

## U. Warlord 1451

Chapter 1451: Reconstitution and Renewal

Bi Fang hadn't died. Its eyes were cold as it dodged to the side.

A gleaming blade struck the air—a jade-green mantis scythe, from a mantis about as tall as a man. Its scythes gleamed with incredible sharpness as divine flames ignited over its body. It fought against another young cultivator.

The frosty light shocked all lifeforms in the region. The jade-green mantis was unbelievably strong and easily beheaded the young cultivator in a fountain of blood.

Zhang Lie and Sun Xiaowu continued slaughtering their way forward. Despite the fact that Sun Xiaowu wasn't in peak condition, his overwhelming defense via the protection of his golden runes meant that barely anyone could harm him.

"Are you certain this is the right direction?" Zhang Lie asked.

Sun Xiaowu nodded. "My senses can't be mistaken."

Zhang Lie and Sun Xiaowu began to climb the mountain along with the golden elephant and jade-green mantis. The cultivators and lifeforms were aware of each other. Though they were wary, none struck at the others.

Behind them were a large number of other lifeforms, but none dared contest these three groups for dominance. They could only follow behind.

Divine flame blazed in the air as the Bi Fang attempted to attack Sun Xiaowu and replace him.

"Do you think I'm easy prey?" Zhang Lie murmured. He waited until the avian approached before suddenly striking with incredible speed.

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

A sea of stars appeared above Zhang Lie's head, shining with crystalline stars.

The silver stars fell from the sky, transforming into a rain of meteors. The Bi Fang was struck down in a shower of blood.

The other lifeforms, seeing the fallen Bi Fang, didn't dare to draw near.

Very quickly, Zhang Lie and Sun Xiaowu reached the fog-shrouded peak of the mountain, where a giant palace awaited them.

It was majestic and magnificent, stately and sacred.

The other eight holy mountains were much the same. A group of strong lifeforms were already ascending the other peaks. Each mountain wreathed in purple fog had its own palace and inheritance at the top.

According to Sun Xiaowu's senses, however, each palace harbored a different treasure, and these treasures were not all equal in value. The palace to which they were headed had the full inheritance that he sought, and was surely the largest treasure to be found here.

As they entered the palace, they were struck by a wave of sound that shook their bodies and caused their souls to resonate.

The palace was carved full of runes and insight. There was no specific instruction to be found, only the thoughts and experiences of other cultivators—which was even more precious.

"Whoever can intuit these teachings the best will be able to advance deeper into the palace," one cultivator surmised.

In other words, this was a test of insight and compatibility with the technique.

Zhang Lie was shocked. Going into the stone forest, he had had a notion of what the cup was designed to accomplish. It was no mere competition, but rather a means of gathering the most talented cultivators of the younger generation from the fifth realm and having them duke it out so that the strongest among them would be fostered with techniques and treasure.

To be able to receive such treatment in the fourth realm was a clear stroke of luck for Zhang Lie and his team.

Zhang Lie and Sun Xiaowu sat cross-legged in meditation as they carefully contemplated the divine melody and the experiences of cultivators that had come before them.

Suddenly, they seemed to be transported into someone else's life—starting out in a small village, fighting stronger and ever stronger cultivators in the vicinity, until finally falling to another's blade.

Zhang Lie immersed himself in the experience and carefully sampled the experience and insight that cultivators from a primordial age had left behind.

"This is incredible," Zhang Lie murmured. He was starting to modify the fundamentals of his framework and techniques, and this past legend's experience held great insight into that process. His eyes shone; he had learned a tremendous amount.

As much as Zhang Lie had benefited, though, Sun Xiaowu had benefited more.

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.

Even more demonic aura, deeply entrenched within his body, was forced out. All the golden runes in the palace began to glow as Sun Xiaowu bathed in their combined radiance.

What had happened in the rock forest was reoccurring again.

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.

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.

Almost all his blood had been replaced; his body was being prepared for a final reconstruction.

Golden flames bathed his body, immolating him, reforging him, and finally rebirthing him.

The heavens rumbled as the sound of scripture came from within the hall. Sun Xiaowu was undergoing a metamorphosis. The shattered bones in his body were reforming in jeweled splendor.

A dragon's keen could be heard, startling the other cultivators who were in the palace.

Divine radiance seeped out from deep within the palace and rained down on the cultivators in a shower of light.

All the demonic aura was finally squeezed out of Sun Xiaowu's body, leaving only the initial seed by his forehead. A burgeoning vitality emerged from his body, causing bone, blood, and flesh to resonate.

Incredible vitality nourished his body and caused it to gleam with light.

As the metamorphosis continued, another cultivator stepped into the palace.

Chapter 1452: All That Impressive

Sun Xiaowu was reforging his truesoul and growing stronger than ever. His latent talent was blossoming.

Where there were gaps in his cultivation, natural law from the environment filled them.

Sun Xiaowu refined the energies around him as he tried to take control of the demonic seed embedded in his body. His bones gleamed with radiant light. The faint golden sheen that they had given off was now a dark gold.

As the metamorphosis continued, another cultivator stepped into the palace.

"It's you!" A figure wreathed in golden flame walked into the palace.

Zhang Lie cocked his head in confusion. He had never met this cultivator before.

"Revenge for the young chieftain!" the figure wreathed in golden flame cried out. Golden radiance pierced the void and shot straight at Zhang Lie, but he deflected the blow easily.

Zhang Lie frowned. "I've never met you and have no quarrel with you. Who are you?"

"I seek revenge on behalf of my young chieftain!" the cultivator roared back. The golden flames grew more and more intense as they swept toward him.

Zhang Lie frowned. Who was this person? He had ignored the inheritance before him, despite having come all this way—was attacking Zhang Lie really his only concern?

Zhang Lie hadn't wanted to fight. He would have preferred to wait for Sun Xiaowu to finish his metamorphosis, but his opponent was unrelenting. In that case, Zhang Lie had no intention of remaining passive, either.

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. All the other cultivators who had entered the palace blanched and fled, attempting to protect themselves even as they ran from the fight to avoid being caught in its aftermath.

Zhang Lie stood before Sun Xiaowu and dispelled the golden flames with his sea-blue genetic energy. His opponent frowned. "As expected of a cultivator who managed to best my young master. I'll admit you have some strength."

"Who's your young master?"

Another cultivator shouted from the side, "He's from the Redgold race!"

The identity of his young master was obvious, then.

Zhang Lie recalled what Bu Wentian had stated. The Redgold clan was now under the control of the Solarvine race, and the young master of the Redgolts was none other than Resplendent Sun, the so-called undefeated legend.

"I'll seek revenge for my young master. Die!" The man wreathed in golden flames began to blaze. Golden light illuminated the entire palace, which was growing warmer by the second.

"[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.

