

Worth 721

Chapter 721: You Ran's True Form!

The singing voices of the three souls resonated in the heavens. The skies darkened, and devilish winds appeared out of nowhere and swept across the lands. They stirred the black mist that had emerged above ground due to the power of the Dark Artifact and had been spreading across the lands!

Spurred by the devilish winds, the black mist began to spread more rapidly across the Martian lands. They howled furiously. Everyone watched as the skies around Wang Baole transformed into an ocean of black mist!

It was an ocean of mist, a mist of death. It seemed to hail from the underworld. One might even venture to call it the Dark Sea!

The sea filled both the lands and the skies, its rumbling waves coursed through the planet. Mars became a mere shadow of its former self. The Dark Fires on Wang Baole flared up. If the path towards rebirth was lined with lighthouses, they would be the fire lighting up the lamps in those lighthouses— cold flames that burned true, that seemed to contain within them the laws of this universe.

They drove the Dark Sea to unleash its power again. Waves of spirit energy rushed forward, unstoppable and overpowering, at Daoist You Ran, threatening to pull him under!

Thunder crashed, fearsome and deafening!

Daoist You Ran tried his best to escape the Dark Sea, whose power was so great it stirred the entire planet, but it was useless. Shock and despair raced through his mind. He screamed and struggled madly, trying his best to fight back.

The waves of the Dark Sea towered like pillars, ready to crash down and flood everything. As they descended on Daoist You Ran, he blew up every face on his body in a last-ditch attempt at self-defense. In that instant, he was like a fragile air bubble, helpless and vulnerable, bursting instantly!

The force of the explosion of all those faces created a backlash inside Daoist You Ran's body. Blood flowed from his lips, and his hair, loosened and disheveled, whipped in the fierce wind. His clothes were torn, his eyes were bright with despair and madness, and his voice was sharp and brimming with hate and resentment.

"Wang Baole, I don't admit defeat!" Daoist You Ran roared and gave up all attempts at escape. His right foot stomped heavily into the ground, holding him in place as his six arms came together in a flurry of hand seals. He was burning his very life in order to gain more power. He was going to fight until his last breath.

He unleashed a hundred and twenty percent of his full cultivation, and the irregularly shaped shard in his eyes appeared again. This precious shard, clearly invaluable to him, began showing signs of self-destruction!

There was no doubt of the extreme danger that Wang Baole had placed him in. It had exceeded any other danger he had ever experienced. He threw everything to the wind as he hoped for the best—that luck would allow him to survive the onslaught of the Dark Sea.

A series of booms thundered in the air. Daoist You Ran continued to hold his ground, proving the extent of his resilience and strength in the face of extreme danger. As he continued to unleash his cultivation and sacrifice his vitality, the irregularly shaped shard in his eyes continued to show itself. It was as if the shard had transformed into an enormous rock that stood before him, protecting him from the waves of the Dark Sea rushing at him. The waves stopped before him, as if held back by the rock. They couldn't advance and pull him under!

Everyone who was watching the fight shivered at the sight. The powers that Wang Baole had displayed had been incredible, so the fact that Daoist You Ran was still alive and holding his own was simply unbelievable. However, the reality was that... Daoist You Ran himself was reaching his limits. His body shuddered violently as cracks began to appear on his arms. The Dark Sea pressed upon him with the weight of an entire planet. He feared that he couldn't hold on any longer.

"Since you won't allow me to take your spirit, I'll simply have to destroy you." Wang Baole remained calm as he stood on the Dark Sampan and observed Daoist You Ran's struggles. As he spoke in a hoarse voice, he raised his right arm, which was holding onto the Lantern Oar. The Lantern Oar pointed at Daoist You Ran, then swept downwards through the air!

The Dark Sea retreated from the invisible barrier in front of Daoist You Ran instantly. Its waves rose into the heavens, shifting and transforming into a finger, followed by a second, then a third. In the blink of an eye... a palm spanning tens of thousands of feet materialized in the air!

It swiped at Daoist You Ran!

Daoist You Ran's eyes widened, they were red and filled with intense despair.

"Mistress Zi Yue, please, save me!" Daoist You Ran screamed out in fear. It didn't matter how much he struggled, the enormous hand approached him and landed with a deafening thunder. Daoist You Ran's six arms turned into mush, and his legs caved in from the impact.

There wasn't even time for him to scream out again. The huge hand rushed at him once more... instantly capturing Daoist You Ran.

It tightened suddenly. Daoist You Ran's combat body, and his soul housed within the body... were instantly destroyed!

The fight hadn't ended yet. An intense light flashed in Wang Baole's eyes. This wasn't the first time Daoist You Ran had died. Wang Baole knew very well that his battle with Daoist You Ran had just begun!

"Or should I call it my battle with Zi Yue..." Wang Baole narrowed his eyes. He lifted his right hand into the air without hesitation and turned it towards a spot a distance away from him. His palm sliced downwards. The Dark Sampan under his feet began to rumble, and it charged out and sped through the heavens with Wang Baole aboard it.

The giant hand that had crushed Daoist You Ran rushed out alongside Wang Baole. They sped across the heavens and appeared in the skies above the main Martian City, right in front of... the Never-Ending Clan Death Dao Battleship.

The Never-Ending Clan Death Dao Battleship took action immediately upon Wang Baole's arrival. No one knew how it managed to do what it did, but tens of thousands of Never-Ending Clan puppets in the Martian City immediately blew themselves up. Their mutilated and maimed pieces of flesh and blood rose to the skies rapidly and gathered before the Never-Ending Clan battleship. Then, they amassed and transformed into a gigantic tumorous mass that slammed into the approaching Wang Baole!

Countless faces formed the surface of the tumor and screamed and cursed at Wang Baole in a language he couldn't understand. Their shrieks filled the air as they unleashed their power in an explosive eruption.

Wang Baole's pupils contracted. His left hand formed a hand seal, then it pointed. The giant hand that had been formed from the Dark Sea charged at the approaching tumor and grabbed at it.

Thunder rose into the heavens. The collision resulted in a violent impact that shook the entire planet. The tumor burst open instantly, transforming into formless flesh and blood. The giant hand that had been formed from the Dark Sea, the temporary vessel for the Dark Artifact's power, showed signs of damage and disintegration as well.

Consecutive use of the giant hand had caused its damage. The fact that Wang Baole's current level of cultivation wasn't able to allow its sustained use contributed to its damaged state as well. Finally, the partially restored state of the Dark Artifact had a great deal to do with the giant hand's rapid deterioration.

Wang Baole's face appeared slightly pale, and his organs were churning. He gritted his teeth and unleashed the Dark Fire, continuing to wield the Dark Artifact. The disintegrating giant hand rushed out instantly, its target, the Never-Ending Clan Death Dao Battleship!

He knew that the battleship was the key to this battle's outcome!

It was then that the Never-Ending Clan battleship suddenly shuddered. An incredible, terrifying force that sent Wang Baole's heart racing erupted from the battleship. It was a power so strong that the battleship itself began to fall apart. Pieces of the battleship shrank rapidly, and black vines shot out of the battleship and wrapped themselves around the latter. They appeared to be draining the planet of its energy while growing in size and length. The Martian City began to cave in, and the city started to disintegrate before their eyes!

Regardless of which side they were standing on, cultivators on the planet suffered the same fate—their vitality and their cultivation draining from their rapidly withering bodies. The lands suffered a similar fate. All across the planet, the vitality of every living creature was escaping from their bodies and rising up into the air, heading straight for the battleship, which was growing increasingly smaller by the moment!

The unexpected turn of events caught everyone by surprise. Every cultivator trembled as they tried their best to fight back, but it was of no use. Their struggle was caught on-screen and projected to the

rest of the Federation. Citizens of the Federation stared in shock and horror at the scene unfolding before them.

Alarm flashed across Wang Baole's face. He had no time to think as danger loomed over the entire planet. The Dark Fire erupted from his body as he roared and controlled the giant hand formed from the Dark Sea. He pushed the giant hand, as its vitality continued to be drained away, to grab onto a corner of the ever-shrinking, withering form of the Never-Ending Clan battleship. Then, with a sudden burst of energy from the Dark Artifact, he maneuvered the hand into flinging the battleship away into space!

A loud boom thundered in the heavens and reverberated across the entire planet. The shrinking, withering form of the Never-Ending Clan battleship transformed into a long arc of rainbow as it was forcefully thrown into the air. It crossed the heavens, tearing through space itself as it was flung out of Mars and into the cosmos!

The suction that had originated from the battleship weakened as the distance between the battleship and Mars widened. There was no time for Wang Baole to catch his breath though. He sped for the stars, where he saw something that sent shock snaking down his spine!

The battleship had lost most of its parts as they had withered away or had been torn away from it when it had been thrown into space. The remnants of its core were covered by countless vines. These vines continued to grow, extending into four human limbs and a human head. The head... was clearly Daoist You Ran's!

It was humongous!

Daoist You Ran's eyes were shut, his face covered with black vines that resembled blood veins. Under his forehead, a tumor seemed to reside, one that pumped without pause. He looked terrifying. At the same time, waves of incredible power continued to exude from his gigantic form.

As Wang Baole observed the giant's strange and startling formation, alarm bells began to ring loudly in his head. They screamed danger at him. It was then that Daoist You Ran's eyes opened abruptly.

"All thanks to my master, and to you, Wang Baole, I've finally reached complete fusion with the Death Dao Battleship!"

"As a show of my sincerest gratitude, I'm going to destroy your civilization. It shall become the food that will nourish my master—my gift to thank her for what she's done for me."

Chapter 722: Destination—Pluto

The face of every Federation citizen was filled with horror. Every cultivator on Mars was struck by shock. Terror surged through them uncontrollably. Even the cultivators from the Dao Palace were seized by fear!

They had lost all desire for battle and were trembling. They had been ignoring the presence of the Never-Ending Clan cultivators as well as the Never-Ending Clan puppets. However, as the events continued to unfold before their eyes, and as Daoist You Ran declared his intentions upon his complete fusion with the Death Dao Battleship, they could no longer fake ignorance.

Besides... if not for Wang Baole, there was a great chance that Daoist You Ran would have drained them dry of their vitality and cultivation earlier. Emotions flashed across the eyes of these Dao Palace cultivators as they stood in silence and gazed into the cosmos.

Reflected in their eyes, and in the eyes of the Martian cultivators and the Federation citizens... was Daoist You Ran's gargantuan form. He seemed to hold the power to shake heaven and earth as his enormous form towered before Wang Baole. The aura he exuded remained as supernatural and eerie as before, but the power he seemed to possess... had clearly drastically transformed!

Zi Yue... Wang Baole narrowed his eyes. He knew that Zi Yue was the cause of Daoist You Ran's transformation. He could hear the difference in Daoist You Ran's voice as well. He sounded like a machine, and there were sounds of something metallic running. It appeared that his very nature had been changed.

Wang Baole had no idea the price that had to be paid for this transformation. Regardless, he understood that Daoist You Ran's power and strength were clearly much greater than before. Wang Baole might have his Dark Artifact with him, but that didn't stop him from feeling an extreme sense of danger at that moment!

One might say that the tables had been turned the moment Daoist You Ran and the Never-Ending Clan Death Dao Battleship had completed their fusion!

