

U. Warlord 1441

Chapter 1441: Try It

As the waves burst apart, the air filled with echoes of Zhang Lie's signature genetic energy. The genetic energy was as deep as the sea. It transformed into a storm that ravaged the land.

The ground quaked.

In a flash, the two cultivators exchanged thousands of blows, combining physical might with genetic power. Each of Zhang Lie's punches seemed to bear the weight of a typhoon.

The woman was no slouch, either. Her own tempest raged as she unleashed a bevy of complicated techniques in an extravagant display of light.

As their punches met, both cultivators were sent flying.

The woman recovered and quickly shot forward. Where she strode, lotuses bloomed. Crystalline flowers budded and blossomed around her in incandescent light.

Power manifested around her. Her eyes, brilliant as lightning, intensified.

"[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. [1]

Pitch-black genetic energy revolved around Zhang Lie like dark clouds, then exploded forth in his vicinity, devouring the crystalline petals.

The woman reacted swiftly. More golden lotus petals scattered around her and transformed into burning energy that countered the dark clouds around Zhang Lie. Her golden light pierced through them as she shot forward.

Another clash unfolded as the two cultivators traded blows. Their attacks blurred as the tempo of the fight was raised ever again.

Suddenly, a gigantic burst of energy separated the two of them. The void distorted; their surroundings exploded.

The woman in gold took the initiative and attacked again. Zhang Lie had never before encountered such an aggressive cultivator. Each time, she seized the advantage.

She looked to be a genteel beauty, but her attacks and movements were sharp and decisive, with no wasted movement whatsoever. Her aura was oppressive. She struck like a storm.

After an intense series of attacks, her body suddenly grew taut. Her bones turned silvery-white as she shot toward Zhang Lie like an arrow.

"[Divine Arrow]!" She blurred; her attacks were so fast they were almost impossible to detect.

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

Zhang Lie punched forward, and the black serpent behind him shot forth.

The woman was visibly startled, but she easily dodged the serpent given her extreme speed. She looked like a bolt of silver lightning as she zipped through the air.

This was a use of spatial force at its peak, allowing her to behave like a divine arrow that shot through the void at extreme speed but simultaneously allow for rapid changes in direction.

In order to catch up with the woman, Zhang Lie activated his limitless universe soulshard. He glowed with stellar radiance, like a burning star. Starlight flowed through his body in phantasmagorical colors.

The starlight's allure captivated all onlookers.

Zhang Lie's body transformed into a glaze of the dark cosmos, as though the Milky Way itself flowed through his body. His aura grew tremendously as he barely managed to match her speed.

The woman continued barreling forward, obliterating any obstacles in her way.

Zhang Lie himself was making a move. A starlit sea manifested around him, and the power of the stars formed a whirlpool using his water-attuned genetic energy as a foundation.

The whirlpool caused the void to grow sluggish, limiting the speed of the silver arrow into which the woman had transformed.

Zhang Lie simultaneously activated his dragonwolf soulshard. His russet fur seemed to glimmer with stellar radiance, each hair a shining star, as though he were draped with the entirety of the Milky Way. His four limbs were armored with a dragon's scales, each a burning golden sun. The two soulshards' power combined.

A dragon's horns grew out of Zhang Lie's forehead, shining with stellar radiance, surrounded by galactic starlight. To others, he would seem to have the boundless energy of a new galaxy.

Zhang Lie swiped forward with his claws. Starlight flooded forward, splitting apart heaven and earth as it shot toward the silver arrow. Simultaneously, his left hand manifested pitch-black genetic energy in the form of an ocean, one darker than the night. It hemmed in the void and sealed off the woman's escape.

Even so, the woman glided forward, somersaulted in the air, and whipped her legs toward his head.

Zhang Lie defended himself with crossed arms. Both cultivators stumbled back in shock.

They were silent for long moments. Zhang Lie narrowed his eyes before he concluded, "Your physical body isn't particularly strong. You're making use of some arcane technique."

With careful inspection, he could see that the woman's body had a sheen of crystalline light over it. That light was the source of her apparent invincibility.

He had been wondering how such a genteel woman had chosen the path of physical cultivation and pursued it to such a frightening extreme, but things were clear now. She had some arcane technique that could bolster her physical body to this extent!

He was deeply impressed by the strength of the fifth realm and the diversity of techniques it possessed. Just getting a taste of what they were like was more than worth the price of admission.

"You're not bad yourself. As you've seen, this is the divine radiance that I cultivate. It defends me against all ills and all techniques. My physical body is indomitable," the woman replied confidently.

"It's very strong," Zhang Lie acknowledged.

"I'm Feng Xian of Starbright Academy. And you? Which divinity of the universe is your master?" she asked. [2]

"I'm Zhang Lieyang," Zhang Lie said.

Feng Xian's smile was splendid in her confidence. She spoke brusquely. "I don't want to waste any more time. I'll take you down immediately."

"Are you sure you can?" Zhang Lie asked.

"Of course. You're strong enough that I'm willing to attempt to bring you into Starbright Academy with me," Feng Xian stated. "As my mount, of course."

Zhang Lie countered, "And if you lose, will you be my mount?"

"Try it." The woman smiled. Her limbs glowed with light, as though she were about to activate some forbidden technique...

Chapter 1442: A Young Girl in Truth

"Give it a try, then." The woman smiled. Her limbs glowed with light. A giant figure materialized behind her, a hundred meters tall, with branches smooth and shining, or covered with soft down. Leaves grew from the branches, narrow and needle-like, each one several meters long and tapering off to a jagged tip. The flower that bloomed near the top of the figure was large and beautiful, pink dappled with shades of white, red, and purple.

It looked like a phoenix with wings unfurled, preparing for flight. A deific air surrounded it; it glowed with light and gave off an alluring scent.

Zhang Lie roughly understood why the woman had become so upset when he said she was poisonous. She likely was related to some sort of plant matter; unlike the Solarvines, who were in fact plants, she probably just had some plant DNA in her genes.

That was why Feng Xian had been so irritated when Zhang Lie claimed her to be a weed, to be poisonous, and to have a noxious stench.

"If you're that confident, then let's begin!"

Starlight surrounded Zhang Lie. Countless stars whizzed away from his body. His pitch-black genetic energy seemed like the astral void, with shining stars scattered throughout.

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

His genetic energy condensed into a black dragon, whose scales were each a star.

The stars inlaid in its body formed a long stellar river.

Zhang Lie's monarch-grade limitless universe soulshard was changing the very nature of his genetic energy, from pitch-black to dotted with starlight, as though it were a sample from the galaxy.

The galactic genetic energy shone with twinkling stars, which transformed into dragons that shot out alongside Zhang Lie's punch.

"What? Who are you? !" the woman cried out. She retreated quickly, shock written in every line of her features. Zhang Lie's appearance frightened her, and she faltered while attempting to execute her technique.

A frightening burst of energy emanated from her body. Her forehead pulsed with such potent fluctuations that even Zhang Lie was amazed.

