

Worth 681

Chapter 681: Fishing?

Oblivious to the fact that war against the Federation had broken out, Wang Baole continued traveling across the sword body. He flew speedily across the lands, passing spatial tears, hexed regions, sudden changes in the landscape, as well as demons and beasts prowling the lands unharmed.

Nothing seemed capable of stopping the traveling mist in its path as it crossed the vastness of the heavens and the earth swiftly!

The traveling mist was so amazing that Wang Baole began to regret the lost opportunity of displaying his majestic figure to the world.

"This is the last attempt at losing weight!" Wang Baole muttered to himself inside the traveling mist. His mind was made up. The first thing he was going to do when he returned to the Federation and became the Federation President was to make a declaration. He was going to redefine fatness as the new standard for beauty!

Everyone will have to fatten themselves up. That's the only way to ensure that Earth progresses. It's the only way to strike fear into all extraterrestrial civilizations' hearts when they see us! The more he thought about it, the more the logic made sense. A huge figure was a strong visual impact, after all.

I mean, when you place a huge mountain of flesh and a bean sprout next to one another, who are people gonna be more afraid of? Wang Baole considered the scenario seriously and concluded that the former would be more terrifying. This strengthened his resolve.

For humankind's survival, for the future of the civilization... and also to pick apart and solve the genetic mystery that caused the premature deaths of my ancestors. There might actually be some incredible secret hiding somewhere in there! Wang Baole allowed his imagination to run wild while he approached the sword handle steadily.

An hour passed. At his current speed, Wang Baole believed that he would be able to leave the sword body in another hour. He began fantasizing about his future again, anticipation growing in his heart as he traveled. Then, suddenly, something caught his attention. The traveling mist stilled in mid-air. It shifted and revealed Wang Baole's surprised face.

I sense Soul Conduit realm divine powers... His head tilted towards the northwest as he gazed into the distance. His eyes didn't manage to see anything amiss. However, since his cultivation had reached the Nascent Soul realm, his spiritual senses had improved exponentially. His senses were hinting that something was going on there.

Wang Baole narrowed his eyes. He thought for a bit, then steered the traveling mist northwest.

Darkness blanketed the region while hexes littered the lands in the northwest. Spatial tears appeared in the sky randomly. In the heavens, a middle-aged woman, face pale and hair loosened and in a mess, was running for her life.

She was seriously injured, and her fleeing at full speed didn't help with her wounds. Blood flowed freely from her lips. Behind her were numerous figures exuding an icy aura and giving chase. They came from all directions, surrounding the woman and leaving her nowhere to escape.

The pursuers weren't Dao Palace cultivators. Their three heads and six arms clearly identified them as Never-Ending Clan members!

The woman... was a familiar face that would be recognized immediately by any cultivator of the Dao Palace. She was... one of the four Grand Supreme Elders of the Vast Expanse Dao Palace, Feng Qiuran!

Zhao Yameng hadn't been the only one who had escaped when Wang Baole had blown up his Thearch Armor in the Never-Ending Clan battleship and disrupted the latter's teleportation interference. Feng Qiuran had escaped as well!

Compared to Zhao Yameng, Feng Qiuran had clearly been identified as an important target by Daoist You Ran. Even though the latter had chosen to go after Wang Baole in a moment of anger, he hadn't forgotten to send Never-Ending Clan members after Feng Qiuran as well.

After his resurrection, Daoist You Ran led Mie Liezi and the Never-Ending Clan battleship off of the ancient sword and towards the Federation. Regardless, his orders to pursue and kill Feng Qiuran had remained.

Feng Qiuran had spent her time in hiding all this while, narrowly escaping death. If she wasn't at the Soul Conduit realm and didn't have a few unique lifesavers up her sleeve, she would have been killed a long time ago.

Nevertheless... Feng Qiuran was now at the end of her rope. Her cultivation had fallen from the Soul Conduit realm to the Nascent Soul realm, and she had once again been discovered. She had no choice but to run. However, the severity of her injuries, the extent of her exhaustion, and the ceaseless, punishing guilt she felt had taken a toll on her. She was a dead cultivator walking.

She had no hope, no future in sight, no possibility of surviving this. Her fate had been determined the moment she stepped onto the battleship.

Is this the end for me... A tragic smile painted Feng Qiuran's lips. She spat out a mouthful of blood, no longer able to control the injuries wrecking her body. They continued to unleash havoc inside her. Her internal organs were bruised and bleeding, her meridians collapsed in multiple places. Life was slowly draining out of her. She felt only despair.

Her vision was a blur as three Never-Ending Clan cultivators flanked her on both sides. Icy glints flickered in their eyes as they charged towards her like arrows released from a bow. Another Never-Ending Clan cultivator behind her did the same, unleashing a sudden burst of speed and rushing straight at her. In front of Feng Qiuran, slightly to her right, another Never-Ending Clan cultivator dashed towards her as well.

There were five of them, some with a cruel twist to their lips, some devoid of all emotion, and some excited. They had old, unhealed injuries and were only at the Nascent Soul realm. But it wasn't impossible for the five of them to take on a grievously injured Feng Qiuran. If they hadn't been worried

about Feng Qiuran unleashing a final lethal attack before her death, they would have killed her some time ago.

They had kept her alive for another reason. Daoist You Ran wanted her captured alive, if possible. Having Feng Qiuran under his control would be akin to having another Soul Conduit realm cultivator under his command. Besides, Feng Qiuran held an important position and status in the Dao Palace. She could help Daoist You Ran strengthen his hold over the Dao Palace.

That was why Feng Qiuran was still alive now. Nevertheless... she was at her wits' end. She was like prey caught in a trap, powerless and hardly a threat at all. The five Never-Ending Clan cultivators finally closed in for the kill!

Thunder rumbled in the skies. A faint, glowing barrier materialized around Feng Qiuran as the five Never-Ending Clan cultivators charged at her, blocking their spells and creating a backlash that drove her enemies back. They didn't suffer many injuries from the backlash. Feng Qiuran, on the other hand, spat out a mouthful of blood as she stumbled and fell to the ground, unable to maintain flight.

The five Never-Ending Clan cultivators rushed at Feng Qiuran instantly. Two of them formed a series of hand seals and barked out a curse.

"Mi Zhen!"

A sudden overpowering force, capable of trapping one's spirit, descended from the sky. The other three Never-Ending Clan cultivators each whipped out a small mirror. The light reflected from the mirrors transformed into a large illusory web. They dashed towards Feng Qiuran and flung the web over her.

Everything happened in the blink of an eye. The five cultivators had coordinated their attacks flawlessly, and in her current state, Feng Qiuran was hardly a match for them. The glowing web fell over her in the next instant and bound her tightly within. Lightning crackled as it surged through the web, causing Feng Qiuran to spit out another mouthful of blood and pass out.

"Let's go!" The five Never-Ending Clan members didn't hesitate. They transformed into five rainbows immediately and dashed off into the distance. They intended to leave this place and report their successful capture.

Just as they were about to depart, however, mist suddenly appeared in the distant sky. It seemed like an ordinary mist at first. Then, it seemed to recognize the five Never-Ending Clan members for who they were. The mist began to shift. It grew in size suddenly, amidst a series of deafening rumbles, and transformed into an enormous face.

It was Wang Baole!

He saw the five Never-Ending Clan members as well as Feng Qiuran, unconscious and caught inside the web of light.

The five Never-Ending Clan members turned their eyes towards Wang Baole as soon as he appeared. An intense light appeared in their eyes. They didn't leave. Instead, they stopped. A smile appeared on one cultivator's face, one tinged with cruelty and scorn. He put Feng Qiuran in his storage bag, then said something to his companions in the Never-Ending Clan's language.

“You lost the bet. I said we didn’t need to hurry to capture Feng Qiuran. If we continued chasing her for a while, it’d definitely draw out some other unlucky soul. Look, see what we managed to fish out.”

Wang Baole’s eyes shone brightly as he hovered in mid-air. He started reciting the sutra in his head before any of the Never-Ending Clan members could reply to their companion. Then, as an immense power descended from the heavens, he said coolly, in the ancient Dark Sect’s tongue.

“Have you ever caught a shark?”

As soon as he said that, the awesome power of the sutra shot down from the skies and flooded the area!

The smoke that formed Wang Baole’s face roared and boiled, then rushed towards the five Never-Ending Clan members with the force of a tsunami!

Chapter 682: A Gigantic, Fearsome Monster!

Wang Baole recited the sutra in his head while saying something completely different out loud and unleashing an attack on his enemies. This was something he had done on numerous occasions. It had become a familiar dance.

The power of the sutra descended from the heavens, striking fear and awe into the hearts of the five Never-Ending Clan cultivators. Their minds went blank. Despite being battle-hardened warriors, they were still shocked by the sudden display of power. Only two of them managed to retreat in time. The other three cultivators had been too slow. In an instant, Wang Baole arrived before them, accompanied by a stormy cloud of mist.

A deafening thunder rose to the skies. The mist exploded, the resultant shock waves forcing blood from the three Never-Ending Clan cultivators’ mouths. The one who had spoken earlier had been caught right in the middle of the explosion. An enormous, fat hand reached out suddenly and grabbed him by his head.

Wang Baole materialized, pressed his palm heavily onto the Never-Ending Clan cultivator’s head, and shoved him landwards like he was dropping a lead ball from extreme heights. Everything happened rapidly. A thunderous boom erupted in the next moment as a huge crater appeared in the ground. It was where Wang Baole had slammed the Never-Ending Clan cultivator!

The cultivator’s pained scream was lost in the loudness of the crash. Alarm flashed across the faces of the other four Never-Ending Clan members hovering in mid-air. Incredulity colored their faces as Wang Baole slowly walked out from the crater.

He was a towering mountain of flesh, fearsome-looking. He hardly resembled a human at all, looking more like a mad, crazed ancient beast. The power he emanated filled the air and struck terror in the hearts of the Never-Ending Clan cultivators.

What made the sight more terrifying... was the countless blood-red meridians dancing in the air around the mountainous lump of flesh like tentacles. They intertwined together and transformed into a

gruesome-looking armor as Wang Baole stepped out from the crater, adding another layer of visual violence to his person. He looked like an enormous, overweight war god!

Dragged along by his right hand was a corpse. All three of its heads had been blown apart, and a trail of blood painted the ground. The sight... sent horror shivering up everyone's spines!

"Which civilization are you from?"

"This land belongs to the Never-Ending Clan. There might have been some misunderstanding here..." The four cultivators eyed the scene and hurried to speak while communicating hastily amongst themselves.

"What is that monster?"

"I've heard of some clan that's called the Giant Civilization or something like that. Everyone in that civilization is born as a lump of flesh that grows bigger in size as they progress in cultivation. They continue growing until they are large enough to devour an entire planet!"

"This guy was just at the Nascent Soul realm earlier before he suddenly displayed a power that rivaled a Soul Conduit realm cultivator. Could he be from the Giant Civilization?" The four Never-Ending Clan members' breathing quickened in their nervousness. The spirit energy that Wang Baole had unleashed, as well as his unbelievably enormous frame, had them terrified beyond measure.