"If even your young master can't stand against me, what makes you think you can?" The sword energy parted the golden flames and beheaded the cultivator.

Despite the fact that his head had been chopped off, the Redgold cultivator was clearly still able to fight. He drew the golden flames onto his palms and struck.

"[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, devouring the flames.

The Redgold cultivator charged toward Zhang Lie like a flaming golden meteor.

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

Zhang Lie punched forward. The black serpent behind him shot forth. Golden flames sizzled as they came into contact with a dark cloud of corrosive genetic energy.

The Redgold cultivator was forced back. He transformed into a golden sun that released scintillating light, threatening to drown Zhang Lie in golden flames.

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

As Zhang Lie punched forward, the serpent hissed and shot toward the cultivator again, breaching the golden light and sea of flames to strike at the sun itself.

The energy of annihilation was like a black hole that sucked up everything in sight, including the golden sun. Pained cries came from within the black hole as the Redgold cultivator was devoured.

The energy of annihilation had destroyed everything in a certain radius around the palace. Pinpricks of light floated toward the seal on Zhang Lie's hand. He turned back to see Sun Xiaowu still attempting to reforge his body. He was undergoing a tremendous transformation, almost like a rebirth of sorts.

His physical body glowed with a sheen that reminded Zhang Lie of top-quality jade.

Golden flames blazed around him, rumbling like thunder. It was a frightening sight to behold.

Sun Xiaowu's condition had all but stabilized. He had made it past the most crucial part of the transformation, and was now attempting to claim the demonic seed for his own use. Zhang Lie, who would have been happy to wait patiently as the transformation took place, found himself the target of yet another cultivator.

The temperature of the entire palace rose at a staggering rate as another figure blazing with flame entered the palace. He was shocked by Sun Xiaowu's transformation, a shock that was quickly replaced by greed and envy.

"I like the spot you've claimed. Make way for me."

The figure blazing with flame was like a demon straight out of hell, one that would make children cry just with his looks alone. A pair of blood-red wings grew out of his back.

Zhang Lie stepped forward, protecting Sun Xiaowu. "And who do you think you are? This palace doesn't belong to you."

"I'm Chi Lingkong of the flamedemons."

Zhang Lie cocked his head. "And?"

Chi Lingkong scoffed. "You haven't heard of the flamedemons? You must be a nameless challenger who made it out of the qualifiers by chance."

"Are the flamedemons supposed to be impressive?"

"I've dealt with quite a few pieces of trash from the qualifiers by now. There might be nine holy mountains and nine corresponding palaces, but there's no space for trash like you in any of them. Scram!"

In a flash, he extended all ten of his fingers. Red feathers billowed around him in the void, poised to shoot out.

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

Chapter 1453: Send You On Your Way

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. However, neither cultivator struck.

The golden elephant and jade mantis beside them, disturbed by the ruckus they were making, had opened their eyes and were glaring at them.

"Haha..." Chi Lingkong of the flamedemons laughed as he approached. "Seniors, would you like to team up with me to deal with them? You'll be able to focus on your cultivation thereafter."

Chi Lingkong intended to get rid of them once and for all.

He turned to the other cultivators in the palace. "Friends, shall we strike as one?" Chi Lingkong smiled, beckoning to them all.

The golden elephant and jade mantis refused the request. They had no interest in being dragged into this fiasco. Let the other cultivators deal with Zhang Lie.

Zhang Lie punched forward in a burst of starlight, causing huge quantities of lightning to rain down from the heavens.

"I'll send you on your way!"

The lightning flashed and swept across the land.

Starlight shaded the sky.

Zhang Lie and Chi Lingkong's fight took place within the palace and without. Chi Lingkong was badly beaten and wounded all over. As he shouted, flaming feathers danced through the air and shone with blinding light, as though a dozen suns had fallen from the sky.

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 stellar dragons soared through the air.

They devoured the radiant suns and smashed into Chi Lingkong, who fell from the sky in a bloody heap.

"The flamedemons? Ha!" Zhang Lie scoffed at the fallen cultivator, then returned into the palace.

Two wheels of light exploded in the sky with shocking might, a technique that Zhang Lie somehow found familiar.

Ethereal blue waves swept across the sky as ripples emanated forth, flecked with crystals of ice and [Mirrored Refraction]. Upon seeing the familiar energy, Zhang Lie smiled. There were two figures fighting in the air.

A cultivator shot up from the ground, his punch like the rising sun.

The other cultivator's sword flashed, the strike forming a long river through the skies. Genetic energy burst apart in a shower of droplets.

His combat armor shone with glimmering runes.

Zhang Lie shouted, "Yang Ze!"

The cultivator with the sword turned. His eyes brightened. "Captain!"

"Don't look at me—focus on your opponent!"

The moment Yang Ze's head had turned, the other cultivator began to attack rapidly, taking advantage of every opportunity to strike. However, Yang Ze easily dealt with his attacks and counterattacked.

Yang Ze and his opponent exchanged dozens of blows as his opponent was sent flying.

Yang Ze turned back to Zhang Lie and smiled. "What are you doing here, Captain?"

"I was headed in your direction to group up with you, but coincidentally found Xiaowu and ended up heading toward this holy land over here first."

As they spoke, Yang Ze's opponent shot toward him like a rabid dog.

Yang Ze coldly blocked, parried, and counterattacked. His right leg struck at the cultivator's chest and sent him flying into the roof of the palace.

His opponent struck once again, his eyes cold, killing intent billowing. He used a strange technique. Lightning covered his body, formless energy peeling away at time. Yang Ze suddenly grew old.

However, with [Mirrored Refraction], Yang Ze seemed to isolate himself from reality, his years falling away until he was his usual self once more. Then, he attacked.

Yang Ze kicked his opponent up into the air, then slapped at his cheek and knocked him flying.

"We can have a chat now," Yang Ze told Zhang Lie as he slowly landed by his side.

"Who was that?" Zhang Lie asked.

"Do you remember my opponent from the qualifiers?" Yang Ze replied.

"What, that Chang Sheng fellow?"

Yang Ze nodded. "That's him. Although I defeated him in the qualifiers, he doesn't seem to have suffered much mental damage. He used a specialized recovery pill in order to keep fighting and make it through the qualifiers. He was lucky enough to succeed—and now he's trying to cause me problems again."

Zhang Lie shook his head. "You should have been more vicious."

Yang Ze shook his head. "According to the information I picked up, except for the Stargod cultivator, that ninth Immortal King from the Hall of Immortals, and Heaven's successor, the rest of the opponents that members of Team Zenith fought all managed to make it through the qualifiers."

Zhang Lie seemed shocked. "Even Resplendent Sun?"

"I don't know about that. The Solarvines are supposed to be a proud race, so I don't think they'd show up."