However, it was too late. Before her technique could be released in full, Zhang Lie's stellar dragon had reached her.

Within moments, a wave of annihilation exploded around the dragon. Pitch-black energy swallowed everything in the vicinity like a storm at sea, covering up the sky.

The explosion was like a black hole that sucked up everything in sight, land, sea, and sky alike.

"This doesn't count. I wasn't ready! Fight me again !" she shouted, fleeing from the pitch-black storm of energy.

"What? You already agreed to the terms of the fight. Now that you've lost, are you going to wait until I enter this so-called Starbright Academy and find you?" Zhang Lie pressed.

Feng Xian scowled. Despite her disheveled appearance from being forced to flee, her beauty remained. She was cursing in anger at what had happened.

Zhang Lie unleashed his dragonturtle transformation.

The image of a dragonturtle manifested behind Zhang Lie, and his water-attuned genetic energy turned heavy, sluggish, and a dark yellow color. Ripples of genetic energy spread out all around him like mud. Feng Xian ended up stuck in the mud, and her actions slowed down tremendously.

Before she could react, Zhang Lie launched another technique.

"[Rune: Quell]!"

Zhang Lie raised a hand high into the air as the image of a dragonturtle appeared before him. Black tablets hovered above Feng Xian's head. Runes of unknown provenance appeared from the tablets, then floated down and surrounded Feng Xian.

"What is this?!" Feng Xian's energy was quickly being drained. Suppressed by the dragonturtle's runic tablets, she found it hard to gather even a shred of energy.

Zhang Lie leapt forward and picked Feng Xian up as though she were a kitten.

"Help!" Feng Xian kicked and bit at Zhang Lie as she attempted to free herself.

By then, her genteel facade had vanished entirely. She seemed more like a beast in miniature.

"This is unfair. You're a young divinity of some major force, but you launched a sneak attack at me! You don't have any of the pride or bearing of a strong foe. In a proper fight, I'd take you down easily!" Feng Xian shouted, clawing at her captor.

The veil had fallen off her face in the frenzy of battle, revealing exquisite features. She was smaller than Zhang Lie had expected and was perhaps only in her teens. It was apparent that she would

become a beauty of legends in adulthood. She pouted, her pert nose scrunched up in anger, as she glared at him with large eyes.

"Admit defeat. Keep your word," Zhang Lie said, smiling.

"You caught me off guard!" Feng Xian shouted. "Fight me fairly if you dare. I'd take you down within three moves. Otherwise, I'll admit defeat!" Zhang Lie didn't know whether she was intentionally provoking him or actually that confident.

Zhang Lie laughed. "Aren't you going to call me a swindler for mounting a sneak attack on a teenage girl like you?"

"Oh, I will! You're a swindler, a thief! You're some young divinity whose identity has been kept secret by one of the major forces, but you're here participating in the Galactic Rising Stars Cup as though you're really a newbie! Don't you have any ethics, any morals? What kind of master would produce a disciple like you?!"

Zhang Lie laughed again. "But I'm not a young divinity, and no major force is my backer."

Feng Xian roared in outrage and continued swiping at him. "Then you must be from an ancient race, or the successor of an ancient inheritance! I was wondering just how that Solarvine managed to lose to a nameless challenger like you. So these are your true colors! Pretending to be a nameless race in order to bully us poor folk."

"Doesn't your conscience throb when you say something like that?"

"That's what I should be asking you!"

Zhang Lie scoffed. "I wasn't the one who challenged you to a confrontation. You were the one sneaking up on me to begin with."

"Fight me fairly if you dare!"

Zhang Lie smiled. "You really are extraordinary, aren't you? That glowing forehead of yours unleashed tremendous energy. Do all the challengers like you possess some sort of tremendous talent?"

"Dare you fight me? I'll give you the advantage and seal away one of my hands. I promise I'll beat you within three moves!" Feng Xian shouted again, her porcelain-like features full of provocation.

"Provoking me won't work, I'm afraid." Zhang Lie flicked her forehead with a finger.

"Ouch! We're not done here!" Feng Xian clutched her forehead in pain as she screamed again.

Zhang Lie laughed. This genius girl from, what was it, the Starbright Academy was truly a breath of fresh air. Her genteel appearance out of battle, fierce and confident disposition within it, and this wild-child-like behavior now...

"I'll remember you!" Feng Xian shouted, her eyes shining with anger.

Chapter 1443: Leaving in Anger

"And so what if you remember me?" Zhang Lie teased, pinching her pert nose.

"I'll eat you!" Feng Xian growled.

Zhang Lie laughed and reached out with his other hand to pinch her cheeks, which still had some baby fat on them. Feng Xian grew more and more furious.

"Just you wait!" Feng Xian cried out, then... transformed into a void phoenix.

The phoenix's cries resounded across the heavens. Feng Xian unfurled her wings and vanished from Zhang Lie's grip.

"Hm?" Zhang Lie was shocked that she could have escaped despite the forcefield enacted by his dragonturtle tablets. A dudou was left in his palms, shining with mysterious runes that even Zhang Lie couldn't understand. [1]

What was this? Had Feng Xian escaped because of this dudou?

"I'm so angry. I, Feng Xian, have never suffered such disgraceful humiliation! How dare you pinch my nose and my face! I'm not done with you!" the phoenix cried out shrilly.

The girl was stubborn and would hold a grudge for a long time. She firmly remembered the humiliation she suffered at Zhang Lie's hands, but seemed to have forgotten about the debt she now owed Zhang Lie on account of their bet.

Zhang Lie waved the dudou in his hands. "You dropped something!"

The void phoenix stopped short and transformed back into Feng Xian's appearance. She was even more infuriated than before. "Return that to me!"

Zhang Lie curled a finger at her. "Come and get it."

Feng Xian scowled as she transformed into lightning and shot into the distance. "Just you wait. I'll reclaim it myself!"

Black genetic energy burst forth from Zhang Lie, as though there were hundreds, thousands of dragons surging throughout his body.

"[Rune: Control]!"

The image of a dragonturtle appeared before him as Zhang Lie raised his hand. Ripples spread out from the two tablets, attempting to seal the void phoenix's will and power—but to no avail.

The void phoenix seemed not to exist in reality.

Zhang Lie waved the dudou in the air again. "If you don't want it, I'll auction it off. I think the undergarments of the genius Feng Xian of Starbright Academy would fetch a pretty sum!"

"Just you wait. I've never suffered such grave humiliation. I'll transform you into a grub and then eat you up!" Feng Xian ran off in fury.

"Admit that you've lost your bet. Otherwise, I'll head to the Starbright Academy in the future to find you!" Zhang Lie shouted.

The dudou seemed like a treasure, but it was designed for a female. Zhang Lie couldn't use it.

Could he give it away? That would be even worse; it would lead to a misunderstanding at best.

Zhang Lie tried to store it in his storage-type soulshard, but found to his surprise that he wasn't able to do so. After careful inspection, he realized to his surprise that the dudou was made of a similar material as his soulshards and could be kept in his soulspace.

