

## U. Warlord 761

### Chapter 761: Enemy of the Realm

Chen Fan frowned. "Zhang Lie, don't you know how many worlds border ours, and how many foes we have?"

Zhang Lie replied smoothly, "There are six worlds in the immediate vicinity of this one, led by the Blackwind, Mengtai, devil trees, giant demons, black spirits, and greenskin beasts respectively.

"The Blackwind, once an ally, betrayed the humans and draconians in our time of greatest need. In total, this world has eight enemy factions, two of whom are worlds farther away allied with the Mengtai. They also participated in the earlier invasion attempt."

Chen Fan and the draconian sage nodded to themselves; it seemed that Zhang Lie at least had an understanding of their current straits and wasn't simply spouting empty words. Though they were still somewhat skeptical of Zhang Lie's claims, they understood that his plan wasn't simply idle whimsy.

Zhang Lie was actually quite familiar with the worlds surrounding the draconian world, and he had even been to them personally in his past life.

After all, he had remained in the third realm for a very long time then, and his memories of the third realm were all but imprinted in his head. "If we also consider the worlds allied with the Mengtai allies, I expect we'll have to face twelve such worlds in all."

Upon hearing how many enemies they would have to fight, the members of Team Zenith all sucked in a deep breath, but they looked more excited than scared.

Chen Fan apologized. "Zhang Lie, it looks like you've put serious thought into this proposal. I'm sorry for dismissing you so abruptly earlier."

"There's no need for that. You're simply thinking of the greater good for humans and draconians alike."

Chen Fan responded seriously, "It's certainly true that attacking the invaders and gaining the upper hand is important, but I think we should consider trying to pressure some of the aliens into backing down and trying to source whatever allies we can.

"Given your strength, Zhang Lie, along with the members of Team Zenith and the warlords of the Milky Way, I'm sure we can take down two or three worlds rapidly. The other worlds will be shocked by our ability and submit to us."

Zhang Lie clenched his fists tightly. "There's no need for such trouble. We can beat them all with brute strength."

Chen Fan frowned. "Twelve worlds at once? Zhang Lie, do you intend on taking on all three thousand worlds of the third realm?"

The human representatives were likewise doubtful of Zhang Lie's plan.

"The aliens are fearful of us humans because of how quickly we're growing. Zhang Lie, you may have the ability to take down twelve worlds at once, but what about the others? We'll only draw

more and more enemies, fearful of our growing strength. Zhang Lie, do you intend to take down all the worlds by force?"

"We'll never see an end to the carnage..."

This was a strategy only alien races who were naturally prone to fighting would attempt.

Zhang Lie cocked his head. "And what's wrong with that?"

Even after the invasion attempt, quite a few of the humans preferred a more diplomatic approach, while others were scared of the endless warfare that would result if they did otherwise.

Chen Fan and the other humans and draconians present fell silent, not knowing how to respond.

Sun Mengmeng couldn't help but laugh. "This is truly a response I'd expect from you, Captain."

Zhang Lie shrugged. "If ten worlds want to make us their enemy, we'll take them all down.

"If a hundred worlds want to make us their enemy, we'll take them all down.

"If a thousand worlds want to make us their enemy, we'll take them all down—and if all three thousand worlds want to make us their enemy, we'll claim all three thousand for ourselves."

Chen Fan stood up in shock. "Zhang Lie, are you... declaring war on the entire realm?"

"If all you see are enemies, what will you see at the end of your slaughter?" the draconian sage asked. He had remained silent during the entire meeting; this was his first time speaking up.

He was a being of ancient wisdom and experience, and his eyes shone with deep insight. His question seemed to be probing Zhang Lie's innermost desires.

"I represent the world. All shall lie at my feet!" Zhang Lie announced arrogantly, as though this were some trivial feat.

Chen Fan frowned. "Aren't you being a little too ambitious, Zhang Lie?"

However, the draconian sage suddenly lifted his head and laughed. "Haha, haha! Haha!"

Everyone turned toward the draconian sage, who had broken out in laughter. It took him a while to return to his senses. "I apologize. It's been too long since I was so excited."

Chen Fan frowned again. "Sage?"

The draconian sage looked directly at Zhang Lie. "I might be a useless pile of old bones, and I know you might not think much of us draconians, but I and the rest of the draconians shall lend you our full support."

Chen Fan's eyes widened.

The sage continued, "It's been too long since I saw such a sparkling piece of jade—no, you're no piece of jade, but rather a star shining brighter than the sun! I eagerly await what kind of change you'll bring to the three thousand worlds of the realm, and I admire your drive that keeps you charging onward despite what anyone else says."

Zhang Lie wasn't surprised by the sage's pronouncement; his favorite activity was to cultivate new heroes and turn them into legends in their own right. With his experience, he had helped out countless hunters with tremendous potential, and was known to be mentor, patron, and witness to a host of geniuses and legends.

The sage's eyes had never been mistaken before.

Zhang Lie countered, "And if I'm charging headfirst into the abyss?"

"Then we'll be going into the abyss together," the draconian sage replied without hesitation.

Chen Fan mulled it over, but announced, "I still oppose this decision."

Zhang Lie smiled faintly. "I apologize, Chen Fan, but this is a decision I'm making for myself, irrespective of what you think. As you know, my Team Zenith can't remain in the third realm for good, and we won't be able to protect the humans here forever.

Furthermore, the aliens of the Milky Way won't always remain our allies. Once everyone ascends to the fourth realm, what will you do?"

Chen Fan retorted, "With the limit-breaking potions you've devised, Zhang Lie, we humans will surely have the power to protect ourselves!"

Zhang Lie smiled wryly. "In the end, you're leaving the problem unresolved for future generations."

"Is there anything wrong with that?" Chen Fan countered. "Humanity will need challenges to grow."

"Have you considered that, by that point, human hunters might be facing the combined wrath of all three thousand worlds? I'm confident that I will be able to conquer all three thousand. Are you certain there will be hunters in future generations who can say the same?"

Chen Fan fell silent.

"We've already retreated time and time again. There's no need to do so any further. I, Zhang Lie, hereby declare that I'll unite all three thousand worlds into a massive world, one ruled by the kingdom of Limit! I shall lead mankind on the path to glory, to greatness!" Zhang Lie announced, shocking Chen Fan and making him stumble back with the force of his proclamation. He looked at Zhang Lie in shock, his mouth gaping, yet unable to speak.

"My decision is final, regardless of your opinions on the matter. If anyone dares to stop me, you'll be my enemy, the enemy of mankind. Alright—we can stop the meeting here. Sun Mengmeng, you're a fire-attuned hunter, and you have some degree of advantage against the devil trees. I'll leave them to you."

Sun Mengmeng, who had been riled up by Zhang Lie's proclamation, immediately accepted the order without question. "Yes, Captain!"

Chapter 762: Preparing to Retire

"As for the other invaders, there's not much to note about them, so I'll just leave the rest of you to divide them up among yourselves. Better to have something to look forward to."

Zhang Lie retrieved a block of wood from his soulshard, which he cut into pieces with his finger. Subsequently, he inscribed the names of the invading races on them, then shuffled up all the pieces. "Go on—each of you, pick one!"

The members of Team Zenith each took one piece.

Sun Xiaowu exclaimed, "My target's the greenskins!"

Fang Yi: "Mine, the black spirits."

Zhou Ying: "And I, the giant demons!"

