

## U. Warlord 1241

Chapter 1241: Crossing Twin Blades

"[The Boundless Blade: Dragon's Annihilation]!"

A silver dragon manifested around the blade. The dragon's howl shook the air. In conjunction with the holy dragon horde and the scintillating lightning, it tore apart the pitch-black netherworld sea in a vortex of destruction.

"[Striking Sun and Moon]!"

Zhang Lie unleashed a devastating strike as bright as the blazing sun.

The sword slashed the sky, and the stars fell. Sword energy flared, and for a moment, it seemed like even the moon was about to be bisected.

Zhang Lie struck with his sword, his arm trembling with power.

"[The Boundless Blade: Dragon's Wrath]!"

Zhang Lie thrust forward with Guicang, summoning a blood dragon. The blood dragon's howls shook heaven and earth.

"[The Boundless Blade: Shattered Sun]!"

Sword energy roiled. The technique splintered the glowing sunlight and replaced it with a silver glow, transmuting that sunlight into something that boosted Li Feng's strength. The sword energy tore apart the sky.

Zhang Lie's blood dragon tore apart Li Feng's ultimate blow and forced him back.

As he deftly avoided the blood dragon's attack, Li Feng slashed at Zhang Lie with brilliant light, but the latter defended with Guicang.

"[The Boundless Blade: the Trembling World]!"

Sword energy roiled. An arclight dragon reared its head. The technique splintered the glowing sunlight.

The sword energy grew brighter and brighter, until it surpassed the sun, moon, and stars in intensity. The will of the sword seemed to manifest physically into the form of a dragon that seemed to be about to rip apart heaven and earth.

Space shattered, and stars fell like rain.

"[First Form: Parting the River]!" Incredible energy gathered on Zhang Lie's sword.

"[Slashing Void and Stars]!"

Sword energy glinted with piercing light as devastating strength rippled from Zhang Lie's blade, the upgraded form of [Striking Sun and Moon].

Li Feng's sword energy was swept away in an instant.

"[Holy Dragon Transformation]!"

Silver light dyed the entire world. Genetic energy swept over Li Feng's body and manifested as a dense layer of silver scales, like a suit of silver armor. Antlers grew out of his head, and his hair turned a radiant silver.

Li Feng gathered large quantities of light-attuned genetic energy, more than what he could reasonably bear, for a moment of explosive strength. He slashed forward with his sword, the radiant energy manifesting like a dragon.

The momentary boost allowed him to fight on par with Zhang Lie. His swords flashed with incredible speed, and even Zhang Lie had to be wary of his close-combat ability.

Under the effect of his [Holy Dragon Transformation], Li Feng's speed increased to such an extreme that a thousand afterimages seemed to trail him.

The attack was incredibly rapid, and the sword so sharp it felt like a thousand sword strikes were layered on top of one another.

"[Shadow and Light]!" Time suddenly sped up in the vicinity of Zhang Lie. In this region of accelerated time, Zhang Lie caught up to and even surpassed Li Feng within moments.

Once Zhang Lie activated his domain, he rapidly gained the upper hand.

"[The Boundless Blade: Godkiller]!"

Silver radiance swept forward in a tide, like a whole herd of holy dragons. That silver light, imbued with golden threads, formed a mysterious sea, simultaneously real and illusory, which existed in between both realms.

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

The intersection of the real and the illusory—Li Feng's strength combined both domains. Thousands of holy dragons swept across the sky. His strength surpassed time and space, the real and the illusory.

At that moment, time became meaningless to Li Feng.

Zhang Lie's actions naturally slowed down—not because Zhang Lie himself had grown slower, but rather because Li Feng's attack rendered time meaningless. It affected not just time, but space and even reality itself.

The technique intersected reality and illusion. This was a strength that transcended this realm, and Li Feng's blade could kill even a transcendent god.

In the pocket dimension, in a space that had lost all sense of time, the members of Team Zenith glanced at each other in shock.

Even Zhang Lie couldn't help but praise the attack. "To think you've come this far already..."

Among the members of Team Zenith, only Li Feng was able to affect reality itself with his techniques. This was likely a revelation that Li Feng had received upon imbuing the peak-grade limit-breaking potion.

His sword came toward Zhang Lie between reality and illusion.

Zhang Lie retaliated with Guicang and Hanguang.

Over Hanguang was a layer of illusory rainbow fog.

In his left hand, Guicang struck in the world of reality; in his right hand, Hanguang struck in the world of illusion. The intersection of reality and illusion resonated with Li Feng's attack, causing an echo that reverberated throughout the pocket dimension.

The barriers shielding and isolating the pocket dimension popped in an instant, before Zhu could even hope to repair them.

The members of Team Zenith were gobsmacked. Zhang Lie and Li Feng's fight had gone beyond reality to the illusory.

"Li Feng, you've grown tremendously, but I think you're still lacking the strength to take me down."

A pitch-black sun appeared behind Zhang Lie, and a blood moon by his feet. His aura was magnified tenfold, and a halo of black sun appeared above his forehead. Natural law seemed to warp around him.

"[Syzygy]!"

Runes likewise appeared on the bloody moon by his feet, forming an intricate array.

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

Zhang Lie crossed his twin blades. The blood moon resonated with the blade in his left hand, and the black sun with the blade in his right.

The black sun's flames strengthened Zhang Lie's attacks and burned away Li Feng's. As the realms of reality and illusion inverted, Zhang Lie simultaneously slashed forward with both blades, forming a huge celestial web.

Li Feng's sword turned illusory, and the auras of blood moon and black sun vanished—not because they had been extinguished, but rather because they had been wiped clean from reality.

Li Feng had cut away the karmic link between Zhang Lie's auras and the mortal world.

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

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

Li Feng's sword turned illusory once more, and Zhang Lie's attack vanished.

Upon noticing Li Feng's pallor, Zhang Lie commented, "It looks like you haven't mastered this technique fully."

Chapter 1242: A Hidden Ultimate

Upon noticing how weak Li Feng was, Fang Yi couldn't help but grin and call out, "Have you been jerking yourself off too much?"

Yang Ze rolled his eyes. "As if you weren't any worse yourself!"

Fang Yi scowled. "When have I ever been like him?"

Yang Ze replied, "When you shoot your signature shot."

Fang Yi corrected, "It's a spear strike!"

Sun Xiaowu echoed Zhang Lie's sentiments. "It looks like Li Feng hasn't mastered this technique."

Yang Ze commented, "This sort of powerful technique naturally carries a commensurate cost."