The fight between the two cultivators naturally attracted some degree of attention, and many had seen Feng Xian flee.

"Did you all see that? Wasn't that void phoenix Feng Xian from Starbright Academy? Was she slain?"

"Impossible! You all know how strong Feng Xian is. She's a genius of Starbright Academy—we saw her take down an ancient wyrm by herself, unarmed! Who could challenge her?"

A group of young cultivators were gathered by a mountain brimming with spiritual smoke and looking at where the void phoenix had vanished.

"But I'm sure I saw her! That sounded just like her, too!" one of the cultivators declared.

"How can that be? She's been invincible ever since she mastered Faerie Glow. All arts are ineffective against her, and she's struck down every opponent in her way!"

"Right? I even heard that she tried to take down the young prince of the spirits' clan, and she was a troublesome foe even for them!"

The cultivators argued with each other, none of them quite able to believe that Feng Xian had been forced to flee. She was simply too strong!

They were all fearful of the girl who seemed in every aspect a stunning beauty. Her genteel and elegant air were renowned, but the moment she struck, she became like a dragon.

"No, you're wrong. I saw Feng Xian fight, become overwhelmed, and flee!"

"Who could have challenged her to such an extent?"

"I didn't dare draw near. I was only observing from afar." The cultivator raised his head and saw a figure whizzing through the air. He immediately pointed at it. "That's him!"

Zhang Lie was chasing after Feng Xian. He was certain that she couldn't keep up this sort of ethereal transformation for long.

"Let's strike. He must be exhausted after fighting with Feng Xian. We'll take down a dangerous opponent while he's weakened."

One cultivator sent an umbrella into the air, whirling as it spun up into the clouds and turning day into night. As it continued to revolve, beams of dark light

Zhang Lie raised a hand. Guicang slashed at the air, cutting the umbrella in two with a snick.

"What?!" the cultivator cried out. His umbrella was a treasure, but it had been destroyed in an instant! Everyone blanched.

Some of their number had run away the moment the first cultivator launched an attack. If even Feng Xian was fleeing, what made them think they could handle him?

As they turned around, golden light blossomed in the air. A sword slash struck at the void and killed the cultivator who had launched the umbrella instantly.

The gigantic silver sword blocked the path of the remaining cultivators.

"Don't leave, now. Let's have a pleasant conversation." Zhang Lie walked over.

The cultivators paled, cursing the idiot who had tried to attack Zhang Lie and immediately been killed thereafter. Zhang Lie had been focused on chasing after Feng Xian, but now—!

A cultivator who could force Feng Xian to flee, no matter how drained he was from the fight, wasn't someone that weak cultivators like them could handle. Feng Xian was a genius of Starbright Academy! How had someone so foolish made it into the tournament proper?

Striking now would be akin to committing suicide, but not only had he committed suicide, he had dragged the rest of them down with him.

The cultivator, bisected, scattered in a pile of mental essence.

Fog suddenly rose up, accompanied by lightning. Zhang Lie was submerged in it. Another cultivator had struck.

"He's nothing more than a young cultivator from some major force! We don't have to worry about him. We'll strike simultaneously and take him down!"

Even now, there were a few fools who thought that they would be able to take Zhang Lie down.

Chapter 1444: Too Overbearing

All those who were able to enter the tournament proper were hailed as geniuses. None of them would want to acknowledge Zhang Lie, who had emerged out of nowhere as an unknown threat.

Unfortunately, those cultivators had chosen the wrong opponent to face.

Mud-yellow genetic energy burst from Zhang Lie's body as the image of a dragon turtle manifested behind Zhang Lie. His water-attuned genetic energy turned heavy and sluggish, like dark yellow mud. Everyone ended up stuck.

Genetic energy burst forth from Zhang Lie as though there were hundreds, thousands of dragons surging throughout his body. Each muscle formed a dragon.

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

A horde of dragons launched out of Zhang Lie's left arm as he expended half his genetic energy in one supercharged attack.

Howling with the force of thunder, the hundred stellar dragons soared through the air.

The dragons swooped down toward the gathered cultivators. Even before they struck, the frightening force of gravity caused the ground to cave in for dozens of meters. They were pressed down against the ground, unable to even move. There was no way any of them could escape. Their eyes widened as the dragons appeared before them, growing larger and larger with every moment.

The stellar dragons were massive in size. They looked like planets. Gravity warped around them, sucking the cultivators into the air, then trapping them in a gravity well. The cultivators weren't even able to use any of their techniques, let alone run.

The lightning in the air did nothing against the stellar dragons.

The ground quaked as the stellar dragons divebombed it. Mountains exploded and the ground cracked, revealing lava underneath.

Within moments, there were only a third of their number left, and the remainder were all badly injured.

Someone opened his mouth and sprayed out fog, filling the air before the cultivators.

The fog could both obstruct vision and affect the mental state of enemies trapped within. The cultivators attempted to buy enough time to free themselves, but Zhang Lie charged straight in. He wasn't afraid of the fog. His mind was resolute and his willpower strong, and the fog would hardly deter him. Rather, it would serve as his tool.

He activated his peak-grade dragon's pupil soulshard. His eyes turned needle-like. The augmentation to his spiritual senses and his soul that straddled two lives meant that the fog might as well have been transparent to Zhang Lie. He easily saw everyone.

One person was sent flying.

So was another.

"Damn it!"

"Don't think we'll all be so easy to take down!"

More and more cultivators were sent flying out of the fog, grievously wounded and scattering into mental essence on the spot.

Fire raged as one of the stronger cultivators ignited divine flame, transforming into a human torch and attempting to dispel the fog in search of a way out.

Zhang Lie's genetic energy took the shape of a giant dragonturtle and smashed over, sending the cultivator flying, snuffing out his flame, and dissolving him into mental essence in mid-air.

"Damn it!"

The remaining cultivators all used their own signature techniques, now focused on nothing but their own survival. Lightning roared, light flared, beasts swooped down from the heavens, and pained cries filled the land.

Perhaps because the cultivator that had set up the fog realized that it would only help, rather than hinder, Zhang Lie, or perhaps because that cultivator had died, the fog slowly dissipated.

Everyone fell to the ground. Zhang Lie shook his head in exasperation. "You're all disappointments. I only struck you a few times, and yet you're all done for."

A fair number of cultivators vomited out blood and dissipated into mental essence; those that didn't decided not to let Zhang Lie humiliate them further. They committed suicide on the spot.

Zhang Lie sighed, glancing at the heaps of bodies that were dissolving into mental essence.

The largest conflict in the competition that led to the most eliminated cultivators at once was orchestrated by none other than Zhang Lie.

After finishing off the cultivators, Zhang Lie reined in his genetic energy. The monarch-grade limitless universe and peak-grade dragonwolf soulshards were quite taxing on his genetic energy. While he had an ocean's worth of reserves, he didn't know how long the tournament would last, and it would be prudent to conserve his resources in case he had no genetic energy left when he needed some.