Wang Baole couldn't care less about what they said. He dragged the corpse out, his eyes flashing with an icy glint. Then, with a sudden explosion of speed, he rushed towards the Never-Ending Clan cultivators in mid-air. It was like seeing an enormous meatball rolling towards oneself.

Alarm flashed across his enemies' faces, and they retreated hurriedly. It was then that the sutra's power made a reappearance, descending from the heavens in a soundless explosion. The four cultivators shuddered, their senses stunned and minds dazed. Wang Baole caught up to them, but instead of unleashing a punch, he charged straight into one of the cultivators with his mountain-like form.

Thunderous booms resonated in the air. The power unleashed by both the Thearch Armor and Wang Baole's physical body culminated in a terrifying blow. It was like being hit by a small meteorite. The sound of bones shattering and screams of pain rang out. The cultivator who had suffered Wang Baole's charge head-on failed to withstand the attack. His body blew up instantly, filling the air with blood. His Nascent Soul tried to escape, but it failed to evade Wang Baole's devouring seed and Flame Snatch.

The Nascent Soul struggled, but to no avail, to escape the sudden eruption of an immense suction force. It was dragged over to Wang Baole. The Flame Snatch immediately consumed it like one would eat a snack. Wang Baole burped, licked his lips, then turned towards the remaining three Never-Ending Clan cultivators. They were trembling, their scalps prickling with numbness. They retreated immediately and without hesitation, then they split three-ways and fled into the distance.

Trying to escape? Wang Baole narrowed his eyes. He flung the headless corpse gripped in his right hand outward violently, hitting one of the Never-Ending Clan cultivators running away to his right. His Thearch Armor spasmed and came apart, transforming into crimson meridians that flew out and raced towards another Never-Ending Clan cultivator. They caught up with him immediately. The cultivator roared and

struggled, but it didn't matter. The meridians crawled over and encased him in armor. The Thearch Armor had become his prison.

His screams of fear were silenced instantly. Wang Baole then dashed forward and reappeared in mid-air. He was going after the next Never-Ending Clan cultivator.

His battle capabilities had been reduced from the Soul Conduit realm without his Thearch Armor. Regardless, his strong physical body, his Nascent Soul realm cultivation, and the vast stores of Spirit Qi inside him meant that he was still a lethal force to be reckoned with. He unleashed whatever Spirit Qi he held inside him without holding anything back. The Never-Ending Clan cultivator only managed to hold his own for a few counts in the explosion of all that power. Wang Baole pummeled him with ten Supernova punches and sent him spiraling to the ground, heavily injured and with blood spilling from his lips.

With a wave of his hand, numerous puppets rushed out and trapped the fallen Never-Ending Clan cultivator. To prevent the cultivator's Nascent Soul from escaping, Wang Baole kicked him in his dantian. The kick sent waves of spirit energy into the cultivator, trapping his Nascent Soul.

Everything happened within the blink of an eye. The surviving Never-Ending Clan cultivator, who had escaped towards the right, had reeled back in shock as he witnessed Wang Baole suppress his last two companions with ease. He dodged the corpse that Wang Baole had flung at him and was about to run away at full speed.

It was then that the headless corpse suddenly exploded. Numerous black strands shot out from the explosion of blood and flesh, gathered together, and formed the silhouette of a person. It was Wang Baole's avatar!

The avatar rushed out to stop the cultivator from escaping. Of course, that wasn't its primary objective. It had only one aim, and that was... to exchange places with Wang Baole!

Wang Baole switched places with his avatar instantly. The switch happened too quickly. The final surviving Never-Ending Clan cultivator, heart racing with fear, didn't even have the time to speed up before he was caught by Wang Baole. Screams of terror pierced the air as Wang Baole's vast spirit energy, as well as his sutra's power, crashed down. The Never-Ending Clan cultivator's two heads were smashed instantly. He crashed to the ground and fainted.

Out of five Never-Ending Clan members, two were killed, another two were injured, and the last was sealed within a short period of time!

Anyone who had witnessed the battle would have been shocked beyond measure!

Wang Baole would have been equally proud, but he wasn't in the mood for that now. Feng Qiuran had been hunted relentlessly, and the Never-Ending Clan was running wild. This was not what he had expected.

Maybe Daoist You Ran isn't the only mastermind behind this whole thing? Wang Baole narrowed his eyes. He grabbed the unconscious Never-Ending Clan cultivator and, with a sudden step, reappeared next to the Never-Ending Clan cultivator who had been bound by his puppets.

The Never-Ending Clan cultivator's dantian had suffered serious injuries. His cultivation had been dealt a heavy blow, and his Nascent Soul was trapped and unable to escape. He was also bound tightly by numerous puppets. All he could do was watch as Wang Baole walked over. Venom filled his eyes as he spoke with a hoarse voice.

"I don't care who you are. You've just offended the Never-Ending Clan. You..."

"You talk too much!" Wang Baole said casually. His left hand pressed abruptly onto the head of the talking Never-Ending Clan cultivator, unleashing the soul searching spell. He hadn't been able to wield it effectively in the past, but it had become easier now that he was at the Nascent Soul realm.

The Never-Ending Clan cultivator shuddered violently and released a pained scream. The expression on Wang Baole's face darkened immediately after. A dozen counts later, he suddenly lifted his head, his breathing quickened. He looked incredulous. He turned towards the unconscious Never-Ending Clan cultivator and performed the soul searching spell again.

He still couldn't believe the information he had gotten from his second attempt. He flew over to where his Thearch Armor was and grabbed the Never-Ending Clan cultivator trapped inside the armor. He unleashed the soul searching spell again!

The answer he got from all three attempts was the same!

Daoist You Ran wasn't dead. The Vast Expanse Dao Palace and the Federation... were in the midst of all-out war!

Chapter 683: Return!

On the ancient sword, with skies dark and scarred with spatial tears and lands littered with hexed regions, Wang Baole stood, a dark, stormy expression on his face. He couldn't understand how Daoist You Ran had resurrected from the fatal attack.

Was it an avatar? Wang Baole fell silent as doubt colored his eyes. An icy glint flickered within as waves of cultivation surged out from his person. They were tinged with violence.

There's not much time left... Wang Baole shut his eyes, took a few breaths, then opened them again. Without hesitation, he pulled open the storage bags belonging to the Never-Ending Clan members and found Feng Qiuran, who had been sealed and stored away inside.

Feng Qiuran was unconscious and heavily injured, her vitality and spirit energy entirely spent. The cause of it all wasn't only her injuries but also because she hadn't had any time to heal herself. As a result, her injuries had gotten worse, and her cultivation had fallen to the Nascent Soul realm.

Feng Qiuran had stood on Wang Baole's side and protected him. Her attitude towards the Federation was another reason why Wang Baole had to save her. Despite the anxiety wrecking him at the moment, he forced himself to calm down. He pulled out a bottle and poured out the spirit liquid inside. With a series of hand seals, he directed the spirit liquid into Feng Qiuran's body.

The spirit liquid was no ordinary liquid, and a single bottle produced incredible results. Feng Qiuran's deathly pale complexion gained a rosy blush as she absorbed the liquid. She shuddered and awakened.

Her pupils contracted when she saw Wang Baole. She was finally convinced of Wang Baole's identity after his explanation. She wasn't surprised at Wang Baole's breakthrough to the Nascent Soul realm. Regardless, she was still startled when she noticed the Never-Ending Clan corpses around them.

She could somehow sense the unconventional nature of Wang Baole's breakthrough. However, now wasn't the time to ask for details. They didn't waste any time at all. After a brief exchange of information, they immediately took flight and headed for the Vast Expanse Dao Palace at the sword handle.

The teleportation array formation in the Dao Palace was the only means of leaving the ancient sword. They were aware of the danger they might be walking into when they reappeared on the other side of the array formation, on Mercury. Regardless, they were left with no other option to return to the Federation.

"Baole, the spirit liquid in this bottle is extraordinary. Its richness surpasses anything I've seen, even when the Dao Palace was in its full glory. It is your destiny to have come by such a bottle. Don't waste it on me. Hold on to this. When we return to the Federation, you..." Feng Qiuran managed to control the extent of her injuries with the help of the spirit liquid that Wang Baole had given her earlier. She handed the bottle back to Wang Baole. She knew the state of her injuries, and it was almost impossible for her to recover fully at the moment. The bottle of spirit liquid could only help her maintain her cultivation at the Nascent Soul realm.

The spirit liquid was extremely valuable. It would be of more use to Wang Baole. After all, it was clear from the Never-Ending Clan corpses around them that Wang Baole was currently more powerful than she was.

"Elder Qiuran, how much of this spirit liquid do you need in order for you to restore yourself to the Soul Conduit realm?" Wang Baole didn't reach out for the bottle and instead questioned her as they raced across the sky.

Feng Qiuran froze. Disbelief and hope rose inside her when she heard what Wang Baole had asked. Light brightened her eyes, and her breathing quickened slightly.

"Five bottles... three will do too!"

Without saying anything, Wang Baole lifted his right hand and gave his storage bag a smack. He pulled out six bottles and threw them all over to Feng Qiuran. Every one of those bottles was filled to the brim with spirit liquid. Their sudden appearance filled the surrounding air with a rich Spirit Qi.

"This..." Feng Qiuran stared at the bottles. She could feel the richness of the spirit liquid in them, which sent her reeling back in shock. Incredulous, she raised her right hand and put the bottles away. Then, she gave a solemn-looking Wang Baole an unfathomable look.

"Baole, give me two weeks. I'll..."

"Two weeks is too long! Elder Qiuran, are you able to restore your Soul Conduit realm cultivation within three days?" Wang Baole flipped his right hand over and pulled another two dozen bottles out of the hundreds of bottles in his storage bag. He handed those to Feng Qiuran.

“Yes!” Feng Qiuran’s eyes widened as she gasped. Her eyes shone brightly. She suddenly thought of something after her hasty reply. She lifted her right hand and handed a storage bracelet to Wang Baole.

“This is yours, isn’t it? I’ve been keeping it for you since the battleship left.”

Wang Baole cheered up at the sight of the storage bracelet. It was indeed his. He had left it with his avatar earlier, and it had been lost after his avatar’s destruction. He had stored most of his Dharmic Armaments and treasures inside.

He had been caught in a fierce battle with Daoist You Ran then and had passed out. After that, he had gone through a series of breakthroughs. There hadn’t been any time to mourn the loss of the bracelet then. Wang Baole had intended to search for it after things had settled down, but now, it had returned to him. Wang Baole assessed the inventory after receiving the bracelet, then nodded at Feng Qiuran. Without any delay, they immediately sped into the distance.

They were quite a distance away from the main Vast Expanse Dao Palace island. It should have taken them two weeks to reach the island if they journeyed at a normal pace. However, with Wang Baole’s knowledge of the Immortal Platform, long distances and traveling time were no longer a problem.

He led Feng Qiuran away and quickly found them an Immortal Platform. They melded with the traveling mist and raced towards the main island on the sword handle. Feng Qiuran was no stranger to the Immortal Platform. However, she didn’t have the access rights to activate one, nor the knowledge to operate one. Even during the Dao Palace’s glory days, the Immortal Platform could only be used by personal disciples.

