

Grand Ancestral Bloodlines

#Chapter 1: Shrine Mountain - Read Grand Ancestral Bloodlines Chapter 1: Shrine Mountain

Chapter 1: Shrine Mountain

On a cliff that stood above the world, a young man with skin as pale and pure as ice looked out and into the horizon.

The beautiful yellows, reds and oranges of the morning sky shone without hindrance, dancing over the pristine white clouds below his feet.

This place was known as Shrine Mountain, the highest peak of not just this Plane, but all of existence. It stood so tall that the sun called it friend and even the clouds could only hug its feet.

Throughout the lower planes, millions of geniuses were born everyday, each with the dream of standing at the pinnacle of the world... Each with the dream of sitting in this young man's very place.

However, this young man remained indifferent. His silver, sometimes pale blue, eyes seemed to pierce through all things. To call his brows sword-like was to sell them short, to describe his demeanor as being that of an Emperor was to insult him, to define him as handsome was to call him ugly.

The cool morning wind blew his long white hair gently, yet not a speck of dust could be found within it. Or, maybe nothing dared to blemish him in any way.

'One thousand years.' The young man thought to himself, devoid of emotion.

Today was his thousandth birthday, a happy occasion for lack of a better descriptor. Kings, Emperors, Queens and Empresses would all converge today, all to pay respects to him.

It wasn't very much of a surprise considering who his parents and grandparents were. However, such a truth wasn't enough to require such fanfare. Simply put, the importance of this young man himself warranted respect regardless of his lineage.

"Elena." The young man spoke this name abruptly. His voice was soothing and calm but held a hint of biting cold that made them contradictorily sharp. Yet, it was very clear by how his eyes softened that he cared for the woman holding this name.

"You always know..." A sound that seemed bestowed to the world by a Fairy Goddess filled the young man with a sense of comfort.

The beauty floated to his side, descending onto his lap. Her violet dress wafted a heavenly fragrance toward him with its every flutter, matching his black robes to perfection.

Holding onto her slim waist, the young man's nonchalant attitude toward the view rescinded as a light smile played his perfect features.

His hand reached upward, caressing the beautiful strands of diamond pink hair that cascaded from Elena's head.

She couldn't help but rest her ear to his chest in response, breathing in his scent.

"Ryu, what kind of gift would you like?"

A slight chuckle escaped from the lips of the young man. It was a laugh filled with warmth, but one he rarely showed anyone. Other than his parents and grandparents, Elena was the only other to have heard this laugh.

"This isn't proper etiquette, no?"

Elena pouted adorably, a sight that would have shocked the billions of subjects she ruled over. The heiress of the Holy Wing Clan, behaving like nothing more than a little girl.

"I have everything in the world, do I not?" Ryu sighed. "The Shrine Plane dances at the palm of my hand, my woman is an unrivalled beauty and genius, my parents love and dote upon me... What else could I ask for?"

Despite his words, the undertone of sadness would never be missed by Elena. She knew her fiancé too well, well enough to know that these words were nothing more than self-mockery.

In the martial world, there were three mortal planes and three immortal planes. Those below constantly fought to reach a higher level of existence, to have their names written into the fabric of history for trillions of years to come and for their bloodline to flourish into eternity.

Yet, Ryu had no such aspirations. It wasn't that he was lazy or without drive. In fact, if a fool spouted such nonsense about Ryu Tatsuya, even commoners would swarm you with whatever weapons they could find, all to protect his name.

The truth was that Ryu didn't have such aspirations because he already had it. The Shrine Plane wasn't just among the three immortal planes, it was the highest immortal plane. The Tatsuya Clan wasn't just powerful, it was the most powerful.

Ryu's life was comically easy. Still, he fought for it to have meaning.

He delved into the world of archeology, prying out secrets long since lost from ruins many clans had given up on. He studied botany with a passion few could match, even breathing life into long extinct species. He even mastered arts of feng shui, applying them to create some of the most beautiful works of art and architecture to ever appear in the martial world.

This was Ryu's life. He found meaning where there was none. When others would have resigned themselves to an existence of meaningless comfort, he sought for something more.