Li Feng nodded. "Indeed, [The Boundless Blade: Godkiller] takes a heavy toll on me mentally and physically, and I'm not sure how much longer I'll be able to fight."

Zhang Lie sheathed his blades, surprising the members of Team Zenith. Wasn't he going to continue?

Zhang Lie began, "I was hoping you would be able to intuit something during this fight, but it looks like you've already set down a path entirely your own, and you've clearly kept in mind what I mentioned during the second realm. Just keep doing what you're doing."

Zhang Lie's goal wasn't to torture the members of Team Zenith, but rather to guide and advise them. He had found Li Feng's performance exemplary, far better than anticipated.

Li Feng urged, "No, Captain, I'd like to continue fighting for now."

This fight was meant to be a way for Li Feng to prove himself, to see how his skills fared against the man he had always been emulating.

Li Feng continued, "I'd like to prove to myself that I haven't wasted my efforts in the second and third realms—not to others, but to myself!"

Upon witnessing Li Feng's resolute expression, Zhang Lie unsheathed his blades anew. "In that case, I'll fight at full power. Can you continue?"

Li Feng replied, "I won't continue using [The Boundless Blade: Godkiller] in what's to follow."

"You can't maintain it?"

Li Feng shook his head. "I can't threaten you with that technique without developing it further, so I have to use something else."

Zhang Lie smiled. "You'll need a stronger technique than that to threaten me, then."

"I won't disappoint you, Captain."

Zhang Lie curled a finger and motioned for Li Feng to make his move. "In that case, let's see the trump cards that you've been hiding."

Li Feng nodded seriously. He raised his sword high overhead in a dazzling glow.

"[Holy Dragon Sword: Bleaching the World]!"

On closer inspection, the sword wasn't giving off light; light was condensing around the sword.

All the light of the unified world gathered around the sword.

Heaven and earth suddenly lost color as the surroundings turned dim and dark, as though all that light had been snatched away. Li Feng and the area around him began to glow more brightly than the sub. The light grew more intense as the aura of the technique increased in strength.

He struck, and the world lost color.

White light saturated the world; everything was dyed white. All the aliens, genetic lifeforms, and hunters of the world suddenly found their eyes beset by a blinding glare, which had taken over their field of vision.

"Not bad!"

Zhang Lie's voice rang out in the world of blinding white.

Two colors suddenly appeared, one red and one black.

"[Blades, Reverberate]!"

Two colors suddenly appeared on a canvas of white. The twin blades Guicang and Hanguang emitted a fearsome aura, shining as brightly as the sun and moon.

A blood-red and a black dragon manifested.

The two dragons twined around each other in a spiral, tearing apart the canvas and transforming into a human figure in the world of white.

Zhang Lie clutched Guicang in his left hand and Hanguang in his right. The two blades shone in unison, then gave off dazzling light as the twin dragons shot forward in unison like a twister.

Infused with the energy of the blood moon and the black sun, the twin dragons shattered the white world.

The hunters, lifeforms, and aliens of the unified world found their vision suddenly returning, not realizing what had passed.

"This isn't all."

Li Feng's body began to glow as he prepared his next technique, one that seemed to be steeped in the illusory.

"[Dream of Light and Shadow]!"

As a rainbow arc accompanied Zhang Lie's slash, as though an aurora were visible in the sky. It shone in all the colors of the rainbow, momentarily hypnotizing the onlookers, even those possessed of resolute will like the members of Team Zenith.

Such was the strength of Li Feng's blade.

Li Feng's body suddenly split into tens of thousands of copies, each with a dazzling gaze of rainbow light. The rosy-hued light was captivating and transported those who saw it into a realm of illusion, making it impossible to distinguish which of the copies were real and which were fake.

Zhang Lie's eyes morphed into a dragon's pupils. He ignored the copies charging toward him from the front and swung Hanguang toward his back.

With the sound of clashing swords, the copies of Li Feng charging toward Zhang Lie from the front all passed through him like a mirage.

Zhang Lie commented, "I hadn't expected you to pick up illusions as well."

At some point, Li Feng had appeared behind Zhang Lie. His longsword was pointed at Zhang Lie's back, but it had been blocked by Hanguang.

Li Feng replied, "I learned it all from you, Captain. Any technique is worthwhile as long as it's effective."

Zhang Lie continued, "To create these illusions by means of impeccable command of light, and then to confuse any onlookers with a captivating aurora... it looks like you've truly put in impressive effort and technical skill learned from the scientific principles of the Milky Way."

Without a critical understanding of modern research from the Milky Way, it was impossible to produce a light-based skill that could induce hypnosis.

Li Feng replied, "Thank you for the praise, Captain. While facing the son of the king of keys, I found that indirect attacks were surprisingly effective, and I tried to focus my efforts into creating such a technique. It's a pity that it didn't work on you in the end."

Zhang Lie shook his head. "You simply chose the wrong opponent. After a heated battle, most enemies would be tired and psychologically unprepared to resist your attack. However, I'm not quite so tired, and I can easily sense your true location from fluctuations in your genetic energy."

Li Feng replied, "I might have believed you had I not seen your eyes turn into a dragon's pupils."

Chapter 1243: Continue Working Hard

Through his dragon's pupils, Zhang Lie could identify that Li Feng wasn't among any of his copies charging toward Zhang Lie from the front.

However, Zhang Lie had been truthful in claiming that his mental state, and he had barely been affected by Li Feng's technique.

"[Holy Dragon Sword: Light and Darkness]!"

Li Feng struck again, causing heaven and earth to turn dark as the light all around was extinguished.

Zhang Lie strode forward and clashed against Li Feng's blade with his own. In an explosion of scintillating light, the world regained color once more.

"[Holy Dragon Sword: Extinguishing Heaven's Light]!"

Light-attuned genetic energy rose into the air as a holy dragon soared toward the heavens. Ripples of genetic energy emanated from the point of impact. Even before the blow landed, the light of the entire world began to flicker and dim.

The ground cracked as sword energy filled the arena. The holy dragon roared; starlight fell. The light of the world concentrated on the tip of the sword.

Zhang Lie blocked the overwhelming blow with Hanguang and counterattacked with Guicang.

"[Second Form: Piercing the Soul]!"

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

Through his dragon's pupils, he could see Li Feng's soul wrapped up in motes of silver light in the shape of a holy dragon.

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

Li Feng, who was struck by the attack in close proximity, stood dazed and petrified for moments, all thoughts of battle having fled his mind.

Zhang Lie's sword shone as brightly as the northern lights overhead, bringing him momentarily out of the physical into the intangible.

It stopped right by Li Feng's neck.