Yang Ze asked, "What do the bear-men look like? Half-men, half-bear?"

Li Feng murmured, "The longhairs seem like they'd be a race focused on strength..."

Zhang Lie nodded with satisfaction. "The aliens you've picked out are your targets, and they're located in the neighboring worlds. You'll be responsible for dealing with them, but you don't have to kill them: just make them submit. Either kill the king of the realm of their world, or make them hand over the proof of kingship."

"Yes, Captain!" the members of Team Zenith chorused.

The draconian sage asked, "And what about the Blackwind race?"

Zhang Lie smirked. "I'll deal with them myself."

He was intending to avenge Chen Ruiming's death on his own.

Yang Ze couldn't help but complain, "This truly is an insane task, isn't it? We're being asked to subdue kings of the realm even though we just ascended and know nothing about the third realm!"

The humans beside them, including Chen Fan, all nodded. To them, this would likewise be a Herculean task.

A king of the realm was the strongest existence in the world they governed, and asking a newly ascended hunter to kill one was like asking a baby to assassinate a princess.

Chen Fan's lips spasmed. He suggested, "I think the members of Team Zenith need some time to understand this realm better."

Zhang Lie shrugged. "They're just the kings of mid-sized worlds, aren't they? They're hardly anything impressive—I managed to kill the king of a large world when I possessed the same number of gene fragments they did! As my subordinates, they can hardly fall behind—I'd be embarrassed to consider them my protégés unless they can manage such a feat."

The humans beside Zhang Lie were all stupefied by the task.

The draconian sage suddenly frowned. "The aliens all around us seem to be making their moves. Shall I seal off the wormholes to this world?"

Zhang Lie smiled. "There's no need. They've come at just the right time—Team Zenith, your targets are here!"

"Yes, Captain!" they chorused.

Chen Fan hurriedly added, "It's hardly possible for newcomers to the third realm to kill kings of the realm, even of mid-sized worlds! I managed to become a warlord without defeating one myself..."

The members of Team Zenith nodded. "We don't necessarily have to kill them—just subdue them."

Chen Fan coughed. "There's only one Zhang Lie in this world. Don't feel pressured to replicate his success."

Yang Ze replied seriously, "Thank you for the advice, but our captain's always been our target. We don't want to end up a mediocre warlord like you, after all!"

Chen Fan felt as though he had just been pierced through the chest. The newcomers he was trying to support, calling him a mediocre warlord...

Li Feng added insult to injury. "How long has it been since you've ascended to the third realm? Why haven't you managed to kill even a king of the realm of a mid-sized world?"

Zhou Ying added to the barrage. "You didn't purchase your rank as warlord, did you?"

Chen Fan coughed even more violently. "It looks as though none of you will respect me until I show you my true strength! Zhang Lie, you don't mind if I teach them a lesson, do you?"

He might not dare strike Zhang Lie, but he was certain he would be able to handle his team!

The members of Team Zenith looked at each other. "Who's going to be our representative?"

Yang Ze stood up. "Let me go."

Chen Fan snorted. "I don't mind if you all come at me at once!"

Zhang Lie couldn't help smirking at the thought—Chen Fan wouldn't even be able to handle one, let alone all of them..

Meanwhile, the human hunters watched the scene play out with interest. They were growing quite annoyed with the members of Team Zenith, who came off as rather arrogant by insulting Warlord Chen Fan, who had protected the draconian world for decades.

However, it was true that none of the hunters present were able to take on the members of Team Zenith. Furthermore, at least part of their dissatisfaction came from their own envy and jealousy at the members' strength. Envy was simply a product of their experiences.

Despite the fact that the members of Team Zenith had saved them from a fate worse than death, they couldn't help but feel inferior when comparing themselves against them—and they were more than happy to see the members of Team Zenith make fools of themselves.

Chen Fan strode to a nearby clearing and prepared himself. "Come, face the cruelty of the third realm!"

The members of Team Zenith glanced at each other wryly. In the end, Yang Ze stepped forward and faced off against Chen Fan.

"I'm Yang Ze of Team Zenith. Let's have a good fight."

The hunters stepped back to give the two combatants some space.

"Do you see how he's acting like he's undefeatable even though he just ascended to the third realm? Who does he think he is? Everyone here was a monster in the second realm—that's how they managed to ascend!"

"Does he really think his performance in the Void Cup and his participation in establishing the kingdom of Limit are all that impressive?"

"Zhang Lie, please don't mind. At worst, your team will lose some face, but if you were to wait for the aliens to teach them that lesson, they might lose their lives!" one of the hunters whispered to Zhang Lie.

Zhang Lie responded with a smile, "If there really is someone able to teach them a lesson, that would be a nice surprise."

As Zhang Lie spoke, Yang Ze quickly took down Chen Fan.

Mist spread over the clearing and the nearby grounds. Chen Fan, as an experienced warlord, did have some skill of his own, but unfortunately for him, his opponents were the members of Team Zenith. A single horde of sharks from Yang Ze was enough to take him down.

Yang Ze had already maxed out his superior gene fragments, and the limit fragments he had accumulated back in the second realm meant that Chen Fan was no opponent for him.

The human hunters gaped. They couldn't have imagined that an experienced warlord like Chen Fan would lose so miserably and so quickly. They gained an improved understanding of Team Zenith's true strength.

Ten minutes later, Chen Fan slunk to a corner and sighed. "I'm growing old, and the times are changing more rapidly than I expected. It might be time for me to retire..."

The draconian sage observed Chen Fan's actions with no surprise in his features, and neither did he head over to console his longtime comrade-in-arms.

Just then, Ren Kunjing returned. "Zhang Lie, I've retrieved the Mengtai's proof of kingship!"

"Oh?" Zhang Lie was quite surprised. "That easily?"

"The Mengtai chieftains' information was accurate, and I found the proof of kingship hidden where they said the high priest was located."

Ren Kunjing passed the proof to Zhang Lie. The Mengtai proof was no jade seal, but rather a scepter of bone—one made not of human bones, but rather of Mengtai bones. The bone was crystalline and translucent; it was apparent that the scepter was an artifact of great quality.

Zhang Lie inspected the scepter momentarily before tossing it to the draconian sage. "I'll leave it in your care, I think."

### Chapter 763: With One Punch

The draconian sage beheld the Mengtai proof of kingship with a complicated expression on his face. The Mengtai had warred with the draconians for centuries. Had they really been defeated so easily?

"There's no need to rush to merge the Mengtai world with this one. Let me gather the proofs of kingship of the other nearby alien worlds, first." Zhang Lie stepped forward. "Ren Kunjing, assemble the warlords. I have commands for them."

Following Zhang Lie's command, the warlords divided into four parties led by the four prime races. They would split up and attack the worlds neighboring the draconian world, taking revenge on the races who had dared invade human territory.

Once everything was settled, Zhang Lie flashed toward one rebuilt wall of the city.

Beyond the wall was a wormhole connected to the Blackwind world. Because the draconians and the Blackwind had always been on good terms, that wall was more symbolic than anything else—it was perfectly ordinary, without any particular reinforcement. The draconians never expected that the Blackwind would one day betray them.

Zhang Lie's sudden appearance frightened the draconians and humans guarding the wall, but they quickly recovered. "Zhang Lie!"

Zhang Lie waved at them and looked far into the distance, where the Blackwind forces had gathered.

The blue skies were hidden by a layer of swarming darkness. Firebirds burning with black flame had taken to the air, and their black feathers were falling from the skies. The Blackwind had sent quite a number of forces over.