Feng Qiuran had witnessed Wang Baole operating the Immortal Platform with the ease of the experienced, and while she knew he was a true adopted disciple, that didn’t prevent doubts from rising in her mind. She could tell that Wang Baole had achieved a breakthrough in cultivation. He must have come across some unimaginably rare opportunity. It likely involved the Vast Expanse Dao Palace’s patriarchs, who appeared to be in slumber.

Wang Baole was keeping quiet about everything, though. Feng Qiuran had her guesses, but she kept them to herself. She knew that Wang Baole’s only concern now was in returning to the Federation. He was more anxious about this than she was, and he was certainly more anxious about the ongoing war than she was.

If he wasn’t saying anything, then it simply meant that the opportunity he had come across and any information he had acquired were of no use to the war. That was indeed the case. Wang Baole had only just found out that Daoist You Ran still lived. He had wanted to return to the third palace and try to request the patriarchs to come out of their slumber and aid the war effort!

However, he had decided against doing that in the end!

No one could guarantee that anything good would come out of the endeavor. There was a great chance that summoning tigers to drive away wolves... might lead to a backlash. They might themselves be devoured by tigers in the end!

The current Federation lacked both a strong foundation as well as experience as a cultivation civilization. Ideally, they would resolve the current problem themselves and grow stronger with this experience.

Furthermore, should an adverse fate appear insurmountable, Wang Baole would rather choose to rely on his senior brother instead of the Vast Expanse Dao Palace elders, whose loyalties remained uncertain.

The Vast Expanse Dao Palace is an outsider, after all... Wang Baole narrowed his eyes. He remained on guard even against Feng Qiuran. He had hidden his caution very well, though. It remained undiscovered as he and Feng Qiuran raced towards the main Vast Expanse Dao Palace island.

Time passed in a blur. Two days went by!

The environment and weather in the sword handle were a lot less hostile than that in the sword body. The traveling mist's speed picked up considerably. Wang Baole and Feng Qiuran finally arrived at the main Vast Expanse Dao Palace island after two days. By then, Feng Qiuran's cultivation had been mostly restored.

The main island was nearly emptied of people, only a few cultivators remaining on the island. There were only a few Never-Ending Clan members left to stand guard as a precautionary measure. They were no match for Wang Baole and Feng Qiuran at all. The pair immediately unleashed an attack without mercy.

The entire battle took only half an hour. The seven to eight Never-Ending Clan members left on the island were killed. Wang Baole and Feng Qiuran's return remained a secret; no alarm was sounded, and no news was leaked. Wang Baole and Feng Qiuran went to the teleportation array formation. They inspected the array formation, ensured that everything was in order, and activated the teleportation.

Light roared to life and rose to the heavens. The earth rumbled. Wang Baole and Feng Qiuran exchanged a look.

"Elder Qiuran, we should stay together instead of splitting up after we reappear. Follow my lead... we'll fight our way out!"

"Can't we wait another day? I just need one day to fully restore my cultivation. I'm barely at the Soul Conduit realm now." Feng Qiuran was silent for a few moments before she asked Wang Baole.

Wang Baole didn't speak. Instead, he turned towards Feng Qiuran and bowed deeply.

Feng Qiuran looked at Wang Baole. She could sense the weight on his shoulders. She sighed and didn't say a single word, simply activating her cultivation. A Soul Conduit realm cultivation erupted from her person as she stepped into the teleportation array formation.

Wang Baole took a deep breath. Blood red meridians materialized over his body, crackling as they morphed into the crimson Thearch Armor. A towering figure, fearsome and emanating battle lust, reappeared. He took a step into the teleportation array formation.

The teleportation array formation activated instantly. Blinding light roared to the skies as ring-like waves of spirit energy surged outwards. The heavens and earth shook. Winds howled and the clouds boiled. Then, the two of them... vanished!

Chapter 684: Dugu Lin's Decision!

The Federation, Mercury.

Mercury was one of the planets in the Solar System with a very thin atmosphere. As a result, light shone directly on the planet with only a slight degree of deflection and dissipation. Therefore, Mercury's skies weren't as blue as the skies of Earth. It was completely pitch-black, aside from the light from the sun and other stars.

It was akin to a streetlamp in the middle of the night. The lamp itself was a bright, luminous entity, casting a bright light over whichever spot it shone on, but that didn't mean that the sky wasn't still dark.

There had been plenty of artificial lighting on the former Mercury. As the designated location for the construction of the array formation, the Federation had made a series of complex and complicated modifications to the planet. It had an artificial sun and the protection of the Solar System Array Formation. Mercury had gradually developed into a Federation base throughout the years!

Now, however... the former base was nothing but ruins. All artificial lighting, aside from the sun, had been completely destroyed. Remnants of war littered the lands. Deep ravines split the lands in several places, and no Federation cultivator was to be found.

The planet had become the base of the Vast Expanse Dao Palace's military, which was under Daoist You Ran's command!

Anti-Spirit Bombs had been dug out from the ground, and array formations had been set up. Mercury had been swiftly and simply rebuilt. Besides ruins and ravines, its most obvious new additions were gigantic, fleshy lumps.

Each fleshy lump spanned a thousand feet. They resembled tumors growing off Mercury, wriggling and spasming as if there was something inside them struggling to get out. They exuded waves of spirit energy and formed something that resembled a web that was cast over the surface of the planet.

Meanwhile... black hump-like entities surrounded Mercury in space. They were the Vast Expanse Dao Palace's galactic battleships, which were capable of space travel.

They had been stored away after the ancient sword had been sealed, but Daoist You Ran had ordered their activation after declaring war on the Federation.

The battleships clustered together. There were at least a hundred thousand of them. While some of them surrounded Mercury, others formed teams of battleships and sped through space.

Compared to the battleships, what truly shook the stars and struck fear into the hearts of Vast Expanse Dao Palace cultivators was... the great Never-Ending Clan battleship!

The fearsome battleship, which was formed from three gigantic disks, floated in Mercury's skies. In the center of the battleship, where the main sacrificial altar stood, a beam of light spanning tens of thousands of feet was joined to heaven and earth.

Thunderous booms continued to erupt. Mercury trembled as if its energy was being sucked out of it. The Never-Ending Clan battleship, on the other hand, glowed with a radiant light. It seemed to be healing!

The light within the beam shone on the ground, making it so that no one could clearly see what was going on inside. Waves of spirit energy continued to surge outward, flooding the land within a hundred thousand feet in all directions and preventing anyone from trespassing.

The sight of the Never-Ending Clan battleship, the beam of light, and the quaking earth was indeed an oppressive one.

The war had gone on for more than a month, and in that time, the Federation had suffered consecutive losses. For instance, Mercury's complete self-destruction being thwarted. Nevertheless, the preparation and retaliation the Federation had displayed—especially when a portion of their Anti-Spirit Bombs had blown up—had dealt a heavy blow to the Vast Expanse Dao Palace cultivators' confidence. Their attitude towards the Federation had changed significantly.

Of course, some of them had realized that something wasn't right. But... with the powerful Mie Liezi and the fearsome Never-Ending Clan battleship around, those who had such suspicions had either been killed or chosen to remain silent and follow their orders.

Dugu Lin was one of them!

Increasingly more Vast Expanse Dao Palace disciples appeared to accept the reality of war. They appeared to have found some measure of self-worth in fighting the war. They felt pleasure in their growing strength as they killed and pillaged. Besides the terrifying Anti-Spirit Bombs, the Federation cultivators that they had come across were weak and easily defeated!

Arson, rape, and pillaging—everything seemed allowed. The evil and lust that had been hidden deep inside everyone had been awakened. The war that had gone on for more than a month had stirred the flames of evil, which burned increasingly brightly and fiercely.

Daoist You Ran had contributed to the situation as well. His work had been in the details... These details were in the reward system for battle credits and its exchange for treasures. He had opened up the Vast Expanse Dao Palace's stores and put up numerous Never-Ending Clan treasures for exchange. This had created a compelling incentive for Vast Expanse Dao Palace cultivators.

It didn't matter if what they were doing was right or wrong. Someone was giving the orders, which meant that they could push all responsibility to that person as well. Besides, their enemy wasn't one of them. They didn't need to be bothered by their greed. There was no need to spare their enemies' lives.

That was why Daoist You Ran no longer needed to fan the flames of war or deceive his followers at this point. What he needed to focus on was restoring the Never-Ending Clan battleship to its full functionality by making use of all the resources that were spoils of war!

When Wang Baole self-destructed his Thearch Armor, he had created a series of chain reactions. The pool and the enormous passage had been destroyed, and their destruction had severely damaged the battleship. When overpowering the Anti-Spirit Bombs' explosions, a similar thing had happened. As a result, Daoist You Ran hadn't gone after the Federation when it had retreated from Mercury. Instead, he had seized the window of opportunity to repair the battleship.

He had instructed Mie Liezi to handle all other affairs until he could get the battleship restored to a certain extent. Mie Liezi was under his full control, with his own will completely suppressed. He carried out Daoist You Ran's orders unquestionably and perfectly.

The other Never-Ending Clan members, who were disguised as Dao Palace cultivators, had also assumed positions of leadership. They led their teams into the battlefield and successfully got the war going. Mercury hadn't only become the Vast Expanse Dao Palace's base, it had also become the place where the Vast Expanse Dao Palace was gathering its forces to prepare for its next assault on Venus.

While the war efforts were ongoing, on the northwestern side of the base, a dozen or so Dao Palace cultivators sat in meditation outside the teleportation array formation that was connected to the ancient sword.

They were mostly at the Core Formation realm. The exception was a cultivator sitting further away from the rest, suited in black armor. He was at the Nascent Soul realm. They were the cultivators responsible for guarding the teleportation array formation!

The black-armored cultivator had his eyes shut. The rest, on the other hand, sat close to one another, seemingly deep in meditation but actually conversing in hushed voices. Many of them had looks of envy and resentment in their eyes.

"I heard that someone managed to accumulate enough battle credits to exchange for a Soul Formation Pill yesterday!"

"There have been thirty-seven people who have gotten Soul Formation Pills this month. I wonder when our time will come. When will we manage to get enough battle credits to exchange for one as well? I saw Chen Luzi a few days ago. He managed to get his hands on a couple of alchemical cauldrons... from the looks of it, they seem to be of superior grade!"

"Damn it. We're stuck here playing guards all day instead of being out there killing lowly Federation cultivators. There's no way we can accumulate battle credits this way. We can only watch as others continue to progress. The lowly cultivators from the Federation are such easy kills too. It's almost like getting battle credits for free!"

The Dao Palace cultivators conversed softly amongst themselves. They didn't seem bothered that the black-armored cultivator might overhear their conversation. It was as if they wanted him to know their dissatisfaction.

This would have been a rare sight in the former Dao Palace. In the current climate, though, it was a common occurrence.

Their words did indeed fall into the ears of the black-armored cultivator. His shut eyes gradually slid open, and a dark light glimmered within.

If Wang Baole were here right at this moment, he would immediately recognize the black-armored cultivator... It was Mie Liezi's most valued disciple, Dugu Lin!

Dugu Lin could hear his subordinates talking, but he didn't say anything. He knew some part of what was going on around here, but he was powerless to do anything. He had grown quiet and spoken increasingly less during this period. Since he was still technically Mie Liezi's disciple, no one had

questioned his decision to stay away from the front line. He had been able to avoid all trouble and choose, instead, to be assigned the responsibility of guarding the teleportation array formation.

