

U. Warlord 1461

Chapter 1461: The Bug Monarch's Use

Yang Ze glared at Li Feng. "As if you do!"

Li Feng laughed. "I actually did pick up some information from the other cultivators. There are an incredible number of bug swarms in the region, all of different species. Over time, as the swarms fight each other for dominance and devour each other, the strongest bugs will evolve into bug monarchs."

"Like raising gu?" Yang Ze asked.

Li Feng nodded. "More or less."

"So what good are these bug monarchs?"

"What would you do if you were injured in this virtual realm?" Li Feng countered.

Yang Ze thought for a moment. "I snuck into the fifth-realm cultivators' territory and overheard that the herbs that grow here can be used to treat injuries of the spirit and soul."

Li Feng said, "The bug monarch can be used in the same way, and is even more effective."

"What, can it revive people from the dead?" Yang Ze exclaimed.

"Not quite—but it can heal injuries and prevent you from taking more."

Yang Ze frowned. "How?"

"Allegedly, you can consume it to obtain mental protection that serves almost like an extra life. Even if you're killed in this world, no damage will be done to your physical body. Apparently, consuming bug emperors can even spark a mental evolution and confer great benefits."

"How do you prepare it?" Zhang Lie asked.

"You should have it, Captain," Li Feng said.

Zhang Lie shook his head. "I don't need it. The two of you should split it."

Yang Ze looked into the distance. "Hold on. We don't have to decide who gets it just yet. It seems like there's a commotion up ahead. Why don't we check it out? They might be fighting over a bug emperor—or perhaps it's another bug monarch."

Zhang Lie frowned. "Shouldn't Fang Yi be our priority?"

Yang Ze replied, "Fang Yi isn't going to die just yet, whereas these bug monarchs could prove particularly valuable to the team at large. Furthermore, what if Fang Yi's in the melee up ahead?"

It was true that the queen's hive soul shard was pointing right ahead. Zhang Lie nodded in agreement.

The three cultivators charged forward as an avian lifeform swooped down toward them. Its wings shone with umbral light, and it glimmered as though it were made of metal. A fierce aura surrounded it; its wings were strong enough to crush mountains.

Zhang Lie raised his head to see the atavistic lifeform swooping down at him, but wasn't particularly concerned. He stood still and waited for the lifeform to approach.

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.

Zhang Lie's gaze was clear, and his black hair floated in the wind.

The mountains rumbled; the ground shook. The avian swooped down with incredible strength, but its target hadn't moved at all.

Furthermore, it had been mired in a domain of genetic energy that made it feel as though it had been trapped in a swamp. It was unable to escape. Even breathing was difficult. It had been restrained and much of its cultivation sealed.

The avian was shaken. It was the apex predator in the lands around, and could kill any manner of beast or lifeform with impunity. How had it been trapped?

Zhang Lie reached out and held it up by the neck. "You want to eat me?"

The black avian's feathers stood on end as it whined, its eyes full of fear. This cultivator, whoever it was, was the most frightening creature it had ever seen.

Zhang Lie glanced askance at it, then tossed it into the air. "Stay away from me."

The black avian fled, rushing to put as much distance as it could between it and Zhang Lie.

Zhang Lie flashed away, moving hundreds of meters in an instant and vanishing from the mountain.

Along the way, a golden giant appeared, thirty meters tall, with thick golden fur around its body. It roared in fury, a stone club in its hands. It swung the weapon down toward Zhang Lie, who raised his head. He reached out and stopped the stone club, which had to be over twenty meters long, and prevented it from budging at all.

The golden giant was taken aback. How did this puny lifeform possess so much strength?

The next moment, Zhang Lie vanished from sight and appeared right before the giant's eyes. He picked him up and tossed him out.

The golden giant smashed into a mountain, causing boulders to rumble and fall. It paled. Only after an extreme amount of time did it finally catch its breath and flee like a terrified rabbit.

The three cultivators continued onward to a mountain range with five mountains giving off radiant light. Several of the mountains had been destroyed, leaving only their bases behind.

There were all manner of shattered weaponry on the ground, along with large pits.

The energy within the pits hadn't dissipated entirely. It remained within the pits like boiling water; an ordinary cultivator who fell inside would be vaporized instantly, leaving nothing but ash behind. Although there were no corpses around the mountains, it wasn't hard to visualize how terrible the initial fighting had to be.

Even before drawing near, they could sense shockwaves coming from afar, along with more massive and frightening explosions of energy.

Zhang Lie's eyes widened. "I sense Fang Yi's aura!"

A bubble of temporal power spread out as the entire world turned gray. Everything that the bubble touched was sealed in stasis.

Zhang Lie's trio broke through the stasis and looked at each other in excitement.

Yang Ze himself was surprised that his blind guess had worked out.

Following the bubble of temporal power came the familiar sound of a keening dragon and howling tiger.

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

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

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

Chaotic energy swirled over the spear.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Chapter 1462: Seven Pupae

Except for Fang Yi, no other cultivator could create such a breathtaking scene. Even before he released his technique, Zhang Lie and the others, still kilometers away, could see the currents of energy clearly.

Yang Ze exclaimed, "Did we really find him?"

Yang Ze was so familiar with Fang Yi that he had subconsciously identified where he would have headed.

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

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

The pitch-black lightning began to spike and sizzle.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The pitch-black lightning spiked and sizzled.

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

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

Even before the attack was released, the virtual realm was already shaking tremendously. The ground cracked and splintered, and the sky was marred with scars.