They were obeisant to their enemies, but willing to strike at their former allies with significant force. Even when the draconians were facing serious threats, the Blackwind provided little in terms of aid, and their reinforcements only fought half-heartedly.

On the other hand, almost all the Blackwind forces had gathered to invade the draconian world.

The king of the Blackwinds was a gigantic black firebird, whose wingspan was over a hundred meters long. Flames roared and crackled over its body, giving it a devilish appearance.

The Blackwind king called out, "Where's the draconian sage? Send the draconian sage out!"

Zhang Lie looked up. "Do you have a will, or any last words?"

The Blackwind king sneered. "Weak, worthless human, what gives you the courage to speak to me?! Even your warlord Chen Fan lowers his head in my presence! Either have your warlord step forward, or the draconian sage. I do not grant audiences to weaklings!"

Zhang Lie smiled faintly. "You care about strength and position, do you?"

One of the Blackwinds began to mock the humans. "Of course our king prizes propriety! If the humans are sending someone like you out—surely it can't be that the draconian sage and Chen Fan are gravely wounded, are they?"

The Blackwind king continued, "Humans, submit to me now and become slaves of the Blackwind, and we'll consider letting you live. If I'm not mistaken, the neighboring worlds have already begun preparing larger invasion forces to attack you. Even if you managed to defend against their incursion somehow during the last battle, you certainly won't be able to defend against this one. You've all lost—this is your last chance!"

One of the draconian guards standing on the wall shouted back, "You Blackwinds are shameless, despicable backstabbers! You broke a hundred-year pact and launched a sneak attack on a human warlord! Even if you were to win this conflict, it would be nothing but a shameful victory!"

The Blackwind king sneered. "And so what if I've backstabbed you? It's all you draconians' fault for siding with the humans. We Blackwind aren't so idiotic. A victory is a victory; there's no shame in that."

It seemed as though the aliens had all tried to reach out to the draconians requesting an alliance against the humans, but the draconians, loyal to a fault, had staunchly refused.

The flames on the Blackwind king's body grew even fiercer. "You should have accepted your fate. To dare to kill my clan's warriors—you humans and draconians are truly arrogant beyond belief! Do you really think surviving a wave of invasions led by the Mengtai is all that impressive? Today, you humans and draconians shall be wiped away from the face of this realm!"

"Are those your last words?" Zhang Lie asked mildly. Genetic energy exploded from his body, and a gigantic pale-blue fish materialized behind his back and soared toward the clouds as though it was leaping out of water. It was the size of a whale, one that could swallow up the sun and moon alike.

Howling winds began to rage over the battlefield; everyone in sight was startled by the sudden appearance of the fish. Genetic energy whirled around Zhang Lie, gathering dust and dirt. All that lay behind the walls began to shake.

Zhang Lie's attack had roused a storm even before it struck.

A tremendous pressure struck everyone in sight, making it difficult for them to breathe.

The Blackwind king, who suffered that pressure most acutely, felt as though his life was being threatened. Only then did he understand just how frightening the seemingly ordinary man in front of him was; he was an existence that should never have been provoked. If not for the flames surrounding the king, he would likely have been sweating profusely by now.

He laughed nervously. "That, I feel that—I think we can afford to chat a little longer!"

Unfortunately for the Blackwind king, he had come to this realization too late.

"Very well. Let's chat with our fists! [Fists of the Silent Sea: Soar]!"

Ripples of energy spread out from Zhang Lie, warping the space around him. Constructs of energy emerged from Zhang Lie's fists. They roared through the skies like galloping steeds, like thundering dragons, overwhelming any opposition in sight.

The gigantic fish hovering above Zhang Lie's head leapt into the sea of genetic energy Zhang Lie had created as it surged toward the Blackwind king.

The ground quaked; the entire wall shook. Everything happened so quickly that the Blackwind forces had no time to react. The water-attuned genetic energy exploded through the air, shattering space and swallowing up all life in its vicinity.

The water-attuned genetic energy combined with spatial power to produce a series of high-frequency vibrations. Almost like an eraser, those vibrations swept across the Blackwind forces and caused them all to vanish from sight, leaving behind clear skies free of black flame.

The humans and draconians guarding the wall were stupefied. Just one blow from Zhang Lie had cleared away all the Blackwind forces gathered—that innumerable force that had swallowed up the skies, wiped out in one fell swoop!

There might well have been as many Blackwind gathered as the entirety of the invasion forces that the draconian world had somehow overcome.

The humans and draconians looked toward Zhang Lie with deep awe and respect.

Zhang Lie's attack triggered a set of spatial rifts as it struck the wormhole leading into the Blackwind world, but Zhang Lie didn't care. As the humans and draconians watched on in shock, he walked through the spatial rift with nothing but his bare body.

On another battlefield, Fang Yi had begun facing off against the black spirits.

The black spirits were completely wrapped in black cloth from head to toe. The slivers of their bodies that showed through the cloth were pitch-black, the color of the abyss, the void, outer space...

Chapter 764: Wheel of Time

No one had ever seen the uncovered body of a black spirit. When a black spirit died, they would dissipate in a cloud of black smoke, leaving nothing but black cloth behind.

Fang Yi shot forward with a low grunt. Hurling forward by wind and storm, he launched his spear with incredible force.

Fang Yi's spear sent wind howling and lightning flashing through the skies. It moved so quickly it left dozens of afterimages in all directions. Fang Yi struck a black spirit with every strike, piercing their bodies through. The wind- and thunder-attuned energy on the spear destroyed the black spirits from the inside out.

The black spirits cried out in agony as they dissipated into mist, and a flurry of black cloth filled the air.

"[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.

He struck the heart of the black spirits, generating a storm of wind and lightning so strong it reached all the way to the wall and sent flying the humans and draconians guarding it.

Wind and storm combined and crackled at the tip of Fang Yi's spear, and a dragon's howl echoed resoundingly in the air. The combination generated a frightening force that seemed to be able to penetrate space.

The black spirits were torn apart, barely able to muster any resistance. Suddenly, however, a number of black bandages shot out of the ground and tangled Fang Yi up.

Fang Yi sneered. He twisted his spear, crackling with lightning, and tore apart those bandages. Even more appeared and shot toward him like serpents.

"[Shadow and Light]!" At that very moment, Fang Yi morphed into countless clones, each of which moved independently through the battlefield. Black smoke bloomed where his clones passed by as the black spirits' heads were pierced through.

Countless black spirits suddenly appeared behind Fang Yi, daggers in their hands.

As though he had predicted their appearance, Fang Yi swept his spear behind him. Crackling with lightning, the spearhead snapped the black spirits at the waists.

"There really are too many of them—it looks like I'll have to show off some of my new skills." Fang Yi wiped at the sweat on his forehead.

He recalled what Zhang Lie had told him back in the second realm. "Your [Heaven's Judgment] is about as strong as you can get it within this realm, but your attacks are still more rigid than I'd like. I recommend that you try to develop its speed instead—you can try to augment it with the power of time that you intuited, advancing it to another level entirely."

"[Heaven's Judgment: Wheel of Time]!" Fang Yi's spear took on the aspect of a dragon of the winds and a storm tiger. Temporal winds buffeted the spear, and a mysterious light began to circle the spear like lightning.

A wheel of light appeared behind him, seemingly taking on the form of a clock.

