

## U. Warlord 1221

### Chapter 1221: Sparring Advice

Zhu immediately invoked her authority as ruler of the world to isolate the fight between Zhang Lie and Fang Yi. Transparent barriers of energy partitioned them from the outside world and prevented their attacks from reaching those outside.

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

Fang Yi's spear took on the aspect of a dragon of the winds and a storm tiger as he charged forward.

Wind and storm roared around him, and his spear resonated with his genetic energy. The spear which the king of chaos had granted him demonstrated shocking strength, infusing chaotic energy into the mix.

"Very good. You've improved significantly from before, and the king of chaos' spear is an invaluable weapon. Unfortunately, it's not enough." Zhang Lie struck casually, but somehow still more quickly than Fang Yi.

Despite the relative languidity of his actions, Zhang Lie's technique struck Fang Yi first. As temporal energy surrounded him, he extended a finger and flicked the tip of Zhang Yi's spear, dissipating the wind and storm around it. The tip of the spear, which could even penetrate space, was apparently no match for Zhang Lie's finger. The spear flew out of his hands, spun a few times in the air, and then stuck into the ground.

Zhang Lie stepped forward as Fang Yi's field of vision suddenly shifted upward. The next thing he knew, he was looking up at the sky.

Fang Yi reacted in the blink of an eye. Zhang Lie had thrown him into the air, so he somersaulted and recalled the spear into his hand.

"[Shadow and Light]!"

Fang Yi's appearance blurred into a hundred clones. Spear thrusts and strikes came toward Zhang Lie from every direction.

A spear penetrated Zhang Lie—but it turned out to be an afterimage.

Even so, the afterimage seemed to be able to speak. "You've improved your understanding of time as well. Not bad indeed."

Fang Yi wasn't the hunter he had been in the second realm. He had suffered dramatically at Zhang Lie's hands because of the latter's improved understanding of time, and he had worked with Yang Ze to shore up his weakness in that regard.

"[Heaven's Judgment]!"

Wind and storm combined and crackled at the tip of Fang Yi's spear, and a dragon's howl echoed resoundingly in the air. As he manipulated his spear, a fusillade of lightning shot through the arena. The combination of wind and lightning generated a frightening force that seemed to be able to penetrate space.

Even so, Zhang Lie frowned. "Is this all you've got?"

This technique was stronger than the last that Fang Yi had demonstrated, but to Zhang Lie, it still wasn't of sufficient strength.

Again, Zhang Lie extended a finger and dissipated the wind and storm surrounding the spear—but this time, Fang Yi suddenly accelerated.

"[Floating Clouds]!" The wind and lightning formed a loop around Fang Yi's body. Wind and storm surged throughout the loop, providing explosive strength that pushed back Zhang Lie's finger.

"Interesting."

That single confrontation had been sufficient to demonstrate Fang Yi's improvement and progress; he had grown far beyond the version of himself from the second realm.

Reaching Zhang Lie's level of strength had been Fang Yi's goal, and Fang Yi had been steadily growing stronger ever since.

Even Zhang Lie had to admit Fang Yi's strength now.

Pale blue energy surrounded Zhang Lie, dissipating the chaotic mix of wind and storm. Zhang Lie reached out and gripped the tip of Fang Yi's spear, lifting it up and Fang Yi along with it.

"[Born of Lightning, Swallowed by the Wind]!"

As Fang Yi shouted, his spear traced a half-moon in the air, surrounded by an aura of time. Light and shadow flashed by its tip, just like the wind and lightning that made up the core of Fang Yi's techniques. The spear pierced space abruptly, spawning a rift that turned its surroundings gray. All movement was locked in time.

The only color in the space, the only movement, came from Fang Yi.

Within the temporal domain, Zhang Lie snorted.

The gray world shattered in an instant, sending Fang Yi flying out and tumbling across the ground. He was unable to maintain his grip on his spear, which fell embedded to the ground. It quivered visibly before remaining in place.

Zhang Lie beckoned at Fang Yi. "Well, that's the warm-up. Show me your strongest attack."

Fang Yi wiped at the sweat beading on his forehead and nodded. "Right, I suppose this level of technique isn't enough against you, Captain. Well, be careful."

"[Wheel of Time]!"

Fang Yi's spear took on the aspects of time and age. Temporal winds buffeted the spear, and a mysterious light began to circle the spear like lightning.

A wheel of light appeared behind Fang Yi, taking on the form of a clock.

The members of Team Zenith were watching the fight from within the pocket of isolated space. Yang Ze critiqued, "Fang Yi has improved significantly, but he's still visibly weaker than our captain."

Li Feng nodded. "Our captain called it a warm-up, but it clearly wasn't one for either of them."

Jun Jiuxiao seemed perplexed. "Really? Both of them seem to be in the thick of things..."

Zhang Hanxiang cried out, "Are you blind? It's obvious that my brother has the advantage! Fang Yi's attacks haven't landed a single time. If my brother wanted to, he could have defeated Fang Yi easily. This is just a training match."

Li Feng elaborated, "I said that this wasn't a warm-up for either of them. Look at our captain—he hasn't even moved a single step, and this can hardly be considered a warm-up for him. On the other hand, Fang Yi's been sent flying twice. It's way more than a warm-up for him, but he just doesn't want to admit it."

A clock began to toll in the pocket dimension.

Zhang Lie put both hands to his back, waiting patiently as Fang Yi took the opportunity to manifest a few wheels of time.

Then, he struck.

Five wheels of time were layered to his back, and he moved at astonishing speed.

"[Floating Clouds]!"

It looked as though Fang Yi had morphed into lightning itself. Storms rose up all around him, and he left a flurry of afterimages behind. Fang Yi's figure darted back and forth among his afterimages, causing even the members of Team Zenith to lose track of where he was. It was difficult to imagine from which direction Fang Yi would attack.

Zhang Lie remained calm and placid, waiting for Fang Yi to strike.

As another wheel of time appeared on Fang Yi's back, he made his move.

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

Fang Yi's spear took on the aspect of a dragon of the winds and a storm tiger as he charged forward. Wind and storm combined and crackled at the tip of Fang Yi's spear, and a dragon's howl echoed resoundingly in the air.

All the afterimages struck simultaneously, making it difficult to distinguish an illusion of the attack from the real thing.

The combination of wind and lightning generated a frightening force that seemed to be able to penetrate space, as though the spear had transformed into an electric saw.

With six wheels of time to his back and chaotic energy infusing him, Fang Yi was so strong that the pocket space that Zhu had set up was starting to crack. Wind and storm buffeted all the spectators.

Chapter 1222: Merciless

The members of Team Zenith all protected themselves. Sun Xiaowu's body flared with golden light, Sun Mengmeng clad herself in black flames, Li Feng's skin glowed silver, Yang Ze was surrounded by mirrored refractions, his body seemingly isolated in space, and Zhou Ying grew thick roots from underneath her feet to cover her up.

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

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

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

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

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

The explosion shattered space and sent waves of force rippling all around it. Like a rampaging beast, it devoured everything nearby, shattering space and swallowing up all life in its vicinity. Fang Yi was sent flying into the distance and smashed into one of the barriers that Zhu had erected, cracking it as he was flung into it hard enough to leave an impression of his body behind.

Fang Yi fell to the ground and sucked in a breath. "Argh, it hurts! Captain, you really are merciless, aren't you?"