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

Fang Yi's spear shot into the heavens.

A howling storm, void lightning, mysterious temporal charge, the wind of ages—the mishmash of elements combined into a beam of light that swept across heaven and earth.

Yang Ze blanched. "Things must be going badly if Fang Yi's been forced to use that technique..."

Fang Yi naturally understood that this competition was a test of stamina; it was a marathon, not a sprint. Unless there was no other choice, he wouldn't have used such a technique.

Zhang Lie grew serious as well. "We have to rush over."

Fang Yi's body was drenched with blood. His back was pressed up against a holy mountain. Wind and storm rampaged around him as mental dust scattered from his body. Despite the opponents that

surrounded him, outnumbering him many times over, Fang Yi didn't despair. His gaze was charged with fighting intent.

"Come on, come on! Come at me if you dare!"

Fang Yi was surrounded by starlight. His gaze was clear, and his black hair floated in the wind.

"The insect pupae don't belong to you. Hand them over!"

"Ha! It's a treasure I'm planning to leave to my teammates. Even if I have to destroy them myself, I won't leave any for you Stargods." Fang Yi took out seven of the pupae, which radiated with intense light. A piece of yellow paper was stuck to them, filled with runes, sealing something incredible.

A nearby Stargod shouted, "Xing You, there's nothing to worry about. Kill this fellow and avenge our hero!"

"Right, right! This fellow could never have killed our hero on his own. He must have used some despicable, underhanded method to secure victory!"

"The pupae are important, but our honor and glory as Stargods is even more so. We can't allow this cultivator who has humiliated us to leave."

The majority of the cultivators that were attacking Fang Yi were, of course, the Stargods. There were a few other cultivators mixed in, likely intending to take advantage of the situation at hand.

Fang Yi laughed. "Come at me if you dare! After I destroy these pupae, I'll kill all of you right here. Killing one of you is an even trade, and two would be a net gain. Let's see just how many of you I can take down, eh?"

The Stargod in the lead, Xing You, took a deep breath. "In truth, there's no enmity among us. You simply defeated our hero during the qualifiers, and we Stargods want to reclaim our honor."

Fang Yi scoffed. "No enmity among us? Perhaps before you chased me down and tried to kill me."

Xing You shrugged. "But didn't you take advantage of the chaos to steal the pupae that should have belonged to us?"

Another Stargod said, "We're even, then."

Fang Yi frowned. "What, you're trying to back down now after chasing me for so long?"

Xing You chuckled. "You don't want to commit either, do you?"

Another Stargod exclaimed in realization, "I see! If this fellow really didn't mind dying, he would already have attacked us rather than stall for time!"

Fang Yi grimaced. Indeed, he didn't want to fight the Stargods.

He had been planning to reunite with Zhang Lie and the others, then kill all the Stargod competitors with the other members of Team Zenith.

Xing You demanded, "Hand over the pupae and I'll let you leave."

Fang Yi frowned. "And why would you do that?"

Some of the Stargods were visibly displeased.

"Xing You, what are you doing? You're not going to reclaim our honor and avenge our hero?"

"This cultivator's existence is a mark of shame on the entire Stargod race! We can't let him go!"

Chapter 1463: Deathmatch

"Enough!" Xing You declared. "This cultivator took down our hero. No matter how he did it, show him at least a base amount of respect. If he really were to go crazy, half our number would perish."

"Even if we die in this realm, all that we'll suffer is some mental damage. Our clan has spiritual pills that can repair that damage rapidly, so what's there to be afraid of?!"

Xing You replied severely, "The elders left you in my charge, and I have the responsibility of taking care of you. At the very least, I shouldn't let you be eliminated for something like this."

One Stargod shouted, "Our idol would never be willing to compromise!"

"And unfortunately for you, I'm not your idol, and I won't be him." Xing You stepped forward and stared at Fang Yi. "Have you made up your mind?"

Fang Yi hummed thoughtfully.

Xing You said, "You have two options: either we fight and exhaust each other, or you leave the pupae behind and depart."

Fang Yi shook the pupae in his hands. "I want half the pupae, since I'm in possession of them now."

One Stargod said arrogantly, "Allowing you to leave is already far more than you deserve!"

Another warned, "Don't be too greedy."

Fang Yi probed, "Then I suppose we'll have to fight."

"You really are greedy, aren't you?!" the Stargod cultivators cried out, raring to make a move at him.

Xing You held his kin back. "We accept," he said.

Fang Yi blinked in surprise. "Really? I hope you're not trying to trick me, then."

Xing You frowned. "Do you intend to fight us?"

"I'm simply surprised by how readily you agreed. Allow me to consider this a bit more... Catch!"

Fang Yi tossed three of the pupae in his hands up in the air.

"[Floating Clouds]!"

At the same time, he made his escape.

The wind and lightning formed a loop around Fang Yi's body, which provided explosive strength that propelled Fang Yi forward.

The Stargods by Xing You's side caught the pupae. As Fang Yi attempted to escape, Xing You made his move. He had never been planning to let Fang Yi go from the beginning; all that had been a deception to catch him off-guard.

Xing You was unwilling to waste even a second of time. His palm glowed with light. Five radiant beams fell from the heavens, each manifesting in the form of a mountain range, locking down the land.

Even tens of thousands of cultivators would be killed by the simultaneous attack of the beams, let alone Fang Yi himself.

As Fang Yi saw the mountains approach him, he didn't even bother to block. He shouted, "Save me, Captain!"

Xing You laughed. "Give up. No one will save you now."

