

U. Warlord 771

Chapter 771: Disaster-Grade Guards

Upon sensing the frightening presence behind him, Fang Yi forced himself to remain calm. He kicked backwards with his right leg.

"[Wind's Spirit]!" His leg, crackling with lightning, landed directly on the disaster-grade sand scarab's head with such force that it caved in, its crystalline exoskeleton cracking.

Simultaneously, Fang Yi used the momentum from that kick to launch himself forward like a bullet, treating the sand scarab like a springboard off of which he launched toward the top of the pyramid.

Just as he was about to reach its apex, another disaster-grade sand scarab pounced on him. Fang Yi opened his eyes wide—there was another such scarab?!

The scarab swallowed up Fang Yi whole before he could react.

"[Heaven's Judgment]! [Tiger's Howl, Dragon's Bellow]!" A shout and a thunderous impact could be heard from within the disaster-grade lifeform's body, and the power of wind and lightning erupted from its exoskeleton.

A spear formed from wind and lightning pierced the scarab's body, and Fang Yi emerged from that hole. Wind and storm combined and crackled at the tip of Fang Yi's spear, and a dragon's howl echoed resoundingly in the air.

Half the scarab's body was ravaged by the elemental energies. After emerging from the scarab's body, Fang Yi continued heading straight for the apex of the pyramid.

Waiting for Fang Yi was a gigantic hand made out of the black cloth unraveled from the black spirits' bodies, as well as yet another disaster-grade scarab.

The scarab sprayed out a burst of black sand and leapt toward Fang Yi, while the black hands descended toward him.

Fang Yi, unable to react in time, was sent flying by the two attacks. He marshaled the wind and landed firmly on the desert floor, skidding to a halt and leaving long furrows across the sand.

Black sand rose up in a wave around him. The sand that the sand scarab had sprayed at him had no small amount of venom, which was already starting to corrode Fang Yi's body.

Fang Yi scoured his body with lightning, cleansing whatever motes of black sand remained on his body. Fortunately for Fang Yi, he had a remarkable constitution bolstered by limit fragments. Anyone else inflicted by such poison would have collapsed already.

Fang Yi saw two disaster-grade scarabs scurrying around the side of the pyramid, defending it from all intruders. It looked as though he wouldn't be able to make it inside without getting rid of the two scarabs—and if he didn't make it inside, he couldn't find the king of the black spirits and kill him.

The two scarabs opened their maws and shot out black sand like pillars of water.

Fang Yi leapt high into the air and avoided the attack. Black cloth suddenly emerged out of thin air above his head, blocking Fang Yi's retreat.

"[Shadow and Light]!" At that very moment, Fang Yi morphed into countless clones, each of which moved independently through the desert and broke free of the trap by brute force.

His next opponents were the two disaster-grade sand scarabs, both of whom had activated their disaster-grade domains.

The black sand within that domain began to froth, as though each particle of sand had become a miniaturized bullet. The stacked domains were far stronger than each would individually be; the only reason Fang Yi was able to survive at all was because of his constitution. A superior-grade lifeform would have been devoured whole by the black sand.

The two sand scarabs advanced, sandwiching Fang Yi from left and right. Fang Yi knocked one scarab to the ground and sent the other one flying; the scarabs that had come from left and right were now up and down.

As black cloth shot toward Fang Yi, he rotated his body in mid-air and avoided the attack. His spear glowed with energy. The wind around him spun him faster and faster. Lightning gathered by the tip of his spear, sending sparks flying as the spear scraped against the scarabs' exoskeletons and left long scratches on their crystalline exterior.

"[Floating Clouds]!" The wind and lightning formed a loop around Fang Yi's body. He shot out of the entrapment, again heading straight toward the apex of the pyramid.

He pierced through the black cloth with the charged tip of his spear, but just moments later, the two disaster-grade scarabs had caught up. They were right about to spit out black sand at Fang Yi when he used another technique.

"[Born of Lightning, Swallowed by the Wind]!" Temporal energy surged toward the tip of his spear. The spear pierced space abruptly, spawning a rift that turned its surroundings gray. All movement was locked in time.

The wind, the black cloth, the scarabs—everything had frozen. The massing black spirits were completely still, as were the two disaster-grade scarabs. The only color in the space came from Fang Yi and his crackling spear.

As his spear revolved and the grayscale world returned to normal, the two scarabs' heads exploded, and their crystalline bodies slumped to the ground.

"[Wheel of Time]!" A wheel of light appeared behind Fang Yi, taking on the form of a clock.

Fang Yi thrust his spear forward so quickly it left dozens of afterimages in all directions, knocking aside the black cloth that threatened to swarm him.

The two sand scarabs, who had somehow survived, circled around Fang Yi and gradually closed in on him like a trap about to spring.

"[Heaven's Judgment]! [Tiger's Howl, Dragon's Bellow]!" Fang Yi attacked the two scarabs before it could happen. Wind and lightning shout out from his spear, striking the two scarabs and causing their bodies to shake and vibrate. With a huge, resonant crack, the two scarabs' bodies split apart in a huge explosion.

Even so, the shocking vitality the scarabs possessed meant that they could still fight. In addition, the remnant parts of their bodies shook and trembled. A head and tail grew out of each part; the two sand scarabs had split into countless smaller scarabs, each of which were stronger than an ordinary peak-grade lifeform.

They were small only in comparison to their disaster-grade "parents", but larger compared to an ordinary peak-grade lifeform. They scurried through the sand, accompanied by endless strips of black cloth from the air.

Fang Yi launched his spear, crackling with wind and lightning, with incredible force. It sent wind howling and lightning flashing through the skies. He thrust his spear forward so quickly it left dozens of afterimages in all directions, knocking aside the black cloth that threatened to swarm him.

As he fought, more and more wheels of time began to stack behind his back. The two disaster-grade scarabs shot out streams of black sand toward Fang Yi, and the black cloth again blocked off any means of escape.

The smaller sand scarabs drew close and emulated their disaster-grade counterparts.

Faced with such a formation, Fang Yi had no opportunity to slowly stack more and more wheels of time.

"Everything's aligned now!" Fang Yi had been moving in such a manner so as to align the black pyramid and the two sand scarabs in a straight line.

Wind and lightning surged around his spear in quantities far larger than seemed possible. Fang Yi combined that energy with temporal energy, causing the light around his spear to flash a dazzling array of colors, blue and black and purple, as though he had broken open a wormhole right in front of him.

Fang Yi grinned.

"[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.

The wheels of time he had steadily amassed to date were necessary to help defray the cost of maintaining and moving in the frozen world.