"You dare chat with someone else while fighting with me?!"

Chang Sheng, who had been sent flying, had returned again in a fit of rage. The very air around him shook.

Blinding light exploded from the palace as it quaked. All the runes in the palace reactivated in order to defend against the attack.

The fight shocked everyone. Even the strongest cultivators that had reached the other eight holy mountains widened their eyes upon sensing the shocking attack.

Just then, a loud, powerful voice rang out. The sound of the voice alone caused the nine holy mountains to shake; it was akin to thunder.

"All fights in this land of inheritance shall take place on arenas following ancient custom."

The cultivators' ears buzzed from the magnitude of the voice.

With a whirr, Zhang Lie and Yang Ze were whisked into the air, where they landed on a huge, expansive arena.

At the same time, the half-crippled Chi Lingkong and Chang Sheng also appeared on the spot.

This battlefield was a floating arena suspended in the air.

All cultivators who were gathered at the top of the nine holy mountains could clearly see the fight. Everyone was surprised by the sudden development.

Zhang Lie frowned. "Sun Xiaowu's still in the palace."

Before Zhang Lie could strike, Chi Lingkong took the opportunity to transform into a bolt of human lightning that shot forward in a burst of red lightning.

Zhang Lie countered with a punch, causing the lightning to dissipate and Chi Lingkong's body to explode in a shower of blood.

Zhang Lie stood tall over the arena, a shocking sight to behold. A young, promising cultivator had been killed just like that!

Chapter 1454: Flamedemons

Zhang Lie had struck a strong cultivator dead in just one blow!

None of the cultivators who had progressed deep into the rock forest could have been weak, but that was precisely why Zhang Lie's accomplishment was so extraordinary.

"Who would be able to stand against him?"

"All flamedemons, charge alongside me!"

Suddenly, one cultivator shouted at his fellows as he transformed into a huge bird in a flash of firelight and swooped onto the stage.

"When have the flamedemons ever suffered such humiliation?!"

"All who decry the flamedemons are enemies of our race!"

Many fierce, red-winged monsters rose into the air. It looked as though the flamedemons were a race of no small repute, if they were able to field so many competitors in the Cup.

A huge fight broke out. Quite a number of spectators rushed into the arena, wanting to take advantage of the flamedemons to deal with a strong opponent like Zhang Lie.

They were more than happy to get a significant threat out of the way.

Yang Ze retreated to one side. "Captain, why's everyone coming for you?"

In the arena, one cultivator's eyes shone in silver, imbued with temporal force. Any who were struck by the beams would have their actions slowed.

"Help me guard Sun Xiaowu and make sure no one disrupts his metamorphosis."

Zhang Lie's concerns, however, would prove to be unnecessary. Sun Xiaowu was indeed in the most critical stage of his transformation, but the evolution had been completed and the inheritance

received. He had successfully taken ownership of the demonic seed in his forehead, and the seed that had once been a black dot now took on the form of a golden rune.

On careful inspection, it would be clear that this small rune was itself formed of countless small runes.

Golden runes surrounded Sun Xiaowu's body and resonated with the palace at the peak of the mountain. The golden runes surrounded him like an egg, protecting his body. No one would be able to hurt Sun Xiaowu now.

As Zhang Lie activated his monarch-grade limitless universe soulshard, he glowed with stellar radiance, like a burning star. Starlight flowed through his body in phantasmagorical colors. The silver beams of temporal light that flashed from the cultivator's eyes winked out.

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. One punch was all it took to destroy the cultivator who had attacked him.

One cultivator transformed into a bolt of lightning and shot over. All who were struck by the lightning would become charred hunks of flesh.

However, Zhang Lie caused the lightning to dissipate with just one punch imbued with starlight. The cultivator blanched and attempted to flee as another bolt of lightning, but Zhang Lie gave chase at incredible speed. He stomped him underfoot and crushed his body.

The red-winged flamedemons flocked over, bringing with them a titanic storm of flame.

The red flames burned heaven and earth alike; even the void distorted from the heat.

Zhang Lie unsheathed Guicang and slashed forward, parting the sea of flames.

One of the flamedemons spread his palms out. They glowed with light and manifested in the form of a golden lance wreathed with lightning and flame. He tossed it out.

Someone exclaimed, "This is one of the flamedemons' secret techniques, a lightningflame lance of incredible abyssal strength."

Zhang Lie 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 the sea of lightning in two.

Sparks flew as his claws struck the fearful cultivator and destroyed him entirely.

More red-winged monsters swooped forward, their wings sparking with fire and lightning.

"[The Boundless Blade: Yawning Wave]!"

A waterfall of genetic energy was imbued in Guicang. As Zhang Lie slashed forward with the sword, devastating sword energy was unleashed.

The flamedemons shot forward in a burst of fire and lightning, defending themselves against the titanic waves of genetic energy. A huge explosion rang out.

Lightning and flame fizzled across the arena. The initial wave of flamedemons had been killed, but even more charged forward.

Zhang Lie's pitch-black genetic energy, dotted with starlight, looked like the primordial matter that made up the universe. His eyes frosty, he charged at the cultivators arrayed around him.

Within moments, Guicang had sent a dozen cultivators flying. He thrust the blade into one cultivator's forehead in a fountain of blood.

Starlight exploded around him as the cultivator's body burst apart.

Zhang Lie was deep in a battle frenzy when another cultivator struck at him, his lance like a bolt of lightning.

It was another flamedemon.

Zhang Lie blocked the lance with Guicang in an explosion of starlight. His sword energy manifested as a stellar river that sucked the flamedemon within, tearing him to shreds.

Another flamedemon appeared, wreathed in purple lightning and red flame.

"I'll kill you!" he thundered.

Zhang Lie was like a demon king who had indiscriminately slaughtered all opponents coming his way.

He raised a hand, slashed with his sword, and beheaded another cultivator in a shower of blood.

"Are all the young flamedemon talents going to lose right here and now...?"

Some among the flamedemons were growing wary of this frightening cultivator who had easily dispatched any challenger. Who would have expected that he could be so overwhelmingly strong despite the fact that they were all from the same generation?

#### Chapter 1455: A Slaughter All Around

With another beam of starlight, Zhang Lie descended from the skies and bisected another cultivator in a spray of blood.

"A demon king—he's a demon!" the flamedemon howled. He clenched his fists tightly.

Deep within the rock forest, the fighting continued in the arena, but victory had already been decided. Zhang Lie's hair scattered around him as his eyes glowed like beacons. He terrorized the cultivators around him.

Since stepping on the arena, he had already taken down over a dozen cultivators. He was dripping in blood—not his own, but that of others.

"I'll kill you!" One flamedemon challenger charged forward, his hair scattered, his face stained with blood. He was in dire straits; an all-out assault was his only hope of survival.