Zhang Lie rolled his eyes. "If I hadn't held back, you would be coughing blood now."

The difference between Fang Yi and Zhang Lie was evident—not just from five emperor gene fragments, but also in terms of combat experience and application of genetic energy. Through their fighting in the third realm, the members of Team Zenith were growing more and more mature, but so too was Zhang Lie.

Zhu restored the shattered barrier.

Zhang Lie grumbled, "Alright, enough nonsense. Surely this isn't the limit of your strength?"

Fang Yi shook his limbs, consumed a vial of Zhou Ying's restorative, and manifested a seventh wheel of time. He rushed forward, his body half-morphing into lightning. Wind wrapped around him; he moved so quickly that even the members of Team Zenith gaped.

Under the boost afforded by seven wheels of time, Fang Yi dashed forward so quickly he seemed like a beam of light, at a rate almost too fast to be caught by the human eye. He appeared by Zhang Lie's side in an instant.

Zhang Lie struck to his right, shocking the members of Team Zenith. Fang Yi clearly seemed to be coming at him from the left—but then they suddenly saw Zhang Lie's palm slam down.

Fang Yi spun in mid-air, thrusting forward with the spear Chaos. His initial advance from the left was merely misdirection; his actions were so swift that even the members of Team Zenith, who were watching intently, couldn't react in time—Fang Yi's afterimage seemed to remain by Zhang Lie's left flank.

It looked as though Fang Yi was attacking from two different directions simultaneously, but the shocking thing was that Zhang Lie was actually capable of predicting this sort of attack in advance.

Zhang Lie pushed aside the haft of Fang Yi's spear, then punched forward with a fist with his other hand.

"[Stormwind Kick]!"

Fang Yi kicked forward, his legs imbued with wind and storm.

As fist and legs clashed, Fang Yi was sent flying into the distance. An eighth wheel of time manifested. Howling winds revolved around him in mid-air, stabilizing him and draining his backward momentum.

"Use your strongest technique, the one you demonstrated against the king of chaos," Zhang Lie commanded.

"Very well. Be careful, Captain!"

Fang Yi didn't hold back. If he refrained from doing so, he wouldn't be able to hurt Zhang Lie at all.

"[Born of Lightning, Swallowed by the Wind], [Tiger's Howl, Dragon's Bellow], [Heaven's Judgment]!"

Fang Yi broke through the constraints of time and returned to the frozen world of gray, with him the only spot of color within. In this state, he was able to simultaneously manifest different techniques at the same time.

Wind and storm combined and crackled at the tip of Fang Yi's spear, imbuing it with sharpness and penetrating strength beyond measure.

Fang Yi compressed that energy again and again, until even the space around the spear started getting sucked in. The tip of the spear punched through space as though it were nothing more than paper.

The combination of elemental, temporal, and spatial energy at the tip of the spear multiplied the strength of Fang Yi's attack beyond what should have been possible.

Chaotic energy swirled over the spear.

Fang Yi combined [Born of Lightning, Swallowed by the Wind], [Tiger's Howl, Dragon's Bellow], and [Heaven's Judgment]—elements, time, space, and chaotic energy.

All these sources of energy were stacked together, like buff after buff.

A dragon of purple lightning and tiger of green wind, shielded by a barrier of time and shrouded by black spatial energy, slowly began to manifest. Storm winds were sucked into the mix.

Wind and storm combined with space and time, a whole new combination.

A spatial rift began to form where Fang Yi was standing, but the frozen world prevented it from breaking out immediately.

The energy of chaos, which had the ability to destroy anything, spun amidst the howling winds.

Formless lightning flashed over the surface of Fang Yi's spear, gathering near its tip. The dragon of winds and lightning tiger prowled about the spear.

Part of the energy from the spatial rift seeped into the lightning-attuned genetic energy, turning it into void lightning.

The pitch-black lightning began to spike and sizzle.

In combination with the spatial rift that was forming, the void lightning tore apart the space around Fang Yi, causing the frozen world of gray to crumble bit by bit.

The manifold energies merged and tangled with each other, space and time, wind and storm, beginning and end.

Fang Yi sent a stream of each type of energy swirling and corkscrewing around the tip of his spear.

As the forces continued to revolve around each other, the wheels of time behind Fang Yi began rotating more and more quickly as the space around him was strained to its utmost.

Chapter 1223: Reinforced Space

Seeing that Fang Yi was about to release his ultimate attack, the members of Team Zenith immediately reared back in shock.

Sun Xiaowu shouted urgently, "Zhu, quick, strengthen the barriers you've put down—and protect us all!"

The members of Team Zenith had seen Fang Yi use his ultimate multiple times before, and they were well aware that the shockwaves that resulted in the aftermath of the attack were sufficient to cause them headaches.

Zhu immediately reinforced the barriers to prevent Fang Yi's attack from affecting the outside world.

Sun Xiaowu's body flared with golden light, and golden runes appeared over his body. He used [Adamantine Aegis] immediately.

"[Blinding Flash: Hundredfold Echo]!"

Sun Xiaowu's body split into hundreds of clones, each bearing resplendent golden runes. They gathered around the members of Team Zenith, forming a human barricade.

Sun Mengmeng waved a hand before her, adding a ring of flame to the barrier.

Li Feng radiated silver light, and illusory silver dragons coiled around the members of Team Zenith.

Refracted light shone around Yang Ze, who waved a hand and isolated the members of Team Zenith from the pocket dimension.

Zhang Hanxiang released a chilly frost, adding a layer of ice as a barrier against Fang Yi's attack.

Zhou Ying's long hair fluttered in the wind, the color of crystalline jade. It gave off motes of vitality. She was so beautiful no one could take their eyes away, and golden leaves whirled around her. The tips of her hair produced gray fog.

Concentrated natural energy and vitality flowed through her fingertips.

"[Avatar of the Fae: Dance of the Earth Dragon]!"

Zhou Ying released all her stored vitality at once, causing the ground to quake as thousands of jade-green wood dragons rushed out of the earth.

The members of Team Zenith were wrapped up by layer after layer of dragons.

The members of Team Zenith layered their defenses one over the other, Sun Xiaowu's golden clones as the innermost layer, followed by Li Feng's silver dragons, Zhou Ying's wood dragons, Zhang Hanxiang's ice, Sun Mengmeng's black flames, and then Yang Ze's spatial isolation.

These layered defenses were no joke at all. Strong though Fang Yi's ultimate attack was, if they could still be hurt despite this many layer of defenses, they would be the joke instead.

"[Syzygy]!"

Hong Xi's eyes glowed. Her left eye morphed into a black sun, and her right eye into a silver moon. To her back, a pitch-black sun and a silver moon rose into the air. Their light illuminated the sky. The black sun and silver moon were linked by a golden thread, which brought them into proximity with each other.

The black sun and silver moon began to merge. The black sun turned a deep red, and the silver moon a rusty red.

The two celestial bodies overlapped, the silver moon taking on a blue sheen.

As they overlapped perfectly, the moon absorbed the black sunlight and transformed into a fully realized pale blue moon.

The moon materialized behind Hong Xi's back. Its light wasn't cold or chilly, but rather warm and nurturing. The members of Team Zenith found their strength enhanced multiple times over. The black flames burned ever more brightly, the golden light was more blinding, the illusory dragons solidified, and the wood dragons' vitality magnified.