Wind and storm combined and crackled at the tip of Fang Yi's spear, condensing as they circled around the tip of Fang Yi's spear and sucking in the nearby space, turning it to putty. 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...

Chapter 772: A Bitter Fight

Fang Yi 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 his technique as wind and storm circled 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.

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

Fang Yi's spear, thrumming with the power of elements and time, was a weapon of legends. Formless lightning flashed over its surface, 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.

Fang Yi combined the power of space and time, wind and lightning, and focused them all on the tip of his spear in an unstable equilibrium.

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.

The two scarabs closed in on Fang Yi as a dragon's howl echoed through the air. Wind and lightning poured out of Fang Yi, striking the two scarabs and causing their bodies to shake and vibrate.

With a huge, resonant crack, the two scarabs' bodies split apart in a huge explosion. Even so, the shocking vitality the scarabs possessed meant that they could still fight.

In addition, the remnant parts of their bodies shook and trembled. A head and tail grew out of each part; the two sand scarabs had split into countless smaller scarabs, each of which were stronger than an ordinary peak-grade lifeform.

They were small only in comparison to their disaster-grade "parents", but larger compared to an ordinary peak-grade lifeform. They scurried through the sand, accompanied by endless strips of black cloth from the air.

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

It sent wind howling and lightning flashing through the skies. He thrust his spear forward so quickly it left dozens of afterimages in all directions, knocking aside the black cloth that threatened to swarm him.

More and more wheels of time began to stack behind his back.

Fang Yi got into position, retreating backwards and prompting the scarabs to give chase.

The two disaster-grade scarabs shot out streams of black sand toward Fang Yi, and the black cloth again blocked off any means of escape.

Faced with such a formation, Fang Yi had no opportunity to slowly stack more and more wheels of time.

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Chapter 773: A Worthy Victory

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

Among these, spatial rifts and void lightning 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.

But if he didn't take this risk, how would he be fit to party up with someone like Zhang Lie?

The wheels of time to Fang Yi's back began to fade. This monstrous technique required a commensurate cost, one far larger than Fang Yi had to pay when he used this technique in the past.

His peak-grade spear began to crack, and even his own body was giving out. He bled out of all his orifices, the bones in his arms began to creak, and green veins appeared on his forehead. All his strength was barely enough to control the motion of the spear.

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 six combined energies formed a cyclone around Fang Yi and his spear. Fang Yi tried to condense the energies further with his willpower, but he found himself unable to do so at all. The already unstable construction began to spiral out of control. Fang Yi's skin began to bleed. His capillaries burst, and blood gushed out of tears in his skin.

All Fang Yi could do was howl as he released the frightening medley of energy.

Fang Yi had never once imagined that his spear could feel so heavy. This wasn't the first time he had used this technique, but he had never tried to combine so much energy before. Just tossing out the spear drained all the energy from his body.

As Fang Yi loosed the spear, it shot toward the apex of the pyramid like a cyclone on the move.

The frozen world of gray splintered in an instant.

A tsunami or a volcanic eruption would be nothing more than a minor inconvenience compared to this apocalyptic blow. The explosion from Fang Yi's condensation of unstable energies destroyed everything in its path; nothing could stop the attack.

The two scarabs were annihilated, and half the black sand in the desert seemed to vaporize. Even the hidden layers of the scarabs' bodies, deep within the sand, were forcibly revealed by the attack.

The cyclone's eye was like a black hole, devouring and absorbing everything in sight, including the scarabs' centipede-like bodies.

Fang Yi was shocked by what was revealed. The disaster-grade scarabs, whose bodies were segmented like centipedes, each segment of which could become an independent scarab if detached, were uprooted in their entirety.

Their bodies were incredibly long—stretching thousands of meters deep, like some manner of weed hidden beneath the desert.

Fang Yi was very relieved that he had such a trump card. If he were to continue fighting with the disaster-grade scarabs as he had been doing, he would surely have exhausted all of his stamina without any success.

Fang Yi's cyclone spun and spun, pulling more and more of the disaster-grade scarabs' bodies out of the sand, like a tape measure retracting tape.

The attack was so forceful and fast that the scarabs were unable to react in time, and couldn't muster any resistance against the attack.

Only then did Fang Yi realize that his foe hadn't been two such scarabs, but just one: the two scarabs' centipede-like bodies, much of which had been hidden beneath the sand, were actually connected.

Fang Yi's attack was so sudden that the scarabs couldn't even voluntarily cut off the afflicted parts of their body to save themselves.

The cyclone distorted space and time along its path. The black bandages tried to form a wall to halt its advance, but to no avail. The cyclone struck the pyramid with overwhelming force.

Finally, the aftermath of Fang Yi's attack made itself known. In the process of charging up the technique, Fang Yi had generated huge amounts of energy all around him. 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 exploded all around Fang Yi.

Flurries of black sand rose into the air, and the entire black spirit world was shaken by the eruption. The black spirits that were starting to gather around Fang Yi were all sent flying; the resulting aftershock from the technique wiped away everything in sight.

The peak-grade spear in Fang Yi's hands disintegrated, and he knelt down on the floor panting, his entire body drained and bereft of vital energy.

He raised his head and looked forward. There was a gaping hole in the desert where black sand had once been located. Huge quantities of black spirits were sent flying by the aftermath of the technique, and the disaster-grade sand scarabs had finally been killed. Left behind on the black sand was a sparkling disaster-grade core.

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

The pyramid didn't fare much better. The frightening combination attack had pierced through its impenetrable shell, and the pyramid was now missing over three quarters of its infrastructure. A gaping hole was visible through its exterior, giving a glimpse into the buildings within.

Fang Yi could see that within the black pyramid was something akin to a labyrinth, with countless corridors and dangerous traps—but there was no sign of the king of the realm purported to live here.

"Hold on. Where's the king of the black spirits?"

Not only that, there didn't seem to be a single living lifeform within the pyramid, or even a black spirit.

"What's going on?" Fang Yi murmured to himself. Was there something wrong with the draconians' information?

Fang Yi's heart began to palpitate, and cold sweat peppered his forehead. The black sand around Fang Yi suddenly began to move. Three whirlpools appeared in three different parts of the pyramid, and three smaller pyramids appeared from the centers of those whirlpools...

Chapter 774: The Strongest Black Spirit

What were these whirlpools doing here? While Fang Yi attempted to understand the strange phenomenon, fumes of black smoke began to emerge from the gigantic pyramid, and black bandages from its base.

Fang Yi's eyes grew wide. "What? Hasn't the pyramid been destroyed...?"