His former subordinates had raised their doubts multiple times. He had also noticed most of them privately killing for battle credits. He knew... that soon, everyone in the Vast Expanse Dao Palace would lose sight of all good and evil. The war would turn them blind towards what was right and wrong, and they would learn to seek only their own self-interests.

Elder Qiuran, have you really fallen? Are the patriarchs of old still around? Will they be able to awaken in time to save the sect? And Wang Baole... is there really no way to change the Vast Expanse Dao Palace's fate of being invaded from the inside? Bitterness filled Dugu Lin's heart. He lowered his head slowly. Then, suddenly, something flashed in his eyes. He turned towards the array formation.

A beam of light appeared inside the array formation. It was faint at first but grew brighter immediately, erupting and transforming into a sea of light that flooded the entire array formation.

Dugu Lin thought he saw something, and his eyes widened with incredulity. His subordinates noticed the commotion inside the teleportation array formation and quickly ran over.

The teleportation array formation hadn't been used at all for the past month, so the Dao Palace cultivators were curious about the incoming arrivals.

It was a challenge for them to discern the identities of the people rapidly materializing in the light, though, because of their lower levels of cultivation. Dugu Lin, on the other hand, widened his eyes then narrowed them immediately. Thoughts seemed to pass through his head. He suddenly shouted.

"Nascent Soul realm elders who stationed themselves at the Dao Palace have arrived. Weren't you all talking about going to the front line to kill Federation cultivators in exchange for battle credits? Quickly, go extend your greetings and find an opportunity to present your request. I will not stop you if they agree to take you with them!"

Temptation shot through the Core Formation realm cultivators. Two of them had more wits and hesitated, falling behind the rest, who had hastened towards the edge of the array formation after hearing what Dugu Lin said. They faced the two figures—one large and one small—materializing rapidly inside the array formation and cupped their fists respectfully.

"Greetings..."

They weren't given the time to finish their greeting. It seemed like they had hardly spoken the first word before a red light suddenly erupted inside the array formation. Crimson meridians shot out like arrows and exploded all around the array formation. Everything happened in the blink of an eye. The Dao Palace cultivators, who had their heads lowered in greeting, had no time to dodge the attack or sound the alarm. The meridians pierced straight through their foreheads!

They didn't even have the luxury to scream. The dozen or so cultivators... died instantly!

The two cultivators who had lagged behind reeled back in shock. They tried to retreat, but it was too late. Dugu Lin's eyes flashed as he unleashed some form of mystic technique. The two cultivators shuddered, then froze. Two red meridians charged out from the teleportation array formation and shot through their foreheads!

Dugu Lin didn't spare a single glance at the corpses around him. Instead, he studied the familiar red meridians that he had fought against and slowly got to his feet. He had pulled out the jade slip that would alert the others with his right hand, his fingers paused between activating the jade slip and just holding on to it. There was an intense light in his eyes. He stared at the two figures who had fully materialized inside the teleportation array formation and said slowly.

"Disciple Dugu Lin greets Elder Wang and Elder Qiuran!"

Chapter 685: Mercury Attacks!

Dugu Lin was an extremely intelligent man. He knew that the Never-Ending Clan currently held the upper hand in the war. Daoist You Ran had exploited the greed inherent in the Dao Palace disciples' nature, and they were now following him almost willingly into war.

The best option for him was to join them and fight for resources in this war that would allow him to build his cultivation.

However, he simply couldn't get himself to cross that final hurdle. It wasn't for the sake of the Federation or the sect, it was for his master. He couldn't do it because of his master. Opinions of his master generally skewed towards the negative. His temperament was inconsistent, and he was vicious. But still... Dugu Lin couldn't forget the care his master had given him, the time and energy he had poured into grooming him, and everything he had done for him.

There was only one way to save his master. Daoist You Ran had to be killed!

That was why Dugu Lin had been severely shaken when he sensed Feng Qiuran appearing in the teleportation array formation. He had hesitated then. He had no idea if Feng Qiuran had become like his master, a puppet. He dared not risk it.

Then, an enormous, fat figure had appeared next to Feng Qiuran. Alongside it had been those familiar red tentacle-like meridians. He had recognized Wang Baole then. That was when Dugu Lin had clenched his jaw and made a decision.

As a precautionary measure, he had first misled the others into approaching the array formation. Then, he had pulled out the jade slip that would sound the alarm. He had spoken calmly, his eyes shining brightly as he watched the two figures—one large and one small—step out slowly from the mist.

Feng Qiuran had a fierce look in her eyes, while Wang Baole's thoughts appeared indiscernible. However, he was flooded with a myriad of emotions. Both of them surveyed the area as soon as they stepped out of the teleportation array formation. After being sure that Dugu Lin was the only person still alive and standing, and that the rest had all been killed, they turned towards Dugu Lin again.

Their eyes stared at the jade slip in his hand!

"Fellow Daoist Dugu Lin, it's been a while." Wang Baole had his Thearch Armor on. Red meridians swayed in the wind around the armor. As he spoke, his helmet shifted away and revealed his face.

Dugu Lin narrowed his eyes as he studied Wang Baole, then Feng Qiuran. Finally, assured that Feng Qiuran's eyes weren't dazed and lost but instead bright and clear, he released a sigh of relief. He immediately spoke.

"The Federation has retreated to Venus. The Never-Ending Clan battleship lacks resources for repair, so it is unable to be deployed for the time being. Daoist You Ran is inside the battleship, guarding it. Based on my observations, he won't be able to split his attention between the battleship and other matters as long as the battleship remains damaged!

"My master, Mie Liezi, is being controlled. However, I've observed him for some time. He has shown signs of losing focus sometimes. It seems that his spirit is not completely destroyed!"

"Your humble disciple is willing to remain here. I will spy on the enemy and provide both Elders with military information. I only request that you... save my master when the time comes! Please leave immediately. The Never-Ending Clan will sweep the area with their spiritual senses every thirty minutes. There's not much time left..." Dugu Lin said urgently. Then, he cupped his fists and bowed towards Wang Baole and Feng Qiuran!

Before Wang Baole or Feng Qiuran could speak, Dugu Lin raised his left hand and hit himself hard on the chest. There was a heavy thud. He shuddered, then spat out a mouthful of blood.

It was a brutal blow. He almost destroyed his own meridians. The injury was so severe that he staggered back and passed out instantly. The jade slip held tightly in his hand was now proof—he had been seriously injured and lost consciousness before he could sound the alarm.

"Elder Qiuran, let's go!" Wang Baole spared the unconscious Dugu Lin a long, unfathomable look before he turned and raced towards the heavens. Beside him, Feng Qiuran hesitated, then said softly.

"There must be many other disciples like Dugu Lin still left in the Dao Palace. We could expose the truth and activate all Dao Palace cultivators. This might be more effective than escaping to the Federation."

"If there are really cultivators who seek the truth in the Dao Palace, do you think they're really so stupid that they haven't found the answer for themselves yet?" Wang Baole said softly, an icy glint flickering in his eyes.

Feng Qiuran opened her mouth, ready to retort. Wang Baole shook his head.

"Elder Qiuran, I read this autobiography once. There was a line inside that went something like this: 'once the gates of greed are opened, they can never be shut again!'" Wang Baole flew out and raced towards the skies as he spoke, his speed picking up.

Feng Qiuran fell silent. She looked around her, a torrent of emotions flashing across her eyes. Then, she sighed softly and went after Wang Baole. They transformed into twin rainbows that dashed into the dark heavens!

They were fast. Regardless, Mercury was now the Never-Ending Clan's base. No matter how high their level of cultivation and how swift they were, they couldn't avoid eventual discovery. They hadn't even breached Mercury's array formation before Daoist You Ran, meditating in the Never-Ending Clan battleship, discovered their presence.

Inside the battleship, the third level, which had been destroyed by Wang Baole when he had blown himself up, had been restored to a great extent. The blood and flesh passageway, as well as the pool, looked no different than they had prior to the explosion. Only one thing had changed... the former battle robes no longer sat in the center of the pool. They had been replaced by... Daoist You Ran!

Daoist You Ran's eyes had been shut, and his breathing even, as he had meditated. Having sensed something amiss, his breathing quickened. Then, his eyes opened!

Wang Baole! Feng Qiuran! A ghostly light flickered inside Daoist You Ran's eyes. He had no idea that he had died and been resurrected. There was hatred in his words, but it was mainly due to the battleship's damage at Wang Baole's hand.

"Summoning all Dao Palace disciples. Wang Baole has conspired against Elder Feng Qiuran. Elder Feng Qiuran has fallen under his influence. Unleash your full power to kill Wang Baole and rescue Elder Feng Qiuran!"

His voice resounded everywhere, creating a loud buzz that resonated in the battleship. His will extended through the battleship, into Mercury's array formation. It blanketed the entire planet. Every Dao Palace cultivator on the planet trembled when they heard his commands. The planet's array formation activated fully and locked onto Wang Baole and Feng Qiuran's location!

Daoist You Ran, who was unable to leave the Never-Ending Clan battleship, narrowed his eyes and barked out another order.

"Mie Liezi, capture Feng Qiuran, and kill Wang Baole!"

His orders erupted in Mie Liezi's mind, echoing endlessly as he sat deep in meditation in the main building of the base.

Mie Liezi was inside a pitch-black secret chamber. He lifted his head slowly after receiving Daoist You Ran's orders. There was a dazed expression on his face. He stood up and took a step forward, disappearing from the secret chamber and reappearing in mid-air. With the aid of the Greater Mercury Array Formation, he locked onto Wang Baole and Feng Qiuran's location. The cultivation inside his body churned, unleashing waves of Soul Conduit realm Spirit Qi. The air around him warped and contorted out of shape. He took another step forward, ripping space itself apart and rushing towards his target.

Wang Baole and Feng Qiuran had been speeding through Mercury's skies and were about to break through its atmosphere and enter space. However, they shuddered suddenly as they felt a sudden power surging towards them and blanketing them. An invisible force seemed to have descended upon them, trying to imprison them. It was slowing them down and trying to prevent them from escaping.

"We've been discovered. This is the Dao Palace's regional array formation, it's immensely powerful. I need thirty minutes to dispel it..." Alarm flashed across Feng Qiuran's face. As soon as she said that, Wang Baole lifted his right hand without saying a word. He looked like a war god with his Thearch Armor on.

He had repeatedly been trying to reach Li Xingwen and the others via his voice transmission ring this whole time. However, it was clear that his voice transmission ring wasn't going to work while he remained on Mercury. He had to exit its atmosphere.

He gave up on trying the voice transmission ring again. He roared as he raised his right hand, and his cultivation erupted from his person. His Nascent Soul shook and released waves of spirit energy more powerful than what he had displayed on the ancient sword.

He had felt a change over his Nascent Soul when he had stepped out of the teleportation array formation. It had felt as if the heavens and earth themselves had lent their powers to him... The planet beneath his feet had rejoiced upon his arrival.