The members of Team Zenith were shocked by Hong Xi's newly displayed capabilities.

Hong Xi smiled in response.

This was another means of employing the combination of [Eclipse] and [Black Sun]—not only to weaken enemies and strengthen yourself, but all your allies as well.

The flaming-red sun and pale blue moon were the two different methods of invoking [Syzygy].

There was an even more intricate and advanced version of the technique that involved weakening herself to strengthen her allies to an extreme degree, but Hong Xi had never had an opportunity to try it out.

Ever since [Eclipse] and [Black Sun] merged, Hong Xi had been fighting on the front lines, and the advanced version of the technique hadn't been worthwhile to invoke.

Zhang Lie didn't make fun of the members of Team Zenith for turtling up; Fang Yi's ultimate technique was certainly strong enough to be worth taking seriously.

In this life, Fang Yi was far stronger than in the past.

The Fang Yi of Zhang Lie's past life didn't have limit gene fragments during the third realm, and because he hadn't been swept into all sorts of incidents due to Zhang Lie's involvement, all he knew was [Heaven's Judgment].

For the Fang Yi of this life to have created such a ridiculous stacking technique was incredible.

"The king of chaos has really left me something troublesome..."

Fang Yi's original sixfold strike had been troublesome enough, but now he had a spear forged of chaotic energy by the king of chaos himself. When Fang Yi fought, that energy would seep into his technique, transforming his ultimate into a sevenfold strike. Fang Yi's ultimate essentially scaled multiplicatively with every additional source of energy he used, so the amount by which his new spear magnified his attack meant that even Zhang Lie had to be wary.

Fang Yi had combined seven different forms of energy: wind and lightning; their advanced counterparts, spatial rifts and void lightning; the fundamental forces of space and time; and chaos.

Dragon-like lightning, tiger-like storm, formless time, timeless space—those four disparate energies combined into a cohesive whole, tied together by a dark gold thread. The energies revolved around each other, summoning a howling gale surrounding a spatial rift.

Part of the energy from the spatial rift seeped into the lightning-attuned genetic energy, turning it into void lightning.

The pitch-black lightning spiked and sizzled.

In combination with the spatial rift that was forming, the void lightning tore apart the space around Fang Yi, causing the frozen world of gray to crumble bit by bit.

All that energy, linked by the karmic power that Fang Yi had manifested, led to an unbelievably complex combination.

Even before the attack was released, the pocket space was already shaking tremendously.

However, Fang Yi's technique suddenly stalled—the energy of chaos and spacetime failed to combine properly.

The reason Fang Yi's technique had gone off smoothly the previous few times was because there was no conflict between wind and storm with time and space. Time and space were compatible concepts, and wind and storm were physical phenomena that were subordinate to the higher-level concepts of time and space.

However, chaos was a high-level concept as well, and one that Fang Yi hadn't mastered.

The chaotic energy, which didn't truly belong to Fang Yi himself, but rather to the spear which the king of chaos had gifted him, stood at the forefront of all other concepts along with karma, time, and space.

#### Chapter 1224: Breaking Through Barriers

The pocket space shook so violently that, even before Fang Yi launched his attack, it was already full of cracks. Even the members of Team Zenith were affected despite being further removed from the arena.

If the energy had belonged to Fang Yi himself, he might have been able to rein it in—but that wasn't the case.

The clash between the energy of chaos and that of time and space caused the wheels of time on Fang Yi's back to shatter one after another. His spear vibrated ceaselessly, and huge quantities of chaotic energy gushed out.

Fang Yi was no longer the Fang Yi he had been within the halls of chaos, and neither was he the same Fang Yi who had faced Ghroth. He now had maxed monarch gene fragments, and while he had originally been able to control his attack to some degree, the outburst of chaotic energy destabilized his control. His hands began to shake.

The eight wheels of time cracked, and the energies began to meld together uncontrollably.

All around Fang Yi, space and time began to splinter and crack. Unusual pitch-black thorn-like protrusions appeared by the edges of Fang Yi's vision, seeming to skewer space.

The skin on his arms cracked. Veins protruded from his forehead and his arms turned bright red.

Fang Yi was familiar with this behavior, which he had encountered countless times in practice. Rather than panic, he howled as he struck with the potent mix of energy he had created, forcing the unstable energy outward.

The entire world seemed to come to a standstill at that moment. A howling storm, void lightning, mysterious temporal charge, the wind of ages—the mishmash of elements exploded.

Yang Ze's spatial isolation was incapable of withstanding the resulting shockwaves and cracked immediately, while Sun Mengmeng's firewall began to fluctuate violently.

[The Boundless Blade: Expulsion]!"

Zhang Lie extended his pointer finger like a sword, and water-attuned genetic energy gathered around it. As he waved his finger, sword energy erupted like a wave, accompanied by a giant shark, tearing apart the storm formed by the sevenfold energy.

Resilient though Sun Mengmeng's black flames might be, even they couldn't withstand the aftershock caused by the clash of attacks. Zhang Hanxiang's wall of ice also shattered, and the hundreds of wood dragons that Zhou Ying had summoned fell to the ground in a pile of branches and vines.

Zhou Ying continued infusing vitality into her summons, replenishing the vines that had broken off and restoring the branches to maintain their defense.

The sword energy pierced through the storm. By the time Fang Yi came to his senses, Zhang Lie's finger was right by his throat. Fang Yi couldn't help but swallow a gulp of saliva.

Zhang Lie retracted his finger and clasped both hands behind his back once more.

Fang Yi exhaled. "I really can't beat you, Captain."

Zhang Lie replied, "If you were able to control your technique, it would have been far harder for me to dispel it."

This was no idle praise. The aftershock of Fang Yi's technique alone had broken through three of Team Zenith's barriers. In the end, Zhou Ying's vines had also given out, and even Li Feng's silver dragons seemed to be on the verge of fading. Half of Sun Xiaowu's clones had been vanquished.

The members of Team Zenith were very relieved that they hadn't been Fang Yi's opponent.

Zhang Lie continued, "If you could have combined all those disparate sources of energy into a cohesive whole, the outcome of this battle could have been very different. Trying to dispel your attack at that point..."

Fang Yi laughed wryly. "This is no easy task. I might have been able to control the technique to some extent beforehand, but ever since changing weapons and including the energy of chaos into the mix..."

The instability caused by the combination of chaos with time and space was almost impossible to resolve.

Zhang Lie replied, "It's precisely that it's hard that you have to do it. Without resolving your problems one by one, how can you grow stronger? That's the process of learning, after all."

Fang Yi nodded. "Thank you for the guidance, Captain. I'll work hard on it."

Zhang Lie asked, "Have you finished resting, then?"

Fang Yi raised his head with some shock.

"If you're done, let's continue. I'm sure you're stronger than this, aren't you? Don't you have other ultimate techniques?"

Zhang Lie turned around and strode farther away, then beckoned at Fang Yi with his fingers.

Fang Yi sucked in a deep breath. Zhang Lie really wasn't about to let him rest, was he?

Fang Yi's fighting spirit reignited. "In that case, give me a moment, Captain."

"[Wheel of Time]!"

Fang Yi's spear took on the aspects of time and age. Temporal winds buffeted the spear, and a mysterious light began to circle the spear like lightning.

A wheel of light appeared behind Fang Yi, taking on the form of a clock.