"The battle is over."

Only then did Li Feng come back to his senses. He sheathed his sword.

"Thank you for your pointers, Captain."

Zhang Lie chuckled and shook his head. "You've grown so much since the second realm that there isn't much I can teach you."

Li Feng shook his head. "No, Captain. Through our earlier battle, I learned that my willpower's still lacking. You were easily able to deal with my hypnotizing light."

In terms of technique, Li Feng could hardly win out against Zhang Lie, who had access to a disaster-grade mistmeld clam soulshard and [Second Form: Piercing the Soul].

Zhang Lie said, "You've already stepped down your own path. You'll need to keep working on your techniques, however."

Li Feng nodded. "I understand, Captain. I'll work hard in the future."

Zhang Lie dismissed him. "You must be tired both mentally and physically after the battle. Go rest. Zhu, you can start your work."

Zhu quickly set up another pocket dimension, one locked up with spatial and dimensional barriers. She didn't say anything about Zhang Lie and Li Feng's fight, which had collapsed the original pocket dimension—likely having grown used to the wreckage and destruction.

By the time Zhu was finished, Sun Mengmeng was raring to fight Zhang Lie, garuda bow in hand.

Sun Mengmeng pledged, "Captain, I won't repeat what happened in the second realm when we last fought!"

Zhang Lie gave her a gentle smile. "I look forward to witnessing your growth from this period of time."

Sun Mengmeng raised her garuda bow. Three arrows, brimming with purple flame, flew toward Zhang Lie like tracking missiles. "[Lunarflame Shot]!"

With a wave of his hand, Zhang Lie caused the three flaming arrows to explode in mid-air.

With a flash from his eyes, Zhang Lie blew the explosions away from the arena with a wave of pale blue genetic energy.

After the resplendent purple explosions, Sun Mengmeng immediately struck. Fire-attuned genetic energy burst from Sun Mengmeng's body as her body erupted in flames. She pulled her greatbow taut.

"[Lunarflame Shot]!" Sun Mengmeng's right hand blurred as countless arrows of purple flame shot out of her bow like a meteor shower that tinted the air purple and gave the battlefield a phantasmagorical appearance. The air turned dry and arid, as though a cataclysm was nigh.

Under the brilliant purple sky, everything began to burn, drowned in a sea of purple flame. However, the flaming arrows seemed to avoid Zhang Lie entirely; even the purple flames spreading across the ground did the same.

Sun Mengmeng frowned. She loosed arrows more and more quickly, until her hands blurred. Purple arrows struck the ground like raindrops in a storm, drowning out Zhang Lie's figure.

When her arrows exploded, they formed pillars of flame over ten meters high.

For an entire minute, Sun Mengmeng continued launching arrows through the battlefield. She panted for breath; her fingertips trembled. All she could see was purple flame.

With a snap of his finger, ripples of energy spread out from Zhang Lie, warping the space around him. The flames were easily extinguished by his spatial manipulation.

"[Baptism of Hellfire: Full Moon]!"

Sun Mengmeng whirled her daggers all around her as a black moon rose into the air, blocking the pulse of energy from Zhang Lie's attack.

The ground exploded. Flames burst into the sky. Cracks of lava spread across the ground.

Sun Mengmeng stabbed forward with a dagger, causing the black moon behind her to explode. Sun Mengmeng rocketed forward with [Flameburst Step].

Purple flames transformed into her raiment. A long tail of flames whizzed by behind her, radiating a phantasmagorical glow. Like a meteor, she shot toward Zhang Lie.

Her beautiful features took on a tinge of the fantastical when lit by the purple firelight, causing the onlookers to stare at her agape.

With the barest hissing of wind, she unsheathed a long dark-red dagger.

As she thrust forward, Zhang Lie swiveled his body to the side to avoid her blade, supported her by the waist, and pirouetted on one leg to dissipate her forward momentum. The flames continued to burn, and purple ash fell from the skies. The two combatants looked as though they were carrying out a dance under the night sky.

Sun Mengmeng's eyes shone with passion and scorching flame, as though she were trying to light Zhang Lie ablaze. Zhang Lie wrapped a hand around Sun Mengmeng's slender waist and spun her around and around, his eyes fixed on her, causing her mind to blur as she slowly closed her eyes...

Zhang Lie suddenly let go of Sun Mengmeng, sending her flying into the distance like a honed blade. She flew higher and higher into the air, higher still, until she finally landed by the side of a mountain with so much momentum that her body was half-stuck in place.

The members of Team Zenith winced.

Chapter 1244: A Familiar Sight

Zhang Lie slowly clasped both hands behind his back. "Have you intuited anything?"

Zhang Hanxiang clutched her face with her hand. "My brother's definitely doing this intentionally..."

Hong Xi sighed. "What a familiar scene..."

Sun Xiaowu clutched his forehead. "My sister lost to this attack twice in a row—she really has gone mad!"

Sun Mengmeng was so besotted with Zhang Lie that she was on the verge of losing her mind.

Zhang Hanxiang sniffed in disdain. "I must apologize for having a brother like this."

Sun Xiaowu sighed again. "I should be the one apologizing for having such a sister."

Despite knowing that Zhang Lie might well be tricking her, she had still fallen for the same ploy twice in a row. After all, what if Zhang Lie was serious this time?

Sun Mengmeng's body burned with purplish-black flame so intense that it dyed the heavens the same color. She cast [Black Sun], forming a corona of purplish-black flame around her. Then, she activated her most impactful soulshards for battle, transforming from a young woman to a fierce warrior with a chitinous carapace, wreathed in black flame.

Her flames were so intense that the armor-type soulshard actually began to crack and split. Black flames seeped out from the cracks, burning so intensely that the ground began to melt and turn red.

By then, Sun Mengmeng had transformed into a fearsome warrior straight out of hell.

Even from afar, the members of Team Zenith could sense the sudden change in temperature, and the scorching heat pricked their skin.

Black flames flared from her garuda bow, manifesting in the form of an undead phoenix.

"[Netherworld's Gaze]!"

Hundreds of arrows, like beams of moonlight, shot toward Zhang Lie. Their flames felt as though they could destroy everything they touched.

Zhang Lie lifted his hand and deflected the stream of arrows, tossing them aside.

Sun Mengmeng's flames were of far higher temperature than in the second realm; she had learned how to channel her emotions into her flames.

The reason Zhang Lie had begun their match with this attack was to facilitate Sun Mengmeng with her emotions, and Sun Mengmeng hadn't disappointed him.

"[The Nine Moons of the Underworld]!"