He hadn't had the time to study the sensation in detail then, but now, as the planet's array formation descended upon them, Wang Baole unleashed his Nascent Soul. The result was a seeming resonance between his Nascent Soul and the planet. His Spirit Qi erupted and rose to the skies. It was given another boost by the Thearch Armor before flowing into his right arm, where the Divine Armament was!

An overwhelming power that shook the entire planet surged outwards in waves of spirit energy instantly. It erupted and transformed into a tornado that seemed to connect the sky and the land. The heavens rumbled as Wang Baole roared.

"Dispel!"

The Divine Armament arm swung forward in a slash!

The heavens and earth shifted. The winds howled, and the clouds rolled back. The regional Dao Palace array formation, which had overpowered Wang Baole and Feng Qiuran earlier... was forced to reveal its illusory, spiderweb-like form. It seemed unable to withstand the sudden incredible power that Wang Baole had unleashed. Layer by layer, it was ripped apart, breaking down and collapsing instantly!

Chapter 686: Battling Mie Liezi Again!

The array formation set up by the Dao Palace cultivators stretched across Mercury's black skies like a spiderweb. It looked like the honeycombs of a beehive. Wang Baole and Feng Qiuran both looked like mere ants next to the vast web. However, such ant-like creatures had just unleashed an incredible power that had shaken the heavens and earth.

The skies and the land rumbled as the Stellar Nascent Soul inside Wang Baole opened its eyes. The planet seemed to tremble, then it released a sudden light that boosted Wang Baole's power. A tear appeared in the Dao Palace array formation with his slash. It expanded, spreading across the skies like a gaping mouth!

Rumblings louder than thunder crashed all around them. Wang Baole, brimming with power, charged out of the tear. He was followed by Feng Qiuran, whose pupils had contracted in shock. The power that Wang Baole had just displayed sent her reeling back despite her being prepared for it!

What's the cause behind such a transformation? Her breathing quickened. She couldn't understand it at all. Wang Baole had displayed incredible, unbelievable power after appearing on Mercury.

She knew this wasn't the time to think about it too deeply, though. She immediately caught up with Wang Baole and slipped out from the tear in the array formation. They were going to leave Mercury and head for space.

Wang Baole pulled out his voice transmission ring then and sent a voice transmission to Li Xingwen.

“Old man, your Baole is back! I brought your wife with me as well!”

Alarm flashed across Wang Baole’s face as soon as he said that. A similar expression appeared on Feng Qiuran’s face. Below them, in the spiderweb-like array formation, space was distorting itself. Loud thunderous booms erupted all around it, and the array formation seemed to blur.

In the next moment, it was transformed entirely. An enormous face appeared in the center of the array formation. It spanned a hundred thousand feet and had a dazed expression and lost eyes that stared at Wang Baole and Feng Qiuran.

Its aura could overpower a Nascent Soul realm cultivator. This was the power of a Soul Conduit realm cultivator!

“Mie Liezi!” Wang Baole’s face darkened, and a myriad of emotions flickered in Feng Qiuran’s eyes. Mie Liezi’s face burst out of the array formation with unexpected speed. The illusory, enormous face lunged at Wang Baole and Feng Qiuran.

The size of the face might not be as vast as the great land beneath them, but it was still as big as a really large island. And it was fast, very fast. It was going to hit them at any time. Wang Baole’s eyes glimmered, and he sucked in a deep breath.

Mercury shuddered as he took that breath. It was as if he had sucked in some strange power with that single breath. His Stellar Nascent Soul loosened its limbs and unleashed its full power. Starlight flooded its body and overflowed. At that moment, Wang Baole seemed to have transformed into a star.

“Get out of my way!” he roared. He raised his armored right hand, his cultivation flowing into his Divine Armament arm. Augmented by the power of a planet, it smashed its fist into the huge face!

The punch shook the heavens and earth. It seemed to have the force of a star behind it, whose starlight was now infused into Wang Baole. It was as if a planet had hurdled onto the expressionless face of Mie Liezi and crashed into it.

Deafening booms rumbled across Mercury, and Mie Liezi’s illusory face started to shatter. The cracks started from the spot that Wang Baole’s fist had landed on. They spread and finally split the face into parts with a loud crack. Then, they exploded. A figure was flung outwards thousands of feet away. It was expressionless and breathing quickly. It was Mie Liezi. Wang Baole’s punch showed that he was a real threat.

Wang Baole wasn’t doing that well. His cultivation was only at the mid-stage Nascent Soul realm. Even boosted by his Thearch Armor and a planet, it still couldn’t compete with a true cultivator at the Soul Conduit realm. He grunted. He might not be spitting blood out of his mouth, and his organs might not be churning at the moment, but nevertheless, he had still been driven back by the shock waves from the collision.

Feng Qiuran was about to seize the chance to attack while both of them were driven apart. It was then that Mie Liezi narrowed his eyes and shouted suddenly.

“Dao Palace cultivators, to your positions. Form an array formation to welcome the return of Elder Qiuran!”

Lightning laced the skies instantly as every Dao Palace cultivator on the planet unleashed their full cultivation.

Mercury’s array formation had a thousand focal points, each of them guarded by a hundred cultivators. There were a hundred thousand cultivators currently guarding and running the array formation, and their power surged into the array formation with Mie Liezi’s orders. The planetary array formation flared with a blinding light, and countless dandelion-like lights appeared, gathering together and transforming into a glowing man that towered a thousand feet!

It seemed to be the materialized form of the array formation. One could even call it the materialization of the combined consciousness of a hundred thousand Dao Palace cultivators. It stretched its arms out and lifted its head, roaring and immediately charging at Feng Qiuran, who was trying to get near Mie Liezi!

“Daoist You Ran is a surviving Never-Ending Clan member who’s controlling Mie Liezi’s mind. I understand that you find it difficult what I’m telling you, but should you believe the wrong side, you will be aiding evil with its plans. Stand down and stop fighting. You can still choose to not help either one of us!” Feng Qiuran said. Her eyes were clear and filled with anxiety, drastically different from Mie Liezi’s lost and dazed look. The glowing man, formed from the consciousness of a hundred thousand cultivators, froze momentarily and lowered its head. It seemed to be mirroring the apprehension that had emerged amongst the hundred thousand controlling the array formation!

It was then that Daoist You Ran’s voice, boosted by the power of the array formation, resonated in the air.

“Let’s welcome Elder Qiuran’s return. Participants in the process will be awarded three hundred battle credits, and those who succeed will be awarded ten thousand battle credits!”

Those words rumbled in the air. The glowing man shuddered, then lifted its head, its eyes shining with intense light. The desire to earn battle credits seemed to have won over many of the hundred thousand minds that steered the glowing man. It started charging at Feng Qiuran again.

It surged forward, breaking the sound barrier and emanating a power that rivaled a Soul Conduit realm cultivator as it crashed into Feng Qiuran.

Wang Baole threw a glance at Feng Qiuran, who was being forced to fight the glowing man. He saw the sorrow in her eyes. Even so, she was not using any offensive or lethal attacks. She was still only trying to defend herself.

Wang Baole frowned as anxiety raged inside him. He needed to leave Mercury as soon as possible. Any delay might allow Never-Ending Clan members more opportunities to join forces with the other Dao Palace cultivators. When that happened, escape might no longer be possible. In fact, death might be the only option left for him.

“Elder Qiuran, we need to get out of here, fast!” Wang Baole shouted. Mie Liezi had approached then, his full cultivation unleashed as he rushed at Wang Baole like a shooting star.

Wang Baole didn't have the luxury to remind Feng Qiuran of their situation anymore. He raised his right hand and formed a series of hand seals. His storage bracelet trembled, and a black pike flew out and surged towards Mie Liezi with a force that could slice through the air itself. A mirror of himself also materialized and separated from his person. He had summoned his avatar.

His avatar rushed head-on towards the heavens. His real form, on the other hand, tightened its fist. The power of his Stellar Nascent Soul and his Thearch Armor gathered in his fist. His Supernova punch followed swiftly behind his Dharmic Armament, both headed for Mie Liezi!

The two opponents collided. The black pike was an incredible artifact that had been given a boost of power by Wang Baole's inherent strength. It was a black beam of light that seemed capable of tearing through space with its sharpness. The power that it exuded was that of a ninth-grade Dharmic Armament. In the face of such power, even Mie Liezi was slightly intimidated. His pupils contracted.

Wang Baole's Supernova combined his cultivation and his physical strength. It was augmented by the endless Spirit Qi housed in the spirit fat in Wang Baole's body. Wang Baole was like a literal walking Spirit Stone.

"Eat that! I have plenty more spirit energy to spare!" Wang Baole roared. He unleashed ten punches consecutively. His fists looked large, a thousand feet wide, as they hit the air, and the incredible force of those hits rushed at Mie Liezi!

The punches exploded in the air, the explosions resonating loudly in the sky. The two cultivators began to battle it out. The black pike got the first hit in. Wang Baole gritted his teeth and triggered its self-destruction without hesitation!

Thunderous booms rumbled in the air!

The force of the Dharmic Armament's explosion surged outwards, forming a shock wave that combined with Wang Baole's Supernova punches and resulted in incredible power. Wang Baole had given everything he had in those Supernova punches. Mie Liezi shuddered violently and was driven back by the fierce attack!

Wang Baole yelled as Mie Liezi retreated in evasion.

"Feng Qiuran, why aren't you moving?" Wang Baole turned as he spoke, then unleashed ten Supernovas at the glowing man engaged in battle with Feng Qiuran!

The assault sent the heavens quaking. Winds lashed out while clouds rolled back. Under Wang Baole's control, the attack drove the glowing man back while giving Feng Qiuran a helpful boost.

A resolute look appeared in Feng Qiuran's eyes. She unleashed her power, and with a hard shove, sped up and shot towards the heavens!

Wang Baole's breathing quickened, and he switched places with his avatar, who had reached the edge of the sky, instantly!

He gave Mie Liezi and the glowing man no chance to come after them. A vicious light flashed across the avatar's eyes. Without sparing a second thought, it self-destructed!

Chapter 687: A Sea of Stars!

The avatar's self-destruction caused an incredible force that blew a hole in space. A sizable vortex appeared in the heavens, sucking everything towards it. Despite his Soul Conduit realm cultivation, Mie Liezi had to slow down his pursuit in the face of the consecutive explosions caused by the black pike and Wang Baole's avatar.

The shock waves from the self-destructions not only affected a wide area but the surrounding space as well. Short-distance teleportation couldn't be performed. He had no choice but to physically retreat to avoid injury.

The glowing man had been the culmination of a hundred thousand minds. That might have given it the power of a Soul Conduit realm cultivator, but it was still formed from numerous minds. The explosion had also affected it. It barely evaded the attack. As it shuddered from residual shock waves, there were at least twenty thousand cultivators within the thousand-eye array formation on Mercury that spat out blood from their mouths concurrently. There were even many who died on the spot, their bodies exploding.

The terrifying backlash created a pause in the pursuit, earning Wang Baole precious time to escape!

He didn't get a lot of time, though. After dodging the explosion of Wang Baole's avatar, Mie Liezi continued the chase yet again. Daoist You Ran remained inside the Never-Ending Clan battleship, unable to leave and join the battle. However, his eyes never left the battlefield.