Daoist You Ran didn't give Wang Baole time to react to his transformation. As his words resonated in the cosmos, he raised his right hand and pointed at Wang Baole, launching an immediate attack!

The attack didn't trigger an eruption of light, but that didn't stop the flash of alarm flickering on Wang Baole's face as he swept his Lantern Oar before him. The Dark Fire spread out instantly, transforming into a sea of fire in front of him. The Dark Sampan under his feet glided back swiftly. At that precise moment, the cosmos before him caved in. A thunderous boom reverberated in the air, and countless vines surged out of the collapsed cosmos and rushed at Wang Baole.

Where these vines passed, the cosmos withered and wrinkled. Finally, the vines collided with Wang Baole's Dark Fire.

The Dark Fire, which had proven a bane against everything else, met a worthy opponent for the first time. Amidst the rumbling of their collision, the Dark Fire burned numerous vines. However, it was also rapidly being extinguished. Within a few seconds, the Dark Fire was completely put out. The scorched vines wriggled as new shoots sprouted from their bodies. Then, they made a second charge at Wang Baole.

Daoist You Ran narrowed his eyes, and his right hand formed a series of hand seals. Numerous more vines emerged from his body, surging into the cosmos. They looked like countless tentacles swaying in the air as they raced towards Wang Baole. It was as if they intended to surround him fully and trap him within!

That wasn't the end of Daoist You Ran's attack. A murderous glint flickered in his eyes as he stepped forward and raised his left hand. It tightened into a fist that then smashed towards Wang Baole with overpowering force. It was a punch that seemed to contain the power to destroy everything in its path!

Countless vines danced in the air, swift and innumerable. They surrounded Wang Baole, on the verge of closing in and trapping him. Daoist You Ran's fist was descending upon Wang Baole as well, carrying with it incredible destructive power.

The expression on Wang Baole's face was dark as the intense danger and immense threat of death loomed over him.

Every one of the vines contained incredible resistance and resilience. Wang Baole's Dark Fire could burn them, but it was clear that he didn't have enough Dark Fire when compared to the countless number of vines. That was why he hadn't been able to destroy them completely.

What made things worse was how the vines would continue to regenerate as long as they weren't completely destroyed. Their strong regenerative abilities and inherent power made Wang Baole's heart sink. The overwhelming power exuding from the approaching Daoist You Ran added greater stress to Wang Baole.

We can't continue the fight here... Grim determination flashed across Wang Baole's eyes. He knew that continuing the fight here might result in collateral damage inflicted on Mars. Any one of their attacks could be disastrous for the planet. At the same time... while Mars was a huge planet, when compared to the entire Solar System... it still wasn't the place where he could unleash his full power.

I have to leave this place! Wang Baole didn't hesitate as he watched the vines around him charge at him. He placed the Lantern Oar on the Dark Sampan, the sound of both artifacts coming into contact resonating in the air once more. Then, a string of complicated Dark Sect spells came out of Wang Baole's mouth!

As soon as the spells were spoken, the State Preceptor's face appeared on his Dark Robe, and the figure of the little boy drifted out from the Lantern Oar. There was a fearsome look on the boy's face, it was lined with fury and violence. He screamed, and the lamp on the Lantern Oar suddenly cracked!

The Dark Fire inside the lamp surged out. The flames spread out, greater in number compared to the Dark Fires housed inside Wang Baole's body. He was sacrificing the Lantern Oar in order to unleash the power of the Dark Fire once again!

Black flames flowed out of the broken lamp, surrounded Wang Baole, then surged outward in the blink of an eye. It was like the eruption of a volcano, black fire that clashed with the surrounding vines.

Thunder rumbled in the skies. The vines might be resilient, but Wang Baole had paid a heavy price for this second attack of Dark Fire. The vines weren't its match. Most of them turned into dust in an instant, though the Dark Fire also suffered a hit in the collision. As a result, it wasn't a match for Daoist You Ran's punch. In the next instant, it scattered to the winds like autumn leaves. Daoist You Ran's fist smashed through the sea of Dark Fire and headed straight for Wang Baole.

Just as his fist was about to land on Wang Baole, the State Preceptor howled. The Dark Robe ballooned into an incredible size, surrounding Wang Baole like a protective barrier. Daoist You Ran's destructive punch landed on the robe.

Thunderous booms reverberated in the air, and the Dark Robe shattered into multiple pieces. The State Preceptor's face grew blurry, and Wang Baole himself spat out a mouthful of blood. Then, the blow

pushed the Dark Sampan under his feet... it dashed out of the sea of fire in the next moment, shot out of the wall of vines surrounding him, and reappeared... in the distant starlit skies.

It didn't stop there, it continued to head for the stars.

"Trying to escape?" Daoist You Ran narrowed his eyes. He didn't pull back his right fist, and instead, the fist suddenly stretched out in an impossible manner, moving towards Wang Baole as if in pursuit!

His fingers stretched rapidly as well. It was a disturbing sight to behold. Wang Baole had experienced numerous fights since he had first embarked on his journey of cultivation. He was battle-worn and experienced. He didn't even spare a glance for what was going on behind him. A resolute light glimmered in his eyes.

"Lantern Oar, I promise that I'll remake you again one day in the future!" The little boy hovered above the ruined Lantern Oar, on the verge of tears. He could only nod in reply. As he turned back and stared at the giant hand pursuing him, a flash of murderous grudge appeared in his eyes. He started chanting a curse in step with Wang Baole's intentions. Then, Wang Baole released the Lantern Oar. The little boy's soul returned to the artifact, and the Lantern Oar swung itself around and charged at Daoist You Ran's giant hand!

Waves of self-destructive power surged from the Lantern Oar, growing in strength until they reached their peak. Then, in the next instant, the oar exploded. The explosion transformed into an invisible barrier that stopped Daoist You Ran's giant hand in its tracks!

Despite Daoist You Ran's desire to continue the pursuit, he wasn't given a choice to do so. No matter how damaged the Lantern Oar was, it was still a Divine Armament of superior grade. Its timely and region-specific self-destruction forced the powerful Daoist You Ran into retreating so as to evade the attack!

Explosive booms thundered in the air, and Daoist You Ran was successfully held back by the explosion. Wang Baole spat out a mouthful of blood as the Dark Sampan unleashed its full force and sped away into the distant cosmos. There was a fierce glint in Wang Baole's eyes. He knew that he wasn't Daoist You Ran's match at the moment. The only way to turn the tides of this fight might be to receive a boost of power from the largest planet in the Solar System. There was also something else... the summoning call from Pluto!

He was making a gamble. He was betting on his importance to Zi Yue, betting that it surpassed the importance of the Federation. He might not have been confident of his odds prior to his battle with Zi Yue, but after absorbing the power of her finger, he now felt a certain measure of confidence in his judgment.

He was also betting on Zi Yue's nature. Someone who was so selfish and focused on her own self-interests wouldn't think of trying to threaten him with the survival of a civilization, as that would be the ultimate childish act in her eyes.

Chapter 723: A Battlefield Created Just for Wang Baole!

Wang Baole made the right bet!

Daoist You Ran was a mere puppet, so what he thought wasn't important. What was important was how Zi Yue thought, and because of the loss of her finger, Zi Yue clearly thought that Wang Baole was more important than the Federation!

It made sense. After all, her plan to destroy the Federation civilization was only a trial she was conducting on Daoist You Ran, and part of her practice of the Star-Seeding Dao. Her intention all along had been to allow Daoist You Ran to carry out her plans. She had only wanted to remain an observer while using this opportunity to advance her cultivation.

It was the same as flying a kite and watching where the wind took it. Essentially, she didn't care whether the Federation was destroyed or not. Wang Baole, on the other hand, had become a threat to the core of her existence. She had clearly realized that she couldn't interfere directly. No matter how one looked at it, she simply wasn't going to let Wang Baole escape!

Besides, events had developed to a point where the situation had spiraled slightly out of Zi Yue's control. The spell that she had cast on Daoist You Ran had been a test of her Star-Seeding Dao as well as a part of her cultivation. That was why she had spent such a long time preparing for this. Once she completed her observation of Daoist You Ran's journey through his conquest of the Federation, her Star-Seeding Dao would've advanced to a greater level.

That was why she couldn't give up. Another reason that she couldn't was that she had done her calculations. This was her only chance of finding the object that Chen Mofeng had hidden from her, the important item essential to her practicing of the Star-Seeding Dao.

In addition... in her original plan, the destruction of the Federation civilization and the sacrifice of an entire star system was going to bring her sufficient energy and nourishment for her rise to power. She would be able to master the ancient sword and brand the elders slumbering on the ancient sword with the Star-Seeding Dao. The Solar System would become the foundation upon which she would advance further in cultivation and attain the Eternal Star realm within a short period of time!

Her plan had been perfect, and it had unfolded perfectly, until... Wang Baole had appeared!

This meant too much to her. She had given too much of herself for this. They were at a point where she was ready to reap her returns. If not for all of the above reasons, Zi Yue would have stayed clear of the first Divine King and left. Now, though... she could only grit her teeth and carry on!

She wasn't interested in killing Wang Baole. Due to her current circumstances, she had no choice but to seize his very life and remove him from the karmic cycle. This was the conclusion she had reached after using the Star-Seeding Dao to run through the various scenarios. It was the only solution that would release her from the karmic cycle as well!

As her will pulsed through Daoist You Ran, the latter's eyes flashed. Daoist You Ran ignored the battle taking place on Mars and began his pursuit of Wang Baole. The both of them vanished from Mars instantly as they raced towards the stars glittering in the distant cosmos.

Their impossible speed ensured that no one could watch their battle and make sense of it. The Solar System Array Formation, which was weakened due to its earlier waves of controlled self-destruction, could no longer perform long-distance observation. Folks on Mars and Earth could only wait anxiously as they watched the two disappear into the distance.

Fortunately... the battle on Mars reached a balance of sorts following Daoist You Ran's departure. Everyone knew that the fight that was taking place on Mars was no longer the decisive battle. The decisive battle was the one between the two cultivators racing away from them!

The Federation's victory in this war was going to be determined by Wang Baole's victory in his fight with Daoist You Ran. If he won, their civilization would live on. If he lost... everything would be destroyed and turned to dust and ashes.

Wang Baole shouldered the fate of an entire civilization, but he wasn't in a great state currently. Blood seeped profusely from his lips. He was traveling as fast as he was capable of. Behind him was Daoist You Ran, who was equally swift. It was difficult for Wang Baole to put distance between the two of them.

He kept calling out to Pluto and replying to its earlier summoning call desperately as he raced through the cosmos. However, he was too far away. In addition, even though he had been able to sense the original summoning call, his limited cultivation made it difficult for him to establish a connection or even get through to the other side!

The problem of distance can be easily solved, but what about the problem of insufficient cultivation? Wang Baole was filled with anxiety. Daoist You Ran seemed to have unleashed some kind of mystic technique, as Wang Baole could sense a sudden spike in Daoist You Ran's speed. The anxiety racing through Wang Baole intensified.

He knew that if things remained as they were, Daoist You Ran would soon catch up with him. Without any powerful means to fend off Daoist You Ran's attacks, Wang Baole's death was almost inevitable!