Fang Yi forged ten wheels of time before stopping.

Under the effect of ten such wheels, the time around Fang Yi distorted tremendously. It seemed as though there were ten copies of Fang Yi superimposed over each other, and his figure even turned a little blurry.

Fang Yi grinned. "Thanks for the wait, Captain."

Zhang Lie waved a hand at him impatiently. "Don't waste my time and show me what you've got! I hope you aren't going to disappoint me after all this time."

"I won't, Captain."

As Fang Yi roared, the wheels of time to his back splintered, and his body began to glow more and more brightly. Next to Fang Yi, a shadow of himself suddenly appeared, one which suddenly merged with Fang Yi's body and gave him a tremendous boost to his strength. The wind and lightning circling the spear doubled in intensity.

"[Wheel of Time: Break]!"

As the next wheel of time broke, even more light flared from Fang Yi's back. A second shadow appeared, merged with Fang Yi, and boosted his strength, followed by a third, a fourth, a fifth...

As more and more wheels of time behind Fang Yi broke, more ephemeral shadows appeared and boosted his strength to an extreme. Wind and storm circled him ten times over.

Fang Yi's attack had filled the pocket space with wind and storm before he even launched it.

A dragon's roar resounded through the air like peals of thunder. A wind dragon and a storm tiger appeared. Wind and storm combined and crackled at the tip of Fang Yi's spear.

Fang Yi leveled his spear. Wind and lightning surged forth. Chaotic energy infused both elements, and the attack disrupted time and space itself. In an instant, everything in the arena blurred.

"Excellent!" Zhang Lie grinned. Fang Yi's attack was indeed powerful.

Zhang Lie took a single step forward. The crash of a titanic ocean resounded within his body, and a burst of genetic energy emanated from Zhang Lie's body. That alone dispelled the storm; as Zhang Lie's fist struck Fang Yi's technique, Fang Yi's nascent blow vanished as though it had never existed.

Fang Yi was petrified.

Chapter 1225: The Strongest Technique

Zhang Lie dispelled everything with a single punch. Fang Yi's tenfold attack vanished in an instant.

Zhang Lie urged with a huff, "Hey, don't just stand there in a daze! Keep going! I could have killed you a hundred times over during that time!"

Fang Yi laughed wryly. "Is there a purpose to continuing?"

Fang Yi hadn't given up even when he fought off Ghroth, an entity of disaster incarnate.

Fang Yi hadn't given up even when he fought against a seemingly superior foe during the king of chaos' banquet.

But against Zhang Lie's unreasonable strength, Fang Yi found himself defeated, unable to rouse any battle intent whatsoever.

Most importantly, Fang Yi knew that Zhang Lie was far from using his full strength.

In other words, Fang Yi's will to fight had been quashed.

Zhang Lie frowned. "Would an enemy let you go just because you said continuing would be meaningless? Would Ghroth have avoided killing you?"

Fang Yi replied, "But Captain, you're not an enemy!"

"If you aren't able to muster up the drive to grow stronger, to fight even against unfavorable odds, how will you survive in the fourth realm? You might as well stay in the third realm and never ascend!"

The harsh criticism shocked Fang Yi.

Zhang Lie continued, "Think back to your foundational reason for growing strong."

Fang Yi recalled why he had created his sixfold strike, even his ninefold strike. All that he had done was in hopes of catching up to the person before him. Now that that person was right in front of him and facing him, how could he back down?

He knew that the sixfold strike would be devastating not just for his enemy but also for him. If he were the slightest bit careless and misjudged the equilibrium of energies, the backlash could strike him as hard as the attack would strike his enemy. Even so, Fang Yi had put his life on the line.

"If you truly want to grow stronger," Zhang Lie continued, "then keep fighting until you collapse!"

Fang Yi's eyes again turned resolute. "I apologize, Captain. Thank you for jolting me awake and reigniting my desire to grow strong."

He hadn't been scared of Zhang Lie despite Zhang Lie's overwhelming strength back in the second realm; why would he falter in the third?

"To demonstrate my gratitude, my next technique will have 120% of my maximum strength. This is truly my strongest blow."

Fang Yi's expression turned serious. He sucked in a breath. His spear took on the aspects of time and age. Temporal winds buffeted the spear, and a mysterious light began to circle the spear like lightning.

"[Wheel of Time]!"

Wheels of time stacked up on Fang Yi's back, but Zhang Lie didn't make a move. He waited patiently as Fang Yi laid his preparations. With his spear in hand, Fang Yi again returned to the frozen world of gray, with him the only spot of color within.

"[Spear of Fate]!" Wind and storm combined and crackled at the tip of Fang Yi's spear, imbuing it with sharpness and penetrating strength beyond measure.

Fang Yi compressed that energy again and again, until even the space around the spear started getting sucked in. The tip of the spear punched through space as though it were nothing more than paper.

The chaotic energy imbued within the spear activated, gushing out around Fang Yi.

The combination of elemental, chaotic, and spatiotemporal energy at the tip of the spear multiplied the strength of Fang Yi's attack beyond what should have been possible.

Golden threads surrounded wind, storm, time, and space.

Fang Yi combined [Born of Lightning, Swallowed by the Wind], [Tiger's Howl, Dragon's Bellow], [Heaven's Judgment], and the power of karma—wind, storm, time, space, chaos, karma. All these sources of energy were stacked together, like buff after buff.

A dragon of purple lightning and tiger of green wind, shielded by a barrier of time and shrouded by black spatial energy, slowly began to manifest. Storm winds were sucked into the mix.

The power of his strike transcended both of its constituents, time and karma.

The strike touched the notion of fate, that all things were predetermined in the long, winding river of time.

The combination of wind and storm, spatial force, void lightning, time and space, karma and fate—all of it combined into a hurricane. The nine different kinds of energy stacked on top of each other and were refined into a cocoon.

As Fang Yi infused more and more of his own energy into the attack, the energies morphed into threads of nine different colors that began to separate.

The void lightning combined with the spatial rift that was forming and tore apart the space around Fang Yi.

Against the ninefold confluence of energies, even the reinforced high-dimensional space seemed liable to collapse.

The manifold energies merged and tangled with each other, space and time, wind and storm, chaos and fate, the beginning and the end.

Fang Yi sent a stream of each type of energy swirling and corkscrewing around the tip of his spear.

The combination of nine energies gave birth to an astounding hybrid. As the forces continued to revolve around each other, the wheels of time behind Fang Yi began rotating more and more quickly as the space around him was strained to its utmost. The pocket dimension began to crack.

Even the king of chaos' spear shook violently as it tried to sustain the nine different energies. Fang Yi himself wasn't doing well. Veins protruded from his forehead as he forcibly used a technique beyond his ability to support. Blood seeped out of his orifices, and his bones began to creak.

The golden threads of karma, which turned black and tried to wrap around Fang Yi, were swept away by the energy of chaos.

Chaos muddled fate, turning bad karma into more strength for his attack.

Lightning crackled like a demon swiping its claws. A storm raged, and space tore apart. Black-and-gold chains criss-crossed and tangled up under the influence of chaos and fate.

Zhang Lie's eyes widened. After the incorporation of karma, the energy of chaos was able to reach an unstable equilibrium with that of space and time.

Karma forcibly linked all the disparate energies together like glue.