How could there be smoke coming out of the base of the pyramid? Hold on—the base! Fang Yi glanced toward the pyramid's base. Upon thinking back to the empty interior, he smiled grimly. "So that's it."

He tried to stand up again, but he was still suffering from a bout of weakness from unleashing his ultimate technique. The sand beneath his feet began to shift. The three smaller pyramids seemed as though they were monsters devouring the black sand all around them.

As the sand drained away toward them, Fang Yi found the sand beneath his feet give way. "Is this the end for me?"

Black bandages covered up the moon in the sky. The black bandages approached from above, and the three pyramids from all around him. Fang Yi, whose body stubbornly refused to move, found himself in dire straits.

He winced. "It's a pity that I wasn't able to finish Zhang Lie's trial. He'll be disappointed, I suppose..."

As the black bandages shot down toward Zhang Lie, an eagle's cry pierced the skies. Golden claws tore the black cloth to shreds as an eagle swooped down toward Fang Yi, grabbed him, and rose again into the skies.

Only when they escaped the bandages did Fang Yi discover that the figure that had grabbed him was a golden eagle, whose feathers were like starlight. As he stretched his wings, golden radiance lit up the entire night sky.

"You are..." Fang Yi thought that this golden eagle looked particularly familiar.

"Zhang Lie had me come," the golden eagle replied.

Zhang Lie!

The golden eagle was none other than Xing Ying. Xing Ying continued, "Zhang Lie knew how difficult this trial would be for all of you considering that you've only just ascended, so he specially assigned us warlords from the Milky Way to follow you from behind. After all, you're all his precious followers."

Fang Yi blinked. "Us warlords?"

Xing Ying clarified, "The other warlords are tailing the rest of the hunters in Team Zenith."

Beneath them, the smaller pyramids began to revolve rapidly. Black sand gathered where they stood, forming miniature cyclones which tore through the desert. The cyclones were strong enough to cause a shift in the air currents, and even Xing Ying was affected.

Fang Yi glanced down at the revolving pyramids. "As expected, the storms I encountered were caused by those pyramids."

"The pyramids are basically mobile warships the black spirits can deploy at will."

"What?"

Xing Ying didn't explain. Instead, he commented, "You're really unlucky, aren't you? The black spirits are by far the strongest race among those around the draconian world."

More black cloth emerged from the base of the pyramid and struck at Xing Ying and Fang Yi. Despite the sandstorm and turbulent conditions, Xing Ying easily flew out of reach while chatting with Fang Yi.

Fang Yi had a complicated expression on his face as he watched Xing Ying dodge the attacks with ease. Was this the strength of a mid-rank warlord, a warlord from one of the four prime races?

Xing Ying continued amiably, "I have to admit that your combat strength is truly extraordinary. For you to be able to destroy the pyramid to such an extent—the black spirit king must have been truly annoyed with you to summon the three mobile pyramids to attack you."

"No, no, you overpraise me. Compared to you, I've hardly managed to do anything."

"There's no need to be so modest—even if I were to attack the pyramid myself, there's no way I'd be able to wreak such damage. It looks like there are really strong hunters besides Zhang Lie and Sun Mengmeng among the humans."

Although quite a few warlords had taken note of Team Zenith's performance during the Void Cup, not every warlord had the time or interest in doing so. To the warlords of the third realm, rookies of the first realm were nothing impressive.

If the third-realm hunters were like adults, then second-realm hunters were teenagers, and the first-realm hunters just little rascals. No matter how outstanding one such rascal was, none of the third-realm warlords would pay them any mind.

The only reason they knew of Team Zenith was via Zhang Lie; all they knew was that he had a group of outstanding subordinates. Before that, no one in the third realm paid any attention to the members of Team Zenith, nor the unharvested potential they represented.

After all, the members of Team Zenith were all humans. The proud warlords didn't want to admit that there were members of other alien races more talented than they were—and of course, the chief reason why the members of Team Zenith had been neglected was because they were always being compared to someone far more radiant: Zhang Lie.

Fang Yi laughed. "Everyone in Team Zenith is exceptionally strong. You'll see what I mean once you face them for yourself."

Xing Ying nodded. "I'll take your word for it. Do you have any insight regarding the black spirit king?"

"You mean the king of the realm?"

Fang Yi's gaze turned to the black pyramid, his eyes sharp as spears. "Yes, I do."

Xing Ying warned him, "The mission that Zhang Lie gave me was to protect your life, but I won't step in in a fight between you and the king. That's still your responsibility, and the most I'll do is take care of the trash out here. Are you alright with that?"

"It's far more than enough. Thank you."

"In that case, let's set off." Xing Ying flapped his wings and flew toward the apex of the pyramid in a beam of light.

Black cloth shot straight toward Xing Ying, but he was always able to dodge and fly between the small openings left behind in each attack. As Xing Ying flew past attack after attack, the black cloth resorted to defense instead, firmly covering up the entirety of the black pyramid.

Golden light tore through the black cloth and charged into the pyramid proper. Xing Ying shouted, "Go!"

He tossed Fang Yi forward. As he fell, Fang Yi took a long swig of restorative, then retrieved a spear—an armament-type soulshard conveniently dropped by a peak-grade sand scarab. The tip of the spear was sharp and honed to a fine edge.

As he fell, the restorative swiftly began to heal his wounded arm and body.

"[Heaven's Judgment: Stormwind Explosion]!" The combination of wind and lightning generated a frightening force that seemed to be able to penetrate space.

The momentum that Xing Ying had given him during his toss allowed Fang Yi to launch down toward the pyramid like a meteor.

With his spear before him, Fang Yi broke through countless walls as he shot into the interior of the pyramid. Within moments, he had arrived at the base layer of the pyramid. Its black foundation prevented him from going further; the tip of Fang Yi's spear began to spark...

Chapter 775: King of the Black Spirits

"Break!" Fang Yi howled, facing the base of the pyramid. He furiously poured genetic energy into his spear. Wind and lightning circled around him.

The black ground of the pyramid began to crack, and Fang Yi's genetic energy seeped into the crevices.

The wheels of time to his back flared with light. There were five of them in all; with his fivefold speedup, Fang Yi quickly turned the black ground red with heat. The cracks propagated, as more and more genetic energy emanated from Fang Yi.

Wind and lightning gathered around the tip of his spear, seemingly turning his entire body into a drill. Another wheel of time emerged from his back, and Fang Yi's attack speed grew even faster.

"[Floating Clouds]!" The wind and lightning formed a loop around Fang Yi's body.

"Break!" Fang Yi howled again. The loop of energy dissolved into fragments, boosting his next few attacks and successfully allowing him to break through the ground, which gave way to his rampage.