Fang Yi spun the spear in his hand as he charged up his attack with genetic energy. The wind and lightning tore apart the black cloth covering up the black spirits, but more and more black bandages spawned from thin air to replace them.

As Fang Yi attacked, the wheel of time behind him suddenly began to glow. As it did so, Fang Yi's movement and attack speed began to grow faster. As he attacked, another wheel manifested behind him, increasing his attack speed even further. As the skill activated once and again, his speed rose to an astonishing crescendo, as though his attacks were being played on fast forward at an ever-increasing clip.

As Zhang Lie had suggested, Fang Yi worked hard on developing his intuition with time before incorporating it into his attacks. His temporal ability manifested as a wheel of time.

Fang Yi subsequently engrossed himself in research in order to master this new ability. In the world federation's archives, he found a huge quantity of material related to time.

The aliens of the Milky Way were superior to the indigenous races of the dimensional world in two respects: their ability to absorb gene fragments, and their advanced technology and scientific development.

The aliens of the Milky Way had a technical and nuanced understanding of space and time, which provided a firm foundation for applying such abstruse concepts in the dimensional world.

Fang Yi researched these materials, considered them in the context of the monarch of stars' twelve stelae, and cultivated his technique into the wheel of time that he now demonstrated.

The principle that he took advantage of was the differing passage of time in different realms.

By storing up his wind- and lightning-attuned genetic energy and continuously circulating it, he was able to produce a speed boost that was active on himself and could stack indefinitely using this principle.

The fact that time progressed simultaneously and at varying rates in different realms allowed for the possibility that they could be added together—just like how the passage of time differed between Earth and the dimensional world, and even between the second and third realms.

In developing his technique, Fang Yi used superstring theory as a basis: there was a hierarchy between worlds, and time progressed faster the lower you went within this hierarchy.

Those hunters who existed and traveled between Earth and the dimensional world were subject to different rates at which time passed. Each dimension, each world, had its own rate at which time passed, and the total rate at which time passed was additive between each layer of time.

In other words, by establishing more and more discrete dimensions, each with its own rate of time, Fang Yi was able to combine them all together into an augmentation effect applied on himself.

More abstractly, this was the same principle at work when hunters ascended between realms—they were fundamentally changed by their progress into another dimension. That was why third-realm hunters were naturally more advanced than second-realm ones, though that disparity didn't necessarily translate into actual strength.

Sufficient quantities of genetic energy could overcome quality—that was how Zhang Lie, as a second-realm hunter, had managed to defeat the third-realm warlord Musi Yu.

Fang Yi repeatedly went between Earth and the second realm and sensed the minute changes in time, from which he finally identified the crucial features of his new technique.

Thanks to the ability to teleport between dimensions so readily, Fang Yi was able to glean a deeper understanding of his wheel of time, which was actually rather poorly named.

Instead of stacking temporal energy on himself, Fang Yi was really compressing the boost afforded by his wind- and thunder-attuned genetic energy. He combined it with his understanding of time to layer these boosts on top of each other in a perpetual cycle; the temporal energy simply served as a conduit for his genetic energy to manifest such a multi-layered boosting effect.

#### Chapter 765: Sinister Spirits

At present, Fang Yi wasn't strong enough to be able to use that temporal energy directly; he had to mediate it with his genetic energy instead.

By combining it with his wind- and thunder-attuned genetic energy and affixing the combination to his spear, he was able to accumulate power through his attacks. With sufficient power, he could form a wheel of time, each of which would increase his perception of time by one second.

In other words, in a single second, Fang Yi would be able to perform two seconds' worth of attacks. A single second might not seem like much, but it might well be the determining factor in fights at Fang Yi's level.

A single additional second of movement would shift the tempo of the fight toward Fang Yi, and Fang Yi's wheels of time could continue stacking on each other and raising his attack speed to unfathomable levels.

This was the new technique that Fang Yi had been working on since his fight with Zhang Lie.

"I was hoping to use this technique to surprise Zhang Lie, not expecting to have to resort to it so quickly—but we are in the third realm, after all."

By then, Fang Yi had layered twenty wheels of time on himself, and he was moving so quickly to an observer that even his speech became a garbled mess. No one knew what he was saying. He attacked at an unimaginable rate: his spear left so many afterimages behind it almost seemed like a trail.

The entire sky seemed to be filled with black cloth and bandages as more and more wheels of time appeared behind Fang Yi. At the beginning, it had taken Fang Yi a whole minute of attacking to generate one wheel, but now, it only took three seconds.

When Fang Yi got to thirty stacks, the afterimages of his spear melded together into a true trail. His arms were shadows, invisible to the naked eye, and he was surrounded by strips of black cloth and bandages that were testament to the number of black spirits he had killed.

Suddenly, a black spirit surrounded by dark energy appeared. It was twice the size of the other black spirits, and the black cloth bandages around its body waved violently like snakes. It gave off a strong sense of foreboding as it attacked Fang Yi with its cloth.

"You must be the leader of the black spirits!" Fang Yi cried out, breaking into a grin.

The black spirit didn't respond. It waved its bandages around like a scythe, which Fang Yi easily dodged with his enhanced speed. The bandages on the black spirit spun in a spiral and twisted into the shape of a corkscrew that shot toward Fang Yi.

A dragon's roar resounded through the air like peals of thunder. Wind and storm combined and crackled at the tip of Fang Yi's spear. His spear, which looked at that moment like an electric drill, struck the black spirit's corkscrew.

Fang Yi's attack was faster and naturally possessed more penetrating power.

His spearhead shot straight toward the black spirit, whose corkscrew-bandage suddenly split apart into the form of a whip.

However, Fang Yi was prepared. With the thirty wheels of time at his back, the black spirit's sudden transformation was easy for him to adapt to.

Rather than charge forward recklessly, Fang Yi took a step back. The black bandages cut the ground like a blade of wind; luckily, Fang Yi had reacted in time, or he would have been severely injured.

Once the black spirit realized that it wasn't a match for Fang Yi, the bandages on its body split apart and linked with those of the other black spirits. It pulled the hundreds of black spirits remaining on the battlefield close.

Fang Yi, realizing that something was amiss, immediately struck. His black spear left thousands of afterimages behind as he attacked the black spirits' combined form like a storm.

Out of the combined spirits emerged a flood of black bandages which clashed against Fang Yi's spear. As the combined spirits moved, they gave off a huge cloud of black smoke. More and more wheels of time appeared behind Fang Yi's back.

The spear moved so quickly that it was burning up from the friction. Its surface turned red-hot as Fang Yi forcefully defended against the spirits' attack. Meanwhile, the combined spirits morphed into a gigantic black spirit, dozens of meters tall. Its body was swollen with a few human-sized lumps.

As it raised its hand high into the air, thousands of black bandages shot out of its body and fell toward Fang Yi like raindrops.

"[Born of Lightning, Swallowed by the Wind]!" As Fang Yi shouted, his spear traced a half-moon in the air, surrounded by an aura of time.

The spear pierced space and time, its tip descending into the void. Everything froze and turned gray: the gigantic spirit, as well as the bandages shooting down toward Fang Yi. The only color—the only movement—in the world came from Fang Yi.

The thirty wheels of time to his back radiated light as they fought off the onslaught of frozen time.

Compared to when he was in the second realm, Fang Yi had improved by so great a margin that it wouldn't be an exaggeration to call him a new man entirely.