Zhang Lie headed off in the direction of Team Zenith. He found that three of them were in the same direction, and not far from each other, either.

Zhang Lie traveled a thousand miles in a single breath.

In a rock forest, runes hung emblazoned in the air. Rainbow clouds gathered, and an aurora spread through the region. Pure white fog drifted through the area, making it seem like an immortal realm.

However, the stench of blood ruined the scene. Scars of combat filled the land, destroying the illusion of tranquility.

A huge fight had broken out within the rock forest, and some lifeforms destroyed in a rain of light.

In the center of the rock forest, a pillar of light rose into the skies. It was obvious that there was a treasure there.

The rock forest was wide and expansive, but simultaneously sinister. The golden runes in the sky sealed the land.

All who entered felt as though they were in a swamp, their actions slowed no matter what sort of movement technique they had.

It had been half a day since the cultivators entered this stage of the tournament, and the major forces had all established their domains. They now found each other wading into the depths of the rock forest.

It was a brutal fight. Everyone wanted to be the first to make it in, and no one chose to conserve their strength.

All sorts of hidden and secret techniques were unsealed for this very moment.

The total number of deaths at the rock forest was no less than the number that Zhang Lie had killed. More importantly, the dead were all strong cultivators in their own right.

The peak cultivators of the younger generation of the supreme forces, in addition to the Holywing, Redgold, and other races whose candidates had made it past the qualifiers, were all fighting against each other. This was an intense free-for-all, and no one would be able to make it out unscathed.

Even the successor of he who was called the strongest of the era had one bleeding arm. All the cultivators were injured in some manner or another.

At a critical moment, a golden toad, a jade-green serpent, and some other frightening lifeforms emerged out of nowhere, killing the strongest among them.

Suddenly, Zhang Lie himself emerged. He tossed a rock—no, a grenade—into the center of the swamp, causing it to explode as mud filled the air.

Chapter 1445: Already Too Late

A waterfall rained down from the high heavens, thousands of meters in the air. This place was a perfect replica of some miraculous scene in reality, and a divine air hung over the land.

As he entered the rock forest, Zhang Lie revealed no trace of wariness about what had just happened. To an outsider, this might appear to be unguarded naivete, but Zhang Lie had absolute confidence in his strength.

He entered just as a few frightening lifeforms slew a batch of the strongest cultivators.

Even the young proteges of the supreme forces, along with those cultivators who had made it through the qualifiers, had sustained injuries during the free-for-all that had just occurred. No one was unhurt, and the frightening lifeforms had made their appearance at the best possible opportunity for them. Radiant light exploded and fresh blood scattered. The scene was a disaster, and a cacophony of screams could be heard from afar.

Not only were many of the cultivators exhausted, the lifeforms were clearly familiar with the rock forest. In this unusual space in which everyone's movements were restricted and sluggish, physical strength was what mattered most, and no one could be stronger than one of those lifeforms.

Zhang Lie's appearance didn't cause much of a fuss in the chaotic battlefield, where everyone had a hard enough time keeping track of themselves. Zhang Lie considered the few frightening lifeforms. One was a golden toad orbited by golden coins, which would block all attacks directed at it. It would open its mouth to reveal a golden coin. The cultivators whom it was eyeing would find their bodies turning leaden and difficult to control. Not only that, they would suddenly get very unlucky.

Another lifeform was a jade-green snake that emitted poisonous air. When it bit down, even the cultivators who had made it out of the qualifiers would turn jade-green within moments. They fell to the ground, their bodies turning stiff and cold.

The golden toad and jade snake were both supporting the third lifeform, a silvery-white rat that teleported through space and killed one cultivator after another. It had a slew of mysterious techniques, and by the time the cultivators noticed that it was present, it had already bitten through their necks.

A giant turtle rampaged through the rock forest, its defenses frightening to behold. There was also a chameleon that could disguise itself beyond the senses of even the most acute cultivator to behold.

These lifeforms seemed much like genetic lifeforms, but they were present in a virtual realm rather than reality, and had no physical genes to speak of.

"Two supports, two assassins, and a tank..."

Zhang Lie didn't think that that was a good team composition, but the results spoke for themselves. Against the struggling cultivators, the lifeforms had managed all but a one-sided slaughter. Only a few of the strongest were still struggling to defend themselves.

Zhang Lie watched the scene from afar without any intention of helping either side. His gaze swept through the crowd before he noticed someone familiar.

Zhang Lie waved at him. "Xiaowu, here!"

Sun Xiaowu had been participating in the melee, and he too had been injured. However, as a gold-attuned genetic hunter, he had particularly strong defenses. He would be able to heal from even the most serious injury; it just cost more stamina to do so.

As he shouted, he caught the attention of some of the frightening lifeforms, who treated him as nothing more than additional serving of food, not realizing that he was the most monstrous lifeform there.

The jade snake shot over and sprayed out poison mist.

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.

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

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 space and causing the rock forest to shake.

The jade snake was sent flying.

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.

The firm and sturdy rock pillars all around them began to collapse as the frightening lifeforms were repelled.

The remaining lifeforms finally noticed Zhang Lie.

Sun Xiaowu gasped, "Captain!"

The lifeforms shot toward Zhang Lie simultaneously.

"[The Boundless Blade: Yawning Wave]!"

Zhang Lie raised his pointer finger high into the air, manifesting a sword will that rose into the heavens, strong beyond human understanding, vast as the ocean.

The rock forest was sheared off beyond a certain height. The frightening lifeforms fell back in surprise. Half the golden toad's body had been cut off, and a huge scar appeared on the giant rock turtle's shell. It keened.

The silvery-white rat and chameleon attacked simultaneously. The rat teleported through space, while the chameleon extended its tongue like a spear with shocking speed.

"[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 revolved around Zhang Lie like dark clouds, then exploded forth in his vicinity. The silvery-white rat that had just emerged screamed in agony, and the chameleon's tongue dissolved.

Before the rat could run away, Zhang Lie caught it in one hand. The serpent behind him hissed threateningly as the rat attempted to flee. Zhang Lie laughed even more menacingly. "Where are you going, little rat?"

Zhang Lie certainly wasn't about to let his prey flee.

Try as it might, the rat was unable to escape. Its ability to teleport had been restricted by Zhang Lie. The serpent widened its maw and swallowed the silvery-white rat whole.

The rat screamed as it slowly dissolved in the serpent's stomach.

Upon seeing this sight, the chameleon shivered in fear and immediately went into hiding. Only then did it realize that Zhang Lie was unlike any other cultivator in this realm. He was a monster.

However, it was already too late.

"Your stealth ability isn't very strong, is it? I can see through you." Zhang Lie's eyes transformed into a dragon's pupils.

Chapter 1446: The Runic Forest

Zhang Lie could directly sense the chameleon's soul, no matter how much it tried to hide. Its stealth ability would hardly apply simultaneously to its soul.