Nine flaming moons appeared in the sky, overshadowing the illumination within. As the flaming moons fell toward the ground, Zhang Lie sent a flurry of punches into the sky, causing the moons to explode in mid-air in a storm of arrows.

Against Sun Mengmeng, who had grown much stronger after the trials of the third realm, Zhang Lie couldn't take it as easy as before.

"[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 two hunters. 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 land and heading straight for Sun Mengmeng.

"[Lunar Apostasy]!"

Sun Mengmeng's entire bow was blazing. She launched her arrows straight into the air, which exploded among the clouds and formed a black moon.

The moon exploded and shot down rays of moonlight to counter the pale blue waves.

A huge rumble shook the heavens, and the world quaked.

As the waves burst apart, the air filled with echoes of Zhang Lie's signature genetic energy. When it came into contact with Sun Mengmeng's flames, huge quantities of steam rose into the air and were dispersed.

The flames surrounding Sun Mengmeng erupted like a volcano, distorting space in a huge area around her and strengthening the flames around.

Pitch-black flames morphed into vortices that clashed against the diffuse water-attuned genetic energy in the air.

The high-pressure steam continuously exploded like bombs.

Sun Mengmeng howled into the air. Fire-attuned genetic energy erupted from her body, and her pitch-black eyes burned red. The flames formed a black hurricane with her at its eye. It burned everything in sight; lava rose to the ground where she stood.

Zhang Hanxiang and the members of Team Zenith hastily retreated. Zhang Lie stood in the midst of the pitch-black hurricane, but the flames seemed to avoid him entirely. He clapped leisurely. "Very well done, Sun Mengmeng! Keep this explosive strength up."

"[Netherworld's Torrential Flame]!"

A frightening fan of flames poured out from Sun Mengmeng's bow, an attack far stronger than the moonlight she had summoned. The intensity of her technique shocked everyone.

The flames arced in the air and fell toward the battlefield in a waterfall.

Zhang Lie punched forward and bisected the flow of the flaming waterfall.

"[Lunarflame Shot: Ninefold Phantasmagoria]!" Sun Mengmeng's surroundings began to burn with dark red flames as she launched yet another attack.

Nine purplish-black phoenixes rose around her and shot toward Ghroth.

Zhang Lie sent nine punches forward, one for each phoenix. The nine phoenixes exploded into nine black roses in the air. Scorching heat enveloped the hunters, and even the members of Team Zenith were forced to activate their defenses.

"[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.

Sun Mengmeng shot out a few pitch-black arrows in succession toward Zhang Lie like a hurricane.

The shark swallowed all the arrows. Pitch-black flames exploded within its mouth in a burst of steam, obliterating the shark.

"[Lunarflame Shot: Might of the Garuda]!" Purplish-black flames gathered on Sun Mengmeng's bow once again, forming an arrow of pure black.

Chapter 1245: Even Stricter

Purplish-black flames gathered on Sun Mengmeng's bow once again, forming an arrow of pure black. She marshaled her emotions without being lost in her rage or anger.

The image of a golden garuda, limned in black, appeared behind her. As she loosed her arrow, it seemed to transform into a beam of light, moving so quickly that it bypassed the constraints of time and space, as though it could penetrate anything.

However, the arrow caused no earth-shattering explosion: Zhang Lie caught it with two fingers, preventing it from moving even a single inch forward.

"Is this it?"

Black genetic energy spread over his palm as the black arrow vanished into nothingness.

"[Lunarflame Shot: Extirpation of the Garuda]!"

Black flames, stuck together, flowed like lava along the ground. Wrapped in flame, Sun Mengmeng strode forth. Her pupils had been replaced by black flame, and she looked like a demon from the abyss.

As Sun Mengmeng infused her genetic energy into the bow, the image of a garuda appeared behind her. She released her arrow, which morphed into a human-faced, golden-winged bird in mid-air, radiating red light as it arced through the skies. It began to pulse with red flame, brimming with such energy that it seemed as though it would set the world aflame.

The destructive energy dyed everything in sight a patch of black.

The entire pocket dimension seemed to transform into a furnace. The ground melted and turned into boiling-hot lava.

Hong Xi's pale blue moonlight shone down on them all. 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.

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

Fang Yi thrust his spear quickly, combining the energy of chaos with wind and storm. A barrier of the elements formed around the members of Team Zenith.

Zhang Hanxiang released a chilly frost, adding a layer of ice as a second layer behind it.

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

Li Feng had yet to recover from his earlier exertion against Zhang Lie, and was still resting.

Sun Mengmeng released her arrow, which morphed into a human-faced, golden-winged bird in mid-air, radiating red light as it arced through the skies.

The garuda landed in a hurricane of pitch-black flames as it arched its wings wide. It began to pulse with red fire, brimming with such energy that it seemed as though it would set the world aflame.

Sun Mengmeng's attack scorched the pocket dimension, dyeing everything in sight a patch of black.

The barriers isolating it from the rest of the third realm began to crack as the pocket dimension filled with pitch-black flames. Yang Ze's dimensional barrier was burnt to a crisp, Fang Yi's elemental barrier was dispelled, Zhang Hanxiang's icy wall melted, Zhou Ying's vines were set aflame, and Jun Jiuxiao and Ye Xianchen's barriers were destroyed entirely.

As pitch-black flames threatened to seize them all, the members of Team Zenith all reinforced their individual barriers.

"[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.

Pitch-black genetic energy with the consistency of water formed a shield around Zhang Lie. When the black flames touched that genetic energy, they were extinguished and corroded immediately.

"[Lunarflame Shot: Extirpation of the Garuda]!"

Sun Mengmeng pulled her bow taut once more, infusing the rest of her genetic energy within. The image of a garuda materialized from thin air and, supercharged with Sun Mengmeng's energy, readied for a devastating blow.

Black flames gathered, lighting the very air itself aflame. The black flames formed a pitch-black abyss that no longer radiated light. Instead, it sucked in the light from all around like black holes and devoured everything in sight.

The pocket dimension was entirely lit up, and the barrier isolating it from the outside realm was filled with cracks.

As Sun Mengmeng loosed the arrow, the garuda shot straight toward Zhang Lie, bringing a whole world's worth of black flame in his direction.

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

The black serpent tangled and wrapped around the fierce garuda, diminishing and smothering the black flames, even as the black flames burned the serpent's flesh. Both creatures began to sizzle; the two energetic constructs were fading away bit by bit as they struck each other.

The garuda keened. Pitch-black flames burst forth in a hurricane.