Jupiter it is! Determination flashed across Wang Baole's eyes as he decided to head for Jupiter. He would still be shortening the distance between him and Pluto. In addition, the Stellar Nascent Soul's unique capability would allow him to receive a boost of power from the planet that would then make up for his current insufficient cultivation!

The Dark Sampan beneath his feet began burning its own vitality. No price was too heavy as he raced through the cosmos in a blur, almost like he was teleporting, and crossed vast distances. When he next appeared, he was in Jupiter's vicinity.

The price for crossing such vast distances so swiftly was great. Wang Baole spat out a mouthful of blood and almost collapsed, his physical body pushed to its limit and almost unable to withstand such travel. The Dark Sampan's form had turned blurry and indistinct due to the energy it had expended, and it now resembled a thin cloud of mist!

It hadn't been repaired fully and now appeared to suffer great damage, but Wang Baole didn't have the time or energy to care about that. He commanded the power of the Dark Sect once more and continued his approach towards Jupiter, which was still a distance away. Regardless, his Nascent Soul was already becoming more lively in his body.

The connection between him and Pluto also seemed stronger and clearer than before. This greatly boosted Wang Baole's confidence in his success.

Jupiter alone might not be enough... Madness entered Wang Baole's eyes then. He just thought of a place that could greatly augment his Stellar Nascent Soul to levels that would seem almost terrifying.

He had no idea the current distance separating him and Daoist You Ran. Based on his calculations, though, he just needed to reach Jupiter. He still might not stand a chance to win a fight against Daoist You Ran, but he could definitely get through to Pluto!

His Dark Sampan burned its vitality to unleash greater speed, pulling him closer to Jupiter. It was then that a thunderous boom erupted in the cosmos behind him. Daoist You Ran had slid through space just like he had and reappeared behind Wang Baole, a frustrated look on his face. He then immediately shifted. Countless vines erupted from his back, intertwined with one another, and transformed into a pair of enormous wings. A single flap of the wings sent waves of spirit energy rippling through space and gave Daoist You Ran another burst of speed. He dashed out, his hands merged into a series of hand seals as dozens of runes lit up his body.

“Wang Baole, the Solar System is a small place. Do you really think you can escape me?” Daoist You Ran’s voice echoed in the cosmos. The runes separated from his body and floated in space, then they sped towards Wang Baole, their speed swifter than Daoist You Ran’s. The distance between the two had been shrinking all along. These runes crossed the distance swiftly, and three of them immediately caught up with Wang Baole. Before they came into contact with him, they exploded abruptly!

The shock waves created from the explosion carried the power to destroy the cosmos. They surged through space, whipping up a storm as they rushed at Wang Baole.

Wang Baole didn’t spare the attack a glance. With a wave of his hand, his Dark Robe ballooned once more to fend off the attack. Blood seeped from his lips, but he kept his speed up and continued to use the Dark Sampan’s vitality as fuel. He was approaching Jupiter, and the Stellar Nascent Soul inside his body was becoming stronger.

The connection with Pluto was becoming more powerful as well, to the point that he could sense the summoning call from Pluto. It had originated from something whose form remained unclear to him at the moment.

It’s still not enough! Wang Baole narrowed his eyes, gritted his teeth, and continued running. Daoist You Ran’s runes continued to explode behind him, inflicting increasingly greater injury to Wang Baole. Regardless, Wang Baole continued his hasty escape to Jupiter. His Stellar Nascent Soul began to brim with power, and its vitality began to overflow to the rest of his body, causing his injuries to heal almost instantly.

Finally, he saw Jupiter within his line of sight. Wang Baole’s Nascent Soul opened its eyes then, and a terrifying power pulsed within those eyes. Strange waves of energy flowed from Jupiter and into Wang Baole. This was a power he had never experienced, one that lit Wang Baole’s eyes up with an intense light.

Wang Baole tried his best to hide his sudden transformation. Regardless, Daoist You Ran still managed to sense something was amiss. The expression on Daoist You Ran’s face shifted as a sense of foreboding settled in his gut. However, there wasn’t time to think. Instead, with a flash of determination in his eyes, Daoist You Ran raised his right hand and ripped off his left arm. Then, he roared, “Divine Star Transformation!”

His amputated left arm began to wriggle. In the blink of an eye, it transformed into a black stick insect that spanned a thousand feet long. With a shriek, it leaped into space and lunged for Wang Baole, its jaws wide open and ready to devour the latter whole. Wang Baole's Dark Robe ballooned in size again, but it was no use, the stick insect pierced clean through the robe!

As the stick insect approached, a flash of violence crossed Wang Baole's eyes. His body blurred as he summoned multiple avatars hastily. A dozen avatars appeared. They didn't attack the stick insect, and instead, they exploded. The force of the explosion propelled Wang Baole forward in a sudden rush. Thunder rumbled in the cosmos amidst the avatars' explosions, and the burst of speed pushed Wang Baole closer to Jupiter. He finally entered the asteroid belt that lay between Jupiter and Mars!

This was Wang Baole's target, this was the idea he had thought of that would allow him to receive a boost of power that would raise his current cultivation to terrifying levels!

That was because hundreds of thousands of small planets could be found here. They were right in front of Wang Baole, a special planet that had been discovered by the Federation a millennium ago was located here as well... it was Ceres, the only dwarf planet in this asteroid belt!

It was here that the Stellar Nascent Soul would unleash unprecedented power and make known to the world its might!

Chapter 724: Hades' Coffin!

The Dark Sampan was still burning its vitality, pushing Wang Baole forward as it sped through space, thundering. When it reappeared again, Wang Baole was atop Ceres!

The gray planet lay beneath Wang Baole's feet. He could feel it trying to fuse with his Dark Sampan. Wang Baole stood stock still on the planet, then turned suddenly, his eyes bright with an intense light. He stopped holding back the cultivation inside his body and unleashed it. His Nascent Soul unfurled and allowed its power to erupt!

This explosion of power was fueled by Ceres and Jupiter, as well as... the hundreds of thousands of smaller planets in the region!

It was a power... that could move planets!

The Stellar Nascent Soul's unique trait allowed its owner to grow ever more powerful the nearer he was to a planet. The size of the planet directly affected how much more powerful the Stellar Nascent Soul holder would become.

The same... applied to the number of planets in the Stellar Nascent Soul holder's vicinity. An individual small planet might not provide a significant boost to the Stellar Nascent Soul holder's power, but when amassed in the hundreds of thousands, the combined boost in power they gave one would be incredible.

Ceres itself was a source of power that boosted Wang Baole's cultivation, while another was the largest planet in the Solar System... Jupiter!

The power free for Wang Baole's taking was incredible. This was the greatest leap in cultivation that Wang Baole had experienced since he had acquired the Stellar Nascent Soul!

This location... was second only to the mysterious Pluto. For Wang Baole, it was the second-best battlefield he could find in the entire Solar System!

His cultivation surged outwards, forming a fierce hurricane in space. Countless wisps of white Qi drifted from Ceres, from Jupiter, and from the countless minor planets around Wang Baole. It was as if they were being pulled towards Wang Baole. They surrounded him, transforming the hurricane into a pure snow white. Wang Baole stood in the center of the storm, like a child of the cosmos, a god who had descended upon the living world!

The power he was exuding surpassed that of a Soul Conduit realm cultivator, reaching the level of a Spirit Immortal realm cultivator. In fact, he might even be more powerful than the latter. He had reached an unbelievable level of cultivation. At that moment, he finally felt the connection between him and Pluto settle with great difficulty!

He could feel... the vast frozen Plutonian land, temperatures so low almost no living thing could survive, then buried underground, something... it was a coffin!

Shock rippled through Wang Baole. He tried nudging the coffin through the connection he had with Pluto, but he failed. He needed more power. He wasn't going to succeed in one shot, he'd have to accumulate more power before trying again.

I need more time! A fierce light glimmered in Wang Baole's eyes. He didn't stop his attempts at awakening the coffin as he raised his right hand and pointed towards the approaching Daoist You Ran. The latter's face was colored with alarm!

"You Ran, let's fight!"

Wang Baole's roar was filled with his desire to battle. It affected Ceres, Jupiter, and the hundreds of thousands of minor planets around him. It was as if the entire star-filled cosmos was roaring with him!

Wang Baole swung his arms to his sides, and the Thearch Armor materialized over him instantly, covering him from head to toe. It looked different. The armor was white, looking one with the hurricane!

The Dark Robe, tattered and torn, became a cape for the armor, fluttering in the still air. The demonic eye also appeared behind Wang Baole!

The boost from the planets had transformed not only the Thearch Armor but the demonic eye as well. It remained shut, but it appeared so very real, like an actual eye of a planet that was in slumber!

It was an alarming sight even for one as powerful as Daoist You Ran. He stumbled to a halt, then stared warily at Wang Baole. He could feel a rising sense of danger.

Their eyes met, and Wang Baole's demonic eye opened abruptly. An invisible force descended upon the cosmos, drawing upon the power of the surrounding planets and transforming it into something tangible—a light with the power to freeze everything in its tracks, which fell over Daoist You Ran and enveloped him entirely.

Daoist You Ran shuddered. Before he could even try to free himself, Wang Baole dashed forward, like an arrow off a bow. He gathered the power of the stars in his right fist and activated his Stellar Nascent Soul. The Divine Armament right hand of his Thearch Armor dazzled with the light of a fierce sun as he charged at Daoist You Ran!

The collision of the two caused a loud eruption that reverberated in the cosmos. Daoist You Ran spat out his first mouthful of blood in this fight. It was proof of how powerful he had become since he had fused with the Never-Ending Clan Death Dao Battleship. He had faced a sudden attack from Wang Baole, one that had behind it a boost of power from the planets as well as from Wang Baole's demonic eye. Despite that, the injury he suffered was hardly serious. In fact, it healed instantly. It was as if the core powering him possessed vast stores of vitality that gave him a near-invincible body!

His counterattack was swift and fierce. Numerous black vines danced in the air as he unleashed a series of spells with a flurry of hand seals. His physical body became his weapon that he unleashed alongside the vines and his spells. Spirit energy rippled through space as he clashed with Wang Baole in the asteroid belt.

Daoist You Ran healed fast, but so did Wang Baole. His recovery rate was faster than the ordinary cultivator at the same cultivation realm. With the incredible boost of power he currently enjoyed, his injuries were healing immediately, at the same rate as Daoist You Ran's.

They were pitting their powerfully built forms against each other in a brutal fight. Neither held back. Each clash gave both of them a fresh set of injuries. They persisted... but neither could bring the other down!

Wang Baole might have suffered a slight disadvantage, seeing how he hadn't been Daoist You Ran's match at the start of the fight and was now being pushed into a defensive position. But... Daoist You Ran was also caught in a fix. He just couldn't seem to defeat Wang Baole.

Things had spiraled out of Daoist You Ran's control. They were now caught in a prolonged battle. Daoist You Ran tried to destroy the smaller planets around him, but he still wasn't able to completely destroy Wang Baole's source of power within a short period of time.

As time passed, anxiety and unease grew in Daoist You Ran's heart. He couldn't explain where these feelings were coming from, it was an instinct. He had a feeling that if the battle continued to drag on, he was going to lose and be killed.

Is this the legendary Stellar Nascent Soul... this doesn't make sense at all! Why do I feel so much unease? There must be something that I'm missing!