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

Zhang Lie punched forward, and the black serpent behind him shot forth and bit down on the chameleon. Its pitch-black genetic energy slowly corroded at the chameleon's body.

Suddenly, a bellow rang out. The stone turtle barrelled forward like a giant mountain, attempting to save its companion.

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

As Zhang Lie punched forward, the serpent hissed and shot forward, slamming into the turtle.

A wave of annihilation exploded around the serpent. Pitch-black energy swallowed up everything in the vicinity like a storm at sea. Huge quantities of black fog, and even the grievously injured cultivators, were consumed by the black-hole like energy of annihilation and vanished in a shower of light.

The chameleon was likewise sucked into the midst and transformed into mental essence. Within the storm, the jade snake and golden toad, which had yet to die, attempted to flee.

Black genetic energy burst forth from Zhang Lie, as though there were hundreds, thousands of dragons surging throughout his body.

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

A horde of dragons launched out of Zhang Lie's left arm as he expended half his genetic energy in one supercharged attack.

Howling with the force of thunder, the hundred dragons soared through the air.

They were fierce and domineering, and all hundred of them boasted the power of annihilation. The void storm expanded in size as the rock forest shook. The remaining cultivators paled.

They fled, frightened beyond measure by Zhang Lie's prowess.

He had easily taken down the few frightening lifeforms that had run roughshod over them all. Just who was he?

They had almost all perished to the lifeforms' attack, but Zhang Lie had turned the tide in a matter of seconds! Zhang Lie was more fearsome than the frightening lifeforms were.

Sun Xiaowu stepped forward and gave him a thumbs up. "As expected of you, Captain. You're as strong as ever."

Zhang Lie sighed in exasperation. "It looks like you haven't done well for yourself."

Sun Xiaowu scratched his head wryly. "A few people ganged up on me."

Zhang Lie rolled up his sleeves and looked toward the fleeing cultivators. "Ganged up how?"

It looked as though Zhang Lie wasn't the only victim. Many of the challengers were shocked to see a cultivator from a nameless race take down so many favored contenders, and they wanted to be the ones to take down the "stellar hunters."

"I wasn't around to help you then, but here I am now. Tell me who the culprits are. They should learn that we won't take this lying down."

The cultivators shivered in fear and looked over their shoulders warily.

Sun Xiaowu held Zhang Lie back with a splendid smile.

"I'm fine, Captain. I didn't ruin our reputation. I took down the culprits myself, but was preoccupied with doing so when the lifeforms attacked."

Sun Xiaowu was worried that Zhang Lie would end up fighting against these fleeing cultivators. Although the ones that had survived were largely proteges of supreme forces in the fifth realm, with a strong following and powerful backers, Sun Xiaowu had absolute confidence in Zhang Lie. It would be trivial for him to take them all down—but that wasn't necessary. If Zhang Lie were to fight these cultivators, he would certainly consume a significant amount of stamina, which would hurt them in the long run. Better to wait and conserve their energies, then strike back later.

Zhang Lie understood Sun Xiaowu's intent. "Have you seen anyone else, then?"

"I found Fang Yi in the rock forest, but we separated from each other in the commotion. He's probably deeper into the forest by now. How about you, Zhang Lie?"

"You're the first one I've seen, Zhang Lie replied."

The frightening lifeforms transformed into pinpricks of light after Zhang Lie defeated them. They spun in the air like whirlwinds in miniature, then floated toward Zhang Lie. The particles of light from the challengers that he had defeated also floated toward him.

The particles gathered by Zhang Lie's palm, where the special seal that had imprinted on them absorbed the light. It grew up his arm. Zhang Lie blinked. "This is..."

One of the Stargods stepped forward. "Didn't your elders tell you?"

Zhang Lie replied, "Is there something unusual about this seal?"

Sun Xiaowu added, "Our elder... well, he was eliminated in the qualifiers, so he probably doesn't know the details of the actual Cup."

The Stargod stepped forward. "These seals represent our qualifications for the Cup. By killing beasts and other participants in this virtual realm, you'll be able to increase your standing. Each beast is worth about ten or so challengers, but they're also far more difficult to defeat."

A Holywing youth joined in. "How far this seal extends will affect the genetic expansion that the top ten cultivators receive at the end, as well as your overall ranking."

Sun Xiaowu nodded in understanding. "So the more people you kill, the greater the benefit of the genetic expansion?"

"Not quite," the Stargod corrected. "It's a bonus, nothing more. If the tenth-place cultivator gets one equivalent of the genetic expansion, the ninth-place cultivator might get two equivalents. If the ninth-place cultivator also took down ten other participants, then that bonus will get boosted to a significant extent."

"And what do you mean when you say it might affect our rankings?" Zhang Lie asked.

The Stargod replied, "If there's a dispute in the rankings—if the third-, fourth-, and fifth-place participants are simultaneously killed, then the extent of the seal will be used to determine the final ranking."

Zhang Lie nodded. "In other words, try to kill as many cultivators and beasts as convenient."

The Stargod smiled mysteriously. "Apparently, if the seal reaches a certain extent and you place in the top three in the tournament, you'll get a decent additional reward as well."

The Holywing youth considered Zhang Lie carefully. "I've never seen a seal that extended the length of an entire arm. Yours is... ten, twenty, thirty..."

The Holywing gaped as he counted just how many people Zhang Lie had killed. Just a rough estimate caused his face to turn ashen.

"What's the matter?" The Stargod cultivator glanced at Zhang Lie's seal and did the same thing. "Damn, just how many cultivators did you kill? It has to be over a hundred!"

Chapter 1447: Runic Reconstitution

Upon hearing the Stargod cultivator's words, all the other challengers gaped at Zhang Lie.

Five beasts would correspond to about fifty challengers' worth of progression, so the remaining fifty had to be from the rock forest. That void storm had sucked up countless cultivators, each of which

had killed some other cultivators to begin with. That could account for about a hundred challengers' worth of seal accumulation, but what about the remainder?

It was obvious that Zhang Lie was akin to a god of slaughter.

The Stargod swallowed a gulp of saliva, drummed up some courage, and proceeded with his original plan.

"You don't seem to understand much about the tournament. Why don't we team up? There are plenty of dangers in the rock forest, as well as enemies from all fronts. It's in our best interests to work together. We don't have to stay as a team for long, either—we can try it out now and keep it going later if we want."

The reason the Stargod had been so willing to volunteer information was in hopes of joining forces with Zhang Lie, transforming a threat into an ally.

The Holywing youth clearly had a similar idea, but had faltered after staring at Zhang Lie's seal. He immediately added, "I'd like to join you both. I'm rather strong myself. Those beasts wouldn't have been able to take me down if I weren't exhausted after fighting with a group of other challengers."

The Stargod and Holywing youths turned to Zhang Lie, ignoring Sun Xiaowu. Sun Xiaowu had no interest in joining the conversation; he retreated to the side.