At this point, one might think Ryu ungrateful. To be saddened when everything in the world was given to you on not a silver, but gold plater.

However, there was a reason that despite having been betrothed to Elena for more than 600 years, they had never married.

Ryu, a man who had everything in the world, a man who could command the waves with one hand and the sunset with the other, couldn't cultivate.

His fiancée would live for billions, even trillions of years given her talent. But he, even with so many priceless treasures sustaining his life, would be lucky to live a thousand more.

Chapter 2: Nuri

How could Elena be unaware of how Ryu was feeling? Although they hadn't completed the traditional ceremonies and melded their souls together as husband and wife, Elena still felt like she could read her fiancé's mind just by looking into his eyes.

In her mind, she would rather a few hundred years of bliss with her love than a few billion years of emptiness.

Elena was a very pragmatic woman. While Ryu only reached his thousandth birthday today, it wouldn't be very long until her millionth year of existence. Unlike Ryu, she was very much aware of how rare it was for her heart to be swayed.

'So what if you can only be by my side for a fraction of my life? These are moments I'll never forget...' Elena thought to herself.

Matching her thoughts, Elena didn't dwell on sadness. Today was meant to be a day of celebration!

"How about I allow you to take a concubine? Aren't I magnanimous?" Elena said with a naughty grin.

Ryu nearly choked on his breath, shattering his elegant demeanor. He had known Elena since he was born, yet he still couldn't combine her public persona with her private one.

To the world, Elena was a holy princess, lofty and beyond mortal impurities. But, to Ryu, she was a lewd prankster and bonafide pervert. Ryu often found himself having to protect his chastity from her, it was almost depressing.

Ryu could still remember the day Elena decided that she fancied him. She infiltrated his room at night and stripped down naked. Without any cultivation to speak of, how could Ryu have stopped her?

Then, standing proudly without a hint of shyness on her face she said: "You're the first man to see my everything, now you have no choice but to take responsibility. Come, put a child in me!"

Cold sweat matted Ryu's back when he recalled the memory. He still had no idea how he managed to weasel out of that situation. Still, in the end he took her as his fiancée. It had already been six hundred years since then.

"There are many beauties comparable to me in the Shrine Planes. In fact, there are many with outstanding potential that we could pluck from the lower realms as well." Elena continued to rattle on as though Ryu's opinion didn't matter.

"My Holy Shrine alone has three subordinate clans and sects within the Blossom Plane who each have eight or so more extensions within the Pedestal Plane. If I recall correctly, there are nine Holy Winged Saintesses born to them within the last hundred thousand or so years, they have great potential!"

Ryu frowned. "Nine? That many?"

"Now that you mention it, nine is quite a lot. Usually, even one in ten times that span would be pretty good..." After acknowledging Ryu's point, Elena continued to ramble on about what must have been hundreds of viable candidates.

While Elena spoke, Ryu looked up at the receding night sky, the faint flicker of stars just barely visible.

His eyes flashed with a fierce light. Their silver hue waned, giving way to what could have been confused with the very depths of space itself.

The stars became reflected within Ryu's eyes as he held his fiancée's delicate frame to his body.

Fate. It was something even the greatest masters of karma struggled to understand. However, in the martial world, those who could read the alignment of the stars were all highly respected.

It was this fate that gave Ryu almost unrivaled intelligence and constitution, yet also an inability to cultivate. Ryu found that the heavens had quite the sense of humor due to this. That said, it didn't mean he took the alignment of the stars any less seriously than anyone else.

The moment he heard Elena's words, something fierce stirred within him. A normal individual might not understand what it meant to be a Holy Winged Saintess, but he did.

Within the martial world, the pinnacle of cultivation was found on the Shrine Plane. This namesake was earned due to the various hundreds of Shrines that graced these vast lands, together representing the vicissitudes of life and death.

Elena's Holy Wing Clan presided over the Shrine of Light. To be named a Saintess of any clan required acknowledgement of at least one such shrine. One could imagine just how rare it was for the representation of all Light to choose you as an arbiter of its will. Yet, this happened nine times in a hundred thousand years? It was too ridiculous.

