglected their training, practicing daily until every motion carried the shadow of their techniques.

For the first time, Nobunaga straightened his posture in proper samurai fashion and introduced himself to Liang Yue.

"Nitenn Ichi-ryū Menkyo Kaiden, Tsukamoto Nobunaga!"

"My weapon: Daihannya Nagamitsu!"

He raised his long katana horizontally with his left hand.

Seeing this, Liang Yue also stood solemnly.

"Liang Yue, inheritor of the Peng Family's Five Tigers Gate-Severing Saber. This blade is named Dragon's Roar."

Liang Yue had studied numerous martial arts. Her grandfather Liang Baoguo was a master of whip techniques and founder of the Primordial Form-Intent Taiji School.

However, this style wasn't widely recognized by mainstream martial artists.

Later, Liang Yue became proficient in multiple disciplines.

Her specialty with single saber came from the Peng Family's Five Tigers Gate-Severing Saber.

This technique was often mentioned in wuxia novels, usually as a skill used by cannon fodder characters.

But in reality, this saber art genuinely existed and was renowned in martial circles.

Liang Yue had trained in it for fifteen years.

She later won the national martial arts championship in single saber—though this wasn't particularly remarkable.

After introductions, silence fell.

Both adopted identical opening stances—iaido!

The draw cut technique, iaido.

Extremely effective in duels, as drawing from the sheath allowed for maximum speed.

Nobunaga hadn't expected Liang Yue to mirror his stance.

He mocked, "A Huaxian martial artist using our Nippon swordsmanship?"

Liang Yue calmly retorted, "Did Nippon have no blades of its own? You copied our Tang swords to create these battlefield failures."

Proficient in various martial arts beyond Huaxian traditions—jiujitsu, Krav Maga, Muay Thai, iaido—

Liang Yue excelled at synthesizing strengths from all schools.

Whatever worked, she used, pure pragmatism.

Her barb sharpened Nobunaga's glare.

Verbal sparring aimed to disrupt focus.

But clearly, Liang Yue wouldn't be easily shaken.

Nobunaga took a deep breath.

Celestial Origin Domain activated around him!

A fifty-meter radius became his special territory!

Within this space, his blade could strike anything instantly!

Meanwhile, Liang Yue slowly closed her eyes.

State of Void!

Her mind became utterly still.

No fear, no hesitation—only unity between woman and blade under heaven.

Both waited for the perfect moment to strike.

Yet each found the other's defenses flawless, making further waiting pointless.

Almost simultaneously, they attacked!

Boots crunched snow as both shot forward like loosed arrows—whoosh!—

Before bodies met, sword auras already sliced through air, murderous intent saturating space!

A single slash that dimmed heaven and earth!

Two white flashes crossed—snow erupted violently, the massive saber beams starkly visible like missing segments of reality itself.

First exchange: inconclusive. Neither gained advantage.

Nobunaga's blade was faster, but Liang Yue's struck harder!

Her delayed-yet-first strike used weapon strength to deflect his aura.

Nobunaga closed his eyes—Liang Yue now stood within his domain.

Yet what he perceived wasn't a person, only a slender Tang saber!

"No-Self state! Truly a master!"

His grin widened, verging on madness.

"I've never crossed blades with a Huaxian swordmaster before! Every so-called expert I've met was a fraud!"

"To encounter you here—what fortune!"

Liang Yue's right hand spun an expert flourish before slashing backhanded.

"Your misfortune, meeting me!"

One a martial fanatic, the other a prodigy trained since childhood—both peerless with blades—

Their clash became extraordinarily intense!

After scientific enhancement from the Deng Family, Liang Yue now possessed vice-captain level strength.

No special abilities—just heightened senses and physicality.

For others, this might merely make a decent Delta-level combatant.

But for a martial grandmaster? A tremendous upgrade!

Five Tigers Gate-Severing Saber—limbs and heads flew with every vicious stroke!

Saber energy crisscrossed the battlefield as their movements blurred beyond perception.

Only afterimages darted through snowflakes while surrounding trees and boulders split with mirror-smooth cuts.