This glue, however, was poisonous. It would have affected Fang Yi's fated future if not for the chaotic energy surrounding him. Most importantly, the chaotic energy came from Fang Yi's spear, not from himself, and the powers of karma and chaos wouldn't cancel out.

The spear of Chaos would continuously provide titanic amounts of chaotic energy, forcibly maintaining this unstable balance.

"Truly incredible."

Perhaps the king of chaos had anticipated this possibility when he forged Fang Yi his spear...

Chapter 1226: Lining Up for a Beating

"Again?" Upon sensing another burst of frightening energy from Fang Yi, Yang Ze couldn't help but grumble, though the members of Team Zenith all reacted instantly.

They certainly didn't want to be struck by the shockwaves that resulted from the aftermath of this attack. Fang Yi's fated spear was the advanced form of his sevenfold strike—or rather, its completed form.

Hong Xi's pale blue moonlight shone down on them all. Sun Mengmeng manifested another black firewall. Sun Xiaowu's body flared with golden light, and golden runes appeared over his body. He used [Adamantine Aegis] immediately.

"[Blinding Flash: Thousandfold Echo]!"

Sun Xiaowu's body split into hundreds of clones, each bearing resplendent golden runes. They gathered around the members of Team Zenith, forming a human barricade.

Sun Mengmeng waved a hand before her, adding a ring of flame to the barrier.

Li Feng radiated silver light, and illusory silver dragons coiled around the members of Team Zenith.

Refracted light shone around Yang Ze, who waved a hand and isolated the members of Team Zenith from the pocket dimension.

Zhang Hanxiang released a chilly frost, adding a layer of ice as a barrier against Fang Yi's attack.

"[Avatar of the Fae: Earthbound Prison]!"

Zhou Ying released all her stored vitality at once, causing the ground to quake as thousands of jade-green wood dragons rushed out of the earth.

The members of Team Zenith were wrapped up by layer after layer of dragons.

Hong Xi manifested a fan of feathers, which she waved to conjure a windwall around them.

Fang Yi's fated spear was stronger than his sevenfold strike, and the members of Team Zenith took it more seriously as a result. They layered their defenses more solidly and comprehensively than before.

Jun Jiuxiao and Ye Xianchen knew that they were comparatively far weaker, but they contributed as well.

Jun Jiuxiao conjured a field of wind and storm, while Ye Xianchen released an aura of ghosts and shadows.

Zhang Lie likewise turned serious.

"[Ninecarp Transformation]!"

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

Dragon-like lightning, tiger-like storm, formless time, timeless space—those four disparate energies combined into a cohesive whole, tied together by a dark gold thread. The energies revolved around each other, destroying even natural law with their combined might.

Space and time cracked, and unusual pitch-black thorn-like protrusions spiked into the pocket space.

The pocket space itself was cracking from the inside out. Even Zhu's earlier reinforcement was insufficient to block Fang Yi's fated spear.

Black, formless chains surrounded Zhang Lie's body as he felt a powerful energy lock in on him.

A howling storm, void lightning, mysterious temporal charge, the wind of ages—the mishmash of elements exploded.

The three outermost layers of defenses set up by the members of Team Zenith vanished in an instant.

"[Godbane Strike]!"

The nine different energies formed a huge vortex. Fang Yi tried to steer the energies into the shape of a spear, but the combination was far too wild for him to execute such fine control. The hurricane-like vortex shot straight at Zhang Lie.

"[Fists of the Silent Sea: Fade]!" Zhang Lie punched forward, and the black serpent behind him shot forth.

A massive burst of energy condensed around Zhang Lie.

The black serpent punched through the hurricane and dissipated it all in one go. When the smoke cleared, Fang Yi was revealed slumped on the ground and panting weakly. "I can't keep going! I don't have the strength to continue. Captain, you've trounced me!"

The hurricane left a mess behind as it dissipated: the ground had turned to sand, and the pocket dimension was close to collapsing. The members of Team Zenith took a deep breath. The shockwaves from Fang Yi's technique had almost been strong enough to affect them all despite their reinforced barriers.

Zhu again invoked the authority of the realm to restore the pocket space.

Zhang Lie asked, "Did you intuit something?"

Fang Yi replied, "I still have lots of deficiencies, and my will isn't resolute enough!"

"And?"

"In the face of your absolute strength, Captain, everything is useless."

Zhang Lie immediately marched forward and kneaded Fang Yi's face with his boot.

Fang Yi struggled and groaned, "What did I say wrong, Captain?"

Zhang Lie replied, "If you fear someone else's strength, you'll never be able to improve. You might not be able to beat them now, but you still have to make them your target, to work toward that goal with all your heart..."

Fang Yi caught Zhang Lie's ankle and raised it up. "Don't worry, Captain. I won't discourage myself anymore. It looks like I haven't worked enough in the past, and I'll work even harder in the future."

Zhang Lie continued, "Furthermore, you have insufficient control over your strength. My [Fists of the Silent Sea: Fade] shouldn't be strong enough to break your ninefold strike, but your control over the manifold energies was too weak. Your strike's physically very impressive, but it's still too easy to counter with skill."

Fang Yi sighed with some exasperation. "That's because you're too strong, Captain. What ordinary person could do what you did?"

Zhang Lie snorted and began kneading Fang Yi's face with his boot again.

"I don't need you to flatter me. When we finish here, you need to go back to the fundamentals and familiarize yourself with your spear and chaotic energy. Then, make sure you get a better grasp of your sixfold strike, sevenfold strike, fated spear, and so on."

Zhang Lie had to admit that Fang Yi had already made significant headway down his own path, and there was little specific advice he could give. In the past, Zhang Lie had thought that Fang Yi's path was too focused on brute force, that it would be too inflexible, and advised that he focus on speed instead.

Fang Yi did do so, but his attacks became even stronger and fiercer as a result.

It was true that an emphasis on brute force might be inflexible, but when Fang Yi reached the apex of force, who else but Zhang Lie could break him?

Zhang Lie continued, "Focusing on strength isn't bad, but sometimes you might prefer flexibility. Combining both aspects is plausible as well—storm is violent, and wind gentle. Both elements do lend themselves to strength, and wind can be strong in terms of howling gales, but I still hope you'll consider working on other aspects of your elements as well."

Fang Yi asked, "What if I end up veering off my path?"

"It's just some minor experimentation, nothing more."

Fang Yi nodded. "I'll do my best, Captain."

Zhang Lie grabbed Fang Yi like a little chick and threw him toward the members of Team Zenith.

"Based on the order we did this in the second realm, you're up next."

"Me?" Yang Ze walked forward unwillingly. "Captain, can the others go first?"

Zhang Lie grumbled, "Don't talk nonsense!"

Yang Ze didn't say anything more. White fog surrounded him; in the blink of an eye, the entire pocket dimension had been filled with fog.

Zhang Lie nodded. "You've grown faster than before, and you've worked hard on your control of water-attuned genetic energy. It's just that..."

Chapter 1227: Yang Ze Takes the Stand

Hundreds of sharks swam toward Zhang Lie in a horde.

"...you still have the same problems as before!" Zhang Lie called out to Yang Ze.

Zhang Lie snapped his fingers. Genetic energy exploded and disrupted the space around Zhang Lie. The fog blew away, revealing Yang Ze behind Zhang Lie, a sword raised overhead.