Bone swords appeared in the air one after another. There were eight of them in all, which he sent arcing forward in Zhang Lie's direction.

Zhang Lie's eyes gleamed with light. Pale blue genetic energy formed a lake so beautiful it enraptured everyone in sight. It was crystal-clear and sparkling.

The lake frothed. Within an instant, the lake had transformed into a storm, a tsunami, which combined with the starlight in the void and filled the air close to bursting.

The starlight, interspersed with the tsunami of genetic energy, knocked aside all the weapons flying toward Zhang Lie. Runes and explosions like fireworks appeared in the air.

The pale-blue genetic energy possessed an awesome might, shattering weapons and drowning all cultivators targeting him.

The flamedemon shrieked as he was sent flying, struck by the devastating starlight, his skull charred and blackened.

His body split apart in the air, then vanished in an explosion.

The flamedemons screamed at the horrifying sight. They couldn't accept that one of the strongest fighters in the clan had been dispatched this readily.

The arena was in utter chaos. The flamedemons had all fallen, many of their bodies destroyed.

"You're still alive? I suppose you have quite the vitality." Zhang Lie pursed his lips at one of the 'corpses'.

The cultivator was lying face-down in a puddle of blood, but was actually still alive. He was simply pretending to be dead.

"You strutted around like you were all that—and now you're playing dead on the ground? What happened to all that panache?"

Zhang Lie's words were like a slap on the flamedemon's face.

Ashen, the flamedemon crawled up from the ground. "I'll kill you. I'll kill you, you bastard!"

"Someone like you isn't strong enough to challenge me, but if you want to die, I'll grant you that wish," Zhang Lie replied calmly. He picked up a blade of bone from the ground.

A flash of light whizzed by as the pearlescent blade nailed itself to the flamedemon's skull. A red line of blood spread over the flamedemon's body as it was bisected down the middle.

Meanwhile, Zhang Lie had already leapt over the corpse, whizzing through the battlefield in a beam of light and scything down all cultivators in his way.

All the spectators gathered on the nine holy mountains were astounded, and even the young proteges of the supreme forces were watching the fight with interest. Zhang Lie was sure to be a strong rival in the future.

"You are calm, aren't you? Inciting everyone to fight, then standing right there as they fall to their deaths," Zhang Lie said, staring at the flamedemon who had just spoken.

The flamedemon blanched, never having expected that things would progress to this extent. How could he be scared of a cultivator from an unknown race?

Zhang Lie sauntered over, bone blade in hand. With his energy restrained, his hair was dark and glossy, his features fine and fair. He looked like a handsome young man, but that was precisely what scared his enemies. The dissonance between his appearance and personality was too extreme—he fought like a demon king!

"Charge!" another flamedemon yelled out. He knew there was no retreat; this would be a fight to the death.

Who among the flamedemons could have predicted such an outcome?

The entire group of flamedemon challengers had perished, all save two.

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

The temperature dropped to sub-zero values, and a strong wind buffeted the battlefield. Blood-colored frost appeared around the two combatants.

A stellar 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.

Each serpent was pitch-black like the abyss, like the dark of night, and speckled with starlight, a miniaturized version of the Milky Way. The serpents were guides and ferrymen both, leading departed souls into sky and space, freed from the mortal coil.

As Zhang Lie's sword swung down, the stellar river struck the mortal world.

As one flamedemon made an invocation, tens of thousands of red feathers appeared in the air, transforming into divine arrows as they tracked and shot toward Zhang Lie.

With every slash of Guicang, Zhang Lie's serpents fell like meteors, whizzing down to the ground and knocking aside the arrows aimed at him.

The other flamedemon followed suit and struck Zhang Lie. Lightning filled the air.

Fire and lightning criss-crossed in mid-air, spreading across the sky like vines.

Everyone atop the holy mountains was shocked. Flower petals danced in the air as lightning and flame wove an intricate choreography. Vitality filled the air, gathering around one of the two final flamedemons.

This was the pinnacle of lightning and fire—to rouse creation from destruction, life from death.

All the cultivators gathered understood how difficult it was to glean this level of understanding.

Grass and trees sprouted, branches and leaves outstretched as they formed a protective lattice against Zhang Lie's attacks. A huge tree fell to the ground, intending to crush Zhang Lie and root itself in him.

Unfortunately, all resistance was futile against an enemy like Zhang Lie.

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

The genetic energy looked as though it had come from the abyss, or perhaps from the expanding, limitless universe. Starlight struck the genetic energy in a flash of surprising beauty.

The night sky morphed into a raging sea. Waves surged forward, sounding like peals of thunder, like stampeding hooves. The universe itself seemed to shake, as though the stars were shifting positions.

Chapter 1456: A Good Test

The night sky morphed into a raging sea. Waves surged forward, sounding like peals of thunder, like stampeding hooves. The universe itself seemed to shake, as though the stars were shifting positions.

The surface of the stellar sea frothed with waves, layering and texturing it. Auroras hung in the air, veiling the night sky.

From afar, stellar dragons seemed to roar. The pitch-black dragons were like the night sky made manifest. Thunder and lightning crackled in the air.

Dragons unfurled their wings amidst a storm of lightning. The auroras stretched on for thousands of miles, so beautiful they captivated the gathered hunters.

Zhang Lie struck. An underworld river hurtled into existence, roaring into the sea. The sword energy roiled like black waves, like a meteor shower, causing the very stars to shake.

The entire night sky shifted as a thousand stellar dragons descended, as though a crack had broken in firmament. A flood that could destroy the world itself rained down on the lava.

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 netherworld sea completely suppressed the nascent greenery and melted it all.

Grass and wood interwove to form a huge tree blazing with lightning and fire, a bulwark against the netherworld sea, but it was quickly destroyed. Sword energy whittled at it; stellar dragons tore and bit at it.

The flamedemon cultivator screamed in agony.

Zhang Lie's starlight manifested as pinpricks of light in the air all around him like fireflies. Vitality condensed from the netherworld sea and formed trees of starlight. The stellar dragons wrapped around them and shrouded the bark in a stellar veneer.

The roots of the stellar trees extended throughout the battlefield, draining away the vitality of the fallen flamedemon cultivators.

If Chi Lingkong were still alive, he would surely have regretted pursuing Zhang Lie and chasing him into the palace, confident in his superiority and ability to take Zhang Lie's life. However, not only had he fallen, his kin and brethren had paid a heavy toll on his behalf.

None of the flamedemons could have expected that they, who had the power to control life and death within the trial grounds, would have ended up the inferior party, humbled by this young man. The hunters became the hunted.

The two flamedemons brandished their weapons for a final showdown.

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

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

A dragon's howl shook heaven and earth, shattering the flamedemons' advances and destroying their weapons.