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

As Zhang Lie punched forward, the blood dragon roared in rage, its howls echoing through the air. It burst apart in the sky, and a wave of annihilation exploded around the dragon. Pitch-black energy swallowed up everything in the vicinity like a storm at sea. Huge quantities of black flame were consumed by the black-hole like energy of annihilation.

In the blink of an eye, all the black flame in the pocket dimension was sucked away, and sunlight filtered down through space once again.

Zhang Lie asked, "Did you intuit something?"

Sun Mengmeng asked, "Captain, are you trying to demonstrate the difference in our level of strength or power?"

Zhang Lie shook his head. "I'm very glad you've learned how to infuse your emotions into your attacks, and it also shows that you've managed to gain some amount of control. However, your problem is just like your brother's: your attacks are too diffuse. It's important to be able to launch wide-ranging attacks, but increasing the concentration of genetic energy will represent a direct increase to your strength."

Sun Mengmeng replied, "Rather than increase the concentration of my attacks by 10 centimeters, I'd rather increase my attack range by 10 meters."

Zhang Lie rolled his eyes at her. "Do you think we're trying to develop new weaponry here? We're talking about conditions in battle. Your techniques waste too much of their power because your arrows are too diffuse. I didn't make this request of you in the past because you weren't able to

control your attacks to such an exacting degree before, but now that you've grown stronger, my requirements will naturally grow stricter."

Sun Mengmeng nodded rather uncertainly, as though she only vaguely understood what Zhang Lie meant.

Chapter 1246: More Devious

As she headed back to ruminate on what Zhang Lie had told her, Zhu grumbled, "Zhang Lie, you must be doing this intentionally! Look at how many times I've had to restore these barriers. Aren't you going to make things easier for me?"

Zhang Lie's final [Fists of the Silent Sea] had shattered the remaining barriers isolating the pocket dimension from the outside realm, and Zhu had to remake them all.

Zhang Lie shrugged helplessly, indicating that he too had no other recourse.

Zhu grumbled once, then began the tedious process of reforming the pocket dimension and sealing it anew.

Meanwhile, Zhou Ying healed Sun Mengmeng of her injuries, then stepped out into the arena.

Her 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.

The gray power gathered around Zhou Ying's forehead, which cracked apart. A gray eye budded from her flesh. It opened up to reveal a chaotic opal iris, which seemed to be able to penetrate flesh, soul, and space.

Each leaf was like a miniature sun, orbiting around the woman's body. To her back was a pair of golden wings. Above those wings was a glowing sun, giving off a radiant, holy light.

Her jade-green eyes were flecked with gold, and she seemed to have become one with the land. The vitality radiating from her was visible to the naked eye. Stellar light surrounded her as though she were a goddess given form.

Black energy formed a gauzy dress around her, sticking closely to her limbs and revealing her curvaceous features—no, making them even more curvaceous than they originally were.

Two root-like tendrils writhed under her dress; her body radiated a seductive charm. Zhou Ying seemed to simultaneously exhibit the charm of a holy priestess and a charming succubus.

She had transformed into her battle-ready state in a matter of moments.

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

She released all her stored vitality at once, causing the ground to quake as thousands of jade-green wood dragons rushed out of the earth. Each dragon was about six hundred meters wide, with skin flecked with golden radiance.

Zhang Lie strode among the heavyset dragons as though he were merely on a stroll.

Golden leaves were interspersed with the wood dragons, each like a sparkling sun.

The dragons interwove around Zhang Lie, transforming into a cage.

"[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 two 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 pocket dimension.

The flood washed away the wood dragons and scoured the land, destroying it all.

Zhang Lie knew that Zhou Ying was a very troublesome existence. If he didn't attack the land as well, Zhou Ying would root herself down and employ her vitality and natural energy to endlessly regenerate her summoned dragons.

A huge rumble shook the heavens, and the entire world quaked.

As the waves burst apart, the air filled with echoes of Zhang Lie's signature genetic energy. The leaves exploded as the pale blue tide stormed them.

However, Zhou Ying's figure, shrouded by the densely packed wood dragons had already vanished from sight.

"As expected of our captain, to be able to deal with these tricks in just one blow."

Zhou Ying suddenly appeared behind Zhang Lie, stabbing him with her dagger in a golden gleam.

As though he had predicted her move, Zhang Lie reached out with two fingers and pinched the blade of her dagger.

Zhou Ying's body was extremely acrobatic. She twisted her waist and kicked out at Zhang Lie like a snake.

The two feelers that grew from the lower half of her dress threw two daggers toward Zhang Lie.

Pale blue genetic energy exploded and knocked the daggers into the distance. At the same time, Zhou Ying slipped away from Zhang Lie's grasp like an eel. Zhang Lie was right about to give chase when wind whistled and hundreds of golden beams surrounded Zhou Ying, allowing her to take refuge in a copse of trees.

Zhang Lie slightly angled his body and avoided the golden beams by millimeters. He easily evaded the attacks and continued to give chase.

Just as he stepped beyond the copse, countless leaves flew toward him, each one as sharp as a knife.

Amidst the storm of leaves, Zhang Lie waved his left arm, genetic energy rippling from it like a shield, protecting him from the barrage.

As the ripples struck the leaves, the leaves rebounded into the air, but precisely at that moment, a green needle shot toward Zhang Lie, camouflaged by the leaves that obstructed his vision.

With a resonant clink, Zhang Lie reached out and grabbed a tiny jade needle with his hand, one formed out of pure genetic energy. It was so thin that it could barely be seen with the naked eye.

The floating golden leaves provided a strong sense of misdirection, especially when surrounded by golden wood dragons. The jade needle seemed to blend into its surroundings. Just like in the second realm, Zhou Ying had manifested a patch of forest, and all that the eye could see was green and gold.

Any ordinary hunter would have been caught unawares by the jade needle, even the members of Team Zenith.

However, Zhang Lie's two lives' worth of combat experience allowed him to discover Zhou Ying's trick near-instantaneously.

Zhang Lie had always approached combat with two sources of input: his eyes and a web of genetic energy that he spread out all around him, forming a radar-like detection system that allowed him to detect any anomalies.

Zhang Lie held the jade needle up to his eye. "What a crafty trick... Zhou Ying, you've grown even nastier."

"Thank you, Captain. I thought I'd be able to catch you off-guard." Despite speaking, Zhou Ying was very careful not to reveal her current location. She continued hiding among the wood dragons cautiously.

The golden leaves fell in a flurry, forming a golden storm. Their serrated edges were like blades that tore the sky.

"[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 widened its maw and caused all the golden leaves to explode.

Zhou Ying's figure appeared in the light, and golden leaves surrounded her.