Not only was he able to move his spear in the space of frozen time, he was even able to move his body now as well. Though he was still only able to move slowly, the speed at which he moved didn't really matter when everything else was frozen.

Fang Yi stabbed his crackling spear into the gigantic black spirit, and the grayness broke. The world snapped back to its colored form as time began to move again. The wind and lightning at the tip of Fang Yi's spear burst in an explosion so spectacular even the human and draconian guards on the wall had to shield their eyes.

The gigantic black spirit exploded.

Fang Yi had thought that he would be able to kill the black spirit in one strike, but the black spirit proved to be even more stubborn than he had expected.

A huge hole had been blown out of its chest, and he could see the sky on its other side. However, even so, the black spirit wasn't dead. A huge cloud of black smoke emanated from its wound, and the black cloth surrounding its body began to heal the massive hole.

The bandages on the black spirit began to twist and transform into something even more sinister as parts of its body were revealed. Fang Yi saw row after row of sharp teeth, within which emerged babies' cries, so shrill he couldn't help but cover his ears.

Even the guards on the wall, far away, had to do the same thing.

Eyes appeared out of the skin revealed by the shifting bandages—not just on the face of the black spirits, but all over their bodies. On the other hand, where its eyes should have been located, there was only a singular purple iris.

The eyes that dotted its body had no sclera or pupil, only an eerie green glow amidst the darkness which seemed to be directed straight at Fang Yi, at those who walked amidst darkness...

#### Chapter 766: Fang Yi's Genius

Above Fang Yi's head, the bandages from the gigantic black spirit coalesced into a sword, one which struck down at Fang Yi.

Fang Yi dodged the attack in a blur and counterattacked with his spear, striking back with thousands of thrusts in just a few moments.

The black spirit blocked, its sword transforming into a shield, which caught the spear thrusts with ease.

Wheels of time condensed by Fang Yi's back, and his attacks grew faster and faster.

Fang Yi's spear took on the aspect of a dragon of the winds and a storm tiger as he charged forward, and the black spirit's shield trembled before it burst apart into a frenzy of corkscrewing bandages, each of which attacked Fang Yi like a drill.

Infusing his spear with more and more genetic energy, Fang Yi parried the attacks with it and sapped the attacks of their momentum.

Subsequently, the black bandages merged together and formed a black cyclone, as though the black spirit were about to showcase one of its trump cards.

"[Heaven's Judgment]!" Once again, Fang Yi broke through the constraints of time and returned to the frozen world of gray, with him the only spot of color within.

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.

Even Zhang Lie himself would be shocked by the sight of Fang Yi's attack. It was difficult enough to combine elemental and temporal energy, let alone adding something as volatile as spatial energy into the mix.

No one else would have dared such a risky proposal, but not only had Fang Yi done so, he had even succeeded.

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

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.

Fang Yi poured more and more genetic energy into the attack. A storm roared into existence around him. Only within a space of frozen time would Fang Yi be able to pull off such an attack. If he had to devote so much attention to a technique in the midst of a heated battle, his opponents would surely be able to kill him.

Most importantly, combining spatial, temporal, and elemental energy required precise care. Any attack on Fang Yi would disrupt his concentration, and the backlash alone might well be a lethal injury.

A spatial rift began to form where Fang Yi was standing, but he held together the fraying world long enough for it to stabilize.

Anyone witnessing his attack would have denounced him as a crazed fool to attempt to control such phenomena as spatial rifts and to make use of it to strengthen his attack, but Fang Yi, bogglingly, succeeded in even this.

Part of the energy from the spatial rift seeped into his lightning-attuned genetic energy, turning it into void lightning. The pitch-black lightning began to spike and sizzle, and the space around Fang Yi, like shattered glass, grew so unstable that it seemed liable to collapse at any moment.

Temporal energy entered the fray, somehow managing to stabilize the mix of energies that ran rampant around Fang Yi.

Fang Yi was very familiar with wind and thunder, having worked with them all throughout the first and second realms. After combining them with temporal and spatial forces, the wind and lightning gained qualities that were foreign to Fang Yi, and they even began to merge with each other, forming natural phenomena much like the spatial rifts and void lightning that Fang Yi had just generated.

All these phenomena were particularly dangerous, and the fact that Fang Yi was meddling and even experimenting with them would make others think twice about associating with him.

Somehow, Fang Yi had managed to contain and curtail these dangerous phenomena, condensing them by the tip of his spear and maintaining an unstable equilibrium by keeping the forces rotating quickly.

Zhang Lie himself wouldn't dare play with such dangerous combinations of energies, but Fang Yi had no choice. He wanted to grow stronger and surpass Zhang Lie, to obtain his approval. If he could harness the energy in these exotic forces for himself, that could make all the difference.

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

Harnessing such powerful and destructive phenomena required a commensurate price.

Fang Yi's peak-grade spear began to crack, and even Fang Yi's own body was giving out. He bled out of his orifices, and the bones in his arms began to creak.

As the types of energy melded further, the unstable combination destabilized further. Space and time began to splinter and crack, and all around Fang Yi appeared unusual pitch-black thorn-like protrusions that seemed to skewer space.

Fang Yi's skin began to bleed. His capillaries burst, and blood gushed out of tears in his skin. The cracks in his spear propagated.

Fang Yi howled as he struck with the potent mix of energy he had created, shattering the frozen world of gray and sending spatial rifts and void lightning directed straight at the center of the mass of black spirits.

The resulting explosion was so intense that calling it a disaster would be an understatement. A tsunami or a volcanic eruption would be nothing more than a minor inconvenience compared to this cataclysm, as though a hundred starbreak annihilators were being fired at once...

#### Chapter 767: The Black Spirits

The explosion from Fang Yi's condensation of unstable energies destroyed everything in its path; nothing could stop the attack. Spatial rifts and void lightning tore through the air.

Frightening energy poured out of Fang Yi. The only reason that energy had yet to explode was because of the frozen world of gray that Fang Yi had erected. With the stasis gone, the pent-up energy finally exploded all around Fang Yi.

The wall to Fang Yi's back, hundreds of meters tall, was obliterated in an instant. Although the wall by this wormhole was smaller and less reinforced than that by the Mengtai wormhole, it was still a wall that the draconians had constructed with the finest craftsmanship and had maintained daily, expecting it to last multiple lifetimes.

And yet, that wall which had survived generations of warriors and assault, was blown away by Fang Yi's attack.

The humans and draconians were sent flying, along with countless stones. Everything seemed to have happened in a flash. The guards were watching Fang Yi charging up for an attack; the next thing they knew, they were flying through the air.

Fang Yi swept forward and rushed into the wormhole. Before his eyes, the wormhole expanded by an order of magnitude in size.

The gigantic black spirit, on the other hand, had been annihilated entirely by Fang Yi's attack.

Fang Yi's combination of energies had resulted in an exceptionally devastating and unusual attack. Perhaps because of the inclusion of spatial and temporal energies, even though the attack would normally have resulted in the formation of spatial rifts, it had expanded the wormhole by ten times its size instead.

Fang Yi gulped for breath. The attack had consumed so much of his energy that he was wrung dry like a rag. His legs turned to jelly, and he almost stumbled to the ground. Fang Yi hurriedly supported himself with his spear, but it crumbled to dust as it landed.

Just as Fang Yi was about to fall, a figure flew toward him from the wall. With huge wings blotting out the sun, the figure landed by Fang Yi's side and helped him up.