As he had expected, there was a huge, cavernous space underneath the black pyramid. If the ground were transparent, an inverted pyramid would have been visible directly underneath the exposed pyramid—these "pyramids" weren't actually pyramids, but rather octahedra.

Fang Yi's spear broke through countless walls, traps, and black spirits. He dashed straight toward the center of the inverted pyramid, where the black spirits were gathered densely.

This was where they were all hiding!

Black bandages stretched out from the black spirits' bodies as they tried to stop Fang Yi. However, Fang Yi's body was crackling with wind and lightning, which formed an inverted cone around his head and body, as though he really were the tip of a drill. He shot forward with such momentum that none of the black spirits' attacks could touch him, let alone stall him.

The moment Fang Yi entered the inverted pyramid, he could sense a strong presence much like a snake coiled up and waiting to strike, deep below him.

Just sensing the presence alone was enough to make his back drip with sweat. He was certain that the king of the black spirits was located deep within the inverted pyramid.

Wheel after wheel appeared behind Fang Yi's back. In almost no time at all, he had stacked ten such wheels. With his aura perception, Fang Yi was more or less able to identify where in the pyramid the king of the black spirits was located.

He was heading straight for the apex of the inverted pyramid, directly antipodal to where the purple laser-eye had been situated.

The wheels of time behind him continued to stack more and more as the wind and lightning around him spun faster and faster. No matter how sturdy the walls of the pyramid were, no matter how dangerous the traps they contained, nothing was able to stop Fang Yi's advance.

As he neared the bottom of the pyramid, however, he found a force opposing him. The wind-and-lightning drill encountered an object of such superlative hardness that it was unable to penetrate it immediately.

That had to be where the king was located!

"[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 and burst through the final wall.

A startling amount of black smoke drained out of the hole that Fang Yi had created, but he was protected by the winds around him.

Fang Yi's aura cleared a path, blocking the smoke from approaching his body.

On the opposite side of the wall was a tomb, with a coffin at its very center. The frightening presence that Fang Yi had sensed came from the coffin.

Fang Yi's attack shot straight toward the coffin and drilled a hole in it. The tip of Fang Yi's spear crackled, and the resulting wind and lightning tore the coffin to pieces.

However, even the wind couldn't penetrate the body within: a mummy with its hands crossed over its chest.

In truth, the black spirits were basically mummies as well, but the mummy in the coffin was wrapped up tightly in the black cloth bandages, whereas the black spirits that were so prevalent outside were wrapped only loosely and haphazardly, with parts of their strange bodies exposed.

The mummy within the coffin was wrapped up so tightly and elegantly that it almost seemed like a piece of art. It held an ankh in its crossed hands, one fashioned in an unusual manner. The loop of the ankh was an inlaid eye, one much like what Fang Yi had seen at the apex of the pyramid.

This eye was golden, and it was so detailed Fang Yi could have believed that it came from a real person.

Fang Yi's technique struck the mummy's face, which was covered by a mask. Though Fang Yi's technique had easily been able to penetrate everything else in the pyramid, the mask held firm against it.

Even when Fang Yi increased the intensity of his attack, the mask stubbornly refused to break.

It was almost as though Fang Yi's attack was going against the heart of the entire world, which was adamantly protecting the mummy from harm—or rather, the mask that it wore. Was this the proof of kingship?

Fang Yi recalled what Zhang Lie had mentioned. The proof of kingship was protected by the world from material damage. It could only be destroyed if the entire world was destroyed first.

The mask was that proof!

Suddenly, the mummy woke up and opened its eyes. The eyes had no sclera; they were pitch-black, almost as though Fang Yi was looking into the abyss.

Black smoke poured out from the mummy. The ankh's eye lit up in purple as a beam of light shot into the sky out of the pyramid along the hole from which Fang Yi had burst through.

From the outside, Xing Ying could see a purple beam of light coming from within the pyramid and illuminating the entirety of the night sky. Fang Yi sucked in a breath. Fortunately, he had encountered such a laser before when trying to enter the pyramid.

The moment he saw the mummy's ankh flash purple, he subconsciously noticed that something was amiss and moved instinctively to avoid the attack.

Two basins lit up with ghostly blue fire, providing enough light that Fang Yi could clearly see the interior of the tomb. On the floor and the ceiling were hieroglyphs with unknown meaning, while murals were carved onto the four walls.

The mummy who wore the proof of kingship as a mask was clearly the king of the black spirits.

"Who dares disturb my sleep?!" the king of the black spirits roared. Black bandages appeared all around him like tentacles.

Despite the mummy's overwhelming presence, Fang Yi was unruffled. He launched his spear, crackling with wind and lightning, with incredible force. It left dozens of afterimages in all directions, knocking aside the black cloth that threatened to swarm him.

Neither party relented. More wheels of time flashed from Fang Yi's back, and purple beams of light shot out from the king's ankh.

Fang Yi evaded with [Floating Clouds]. Simultaneously, he charged his spear with wind and lightning, so bright it made the entire tomb shine as though it were day...

Chapter 776: The Undying Spirit

"[Heaven's Judgment: Stormgod Explosion]!" The roar of thunder resounded within the tomb as a god of lightning materialized from behind Fang Yi and pummeled the mummy with its fists.

The king of the black spirits didn't meet Fang Yi's attack with one of his own. Instead, he immediately recalled all the bandages and, using them as a spring, launched himself through the air, up the hole that Fang Yi had made, and out of the pyramid.

"I won't let you flee!" Fang Yi shouted as he gave chase, retracing his steps and flying out of the hole.

Another purple beam shot down from above, launched by the king of the black spirits.

Fang Yi evaded with [Floating Clouds]. The spear in his hands tore apart the foundations of the pyramid around him as he carved out a space for himself to dodge the attack.

The king of the black spirits, meanwhile, successfully made it out of the pyramid. He floated in the air, his arms spread, as if summoning something. Within the inverted pyramid, all the spirits transformed into black bandages that shot toward their king.

The king gathered all those bandages, coiling them around and around each other, forming a sphere that looked like some form of egg.

Xing Ying, supervising Fang Yi from the air, widened his eyes. "This won't be good..."

He shot through the air, his claws glinting with light. He tried to slice apart the black sphere, but the three small pyramids shifted and blocked him from attacking.

The black sphere slowly unraveled, turning into a black giant. It bent down and plucked off the top of the black pyramid to use as a weapon, roaring as a sandstorm formed around him.

Rather than being wrapped up in bandages, it was made up of one: a giant of cloth that was stitched together to form a muscular figure. The king of the black spirits was embedded within the giant's chest.