Clang!

They passed each other, blades screeching sparks.

Then Nobunaga suddenly drew a short sword from his robe—

Ayanokouji Tantou!

Exploiting Liang Yue's unbalanced footing, he hurled the dagger at her back!

Detecting the threat, Liang Yue's saber flashed up to deflect it—

Creating the opening Nobunaga needed.

Gripping Daihannya Nagamitsu with both hands, he traced a slow circular arc.

No one saw the actual draw.

Just hundreds of sword lights instantly enveloping Liang Yue, sealing all escape routes!

Secret Technique: Swallow Reversal.

An enhanced version of Sasaki Kojirō's legendary move—said to strike even swallows mid-flight.

In the hands of superhuman Nobunaga, this technique could intercept even Zhang Yi's sniper shots!

Facing this killing stroke, Liang Yue's expression turned grave.

Unavoidable.

Then... don't avoid it!

Instead of retreating, she charged straight into the blades!

This shocked even Nobunaga wide-eyed.

The technique's creator never imagined someone lunging into the storm!

Swallow Reversal's arcs shredded Liang Yue's reinforced combat suit, her fair skin, her arm—

So what?

Traditional martial arts lineages saw countless serious injuries during sparring.

As Nobunaga's technique reached its limit, her saber became a white ribbon sweeping upward!

An arm soared skyward—crimson blood splashed snow like blooming plum blossoms before quickly darkening.

Chapter 750 Angel Wings

On the vast snow-covered ground, Liang Yue and Nobunaga separated once more.

After a near-death struggle, both decided to adjust their conditions before continuing their battle.

However, both had already sustained significant injuries.

Liang Yue's right arm was pierced through, blood dripping steadily from the wound.

Meanwhile, Nobunaga's left arm had been completely severed!

At first glance, Liang Yue seemed to have the upper hand—but appearances were deceiving.

Though Nobunaga lost his left arm, his right hand could still wield his blade.

Losing an arm would disrupt his balance, however, greatly reducing his speed in subsequent attacks.

Liang Yue's right arm, pierced straight through the bone, hung limp at her side.

She had no choice but to switch to her left hand.

Though skilled with dual blades and capable of fighting effectively with her left, it still couldn't match her dominant right.

In battles between martial masters, life and death often hinged on a single strike.

Their duel was far deadlier than the clash between Baili Changqing and Daiku Kai Enzu.

— —

Across the battlefield, fierce combat raged everywhere.

Beyond the three main battles involving Zhang Yi, the fighting grew even more chaotic.

The Celestial Hound Squad, led by Wu Di and Ye He, was tasked with handling the numerous Tianlong Pirate Crew members and several Moon of Corrosion fighters.

Yang Xinxin, mounted atop Hua Hua, also fought within this skirmish.

Kanute's Western Squadron had once possessed formidable combat strength, with Kanute himself rivaling a deputy captain of the investigation team.

However, after taking a direct hit from Zhang Yi's Void Sphere, he sustained severe injuries.

Now, leading his subordinates against the Celestial Hound Squad, he could no longer fight at full capacity.

Soon, the ordinary grunts were mostly cleared out.

Only the empowered remained!

The other empowered within the pirate crew were no match for the well-trained and heavily armed Celestial Hound Squad.

But Kanute himself was an entirely different beast.

A rare marine-type beastman, his transformed state took the form of a colossal blue shark—fifteen meters long and weighing over a hundred tons, making him a living weapon of mass destruction!

Coupled with his ability to move freely through any medium, he could attack with terrifying agility even across snowy terrain.

Even Celestial Hound Squad members were sent flying by his assaults.

By his side fought two lieutenants:

First Mate Quito Sang, a unique-type empowered whose ability allowed him to transform his body into unbreakable chains.

Second Mate Shan Chai, a beastman-type empowered with electric eel traits, capable of swimming through ice and discharging high-voltage currents.

Together with Kanute, they clashed head-on against the Celestial Hound Squad.

Also fighting alongside them were Moon of Corrosion members Sakuraba Yoshimitsu and Kurosawa Aga.