Zhang Lie shook his head in refusal. "I'm sorry, but I already have comrades. I don't intend to work together with other challengers."

It wouldn't necessarily be a bad idea to work together with more experienced challengers, but the problem with the ones before him was their races.

Zhang Lie didn't discriminate against the Stargods or the Holywings, but among his companions were those who had defeated the Stargods and the Holywings. There was no way the party would last.

"That's a pity."

"Let me know if you ever change your mind."

The Holywing and Stargod youths slumped and turned away.

Zhang Lie turned to Sun Xiaowu and asked, "How did you end up fighting?"

Sun Xiaowu pointed at the runes in the rock forest. "These runes seem rather extraordinary, almost as though they represent some sort of inheritance. Everyone tried to intuit them, but tensions were rife and a fight quickly broke out."

Zhang Lie replied, "Try to recover some of your genetic energy. Let's see if we can get something from these runes."

The other challengers thought the same way.

Everyone sat around the rock forest, contemplating the shining golden runes that hung in the air. This could very well be some mysterious inheritance.

Zhang Lie could easily take down the challengers before they recovered from their exertion, but he wouldn't be able to do so while simultaneously protecting Sun Xiaowu. He discarded the idea.

Zhang Lie glanced at the runes and cocked his head. He didn't know if he simply didn't boast the talent, or if the runes were incompatible with his framework and techniques.

Suddenly, fog gathered around the rock forest. The runes glowed brilliantly as the runes crashed into each other with tinkling noises, as though they were notes of some divine music.

Sun Xiaowu sat cross-legged as the runes hovered around him, smashing his bones. He bore with the intense pain as the runes granted him their golden light. The rumbling of thunder could be heard within his body as golden light bathed his limbs and bones, shrouding him in radiance.

The golden light was like a scorching flame. Despite the overwhelming temperature, Sun Xiaowu stood still and motionless as the golden runes branded themselves on his skin.

Sun Xiaowu's bones cracked. He shuddered in overwhelming pain as the golden runes seeped into his very bones.

His bones continued to fragment as blood seeped out of his skin, carrying trace impurities from his mind along with it.

The black demonic seed, implanted during the qualifiers, emerged anew. Demonic aura roiled in the air and shot into the skies, transforming into the figure of some great demon that seemed about to descend to the virtual world. Black lines, like roots, spread from the demonic seed all over Sun Xiaowu's body, causing black aura to seep out of it.

Zhang Lie blanched. Bu Wentian had underestimated the power of this demonic seed.

Without anyone's knowledge, it had implanted itself in Sun Xiaowu's mental world. If not for his attuning to these mysterious runes, the demonic seed would have continued to corrode at Sun Xiaowu's mind. The moment he touched the bone lance again, he would immediately transform into a demon, one far more frightening than what had occurred during the qualifiers. For one, Sun Xiaowu was stronger than the last successor of Heaven, and he was distinct from the statue altogether. Who knew what sort of cursed existence would result if he were to wield the bone lance?

Fortunately, almost as though it were fated, Sun Xiaowu had received the inheritance of the rock forest, which was forcing out the demonic seed. Demonic aura exuded from Sun Xiaowu's body, cleansed by the golden runes. The entire rock forest shook as the runes glimmered. The challengers who were recuperating and attuning to the runes themselves opened their eyes and looked over.

Zhang Lie glared back at them. "If you keep looking, I'll dig your eyes out."

The challengers didn't dare to contest Zhang Lie. They minded their own business as they attempted to create the same resonance that Sun Xiaowu was emitting—or perhaps a stronger one entirely.

Zhang Lie didn't dare to leave Sun Xiaowu's side. He stood right before him, guarding him from assault. If any cultivator dared to strike at him, Zhang Lie would retaliate at full force.

Sun Xiaowu's body was reconstituting; this would be a key part of his transformation.

That said, they were in a virtual realm, so what Sun Xiaowu was really rebuilding was none other than his mental avatar.

Sun Xiaowu's bones continued to grind against each other. He gritted his teeth and bore with the pain as bone finally turned into powder.

This was a frightening scene to behold. Considering the extent of the destruction, if anything untoward were to happen, Sun Xiaowu's mental avatar could be ruined for good.

Then, even his skull began to fragment, crack, and turn to powder.

Someone realized what was happening to Sun Xiaowu. "Reconstruction of the ego..."

Sun Xiaowu was supporting himself with genetic energy. Otherwise, without any bones to maintain the structure of his body, he would be nothing more than a bag of flesh and bones.

With his bones shattered, the blood seeped even more quickly out of his skin, carrying the impurities of his mental avatar along with him. The blood turned black; new, fresh, pure blood would be created within his body as it was reforged.

The golden light from the runes bathed Sun Xiaowu. He continued to bear with the pain as he absorbed the light to refine his blood, flesh, and bone.

The golden runes transformed into natural law that smelted his body, fully obliterating bone in preparation for reconstruction.

Finally, Sun Xiaowu's body shone with even more intense light, blood-colored as impurities streamed out. What remained of his body was weakened and febrile.

Chapter 1448: Don't Worry About Me

The rock pillars of the rock forest vibrated. The runes glowed with light, synchronized and resonating with Sun Xiaowu.

Zhang Lie asked in concern, "Are you alright?"

Sun Xiaowu coughed several times. Black smoke belched out, representing mental impurities.

"Captain, take a look at me. Do I look like I'm alright?"

Zhang Lie considered Sun Xiaowu carefully. The fluctuations in his vitality were stronger than before, a sure sign of an evolution. Every piece of flesh and bone shone and sparkled with golden runes, making him look far more impressive than before, but Sun Xiaowu's aura was unusually weak.

"The inheritance is incomplete," Sun Xiaowu explained.

Zhang Lie frowned. "Was it because I destroyed a few of the pillars?"

Sun Xiaowu shook his head. "What's here is only part of the inheritance. I'll have to head to the center of this forest.

Zhang Lie glanced at the pillar of light that reached toward the skies and nodded. "Do you need help?"

Sun Xiaowu shook his head again. "I'm not so useless that I can't walk by myself."

The other cultivators had also moved on, deliberately avoiding passing close by Zhang Lie.

The first melee at the rock forest had consumed all their desire to get into another fight, at least for the short term.

In particular, none of them had any intention of going against Zhang Lie.

Some of the cultivators had already formed an alliance, resulting in teams possessing incredible strength.

On the way, Zhang Lie asked, "What was going on with the demonic seed?"

Sun Xiaowu shook his head. "I'm not sure myself. I never expected that the seed would already have taken root in my mental avatar. It was all but a ticking time bomb—and I never discovered it until now! Thank goodness the golden runes illuminated the problem."

"Can you resolve it?" Zhang Lie asked.

"I'll start by expelling the demonic energy and see if that solves the problem."

Before them, the rock forest receded. Fog filled their surroundings; everything seemed to be growing less and less realistic.

The cultivators were all trudging along at a sluggish pace, bound by the domain of this mysterious space. They couldn't walk faster even if they tried.