Xing Ying sighed. "Good luck, lad..."

When Fang Yi emerged from the inverted pyramid, he was shocked to see the giant standing above him. The giant slammed a palm down on Fang Yi, who hurriedly dodged with [Floating Clouds].

The giant's palm struck the cracked pyramid, sending rubble flying all over.

Fang Yi emerged from the smoke, his spear charged with wind and lightning.

"[Shadow and Light]!" At that very moment, Fang Yi morphed into countless clones, each of which moved independently through the battlefield, bolstered by the wheels of time to their back.

Each clone instantly thrust forward with their spear hundreds of times. The strikes looked like illusions, but they all manifested in reality. Thousands of spears criss-crossed in mid-air, striking the giant and spawning countless wheels of time to the clones' backs.

In the blink of an eye, each clone had twenty such wheels strengthening their attacks, but the giant's muscles, formed from black cloth, were stronger than the thickest armor. Even repeated attacks from the clones' spears were unable to hurt the giant.

The giant swept forward with his arm, dissipating the clones with nothing but brute force. Its strength was frightful; strong gusts of wind followed its every move. It tore a hole in the sandstorm raging across the battlefield.

Fang Yi appeared behind the giant's head, the black spear in his hand sparking with lightning. The giant opened its mouth, revealing a purple glow as he charged up a beam attack.

Fang Yi's eyes lit up. That attack came from the ankh's eye—the ankh was in the giant's mouth!

"[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. Light and shadow flashed by its tip, just like the wind and lightning that made up the core of Fang Yi's techniques.

Temporal energy surged toward the tip of his spear.

The spear pierced space abruptly, spawning a rift that turned its surroundings gray. All movement was locked in time. Everything froze and turned gray: the wind, the black sand, the giant, and even the beam of purple light coalescing around the giant's mouth.

The only color in the space came from Fang Yi and his crackling spear.

"Let's give you a taste of your own medicine!" Fang Yi tossed out the spear in his hand straight toward the giant's mouth.

The frozen world of gray cracked. Time began flowing anew, and the giant's mouth brimmed with purple light. Fang Yi's spear wasn't sufficient to destroy the ankh.

Moments before the giant was about to release its beam attack, Fang Yi leapt toward him, somersaulted in mid-air, charged his leg with wind and lightning, and kicked at the haft of the spear, propelling it forward deeper into the giant's mouth and piercing the ankh located there. Purple light exploded, and the resulting explosion sent Fang Yi flying into the distance.

Xing Ying, hovering in the air, smoothly caught him. Fang Yi summoned his spear back into his hand.

Xing Ying murmured, "The king of the black spirits doesn't seem to be dead just yet."

The explosion of the purple light had knocked the giant's head off, but the giant wasn't the king himself.

The king's head was located at the giant's chest. Although the explosion was impressively large, causing the giant's neck and even chest to cave in, the king of the black spirits was largely unhurt.

"He's truly a pest to kill!" Fang Yi complained.

"It looks like you'll have to keep fighting," Xing Ying replied, flapping his wings to get closer.

"I'll use my final trump card, then." Fang Yi leapt forward. The wheel of time expanded behind him as he charged up to the giant with his spear.

The headless giant punched at the spear, blocking it but unable to send Fang Yi flying. The two attacks were at an impasse when Fang Yi's wheel of time suddenly flared with light.

"[Wheel of Time: Break]!" With a howl from Fang Yi, the wheel of time behind him broke in a shower of light.

Next to Fang Yi appeared a shadow of himself, one which suddenly merged with Fang Yi's body and gave him a tremendous boost to his strength. The wind and lightning circling the spear doubled in intensity.

As the next wheel of time broke, even more light flared from Fang Yi's back. A second shadow appeared, merged with Fang Yi, and boosted his strength, followed by a third, a fourth, a fifth, a sixth...

Chapter 777: The Mummified King

As more and more wheels of time behind Fang Yi broke, more ephemeral shadows appeared and boosted his strength to so intense a degree that even Xing Ying could feel his aura from afar.

The sandstorm had been completely dissipated by Fang Yi's wind. Xing Ying jumped up in shock as Fang Yi suddenly grew stronger and stronger in his vision.

This was Fang Yi's final trump card, and it was founded on the basis that time could be stacked additively.

Fang Yi had identified this idea from the reference materials that he had read through and used it as the basis for his time-related techniques. Time stacked; it didn't pass or fade away. Like age, time was cumulative—a person grew one year older every year.

Because he was able to sense this stacking of time from two different worlds, Fang Yi had intuited a technique that could take advantage of this feature of time. His wheels of time didn't prolong time or reduce the rate at which it flowed, but rather stored time and released it over a prolonged period.

This stored time was kept in the wheel to his back. When these wheels of time were destroyed and the stored time was released, the equivalent of a bug was produced. It was as if two separate programs called Fang Yi were simultaneously running, and both Fang Yi's actions would manifest in the real world, directly doubling his power.

Fang Yi's trump card was built off this bug. A single thrust from him would be doubled in strength, but that wasn't where the crux of this technique lay. Even more astoundingly, when the second wheel of time broke, Fang Yi's strength would be doubled once again—the first wheel doubled his strength, and the second wheel doubled it once more, a fourfold increase in all.

This was why Xing Ying was so shocked.

As a third-realm warlord from one of the four prime races, Xing Ying was learned and cosmopolitan. Anything that could shock him had to be truly extraordinary—like the twenty wheels of time that Fang Yi had just broken. It hadn't raised his power by twenty times, but rather doubled it twenty times over—a million-fold increase.

Xing Ying was gobsmacked.

The incredible power that Fang Yi's wind and lightning gave off was difficult to imagine.

Fang Yi's first trump card, combining six disparate energies, was an evolution in the quality of his attack, whereas his second trump card, breaking the wheels of time, was an evolution in the quantity of energy his attack involved.

A million-fold increase in his strength was far beyond the limit of strength Fang Yi was otherwise able to produce.

Even Xing Ying was sent flying within moments, and the sandstorm was quelled instantly. The three smaller pyramids were forcibly sealed. The black giant before Fang Yi was struck with the bulk of all that energy, instantly evaporating its arm. Its defense was a joke compared to Fang Yi's strength now.

Energy overwhelmed the giant and destroyed his surroundings. Even the will of the world was unable to survive unscathed.

The entire world seemed to shake, and a crack appeared on the black spirit king's mask.

Simultaneously, cracks propagated through the sea and sky. Sand poured into those cracks, and Xing Ying, watching all this from afar, murmured to himself, "There's another monster like Zhang Lie among the humans..."