Zi Yue felt the same sense of uneasiness. In fact, the unease that Daoist You Ran had been feeling had originated from her. She was a cultivator of the Star-Seeding Dao and could control the karmic cycle. That meant that her uneasiness and sense of looming danger was even more intense than Daoist You Ran's. It felt like a grim reaper's scythe hovering over her neck, ready to fall at any moment.

Nevertheless, she couldn't step in directly and attack Wang Baole. She could only grit her teeth and struggle with the sudden desire to change her preset plans. The idea grew roots in her head, and her mind was made up immediately. She was going to complete the final steps to advance her Star-Seeding

Dao in the fastest way possible, reap her gains in Dao, and advance her cultivation. Then, she would decide whether she would remain or leave!

It was a difficult decision to come to, as she would be forced to give up many things. Her plans for the future were going to be disrupted as well. But the threat that she was feeling forced her to this. Zi Yue immediately barked out her orders to Daoist You Ran, her instructions resonating in his head!

“Give up fighting Wang Baole. Use your essence as fuel and convert it to power. I will give you an additional boost so that you will possess enough power to destroy the Federation, open the gates to the karmic cycle, and complete your destiny! You Ran, since the moment you met me, your destiny was determined. You are meant to destroy this civilization. This is... the destiny that I, Zi Yue, have given you!”

As she spoke, a vast region of the cosmos began to twist and contort itself. No one knew how she managed to accomplish that feat, but a black hole-like vortex appeared suddenly in the cosmos!

There was a patch of sky in the vortex, as well as a blue marble of a planet. It was... Earth!

The black hole was like a door that opened to another place in the universe!

The sight sent Wang Baole reeling back with shock!

Daoist You Ran’s eyes began to shimmer with an intense light. He started muttering to himself.

“I will follow my destiny and destroy this civilization. This is my destiny... I must get this done!” His murmurs rippled through space. His physical form, his core, his spirit, and his cultivation became fuel, which he set afire without hesitation. Before Wang Baole could come to terms with what Daoist You Ran had just said, the latter had transformed his enormous form into a sea of fire!

Daoist You Ran raised his face skyward and howled madly. He was burning in the sea of fire. An enormous, illusory hand reached out from the flames. It stretched from thousands of feet to tens of thousands, then hundreds of thousands, then millions of feet long. It grew to the size of a planet and then charged into the vortex, heading straight for Earth... making a grab for the latter!

The sudden turn of events happened too quickly. In the vortex, Earth began to lose its color. The planet was being drained of its life—the planet where he had spent his childhood, where his parents were, where everything he cared about was!

Wang Baole’s eyes reddened. The sudden, overwhelming surge of emotions forced his potential to be fully unleashed. The seal of the Dark Fire appeared on his forehead, then spread rapidly to the rest of his body. It was accompanied by a throbbing pain. Wang Baole howled, his face contorting in agony. The connection he had with Pluto suddenly settled fully!

The vastness of time, ancient and ageless, leaped across the cosmos and surged into Wang Baole’s mind. He could feel the coffin and what it held within. It was the power of the Dark Sect, unimaginably strong yet free for his taking. It was tinged with a familiar warmth!

It was a warmth like rain in the springtime, warmth that nourished his spirit. It freed him from the pain and possible dangers of overexerting himself as he unleashed his full potential. It gave Wang Baole the energy to raise his right hand and point at Daoist You Ran’s hand, which was headed straight for Earth!

“Soul, come!”

In an instant, Pluto began to shake. Its frozen lands collapsed, and huge crevices splintered the earth. Waves of terrifying energy surged from these crevices. They had been hidden underground for thousands of years, perhaps even longer, and now, they rose to the skies!

Chapter 725: Extermination!

The universe shuddered as waves of spirit energy surged out from Pluto and spread across the entire Solar System!

At that very moment, it had become the center of the Solar System. Even the sun’s light seemed to dim considerably as the waves of spirit energy surged from Pluto. The lands of Pluto shuddered, as if on the verge of collapse. Cracks appeared on the ground, spreading and splintering further like a growing spider web. Within the blink of an eye... these cracks covered the entire surface of Pluto.

Black mist erupted from these cracks and blanketed the entire planet. Pluto became invisible to the naked eye. Instead, what one saw... was an enormous ball of mist!

The mist boiled and rumbled, its form transforming rapidly from a sphere to something longer. When the transformation finally ended... what appeared in space was a gigantic coffin!

It appeared ancient, its aura, wearied with the passing of time, unleashed fully when the coffin appeared. Waves of energy surged into the surrounding cosmos. The ancient song of the Dark Sect could be heard coming from the coffin!

It was a strange song that traveled far. Within an instant, the entire Solar System was filled with the song. Mars and Earth alike, all living creatures within the Solar System, even those deep in slumber on the ancient sword, couldn’t escape from this song... they heard it loud and clear!

“When the heavens and earth separate, the cycle of fate stops...”

“Knowing what happened in the past, the one who suffers now is...”

“Knowing what’s to come in the future, the one who is working hard now is...”

The song echoed through space, and every planet in the Solar System came to a standstill. They stopped their rotation, their orbit. Meteors and dust alike fell still. All laws of this universe had fallen under the song’s influence and lost all effect.

All life, any life that was trapped in the cycle of life and death, was ensnared by the song that was traveling out of the coffin. The entire Solar System seemed to have become a still painting at that moment!

In the painting, there were all living creatures, all planets, all life. Naturally, there was also Daoist You Ran and Zi Yue... both of them were in the painting as well!

But there was no Wang Baole.

As a Dark Child, he had risen beyond this level. He was no longer part of the painting but its observer.

He stood on Ceres and gazed at what was happening around him. His senses extended themselves as the power of the song spread outwards. It was as if he could see the entire Solar System at a single glance.

He saw planets, dust, countless lives. On every living being, he saw an indistinct shadow that circled them. This indistinct shadow... was known to the Dark Sect as one's soul. It was proof of one's existence!

Wang Baole had a feeling that if he wanted, he need only think about it, and he would be able to harvest the tens of thousands of souls found in the Solar System. There would be no laws of this universe that could stop him from doing that. Even the Heavenly Dao must watch silently, powerless to stop him!

"Perhaps I'm not yet capable of achieving such a feat now. But... the path that I've chosen will give me access to this power. I'll be able to have this power even before I reach my full potential," Wang Baole muttered as he gazed at the painting of the Solar System. He had a strong feeling in his gut that if his level of cultivation were higher, he might even be able to... change the laws governing this universe at this very moment!

He would be able to change each planet's location, dictate whether they stood still or orbited the sun. He could even stop the sun from giving off light and heat, break it apart and change its very structure and essence. He was free to change anything and everything in this painting of the Solar System!

"Is this what makes the Dark Sect such a terrifying force?" Wang Baole whispered to himself. It suddenly dawned upon him.

The Dark Sect was like a pen that allowed one to change reality!

They didn't simply have the right to act on behalf of the Heavenly Dao and dictate one's death... they had the ability to change the Heavenly Dao itself and write their own laws. They might appear to be servants of the Heavenly Dao, but in reality... the Heavenly Dao was their instrument, their Dharmic Artifact. With this Dharmic Artifact in hand, they could write the laws of the entire universe!

Even a powerful force like the Dark Sect cannot escape the inevitability of its fall. Regardless, even though it has become history, its power, which still lingers in this world, can change the world to a certain degree... This coffin, which has rested inside Pluto for who knows how long, is one source of the Dark Sect's remaining power!

Wang Baole was silent. There was no way he wouldn't recognize the familiar aura coming from the coffin. It was his master's aura!

His memories from the Dark Art allowed him to come to a conclusion. The coffin had been part of his master's plan. It had been for Wang Baole. His master had manipulated the Dao in a manner unknown to Wang Baole, sent the coffin through time and space, and allowed it to appear inside Pluto.

Filled with gratitude and sorrow, Wang Baole began to examine the people in the painting of the Solar System. His eyes swept past everyone before finally resting on Daoist You Ran.

He saw Daoist You Ran's soul, as well as who rested within his soul. It was Zi Yue!

Zi Yue's presence was different from the rest. Special. She seemed to have no physical form. Instead, she was an illusory Soul Seed resting inside Daoist You Ran's soul.

Wang Baole's eyes swept across the entire Solar System. He examined the Death Dao Battleship and the ancient sword. There were no traces of Zi Yue's true form. What he found instead... was a near-imperceptible strand that was connected to Zi Yue's Soul Seed, which extended into the cosmos beyond the Solar System.

I understand now. The real Zi Yue isn't here at all. Instead, what we are fighting is only one of her Soul Seeds!

Wang Baole narrowed his eyes, his gaze following the strand and attempting to see into the cosmos beyond. Regardless, he didn't gain much out of the exercise. An icy glint flashed in his eyes then, and he raised his right hand and pointed at Daoist You Ran!

The coffin on Pluto shuddered, its lid sliding open slightly. The song became louder instantly, and a black arm slowly reached out from inside the coffin, expanding in size and heading for the painting of the Solar System and Daoist You Ran!

It was swift, crossing the vast expanse of space in an instant and appearing before Daoist You Ran. Without hesitation, it reached into Daoist You Ran and grabbed his soul, as well as Zi Yue's Soul Seed, which was resting inside Daoist You Ran's soul!

Both Daoist You Ran and Zi Yue's Soul Seed were powerless before the giant hand. They appeared to lose all ability to fight, allowing the hand to yank them out of Daoist You Ran's body and drag them into the coffin with it.

Everything happened instantly. It took but a moment for the black arm to return into the coffin, for the lid to fall back heavily, for the mist to dissipate. The coffin transformed into a mass of black mist that wormed into Pluto. Then, the cracks on the planet vanished, completely healed.

It was as if nothing had happened!

As Pluto resumed normalcy, the Solar System did the same as well. Planets began to rotate and orbit once more, dust continued their aimless drifting in space, sunlight spilled across the universe—every living creature returned to their normal states at that moment!

Perhaps what was truly terrifying... was how no one had noticed the momentary pause in time. Perhaps Daoist You Ran's fallen form had been the only thing to have witnessed the moment and glimpsed the truth hidden within the Solar System!

Daoist You Ran's body immediately shriveled up and broke apart, turning into ashes and dust that scattered to the cosmos, lost in the asteroid belt.

His body and soul were completely destroyed!

His death affected every Never-Ending Clan cultivator on Mars, and the light faded from their eyes. They fell to the ground and turned to dust, as their existence had been rooted in Daoist You Ran's existence.

Mie Liezi and the others whose minds had fallen under Daoist You Ran's control shuddered as they regained their senses!

The weakening of the Solar System Array Formation meant that no one had been able to observe the final battle between Wang Baole and Daoist You Ran. However, every Federation cultivator on Mars saw the Never-Ending Clan cultivators turn to dust, and Mie Liezi and those under Daoist You Ran's control regain their minds. Excitement and joy filled their hearts as they guessed what had happened.

Of course, there was no way they could get immediate confirmation on whether their guesses were true. Nevertheless, one thing was certain, the war that had the potential to end the Federation civilization... had finally come to an end!

It was then that Wang Baole spat out a mouthful of blood as his body slid to the ground. The injury and pain he had experienced from overextending himself might have been soothed by his master's healing, but this battle had still caused him deep injuries. Now that everything had finally ended, the tension finally drained from his body. Unable to stand any longer, he passed out.