Wang Baole, Feng Qiuran, you have nowhere to run! Daoist You Ran narrowed his eyes and raised his right hand. A jade slip appeared in his palm, and he immediately barked out an order.

The order wasn't for the Vast Expanse Dao Palace cultivators on Mercury but for his fellow Never-Ending Clan members, who had awakened and were hidden inside the host bodies of Vast Expanse Dao Palace cultivators!

Most of them were in space now, leading numerous Dao Palace cultivators inside Dao Palace space cruisers spread across space. They were preparing for the next battle with the Federation. The Never-Ending Clan cultivators' eyes flashed with an icy light when they received Daoist You Ran's orders.

The space cruisers floating outside Mercury quickly acted and surrounded the planet, preventing anyone from leaving.

While that was happening, a large group—upper echelons of the Federation—were gathered in a base on Venus, behind the planet's line of defense. They were cultivators from the four Dao Colleges, the Senate, the Trilunaris Corporation, the Five Generation Sky Clan, and many other powerful political forces.

They were there by order of Duan Muque and Li Xingwen. These cultivators had shared in the Federation's power and wealth. Now that the Federation was in danger, they were to fight and defend it!

The expressions on their faces were grave. They gathered in the command center, their eyes fixed on a large screen before them.

The screen projected a clear map of the Solar System. The Solar System Array Formation put in place meant that the map was being updated in real time. Mercury's image on the map looked blurry, though. The fall of the planet to the enemy forces and the interference from the planet's array formation prevented them from receiving any information from the planet.

The area around the planet had been pitch-black up until thirty minutes ago. It was then that a blurry image began to replace the initial blankness. Something seemed to have weakened the interference in the area.

"Something has happened to Mercury's array formation. An unknown force seems to have inflicted some damage to it!"

"Based on the data we've gathered from the Solar System Array Formation, the Dao Palace space cruisers outside Mercury appear to have modified their formation..."

"We've received reports from the front line that the Dao Palace battleships stationed at the outer regions are withdrawing... They seem to be setting up some sort of blockade!"

"Based on all the information we have, it seems reasonable to conclude that... something has happened in the Dao Palace. Someone is attempting an escape. Based on the adjustments to the enemy battleships' formation, we can ascertain that this unknown person is trying to escape from Mercury and enter space!"

Cultivators from the department in charge of the Federation's military strategies, skilled in the art of war, stood before the large screen in the base and shared their findings with everyone. They explained their conclusions, which were based on the information that had been gathered in that half an hour.

A look of surprise flashed past everyone's faces as they absorbed the information. They didn't have time to discuss the matter. Li Xingwen, who had been standing next to Duan Muque, who had a faintly stormy expression on his face, coughed. Both of them stood before the crowd.

"As everyone can see, this is the situation that we are in now. Time is of the essence. I would like you to listen to this voice transmission." As he said that, Li Xingwen turned on his voice transmission ring and played Wang Baole's message out loud.

"Old man, your Baole is back! I brought your wife with me as well!"

The voice was filled with excitement and warmth. It resonated in the great hall where numerous upper echelons of the Federation were. Their eyes widened. Some of them even gasped out in shock.

"Wang Baole?"

"The guy who became the Grand Supreme Elder of the Dao Palace?"

"He's still alive? The wife he's speaking of..."

A myriad of emotions surged through the crowd when they finally identified the voice as Wang Baole's. They were quickly drawn to what Wang Baole said at the end, and they soon realized whom he was referring to as Li Xingwen's wife!

"Grand Supreme Elder Feng Qiuran of the Dao Palace!"

Li Xingwen didn't seem embarrassed by the gasps of shock. He seemed rather smug, in fact. Duan Muque's face still looked stormy. He had been surprised to find out that Li Xingwen had received Wang Baole's voice transmission. But Li Xingwen had then mentioned the secession of his presidency. That had caused Duan Muque endless exasperation. His head throbbed at the thought. Even the war hadn't caused him so much grief.

"Alright, my fellow Daoists. I propose that we bring Wang Baole and Feng Qiuran to safety immediately. I know you might be wondering if they are truly who they claim to be. Based on the information we have gotten, Mie Liezi is currently being controlled. There is also the matter of Never-Ending Clan members hiding themselves in host bodies. However, we cannot simply abandon these two because of our suspicions. I propose that we secure them first, then assess what to do next!" Li Xingwen said decisively. He might have put it across as a proposal, but the determination in his eyes was clear for all to see.

"I concur!"

"I have my doubts, but Wang Baole has done a lot for the Federation. It doesn't matter that this might be a trap, we still have to try!"

The Federation was currently in the midst of a war that was going to dictate their fate, and the ugliness of human nature was exposed when war was concerned. Nevertheless, having a common enemy was enough to unite everyone and let them set aside their past conflicts. Even the Five Generation Sky Clan agreed with Li Xingwen's decision.

Duan Muque quickly issued an order using his power as the Federation President, deploying Fleets of Federation cruisers. The line of defense on Venus was activated. It seemed like the Federation was going on the offensive. The Solar System Array Formation was fully activated as well, creating waves of interference that reached Mercury. The result was a disturbance that hindered the Dao Palace and Never-Ending Clan cultivators and prevented them from setting up a blockade.

As the military was deployed, Li Xingwen secretly led his own team towards Mercury. He made use of the Solar System's array formation and rushed there at top speed.

The team included the giant tree and Sect Lord Xu of the Galactic Dusk Sect. There were also numerous Core Formation realm cultivators from various other political forces. On their own, they might not be a match for the enemy, but they had Federation technology on their side. Their joint study of technology and spirit energy had resulted in many methods to augment their powers. Amongst their arsenal of weapons was the Anti-Spirit Bomb!

The Federation's military made their move on Venus while Li Xingwen started on his secret extraction. Meanwhile, in the skies above Mercury, Wang Baole and Feng Qiuran were busy running and trying to escape while battling the planet itself as it tried to drag them back to land!

Wang Baole's heart was still aching because of the loss of his black pike. He didn't feel a similar heartache for his avatar, though... The former was a unique artifact while the latter was something that had been formed from the vast stores of spirit fat housed inside his body. The avatar had simply been an expenditure of spirit energy.

In fact, one problem had been plaguing Wang Baole ever since he had exchanged places with his avatar and tried to escape to space.

The explosive force from blowing up my avatar seems rather powerful... Why don't I use this method to attack the Never-Ending Clan battleship? I could kill Daoist You Ran again. I'll end the war on my own. I'll be a hero!

The idea was extremely tempting. Wang Baole's heart raced at the thought of it. He quickly abandoned it, though. Daoist You Ran's resurrection was surrounded by unknowns. Feng Qiuran, due to her personality, wasn't someone he could exactly rely on. Besides, he remembered the Never-Ending Clan members he had found inside the battleship, asleep and healing. The power that they had emanated clearly hinted at how strong they were.

There was very little chance of him surviving and emerging as the hero for this occasion. There was a greater chance of him martyring himself.

Besides, he shouldn't be using this trick so flagrantly. He wasn't a one-trick pony. That might work against him. He decided against playing the hero.

Besides, this isn't a good habit to cultivate. I might get used to it and accidentally self-destruct my real form instead... Wang Baole shuddered at the thought. He picked up speed once more, getting closer to leaving Mercury and entering space.

The heaviness pulling him disappeared in the next instant. He leaped and rose thousands of feet. An unimaginable feeling seeped out from his Stellar Nascent Soul.

A cultivator who had reached the Core Formation realm was able to survive temporarily in space. One at the Nascent Soul realm might not be able to exist in space like planets, but they could still cast spells and fly without difficulty. However, he couldn't keep that up for long. A cultivator who had reached the Soul Conduit realm, on the other hand, had no such concerns.

Anything could be solved as long as one had sufficient Spirit Qi!

Of course, these were restrictions that bound the ordinary cultivator. Wang Baole was different. His body shuddered violently as soon as he stepped out of Mercury's atmosphere and entered space. The Stellar Nascent Soul inside his body felt strange. It was as if... he had fallen into an ocean of stars, and the Stellar Nascent Soul was but one fish in the great ocean!

I've always thought myself special, destined to become the Federation President and lead the Federation to conquer the rest of the galaxy. Seems like my Nascent Soul is proof of my uniqueness! The special nature of his Stellar Nascent Soul cheered Wang Baole up. He threw a look at Feng Qiuran, who had also entered space, then turned towards the distant stars. With a burst of speed, he raced into the distance!

Chapter 688: Grandmatron?

Dao Palace battleships hovered outside Mercury. They seemed to have sensed Wang Baole and Feng Qiuran. The battleships shifted and turned towards the two, their intention to trap the duo clear.

Wang Baole had the advantage of speed and agility, though. He was currently brimming with confidence. He saw his destiny in the sea of planets. This feeling of a fish returning to the great ocean

brought him an unimaginable sense of pride. With his hands behind his back, he turned towards Feng Qiuran, who was trailing behind him. He said nonchalantly.

“Elder Qiuran, I’m going to speed up from now on. I have my Thearch Armor and an extremely powerful physical body. The speed that I can unleash is something even I find unbelievable. My home lies in the stars, after all. Don’t push yourself too hard if you can’t catch up. Just let me know at once.” He was about to race off when an odd look appeared on Feng Qiuran’s face. With a wave of her right hand, a white light shot out from her storage bag.

The dazzling white light paused next to Feng Qiuran, expanding and transforming into an enormous sword that spanned a thousand feet long!

It might be shaped like a weapon, but the waves of spirit energy it was giving off, as well as its structure, clearly indicated that it was a small battleship. In fact, a shuttle might be a more precise term!

Its exterior shimmered with light, creating distortions in the space around it. It was like a beast, longing to race into the distance and whose desire was being thwarted temporarily with a rope around its neck. It kept struggling. Once the rope that bound it was loosened, it would rise and charge forward, disappearing without a trace!

Wang Baole was stunned momentarily at the sight of the shuttle. Feng Qiuran strolled forward calmly and boarded the white shuttle. She then turned her head casually and looked at the dazed Wang Baole. She didn’t say anything, but her eyes said it all. She seemed confounded by why Wang Baole was choosing to expend so much effort in flying when there was a perfectly serviceable shuttle he could use...

“If you have any strange preferences and wish to fly on your own, well, you could...” Feng Qiuran stared deeply into Wang Baole’s eyes as she conveyed her very considerate reply.

Wang Baole fell silent...

He stared at the shuttle. It was obviously an extraordinary artifact. Then, he lowered his head and stared at his own two legs. He was stumped, momentarily. Even an idiot could tell the difference between traveling via shuttle and via his own two legs... However, he had made such a grand statement earlier. It would be embarrassing to take it all back now. He was of half a mind to continue the act. Then, he noticed Dao Palace cruisers approaching all around them. Several cultivators had even rushed out from the cruisers. Mercury was beneath their feet. A gigantic vortex approached from the direction of the planet as well, which must be Mie Liezi. The expression on Wang Baole’s face turned serious.

“Elder Qiuran, unfortunately, the Federation is now facing an invasion by evil forces. As your junior, I regret not being able to escort you as we traverse space on foot and tour the stars in the Federation. So be it. I will make it up to you once we chase these evil men from our lands. Well... let’s hurry up and leave.” Wang Baole coughed as he raised his foot and stepped onto the shuttle. He stood next to Feng Qiuran, ignoring the strange look she was giving him. The expression on his face was that of the unperturbed. He didn’t seem the slightest bit embarrassed.