While observing Fang Yi's fight, Xing Ying had become convinced of Fang Yi's strength.

To him, Fang Yi was a genius among the hunters of the Milky Way, but one still rather far removed from a walking miracle like Zhang Lie.

Even upon seeing Fang Yi use his trump card, Xing Ying's perspective didn't change. He thought he was even erring on the side of overvaluing the members of Team Zenith, but it was now clear that he was completely mistaken.

With the strength that Fang Yi was giving off now, Xing Ying had to admit that Fang Yi was equally as monstrous as Zhang Lie.

The black sand evaporated off the desert, leaving behind magmatic ground.

Steam rose into the air, not just around the black pyramid, but around almost a third of the black spirit world, even thousands of miles away.

The black pyramid was completely destroyed. Lava poured into the inverted pyramid. All that was left of the black giant was a half-cracked mask that fell from the sky, along with Fang Yi himself. Xing Ying hurriedly caught Fang Yi, who thanked the warlord.

Just as with Fang Yi's other trump card, the strength of this technique was proportional to its cost. Fang Yi had essentially done the equivalent of casting his technique twenty times in quick succession, draining all of his stamina in one go. He didn't even have the strength to raise his hand.

Xing Ying marveled, "You're truly an impressive fellow."

He squinted toward the ground. "But... it looks like the black spirit king still isn't dead."

Fang Yi also glanced downward, where he saw a pile of black rags beneath the mask, struggling amidst the lava.

How had the black spirit king survived such a devastating blow? The proof of kingship was sturdy enough to block a significant fraction of Fang Yi's attack, so that the king was able to survive with the barest modicum of health. However, he seemed to be on the verge of dissipating entirely, far weaker than he had once been just moments ago.

"Please, I don't want to move even a finger!" Fang Yi called out to Xing Ying.

Xing Yin replied, "You should know that Zhang Lie forbade me from interfering directly, don't you?"

"I really can't move. Won't you just kill the king and take the proof of kingship?"

Xing Ying narrowed his eyes. "Fine, but you'll owe me a favor!"

"This is too easy a task to warrant a favor, surely?"

Xing Ying ignored Fang Yi's protests. He swooped down and clawed at the bundle of rags, then killed it with his stellar genetic energy.

A rain of blood fell from the night sky as the world howled in pain. The king of the black spirit had finally been killed..

Chapter 778: The Cautious Yang Ze

Compared to Fang Yi, the other members of Team Zenith were having a far easier time.

Yang Ze was lazing atop a wall on the draconian world, eating an exotic fruit that was a specialty of the world. He sighed in satisfaction. "It's really sweet!"

Beneath the wall, a few bear-men were brawling against a horde of sharks.

This was the first time that Yang Ze had encountered bear-men. They were even more ferocious and intimidating than bears. Most of the bear-men were over three meters tall, with sharp canines and claws that were half a meter long, blood-red and glinting with cold light. They fought standing on their hind legs.

There were a few tens of thousands of bear-men beneath the wall, facing off against a horde of over a thousand sharks.

The bear-men grinned with malice as they charged forward, expecting that their numerical advantage would allow them to easily overwhelm the sharks. After all, they had ten times the number.

Almost immediately after the battle started, the bear-men found that they were mistaken, terribly so. No matter how many sharks they killed, more would appear out of the mists. The shark horde seemed to be completely endless.

The bear-men had nearly inexhaustible stamina and numbers, but only nearly so.

The guards patrolling the walls had never seen a battle play out like this before. All they had to do was stand guard like dummies while a horde of sharks fought off the bear-men by their feet. The bear-men began to die in droves as the sharks appeared in larger and larger numbers.

These sharks were all the work of one man, who was leisurely lounging on the wall and snacking on some fruits.

Except to repel some of the bear-men during their initial assault, Yang Ze had done nothing but sit back and relax throughout the battle. He watched the bear-men perish while fighting off an endless horde of sharks with interest.

He didn't think he could ever understand battle-crazed fellows like Fang Yi—this was how a battle should go. How relaxing it was to obtain a victory without doing anything! In order to alleviate his boredom, Yang Ze would control his sharks and play around with the bear-men from time to time.

There were initially tens of thousands of bear-men, but they had been whittled down to just a few hardy veterans fighting against impossible odds.

Yang Ze was surrounded by crystalline lotus flowers. He continued spectating the battle from up high, as though he were in control of the entire battle.

As the bearman continued to die, the champion of the bearman found warning bells ringing in his head. Although the bearman were beastkin, with above-average constitution and below-average smarts, it was clear that something was fishy with this battle. The hordes of sharks before them were completely unkillable!

The bearman champion regretted that he had come to this understanding far too late, only after most of his kin had been sacrificed to this pointless battle. No matter how unintelligent he was, it would be difficult not to realize that the man controlling the sharks was the one eating fruits and smiling at them from high above the wall.

The human's smile was mocking, as though he were watching a group of animals put on a show.

The bearman champion knew that, if he were to allow the shark hordes to continue decimating his kin, they would all perish here. For the sake of his race, he had to charge forward now.

With an angry roar, he leapt up into the air, swiping his claws and killing two sharks instantly. As long as he could take down this human, the others would be no match for the seasoned bearman warriors—and it would be the bearman who would be slaughtered then.

"This is the bearman champion?" Yang Ze continued to relax, with no intention of moving from his seat at all. He scrutinized the incoming bearman champion.

The bearman champion was larger by half than the other bearman, and he was over five meters tall. He leapt up toward the wall from fifty meters away—and, astonishingly, successfully ascended the wall.

"He's strong, I'll give him that. Pity about his brain, though..." Yang Ze snapped his fingers with a bored flick. The lotus flowers around him shot forward and exploded around the bearman champion.

As the genetic energy exploded, the bearman champion fell to the ground, his body devastated by the explosion and shredded into pieces.

"Is he really that weak as to fall prey to such an explosion?" Yang Ze sneered. "This couldn't even be considered a warm-up."

The bearman were astounded by how easily their champion had fallen.

"No stronger than an ordinary peak-grade lifeform," Yang Ze commented. With a wave of his hand, more and more crystal lotuses flew out onto the battlefield, like a battalion of soldiers waiting for Yang Ze's order.

While Yang Ze was snacking on fruit, he had been manifesting these lotus flowers with his genetic energy. However, they had been hidden behind the draconian wall, where the bearman were unable to see them.

Within the mist that saturated the battlefield, the crystalline flowers exploded one after another, reaping a harvest of blood with each explosion. Not a single bearman survived.