The ground quaked and rumbled, as though something was about to appear from its midst.

Chapter 1247: A Qualitative Change

"[Avatar of the Fae: Worldbound Enclosure]!"

Zhou Ying summoned tens of thousands of wood dragons from the ground, enough to fill up the entire arena. They were thrice as thick as before, and their barkskin shone with metallic luster.

As they attacked Zhang Lie, countless golden leaves accompanied them.

A black serpent wrapped around Zhang Lie. Any leaf that touched its body was dissolved instantly.

"[Ninecarp Transformation]!"

Zhang Lie waved a hand. His genetic energy, as dark as ink, dissolved the majority of the wood dragons. However, the wood dragons stubbornly clung onto life with their remarkable vitality, and

new ones regenerated within moments. Zhang Lie's attacks were barely sapping away at their regeneration. Tens of thousands of wood dragons surrounded Zhang Lie.

The densely packed wood dragons formed a cage, one interspersed with large quantities of golden leaves. Even a mosquito wouldn't be able to escape.

Zhou Ying wasn't standing still, either. Her body melded into the leaves, and she slashed with a flurry of strikes. She chopped off the serpent's head, but before Zhang Lie could retaliate, a vine grew out of the ground from Zhou Ying's feet, bringing her up and away.

Zhang Lie punched the cage of wood dragons, but by the time he emerged from their midst, Zhou Ying had vanished.

"It's time for a different style, I think."

Zhang Lie's genetic energy transformed from pitch-black to silvery-white, striated with gold.

"[Ninecarp Transformation: Golden Tiger]!"

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

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

His genetic energy shot out from him like blades, slicing apart the wood dragons. However, Zhou Ying was nowhere to be seen.

Vitality and natural energy formed a web of roots underground, allowing them to regenerate near-instantaneously. The split wood dragons merged together within moments.

The wood dragons that were unable to regenerate and had fallen to pieces on the ground squirmed like segments of a snake's body. Where their wounds were, gray fog began to spread, and vines grew out of them. Even more wood dragons and vines attacked Zhang Lie, attempting to trap and entangle him.

Zhang Lie closed his eyes, attempting to use his senses to detect a combination of vitality and natural energy, and hence to find Zhou Ying's location.

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

Zhang Lie suddenly opened his eyes wide and punched forward.

The [Fists of the Silent Sea] formed a fist in combination with the black serpent form and a mallet with the golden tiger. The condensed genetic energy solidified into sharp silver crystals, piercing through the horde of wood dragons like honed daggers, but they missed.

The crystals had gone through all the wood dragons in the vicinity, and Zhang Lie could see out into the open through the holes they had left behind. However, Zhou Ying was nowhere to be seen.

"Haha, catch me if you can, Captain!"

Zhou Ying darted through the wood dragons leisurely. The terrain was as easy and familiar for her to traverse as though she were in her backyard. She moved so rapidly that she left a flurry of afterimages behind.

"[Storm of Leaves: Void Cut]!"

The afterimages suddenly seemed to gather as she appeared atop Zhang Lie's head. As she clutched her dagger in a reverse grip and arced it downward, her face lit up in a smile. "I've succeeded."

Zhang Lie smiled, as if he'd guessed where she would be all along. Zhou Ying's eyes widened.

As he punched toward his back, he knocked Zhou Ying's dagger flying—along with Zhou Ying herself.

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

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

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

The daggers tore through sky and space, cutting a route through the wood dragons. By then, however, Zhou Ying had vanished again. Vitality and natural energy surged, and even more wood dragons grew out of the ground.

"Haha, Captain, you can't catch me unless you deal with the wood dragons first!" Zhou Ying's voice came from all around Zhang Lie, preventing him from pinpointing her location.

A dense horde of wood dragons surged toward him in a golden flood.

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.

Whenever he cut apart a wood dragon, gray fog would seep out of its "wounds". As he cut more and more of them, the air filled with gray fog.

Zhang Lie didn't dare to breathe in or even touch the fog, not knowing whether or not it was poisonous.

Golden genetic energy formed a protective barrier over his skin, like a suit of golden armor that isolated him from the fog.

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

As he cocked his fist, dozens of crystalline dragons formed behind his back, roaring in unison and causing the sky to tremble.

The next moment, they shot out through his fists.

Hundreds of crystalline dragons criss-crossed through the air, beautiful and dazzling. They pierced through huge swathes of the wood dragons and burst apart, sending crystal shards exploding through the dragons in a storm. The wood dragons fell like bushels of wheat, and their golden

leaves exploded. As more fell, the gray fog grew thicker and denser. Golden leaves floated through the air and toward Zhang Lie in a flood.

Zhang Lie unsheathed Guicang, cutting apart the golden leaves.

A golden explosion bathed the pocket dimension in golden light. Shrouded by the leaves and light, Zhou Ying appeared behind Zhang Lie once more.

"[Storm of Leaves: Fourfold Void Cut]!"

Zhou Ying gripped a dagger with each hand, and the tendrils growing out of her lower body wrapped around two more. The daggers slashed through the void, and all four converged on the same spot.

Zhang Lie reacted very quickly, unsheathing his blade and slashing at Zhou Ying in one graceful turn. Guicang shattered even the void daggers.

Wind and storm buffeted the two combatants, and a flurry of sharp leaves surrounded Zhang Lie.

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

As black genetic energy surrounded him, the temperature of the pocket dimension dropped to sub-zero values, and a strong wind buffeted everyone present. Blood-colored frost appeared around them all.

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

The golden leaves clashed against Zhang Lie's demonic serpent in a series of explosions. Zhou Ying made her move, her hands and feelers waving in the air with layered void slashes, as though attacking Zhang Lie with a hundred daggers in unison.

Chapter 1248: A Little Interesting

Zhang Lie's serpents burst apart into pitch-black genetic energy before reforming into serpents once again.

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

The genetic energy rippled forth. A sea of genetic energy covered up the sky. 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.

A storm of golden leaves surrounded Zhou Ying and transformed into a golden egg, around which the golden leaves wrapped protectively to block the serpents' attack.

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 serpents continued to divebomb the golden egg, and the golden leaves continued to explode in defense, causing the serpents to dissipate back into genetic energy.

Vitality and natural energy exploded en masse from the golden egg. The energy crept along the ground, causing huge quantities of wood dragons to emerge. Zhang Lie had no choice but to deal with the incipient trouble. Demonic serpents clashed against the emerging wood dragons, corroding them with their dark energy.

"[The Boundless Blade: Dragon's Wrath]!"