One flamedemon transformed into a stork with scarlet feathers, blazing with firelight, but it was useless.

"[First Form: Parting the River]!"

Bright sword energy radiated from Zhang Lie like brilliant rays of sunlight, illuminating the entirety of the world.

A frightening force descended, energy rumbling and rippling around him. As Zhang Lie swung the blade in his hand, he tore apart the roaring flames.

The outcome of this battle was not in any doubt. With a clean snick, the final flamedemon was beheaded in a roar of despair.

No other cultivator remained in the arena. Zhang Lie's gaze swept proudly over the young proteges atop the nine holy mountains, all of whom subconsciously retreated upon meeting his gaze.

Some of the proteges were angered by their own subconscious response. They were the most brilliant members of their clan, and their pride and arrogance refused to submit to another. They had to be the strongest no matter where they were.

One cultivator gritted his teeth and descended onto the battlefield, furious because of his embarrassment.

He was soon joined by more and more of the cultivators atop the mountains. Unlike Zhang Lie, who had slaughtered mountains of corpses to make his way through the realms of the dimensional world, these young proteges had led sheltered lives free of despair and failure.

None could climb above them; the top was reserved for them and them alone!

Cultivators descended on the stage, intending to challenge Zhang Lie for dominance.

Zhang Lie raised his sword up high, unconcerned about the challengers. He would be able to clear the chaff with just a single swing.

Just then, golden light filled the air. The palace where Sun Xiaowu had been meditating was completely overwhelmed by the golden light, which cast a burnished tint on all nine of the holy mountains. A golden fist slammed into the arena from the palace, sending all the cultivators who had been rushing onto the arena flying.

Sun Xiaowu appeared beside Zhang Lie.

"You've worked hard, Captain."

Sun Xiaowu shone in dazzling golden light. A dense layer of runes surrounded him like a suit of battle armor. Above his head shone a complicated golden rune, itself formed of dense runic script. It was abstruse and difficult to comprehend. Zhang Lie didn't know what Sun Xiaowu had intuited.

On the other hand, Yang Ze, who was almost finished dealing with his opponents, was startled to see Sun Xiaowu appear.

"Where did you come from, Sun Xiaowu? With all these special effects radiating off you, too..."

Sun Xiaowu ignored Yang Ze. "Let's attack together. I'd like to test out my newfound strength."

"Very well!"

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

"[Shadow and Light]!"

Zhang Lie's body split into hundreds of thousands of afterimages. The sword strikes bloomed like rain, like vibrant silver flowers.

Sun Xiaowu raised his right hand. Golden runes spun more and more quickly all over his body.

"[Goldenscale Palm: Split]!"

Golden radiance struck. Sun Xiaowu's palms brimmed with golden light as a dense layer of golden scales covered his skin.

Sun Xiaowu's right arm glowed with resplendent light, shocking all the cultivators in the vicinity.

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

Sun Xiaowu took a step forward, then punched with all his might, generating a dominating wave of genetic energy. The heavens themselves shook from the blow, and the arena almost collapsed. A wave of golden light swallowed up all the cultivators in sight.

#### Chapter 1457: An Incredible Feat

The cultivators, eliminated from the competition, spread word of what had happened. All who listened to their description were astounded.

This level of accomplishment went beyond shocking.

It was like something out of legend, something that couldn't be true.

"How in the world did he do it? That's impossible!"

"What a frightening accomplishment..."

The crowds were shocked by Zhang Lie and his allies' strength.

Several representatives of the supreme forces frowned upon hearing the information. Their eyes seemed to encompass miniature galaxies of their own, sparking a healthy dose of fear in those around them.

"What force do they represent? They're being far too audacious."

Scarlet flames blazed around the head of the flamedemons. He treated what had happened as a challenge to his authority; there would be a reckoning for this.

All the flamedemon challengers present in the rock forest had been killed. The news was like a slap to his face.

This was an insult, one that would have to be repaid in kind.

A sword flashed, the strike forming a long river through the skies. The genetic energy burst in a shower of droplets that shone silver in the sunlight.

Yang Ze's battle had finished as Chang Sheng was eliminated.

The three hunters smiled as their gazes met.

"What are you doing here, Yang Ze?" Zhang Lie asked.

Yang Ze replied, "I was with Fang Yi, but we each encountered a foe and split up."

They had come to the rock forest intending to see whether there were any treasures to be found, not expecting to encounter enemies instead. One was an opponent from the qualifiers; the other was a member of the Stargods.

"There are quite a few Stargods here as well. They attack Fang Yi on sight. I wonder how he's doing?"

"Don't worry," Zhang Lie replied. "I'll be able to find Fang Yi with my beehive soulshard."

Yang Ze continued, "As for you, Xiaowu, what's with all the special effects?"

"The inheritance from this rock forest was particularly compatible with my framework. I just don't know where it's from..."

"How do you feel?" Zhang Lie asked.

Sun Xiaowu gave him a thumbs up. "Great. It's just that..."

"What is it?" Zhang Lie asked.

"There's a passageway leading into a deeper part of this world," Sun Xiaowu replied.

"Where?" Yang Ze pressed.

Sun Xiaowu shook his head. "It takes advantage of the teleportation apparatus built into the palace to do so. You'll have to perfectly comprehend the inheritance here to use it."

"Does it lead into the heart of the world?" Zhang Lie asked.

Sun Xiaowu shook his head. "I think there's far more to this world than Senior Bu Wentian told us about. I don't know about the specifics, either."

Zhang Lie nodded. "That's normal. After all, he didn't make it past the qualifiers, and likely is only aware of the knowledge common to all participants. The true mysteries of the competition proper—well, it's likely only the supreme forces of the fifth realm are aware of them all."

"Once we find Fang Yi, I'd like to attempt to make the crossing through the palace. I have the sense that it'll be particularly important to me."

Zhang Lie waved a hand. "There's no need. You should pass through right now while you still can. Fang Yi's not in much trouble, and the two of us can deal with it on our own."

Sun Xiaowu's eyes brightened. "Why don't we all head in once we find Fang Yi?"

Zhang Lie shook his head. "The runes in the palace aren't compatible with my framework. Although part of my framework shares many similarities to a gold attunement, it's only superficial. If I attempt to imbue the insight I've gleaned into my framework, it'll have a tremendous influence on my framework and future development. All the palace can impart to me is reference and perspective."

Yang Ze shrugged. "And I can't make heads or tails of it."

Sun Xiaowu sighed, but Zhang Lie waved a hand at him. "Don't worry about us. Go!"

Sun Xiaowu nodded. He stepped back into the palace, which glowed with light. Runes appeared in an ardent blaze. The entire palace rose into the sky. The holy mountain that supported it crumbled.