"Argh!" Suddenly, screams came from the cultivators at the very front.

"Be careful. It's an abyss!" someone murmured.

A pitch-black abyss lay at the edge of the stone forest, shrouded by fog and difficult to spot without careful attention. A terrifying suction drew in any cultivators that drifted close by.

Furthermore, none of them were able to fly with this domain sapping their strength.

One cultivator tossed in a large rock, but even after fifteen minutes had passed, no one could hear the sound of it landing. Who knew what horrors lay beneath the abyss?

The cultivators looked around until someone found a log bridge made of a single ancient darkwood log, forming a simple and treacherous path forward.

The cultivators blanched. Would they have to fight each other for the right to cross?

"There are more log bridges over here!"

The cultivators quickly discovered other log bridges all around. There were dozens of them in all. Zhang Lie and Sun Xiaowu frowned. Who knew if there were others that had gone before them?

As they stepped onto the log, the suction coming from below weakened. The log glowed with light, shining with mysterious runes.

They looked down at the thick fog below them that was occasionally scattered. It was pitch-black, as though a beast stood before them prepared to devour everything in sight.

"We're almost there!"

Suddenly, a frightening aura erupted. Someone was attacking the log bridge and attempting to destroy it.

"Damn it!" Zhang Lie shouted.

They were almost to the cliff on the other side, but someone was starting at them. He was attempting to take the opportunity to dislodge the cultivators and send them falling into the abyss.

"Ming Youyu!" Someone immediately recognized a protege of the netherworld lands, a young cultivator steeped in the aura of death. Vitality seemed to have deserted him; his eyes were cold and unfeeling.

However, the log bridge was particularly sturdy. Mysterious runes infused in the log prevented it from being destroyed.

Suddenly, Ming Youyu pulled out a black netherworld sword and slashed at the abyss.

"Be careful!" Zhang Lie shouted.

After the abyss was attacked, a howling wind rose up into the air. It revolved and formed a black hole that devoured the cultivators on the log bridge.

A cultivator shouted, "As expected of a cultivator from the netherworld lands! Evil and vicious, sparing no expense to get rid of any competitors barring his way!"

"Ming Youyu's trying to monopolize whatever lies on the other end of this bridge and eliminate us all!"

"You'll pay for this!" Zhang Lie shouted.

Unfortunately, none of the cultivators were able to fly within this domain.

He and Sun Xiaowu were struggling to hold on. The black hole's suction was immense, and they could lose their balance at any time. Wind ripped at their bodies like sharp blades, wounding exposed skin.

On the other end of the bridge, a roar caused even the void to tremble. The log began to shake, and the force of the abyss grew stronger.

A purplegold denglong strode by Ming Youyu's side, its howl shaking the very heavens.

Stars began to fall from the sky, and even the moon seemed to crumble.

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.

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

A howling gale swept over the log. 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 abyss.

"Open!" 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 abyss trembled. Divine radiance filled the air.

"Don't worry about me," Sun Xiaowu said, his body glistening with light. Golden runes lit up around his body to protect himself.

Despite the fact that the inheritance was incomplete, Sun Xiaowu's body had already been reforged. Impressive defenses resisted any invasion.

"Very well!" Zhang Lie's eyes lit up as killing intent filled the air.

He wouldn't have to worry about Sun Xiaowu any longer. Zhang Lie activated his full strength as he made to kill the man and beast waiting at the end of the log bridge.

Chapter 1449: Hot-Blooded War

"[The Boundless Blade: Yawning Wave]!"

Zhang Lie manifested a sword will that rose into the heavens, strong beyond human understanding, vast as the ocean.

The beam of sword energy tore open a path for Zhang Lie.

"[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 revolved around Zhang Lie like dark clouds, then exploded forth in his vicinity. He shot down the log bridge, transforming into a serpent, bypassing all barriers before him, and pressing toward the other shore.

"What?!" Ming Youyu cried out. Things weren't progressing according to plan. He was dressed in dark gold battle armor and radiating light of a similar color. With a black netherworld weapon in hand, he slashed forward.

At the same time, the purplegold denglong shot into the air and exuded divine authority as it attacked Zhang Lie.

Zhang Lie countered with a burst of tremendous strength. His body glowed as black fog surrounded him.

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

Zhang Lie punched forward, and the black serpent shot forth.

Ming Youyu stumbled back.

As Zhang Lie activated his monarch-grade limitless universe soul shard, he glowed with stellar radiance, like a burning star. Starlight flowed through his body in phantasmagorical colors.

The starlight's allure captivated all onlookers.

Zhang Lie's body transformed into a glaze of the dark cosmos, as though the Milky Way itself flowed through his body. His aura grew tremendously.

Ming Youyu gritted his teeth and bore the tremendous pressure weighing down on him.

This would be a hot-blooded fight.

Knowing that he had encountered a strong enemy, Ming Youyu released a deathly aura. A black chain floated into existence out of his palm, a divine armament he had been born with—the chains of the god of death.

He attempted to restrain Zhang Lie and seal him, or, at the very least, to break through the restrictions imposed by this domain and break out. The black chains pierced through the void in a shower of umbral light.

The black chains were natural law made manifest. They sparked where they struck Zhang Lie's hands

The two cultivators exchanged hundreds of blows in an instant.

Zhang Lie simultaneously activated his dragonwolf soulshard. His russet fur seemed to glimmer with stellar radiance, each hair a shining star, as though he were draped with the entirety of the Milky Way. His four limbs were armored with a dragon's scales, each a burning golden sun. The two soulshards' power combined.

A dragon's horns grew out of Zhang Lie's forehead, shining with stellar radiance, surrounded by galactic starlight. To others, he would seem to have the boundless energy of a new galaxy.

Zhang Lie swiped forward with his claws. Starlight flooded forward, causing Ming Youyu to shriek in pain as his chains shattered.

Zhang Lie's claws of starlight split apart heaven and earth and even cut off Ming Youyu's arms in a spray of netherworld blood. He was grievously injured.

Ming Youyu turned and attempted to flee.

"You won't get away!" Zhang Lie shouted.

Starlight surrounded Zhang Lie. Countless stars whizzed away from his body. His pitch-black genetic energy seemed like the astral void, with shining stars scattered throughout.

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

His genetic energy condensed into a black dragon, whose scales were each a star.

The stars inlaid in its body formed a long stellar river, Zhang Lie's monarch-grade limitless universe soulshard was changing the very nature of his genetic energy, from pitch-black to dotted with starlight, as though it were a sample from the galaxy.

The galactic genetic energy shone with twinkling stars, which transformed into dragons that shot out alongside Zhang Lie's punch.

The purplegold denglong rose into the air in a flash of purple light, but the stellar dragon pierced through it and impacted with the denglong in a flash of light.

Within moments, a wave of annihilation exploded around the dragon. Pitch-black energy swallowed everything in the vicinity like a storm at sea, covering up the sky.