"If we draconians were to let a victorious hero like you kneel on the battlefield, we'd lose all our reputation." The winged figure who had flown out from the devastated wall was a doughty draconian warrior.

Fang Yi took another huge gulp of breath. "Thank you."

He was so drained that his arms and legs were turning numb, he was completely out of genetic energy, and even walking was a challenge. The forty wheels of time to his back had vanished.

"Thank you. You've worked hard," the draconian emphasized.

Fang Yi retrieved a restorative from his extra-dimensional storage and drank it all, giving his battered and bruised body the chance to repair itself.

That version of [Heaven's Judgment] was one of his two trump cards. He had another one, but Fang Yi had barely managed to cast the first. He couldn't even stand to think about the second at the moment.

His second trump card was theoretical at best. He believed he was capable of casting it, but he had never actually done so. As for how strong it was, even he couldn't be certain.

He had tried out his first trump card once in the second realm, and it had been so strong that the will of the world had almost forced him into the third. After that incident, Fang Yi hadn't dared to practice that technique in the second realm again—and he believed that his second trump card was at least five times stronger.

When Fang Yi turned back to see the shattered wall behind him, he sighed. "I'm sorry—"

The draconian shook his head. "There's no need to apologize. If you all weren't here, we'd have lost our entire world, not just a wall. You fought to preserve our world—and you've done so."

"Thank you," Fang Yi murmured.

This was why humans liked the draconians. If he had fought tirelessly to protect the world, only to be criticized for ruining a wall...

The draconian smiled warmly. "We're the ones who should thank you. Fortunately, all us guards responded quickly, and none of us were seriously injured from the explosion."

Fang Yi smiled.

The draconian pulled out a note from his pocket. "Right, the draconian sage had me bring over some information about the black spirits' world."

"News?"

Zhang Lie certainly wouldn't have passed on any information even if he had any—subduing the neighboring worlds was meant to be a trial for the hunters of Team Zenith. However, the draconian sage thought differently.

The draconian continued, "According to the sage, all of you are planning to head to the neighboring worlds to kill their kings of the realm. In that case, you'll definitely need this information."

Despite everything, the humans and draconians continued to harbor doubts about whether or not the members of Team Zenith truly had the ability to do so. After witnessing Fang Yi's last technique, however, the draconian was entirely convinced.

The draconian continued, "We don't get along with the dark spirits, and our information about them isn't complete. Nevertheless, I hope it can be of some use to you."

In truth, none of the aliens neighboring the black spirits got along very well with them.

"Who knows what these cloth-wrapped fellows are thinking?" the draconian grumbled. "When we saw that they were among the invaders, we were very surprised."

Fang Yi glanced at the report.

"The information's written in the Chinese language, so I'm sure you can understand it," the draconian acknowledged. "We draconians admire your language, and quite a few draconians have learned it. The draconian sage is the most impressive of all: he can write in Chinese as naturally as in the draconic language."

Fang Yi asked, "What language do the draconians use?"

The draconian wrote two logograms on the ground which looked to be some analogue of cuneiform.

"What does it mean?"

"Hero!" the draconian responded with a smile.

Fang Yi peered at a particular section of the report.

"The black spirits live in a black desert, one shrouded by night all year round. No living lifeforms can be detected in the vicinity, and the only light comes from pale slivers of moonlight from high above. In that case, how do the black spirits manage to... live?"

The draconian shrugged. "That's a question we've always had. No one understands the biology of these black spirits, and many even suspect that they're not true living beings."

Fang Yi recalled how the black spirits had dissolved into black smoke as they died.

"If they're not alive, what are they?"

The draconian shrugged again. "Who knows?"

Fang Yi continued to read through the report the draconian had passed him.

Within the black desert appeared countless spirits, which were different from the black spirits. These spirits had no consciousness of their own and were unable to communicate with living beings. They would attack whatever life they spotted, and when killed, they would turn into piles of black sand.

Their strength was on par with first- and second-level beasts, or, in human terms, regular- and mutated-grade lifeforms. Because of how many such spirits there were, they were quite annoying to deal with.

The king of the black spirits lived in a pyramid, which was particularly dangerous.

A pyramid...? Fang Yi frowned. Surely the black spirits weren't related to ancient Egyptians from Earth?

Chapter 768: The Black Desert

The draconian noticed Fang Yi's frown. "What's the matter, Fang Yi?"

"This report mentions a pyramid. Are these pyramids like the ones in Earth culture?"

The draconian shrugged once more. "I don't know myself. I haven't been to the black spirits' world, and neither do I know these pyramids you refer to."

Fang Yi put away the report. "Regardless, thank you for the information. Do you know how I can find this pyramid?"

The draconian replied, "The sage knew you would ask this question! He said to follow the moonlight."

Fang Yi frowned. "Follow the moonlight?"

Fang Yi quickly understood what the sage meant. There was no day in the world of black spirits, only eternal night. The moon hovered in the air as though it were fixed in place, and was therefore the best marker with which to locate himself.

Fang Yi wondered, "Just how is it that your sage knows where this pyramid is located despite being on bad terms with the black spirits?"

The draconian smiled. "The sage has been alive for far longer than you or me, and he knows secrets that have been lost to time. All the neighboring races have wondered about the black spirits, and they've managed to piece together some information about their mysterious world."

Fang Yi turned and looked toward the distance. "Do you happen to know how the others are doing?"

The draconian replied, "There's no need to worry about your teammates. They're all very strong, and they've all managed to dispatch their respective enemies. They're also heading toward their targets' worlds at the moment."

Fang Yi smiled, reassured. "In that case, it's past time that I set off, too."

The draconian frowned. "You won't rest, Fang Yi? It looked like you exerted yourself quite a bit just now."

"There's no need. I won't let them leave me behind." Fang Yi passed through the wormhole and entered the black spirits' world.

As the draconians' report had indicated, he found himself in a black desert. The night sky was starless; the only illumination came from the moon hanging high up in the sky.

The three thousand worlds seemed to obey no scientific principles—each world had its own astronomical quirks. It was possible to look up and see the night sky in some worlds, but the star charts that were produced from different worlds never agreed with each other.

In the past, there were scholars who had tried to look deeper into this mystery. Some guessed that the three thousand worlds belonged to separate galaxies, or that they were all microscopic regions within an entirely new universe, but anyone who had ascended toward space, hoping to uncover the truth behind the three thousand worlds, had never returned.

In the end, no one dared to pursue this mystery further.

Fang Yi grabbed a handful of sand from the ground—even the specks of sand were black. Purplish-black flames lit up in front of him. They gave off no warmth. In fact, they made him feel even colder than before, as though he were slowly melding into the endless night, as though he were traipsing into the abyss. Each flame was as tall as a human.

As the draconian sage's report stated, Fang Yi was attacked immediately as he entered the desert.

With a low shout, Fang Yi shot forward. Hurling by wind and storm, he launched his spear with incredible force. Fang Yi's spear sent wind howling and lightning flashing through the skies.

He thrust his spear forward once more, so quickly it left dozens of afterimages in all directions. The spirits burst apart. They were indeed the level of regular- or mutated-grade lifeforms, but there were so many of them that it would be impossible to kill them all.

Fang Yi took to the sky, trying to avoid the spirits' attacks—but unexpectedly, the spirits floated up with him.

"It looks like I have no choice, then. [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. The dragon of winds stirred up an entire cloud of black sand and turned into a black dragon. The storm tiger lit up the entire desert with lightning.