Just as Xing You finished speaking, however, pale blue genetic energy rippled about Zhang Lie's arms. He flicked his wrists, causing a frightening aura to descend around them. A fish the size of a whale materialized in the air.

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

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, smashing into the five mountains.

The five mountains exploded. 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.

Zhang Lie stood in the distance, one fist raised in the air.

Xing You stopped his pursuit. "Who might you be, sir? As far as I recall, the Stargods have never provoked you."

Zhang Lie's strength was apparent from the blow he had unleashed; it was no weaker than the Stargods' own techniques.

Xing You would surely have had some recollection of offending such a powerful cultivator. He had emerged from nowhere—Xing You was certain that the Stargods hadn't done anything against him.

Xing You scrutinized him more carefully and found that he did seem somehow familiar. He recalled where quickly.

"You're the cultivator who defeated the supposedly invincible Solarvine!"

That invincible Solarvine had been a renowned genius throughout the galaxy, and his reputation went far beyond the Stargods' own idol and the ninth Immortal King. That this cultivator had been able to defeat the Solarvine spoke volumes about his strength.

Then, seeing what Fang Yi was doing, Xing You finally understood why Zhang Lie had made a move.

Fang Yi was grabbing onto Zhang Lie's leg, almost kneeling on the ground.

"Captain, if you hadn't shown up when you did, you might never have seen me again!"

Fang Yi had known that Zhang Lie was approaching. His tracker bee soul shard had sensed the queen's arrival, so Fang Yi had been delaying until Zhang Lie arrived.

Zhang Lie frowned as he saw the wounds on Fang Yi's body.

"Don't worry. With me around, no one will be able to do anything against you."

Fang Yi held out the four remaining pupae in his hands. "Captain, these are my spoils. I was going to split them evenly among each of us, but they stole three of the pupae."

Xing You harrumphed. "Those pupae belonged to us to begin with. If you shield this cultivator, you'll be establishing us as your enemies. Hand the pupae over and we'll allow you to leave."

The other Stargods gathered behind Xing You to form an imposing presence.

"We Stargods won't take this lying down. Our starlit legends could easily take down the Solarvines. This fellow stole what belonged to us, and I must reclaim it."

Xing You attempted to frighten Zhang Lie with the name of the Stargods, but he had clearly chosen the wrong target to mess with.

"Know who you're messing with!"

"No matter how strong you are, you're alone—and you'll have to take care of that injured liability, too!"

"Do you really intend to make an enemy of the Stargods?"

The Stargod cultivators were all in an uproar.

"Alone? Says who?"

"So what if we were to make you our enemies?"

Two voices could be heard from the air as Yang Ze and Li Feng approached.

Yang Ze's opponent, Chang Sheng, wasn't particularly renowned, but Xing You grew alarmed upon seeing Li Feng.

Li Feng had defeated the ninth Immortal King!

Xing You was confident of his odds against Zhang Lie, who had crushed the invincible Solarvine, but with Li Feng in the mix, he couldn't help but start to frown.

Chapter 1464: Slunk Back Just Like That

Xing You coughed. "There might be a misunderstanding. We still have other business on our agenda—let's leave."

Xing You was afraid.

Against Zhang Lie, Xing You thought that the Stargods would be able to emerge victorious thanks to their numerical advantage.

With Zhang Lie and Li Feng together, however, even if the Stargods could win, it would be a Pyrrhic victory at best.

Xing You clearly hadn't expected these stellar hunters to all be teammates, but he was no idiot. There was no need to fight to the death. The Stargods had already obtained three pupae, an acceptable gain. Xing You was willing to drop the matter there.

However, Zhang Lie had no intention of permitting Xing You and the Stargods to leave.

"When did I allow you to leave?"

Li Feng's face turned dark. "Do you think you'll be able to get away like that after bullying a brother of mine?"

Xing You turned back and frowned. "Do you stellar hunters treat us Stargods as prey?"

Zhang Lie snorted. "We're not whatever these 'stellar hunters' are. We simply won't let you get away with bullying one of us."

Xing You sighed. They wouldn't be able to get away without a fight, then.

Some of the Stargods were raring to fight themselves.

"We were willing to let all of you off, but you're all rather cocksure, aren't you?"

"Come on, let's fight them head-on! There are only three of them. We'd win easily!"

"Xing You was willing to back down, but you're all refusing to compromise. Do you really think us Stargods that weak?"

The other Stargods were incensed by Zhang Lie's actions.

Zhang Lie thundered, "And what about you? Do you think we humans are that easy to bully? None of you will get away with injuring Fang Yi!"

"Ha! Well, let's see what makes you so confident, then!"

Xing You seized the initiative.

Thousands of beasts seemed to roar in unison. The spectators' souls quavered as a tremendous pressure, almost impossible to resist, descended.

With a wave of Xing You's fist, heaven and earth filled with light. The figures of beasts covered the arena with an irrepressible aura.

"[Fist of Ten Thousand Beasts]!"

Ten thousand beasts howled and roared, among them standard creatures like tigers, bears, and leopards, and those steeped in mythology like dragons and qilins.

The land was filled with rampant beasts, roaring with divine auras as they pounced forward.

The spectators watched the scene unfold in shock.

Unexpectedly, Zhang Lie stood still where he was, seemingly not fearing the beasts' assault at all. Without turning his head, he said, "Take care of Fang Yi. Feed him the bug monarch."

"[The Boundless Blade: Yawning Wave]!"