Zhang Lie understood what was going on now. Each palace represented a path forward. Perhaps Bu Wentian had been wrong about the victory condition of the tournament, too—"the final cultivators remaining will be the victors."

No. There were still plenty of secrets that they didn't know about this world.

"Where to next, Captain?" Yang Ze asked.

Zhang Lie suggested, "Let's follow the queen bee soulshard and find our nearest teammates."

Yang Ze nodded. "We'll have to hurry. I'm worried something will happen to Fang Yi sooner or later."

Zhang Lie shook his head. "Don't worry about it too much. Fang Yi's an incredible fighter, and he won't have a problem."

Zhang Lie and Yang Ze set off in the direction the queen bee soulshard led them toward. Suddenly, countless golden beetles in the air began to hum in collective resonance. The resulting noise was the ear-piercing screech of metal against metal. Golden light and lightning flared, striking the cultivators around them indiscriminately.

The swarm of golden beetles was like a tidal wave.

Yang Ze blanched. "Where did these beetles come from?"

Zhang Lie waved a hand. "According to the soulshard, Fang Yi's on the other side of this mess."

Yang Ze gulped. "Trapped within this sea of bugs?"

"I'm not sure yet. Regardless, we'll kill our way over."

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.

Ripples of energy spread out from Zhang Lie, warping the space around him. The towering waves looked like enraged black dragons, flooding the area. A large swathe of golden beetles was swept away.

As a howling gale rose up, the golden beetles were torn to shreds. Their limbs exploded and scattered around them.

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 golden beetles before them were cleared away, revealing the cerulean blue sky once more.

Yang Ze smiled. "I'm glad I'm with you, Captain. I don't even have to make a move."

"We'd better hurry over," Zhang Lie said.

The golden beetles swarmed toward Zhang Lie and Yang Ze as though they had gone mad.

"[The Boundless Blade: Ersatz Yawning Wave]!"

Yang Ze's blade left ripples in its wake, clearing away the golden beetles that had swarmed around them. He frowned. "What's going on? These beetles are going crazy!"

Zhang Lie frowned as well. "Perhaps we'll find out as we venture deeper within."

Chapter 1458: Heavenly Sword Energy

"Regardless, the beetles don't concern us. We simply have to find Fang Yi," Zhang Lie said. When the golden beetles swarmed toward them once more,

Zhang Lie extended his pointer finger like a sword, and water-attuned genetic energy coiled around it like a snake.

"[The Boundless Blade: Yawning Wave]!"

Zhang Lie swung downwards with a heavy blow, and a shark swam forth.

After killing the golden beetles, pinpricks of light gathered by the back of Zhang Lie's palm as his seal continued to grow.

There was a large, weathered cave in the cliff that rose up before them. A dark golden bug crawled out, about the size of an arm. It sprayed out golden light that turned rock and wood into nothing more than powder.

A huge crash resounded from the cave as tens of thousands of dark golden bugs emerged. As they spat out a golden breath, everything before them was destroyed.

The layered golden breaths from the entire swarm of bugs shot forward in a devastating wave so strong that even Zhang Lie had to retreat in surprise.

Suddenly, silver light flashed from within the cave. A silver bug monarch had appeared, also only about the size of an arm, but it glowed with silver light that manifested in the image of a qilin.

The qilin was composed of runes. The silver qilin hung suspended in the air, mysterious and powerful.

The dark gold bugs treated Zhang Lie like prey. They buzzed threateningly as they swarmed over, led by their silver-colored bug monarch.

Their golden breath morphed into tens of thousands of sword beams, decomposing the environment around Zhang Lie to powder.

"[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, swallowing up the golden breath.

Yang Ze's body shone with traces of [Mirrored Refraction]. Shrouded by dark clouds, he drifted through the golden breath and reached out for the silver bug monarch.

Suddenly, a purple arc shot toward Zhang Lie's hand. It was a shining arrow that released a demonic hum as it flew.

His gaze cold, Zhang Lie counterattacked.

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

He punched forward, and the serpent behind him intercepted the arrow.

"You can go now. I've had my eyes on this bug monarch for some time." A young man approached with a purple longbow in his hands. He was tall and slender, his gaze like the stars themselves.

He glanced coolly at Zhang Lie, confident in his strength.

Another young man appeared in a burst of rainbow light with a confident air about him. The young man's gaze swept over Yang Ze, then focused intently on him.

"You?"

Zhang Lie turned to Yang Ze. "Do you know him?"

Yang Ze shrugged. "Why would I?"

The young man laughed coldly. "We might not know each other, but my junior brother knows you."

"Who's he?" Yang Ze asked.

"Chang Sheng."

Yang Ze blinked. "Oh, him? He really bears grudges for quite a while, doesn't he?"

The young man said, "My junior brother vowed to defeat you in the official competition. I'm surprised you've lasted so long."

Yang Ze shrugged. "He had some skill, but I've eliminated him already."

The young man seemed taken aback. "You eliminated my junior brother?"

"I suppose you must not know. It just happened."

The young man narrowed his eyes at Yang Ze.

The skies shimmered with rainbow light as a young woman dressed in radiant gold appeared. She was tall and svelte, her features elegant, her black hair scattered around her back. Her eyes were limpid, her face veiled.

She stood proudly. When she blinked, lightning flew out of her eyes. She seemed to be a being freed from the constraints of the mortal world, and a deific aura surrounded her.

"Ah, you?" Zhang Lie remarked.

Upon seeing Zhang Lie, her divine appearance suddenly became all too mortal.

"You! You, what are you doing here?!"

Despite the veil covering her face, it was clear that the young woman had turned pale.

Zhang Lie smiled. "It means that we're bound by fate. We had vigorous exercise, but then you suddenly departed and left your dudou with me."

The young woman gritted her teeth. "Nonsense!"

Zhang Lie retrieved the dudou from his soul space, causing the woman to grow furious. She blushed red all the way to the tips of her ears.

Yang Ze teased, "You've made a move on the lifeforms here this quickly, Captain?"

The young man was taken aback. "Who would have expected that the very image of purity herself, Feng Xian, would have fallen for a man's wiles? I'm sure many young proteges of Starbright Academy will be drowning their sorrows in wine tonight."

The young woman was none other than the first opponent Zhang Lie had encountered in this world—Feng Xian.

Feng Xian gnashed her teeth as she glared at Zhang Lie, as though she wanted to eat him whole.

"I have to admit, I'm a cultivator in my prime, but there's no need to look at me so, is there?" Zhang Lie asked, smiling.

Feng Xian seethed. She turned to the young man with a smile. "Senior Brother Chang Ming, you must be mistaken. I'm sure this fellow has the wrong person in mind. I've never seen that dudou before."

"Is that so?" Zhang Lie stored the dudou away again.