The guards atop the wall were agape, shocked by how easily Yang Ze had ended the battle, as though all the skirmishes they had had with the bearman in the past were just a lie.

Hundreds of crystalline lotus flowers surrounded Yang Ze. He looked onward at the wormhole before him and chose not to head in just yet.

"I suppose I'll stockpile a few more flowers first."

After all, he was about to face a king of the realm, and he had never fought against one such before. It would be better to be safe than sorry.

"In that case, I'll go for a thousand—no, ten thousand flowers." Yang Ze made this decision after glancing at the pile of bearmen bodies littering the ground.

Quite some time later, his hands in his pockets, ten thousand crystalline lotus flowers behind him, Yang Ze sauntered into the wormhole into the bearmen world. He found himself in a forest without end.

"How should I find the king?"

At any rate, the first step was to identify the closest town or village to see if there were any news about the king. Yang Ze expected that finding the king of the realm would be difficult, but he quickly came across a village or small town fenced by logs of gigantic wood.

"I thought it would be harder..." It did make sense that, since the draconians had erected a wall on their side of the wormhole, that the bearmen would have a corresponding wall as well.

The draconians and bearmen were on rather neutral terms, and would trade with each other from time to time. However, there were also frequent altercations between members of the two species, leading to the creation of a defensive perimeter on either side of the wormhole.

The difference was that the draconians had erected their wall on a plain, whereas the bearmen made theirs out of gigantic logs within a forest.

The bearmen were specialized for fighting in forested areas, and the fact that a forest had grown up around the entrance to the wormhole on the bearmen world was a key part of their defenses.

Yang Ze's appearance caused a few bearmen guards to poke their heads out from above the wall.

"Who are you, and what are you doing here?"

Chapter 779: The King of the Bearmen

The bearman warriors had only gone through the wormhole less than a day ago. Considering their experience with the draconians, the bearman warriors should be within the draconian world by now. How, then, had humans passed through the wormhole and into the bearmen world?

Yang Ze countered, "Where's the king of the realm?"

The bearmen stilled before thundering back, "I'm the one questioning you! Where are our warriors?"

"Getting information out of you all isn't that easy, is it... To be honest, I'd prefer not to resort to violence. If it were Zhang Lie, well, I suppose he'd 'politely' greet you all. I guess I'll emulate him..."

Yang Ze unsheathed his blade as water-attuned genetic energy burst forth from him. He activated [Mirrored Refraction]. Waves lapped from his longsword, and a great white shark appeared behind him.

Realizing that Yang Ze was about to attack, the bearman yelled, "Sound the alarms! Enemy assault!"

However, they were too late.

"[The Boundless Blade: Shark Frenzy]!" Waves splashed as Yang Ze swung his sword, a gigantic shark by his back. As Yang Ze infused genetic energy into the technique, the shark materialized into reality, swimming forward as he launched his attack.

The wooden palisade that the bearman had constructed, that had stood for as long as the forest had been around, fell to the attack. The shark tore a hole in the wood, sending chips of wood flying all over.

All the bearman present had grown used to the palisade, and it gave them a sense of reassurance whenever they looked at it. That day, however, an enemy had easily torn a hole in the wooden pillars, sparking instant panic among the bearman.

Yang Ze shook his head. "How poor the quality of this wood is! Could you all have neglected the upkeep of the fence after not fighting the draconians for too long?"

The bearman defense was far too shoddy compared to that of their draconian counterpart. If Yang Ze had attacked the draconian wall in the same fashion, he might have been able to drill a hole through at most, rather than an entire stretch of the palisade—a space large enough that he and any of his forces could easily attack the defenseless interior of the bearman village.

This was the difference between the draconian and the bearman defense.

The bearman's ineptitude was evident from their panic at having their defenses breached. If such a situation had happened to the draconians, they would immediately rally and counterattack instead. This difference derived from combat experience. The draconians continuously warred against the Mengtai, and they had trained an elite force of soldiers.

Yang Ze leisurely walked forward as his surroundings filled with white mist. The mist spread through the forest. Shark hordes appeared among the trees and swam past the defensive border.

As the bearman mustered, they were quickly taken down by the fierce, prowling sharks, giving the white mists a faint tint of pink and dyeing the ground red.

Yang Ze bore the bearman no mercy: either they died, or he would. Showing kindness to an enemy was akin to treating himself cruelly. His gaze sharp, he strode into the village. He observed the bearman corpses calmly—if the bearman hadn't fallen, the humans and draconians would have.

The bearman had been the invaders, and they had no one to blame but themselves for being counter-invaded by humans.

The one-sided slaughter quickly ended.

The king of the bearman, sensing Yang Ze's arrival and invasion, retaliated. A cyclone headed straight for Yang Ze, dispersing the white fog he had put up. Claws sliced Yang Ze's body apart.

Yang Ze looked at the two halves of his body in shock, then slowly dissipated into mist—his 'body' was simply an illusion spawned from [Mirrored Refraction].

Over the past year, Yang Ze's understanding of [Mirrored Refraction] had grown to even greater heights. He was now able to spawn such illusions in a split second, and the illusions were as good as real.

He appeared atop the wooden palisade. "Is the king of the bearman unwilling to face me directly?"

The moment Yang Ze appeared, a claw swiped at Yang Ze's head. This time, however, it remained hovering above its body. It spoke while floating: "I've found you."

To see a decapitated head speaking was a frightening sight. Of course, once he finished speaking, Yang Ze's 'body' slowly vanished once more.

The king of the realm, hidden in the forest, was shocked by his two failed attempts at assassination. He intended on retreating and then finding another location from which to attack Yang Ze, only to notice something to his back.

"King of the bearman, I've found you!"

The bearman grew alarmed. He hadn't noticed Yang Ze appearing behind him at all! He was hidden on a nearby hill, about five hundred meters from the village.

Yang Ze had traced the king's location via his second attack.

The king of the bearman was surprisingly intelligent—or, rather, unusually experienced with these sneak attacks. His long-distance claw swipes, which changed direction with the wind, meant that Yang Ze couldn't be certain of their source. However, even though the king of the bearman could hide the direction from which he attacked, he couldn't hide the energy he gave off.

If Yang Ze couldn't even find a bear hidden in the forest, he could hardly call himself a member of Team Zenith.

The king of the bearman was about to turn back and attack, only to find his surroundings filled with crystalline lotus flowers.

The next moment, the lotus flowers exploded. Water-attuned genetic energy filled the air.

The short-ranged explosion caused no small amount of damage to the king, who had lost a fair bit of his fur. Countless ice crystals, large and small, had pierced his skin and drawn blood. A trickle of blood seeped out of his mouth.