Zhang Lie swung his pointer downward. The conjured beasts vanished in wisps of smoke as a horde of pale blue sharks composed of genetic energy shot forth.

Meanwhile, Xing You charged forward like a demon god, easily tearing a mountain apart and tossing the two halves out toward the trio of cultivators. The shark hordes dissipated from the attack as pale-blue genetic energy splashed through the air.

The spectators gasped. What incredible might—Xing You had torn apart a mountain with his bare hands!

Xing You darted forth in a beam of light, avoiding the boulders and splashes of genetic energy all over the battlefield.

Zhang Lie met the charge with a punch.

Heaven shook; the void trembled. The clash between the two cultivators' fists gave off tremendous light.

"First blood!"

"Look, they've already drawn blood!"

Blood was sent flying into the air, bright red and dazzling with light.

The two fists clashed again as the sky seemed to rumble.

The two cultivators passed each other by as they drew back their fists. They had landed on the peaks of different mountains.

Zhang Lie's fist was red with blood. He lowered his head and looked at it.

The Stargods laughed pridefully. "Is this the limit of their strength? All have to bow down against us, the Stargods!"

"Victory will be decided within moments. As expected, only we Stargods are invincible."

"Xing You, kill that fellow quickly!"

Xing You stood firm and unyielding atop the mountain peak, his thick purple hair floating in the wind. His eyes were like divine lanterns, giving off incredible light. He looked invincible.

What none of the Stargods could see was that several of Xing You's fingers had been broken. Blood dripped down from them, glowing red, almost as though it was burning. The blood released a tremendous aura, and each drop of blood was even more resplendent than a ruby.

All that blood had come from Xing You.

Xing You wasn't like Xing Yu; he hadn't mastered the Hands of the Blood God, a particularly difficult technique. However, it wouldn't do to show his weakness in front of his kin. He couldn't believe that he had already been injured in just that first confrontation against Zhang Lie.

Xing You was shocked. He had known that Zhang Lie would be strong, but not this strong—stronger than even Xing Yu himself.

Yang Ze fed Fang Yi the silver bug monarch following Zhang Lie's orders.

After Fang Yi consumed the bug monarch, his body shone with silver light. His wounds healed at a rate visible to the naked eye, as did his mental strength. He shouted, "Captain, don't finish him off that quickly! Leave him to me!"

Zhang Lie laughed. "That'll depend on how fast you recover, then."

Fang Yi didn't dare hesitate. He sat cross-legged in meditation as he harnessed the silver bug monarch's energy to restore his lost genetic energy.

"What are you looking at? I'm your enemy!"

Xing You formed seals with both his hands, causing the void to shake. One formed a tiger; the other, a dragon. They roared loudly as they manifested.

As expected of cultivators from the same race, Xing You shared many of the same techniques as Xing Yu.

The dragon and tiger charged forward in the blink of an eye, straight toward Zhang Lie.

The resplendent light that Zhang Lie's fists gave off distorted the heavens. Incredible strength poured out.

Blinding light was emitted from the confrontation between the two cultivators, almost like lightning.

Anyone else caught by the attack would be obliterated into a mist of blood.

Xing You raised a huge chunk of mountain and tossed it toward 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. The mountain sizzled as it came into contact with that genetic energy.

It was like ice that had been thrown into a blazing fire—and melted instantly.

Xing You deflected the dark clouds of genetic energy coming his way as his body lit up with radiant light. His leg kicked at Zhang Lie with stupendous force.

Chapter 1465: Indomitable Aura

Xing You's leg was like a whip that caused the void itself to shake as he executed his kick. The dark cloud of genetic energy split in two.

The whip extended forth and struck a mountain, causing it to explode in a shower of boulders and dust.

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

Zhang Lie punched forward. The black serpent behind him shot forth toward the whip in an instant.

The serpent exploded into a flurry of dark clouds.

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. His aura grew tremendously. He punched forward and caused the very stars to explode.

His fist struck with overwhelming force, bolstered by the starlight of the Milky Way.

Xing You blocked with both arms, but even so, he was forced back. His blood grew heated, and his purple hair billowed in the sudden wind. His eyes lit up, and two lances shot out of his pupils, bright and blinding.

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 and blocked the light.

Xing You slammed down with his right palm, cupping it and forming an orb of lightning that quickly grew as large as a mountain. It smashed down toward Zhang Lie.

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.

Lightning and starlight erupted through the air. The next moment, a wave of annihilation exploded around the dragons. Pitch-black energy swallowed everything in the vicinity like a storm at sea, covering up the sky and swallowing up the lightning.

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

Xing You roared in outrage. Ripples of energy filled his mouth and spread outward before transforming into a titanic wave of energy, wild and unbridled. The void shuddered as he struck, causing several mountains below them to explode in a frightening scene. The waves of annihilating energy were barely blocked by the surrounding landscape.

Xing You waved a hand. A divine hum emanated from him as lightning flashed between his hands. A golden lance appeared, formed from lightning and ripples of energy, which Xing You thrust toward Zhang Lie's forehead.

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.

Xing You's lance pierced through the stellar dragons and caused a storm of annihilation to appear.

At the same time, the spear tip exploded, transforming into a wave of lightning that swamped the arena. Arcs of lightning flashed every which way, as though a golden wave of energy were towering over the two combatants.

The golden lightning and pitch-black storm intersected in the air. The energy of annihilation wasn't suppressed by the golden lightning; rather, it devoured the lightning and grew stronger as it continued to spread and extend outwards.