The battle between the top-tier fighters was not something they could interfere with—daring to intervene would mean instant annihilation.

Hundreds of other pirates lingered at the edges, but their impact on the battlefield was minimal.

On the Celestial Hound Squad's side, Wu Di and Ye He led the frontline suppression.

Against Kanute—a monstrous foe with near-impenetrable offense and defense—their attacks proved largely ineffective.

"Focus fire on his weak points! Aim for the gills! Target the gills!" Wu Di shouted, summoning massive floating cannons in his hands before unleashing a devastating beam toward Kanute.

The searing light tore through the air—only for Kanute to effortlessly dive beneath the snow, evading the blast.

Seconds later, a gaping maw erupted from beneath Wu Di's feet, threatening to swallow him whole!

Wu Di's blood ran cold as he stared into that abyss of teeth.

Luckily, Xue Miao activated his Godspeed Technique and yanked him to safety at the last moment.

As he retreated, Xue Miao tossed two high-explosive grenades straight into the shark's mouth.

Kanute snapped his jaws shut—then let out a muffled *thump* from his stomach.

"*Burp!*"

A puff of black smoke escaped his mouth as his massive eyes gleamed with mocking amusement.

The attack had barely tickled him.

"Hunting... begins now!"

He submerged into the earth, his towering dorsal fin protruding above the snow like a blade.

The ground rippled like water beneath him.

Every person standing atop it had become potential prey.

Just the sight of that fin alone was enough to paralyze men with dread.

Wu Di, still shaken from his near-death experience, broke into cold sweat.

Had Kanute not been grievously wounded earlier by Zhang Yi, devouring them would've been as easy as eating cupcakes.

The Tianlong Pirate Crew's captain was no ordinary foe.

But now... how were they supposed to defeat him?

Perched atop a high vantage point, Hua Hua watched the battlefield unfold with keen amber eyes.

From within its thick fur peeked Yang Xinxin's delicate, doll-like face.

Her gaze drifted skyward, where Zhang Yi and Phoenixin Ren's dazzling battle raged.

She couldn't intervene in that clash—not yet.

For now, the greatest threat was Kanute in his monstrous shark form.

Yang Xinxin gently stroked Hua Hua's head.

"Watch closely. Memorize his movements."

"Mrrow."

Hua Hua's pupils dilated as it stared downward.

Such a big fish!

Its whiskers twitched with feline instinct—though this particular fish was slightly oversized.

Behind Yang Xinxin, a six-winged angel slowly materialized.

Its face bore a bizarre expression—simultaneously laughing and weeping, as if embodying every human emotion at once.

Even stranger were its wings, each pair a different color:

One pair crimson as blood.

One pair azure as the sea.

One pair black as ink.

"Find him. Pinpoint his location." Yang Xinxin murmured.

The angel lifted a longbow in its left hand while plucking a blue feather from its wing with the right.

The feather elongated into a sleek arrow, its fletching still retaining delicate plumage.

Moments later, Kanute erupted from the earth, jaws wide—this time aiming straight for Lu Yinghao!

Lu Yinghao paled. Even with adrenaline surging through his veins, he couldn't outpace Kanute's lunge.

CHOMP!

Kanute swallowed him whole.

Yang Xinxin's eyes sharpened.

Her angel drew its bowstring taut—then released the blue-feathered arrow straight at Kanute's bulk!

THUNK!

The arrow embedded itself shallowly into Kanute's scales, failing to pierce through his thick hide.

Kanute spared Yang Xinxin a dismissive glance before ignoring her entirely.

Unless she possessed firepower rivaling a deputy captain's, penetrating his defenses was impossible.

If he couldn't withstand Zhang Yi's Void Sphere, did they really think the rest of the Celestial Hound Squad stood a chance?

Just as Kanute prepared to mock his foes, his expression suddenly twisted.

He lurched—then violently vomited Lu Yinghao back out!

Drenched in slime, Lu Yinghao landed awkwardly but quickly regained his footing, flashing a smug grin at the giant shark.

"Try eating me again, idiot. I'm *literally* poison."