At this exact moment... somewhere far away from the Solar System, on a distant and foreign star system, was a rather unique planet. It was unique because of the vines, blood, and flesh covering its surface. It was a horrifying sight to behold. If one should examine the planet more closely, they might spot between the mesh of vines, blood, and flesh, a face with shut eyes.

The face appeared indistinct. Regardless, one could immediately tell that it was clearly... Zi Yue!

Her eyes opened. They seemed to contain countless dimensions and tens of thousands of eyes. Within each eye sat a figure, and suddenly, one of those figures cracked and shattered.

"Wang Baole?"

Chapter 726: Project Dark Swallow!

On the forty-eighth year of the Spirit Inception Era, war had broken out between the Dao Palace and the Federation.

Five months later, the war had ended. The Dao Palace cultivators, led by Mie Liezi, had chosen to surrender.

It had been a brief war, but one that had been intense and with a high casualty count. Its end had been viewed as a mystery by almost everyone.

That was because no one had witnessed the most decisive battle. It had remained a mystery that had fueled many rumors regarding how the war had truly ended.

Rumors spread from person to person. During this period, the postwar cleanup and rebuilding efforts continued nonstop. The first on the agenda was what to do with the Dao Palace cultivators who had surrendered. Thirty percent of the surviving cultivators were judged to have committed grievous crimes. Their sentence was declared forcefully by Duan Muque and broadcast to the entire Federation. They were to be executed!

It was a harsh sentence, but the people of the Federation needed this. There was no way they could allow those who had invaded Federation territory to surrender without suffering any consequences. Duan Muque was willing to bear the consequence of allowing such a massacre to happen!

In addition, almost all of the Dao Palace's upper echelons were planted with a Spirit Science hex—a product of Zhao Pinfang's research. They were no longer a threat to the Federation. They were also given a five-hundred-year sentence!

They would be released from their hexes five hundred years later, once they completed their sentence. Mie Liezi's status and circumstance made him an exceptional case. While the Federation hesitated over his final sentence, he chose to make an oath and return to the Dao Palace. He would guard the Dao Palace for the rest of his life. Unless the Federation summoned him, he wouldn't take a single step out of the Dao Palace.

As part of the war reparations, the Dao Palace would grant the Federation full access to their resources. That included access to all their records and mystic techniques. The Federation would also possess unilateral rights to enter and leave the Dao Palace. Federation cultivators could now enter and leave the ancient sword freely. Of course... under Feng Qiuran's insistence, the deepest regions of the ancient sword were designated as restricted zones. Federation cultivators were forbidden from entering the area and disturbing the slumber of the Dao Palace elders.

Next... Wang Baole's proposal to form an alliance prior to the outbreak of the war was raised again. Duan Muque gave it the full attention it deserved, summoning the upper echelons of the Federation as well as Feng Qiuran to discuss the matter. Both parties made minor modifications to the original proposal and agreed to the setup of the alliance.

In the forty-ninth year of the Spirit Inception Era, the Solar System Alliance was established. Its creation heralded a new era—the Solar Era!

There were currently two members in the Solar System Alliance, the Federation civilization and the Vast Expanse Dao Palace. Alliance regulations stated that the Federation civilization was the only member to possess a longstanding, first-tier membership status in the alliance. It had the power to change or veto decisions of the alliance. The Vast Expanse Dao Palace, on the other hand, held a second-tier membership.

These rules clearly gave the Federation a great advantage over the Dao Palace. The latter would never have agreed to such terms in the past. Even though Feng Qiuran had always had the intention to build an alliance with the Federation, she would have pushed for the Dao Palace to be the leader of the alliance. However, the war and the power that the Federation had displayed during this war had changed her mind. Both Feng Qiuran and the Dao Palace began to view the Federation with greater respect, and they recognized its power. The key reason for their change was still... Wang Baole!

His power and his final mysterious battle with Daoist You Ran had resulted in Feng Qiuran's agreement to the terms of the alliance. It didn't matter that no one had witnessed the final battle.

The honeymoon period between the Dao Palace and the Federation officially began with the alliance's establishment. Communications and exchanges between the two took place with unprecedented frequency. The wealth of knowledge and mystic techniques the Dao Palace possessed were invaluable

to the Federation. Spirit Science development in the Federation progressed rapidly during this period of exchange.

The Dao Palace stood to gain as well. Extension of the Federation's infrastructure, such as the Spirit Internet, as well as provisions of daily supplies, were a great help to the Dao Palace cultivators. As the immigration laws between the two grew more liberal, many Dao Palace cultivators and Federation cultivators on Earth chose to immigrate.

Rebuilding efforts in the alliance were ongoing as well. With the Dao Palace's support, rebuilding efforts on Mars progressed smoothly. Deep excavations on Saturn, Uranus, and Neptune were successes with the combined efforts of the Dao Palace and the Federation. They became the first bases of the alliance. To a certain extent, they could even be considered as the first free cities of the alliance.

There was Jupiter as well... After some deliberation, the Dao Palace decided not to bring the matter of the planet up. The Federation, on the other hand, utilized their first-tier membership status to classify Jupiter and its surrounding asteroid belt as a restricted zone!

Few understood the strategic value of that decision. Not Li Xingwen, Duan Muque, and the other upper echelons of the Federation though, who had sought Wang Baole's advice and understood the situation. They were prepared to cordon the region and create a place that belonged solely to Wang Baole.

The alliance overflowed with life and opportunity. The smooth assimilation between the Dao Palace and the Federation allowed many great things to be done. Civilization advanced without stop. At the same time, Wang Baole received the Federation's recognition. He had not only become their hero, but everyone—from the citizen on the ground to the upper echelons of the Federation, and even the Dao Palace—knew very well that he was going to be the next Federation President. He was going to hold the highest office in the Solar System Alliance!

That wasn't going to happen anytime soon because the Federation and the Dao Palace had just begun their assimilation and alliance. There was still a great deal of work to be done. They had to rebuild, to set up laws and rules. They needed to decide how to divide profits. There were so many tedious details to be ironed out. Most importantly, Duan Muque didn't want Wang Baole to have to deal with such a chaotic situation immediately when the latter got into office. He wanted to get all the grunt work done. He intended to untangle the political chaos in the Federation, which was caused by the presence of the various political entities. He intended to amputate the malignant tumor hidden in the Federation. He was going to exploit the authority and power he had gained from the war and consolidate all power in the hands of the presidency. Then, he would hand over a brand new Federation to Wang Baole, one free from troubles and burdens!

Wang Baole couldn't wait to be made president. However, he also understood Duan Muque's good intentions. After gaining consciousness from his battle with Daoist You Ran, he returned to Earth. He spent his time with his parents, enjoying an ordinary person's life while burying the unresolved matter that had risen inside him after his battle with Daoist You Ran. He put it to rest silently, unwilling to touch the matter again.

He told himself to be happy. As he kept brainwashing himself quietly, he seemed to slowly forget about the existence of this unresolved matter. He began to look forward gleefully to the announcement declaring him as the Federation President.

Wang Baole's life with his parents became peaceful and calm. Besides staying by his parents' side, what Wang Baole enjoyed doing the most was leading his donkey out secretly. It was then that he would eavesdrop on conversations, listen in on heated, passionate voices, and watch the looks of adoration on the speakers' faces as they discussed him.

COMMENT

He even put up the occasional pretense of being a wolf in sheepskin. He would pretend to be bullied, then reveal his powerful self at the end and observe the shocked expressions on everyone's faces. The experience brightened his mood every time. But after doing that too many times, his donkey grew tired of it. He himself found it meaningless as well. After some thought, he began protesting his singlehood in his mother's presence. Soon, his mother began setting up matchmaking sessions for him.

His mother knew how amazing his son had become. However, no matter what, Wang Baole would always remain a child in her eyes. As she went through her selection of candidates, Wang Baole began bringing his donkey to session after session of matchmaking. The experience became a new source of fun for Wang Baole.

Then, Bunny arrived. Wang Baole could only end the matchmaking. Still, he enjoyed his time with Bunny. The academic exploration they conducted with each other was extremely enjoyable.

This didn't last long. However... Li Wan'er arrived next. The feelings of happiness that Wang Baole had been experienced shifted immediately to that of absolute terror. Wang Baole's head began to throb. Time crawled as three months passed. The alliance was running along smoothly, and rebuilding efforts were nearing completion. After spending a great deal of effort, Duan Muque finally got the Federation into shape. Everything was pointing to a new beginning. Wang Baole was sitting on his hands, waiting in excitement. It was then that...

Many of Wang Baole's friends—Zhao Yameng, Liu Daobin, Li Wuchen, Jin Duoming, Lin Tianhao, and Kong Dao—came knocking on his door and bid him farewell.

They didn't share any details of their departure, they only informed him that they were off to carry out a secret mission. The duration of this mission might be short or very long.

Zhao Yameng had originally not been part of the mission. She was the daughter of the Martian Colony Governor and Zhao Pinfang, so she had a bright and stable future in the Federation and in the alliance. However, she had chosen to join the mission of her own accord. No one knew why she had done so. Her tone had been cold when she had said farewell to Wang Baole. She had even glared at him fiercely before her departure.

COMMENT

The intense hostility in her eyes had made Wang Baole shiver with guilt. He had quickly made use of his access rights to find out the details of their mission. There was nothing he wasn't allowed to know in the entire Federation.

A quick search left him looking somber. Their mission was highly classified, with only four people allowed to access the mission details!

They were Li Xingwen, Duan Muque, Zhao Pinfang, and Wang Baole!

The mission was a continuation of the Hundred Seedling Plan and the Federation's plans involving the Dao Palace. It had been drawn up many years ago. It had been given a name... Dark Swallow!

Chapter 727: Senior Brother Arrives!

"Dark Swallow..." The expression on Wang Baole's face was serious. His mood turned dark after he read the full details of the mission.

Dark Swallow was essentially an espionage mission!

However, they weren't conducting the mission in the Federation or in the Dao Palace. They were going to venture... out, into the unknown universe!

Many years ago, at the beginning of the Spirit Inception Era, through certain unique means, the Federation came to know of the existence of multiple civilizations around the Solar System.

They had done so with the talisman that Li Xingwen had revealed to Wang Baole, the core of the Solar System Array Formation. They had also relied on ancient ruins found on Earth for clues. In fact, Wang Baole had read the information about Project Dark Swallow and found... records about Lin Tianhao's father, Lin You!

The records clearly documented Lin You's disappearance at one of those ruins when he had been a young man. He had reappeared at the exact spot of disappearance a year later. His report stated that he had been transported to another civilization and had brought back some basic information about other civilizations in the universe.

Another name had sent Wang Baole reeling back in shock. It was... Xie Haiyang's name!

The records spoke of Xie Haiyang's mysterious behavior, highlighting especially his disappearance during his time in the Ethereal Dao College and his reappearance in the Dao Palace. The Federation had thought this had something to do with the Dao Palace. However, they hadn't been able to investigate the matter further due to their relationship with the latter then.

After the war ended, the Federation had reinitiated investigations on this matter. Xie Haiyang's true origins came under the Federation's scrutiny. The game that he had collaborated with Wang Baole on also became part of the investigation's focus. If not for Wang Baole's unique position in the Federation, which spared him from any suspicion and doubt, he himself would have become a target of this secret investigation as well.