Xing You clasped his hands together to form the Stargod Seal, the ultimate technique of the Stargods, which could isolate all material presence in the world.

Xing You had trained the Stargod Seal to an extreme. He used it now to block the energy of annihilation and the glow of golden lightning from reaching him.

Zhang Lie unsheathed Guicang, slicing apart the energy of annihilation before him to protect himself.

Coolly, Xing You again clasped both hands together, one the sky and the other the earth. The entire realm trembled in their wake.

Xing You's body glowed with incandescent light. The radiance of heaven shone down on him; the tableau almost seemed apocalyptic. Light washed over the arena.

Stars fell from the sky, forming a stellar river that drowned Zhang Lie within, a tribulation from the universe itself.

"[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.

Even the world seemed to submit to this attack; it divided in twain.

Lightning parted around Zhang Lie as he calmly stood still.

Heaven and earth were drenched in tribulatory lightning; only Zhang Lie was unscathed.

"[Stargod Seal]!"

Xing You shouted, reinforcing the seal in his palms once and again. Incredible light poured out from him and surged forth like a tsunami, completely occluding the arena.

"[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.

Chapter 1466: Seizing the Light

The serpents fell like meteors, whizzing down and striking Xing You's attack.

As lightning clashed against Zhang Lie's netherworlds erpents, a few mountains beneath them melted like ice.

The overwhelming power Fang Yi had displayed caused many of the spectators to step back subconsciously. What manner of strength was this?

The virtual realm shook and distorted, as though it were under heavy pressure that would cause it to explode.

The light dissipated as Xing You's scattered hair fell back down to his shoulders. His gaze was ice-cold as he stared before him. One of his hands were bleeding, the one which Zhang Lie had caused to bleed in the initial clash.

After this attack, that wound began bleeding again, unable to be healed. Crimson light emerged from it; the Stargods' blood seemed to have a sinister power.

An unknown race whose identity was unfamiliar even to the supreme forces of the universe—for Fang Yi to have come from this race was incredible enough, let alone someone like Zhang Lie.

Zhang Lie was even stronger than Fang Yi, who had taken down the foremost Stargod of his generation.

If he hadn't witnessed the fighting—participated in the fighting!—for himself, Xing You would never have believed that another cultivator could be so strong.

"Enough. Let's end it here!" Xing You shouted. His aura rose to a tremendous degree as the ground below him cracked open. The mountains shifted; the heavens distorted.

His aura grew stronger than it had ever been. It felt as though a slumbering beast had just awoken and was about to bring calamity to the realm.

Everyone was frightened; their souls quivered.

However, in a moment, that frightening aura vanished as quickly as it had appeared.

At the same time, Xing You completely vanished from sight.

Suddenly, ripples of energy burst forth from the void. Zhang Lie felt his eyes burn in pain—runes seemed to have been applied to his body.

"[Judgment of Stars—Seize the Light]!"

Xing You's voice came from far away, cold and emotionless, as he passed down judgment.

The pain in Zhang Lie's eyes deepened. Darkness surged at the edges of his vision. "Do you really think I'll fall prey to this technique? I already saw your clan's Xing Yu use it before during the qualifiers."

"[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.

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 curtains of darkness that Xing You had propped up with spatial force were pierced right through. Light returned to Zhang Lie's vision. Compared to Xing Yu's understanding and advancement of spatial force, Xing You was far inferior. Unexpectedly, however, he nonetheless caught Zhang Lie by surprise. By the time Zhang Lie freed himself, Xing You was a tiny dot by the horizon.

Zhang Lie:...

Zhang Lie had expected that Xing You was about to attack just like Xing Yu had, but he had been mistaken.

If Xing Yu were to learn that Xing You had used the same technique he did in order to escape from a fight, Xing Yu would likely grow so incensed that he spat out blood.

Zhang Lie had to admit, however, that this Stargod technique was an incredible trick for running away. He hadn't sensed Xing You's intent at all.

Even Yang Ze, watching the match unfold, nodded in approval.

After fighting with Zhang Lie, Xing You was certain that he was no match for him.

Against Xing Yu, the top Stargod of his generation, Xing You could put up a decent fight, and he didn't think he would lose to Xing Yu while Xing Yu wasn't in the Starlit Legend status.

The reason that Xing Yu had been able to become the top Stargod of his generation wasn't because of his combat strength;

Xing Yu was only above average with regards to combat ability under ordinary circumstances, without invoking the Starlit Legend. Xing You was the stronger fighter otherwise.

This was why Xing Yu hadn't participated in the official tournament and why the Stargods had decided to make Xing You the leader of the Stargod cultivators in the tournament.

However, Xing Yu was simply too compatible with the stone of starlit fate, and was able to perfectly integrate with it. No matter how upset Xing You was, there was nothing he could do about it.

Even against Xing Yu in the Starlit Legend state, Xing You felt he had a chance—but against Zhang Lie, all he felt was despair.

Zhang Lie was like the starry sky, the abyss itself. His strength was beyond compare; Xing You didn't even know how to judge it. As Zhang Lie drew his sword, Xing You was suddenly beset by the realization that he would never be able to win against this cultivator, no matter how much time he spent, what tricks he tried—Zhang Lie was an unassailable existence.

Upon recognizing this truth, Xing You fled.

"Don't forget about me!" Fang Yi shouted, soaring up into the air, his recovery complete. Wreathed in wind and storm, he transformed into a bolt of lightning that illuminated the heavens.

Xing You cursed as he vanished completely from sight.