Zhang Lie twisted his head and looked at him, at which point Yang Ze's body dissipated like ripples disturbing a calm body of water.

Zhang Lie was able to manipulate water-attuned genetic energy to create mirages and illusions, but Yang Ze could do it even better.

"I'm right here, Captain!"

Under the effects of [Mirrored Refraction], he seemed to phase in and out of existence.

He swam through the air, leaving buds of water behind.

Zhang Lie punched forward without even looking toward the voice.

He punched in a seemingly random direction, but Yang Ze's face suddenly changed.

The next moment, Yang Ze's body erupted in a cloud of fog. Zhang Lie was rather impressed that Yang Ze had been able to trick him, then quickly began punching in all sorts of different directions.

Yang Ze retaliated with a [Fists of the Silent Sea] of his own. The two attacks, which both seemed to strike at nothing but air, somehow smashed into each other.

The fists met head-on, and Yang Ze's body burst into another wave of ripples.

As ripples spread throughout the arena, the buds that Yang Ze had placed initially finally exploded. Lotus flowers made of pure water blossomed from the buds, each an intricate construct of genetic energy.

The ripples intersected in mid-air and launched a chain reaction, devastating the arena with water-attuned genetic energy.

However, Zhang Lie himself had a water-attuned framework, one of a higher grade than Yang Ze, and the attack would be all but meaningless against him. He folded his arms and gave Yang Ze the time he needed to strengthen the attack to its maximum.

Amidst a storm of water-attuned genetic energy, Yang Ze raised his sword up high. Boundless energy suffused him, and a giant shark emerged from his back.

"Captain, here I come!"

Yang Ze swung down with his greatsword, and the giant shark flicked its tail and launched itself toward Zhang Lie. Zhang Lie raised his arm, and the serpent behind him stuck out its head.

A black serpent uncoiled from behind Zhang Lie's back. As it raised its head, waves of dark energy flooded the room.

As the serpent hissed, black ripples spread out from its body, releasing waves of corrosive energy that scoured the battlefield.

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

As Zhang Lie released his fist, the black serpent shot forward.

Yang Ze didn't dare to clash against Zhang Lie head-on. He had seen Zhang Lie use this technique before, and it wasn't something he could block.

As the giant shark struck the serpent, its body dissolved into water-attuned genetic energy. The serpent continued barreling forward, but Yang Ze's body shone with [Mirrored Refraction]. The black serpent passed right through his body.

Zhang Lie nodded. "Excellent. It looks like you've already incorporated your understanding of the 24 layers of space into your attacks. You remain in one of the deepest layers and project an image of yourself from that layer..."

Yang Ze chuckled. "As expected, I can't fool you, Captain. I was going to give you a surprise, but you uncovered the trick within moments."

Zhang Lie asked, "What layer of space are you in now?"

"The 24th layer is impossible for me at the moment, but the eighteenth is readily accessible. If I want to project an image of myself, however, the deepest I can go is the twelfth layer."

After all, they were currently in a pocket dimension constructed by Zhu herself, invoking her authority as ruler of the unified world. They were naturally isolated from the rest of the third realm, and rather severely so, considering that Zhu had erected multiple barriers around the pocket dimension as a failsafe.

Being able to descend into the twelfth layer was already beyond impressive.

Zhang Lie continued, "But it doesn't look to me as though you're a projection from the twelfth layer."

Yang Ze seemed surprised. "You can tell?"

"At least within the first ten layers."

Yang Ze chuckled wryly. "It looks like I do have to work hard to surprise you, Captain."

Zhang Lie replied, "If your projection were from one deeper layer, I would have had a much harder time telling."

Yang Ze drew a greatsword from his back, and pale blue genetic energy surrounded his body.

"[The Boundless Blade: Yawning Wave]!"

He struck again, his sword flashing toward the king like the current along a river.

Zhang Lie cut apart the current with a hand. "You can even use skills? It looks like this is beyond a mere projection."

Yang Ze's sword flashed toward him. Zhang Lie attempted to knock it aside with his hand, but all he struck was air. Yang Ze's blade landed, only to be repulsed by a barrier of water-attuned genetic energy.

"Interesting!"

Yang Ze retreated after his rapid attack. "It's a real projection, after all."

Zhang Lie understood what he meant. "I see. So that's why you're in the tenth layer, rather than the twelfth."

Yang Ze explained, "This is an upgrade of [Reflected Sight, Refracted Vision]. [The Boundless Blade: Dragonwhale]!"

In the blink of an eye, Yang Ze was surrounded by a patch of ocean.

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

Upon seeing the massive dragonwhale, Zhang Lie remarked, "It looks like you can even use some of your stronger techniques with this projection..."

The whale's body was long and streamlined, with long whiskers and scales patterning its body.

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

At this point, however, despite all his tricks, Yang Ze was weak in a frontal clash.

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

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

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

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

The serpent swam around, and it and the whale smashed into each other.

A huge rumble shook the heavens, and Yang Ze's projection distorted for a moment.

A wave of annihilation exploded around the dragon. Pitch-black energy swallowed everything in the vicinity like a storm at sea. Pale blue genetic energy and the pitch-black energy of annihilation crisscrossed through the air.

The explosion was like a black hole that sucked up everything in sight...

Chapter 1228: Quite Interesting

At that moment, space shattered.

The confluence of three different types of energy had caused too much stress in the local area. Yang Ze's projection was destroyed entirely, and countless cracks spread through the pocket dimension.

The cracks spread into the deeper layers of space, causing them to shake violently and crack as well. Yang Ze dove into ever deeper layers.

The energy of annihilation eventually lost its momentum on the eleventh layer, and Yang Ze sucked in a deep breath of relief. However, even the twelfth layer was filled with cracks; it was evident just how strong the explosion had been.

Before Yang Ze could calm down, a frightening wave of sword energy shot toward him.

Yang Ze's eyes widened as he defended himself with water-attuned genetic energy.

"The Boundless Blade: Sea Serpent]!"

His sword morphed into a sea serpent, pale blue in color, with gills on either side of its body, its scales like crystalline shards of ice. It surged forward, swiping its claws. It bit apart the sword energy, but surfing over the sword energy was a pale blue shark.

The shark opened its maw wide and bit a huge chunk off the dragon. Genetic energy exploded at the point of impact.

Frightening water-attuned genetic energy ravaged the deeper layers of space. The eleventh layer, which was already filled with cracks, was shredded as well.

Despite the fact that the energy of annihilation hadn't managed to hurt Yang Ze, it had opened a route to the deeper layers of space for Zhang Lie.

Zhang Lie stepped into the twelfth layer and called out, "I'm coming for you, Yang Ze!"

As he stepped into high-dimensional space, Zhang Lie transformed.

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

Yang Ze tried to escape into the thirteenth layer, but before he could do so, a bloody beam appeared before him. Zhang Lie had caught up in the blink of an eye.

Yang Ze might have been the better spatial manipulator, but Zhang Lie was clearly faster.

The next moment, Yang Ze was kicked flying—at which point he finally managed to scamper into the thirteenth layer.

As he did so, he could hear a crack coming from the barrier between the twelfth and thirteenth layers of space, which was being breached.

The crack expanded as the noise grew louder. Finally, with a huge crash, a hole opened up, and a horde of howling black dragons appeared in sight.

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

Zhang Lie had managed to break down the barrier into the thirteenth layer of space by brute force.