It was obvious that Wang Baole was great at convincing himself. Feng Qiuran was his senior and Li Xingwen’s wife-to-be. He should be addressing her as Grandmatron. There wasn’t anything wrong with giving way when in the presence of his grandmatron. That was called respecting one’s elders!

Having counseled himself mentally, Wang Baole suddenly realized how perfectly he had conducted himself.

Feng Qiuran spared a glance at Wang Baole. His complete lack of shame didn't upset her. In fact, it was endearing. She began to view him as the young man that he was.

He's still a child. She laughed, startled. She formed a series of hand seals with her right hand, causing white light to bathe the shuttle and flood the area around them like starlight. It began moving in the next moment. It unleashed an unimaginable speed and surged forward, slicing through space like a knife through butter. It raced into the distance before the battleships and cultivators around them could close in and before the vortex on Mercury that was Mie Liezi could approach.

The shuttle was a lot faster than a Soul Conduit realm cultivator. It ranked amongst the top treasures in the Dao Palace. Feng Qiuran was the Grand Supreme Elder and had witnessed the rise and fall of the sect. The shuttle had been placed in her possession and might be viewed as part of her personal inventory. The speed it unleashed brought Feng Qiuran and Wang Baole right through the blockade set up by the enemy battleships.

Wang Baole's heart raced as he sensed the speed they were traveling at. An array formation cloaked the shuttle, forming a barrier that prevented the shuttle's passengers from feeling any discomfort due to the extreme speed. There was no need for voice transmissions, he could speak freely. He turned and stared at the shrinking Mercury, and curiosity lit up his eyes.

"This is quite impressive." Wang Baole squatted and touched the shuttle's exterior. His knowledge in Dharmic Armaments told him that this shuttle was possibly at least a ninth-grade Dharmic Armament. It might even be of a higher grade. It might not be a Divine Armament, but it was likely almost as powerful as one. He lifted his head and turned towards Feng Qiuran.

"Elder Qiuran... could I borrow the shuttle for study later?"

Feng Qiuran's eyebrow rose. She was about to speak when Wang Baole's voice transmission ring started vibrating. Li Xingwen's voice, filled with concern and anxiety, rang out.

"You little rascal, still not dead? You holding up alright?"

Wang Baole felt a surge of warmth upon hearing Li Xingwen's voice. He set his voice transmission to play through the speaker, then spoke at his voice transmission ring.

"I thank the grandmaster for his concern. Please, do not worry. Baole will carry out his duties as you have commanded. I'll deliver the grandmatron to safety on Venus even if it kills me!"

There was a clear pause on Li Xingwen's end. He spoke again after a few seconds of silence, his voice gentle.

"Baole, you've done a good job. Your grandmatron means everything to me. I haven't been eating or sleeping this entire time, worrying myself sick over your grandmatron's safety."

Feng Qiuran's breathing grew uneven when she heard those words ringing out from the voice transmission ring. A myriad of emotions flashed across her eyes, and a strange look settled on her face. Wang Baole couldn't help but approve of the old fellow. Those were indeed the quick reflexes of

someone who had once been the president of the Federation. He had guessed correctly from Wang Baole addressing Feng Qiuran as Grandmatron that the voice transmission had been put on speaker.

“Baole, I’m on the way. You have to protect your grandmatron and be careful of the Never-Ending Clan... Baole, I’m going to owe you a huge favor for this. I...” Li Xingwen’s voice was filled with agitation, anticipation, and his desire to see Feng Qiuran as soon as possible. He didn’t have a chance to express those feelings fully. Wang Baole was feeling increasingly awkward when Feng Qiuran finally coughed. She couldn’t take it any longer either.

“Li Xingwen...”

“Qiuran!” The sound of a chair being overturned rang out from the voice transmission ring. It was followed by Li Xingwen’s voice. He was beside himself with emotion.

“Li Xingwen, you...”

“How are you doing, Qiuran? Are you tired? Have you been hurt anywhere? Do you feel any discomfort? Don’t worry, I’ll take care of you after you arrive in the Federation. I’ll make sure those who made you suffer pay for it, even if it kills me!”

Feng Qiuran was rendered speechless by Li Xingwen’s passionate declaration. She had lived through war. It had aged her. Love had become a foreign, distant thing. His declaration had shaken her deeply, causing her face to flush ever so faintly. Wang Baole coughed softly. Li Xingwen was behaving like a lovesick fool. That didn’t stop him from eavesdropping, though.

Li Xingwen knew Wang Baole very well. He immediately told Wang Baole to hand the voice transmission ring to Feng Qiuran. Wang Baole had no choice but to obey. With the voice transmission ring in hand, Feng Qiuran quickly deactivated the speaker mode, switching to private voice transmissions instead.

Wang Baole had no idea what Li Xingwen said, but Feng Qiuran’s face seemed a lot redder to Wang Baole’s curious eyes when she finally ended the conversation with Li Xingwen. The look in her eyes was no longer as lost. Faith and confidence had replaced it.

Something stirred inside Wang Baole. He opened his mouth and tried the new string of words on for size.

“Grandmatron Qiuran?”

Feng Qiuran raised her head and glared at Wang Baole. She didn’t reject the new form of address, though. Instead, she adjusted the direction the shuttle was heading, then spoke hurriedly, as if nothing had happened.

“Your grandmaster has shared the route with me. Based on this route, it should take us about two days to reach the destination and meet up with them. After that...” The expression on Wang Baole’s face suddenly shifted. He lifted his head suddenly. A bright, red light appeared above them and transformed into a sea of red that enveloped their shuttle instantly!

Beyond the sea of red, space distorted itself as an entire fleet of Dao Palace battleships appeared. There were more than ten thousand of them. Each one was shooting out a bright red light. That was what had created the sea of red and trapped Wang Baole and Feng Qiuran’s shuttle!

The worst had yet to come. Wang Baole and Feng Qiuran shook with alarm as four distinct spirit energy signatures erupted from the mass of Dao Palace battleships... radiating Soul Conduit realm cultivations!

Chapter 689: Trapped!

The four Soul Conduit realm cultivations erupted. The sea of red surged outwards and flooded towards the shuttle like giant waves, blanketing it in an instant!

The vast red sea seemed to have transformed into a gigantic hand. The hand grabbed the shuttle from beneath as it unleashed a sudden burst of speed in its attempt to dash out of the blockade!

Then, the red sea started showing signs of solidifying. It was as if it was going to freeze itself and turn to ice. It was going to freeze the shuttle alongside it, as well as the entire region of space!

As this was happening, a terrifying force began to spread throughout the red sea and head towards the shuttle!

The shuttle shook violently, sending Feng Qiuran and Wang Baole shuddering as they stood inside. Alarm flashed across their faces. They could see the shuttle creaking under the pressure exerted on it, and it was showing signs of cracking. Sooner or later, it was going to be crushed into bits.

The shuttle might be an extremely high-grade artifact, but it could hardly withstand the joint force of ten thousand battleships. There was a great chance it was going to shatter and cave in anytime now.

"Self-destruct the shuttle!" Wang Baole said, the expression on his face solemn. There was no time to say anything more. He yelled, then leapt into the air. Countless red meridians emerged and grew outwards. The Thearch Armor wove itself around his humongous body once again, and the fat war god made another appearance. Wang Baole unleashed his full cultivation, readied his defenses, and prepared to charge.

Hesitation flashed across Feng Qiuran's eyes. Her indecisive nature didn't change the fact that she was still a powerful cultivator at the Soul Conduit realm, who had experienced war and battle. Her conversation with Li Xingwen might have helped as well. She only hesitated a moment before determination lit her eyes. Her hands came together in a flurry of hand seals, and she pressed her palms onto the shuttle.

The four Soul Conduit realm cultivations had been rapidly approaching the shuttle from four different directions. Before they could surround the shuttle that was struggling in the red sea, the shuttle suddenly released a glaring light. It was a light that outshone the other stars in space, threatening to blind everyone.

It seemed to have transformed itself into a small sun, burning itself up rapidly before it finally... exploded!

A violent shock wave exploded in space, like a sudden avalanche. It was like a sudden collapse of the sky, the caving in of the earth. Waves of spirit energy surged outwards like a tsunami, the fierce rippling of energy visible to the naked eye!

It brimmed with the threat of violence and death and tore the red sea apart in an instant. It was like the ignition of a bomb in a glacier!

The damage was compounded by the power and high-grade materials of the shuttle. The result was an explosive force that surpassed an ordinary explosion!

The sea of red, which had been in the midst of turning itself to ice, shuddered and shattered instantly, parting under the force of the shuttle's explosion. The force stopped the four Soul Conduit realm cultivators in their tracks as well. They were forced to change course in order to avoid the backlash. The battleships couldn't shift away as quickly and had to face the shock waves head-on.

The battlefield was plunged into chaos following the shuttle's self-destruction. It was then that Wang Baole and Feng Qiuran made a dash for it.

Feng Qiuran had guided the explosion such that a great portion of the shock waves had been directed outwards. As a result, both her and Wang Baole had been relatively unharmed by the explosion. She had the protection of her Soul Conduit realm cultivation, and Wang Baole had his Thearch Armor. Having braced themselves against the residual shock waves, they had recovered slightly and immediately unleashed their full speed—riding on the explosive force caused by the shuttle's self-destruction. Exploiting the collapse in the enemy battleship formation, they shot forward, like arrows released from a bow, and charged out!

Their speed, given a boost by the explosion, made them mere blurry images in one's eyes. They broke through the red sea, stirring ripples in space itself as they emerged on the other side of the ten thousand strong battleship army!

Witnessing their escape were the cultivators on the battleships, who were still in disarray as they tried to recover from the explosion, as well as the four Soul Conduit realm cultivators. They experienced varying degrees of shock as they watched the escape happen under their noses!

The chances... of slipping through the blockade were so slim, nobody had thought it could actually happen. Someone had to make the snap decision of blowing up the shuttle as soon as the blockade was formed. The decision might have seemed simple, but few could have done so within a moment.

The key that had made the escape successful had been the speed of this reaction—the blowing up of the shuttle!

But what of it! The four Soul Conduit realm cultivators who had been driven away by the shuttle's explosion were all former Nascent Soul realm elders of the Dao Palace. Amongst them was Chi Lin. He belonged to Feng Qiuran's faction and had tensions with Wang Baole.

He was clearly a changed person, host to a Never-Ending Clan parasite. His cultivation was given a natural boost to the Soul Conduit realm. He narrowed his eyes and stared in the direction that Wang Baole and Feng Qiuran had escaped in. He clearly wasn't in a hurry to give chase. Instead, he sneered.

He wasn't the only one. Mirroring his sneer were the other three former Nascent Soul realm elders of the Dao Palace. They had all risen to the Soul Conduit realm after becoming hosts to Never-Ending Clan parasites. Their stares pierced into distant space, in the direction Wang Baole and Feng Qiuran were headed, where the cold, black abyss suddenly began to distort and warp!