Fang Yi launched his spear, crackling with wind and lightning, with incredible force.

It sent wind howling and lightning flashing through the sky.

With his spear, he invoked chaotic energy in the form of lightning and raging wind. The spear left a dozen afterimages in its wake.

Xing You made his move. Ripples of energy burst forth from the void. Fang Yi felt his eyes burn in pain—runes seemed to have been applied to his body.

A shard of natural law resonated with the virtual realm.

Fang Yi found that all sound had vanished. He was in a dome of dead silence. He temporarily lost his sense of direction.

Chapter 1467: Taking Revenge

From behind him, Zhang Lie smirked. He slashed forward, unleashing a netherworld river and tearing apart the heavens. As the starlight of the dark night burst apart, Xing You was revealed. He staggered and spat out a mouthful of blood.

"How despicable! Two on one?"

"Let's help Xing You!"

"We'll kill these three cultivators!"

The other Stargods belatedly began to attack the three members of Team Zenith.

Yang Ze shook his head. "Have they forgotten how they ganged up on Fang Yi?"

Zhang Lie shrugged. "We're only doing to them what they did to us."

Li Feng mocked, "They really are fools, aren't they? They don't fear their deaths at all."

The Stargod cultivators struck as one, unleashing hundreds of thousands of beasts across the realm.

The [Fists of Ten Thousand Beasts] and the [Stargod Seal] criss-crossed in the air, invoking the power of the realm itself. The land was filled with rampant beasts, roaring with divine auras as they pounced forward.

The spectators watched the scene unfold in shock.

A stellar river manifested in the air; the tribulation of lightning flashed over the heavens.

Yang Ze stood calmly as he observed the fight in the distance, as though the Stargods before him didn't exist at all. His body shone with [Mirrored Refraction], causing the water in the air to condense into crystalline sharks that struck at the Stargods.

"[Light Dragon's Remnants]!"

Li Feng marshaled his genetic energy into the form of a large number of white dragons.

The crystalline sharks and arlight dragons fought off the beasts stampeding through the land.

Zhang Lie made his move as well.

"[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 a large number of beasts and Stargod seals.

Having realized that Zhang Lie was the strongest cultivator on the battlefield, the Stargods concentrated much of their attacks on him. All manner of special effects flared through the air—lightning, arlight, water, starlight, beast howls.

"[Trappings of Void]!" Xing You attempted to invoke spatial force to trap Fang Yi in place and strip him of his sight, hearing, and touch so that he could escape. However, Fang Yi had no intention of falling for the same trick twice. Even without Zhang Lie's assistance, he had devised a way to break free.

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

"[Heaven's Judgment: Four Sages' Roar]!"

The combination of wind and lightning generated a frightening force that seemed to be able to penetrate space. Chaotic and spatial energy joined in the mix—a miniaturized version of his signature fivefold strike, at least at the level of a fourfold strike.

A black turtle and divine bird rushed out of the mix of chaotic energy, spatial rifts, wind, and storm.

The wind resolved into a stormwind dragon. Spatial force transformed into a qilin, with the void as its claws and lightning as its whiskers.

The lightning transformed into a white tiger wreathed with howling winds, spatial force forming its sharp claws and chaotic energy condensing into its eyes.

Chapter 1468: The Stargods' Revenge

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

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

Strength surged into his spear.

The combination of wind and lightning generated a frightening force that augmented [Heaven's Judgment]. This was the apex of Fang Yi's technique, which crystallized his frightening combat power.

The spear shot through the Stargod seal and penetrated Xing You's body in a shower of blood.

Xing You cried out as his body trembled. The energies of chaos, time, lightning, and wind ravaged his body.

The Stargods fighting in the distance gaped as they saw what had happened to Xing You. In their shock, they even forgot to attack.

Xing You's body was drenched in blood. How could that be?

"What happened?" the Stargods shouted.

"Is this all you've got, too?"

Fang Yi strode out of the cage of void, invincible in his glory.

"Too?" Xing You seemed to be triggered by the word. Calmness was replaced by mounting anger.

"Does your 'too' refer to me and Xing Yu, or the entire Stargod race?"

"Is it important?"

Fang Yi clutched his spear. Was a competitor that was about to be eliminated worth replying to?

"You don't understand the glory of the Stargods at all!" Xing You thundered. A burst of holy light emanated from his body.

A mysterious stone within his body shone with lustrous light, bright red one moment, royal purple the next, and pristine white a moment later. The area around him shone with resplendent light as his body and soul began to glow, illuminating the entire virtual realm. The aura was expansive, holy, majestic, and severe; it was grand and all-encompassing. All of it stemmed from that mysterious stone.

Fang Yi recognized that stone immediately, because he had engaged in an intense battle with another of its wielders.

"That's... a stone of starlit fate!"

Xing You smirked. "Xing Yu's not the only one with such a stone, though my compatibility with it can't compare to his."

Xing You's wounds recovered rapidly. He charged forward at an enemy whose strength he recognized.

Fang Yi stood immobile, solid as a mountain. His spear thrust forward in a flash of lightning that shook the heavens.

Such was the incredible force of the attack that a few mountains were uprooted from the ground and exploded in the air.

Xing You's body radiated with light. As Fang Yi closed in on him, the air filled with shining brilliance. Xing You's fist distorted the void itself.

This was a superlative clash, one that left all the spectators awestruck. Divine force bloomed as seals filled the void.

It was as though the world itself were collapsing.

The void blurred. The ground cracked open as scars of void shot through the mountains, tearing apart the world and shocking the spectators further.