The high-dimensional layers of space began to reverberate. Dozens of black dragons flew toward Yang Ze, each bearing significant energy of annihilation.

Yang Ze rapidly grew alarmed as he dodged their attacks with his movement techniques.

"[The Boundless Blade: Nine-Headed Hydra]!"

Genetic energy exploded from Yang Ze and manifested in the form of a nine-headed hydra, which sprayed out nine breaths of sword energy.

The black dragons struck by the breath attack exploded in a burst of annihilation, setting off a chain reaction that quickly took down the hydra.

The sword energy that made up the hydra temporarily formed a barrier against the explosions, giving Yang Ze enough time to escape into deeper layers of space.

As he did so, however, Zhang Lie chased quickly after him, tearing apart the barriers between ever deeper layers—and at a faster rate than he was able to traverse them.

Yang Ze ran, and ran, and ran. In the end, he was forced into the eighteenth layer, which had just been restored by the will of the world. Yang Ze turned around. "Captain, you're too strong."

Zhang Lie stepped out of the broken barrier between the seventeenth and eighteenth layers. Despite his haggard appearance, Yang Ze's eyes were still shining brightly. "However, when fighting in such a deep layer of space, I think I stand a good chance!"

"[The Boundless Blade: Hundred-Headed Hydra]!"

Yang Ze's genetic energy manifested in the form of an astounding hundred-headed hydra.

As he drew on spatial force, the hydra sprayed out a hundred simultaneous beams of sword energy, pale blue genetic energy, and compressed spatial force from a high-dimensional layer of space.

Whereas Yang Ze's attacks were boosted, Zhang Lie was suppressed to some extent. Yang Ze was very familiar with high-dimensional space and could negate that suppression.

Yang Ze hadn't been fleeing just because he was trying to avoid an inevitable demise; he had constantly been searching for an opportunity to strike back, to lure Zhang Lie ever deeper.

He was never one for straight-up fights, and would far rather use his brain and prepare in advance.

Zhang Lie nodded. "Good strategy, but not everything will play out the way you want it to. [The Boundless Blade: the River Lethe]!"

The temperature had dropped to sub-zero values, and a strong wind buffeted the arena. Blood-colored frost appeared around them.

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

Thousands of serpents blocked the hundred breaths of sword energy. The bitter cold froze the hydra and corroded Yang Ze's genetic energy.

Yang Ze was shocked that Zhang Lie's attack was so devastating that it could even freeze the eighteenth layer of space solid.

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

As the netherworld river exploded, pitch-black genetic energy spread all over. A huge ocean of genetic energy swamped the eighteenth layer. Waves surged forward, sounding like peals of thunder, like stampeding hooves.

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

As Zhang Lie struck, an underworld river hurtled into existence, roaring into the sea. The sword energy roiled like black waves.

Even so, all the serpents passed harmlessly through Yang Ze's body...

Chapter 1229: Did You Intuit Something?

The sea had morphed into a boundless battlefield. The sea breeze was as a horn to action, and the serpents, thousands of courageous soldiers heeding its call.

The million serpents passed through Yang Ze's body with a force that could not be repelled.

Zhang Lei frowned. "Spatial force? No..."

Even in the eighteenth layer of space, Zhang Lie was also able to invoke spatial authority.

"It has some flavor of karma, as though you're reversing heaven's might..."

Yang Ze explained, "I call this technique [Moon Within the Lake]."

"Referring to the surface of a placid lake as a mirror that captures the moon's reflection?"

Yang Ze grinned. "How's my skill, Captain?"

Zhang Lie replied with a smile. "It's interesting, but to have manifested a karmic power about avoidance... Just how much do you fear death?"

Yang Ze countered, "Are you trying to think of a way to handle my technique?"

"I'll simply shatter karma and space together! [The Boundless Blade: Dragon's Wrath]!"

Zhang Lie thrust forward with Guicang, summoning a blood dragon.

A dragon's roar shook the void as the pitch-black genetic energy turned blood-red. The underworld river roiled, forming a gigantic blood dragon, its jaws wide open and its claws poised to swipe. The high-dimensional space was disrupted as a burst of spatial force pulsed through it, distorting Yang Ze's figure.

Yang Ze screeched strangely as he was knocked out of the reflected space and sent smashing into the dimensional barrier.

Zhang Lie's attack indeed tore apart karma and space before striking Yang Ze.

The distortion of karma sapped away some energy, and Yang Ze's body overflowed with spatial force as he passed through the barrier into the nineteenth layer of space.

During his heated battle with Zhang Lie, Yang Ze's spatial manipulation improved sufficiently that he was able to pass through without any resistance whatsoever.

The moment he entered the nineteenth layer, a crash rang out behind him.

Pale-white sword energy pierced through the dimensional barrier barrier. The force of the attack sent Yang Ze tumbling through space as Zhang Lie entered the nineteenth layer.

Yang Ze raised his hands up in the air in surrender as he chuckled wryly. "As expected, I can't beat you, Captain. I surrender."

Zhang Lie asked, "Did you intuit something?"

Yang Ze nodded firmly. "Yes, yes, of course! Everything pales in comparison to absolute strength, and no skill and strategy can bridge the gap.

Regardless of whether we were in the high-dimensional battlefield I prepared for, or in the mirror dimension of [Moon Within the Lake], everything is hopeless in front of you, Captain. Captain, you're trying to tell me that strength is might, that there's no need for anything else!"

"Ridiculous!"

Shocked by Zhang Lie's sudden bark, Yang Ze took a few steps back. "No?"

"It looks like you haven't intuited a thing! In that case, we had better continue."

Yang Ze shivered in fear. "No, Captain, please!"

"No more nonsense. Take this!"

As Zhang Lie shouted, sword energy soared into the heavens and illuminated the nineteenth layer of space.

Shortly thereafter, Zhang Lie dragged Yang Ze back from the crack in space.

He tossed the bedraggled, wounded Yang Ze to the ground like a piece of trash, then commanded, "Treat him, Zhou Ying."

Zhou Ying immediately stepped forward to heal Yang Ze as Zhu walked up to him in dissatisfaction.

"Zhang Lie, aren't you being a bit too much?"

Zhang Lie replied, "Don't worry, Yang Ze will be just fine. He just has to rest for a week or two."

"I'm not talking about Yang Ze, but rather this!" Zhu pointed at the dimensional crack that was slowly repairing itself.

Zhang Lie was instantly embarrassed.

Zhu grumbled, "Zhang Lie, you should know just how damaging it can be to the third realm when high-dimensional space is destroyed like this. Now that you've damaged the spatial integrity of the third realm once more, I'll have to request that the will of the realm repair it. How am I supposed to explain what happened?"

Zhang Lie spread his arms. "I know that the will of the realm can repair the damage, so I didn't pay much attention to it..."

Zhu sighed. "I don't want to blame you, Zhang Lie, but I do want to remind you to watch out and to avoid damaging the high-dimensional spaces of the third realm!"

Zhang Lie nodded.

Sun Xiaowu asked, "Aren't you going to stop our captain, Zhu?"

Sun Xiaowu had been raring to fight Zhang Lie after maxing out his monarch gene fragments to test out his strength, only to realize that the gulf between Zhang Lie and the rest of them had only widened.

Upon witnessing Fang Yi and Yang Ze's sorry states, the other members of Team Zenith shrank back.