When the king of the bearman turned around, Yang Ze saw him clearly for the first time. The king was hardly as magnificent in stature as the champion of the bearman; instead, he was smaller and thinner than average, only about the height of an average human man. He was roughly of the same size and height as Yang Ze, and his limbs were thinner than those of an average bearman.

Despite his smaller body, his claws were wholly undiminished in size and still half a meter long.

Compared to his bulkier and stronger kin, Yang Ze found the king in front of him a larger threat. His eyes were as sharp as blades, and it was clear he was more than adept with his claws.

Yang Ze curled his finger, beckoning the king forward as he sent all the crystalline lotus flowers he had deposited in the vicinity floating toward him.

Chapter 780: Ten Thousand Lotus Flowers

The king of the bearman didn't ask how Yang Ze had found him. He simply swiped at Yang Ze, intending to cull the threat before it was too late.

However, Yang Ze was prepared. His body dissipated into mist as the king of the bearman, realizing his attack had failed, swiftly retreated.

"I won't let you go! [The Boundless Blade: Yawning Wave]!" Yang Ze struck again, his sword flashing toward the king like the current along a river.

The king of the bearman swiped again with his claws, but Yang Ze evaded by darting through the trees.

Waves lapped at his feet. In the blink of an eye, he closed in on the king of the bearman and sliced downward with his blade.

The king defended with his claws, causing an explosion as their attacks met. The wind from the attack ruffled Yang Ze's hair. As Yang Ze clenched his fists, water-attuned genetic energy rippled around him.

"[Fists of the Silent Sea]!" Yang Ze invoked his authority over space, which combined with his water-attuned genetic energy and formed circlets around his arms.

The space around him compressed and shook.

A sudden wind blew through the forest, sending the leaves rustling and falling off their branches. The wind gathered by the king of the bearman's claw, which he shot out as daggers.

A fist and a claw struck simultaneously.

Neither man nor bear had any intention of retreating, because they both understood that doing so would be akin to relinquishing control over the tempo of the battle. Who would ultimately win out depended on who could withstand the storm of blows from the other party longer.

Yang Ze's [Fists of the Silent Sea] clashed against the bearman's claws. Those claws pierced Yang Ze's chest as Yang Ze's fists smashed against the bearman's face. The force of the impact burst one of the chieftain's eyeballs, but he smiled grimly.

It was evident that Yang Ze had received a more serious injury. However, the bearman didn't expect that Yang Ze would reveal a similar smile, the smile of victory.

He suddenly noticed that his attack on Yang Ze didn't feel as though he had struck flesh, and there was no trace of blood on his claws.

Yang Ze slashed forward with his blade, causing the chieftain to jump back in shock. However, he was a moment too late, and a thin line scored his chest.

The king of the bearman couldn't help but ask, "Just what did you do?"

Yang Ze touched his chest. "It's a unique technique I developed that combines authority over space and water-attuned genetic energy to shroud me in an isolated space. All attacks toward me will be repelled and refracted."

The bearman seemed to have struck Yang Ze, but his attack had actually missed. Under the effects of [Reflected Sight, Refracted Vision], Yang Ze could attack his enemies, but they would have a far harder time attacking him.

It was as though he were a flower reflected in a mirror, or the moon on the surface of a lake—visible, but untouchable.

Of course, all this was predicated on the fact that Yang Ze's opponent didn't have his own authority over space.

"Is that so?"

Although the king of the bearman didn't possess any such authority, he was able to command space because of his authority as king of the realm. Imbuing his claws with that command easily allowed him to rip Yang Ze's defense apart, but that was within Yang Ze's expectation.

After all, he was in the third realm. All hunters and existences who had made it this far had a unique skill or quality of their own, and they wouldn't be so easily defeated. Unlike in the second realm, where just possessing authority over space was a remarkable, all-encompassing talent, such talent was rare but hardly unheard of within the third realm.

"If you're able to command such authority, you must be one of the humans' so-called warlords," the king of the bearman called out. Wind howled as it gathered around him.

Yang Ze replied, "No, I'm just a nameless fighter!"

The bearman scoffed, refusing to believe Yang Ze. "No nameless fighter could wound me. Do you truly think I believe the human race is that strong?"

"It's not that we're strong, but rather that you're weak!" Yang Ze called back.

The bearman bared his incisors in rage. "Insolence! Nameless fighter or warlord, the only fate awaiting you today is death!"

Yang Ze continued taunting, "What, you're already angry? Surely I couldn't have gotten a rise out of you so easily!"

The bearman swiped with his claws, morphing into a cyclone. His attacks, imbued with the power of space, tore apart Yang Ze and the nearby trees.

Yang Ze burst into fog as the king of the bearman frowned. Yang Ze's voice came from all around the forest, its source unable to be traced. Light from [Mirrored Refraction] shot through the air.

"Don't get so upset, king of the bearman. Don't you want to know what I'm doing here, and how I made it here in the first place? Aren't you curious how the bearman who are invading human and draconian lands are doing?"

The king of the bearman sniffed, and his eyes brightened. His claws shot toward Yang Ze's precise location, leaving Yang Ze with no choice but to block the attacks with his blade. "To think the bearman had such an acute sense of smell..."

The king of the bearman, shrouded in wind, rushed forward again.

Yang Ze grinned. "Aren't you curious about the fate of your kin, sent to die?"

The king of the bear-men replied, "Naturally, but you're simply trying to divert my attention!"

"[The Boundless Blade: Shark Horde]!" Over a hundred translucent blue sharks shot toward the king of the bear-men as a horde.

Meanwhile, the king swiped forward in a flurry, disintegrating the sharks in an instant.

At the same time, Yang Ze activated [Mirrored Refraction] to hide himself. He appeared far in the distance.

"King of the bear-men, do you know why I wasted so much time talking nonsense to you?"

The king frowned.

"Look around you," Yang Ze advised.

The king did so, and he instantly grew alarmed.

Somehow, all around the forest were crystalline lotus flowers, hovering in mid-air, so numerous that he could see patches of blue dotting his vision no matter where he looked.

However, he knew how dangerous these flowers could be. A hundred flowers exploding had caused him no small amount of damage, and there were thousands in his vicinity...

Yang Ze laughed. "Don't bother counting. There are 9,900 in all, and I snuck in an extra 100 while we were talking to have a nice, even number."

Yang Ze's smile was the most frightening expression the king felt he had ever witnessed. Yang Ze had carried on a conversation in order to focus the king's attention on him, as well as to taunt the king so that he wouldn't escape.

All his planning was for this finale...