The two cultivators seemed as though they were about to break free from the constraints of mortals.

Xing You vanished once more, and the void cage descended. The darkness approached, cold and silent.

Having faced the technique once, Fang Yi was well aware of its secrets. Stripping away light, voice, his physical body, and even his soul—all of that was trickery.

"[Wheel of Time]!"

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

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

The tolling of a bell reverberated through the pocket dimension.

"[Winds of Aeon]!"

Fang Yi invoked the power of time, which revolved around his spear. Spatial force mixed with it, extending toward Fang Yi's hand and spreading throughout his body, augmenting it. The wheels of time to his back bolstered his body—but his strength didn't spread further.

Wind and storm howled around him. The wheels of time to his back glowed with light, forming radiant halos that illuminated the sky. Formless time let out a blinding light even more piercing than the sun, wrapping around his entire body and shrouding him in a barrier of light.

Fang Yi's body distorted and split into two, as though he had been isolated from spacetime.

Wind and storm whirled around Fang Yi. Spatial force condensed into a moon, and Fang Yi's domain of time manifested itself around him. Even his hair turned purple, crackling with arcs of lightning.

"[Floating Clouds: Echo of Time]!"

Fang Yi morphed into lightning itself. Storms rose up all around him, and he left a flurry of afterimages behind. He thrust forward with his spear.

His spear's afterimages were simultaneously illusory and real. The Fang Yis of various parallel universes, of different timelines, coalesced into one at that very moment. The best outcome glimmered as Xing You clutched his wound and retreated in pain.

In the end, Xing You wasn't like Xing Yu, and he was unable to evoke all the potential in his stone of starlit fate and attune to the Starlit Legend. Fang Yi was able to gain the upper hand even without calling on the stone of counteracting fate himself.

Even so, the tremendous regeneration provided by the stone of starlit fate meant that Xing You wasn't in danger of being defeated in the short term.

Xing You combined spatial force with the Stargod Seal to unleash a blow of tremendous force. The skies pulsed, and celestial light struck the Stargod Seal to draw out its true strength. Formless black chains bound Fang Yi, interwoven with karma and fate. Perhaps this was the true form of the technique.

Fang Yi's body crackled with lightning. With wing and storm, time and space, he shattered the chains and unleashed tremendous strength. A storm swept across the horizon and covered up the sky. The wheels of time to his back glimmered with light. The domain that coalesced around him allowed him to quickly stack up wheels of time.

"[Heaven's Judgment]!"

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

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

Chapter 1469: One Shot

Although Xing You had seen this technique during the qualifiers, facing it himself was an entirely different experience.

His face paled; he wanted to run, but it was too late.

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

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

Chaotic energy swirled over the spear.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The pitch-black lightning began to spike and sizzle.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The pitch-black lightning spiked and sizzled.

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

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

Even before the attack was released, the virtual realm was already shaking tremendously.

The combination of seven different energies caused the virtual realm to shudder as though it were about to break apart. The ground quaked, and the sky looked as though it had been cleaved by a bladed weapon.

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

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

His hands trembled as the energies combined. At the most crucial moment, Fang Yi concentrated as the energy of chaos and spacetime merged into a brand new, mysterious strength, that of primordial chaos.

The combination of energies gave off such a fearsome aura that anyone would be worried upon sensing it. All around Fang Yi, space and time began to splinter and crack. Unusual pitch-black thorn-like protrusions appeared by the edges of Fang Yi's vision, seeming to skewer space.

The skin on Fang Yi's arms cracked. Veins protruded from his forehead and his arms turned bright red.

As Fang Yi concentrated on controlling the transformation, that energy took on the shape of a spear.

The combination of wind and storm, spatial force, void lightning, time and space, and chaos—all that energy erupted in the middle of the virtual realm, obliterating Xing You and causing him to explode in a shower of mental particles.

The light pierced through everything in its path—mountain ranges, the heavens themselves, even the mental particles—leaving just a small fraction to gather on the back of Fang Yi's palm.

Fang Yi didn't mind; after all, he had already killed plenty of the Stargods.

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

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

"[Light Dragon's Remnants]!"

Li Feng marshaled his genetic energy into the form of a large number of white dragons.

"[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 all around. The huge sword slash destroyed a large number of mountains in the vicinity and caused a huge swathe of the Stargod cultivators to fall.

Zhang Lie's attack was no weaker than the burst of light that Fang Yi had given off.

The three members of Team Zenith had finished their slaughter. The Stargods were no match for them, and none had managed to flee.

Fang Yi stepped forward to see three pupae by what remained of Xing You's corpse. He sighed in relief. "Thank goodness they're alright."

Yang Ze was shocked. "They're unharmed even after being struck by your ultimate attack?"

Chapter 1470: Opening Them Blind

"These pupae are far more impressive than I expected."

"They're no ordinary treasure."

Li Feng, on the other hand, was a wet blanket. "Don't be so excited just yet. See this? The pupae have been damaged from Fang Yi's attack. However, Fang Yi wasn't targeting them, and they have surprising defense in their own right. The Stargod Seal also served to protect them. These three factors all contributed to their preservation."

Yang Ze scowled. "Fang Yi, couldn't you have held back a bit?"

Fang Yi rolled his eyes. "Do you think I could have, after seeing that fight for yourself?"

If Fang Yi had done so, Xing You could well have been the cultivator standing before them instead.

Zhang Lie headed over and asked, "That said, what happened to all of you after you entered the world of the official tournament?"