No conclusive findings had resulted from the investigation. Regardless, the team had presented their assessment of the matter. They believed that... Xie Haiyang had come from a greater and more advanced civilization for training in the Federation!

There had been others who had also been the target of this secret investigation. Wang Baole found more than a hundred names. They came from various fields and backgrounds. But two commonalities united them. They had either vanished and reappeared like Lin You had... or various signs and clues had pointed to their not being from the Federation!

Zhuo Yifan's and Zhuo Yixian's names were also in the report. Based on the investigation's findings, they seemed to have been transported out of the Solar System via some mysterious power!

The accumulation of these bizarre occurrences had forced the Federation to give them due attention. That had been the reason for the continuation of the Federation's Hundred Seedling Plan and the alliance with the Dao Palace, which had come in the form of... Project Dark Swallow. The objective of this project was to identify individuals with certain unique skill sets and whom the Federation could trust, then send them out of the Solar System. Their objective would be to search for other civilizations beyond the Solar System!

The means for their travel was similar to Lin You's. The records stated that over the years, the investigation team had located forty-three locations that they suspected were teleportation portals!

Due to the risks involved, they hadn't dared to try and initiate any teleportations. As a result, the Federation had no knowledge of the teleportation capabilities of these portals. The participants of Project Dark Swallow were to act as scouts for information. Should their teleportation succeed, they should strive for the ideal scenario—to infiltrate the extraterrestrial civilizations successfully. Else, they were to ensure their own safety, then do their best to collect as much information as possible, so that the Federation was provided with as comprehensive a picture of the surrounding civilizations as possible.

This plan had been drawn up based on the facts the Federation had on hand. Most of the people who had disappeared via these teleportation portals had never returned. A few, though, had made their way back. Sometimes, after a few months, and sometimes, after years.

This plan should have been extremely challenging for the Federation to execute on its own. The participants' safety rested on their possession of various mystic techniques or artifacts that allowed them to hide themselves or change their forms to blend in. They also needed to be able to communicate with any foreign lifeforms and possess a certain level of cultivation.

With the Dao Palace as a new member of this project, all problems had been resolved easily. Prior to their addition, the Federation had been in the middle of building artifacts that could conceal or change one's appearance. With the Dao Palace in the picture, Zhao Pinfang had been able to complete the construction of these artifacts easily. In addition, the Dao Palace had also provided a solution regarding the challenge of communicating with alien lifeforms.

The project had been reinitiated. It might seem a hasty move, but on the contrary, the Federation had begun preparations for this project many years ago.

Wang Baole stared at the records he had just read and fell silent. He had half a mind to stop Zhao Yameng and his friends and get them to abort their missions. But he didn't know how to convince them and where to start. The Federation made the right move. They needed to find out about the universe that rested beyond their borders. They desperately needed to understand what was going on in the star systems surrounding them. This would allow them to be more prepared for their next contact with an alien civilization, regardless if they were friendly or hostile. This would prevent the war with the Dao Palace from repeating itself. They wouldn't have to face similar despair.

This was a civilization trying to progress. It wasn't something he alone could accomplish. This required the efforts of countless people. As a civilization started its path towards greater progress, many people would have to contribute their own talents, as well as unleash and showcase their potential to the world.

Even though this project seemed highly dangerous, Wang Baole did note from the files how the Federation had given lavish resources to everyone who was participating in the project. Each person had been given more than a dozen second-generation Anti-Spirit Bombs. Each bomb had been proven a sizable threat to a Soul Conduit realm cultivator.

The Federation had also preserved a copy of everyone's genetic information. It had used the Dao Palace's technology to preserve a part of their souls. In the event that one of them perished in their mission, they would have a chance at being resurrected once the Federation's Spirit Science technology reached a breakthrough in the future!

What Wang Baole could do now was give Zhao Yameng and the others the Dharmic Armaments that he had crafted himself. He also used his cultivation to create multiple replicas of himself and gave them to his friends. They might come in useful in a fight!

He had to ensure that these replicas of himself didn't emit spirit energy, which might cause his friends unnecessary trouble. Wang Baole tried his best to seal their spirit energy. This meant that his connection with these replicas was weakened. The result was avatars that emitted virtually no spirit energy and had no spiritual presence, yet didn't affect how powerful each avatar was!

In the days that followed, Wang Baole sensed many of the avatars that he had sent to his friends dropping out of his radar. He knew what their disappearance meant... it meant that his friends had left the Solar System.

His spirits low, he left his house and began wandering Ethereal City alone. He watched as pedestrians and vehicles made their way across the city and listened to the bustle of the city around him. Then, he wandered some more, aimlessly, and found himself next to a lake. He sat down and stared at the lake, as well as the lotus leaves adrift on the surface of the lake, as he began to think.

He thought about his childhood, his college days, and his time in the Dao Palace. Finally, he thought of his battle with Daoist You Ran and Zi Yue's Soul Seed, and the strand that extended deep into the cosmos.

Time passed slowly. The sun set, and the moon rose. Wang Baole's eyes grew brighter. He didn't notice that someone had appeared behind him a while ago. It was a young man, and he had a wooden sword on his back and a gourd in his hand as he leaned against a huge tree. He watched Wang Baole as he drank from his gourd. There was an unfathomable look in his eyes. He seemed to be deliberating on his words and how to begin to comfort Wang Baole.

Wang Baole didn't seem to notice him. Instead, the light in Wang Baole's eyes grew increasingly brighter, and he began to mutter to himself.

"They have their mission. I, too, have mine... with great power comes great responsibility. I might care nothing for fame and reputation, and might be as carefree as a wild bird, intent on living a free life, but for the Federation, I have no choice but to take up the heavy burden of the Federation President!

“There is no way around it. I didn’t ask for an incredible, heaven-defying level of cultivation, a pure and righteous heart, and amazing looks. The people need me. The Federation needs me. Yes... the alliance needs me to become their president!”

The expression of the young man leaning against the tree turned odd when he heard those words. He slapped his forehead lightly and swallowed the words of comfort he had wanted to say to Wang Baole.

“I can’t dwell on my friends’ departure. I have to get my spirits up. I have to unleash my power, the power of the most handsome man in the Federation!” Wang Baole got to his feet suddenly as he muttered to himself. He lifted his head skyward and was about to shout out a few words of encouragement directed to himself. His mouth opened, but before he could say anything, he heard someone coughing behind him. It was a sound filled with exasperation.

“My dear Junior Brother, you have... a really unique way of cheering yourself up.”

When Wang Baole heard that, he immediately stiffened. Then, he turned his head abruptly. His eyes landed on the young man leaning against a huge tree... it was his senior brother, Chen Qing!

He stared at Chen Qing. Instead of starting a conversation immediately, Wang Baole... fell silent.

Chen Qing mirrored his silence. They stood by the lake. A breeze swept past, stirring ripples on the surface of the lake and their hair.

A long moment passed, and Chen Qing rubbed his forehead. Then he sighed and flung his gourd towards Wang Baole. His eyes were earnest as he said softly, “Baole, intelligent souls are often sensitive ones as well. I only found this out when I came here just now. Don’t misunderstand me. The matter that lies unresolved in your heart. I didn’t put it there.”

Chapter 728: The Heavenly Dao’s Calamity!

To live one’s youth carefree and without worries. ‘Tis the happiness one felt that made one young!

The saying was where the name of the Green Forest Lake in Ethereal Dao College had come from. The lake had been witness to the rise of the Ethereal Dao College in the Spirit Inception Era. It had also been witness to Wang Baole’s growth, from when he had been a mere youth to where he was today.

It remained an observer even to this day, observing the changing of the seasons, as autumn crept gradually over these lands and as he grew from a teen to a young man. It observed even now, as he stood, back against the lake, staring at his senior brother Chen Qing’s silhouette.

His hair was flying, astray in the autumn wind. Gone with the chilly breeze was his youth as well. What remained were the scars that time had left behind, in place of what had been a youth’s carefree thoughts.

Even his reflection on the surface of the lake looked dark and unfathomable. A lotus leaf drifted past in the next moment, stirring ripples that unsettled the stillness of his image. It seemed like a mirror of Wang Baole’s inner thoughts, how he too wasn’t as calm as he seemed.

He took the gourd from his senior brother, taking a huge gulp from it without even examining what he was drinking.

The alcohol was strong, and a single gulp could intoxicate one slightly. Wang Baole finished half a gourd full of alcohol, then handed it back to his senior brother. He stared at his senior, then started speaking very softly.

“Senior Brother, I’ve wanted to ask you this for a long time. What I saw in the Dark Dream, what happened to you—is that really true?”

The moon flooded the scene with its cold light. It was quiet, disturbed only by the autumn breeze, whose chill seemed to intoxicate Wang Baole further. His question seemed to conceal beneath it something that a stranger would have found difficult to discern.

The lotus leaves in the lake swayed slightly in the autumn breeze while someone gazed out into the lake, sleep escaping him. That someone was Wang Baole. Something was weighing heavily on his mind!

Everything started with the last battle with Daoist You Ran. It had persisted when Wang Baole had returned to Ethereal City, remaining on his mind while he was in his parents’ company and while he was whiling his time away peacefully, and it hadn’t gone away. He hadn’t been able to let it go. What he had done had been to set it aside, burying it deep and trying not to think about it at all. If not for Chen Qing broaching the topic, Wang Baole might have left it buried in the deepest recesses of his mind... and never spoken about it.

During the last battle with Daoist You Ran, Zi Yue’s sudden change of mind had been too abrupt. It had shocked Wang Baole and pushed him into unleashing his full potential, to the point of exhausting himself completely. That had resulted in his establishing a firm connection with the coffin on Pluto. Everything... had happened so naturally, so coincidentally, it had seemed too good to be true!

Any misstep during that battle could have resulted in the extermination of the Federation civilization and the deaths of his family and friends. Perhaps everything that had happened had indeed been a fortunate series of coincidences. But there was also the possibility... of someone influencing the turn of events secretly!

Wang Baole had no idea how that could have been done. He wasn’t surprised at all that his senior brother Chen Qing had broached this topic, and he wasn’t going to use this as evidence to argue that Chen Qing had been the mastermind behind everything.

He had only asked one question. He believed Chen Qing knew what he was trying to say.

Chen Qing did. The young woman who had been destined to become his Dao partner had her fate changed due to someone’s interference. As a result, she had been destroyed in both form and spirit. Who could claim that he hadn’t suffered as well? He might seem without worries, but the truth was that he was still struggling with his loss.

He didn’t want this pain, and he wasn’t going to inflict something like this on another person.

Chen Qing took the gourd wordlessly, then finished the rest of the drink in a single gulp. He shut his eyes. After a long moment, he opened them, then looked straight into Wang Baole’s eyes and said softly, “Dear Junior Brother, I didn’t do it. But I will admit that... my intention to make Zi Yue become a

source of nourishment for you caused this. Give me some time. I will find out who... is secretly trying to pit us against each other!"

Wang Baole eyed Chen Qing, then laughed. The heaviness in his heart still lingered. But now, he was sure that what had happened was either a coincidence or... some mysterious power had indeed instigated the entire thing and pushed things into motion for reasons beyond his knowledge.