The blood dragon's phantasmal figure soared into the air. Zhang Lie thrust forward with Guicang, and the blood dragon swooped down and merged with the sword.

Guicang unleashed a barrage of sword energy in the form of a blood dragon.

A dragon's roar shook the sky as the pitch-black genetic energy turned blood-red. The underworld sea roiled, forming a gigantic blood dragon, its jaws wide open and its claws poised to swipe. Large swathes of the wood dragons were torn apart, and even the gray fog was repulsed. The attack struck the golden egg,

immediately causing a large portion of the golden leaves to burst apart. The blood dragon tore apart the golden egg's defenses, but Zhou Ying wasn't within it. She had vanished—but when?

Zhang Lie thought for a moment before noticing the burrow in the ground, then smiled meaningfully. "Interesting."

When vitality and natural energy had poured into the earth, Zhou Ying had burrowed down and escaped from the eye-catching golden egg.

"There's more, Captain!" As a wood dragon emerged from underneath Zhang Lie's feet, a huge hole formed with his body at its center.

More and more wood dragons emerged from around Zhang Lie. As he waved Guicang around, they splintered and were cut into pieces.

Among their remains, Zhou Ying made herself known. Golden leaves fluttered through the air and became a golden storm that flew toward Zhang Lie.

Among the densely packed leaves was a thin, slender jade needle, delicately hidden within.

"[First Form: Parting the River]!"

A frightening force descended on the arena as pale white sword energy gushed out from Zhang Lie.

Zhang Lie swung his sword simultaneously in every direction, sweeping away the golden leaves, jade needle, and wood dragons. Zhou Ying herself was flung back.

She somersaulted in mid-air and pushed off the barrier of the pocket dimension, shooting forward in Zhang Lie's direction like an arrow loosed from a bow. She twisted and launched a flurry of void cuts, transforming into a black frenzy as she cut apart space.

"[Shadow and Light]!"

Zhang Lie whirled around. Time suddenly sped up in the vicinity of Zhang Lie as he thrust forward with Guicang.

There was only a single blade, but it felt as though a thousand blades had been stitched together as one. Space fell apart and peeled away; the tip of the blade pointing straight at Zhou Ying.

Zhou Ying crossed her arms and blocked Guicang. As she was forced back, her feelers tossed two daggers at Zhang Lie.

Zhang Lie knocked them aside with Hanguang from his other hand.

"[Syzygy]!"

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

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

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

Golden leaves gathered around Zhou Ying and transformed into two shining daggers, which Zhou Ying's black feelers caught. She slashed and broke apart the celestial web before it could close in around her.

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

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

The energy knocked Zhou Ying flying once more.

However, the combination of vitality and natural energy gave Zhou Ying tremendous regeneration.

Zhang Lie wasn't fighting to kill; the damage he inflicted on Zhou Ying would heal within moments. He could hardly fight lethally against his cherished teammates.

"[Blades, Reverberate]!"

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

The twin blades Guicang and Hanguang emitted a fearsome aura, shining as brightly as the sun and moon. Sword energy materialized from Guicang into a blood dragon that revolved around his body.

The blade Hanguang morphed into a black dragon, and the blade Guicang into a blood dragon. The two dragons, coiling together as one, shot out toward Zhou Ying like a hurricane, bearing down on him with the might of Zhang Lie's spiritual sea between them.

Infused with the blood moon and the black sun, the twin dragons formed a black whirlpool. Tremendous suction, like that from a black hole, sucked up everything around the two combatants...

Chapter 1249: Tentacle Monster

Zhou Ying again transformed into a storm of golden leaves in an attempt to avoid the twin black and blood dragons.

However, the vortex formed by the black and blood dragons boasted tremendous suction, and Zhou Ying was unable to escape.

The wood dragons that were slowly regenerating thanks to the vitality and natural energy emitting from Zhou Ying were likewise sucked into the vortex and obliterated.

The vortex struck the barrier isolating the pocket dimension from the rest of the third realm, causing the entire pocket world to tremble and shake. The barriers cracked as Zhou Ying found herself plastered to it. Vitality and genetic energy surged, causing her wounds to heal at a rate visible to the naked eye.

Zhou Ying's feelers extended out and removed her from the barrier.

"[Second Form: Piercing the Soul]!"

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

To Zhang Lie's dragon's pupils, Zhou Ying's soul was a massive tree that reached for the sky, like a world tree in its majesty and stature. It had golden leaves, and gray fog gathered by its roots.

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

Zhou Ying was instantly dazed.

Zhang Lie's sword shone as brightly as the northern lights overhead, bringing him momentarily out of the physical into the intangible.

Just as it was about to land, Zhou Ying suddenly smiled.

Her two feelers began to move, slashing forward with void cuts from two golden daggers and defending against Zhang Lie's aureoreal blow. Spiritual energy gusted forth in a wave. As it struck Zhou Ying, her eyes rolled back, and the golden leaves she controlled shot forward. With his other hand, Zhang Lie scattered the leaves with Hanguang.

Zhou Ying recovered from the spiritual attack quickly.

With her hands and feelers, she continued launching void cuts at Zhang Lie, who defended with Guicang. Genetic energy surfed from Zhou Ying's feet, a combination of vitality and natural energy, and infused it deep into the soil. all around her, wood dragons came to life.

Zhang Lie cut apart the dragons as they emerged, but at the same time, two more feelers grew out from behind Zhou Ying's back and attacked him. Zhang Lie defended with Guicang, slicing off both feelers.

"Did you intuit something?" Zhang Lie asked.

"This battle isn't over yet!" Zhou Ying cried out. Her hair stood on end and golden leaves surrounded her like a storm, swallowing Zhang Lie up. The leaves then exploded in golden light, each one like a miniature sun.

Zhou Ying emerged from the storm unscathed. The feelers that Guicang had chopped off were now regrown.

Zhou Ying's body trembled as she sensed an incomparable strength. She glanced back at the golden storm of leaves.

Red light flashed out from amidst the gold. Zhang Lie, armored in red dragon scales and with a dragon's horns jutting out of his forehead, walked out.

"[Ninecarp Transformation]!"

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

The golden leaves were burnt to a crisp by the blood-red genetic energy, but their golden explosions were completely blocked. A long tail grew out of his back. His black hair took on a red tint, as though they were lit up by an inner fire. Interlocking rings of black and red that warped natural law surrounded his body. Red genetic energy rose into the air and dyed the skies crimson. Cracks appeared on the barriers that Zhu had painstakingly set up once more.