Feng Xian bit her lip as she addressed Zhang Lie. "Would you be willing to let me have this silver bug monarch? I promise to compensate you."

"I won't. I need it myself," Zhang Lie refused firmly.

The archer stared at the cultivators that had suddenly appeared with killing intent. He had already nocked a purple arrow and was pointing it at them. In terms of looks and aura, he was no inferior to the other two cultivators from Starbright Academy.

He revealed snowy-white teeth as he asked, "Do you know who I am?"

"Why should I care?"

Feng Xian introduced, "This is a successor of the Hall of Immortals, the alternate to the current ninth-generation Immortal King. He once fought for the position with the current king, and his name is Chen Feng."

Zhang Lie considered the information. "In other words, he lost to the current Immortal King."

"You'll regret this!"

Chen Feng seethed. His body began to glow as the runes on his arrow shone brightly. Killing intent surrounded him; he was just about to strike.

Zhang Lie suddenly thought of something. "Hold on. You're from the Hall of Immortals?"

Chapter 1459: An Easy Battle

"And so what if I am?" Chen Feng was just about to strike.

"Hold on." Feng Xian held him back.

Zhang Lie glanced at the silver bug monarch.

"This isn't a simple bug, is it?"

Chen Feng scoffed. "You don't even recognize this lifeform? You really are unlearned, aren't you?"

"Hand over the bug monarch and I'll consider the grudge between you and my junior brother settled," Chang Ming offered.

A divine aura radiated from his body. His armor was gleaming. Although he was yet young, he stared at Zhang Lie with uncommon confidence and poise.

Yang Ze laughed. "It's not even your grudge to settle. Furthermore, when have I ever asked for it to be settled? You really think you're all that, don't you?"

"Claim it if you think you have the skills to," Zhang Lie replied coolly, standing against the three cultivators. Despite being outnumbered, he was unbelievably cool and collected.

The cultivators gaped at him. Just who was Zhang Lie? He had refused a prodigy of Starbright Academy and disdained a prospective successor to the Hall of Immortals.

Suddenly, the rumble of thunder could be heard in the distance, along with bestial howls, divine flame, and an intense confrontation.

Light filled the air, and the outline of a copper hall appeared in the heavens in an imposing sight.

What had happened? Perhaps the birth of a treasure, or some unusual occurrence that had sparked a transformation.

"Hand it over!" Chen Feng demanded, raising his longbow. The divine purple arrow flashed in the light.

"Scram," Zhang Lie replied coolly.

Chen Feng's threat drastically lowered Zhang Lie's impression of him.

Feng Xian didn't stop them from fighting. She stood by a side and watched the heated fighting occurring in the distance, where most of the cultivators were gathered.

Suddenly, Chen Feng made his move, drawing his longbow taut and launching an arrow.

He believed himself to be among the supreme cultivators of his generation, who had once been a competitor to the successor of the Hall of Immortals and who had stood at the very peak. How could he be beaten by an unknown challenger of ill repute? He would kill him and seize the silver bug monarch for himself.

Zhang Lie reached out and caught the divine arrow with a metallic clang.

Meanwhile, Chen Feng had darted straight toward Zhang Lie the moment he shot out his arrow, prepared to suppress him and retrieve the silver bug monarch.

Feng Xian acted then, too, as did Chang Ming. They all reached out for the silver bug monarch.

Yang Ze caught the silver bug monarch and defended against the two cultivators' attacks. Just then, light shot into the heavens.

"[Light Dragon's Remnants]!"

A figure appeared in the middle of the light, arms moving so fast they left afterimages behind, and filling the air with arlight dragons.

The appearance of the arlight dragons was so sudden that it caught everyone off guard. The horde of dragons surrounded them.

"Hm?"

Zhang Lie reacted most quickly. He slammed a palm into Chen Feng, sending him stumbling into the horde of dragons.

"What?!"

The three enemy cultivators were shocked by the sudden sneak attack.

Yang Ze grinned. "Li Feng, what're you doing here?"

Li Feng slowly floated down from the sky. He stood beside Zhang Lie and Yang Ze. "Why can't it be me?"

Zhang Lie frowned. "It looks like the queen's hive soulshard was pointing to Li Feng, not Fang Yi."

Li Feng frowned. "What, you didn't specifically come here to group up with me?"

Zhang Lie shrugged. "We heard Sun Xiaowu mention that Fang Yi was here too. Finding you was an unexpected surprise."

Chen Feng drew his bow again in a flash of lightning. The void itself shook violently as an arrow pierced the heavens.

"[Dance of the Incandescent Wyrms]!"

Li Feng summoned dozens of serpents, flaring with blinding light. They tore apart the lightning and blocked the arrow.

"It's not time to reminisce just yet, I suppose."

Chen Feng frowned. "I remember you. To think I would be lucky enough to encounter you here."

Li Feng gave him an odd look. "Do I know you?"

Yang Ze replied, "He's from the Hall of Immortals. Didn't you fight some ninth Immortal King from the Hall of Immortals during the qualifiers?"

Li Feng nodded. "I remember the name, I think."

Yang Ze continued mockingly, "This is the guy that lost against him and failed to become the next successor of the Hall of Immortals."

Chen Feng snorted. "It's none of your business!"

Li Feng turned to Yang Ze. "Is that so?"

Chen Feng laughed. "All that happened in the past. As long as I can beat you, I can prove to those codgers in the Hall of Immortals that I, Chen Feng, should be the true successor!"

Li Feng shook his head. "You must be crazy. If even the ninth Immortal King can't beat me, what makes you think you can?"

"Let's try it and see," Chen Feng said, drawing his bow taut.

"[Arclight Dragon's Imprint]!"

Li Feng waved his left arm, around which a torrent of light-attuned genetic energy was gathering. It took the form of a gigantic dragon's claw that swiped at and blocked the arrow.

Feng Xian formed seals with her hands. Pure moonlight descended from the skies. She struck with a jade-white palm.

As Zhang Lie activated his monarch-grade 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. He struck Feng Xian's palm in a stellar explosion and shower of moonlight.

Chang Ming's armor gleamed with radiance as he shot into the sky and struck at Zhang Lie's body with a glowing punch.

Zhang Lie responded coolly. Even as he confronted Feng Xian, he raised his other hand and struck forward with such force that the other cultivators gulped.

"[The Boundless Blade: Dragonwhale]!"

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

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

The whale's body was long and streamlined, with long whiskers and scales patterning its body. As it flipped over, pale-blue genetic energy exploded and transformed into a howling tempest.

This was a massive confrontation. Genetic energy erupted from the cultivators, shattering the rock mountain and cave in front of them.

The black bugs screeched and began to rampage, spitting out golden breaths that made the melee even more chaotic.

After the attack, Zhang Lie stood calm and collected.

Chapter 1460: Would You Like It Back?