"We were very unlucky."

Fang Yi explained what had happened since entering the world.

"I was going to meet up with you and Captain via the tracker bee soulshard, Yang Ze, but I encountered the Stargods while passing through the rock forest. Remember how I eliminated some fellow called Xing Yu during the qualifiers?"

Zhang Lie nodded. "So they came causing trouble for you?"

Yang Ze raised a hand. "I headed over the moment after coincidentally hearing the sounds of fighting. I saw Fang Yi in the midst of a fight and immediately went to help, only to encounter a competitor I faced during the qualifiers myself. Because there were so many people, Fang Yi and I decided to split up."

Fang Yi continued, "Then, I and the Stargods headed into this domain and encountered the birth of the bug monarch. I rushed into the midst of the fighting to escape from the Stargods. They gave up after being unable to catch me and left in pursuit of the bug monarch instead."

After Fang Yi escaped, despite his annoyance with the Stargods, he chose to wait until he met up with Zhang Lie before exacting his revenge—only to end up in the midst of the fight over the bug monarch.

"The bug monarch's birth led to a lot of commotion. Thirteen pupae appeared in all. Other cultivators stole six, while the Stargods claimed seven for themselves."

Zhang Lie was shocked. "The Stargods are so weak. How did they manage to claim seven?"

Yang Ze grinned. "Weak in comparison to whom? No one would compare to you, Captain, and they're still decently challenging opponents for the rest of us. Compared to the other competitors, however, the Stargods aren't weak and have strength in numbers. It's nothing surprising."

Fang Yi continued, "I'm not finished! After the Stargods managed to snatch seven of the pupae, they naturally roused the dissatisfaction of the other competitors. Those competitors banded together to fight the Stargods, and I joined in in order to take revenge. I stole the pupae from the Stargods and was then chased and surrounded by them. You saw me at the end of my rope."

Zhang Lie asked curiously, "Who claimed the other six pupae?"

Fang Yi replied, "Three different cultivators took them. They were working separately. Apparently, one was from the Hall of Immortals, another used the same techniques as the cultivator Yang Ze fought against in the qualifiers, and the last one was a veiled woman."

Yang Ze frowned. "I feel like we've encountered them somewhere before."

Li Feng nodded. "They sound familiar."

Yang Ze rubbed his palms greedily. "Forget about them. Let's see what's in the pupae that we claimed. Who knows? A bug emperor might emerge!"

Fang Yi rolled his eyes. "You think it'd be that easy?"

Yang Ze picked a pupa at random. "Who knows? I might get lucky."

The pupa, to which a Stargod Seal had been affixed, was very easy to break open.

A flash of blue light appeared. A blue bug lay within the pupa, only about as long as Yang Ze's arm. It radiated blue light all over its body, which formed the image of a sea dragon around it.

That image was made of illusory light and hung in the void, mysterious and powerful.

Yang Ze frowned. "Just a bug monarch?"

The blue bug seemed rather weak.

Li Feng shook his head. "It looks like you aren't that lucky, after all. It's weaker than the bug monarch that Fang Yi consumed."

Yang Ze frowned. "I won't take responsibility for this. It's likely because Fang Yi's attack struck it. Even though the pupae were protected by the Stargod Seal, you've all seen how destructive Fang Yi's techniques are. It's likely that this bug monarch was crippled from that attack."

"In other words, you were unlucky. Watch this." Li Feng picked up a pupa of his own.

Silver light flashed. Within the pupa was a silver bug monarch, also about the size of Li Feng's arm, but it radiated silver light in the image of a dragon.

That image was made of illusory light and hung in the void, mysterious and powerful.

It was comparable to the one that Fang Yi had swallowed, and better than Yang Ze's.

Yang Ze smirked. "It looks like you aren't particularly lucky, either."

Li Feng scowled as Fang Yi opened a pupa of his own.

Blue light flashed. Wind surrounded the bug that appeared from within the pupa. It was about the size of Fang Yi's arm, but was speckled with purple, gold, silver, and blue light, forming the image of what seemed simultaneously like a dragon and a tiger in the air.

That image was made of illusory light and hung in the void, mysterious and powerful, crackling with lightning.

Zhang Lie considered it. "What a pity. It's only one step away from becoming a bug emperor."

Yang Ze shrugged. "It's no loss to us. After all, we won't stay in this world for long, and anything we can claim now is a boon."

Fang Yi handed a pupa to Zhang Lie. "Open one too, Captain."

"Very well!"

As Zhang Lie broke open the pupa, a dragon's howl could be heard from the sky. A black dragon rose into the heavens. A flaming qilin appeared, a golden tiger howled, a phoenix danced across the sky... All manner of omens unfolded, shocking the cultivators present.

The skies turned dark as day transformed into night. The ground shook. Lava quaked and erupted from the ground. The entire world turned fiery-red. Then, lightning flashed and the stars began to fall. Wind swept across the land, and a phoenix cried out.

Within the pupa was a small bug, again about the size of Zhang Lie's arm, but it was speckled with black, yellow, red, blue, purple, gold, silver, and green light. The light formed a phantasmagoria of images—a swimming fish, a small black serpent, a golden tiger, and so on.

The scene left everyone in shock.

Yang Ze exclaimed in surprise, "Captain, that's a bug emperor for sure, a bug emperor!"

Although he had never seen a bug emperor for himself, nor heard anyone describe one, he was certain that what Zhang Lie had found was a bug emperor.

How else could the various phenomena that unfolded be explained?