The two beasts tore apart the spirits and made a path forward. Fang Yi ran into the distance, his steps buffeted by wind and crackling with lightning.

According to the draconian sage, he was supposed to follow the moon.

Suddenly, however, the sands in the desert began to shift like the tide. Before Fang Yi appeared a gigantic vortex. Considering he was in the air, Fang Yi didn't expect to be affected. Suddenly, however, an insect emerged from the center of the vortex. It looked like a mix between a scarab and a centipede, with a chitinous exoskeleton giving off golden light. It had two sharp claws, and it seemed particularly ferocious.

The golden scarab opened its mandibles and tried to swallow Fang Yi whole.

Fang Yi snorted. He thrust the spear in his hand, wreathed in wind and lightning, into the scarab's mouth. A bystander might have thought this to be a suicidal act, but Fang Yi's strike caused the scarab to keen in agony.

Lightning danced on the scarab's exoskeleton as Fang Yi pierced its body whole. The spear flew out of the other end of its body, and the will of the world's voice rang out in his mind.

[You successfully killed a peak-grade golden sand scarab and obtained its soulshard. By consuming the flesh of the peak-grade golden sand scarab, you may receive one to ten peak gene fragments.]

Is it a peak-grade lifeform, then? Fang Yi had heard that kings of the realm were able to tame peak- or even disaster-grade lifeforms, but he hadn't expected to encounter such lifeforms so quickly.

Fortunately for him, he was lucky enough to have a soulshard drop.

While he was drinking with Zhang Lie, he heard Zhang Lie bemoan the lack of soulshards since entering the third realm.

Fang Yi felt similarly: the rate at which soulshards were dropping seemed to be far lower than before. He and the rest of Team Zenith had had to kill a whole bunch of genetic lifeforms in order to amass gene fragments, but not a single soulshard had dropped.

Therefore, Fang Yi was quite surprised to have obtained a soulshard on his first kill here.

He thought that killing the peak-grade golden sand scarab would be the end of things, but it was just the beginning. All around Fang Yi, within the pitch-black desert, countless vortices emerged. It seemed as though all the sand in the desert were gathering around Fang Yi as one scarab after another rushed toward him.

"[Shadow and Light]!" At that very moment, Fang Yi morphed into countless clones, each of which moved independently through the battlefield. As wind and lightning exploded in the air, the scarabs were sent flying.

Nevertheless, they clung on to life stubbornly. Even when their heads were blown off, they refused to die. Even if they were cut in half, a new head would spring out of one end of their bodies, as though they were earthworms.

Wind howled and lightning flashed through the skies. The purple lightning lit up the black desert, and the wind blew black sand into the sky. The combination of wind and lightning generated a frightening force that seemed to be able to penetrate space.

Buffeted by the wind, the particles of black sand gained fearsome penetrating power, and they shot through the scarabs' exoskeletons like bullets, producing an opening through which lightning could spear through their bodies, destroying their cells and vitality, finally killing the peak-grade sand scarabs...

#### Chapter 769: The Mysterious Pyramid

[You successfully killed a peak-grade golden sand scarab. By consuming the flesh of the peak-grade golden sand scarab, you may receive one to ten peak gene fragments.]

[You successfully killed a peak-grade golden sand scarab. By consuming the flesh of the peak-grade golden sand scarab, you may receive one to ten peak gene fragments.]

[You successfully killed a peak-grade golden sand scarab. By consuming the flesh of the peak-grade golden sand scarab, you may receive one to ten peak gene fragments.]

The will of the world's voice continuously rang out in Fang Yi's mind.

Fang Yi continued waving around his spear until the last sand scarab was finally destroyed, at which point he dropped down onto the sand, his hands on his knees, as he panted for breath.

"Our captain's trials truly are quite something..." Fang Yi wiped at the sweat on his lower jaw, then took a long swig of water from his extra-dimensional storage.

After a short rest, Fang Yi continued onwards. Despite the fact that he had moved on as quickly as he could, a huge swarm of spirits was waiting for him.

"These troublesome pests!" Fang Yi waved his spear, charged with wind and lightning, and activated his movement technique [Floating Clouds]. He darted from spirit to spirit, a trail crackling and blowing behind him.

The spirits were annihilated instantly as Fang Yi tore a path from among them. He moved so quickly that the spirits weren't able to catch up or react.

A sandstorm appeared before Fang Yi. The air moved so quickly that the particles of sand scraped over his face like a razor. The moonlight was covered up as clouds of black sand appeared all around him, with a twister of sand approaching from the horizon. The scale of the storm was so massive that it looked as though he would be swallowed up.

"A sandstorm?!" Fang Yi turned around, but no matter where he looked, the sand seemed to head in his direction. Despite the fact that he was moving at full speed, the sand seemed to draw closer and closer.

Fang Yi had no choice but to try to dispel the storm by force, then.

"[Heaven's Judgment]! [Tiger's Howl, Dragon's Bellow]!" Wind and storm combined and crackled at the tip of Fang Yi's spear, and a dragon's howl echoed resoundingly in the air. The lightning shot toward the heart of the storm, while the winds served as a barrier to deflect it.

Large quantities of black sand surrounded Fang Yi and wore away at his shield of winds.

Fang Yi leveled his spear. Wind and lightning surged forth. That combination generated a frightening force that seemed to be able to penetrate space.

"[Floating Clouds]!" The wind and lightning formed a loop around Fang Yi's body. With a low shout, Fang Yi charged into the midst of the storm, trusting in his technique to defend him from the worst of the onslaught.

Lightning splintered through the skies as the black sand burned in the overwhelming heat generated by the lightning.

Fang Yi's wind clashed against the twister time and again. When Fang Yi infused more and more genetic energy into his winds, it won out against the desert twister. He bore an opening through the walls of sand the twister erected, then charged out through that opening while the ring of elemental energy provided by [Floating Clouds] exploded behind him. The explosion granted him a much-needed boost of momentum, increasing Fang Yi's speed and penetration ability and allowing him to break through the second barrier of sand.

For a split second, Fang Yi seemed to see a pyramid at the center of the storm, but he hardly had the resources or presence of mind to look back and examine what he had seen more closely. He ran off at full speed to avoid being sucked back into the storm.

He ran through the air for what felt like an eternity before he stopped and gasped for breath.

Zhang Lie's trial truly was difficult. Fang Yi hoped the other members of Team Zenith were doing fine.

It took a few interminable hours before he finally saw a grand pitch-black pyramid appearing over the horizon. As he had suspected, this pyramid was constructed in much the same manner as pyramids on Earth.

The difference was that it was made out of some gold-like substance rather than stone. Its exterior were smooth, and Fang Yi didn't see even a single crack or hole in it. At the top of the pitch-black pyramid was engraved a curious eye, one which seemed to be... glowing?

A purple light shot out from the eye straight toward Fang Yi, who hurriedly evaded the beam using [Floating Clouds].

Where the purple beam struck the earth beside him rose a wall of black sand. The superheated air was scorching; the black sand had vitrified.

From Zhang Lie's manipulation of the sand with lightning, he estimated that the melting point of the black sand was two or three times higher than that of normal sand. In other words, the purple beam produced so much heat that the sand had reached a temperature of over 5,000 degrees Celsius.

Fang Yi wiped at the sweat beading on his forehead. Fortunately, he had dodged the attack, or he would have received serious injuries from just a scratch by the beam. Despite having maxed out his

peak gene fragments, Fang Yi would instantly turn into roast meat if he were struck head-on by the beam—hardly a fitting end for a hunter like him.