Chang Ming's heart thumped. He stiffened in shock.

Feng Xian was surprised as well. She knew how strong Zhang Lie was, but neither Li Feng nor Yang Ze were weak, either.

They easily neutralized all attacks coming their way and were impressive fighters in their own right.

Clearly, none of the three were even using their full strength.

Suddenly, Chen Feng fainted and charged toward the silver bug monarch, intending to claim it before anyone else could.

Chang Ming's eyes glinted, his armor radiating light. He shot over himself, divine light emitting from his palms.

"Techniques from the Eternal Hill?" Chen Feng's eyes widened in shock. He clearly feared this secret technique. He shifted over to the side to dodge the blow, then retaliated with an electrifying punch.

Yang Ze easily ascertained that Chang Ming was more skilled than his junior brother.

As the two cultivators struck each other, the dark golden bugs all around them grew furious. These cultivators were clearly disregarding them by starting a fight in their domain!

Runes formed in the air and condensed in a killing blow of massive proportions.

Chang Ming and Feng Xian were both shocked. Chen Feng took the lead, guarding the trio and defending against the frightening attack as he howled.

Yang Ze clashed against Chang Ming, his body quaking with residual momentum, before the bugs' runes struck him. Golden sword energy filled the air and forced him to retreat.

Just then, Zhang Lie appeared, descending from the skies. His foot headed to the most impactful spot on the battlefield.

"You dare!" Chen Feng roared. Beneath him were furious bugs striking at him from below; above him was Zhang Lie coming at him with a foot from above right at his head.

No matter what, he didn't want anyone to step on his head. That would be far too shameful to bear! He punched upward with clenched fists.

However, the cultivator above him had terrifying strength, which weighed down on him like a great mountain. Wind whooshed—his face burned from the friction, as though blades were scraping at his skin.

Unable to move, Chen Feng was hit squarely by the golden bugs' runes, causing his body to quake as wounds appeared all over.

He coughed out a mouthful of blood as he stumbled in weakness.

Zhang Lie descended from the heavens like a god, indomitable and invincible. Chen Feng found himself defenseless against Zhang Lie's blow.

Chen Feng roared. A palm of light, dozens of meters wide, slammed into the sky—but it was useless. Zhang Lie's foot landed like an imposing mountain, causing his body to shake.

Chen Feng thundered in rage. The bugs beneath him glowed with light, a dangerous threat. Swords of golden light thrust into his body.

The foot in the sky pushed downward, plastered against his head. Badly wounded by the bug swarm, he was unable to fight back. He roared in anger.

He held both hands skyward, protecting his body even as his hair fell in disarray. His skull ached; blood seeped out. He had barely avoided having his skull crushed from Zhang Lie's foot. He fell toward the bug swarm.

The bugs' light took on a bloody tint as he was struck by rune after rune. The bugs' attacks were too concentrated for him to defend against, and he had no choice but to suffer the attacks head-on.

Chen Feng screamed, pain wracking his body. He struggled furiously as he headed toward the monarch.

All this happened in the blink of an eye, so quickly that an ordinary cultivator wouldn't have been able to sense a thing. One moment, Chen Feng was fine; the next, he had been seriously injured.

Chang Ming and Feng Xian watched on in shock, but there was no time to think. They swooped downward in an attempt to claim the bug monarch for themselves. Chen Feng's downfall had disrupted the bug swarm; this was an excellent opportunity.

Li Feng naturally wasn't about to let the enemy cultivators claim the bug monarch. He reached out to intercept them.

"[Light's Bulwark: Draconic Fist]!"

Li Feng clenched his fist. His right arm, clad with light, was covered with scales. The scales began to move as an arlight dragon materialized, howled, and rushed forward.

"[The Boundless Blade: Sea Serpent]!"

Yang Ze's sword morphed into a sea serpent, pale blue in color, with gills on either side of its body, its scales like crystalline shards of ice.

The two dragons combined into one, twining around each other as light- and water-attuned genetic energy intersected. Even Chang Ming and Feng Xian had to retreat and deal with the attack.

Zhang Lie descended as a stellar river streamed down, capturing the silver bug monarch and sealing it with his genetic energy.

Countless runes flashed around him.

Chang Ming and Feng Xian had been intercepted by Yang Ze and Li Feng working together. The three enemy cultivators looked at Zhang Lie. Chang Ming and Feng Xian frowned in annoyance, but they didn't strike at him. They had each exchanged blows with Zhang Lie and knew how strong he was; fighting him for a bug monarch wasn't worth it.

Chen Feng's hair lay scattered, his body full of blood. His face was ashen, his eyes crazed and malevolent. Zhang Lie had stomped on his head, almost killing him as a result. This was a grave insult, and he very much wanted to challenge Zhang Lie to a fight to the death.

"Captain, let me handle this fellow."

Li Feng stepped forward and looked at Chen Feng.

Chen Feng eventually restrained himself, not wanting to fight under such disadvantageous conditions, because he had suffered significant injuries from the bug swarms.

Zhang Lie didn't strike, either. He could sense more cultivators massing by the edges of the battlefield, and he had no intention of letting them take advantage of him.

More importantly, he knew that the Stargods were surrounding and attacking Fang Yi, and didn't want to waste time here.

Chen Feng was upset, but ultimately chose to retreat.

Chang Ming and Feng Xian also vanished from sight, not wanting to engage Zhang Lie in battle just for a bug monarch.

The cultivators skulking about sighed and retreated themselves.

Zhang Lie shook the dudou in his hands. "Feng Xian, don't you want this back?"

Feng Xian stopped short. She blushed as she glared at Zhang Lie. Is he trying to scam me?!

Zhang Lie smiled. "Women's clothing is useless to me. I wouldn't mind returning it to you."

Feng Xian was tempted, but she forced herself to remain calm. She left with a snort.

Zhang Lie sighed. He had been intending to exchange it for information, but it looked as though he would be stuck with it.

Zhang Lie turned to see Yang Ze and Li Feng giving him a strange look.

Zhang Lie scowled. "It's not what you're thinking!"

Yang Ze raised his hands in surrender. "I didn't say anything, Captain! But what are you planning to do?"

"Are you going to chase her?" Li Feng asked.

Zhang Lie shook his head. "Let's find Fang Yi first."

Yang Ze corrected, "No, Captain, Li Feng's asking you if you're planning to woo her!"

Li Feng nodded. "You can leave Fang Yi to us."

Zhang Lie rapped them both on the head.

Yang Ze picked up the silver bug monarch and asked, "Captain, what good is this?"

Although Zhang Lie had seized the bug monarch, he hadn't done so because he wanted it, but rather because he didn't want others coveting his possessions. He had no idea how to use it or why it was valuable.

Li Feng asked, "Don't any of you know what it's good for?"