Alarm flashed across Wang Baole's eyes. Feng Qiuran's pupils contracted. They tried changing course, but it was too late by then. The spatial distortion ahead of them suddenly transformed into an enormous vortex!

It resembled a black hole, a passageway leading to the unknown. Its endless spinning seemed to unlock a door in space. Two large clouds of red mist burst out from its center!

Both spanned thousands of feet wide. They quickly raced towards Wang Baole and Feng Qiuran as soon as they appeared, radiating power that threatened to overwhelm and seal Wang Baole's and Feng Qiuran's. The two had no chance of escape.

The red mist approached swiftly. Feng Qiuran staggered back, her face pale. She smacked her storage bag and pulled out a bell. White runes rippled out from the bell in waves as she shook it fiercely. The runes clustered together, spreading out across thousands of feet. They tried to smack the mist away and gain time for Feng Qiuran and Wang Baole to escape.

The gigantic hand that was formed from runes passed straight through the mysterious and bizarre red mist though. The mist enveloped a shocked Feng Qiuran and swallowed her whole, trapping her within.

Wang Baole didn't hesitate at all. His body blurred into multiple images, which separated as his avatar stepped away from his body. It froze, weighed down by the overwhelming force of the red mist, and stood next to Wang Baole. There was no time for him to employ his usual methods, which involved him switching places with his avatar.

The only purpose for the avatar this time was to blow itself up!

The avatar charged into the approaching red mist as soon as it had separated from Wang Baole. Then, just as the red mist was about to swallow Wang Baole whole as well, it self-destructed!

The explosive force was immense. It swept across space like a sudden hurricane, sending the red mist shuddering and slowing it down for an instant.

Wang Baole used that chance to beat a hasty retreat. His heart was racing, and alarm bells sounded loudly in his head. He could see another cloud of red mist emerging from the vortex, which caused his scalp to prickle. The Dao Palace and the Never-Ending Clan were clearly well prepared. Just as he was about to make his escape, Chi Lin and the other three Soul Conduit realm cultivators closed in, ready to strike.

Waves of spirit energy surged through space, sending storms and strong winds across the abyss. Wang Baole had started reciting the sutra, but it didn't matter. He had his Thearch Armor, as well as a planet within the vicinity giving him strength, but it was all useless. He was still no match for four Soul Conduit realm cultivators. His armor shook violently as he was flung backwards, blood spilling from his lips. Two clouds of red mist rushed at him and swallowed him whole!

In the heavens, there were two clouds of red mist, one larger than the other, spinning and churning. It was a terrifying sight!

"Summoning all Dao Palace cultivators. The Grand Supreme Elder has decreed. Activate the array formation and target the traitor Wang Baole. You are to destroy his very spirit!"

“Cleanse Grand Supreme Elder Feng Qiuran of the spell controlling her mind so that she may regain her senses!” Chi Lin’s voice traveled into the minds of every Dao Palace cultivator inside every battleship in the area. They trembled and sat down hastily, unleashing their full cultivation. Red light erupted from every battleship once again, enveloping the mists and transforming the area into a sea of red!

Chapter 690: Demonic Eye Art!

Not far from Mercury, tens of thousands of battleships gathered. The region was awash in a red sea. Tens of thousands of cultivators channeled their cultivation into the sea of red and began the refinement process!

One could call it refinement. That, or a unique form of array formation being guided by Chi Lin and the other Soul Conduit realm cultivators!

The array formation was an extremely malicious form of Never-Ending Clan mystic art. Its name was Soul Infusion Destruction!

The entire process could be explained as a special refinement method being employed to channel hordes of souls forcibly into human vessels. The continual refinement of the human vessels would transform them into something akin to human bombs. The array formation helped to modify and augment the effects. The explosive force that resulted from blowing up a human bomb wouldn’t be the cumulative strength of all cultivation and souls fed into the array formation—it would be exponential.

It was monstrous. The more souls it consumed, the higher the cultivation that was channeled into it, and the more powerful the eventual explosion. The vast hordes of Dao Palace cultivators aboard their battleships were clearly unaware that they were mere instruments, which were serving their souls for consumption!

As their cultivation continued to flow into the array formation, their souls would also slowly fuse with the array formation. They would gradually become a part of the array formation without even knowing it.

This... was part of Daoist You Ran’s plan all along!

Beyond the red sea, scattered across the vast space, countless Dao Palace battleships lay concealed within spatial distortions. Aboard those battleships were many Dao Palace cultivators, who had been summoned to the red sea to await instructions without knowing what was going to happen to them.

They were also part of Daoist You Ran’s plan!

One had to admit that Daoist You Ran was indeed a genius. Despite him being unable to leave the Never-Ending Clan battleship while it was still undergoing repairs, he had drawn up a plan for the destruction of the Federation’s second line of defense on Venus. He had done so within a short period of time, amidst a flurry of unexpected events, and had based it all on Wang Baole and Feng Qiuran’s reappearance.

It was a simple plan that involved attacking the weakest link and drawing out the rest of his enemy’s forces. Wang Baole and Feng Qiuran were bait meant to lure the Federation to their rescue. It didn’t

matter how many came, they would all be destroyed. Based on Daoist You Ran's assessment, he believed that there was a great chance that the Federation would pretend to mount a fierce attack just so they could carry out the rescue. Then, they would retreat when given the opportunity.

"When that happens... and they arrive, it'll be the perfect time to unleash the explosive power of the Soul Infusion Destruction. We will destroy the Federation's main forces. Venus, the key to the Solar System Array Formation, will fall with ease!

"My only fear is that too few people will turn up!

"But even if that happens, we still have two Soul Conduit realm vessels that will prove effective weapons when attacking Venus!" Daoist You Ran sat inside the Never-Ending Clan battleship stationed on Mercury. His eyes were mere slits, concealing the anticipatory light within as he smiled faintly and murmured to himself.

The Federation was at a disadvantage when it came to their level of cultivation as well as their knowledge in such mystic arts. Even if they had the Solar System Array Formation, it would be difficult for them to detect Daoist You Ran's Soul Infusion Destruction. That was why he hadn't made any changes to his plan.

The Federation army had made a show of its deployment, leaving Venus and approaching Mercury. Li Xingwen, who had led a sizable team with him, had left in advance. He hurried to the meeting place he had set up with Feng Qiuran.

Every action that the Federation took had been deliberated and run through by its immensely resourceful think tank. They had simulated how the war was going to turn out based on every piece of information they had got their hands on. Despite them being unaware of the malicious trap that had been set for them, they had considered the possibility of an ambush. Their plans had provided for ways to circumvent it.

Of course, no one knew how effective these contingency plans would be.

Daoist You Ran's plans and the Federation's rescue efforts began to unfold concurrently. In the center of the storm, where the red sea lay, were two clouds of red mist. They were being refined into human vessels. Wang Baole was inside one of them. He was facing a difficult decision, an occasion that had rarely happened to him!

He had no idea how Feng Qiuran was doing at this moment, but he was well aware of his Thearch Armor and his physical body's capabilities. They were being eroded away rapidly as he was trapped inside the mist. It was likely that Feng Qiuran wasn't going to last much longer than he was. In fact, she might not last as long as he would.

The red mist was extremely bizarre. It had the ability to seal and trap them, as well as erosive properties. It was indescribably cold and eerie. Wang Baole couldn't free himself no matter how hard he struggled. He felt like a fly, and the red mist was a gigantic hand that was clutching him within its closed fist. There was no way for him to escape, and even moving was proving a challenge.

He could only watch as the mist slowly ate away at his Thearch Armor. Once the Thearch Armor was completely eroded away, he could imagine his physical flesh, his Nascent Soul, and his spirit, having lost the protection of the armor, being next.

The spirit fat on me will only gain me a little bit of time... Wang Baole's heart sank. He couldn't sense what was going on outside and had no idea if he was still trapped in the spot that he had been caught in. Unease continued to fill his heart.

If the Never-Ending Clan is trying to use Feng Qiuran and me as bait... Wang Baole's pupils contracted. His heart became filled with anxiety. He tried struggling to free himself again but to no avail. He became increasingly frustrated, and danger started to loom increasingly heavier over his head. He knew that if the situation remained unchanged, there was little chance of him walking out of this alive!

The only way is to keep creating and blowing up my avatars. Rather than staying trapped here and waiting to get killed, I might as well see if I can blow up enough things and force my way out of this thing... My only worry is that I'll still have to fight the four Soul Conduit realm cultivators after that. That's going to be a tough battle... Wait, there's still Mie Liezi. He has definitely caught up by now! Wang Baole was torn. It was unfortunate that they were nowhere near Mars. Given the choice, he might risk it all to summon his Dark Artifact.

I don't care anymore! Violence flashed across Wang Baole's eyes. He gritted his teeth and prepared to summon his avatar so that he could blow it up. Just as his avatar appeared and was about to self-destruct, he suddenly widened his eyes and stared at the rumbling mist ahead of him!

A face had flashed past in the mist. It had vanished instantly, but Wang Baole had seen the greed and brutality that had been on its face. It was as if the face had found Wang Baole an appetizing treat and had wanted a bite.

That is... Wang Baole's heart raced. He abandoned the idea of blowing up his avatars and scanned the surrounding mist carefully, his eyes wide. Soon, he saw a face again. It was a different face, one with a lost expression.

Wang Baole's eyes burned brightly at the sight. He didn't act rashly. Instead, he continued waiting. Slowly, more faces appeared. Some of them were male, others female. Some looked violent, some lost. Some of the faces were awash with greed, others perversion.

Wisps of soul appeared alongside these faces, gathering together and spreading around Wang Baole.

This is like receiving a pillow for a gift when you're just beginning to feel drowsy! Wang Baole blinked before a wild joy began flooding his heart. Dead spirits were the thing that he was least afraid of. As a Dark Child, seeing these souls was like seeing servants wandering all around him.

He was overjoyed by their appearance, and he began to reassess his situation carefully.

I have no idea why they're here, but as long as there are souls hidden inside this mist and there is a sufficient number of them, I should be able to use the Dark Art to free myself. There's no need to blow my avatars up anymore!

I can use the souls as my weapons too... but after freeing myself, even if I have the souls at my disposal, I'll still have to face four Soul Conduit realm cultivators, face an army of battleships and cultivators, and save Feng Qiuran. That's almost an impossible task. Wang Baole narrowed his eyes.

Unless I can become very powerful, very quickly...

Power... isn't that just the means to kill. That's why... the Demonic Eye Art... Madness flashed across Wang Baole's eyes. By choosing the path of the Demonic Eye Art, he was sending himself down the road to more killing and more death in order to gain more power. He hadn't wanted to go down this path unless he had no other choice. A Nascent Soul realm mystic art was the bridge between one's foundational cultivation and their ascent. It was the key that could determine where they would land in the future.

"There's not going to be a future if I don't survive the present!" Wang Baole was a man of decisiveness. The veins in his eyes gradually turned red, and determination colored his eyes as he muttered to himself. He didn't hesitate any longer. His hands might have been rendered immobile, but he could still chant the words to the Demonic Eye Art in his head.

A creepy black eye soon appeared behind him. The eye was shut. Its form materialized gradually, emanating a black aura that tainted the space around it. It spread outwards and enveloped the area, and a cold, evil aura slowly flowed out from Wang Baole!