"Such laser beams have to have a recharge period and downtime to dissipate the excess heat. There's no way that it can be used in quick succession..."

This downtime was the best opportunity for him to destroy that weapon.

With an obsidian spear in his hand, with wind and lightning surrounding him, Fang Yi prepared to make his move. Just before he struck, however, the eye atop the pyramid shot out another beam of purple light.

The light shone as brightly as the sun, tinting the desert sand purple. The entire desert lit up for one splendid moment. Fortunately, Fang Yi was able to evade once more with the help of [Floating Clouds].

The beam struck a nearby sand dune, which turned into glass and burst apart. The superheated air, carried by the desert wind, struck Fang Yi and left him open-mouthed. Was this the level of technology in the third realm? There was barely any downtime at all! It lasted only a few seconds, which was far too little time for Fang Yi to get closer to the pyramid.

The purple beam of light that Fang Yi had seen looked so much like a laser that he was certain the attack was technological in origin. Common sense had misled Fang Yi.

While he was thinking, another beam of purple light shot out of the tip of the pyramid.

He might be able to avoid these beams with [Floating Clouds] at the moment, but the closer he got, the more difficult such a process would become. Just one direct hit could end Fang Yi for good.

"This is truly annoying! [Born of Lightning, Swallowed by the Wind]!" As Fang Yi shouted, his spear traced a half-moon in the air, surrounded by an aura of time.

The spear pierced space abruptly, spawning a rift that turned its surroundings gray. All movement was locked in time. The wind, the laser beam—everything was halted in this grayscale world.

However, keeping everything in stasis would be a tremendous toll on Fang Yi, and he was still quite some distance away from the pyramid. Despite his speed, he certainly wouldn't be able to make it to the top of the pyramid while maintaining this stasis, but as a spearmaster, Fang Yi hardly had a need to do so. He cocked his spear, imbued it with the power of wind and lightning, and threw it like a javelin...

#### Chapter 770: A Difficult Foe

Fang Yi's spear arced through the air like a meteor before stabbing into the black eye at the top of the pyramid. Fang Yi deactivated the frozen world of gray, and the eye continued shooting out its purple laser—but a peak-grade armament-type soulshard was now embedded in its opening.

The laser exploded, causing a purple explosion at the top of the pyramid.

Fang Yi smiled as the pyramid began to flash with red light, as though some alert had begun to sound. Black smoke poured out of the pyramid and rose into the sky. Fang Yi recognized this smoke as the same smoke that had emerged from the corpses of the black spirits.

A large flock of black spirits emerged from the smoke, and purple flames lit up all around the desert. Tens of thousands of black spirits appeared in the air and surrounded Fang Yi, as though they were a huge battalion of soldiers tasked with killing him.

Fang Yi raised his arm up high. The peak-grade spear which he had thrown was now summoned back into his palm. He imbued his spear with the power of wind and lightning. Then, with a low shout, Fang Yi dashed forward with his spear in hand,

Fang Yi launched his spear, crackling with wind and lightning, with incredible force. It sent wind howling and lightning flashing through the skies. Fang Yi thrust his spear forward, so quickly it left dozens of afterimages in all directions.

Black bandages filled the air as Fang Yi's surroundings flared with light.

Gusts of black sand filled the air. Lightning crackled at the center of the black spirits, but when the smoke and sand cleared, Fang Yi was nowhere to be seen. A figure darted among the ranks of black spirits, generating wind and lightning where he went.

Huge swathes of black spirits were pierced through by lightning, causing them to dissipate into black smoke.

"[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. The dragon of winds stirred up an entire cloud of black sand and turned into a black dragon. The storm tiger lit up the entire desert with lightning.

The two beasts tore apart the spirits and made a path forward. Fang Yi ran into the distance, killing his way toward the black pyramid.

Another change occurred as Fang Yi grew closer to the pyramid. Red light shone from its base, like a protective cordon that connected straight into abyssal depths. Huge black bandages emerged from beyond the red light and shot into the skies as though they were feelers of the black pyramid. The bandages deflected Fang Yi's attacks and shot toward him.

"[Heaven's Judgment]!" Wind howled and lightning flashed through the skies. The purple lightning lit up the black desert, and the wind blew black sand into the sky. The combination of wind and lightning generated a frightening force that seemed to be able to penetrate space.

Fang Yi tore a hole in the bandages that shielded the pyramid even as the bandages slammed against the ground, generating huge waves of sand that shook the entire desert.

Swathes of black spirits, unfortunate enough to be caught up in the attack, were smashed into the sand; the pyramid's attacks didn't distinguish between allies and enemies.

The remaining bandages struck at Fang Yi, who evaded the attacks with [Floating Clouds]. Using the flat side of the bandages as platforms, Fang Yi continuously jumped, dashed, ran, and kicked off the bandages, slicing them apart even as he dodged their attacks.

The black bandages corkscrewed toward Fang Yi, who dove between the gaps in the pyramid's attack with [Floating Clouds], simultaneously changing his direction abruptly in mid-air and striking at the attacking bandages to deflect their blows.

Lightning sparked around him as the corkscrewing bandages drew close.

Fang Yi continued to spin in the air as the nearby bandages gathered together and formed a huge corkscrew, which shot straight at Fang Yi.

"[Floating Clouds]!" Fang Yi morphed into lightning for mere moments, and the wind swelled around him.

The black corkscrew's attack barely missed Fang Yi's true body and struck at his afterimages.

Fang Yi had constructed mirrors of wind, which reflected light from his lightning to generate false illusions of himself, a technique he had developed after his fight with Zhang Lie.

During that fight, Zhang Lie had made use of illusions to great effect, and Fang Yi swore that he wouldn't fall prey to such tricks again. As a result, he worked hard on developing this extension to his footwork technique in order to understand the basis behind what Zhang Lie had done, and then to emulate it with the tools available to him. That would grant him comprehensive knowledge of such techniques, which he would be able to use against Zhang Lie in the future.

With this technique, Fang Yi shot even closer to the black pyramid. He thrust forward with his spear, generating sparks as it struck the surface of the pyramid. All Fang Yi's spear managed to do was leave a faint scratch on its surface, causing him to frown. He stepped on the smooth outer wall of the pyramid, wind and lightning gathering by his feet.

Fang Yi dashed up the pyramid. The exterior of the pyramid was hard and sturdy, and Fang Yi's spear was unable to do much damage against it.

However, there was a crack in that exterior: at the very top of the pyramid, where the eye-laser had been. Fang Yi's attack had left a gaping hole from which he could enter.

The black bandages naturally tried to stop him, but they were unable to do so. No matter how they attacked, Fang Yi was able to evade with [Floating Clouds]. Just as he was about to reach the apex, the sand in the desert began to shift. Black sand gathered near the base of the pyramid, forming a gigantic whirlpool.

Sand suddenly burst out of the tip of the pyramid, and a gigantic lifeform emerged from its midst. It was a peak-grade sand scarab—no, from the aura it gave off, it had to be no less than disaster-grade!

The disaster-grade scarab was over ten times the size of the peak-grade variety, with eight beady eyes that gave off light in the night. All eight were staring straight at Fang Yi. The scarab scuttled quickly up the exterior of the pyramid. Even though it had just been at the base moments ago, it caught up to Fang Yi in a flash...