The explosion was like a black hole that sucked up everything in sight, land, sea, and sky alike. Ming Youyu's eyes widened at the outpouring of energy.

He wasn't a fool; he had prepared for retaliation when he first attacked the log.

Ming Youyu howled.

Who knew what he had prepared by the other end of the log bridge? Firelight bloomed where he stood.

Zhang Lie's energy of annihilation pierced through the light. The denglong vanished in pinpricks of light which floated toward Zhang Lie's seal, but Ming Youyu had vanished.

Zhang Lie and Sun Xiaowu rushed forward as quickly as they could to avoid other cultivators gaining the edge over them.

Another melee was occurring up in front as challengers fought each other to a standstill.

Zhang Lie was certain that Bu Wentian didn't know much about the official tournament at all. Far more challengers than he had predicted were fighting up in front.

Some tried to attack Zhang Lie. Zhang Lie's eyes grew cold. At this point, he retaliated against even a probing attack with lethal force.

Nine holy mountains appeared in the vicinity, tall and proud, magnificent in their glory.

This was a holy land.

Cultivators had killed to make it here, and all those who had arrived were bleeding in some manner or another, having sustained at least minor injuries during the melee. Many cultivators were present. Their eyes shone as they looked toward the mountains.

A group of firecrows took to the air, their feathers black. They looked like black suns that shot forward. It was evident they were from the same race.

Their leader burned with flames so intense that the void itself seemed to distort as they flew toward the mountains with extreme speed.

A purple centipede, only two meters long but brimming with purple flame, leapt up from the ground and into the air. It was a minor deity.

Eight of the crows dissolved in the spray of poisonous fog that it released, falling to the ground as a black, liquefied mass.

The leader of the firecrows glared at the centipede and commanded its flock to attack the centipede. A massive fight ensued.

The centipede's body was as tough as adamantium, ringing out like metal when struck with the firecrows' sharp claws and beaks and sending sparks flying.

The fight was brutal and finished quickly. The firecrow was badly injured, half its body corroded away and revealing bone. It fled toward the horizon, its flock all dead.

The purple centipede was surrounded by poisonous fog that it exuded. Any who touched it would find their skin blistering and boiling.

Not far away, a fiery red ox bellowed and charged forward, the ground turning into magma in its wake. Divine flame flared up around it, its horns glowing with resplendent light.

Chapter 1450: A Fiery Avian

A figure of lightning rose up into the air, able to fly despite the tremendous restrictions of this domain.

Its skull glowed with light. Lightning arced from his body, forking hundreds, thousands of times before concentrating on that old ox. Lightning and flame filled the air.

The figure was a mammoth that had taken a humanoid form, but its head was still that of a mammoth. It was unbelievably strong and wielded a giant blade a few meters long. When it moved, space distorted.

Faint traces of divine flame burned around it. The blade it held was of ancient make, made of ivory, and possessed overwhelming strength.

It could easily topple a mountain or flatten plains.

The blade released glowing light as it smashed into a halberd.

Zhang Lie saw another cultivator who seemed to have come from the Hall of Immortals, bearing the same make of weapon as the ninth Immortal King.

He clashed against the mammoth, forceful and imposing, as his eyes transformed into runes. In just a flash, the mammoth's actions slowed and were captured in his mind's eye.

The halberd struck the ivory blade time and time again.

Suddenly, with a final cleave, the man who seemed to have come from the Hall of Immortals drew blood, beheading the giant mammoth in a river of blood.

From five hundred paces away, a shout rang out. A particularly strong cultivator had been killed.

His opponent was a scorpion whose exoskeleton glittered like blue diamond, translucent and sparkling with ocean blue.

It was the size of a millstone, and its carapace was a color that seemed more out of place in reality than illusion. Its sharp stinger glittered with frosty light. It hid itself in the void; when it struck, its stinger transformed into blue lightning that shot toward the ground in a spray of blood punctuated with terrible screams.

It was precise, deadly, and cold. Its stinger was sharper than a lance as it pierced through the young cultivator's lower back and impaled him.

The cultivator struggled. Those who saw his plight shivered and shuddered in sympathetic resonance.

This was a killing blow. Even without any poison, it would have sufficed to take the lives of many. The scorpion's stinger was simply too sharp.

The stinger shook as the cultivator's body split and exploded in the air.

The scorpion was overwhelmingly strong.

Such was the nature of the battlefield; even the strongest cultivators would easily fall under such circumstances, and all this was taking place at the foot of one of the mountains, a minuscule fraction of the battlefield.

There were nine holy mountains in all, bathing their surroundings in a haze of purple air. Precious, ancient herbs grew all over them.

Suddenly, the grind of metal against metal could be heard amidst the void—a group of copper beetles, numbering perhaps in the tens of thousands.

The cultivators goggled. This was an overwhelming swarm of beetles. They could devour everything around them, flesh, metal, and weapons. Tens of thousands of them together boasted an overwhelming might.

At the foot of the mountains stood a youth with black hair draped over his shoulders, a golden lamp in his hands. He inclined his head toward the skies and roared.

He shot forward and activated the lamp, sending divine flame into the air that combusted the copper beetles in high-pitched screams.

The beetles were all lit aflame. They struggled violently as they fell to the ground.

The flames melted their bodies into liquid metal, which dissolved rock, the ground, and ancient wood.

This was a huge battlefield, chaotic, cruel, and amazingly dangerous. Cultivators perished one after another, and even those that were strong enough to control divine flame would be struck by calamity beyond what they could counter.

Such was the enormity of what Zhang Lie faced. All manner of weapons flew through the air.

Zhang Lie encountered a spot of trouble himself and immediately retaliated in kind.

His opponent looked like a red-crowned crane but with blue coloration and red spots all over its body. Whenever it flapped its wings, fire flared.

It was a particularly strong avian, almost like the legendary Bi Fang.

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.

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

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 area.

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.

Fire evaporated water and turned it to steam.

As they fought, the crane's energy slowly flagged. The red flames that emerged from the red spots along its body began to weaken and sputter.

Suddenly, a golden whip shot over, causing the Bi Fang to cry out in pain as it was struck by a sneak attack.

The 'whip' was the trunk of a golden elephant, dozens of meters tall. Its thick, golden trunk was even more fearsome than an ordinary whip, and the force of the blow was enough to crush the Bi Fang's bones.

The golden elephant then turned to Zhang Lie.

Zhang Lie snorted. The strongest beasts of this mountain hadn't even shown themselves yet.

"[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.

Starlight draped over his body, causing it to glow resplendently.

His speed reached an extreme as he shot forward like a sharp blade and struck the elephant's trunk.

Suddenly, the trunk curled around him, as though the elephant was about to eat him up.

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

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 crystal, each seeming to contain an entire nascent galaxy.

The thousands of shards of crystal exploded like a blooming flower. The golden elephant shrieked as it released Zhang Lie, transforming into radiant golden flame as it shot away. Its trunk had almost been cut apart, and it was barely hanging by a flap of skin.