"Senior Brother, you still have wine?" Wang Baole asked with a smile, ease entering his heart.

Chen Qing watched as Wang Baole returned to his normal cheerful self and laughed. He pulled out two gourds, and the both of them sat by the lake sparkling under the light of the autumn moon and began drinking.

This was meant... to be a beautiful scene. Moonlit, next to a lake rippling gently in the breeze. Two men dressed in robes, young and handsome, like deities who weren't of this world.

The autumn breeze was chilly, but they were warmed by the wine in their bellies. Then, Chen Qing told Wang Baole his purpose for his current trip to the Federation. It was to take Wang Baole away. Wang Baole blinked, and his lips started smacking. He pulled out a few bags of snacks and began eating noisily. Chen Qing watched in a daze as Wang Baole handed a few bags of snacks over to him before pulling out a soy egg from his storage bag.

Chen Qing took the sticky, gooey soy egg from Wang Baole and bit into it instinctively. He was about to say something when Wang Baole raised his gourd up into the air and knocked it against his own.

"Come, Senior Brother, let's drink!"

That wasn't the end of it. Wang Baole pulled out a dozen sticks of raw chicken wings marinated in spices. As he continued drinking, he cast a spell and began grilling the wings. A stunned Chen Qing watched as Wang Baole pulled out a seemingly endless supply of meat skewers and all manners of grilled foods. In the end, Wang Baole pulled out a pot and started cooking a huge goose. Half a plate of green peppers was thrown into the pot. The atmosphere had changed drastically at that point. A scene that had been ethereal and out of this world was now mundane and ordinary.

"Come on, eat. There's no need to be polite when you're with me, Senior Brother."

Chen Qing stared, slightly lost for words as Wang Baole continued to eat and drink at the same time. He rubbed his forehead and tried to continue his earlier words.

"Baole, I'm going to take you to..."

Before Chen Qing could finish his words, Wang Baole had drunk the last drop in his gourd. His eyes were misty as he turned and grinned stupidly at his senior brother. Then, he tilted his head and fell to his side. He had fallen asleep.

It was clear to Chen Qing that Wang Baole didn't want to leave and that he was doing this on purpose. Chen Qing didn't know whether to laugh or cry. He raised his right hand. With a slight wave, an invisible force entered Wang Baole's body and pushed the alcohol out. Wang Baole opened his eyes reluctantly. Before Chen Qing could say anything, he suddenly smacked his forehead.

“Oh no, I have to go, Senior Brother. My mom told me that I have to return home before one in the morning every day. Let’s talk again tomorrow.” Wang Baole got to his feet hastily. He was about to leave when Chen Qing pointed at him. Wang Baole’s legs froze, his feet stuck firmly to the ground. No matter how much Wang Baole struggled, how wildly his upper body flailed, his legs remained immobile and firmly rooted to the ground.

“But, Senior Brother, I don’t want to go...” Wang Baole’s face was all scrunched up as he stared back at Chen Qing.

Chen Qing glared. He could feel his head pulsing with pain.

“Baole, the Dark Sect might have fallen, but there are still survivors who’ve gone underground and are still around. They’ve formed an underground sect. You are a Dark Child. As your senior brother, I am to send you back to the sect on behalf of our master, so that you can continue your training!”

“Senior Brother, my parents are old. I can’t bear to part with them. I’m scared that they’ll be gone when I return. I...”

“I’ll take care of this for you. Your parents are my elders too. I’ll give them pills that will extend their lifespans for another two hundred years. That’ll solve your problem. There’s no way you’ll still be away after two hundred years. When you return, I can still help you find more of these pills!”

“Oh? Thanks, Senior Brother. But, Senior Brother... my girlfriends are all in the Federation. What will happen to them if I leave? I’m afraid the next time I return to the Federation, I’ll find them married to other men...” Wang Baole said hastily as he tried to make his senior brother change his mind.

“Don’t worry. Think of your current status in the Federation. Who would dare to steal your women?” Chen Qing said coolly. He raised his right hand and, with a wave, dragged Wang Baole away into the air with him. They lifted off the ground, ready to leave Earth.

Wang Baole panicked.

“I don’t wanna go. I haven’t become the Federation President yet. Let’s negotiate. Why not wait for me to become president? I’ll leave with you immediately after that. Deal?”

“Baole!” Chen Qing stopped in midair. He lowered his head and stared at Wang Baole, the look in his eyes serious and intense.

“I’m not trying to be unreasonable. The Never-Ending Clan’s Heavenly Dao approaches. Every time it appears, it will scan the entire universe and destroy any presence of the Dark Sect it finds immediately. You are still weak and have no means to fight back. If they find you, you’ll be killed instantly!

“That’s why I’ve told you many times to prepare yourself, because I’m going to take you away. The only way for you to escape the approaching power of the Never-Ending Clan’s Heavenly Dao is to follow me to the underground Dark Sect and receive the blessings of what remains of the Dark Sect’s Heavenly Dao!

“You might have realized this, but the Heavenly Dao can be considered an extremely powerful artifact. Only Heavenly Dao can fight Heavenly Dao. The Dark Sect’s Heavenly Dao might be mostly destroyed, but it’s not completely annihilated. What remains can protect you!

“The coffin that you found inside the planet Pluto in the Solar System Alliance? Our master used his great power to send it here. To evade the eyes of the Never-Ending Clan’s Heavenly Dao, he had to send it through time. He had to use a great spell in order for the coffin to travel through time and reach you here. His objective was to give you a place to fall into deep slumber so that you could avoid the approaching calamity!

“You can either enter the coffin every ten years and sleep the next hundred years away, or you can follow me and settle this problem once and for all!

“Which option are you going to choose?”

Chapter 729: Take Off!

Wang Baole shook when he heard that.

He had guessed that the coffin had been a gift from his master, but he hadn’t realized its purpose. He was to hide inside and sleep away the calamity that was headed his way.

His senior brother’s words proved that his guesses regarding the Heavenly Dao were correct. The Heavenly Dao... to a certain extent, could be considered as a supreme weapon.

He also agreed with the Never-Ending Clan’s position on the Heavenly Dao. Together with his existing knowledge of the Dark Sect’s history, he could somewhat piece together what had happened in the past.

The Dark Sect had changed the Heavenly Dao and written down the laws for the universe. The Never-Ending Clan had gathered the clans to revolt against them and destroy the Heavenly Dao. They had caused the fall of the Dark Sect, then rewritten their own version of the Heavenly Dao. After replacing the Dark Sect, the Never-Ending Clan had continued exterminating survivors of the Dark Sect.

His senior brother was clearly an exceptional case!

Chen Qing watched as emotions flashed past Wang Baole’s face. He sighed softly.

“Baole, I know you don’t wish to leave your home. But it’s necessary that you leave. Your departure will also become a source of hope for the Federation’s civilization.”

“Hope?” Wang Baole lifted his head and stared at his senior brother questioningly.

“The Federation is still too primitive a civilization. It’s like a child compared to the rest of the universe. It has virtually no means to protect itself. Let’s not even consider the scenario of an Eternal Star realm cultivator coming across the Federation. If a mere Planet realm cultivator comes across the Federation and wishes to refine it, he could do so easily!” Chen Qing didn’t mince his words. He laid the truth out bluntly.

Wang Baole fell silent. He knew that his senior brother was speaking the truth. The Federation... was undoubtedly a relatively weak civilization. Spirit Qi had only made its appearance in the Federation a few decades ago. The spirit meridians on Earth weren’t yet fully formed, and they had to create their own spirit stones.

They might not be an infant cultivation civilization, but it wasn't wrong to call them a mere child when compared to other civilizations.

"Of course, there's still the Vast Expanse Dao Palace on the ancient sword. But in my view, even though there are powerful elders slumbering on the ancient sword, most of them are with serious injury. They might lend a hand if something were to threaten their survival, but if the danger in question is only towards the Federation, will they even be bothered to help? Of course, there's also the question of whether the Federation will still exist when they awake!" Chen Qing stared at Wang Baole as he continued speaking.

His words rendered Wang Baole speechless yet again. He had Little Missy with him, so he believed that there was a great chance that the Vast Expanse Dao Palace elders would become their allies after they woke up. But... this was still a gamble. It was placing one's survival in the hands of others. A sudden change in mindset might be all the difference. Wang Baole wasn't in favor of such passivity.

"What's the point of you remaining in the Federation? If you really wish for your home civilization to evolve and prosper, the best way is to let the Federation civilization become more powerful!"

"There are two ways to do that. One is to allow time to do its work. As time passes, the generations will continue to evolve. However, based on the Solar System's potential and its current structure, this method will require a great deal of time. Even if no accident were to befall the Federation during this time, its evolution would still require tens of thousands of years!"

"That's why the second method will suit the Federation better!" Wang Baole lifted his head again when Chen Qing said that. His eyes shone brightly.

"Senior Brother, what's the second method?"

"It's a shortcut. As you advance the level of your cultivation, you will also be helping your civilization consume other civilizations!" Chen Qing paused for a few moments before replying abruptly. His reply revealed the hidden laws by which the universe operated!

"The foundation of every civilization is an Eternal Star! Only star systems with Eternal Stars have the potential to give birth to cultivation civilizations!"

"A civilization's Eternal Star—its sun—is what's most precious to the civilization. That is because the sun is the essence of all life!"

"In your Solar System, the sun is your main essence of life. If you can guide your civilization's sun into devouring the Eternal Stars of other civilizations, you can make your sun more powerful. Both its propulsive force and its energy stores will increase. It will become a force of nature in the cosmos!"

"The Eternal Stars and the civilizations that it consumes will become its servants. As the Federation's Eternal Star grows increasingly more powerful, the cultivators of the Federation will also see more rapid advancements in their cultivation!"

"That is the hidden law of this universe and the root of all wars between civilizations. The Never-Ending Clan doesn't interfere in such wars. Across the universe, countless civilizations are engaging in war and pillage freely, all in order to strengthen themselves!"

“So, how will you choose?” An unfathomable light glimmered in Chen Qing’s eyes as he stared at Wang Baole.

Wang Baole fell silent, though his breathing had quickened slightly. After a long moment of silence, a look of determination settled in his eyes. He turned towards Chen Qing, cupped his fists, and bowed.

“I’ll do whatever Senior Brother instructs me to do. But I’d like to have another day. I’d also like to request a protective spell to be cast over the Federation, as a layer of defense.”

“Sure!” Chen Qing nodded. Without wasting any time at all, he raised his right hand. With a wave of his hand and a series of hand seals, a sudden burst of sword Qi erupted in the heavens. It descended upon the earth, buried itself underground, then vanished without a trace. Wang Baole’s bindings were loosened at the same moment.

“I’ll be waiting for you outside Earth!” Having said that, Chen Qing flung a storage bag towards Wang Baole, turned, and dashed off into the skies. He disappeared instantly.

Wang Baole stood in midair and gazed into the direction his senior brother had vanished. A long moment passed before he finally made up his mind. He turned and headed straight for the Ethereal City. He reached home, then sat inside his house quietly. When dawn broke, Wang Baole got to his feet and began preparing breakfast for his parents. When his parents woke up, he turned towards them and got to his knees.