Zhu turned to Sun Xiaowu. "Why should I prevent Zhang Lie from testing your strength?"

"You aren't afraid that the realm will be destroyed?"

"Even if it does, I don't care. Zhang Lie can handle his own business. I'm just here to remind him of it."

The members of Team Zenith couldn't help but pity the will of the third realm for having a ruler who would prioritize Zhang Lie instead.

Even if Zhang Lie wanted to destroy the world, this ruler wouldn't impede him; no, she very well might aid him instead. No, she absolutely would.

Under Zhou Ying's rapid healing, Yang Ze recovered. "Ah, thank you, Zhou Ying!"

Zhang Lie asked, "Did you intuit something?"

Yang Ze immediately nodded. "Yes, yes! Captain, you're trying to tell me that everything is founded on strength, that technique and strategy is meaningless without a solid foundation! Your strength might be suppressed in high-dimensional spaces, but you're still far stronger than I am, and I'm still no match for you despite my home field advantage."

Zhang Lie cracked his knuckles. It looks like you still haven't learned your lesson. Shall we have another go?"

Yang Ze hurriedly called out, "No, no! Captain, I can't take it anymore. Can't you tell me what I'm doing wrong?"

Zhang Lie sighed. "To be honest, your strategy and attempt to lure me to a disadvantageous battlefield are both excellent, but you're still too weak in a direct fight. You need to stop focusing on running away; work on attacking your opponents as well!"

Yang Ze was exasperated. His attacks weren't weak; his opponent was simply too strong. He pursed his lips. "I understand, Captain."

"Go take a break. Sun Xiaowu, it's your turn."

As Yang Ze walked off, Sun Xiaowu let out a huge sigh as he strode forward.

"Must we really do this, Captain?"

Zhang Lie had reverted to the appearance of a human, rather than a dragonwolf. He curled a finger at Sun Xiaowu. "Don't talk nonsense. I want to see how much you've grown after maxing out your monarch gene fragments."

Starting the fight with the dragonwolf transformation active would be akin to bullying.

"The high-dimensional space hasn't been fully repaired yet, and it would be a problem if we were to break it some more, wouldn't it?"

Zhang Lie rolled his eyes. "Do you think you can escape into it like Yang Ze?"

Knowing that he couldn't escape, Sun Xiaowu's body flared with golden light. "In that case, Captain, be careful. [Blinding Flash: Thousandfold Echo]!"

Sun Xiaowu's body split into over a thousand clones, so many they seemed to fill the sky. "[Golden Divide]!"

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

Chapter 1230: Must We Really?

A storm of golden feathers seemed to skirt by Zhang Lie as a gust of strength isolated him from them.

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

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

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

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

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

The frightening aura that exuded from Zhang Lie vanquished all the clones and extinguished Sun Xiaowu's golden radiance.

"[Adamantine Aegis]!" A layer of golden runes covered Sun Xiaowu's skin,

A huge rumble shook the heavens, and the entire pocket dimension quaked.

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

The ground quaked; space shook. The tolling of a bell resounded. The members of Team Zenith and Zhang Hanxiang clutched their heads in pain as the runic script dissipated from Sun Xiaowu's body.

Sun Xiaowu stood in the midst of a pale-blue hurricane, besieged by wind and storm. The runes on his skin glowed brightly, and he stood stably as though his feet were rooted to the earth. Against the towering waves of pale-blue genetic energy, Sun Xiaowu stood firm and unyielding.

Zhang Lie whistled. "You really have grown far stronger compared to when you were in the second realm!"

"[Blinding Flash: Ten Thousandfold Echo]!"

The next moment, Sun Xiaowu's body divided into thousands of illusions as Zhang Lie watched on in pride.

"Hmm? Interesting." He smirked.

"I'm behind you, Captain!" Sun Xiaowu called out smugly as he appeared behind Zhang Lie's back.

"[Goldenscale Palm: Split]!" Golden radiance struck the land. Sun Xiaowu's palms brimmed with golden light as a dense layer of golden scales covered his skin. His aura suddenly shifted, and his right arm glowed with resplendent light.

An aura of intense strength emanated from Sun Xiaowu's body.

Sun Xiaowu took a step forward, then punched with all his might, generating a dominating wave of genetic energy.

Zhang Lie met Sun Xiaowu's punch with one of his own in a direct strike, causing the golden energy to explode over the land. Sun Xiaowu's image cracked and fizzled away—that "Sun Xiaowu" had just been one of his clones.

Golden radiance covered the sky as his clones gathered together, each seeming simultaneously real and illusory.

"[Goldenscale Palm: Qilin]!"

Sun Xiaowu and all his clones leapt up into the air, performing exactly the same action. Golden light flashed from their arms and illuminated the sky. Tens of thousands of clones merged into Sun Xiaowu's main body, and the countless activated copies of the technique merged into one.

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

He rushed forward, golden scales appearing over his arm as he punched at Zhang Lie, who met him with nothing but his bare hands.

Zhang Lie's palm alone was sufficient to stop the golden qilin's might. His palm was far smaller than the massive qilin, but it boasted ridiculous strength.

"Captain, you're far too strong!" Sun Xiaowu gasped.

"Here!" Just then, Zhang Lie tossed the qilin back toward him. When the explosion cleared, Sun Xiaowu was left standing. His armor had transformed him into a ten-meter tall golden giant surrounded by runes.

"[Adamantine Aegis: Martial God]!"

Golden runes emerged from Sun Xiaowu's body and revolved around him as his aura grew stronger and stronger. As the golden runes merged with his genetic energy, Sun Xiaowu transformed into a mecha over a hundred meters tall. The golden runes surrounded Sun Xiaowu, turning him into a burning sun.

"Captain, I'm coming!" As Sun Xiaowu punched forward, so too did the golden mecha. The clash between punch and punch caused a storm to form, and the ground cracked at the point of impact.

"[Goldenscale Palm: Split]!"

Layers of dense golden scales appeared on Sun Xiaowu's arms, and his right arm glowed with resplendent light.

As Sun Xiaowu attacked, so too did the golden giant, bringing the strength of his attack to a new level entirely. The ground caved in; the sky shook.

Genetic energy gathered on Zhang Lie's fist, like the roaring of the sea.

[Goldenscale Palm: Split] transformed into blinding golden light, as though the sun were falling to the ground. Radiance struck Zhang Lie like a palpable force.

Simultaneously, Zhang Lie punched forward, bolstered by the weight of the entire ocean.

Radiant light smashed into the boundless ocean in a huge crash that left cracks in the pocket dimension.

"[Blinding Flash: Thousandfold Echo]!"

Sun Xiaowu split into a thousand clones, each of which summoned a golden mecha.

"[Golden Divide]!"

Thousands of golden mechas simultaneously used Golden Divide, and the entire sky turned glittering gold.

There were so many of them they filled the sky. The golden blades formed a golden flood.

"[The Boundless Blade: Yawning Wave]!"

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

The shark rushed into the crowd of Sun Xiaowu's clones, tearing dozens apart within moments. The mechas immediately attacked it.

"[Goldenscale Palm]!"

Sun Xiaowu's arms glowed with resplendent light, and a layer of dense golden scales emerged over his skin. The thousand clones all used [Golden Divide] simultaneously, dyeing the heavens in resplendent gold and causing the shark to burst in an explosion of genetic energy.