The ground beneath his feet melted into lava, and the air turned scorching hot. After absorbing the golden mulberry tree, Zhou Ying's wood dragons boasted extremely strong resistance to fire. Even so, the wood dragons all around Zhang Lie were lit aflame, and the ones by his feet were burned all the way to their roots.

"To think you still had two feelers hidden..."

Zhang Lie walked out from amidst the storm of golden leaves, all but completely immune to the explosions of golden light.

With Zhang Lie before her, Zhou Ying couldn't help but feel a sense of overpowering weakness.

Zhang Lie asked, "Do you have any other feelers?"

Zhou Ying shook her head. "I only have four at the moment."

"In other words, you'll become a tentacle monster in the future?"

Zhou Ying frowned. "Of course I won't!"

"Did you intuit something, incidentally?"

"I don't plan on admitting defeat just yet."

Zhou Ying erupted in a burst of vitality and natural energy, turning into what seemed like a green crystal. Golden radiance shone where her head would be, and gray fog surrounded her.

"[Avatar of the Fae: Galaxybound Enclosure]!"

A titanic burst of vitality and natural energy erupted from her, turning Zhou Ying into a facsimile of a goddess of nature, the princess of the forests. Huge wood dragons emerged from underground, each about the size of a small plaza.

They were humongous and present in staggering numbers, filling the pocket world like a golden tide.

The members of Team Zenith hurriedly layered their shields to prevent themselves from being affected.

Hong Xi's pale blue moonlight shone down on them all, increasing everyone's strength.

"[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. The surrounding wood dragons were knocked back.

As Zhou Ying continuously injected vitality and natural energy into the pocket world, however, even more wood dragons grew to take their place. They were on the verge of smashing apart Zhu's barriers.

Fang Yi punched forward, his wind dragon and storm tiger clearing out a large swathe of dragons.

Li Feng radiated silver light, and illusory silver dragons coiled around the members of Team Zenith, dealing with their natural brethren.

The wood dragons were present in staggering numbers. No one expected that Zhou Ying would be able to bring so much vitality and natural energy to bear. Boosted by her energy, the wood dragons replenished their numbers more quickly than the members of Team Zenith could take them down.

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

As more and more wood dragons continued to appear and the pocket dimension seemed fit to burst, Zhang Hanxiang released a chilly frost, adding a layer of ice as a barrier against Zhou Ying's attack.

With a casual wave of his sword infused with fiery-red water-attuned genetic energy, Zhang Lie himself cut apart a huge swathe of wood dragons. The energy was scorching hot, and the dragons, which were able to absorb even ordinary flame, were lit up on fire by his energy...

Chapter 1250: An Army of Treemen

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

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

Sun Mengmeng's flames, which would have been particularly effective against Zhou Ying, weren't a viable option because she was still recovering from the exertion of the previous battle.

Zhang Lie suffered from the same issue as did the members of Team Zenith. The wood dragons grew far more quickly than he could get rid of them, even though he was able to cut down a large group with every swing of his sword. The moment he set them aflame, even more would appear; meanwhile, his movements were steadily growing more and more restricted.

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

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

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

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

The high-temperature steam was so hot that it visibly glowed an alarming shade of red.

Despite their distance, the members of Team Zenith could feel the steadily increasing heat. Sweat dripped down their backs. Zhang Hanxiang emanated an aura of frost, trying to retain some moisture in the air to prevent them all from fainting to heatstroke.

Zhang Lie's domain of scarlet steam looked less like a domain than a red sea, one which overtook the void. Wood dragons spontaneously combusted in the vicinity.

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

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

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

The two halves of the attack clashed with each other.

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

Zhang Lie had allowed these two disparate sources of energy to combine, and their merger was so intense that the distinction between the real and illusory began to blur.

The surface of the sea frothed with angry waves, like dragons emerging with the tide. The waves roared through the sea like galloping steeds, like thundering dragons.

From afar, the waves looked like a coven of flaming phoenixes spreading their wings and taking flight; from close up, they looked like flaming dragons.

These manifestations all drew from Zhang Lie's immense spiritual and genetic energy reserves, along with the sword techniques and willpower that he had honed over countless battlefields.

The spiritual sea seemed to belong to a separate dimension altogether, whereas the scarlet water-attuned genetic energy was in Zhang Lie's current dimension. The two sources of energy were linked and made manifest by Zhang Lie, and they both surged forward as Zhang Lie swung his twin blades.

The two blades combined spiritual and genetic energy, willpower and time. All that melded into a tsunami. The combination of these disparate energies was so potent that it could destroy any lifeform's body and soul.

Around the vortex of reality and illusion, the scarlet sea and spiritual sea spun around each other, forming a massive tsunami that shook the entirety of the void,

The pocket dimension cracked apart as the ethereal sun and real and illusory oceans clashed. The ground melted and turned into boiling-hot lava.

Where the oceans met, a tsunami formed, which suppressed the multicolored sun. A burst of strength crumbled everything around, cracking the ground and sweeping away the forests and wood dragons.

Zhou Ying's body flashed jade-green as she radiated light like a jewel. Golden radiance and gray fog combined into a cohesive whole as Zhou Ying's body transformed. Her body turned to wood and grew rapidly. Within moments, she became a thick tree, the crown of which was pushing against the top of the pocket dimension.

The leaves of the tree were arrayed in gold, green, and gray, and a gray eye was embedded into its crown.

Upon seeing Zhou Ying's transformation, Zhang Lie was shocked.

In exasperation, he called out, "Surely there's no need to transform into a tree just because you can't beat me? This is a training exercise, not a bout to the death!"

After Zhang Lie activated [Blades, Extinguish], Zhou Ying had transformed herself into a towering tree to withstand the attack. She had rooted herself in lava.

The leaves shook and trembled as a mysterious voice rang out, "This is my strongest battle-form, which I developed after absorbing the strength of the Everbearing Lady, Captain. I can change back, but it's my trump card and a key component of my power."

Zhang Lie glanced at her thoughtfully. "Just like the wood spirits—no, the wood spirits can merge with trees, but you transform into one instead."

The ground shook. Tremors formed with Zhou Ying at their epicenter. The trees all around her uprooted themselves and turned into treemen.

"This is the army that I've prepared diligently—" Before Zhou Ying could finish, Zhang Lie had made his move.

"[Ninesoul Dragonblade—Third Form: Separating Earth and Sky]!"

White light split the sea and the sky, cutting apart the horizon. The skies split; the black- and white-colored energy that went into the slash erupted like a volcano. White energy drifted toward the skies, and black energy sank to the ground, dividing heaven and earth in two.

As the two shades of energy combined, everything in sight was destroyed.