He explained gently to the shocked elderly couple, making up a reason instead of telling them the truth because he didn’t want to cause them to worry. The farewell was a painful, heartbreaking affair. They had their breakfast, then Wang Baole cast a few protective spells over his parents and watched as they took the pills his senior brother had given him to extend their lifespans. Finally, Wang Baole gave his parents a deep bow and left.

He found Bunny, then Li Wan’er. He sent Li Xingwen and Duan Muque each a voice transmission. The Martian Colony Governor and a few others were shocked when they heard that Wang Baole was leaving, while Li Xingwen was almost beside himself with anxiety. Duan Muque was speechless, having no idea what to do with himself or with the situation.

But Wang Baole had no choice. He wanted to stay, but he knew his senior brother was right. For himself, and for the future of the Federation, he had to leave. Hope for them rested beyond the Solar System.

He still regretted the fact that he hadn’t been able to become the Federation President. In the end, the Martian Colony Governor was made the next Federation President. Wang Baole’s departure from the Federation was designated as top-secret. To the general public, he had retreated into seclusion.

His one day’s grace soon came to an end. Wang Baole witnessed his last sunset on Earth, then got to his feet and headed for the stars!

As soon as he reached space, Chen Qing appeared beside him. With a wave of his hand, the cosmos was transformed instantly. The both of them teleported away from Earth and reappeared in the next moment... on Pluto!

“It’s a long way to the underground Dark Sect. We have to pass seven restricted regions and go through the Never-Ending Clan’s primary territory. The time of the Never-Ending Clan’s Heavenly Dao

approaches. For your safety, you have to go into deep sleep inside the coffin. This coffin is a gift from our master. It's a unique artifact that can't be stored away in a storage bag, so I'll have to carry it. The journey will take us ten years or so. We'll reach our destination by the time you wake up."

Wang Baole was rendered speechless as he listened to Chen Qing's explanation. He felt helpless at the thought of having to sleep away ten years of his life. He knew there was no other way around it though, so he nodded his consent. Pluto shuddered as Chen Qing waved his hand, and huge crevices split the ground apart. Towers of black mist rose to the heavens, then gathered and transformed into an enormous coffin right before Wang Baole's eyes!

Chen Qing formed a series of hand seals, and the coffin shook and shrank in size rapidly. Finally, it settled into a normal-sized coffin that was no longer made of mist but of a tangible, black metal!

The sense of age that exuded from the coffin appeared stronger at that instant. The runes that shimmered on the lid of the coffin gave off waves of unimaginable, overwhelming power.

"Do I really have to sleep in the coffin?" Wang Baole sighed.

"Don't worry, Baole, it's just a nap. You'll reach the place in no time." Chen Qing smiled at Wang Baole as he raised his right hand and waved. The coffin lid slid open slowly, and mist flowed out of the coffin. Wang Baole rubbed his forehead, then took a huge step and got inside.

He lay inside the coffin. It wasn't as uncomfortable as he had thought it might be. In fact, it felt warm. Wang Baole began to feel sleepy. He yawned, then muttered, "It's not bad, actually, to sleep for ten years. I'll be there when I wake up. I hope nothing happens during the journey..."

"Don't worry, nothing will happen!" Chen Qing stood outside the coffin and laughed. He slid the lid shut, then lifted it. Afterwards, he began walking towards the stars swiftly. Within three steps, he was out of the Solar System!

He didn't stop. With another step, he was away, headed for the distant stars!

Chapter 730: An Accident...

The Divine Eye System was a star system twice the size of the Solar System. It had twenty-three big planets that orbited the system's primary star. The planets rotated ceaselessly, as if in an eternal orbit.

Like the Solar System, the Divine Eye System had its own civilization as well. It was clearly more advanced than the Federation, though both civilizations shared similar environments. That might be why the lifeforms in the Divine Eye System's civilization resembled the human lifeforms found in the Federation.

There were, however, some slight physiological differences between both species.

On this day, on the primary planet where the Divine Eye civilization was based—a planet that was the size of Jupiter in the Solar System—a meteor fell and made a landing. The unique features of the Divine Eye Star meant that meteors were a common sight. As a result, while a portion of the populace noted the arrival of the meteor, few paid much attention to it.

Only selected cultivators who were in the vicinity of the meteor's landing would think of checking it out in case any special resources might be recovered. That was also the reason why fights often broke out amongst cultivators.

In this particular instance, the meteor crashed into the planet, creating a huge crater on the ground. A coffin followed. Upon impact, it pierced deep into the earth of the planet soundlessly. It then stopped moving, as if it had just been buried.

This coffin was black and appeared as if it were crafted from a black metal. On its surface were countless runes. However... most of the runes appeared to be damaged. In fact, the coffin itself was riddled with holes and marks, countless scratches lining its surface. They appeared to be caused by some sharp weapon. A few seemed deep, nearly deep enough to cut through the coffin. From the looks of it, it seemed that someone had blocked the attack just when the cuts had almost penetrated the coffin. If they hadn't done so, the coffin might have been split into multiple parts and destroyed!

It was clear that the coffin had survived an unimaginable battle, one that had been fierce and intense beyond measure. Else, there was no way that such a powerful artifact would be damaged to such a degree.

If one were to examine the coffin more closely, they would find dried bloodstains all over it, though they weren't red. It was clear that it had been a battle that involved numerous warriors.

This coffin... had traveled all the way from the Solar System. It was the Dark Sect's coffin, which Chen Qing was carrying... and which housed Wang Baole's sleeping form.

The meteor's crash into the ground and the coffin's burial deep underground had sent quakes shuddering through the earth. The deep cuts on the coffin had almost splintered from the impact. The quakes shook the coffin and Wang Baole, who had been deep asleep inside. He opened his eyes.

"Are we there? What a great nap..." Wang Baole rubbed his eyes, yawned, and pushed at the coffin lid. He couldn't nudge it open. Surprised, he began to call out loudly.

"Senior Brother, are we there yet?"

Wang Baole waited a while longer but heard no reply, which he found bizarre. He smacked the coffin a few times, then focused his cultivation and called out again.

"Senior Brother, are you there?"

"What's going on, Senior Brother? Come on, answer me!" The expression on Wang Baole's face gradually turned somber. He continued shouting but received no response, so the unease inside him grew.

"Little Missy, are you there?" After a long bout of silence, Wang Baole decided to play it safe and not push the coffin lid open with his Dark Fire. Instead, he tried calling out to Little Missy.

This was the backup plan he had set up before he had fallen into slumber.

There was no reply from Little Missy either. Wang Baole narrowed his eyes and began to think. But no matter how hard he thought, he couldn't think himself out of this puzzle. He had fallen asleep as soon as he had entered the coffin. It was difficult to judge if he had reached his destination.

After contemplation, he decided to wait. Wang Baole patiently counted the days as they passed. On the third day, a sharp look finally entered his eyes.

There's a great chance that something unexpected has happened! Dark Fire burned in Wang Baole's eyes. He raised his right hand and placed it against the coffin. His cultivation erupted, immediately establishing his connection with the coffin. Just as he was about to push the lid open, a faint voice entered the coffin. It seemed to come from somewhere else. The voice echoed in Wang Baole's head.

"Baole."

"Senior Brother!" Wang Baole's eyes sharpened. He stopped trying to push open the coffin lid and asked hastily, "Senior Brother, what happened? Are you outside?"

"Baole... something happened along the way... for the time being, I've... a minor civilization... wait for me to pick you up... make sure your true form doesn't leave... the Heavenly Dao approaches... death is certain... mystic technique for creating avatars... temporarily escape discovery by the Heavenly Dao... okay to leave..."

The message was intermittent. It was as if some sort of strong disturbance was disrupting the transmission. The result was an incomplete message from Chen Qing. Nevertheless, Wang Baole was able to piece together the main gist of Chen Qing's message.

Something unexpected happened? I'm being deposited temporarily on a minor cultivation? The Heavenly Dao approaches, and I'll die if my true form leaves the coffin? But if I practice this mystic technique that allows me to create an avatar of myself, I can leave the coffin for short periods of time? Wang Baole frowned. He had no idea what had happened to Chen Qing. However, he could imagine that something that could force someone as powerful as Chen Qing to leave him somewhere must be... something quite extraordinary!

Chen Qing's voice continued intermittently as he transmitted a mystic technique to Wang Baole. Chen Qing appeared to have spent most of his efforts on this part of his message, preventing the interference from disrupting the transmission and hence allowing the full mystic technique to be transmitted successfully.

The name of this mystic technique was the Illusory Source Art. Once mastered, it could allow one to change their aura as well as their very essence. They would be able to transform into anything.

Wang Baole examined the mystic technique carefully. Then he started thinking. There were a few steps in this mystic technique that involved the cultivator's soul. Wang Baole was a Dark Child, and he had read many pieces of literature during his time in the Dark Sect. He knew that there were spells out there that were malicious or could assert deep control over their victims. However, these spells couldn't be cast involuntarily on their victims and required their victims to willingly practice them before the malicious effects of the spells could take place.

Is this real, or is it just a trick... did Senior Brother really encounter something unexpected, or... This was something really important. Wang Baole couldn't stop analyzing everything he knew in detail. He studied the mystic technique silently, not knowing whether he should try it. His eyes stared up at the inside of the coffin lid. If he wanted to push it open, he needed only to unleash his Dark Fire. Leaving the coffin would be a piece of cake.

Should I train? Should I open the coffin?

Sometimes, choices were difficult decisions to make. Especially the ones concerning trust, and even more so when said decision concerned one's life or death.

As Wang Baole fell into a contemplative silence, somewhere beyond the Divine Eye System lay a vaster star system. Thousands of smaller star systems were housed within this greater star system, forming a cosmic array formation!

It was an array formation of tremendously ambitious scale. It used the energy of thousands of Eternal Stars, both big and small, as fuel that then became an endless source of power that could overpower everything in its path. What made the array formation even more impressive were the eight cauldrons distributed around the array formation, floating in the cosmos while separated from one another by vast expanses of space.

Each cauldron exuded an extremely old and fearsome power. One could see an indistinct figure inside the cauldron, which appeared to be trapped in an endless cycle of refinement.

The array formation, formed from thousands of Eternal Stars, and its eight powerful cauldrons, were a cage. Their prisoner was... Chen Qing!

A stormy-faced Chen Qing stood in the center of the array formation. Around him flashed bolts of black lightning. They came from all directions, thundering as they descended. They appeared like numerous chains that criss-crossed the entire star system.

Before Chen Qing stood a man. He wore golden armor, had a towering figure, and had three heads and six arms. He was like a god of war who exuded an overpowering aura that rivaled the power of the entire cosmic array formation!

Behind him stood armies of illusory figures. They also looked like deities in their own right, exuding waves of terrifying power. The armored man looked like a god who commanded a vast army and stood supreme above all others!

"Chen Qing, I know what the boy means to you. That's why I allowed you to send your voice transmission and only disrupted the transmission partially. Why don't you make a guess... will this dear junior brother whom you treasure so much choose to believe you? I look forward to seeing what he'll choose!" The towering man smiled. As his voice resonated in the cosmos, tens of thousands of black lightning bolts snaked past one another, thundering as they expanded and finally transformed into a dark screen.

On the screen was an image of... Wang Baole's coffin!

However, what it showed wasn't the inside of the coffin but its exterior!

"Who do you think will walk out? Your precious junior brother's true form, or his avatar?"