Ryu didn't like looking at the alignment of the stars. In fact, despite being born with the first-ranked heavenly pupils: Mysteries of Heaven and Earth, he had only used its ability to read the lines of karma two times before. Once when they were awakened and once when his meridian awakening ceremony failed.

The moment Ryu sunk into this state, the first star he saw was his own. It was larger than all those in its near vicinity, blazing with mercury-like fires and beautiful silver hues.

Ryu sighed when he saw it. His Fate Star looked dazzling, but he knew what it represented. It would burn brighter and larger than the rest, but also dim and die sooner as well.

Shifting his attention away, Ryu's view expanded, widening his scope.

'This...' Ryu's breath hitched in his throat.

"Ryu? Is something wrong? I just remembered that we don't need to go concubine hunting in the lower planes, I know of one lady here that would die of happiness if you took her into our bedchambers." Elena's sparkling pink eyes flashed with a hint of deviousness. Bringing up this lady was clearly her plot all along. "Don't you remember your Death Guard? Nuri, I believe her name was."

Hearing this name, Ryu was stunned out of his thoughts. In fact, he wasn't the only one. A shadow hidden in the void choked on air as well despite the fact there was no such thing to speak of within the void!

Chapter 3: Father

Elena sent a sly gaze toward seemingly empty space before winking as though to say: 'I have your back.'

Not every woman would be straight forward as Elena, backing Ryu into a corner and not allowing him to refuse her advances. In fact, Elena dared to say that if it wasn't for this personality of hers, she would have never become Ryu's fiancée. He was so young, but his heart was as stubborn as an old fogie.

Of course, Nuri's Presence couldn't be hidden from Ryu. Although he couldn't cultivate his body, his mind had reached a state few could match. In fact, his Grandpa Kunan had once said a tribulation cloud could vent all of its anger within his Mental Realm yet still come out on the losing end. If others said it, it wouldn't mean much. But, considering his maternal Grandfather was the Priest Saint of the Lightning Shrine, no one dared take his words lightly.

However, the role of a Death Guard didn't allow cordial interactions between them.

With a sigh, Ryu stood. He had tried to release Nuri of her duties many times, but she was more stubborn than he was.

Elena defiantly dove into his arms, insisting that he carry her despite the weakness of his body. It was lucky that she was as light as a feather, otherwise Ryu would have collapsed.

'You think I don't know that you're purposely lowering your weight? How did I end up with such a fiancée?'

With those last thoughts, Ryu began a slow trek down the highest peak, his fiancée in his arms and a blushing shadow to his back.

**

Within a delicate spring garden, nature's energy flowed with unmatched fluidity and swiftness.

Precious heavenly medicines graced the lush green grass as nothing more than pretty fixtures. The small stream gushed with Resplendent Spring Water, capable of extending a life by months with a simple sip. Even the meditation platforms, small chairs and tables were made of Essence Jade, the most valuable material in all of existence.

Blending into the grace of this garden, a heavenly couple leisurely reclined.

A man of bold Presence sat on a high meditation platform, his every inhale and exhale seeming to match the breath of existence itself.

His robes were a blazing red, matching his hair and eyes that danced with heavenly flames. His features were handsome beyond compare, looking like nothing more than a 30-year-old man despite having lived for billions of years.

The woman seemed to be the polar opposite. Her Presence was akin to a calm lake, sparkling with a refreshing coolness yet flickering with arcs of blue lightning every so often.

Her hair matched her pure white gown as her blue pupils flickered with a pensive expression toward the small booklet held in her delicate hands.

If one said that she was the number one beauty in the world, no one would dare to deny. Even the beautiful Elena and shy Nuri fell several levels short. They simply hadn't had the time to refine themselves to this extent.

"Mother! Father!" Unsurprisingly, it wasn't Ryu greeting his parents so warmly, it was Elena. She didn't seem to care that she was interrupting their cultivation in the least.

Elena leaped from Ryu's arms gracefully, rushing to her mother-in-law's side. It wasn't even until several minutes later that his own mother realized he was here too.

Ryu sighed when he looked at his father's figure. Calm, immovable like a towering mountain. His heartbeat was akin to the rumbling of the earth and his blood was the raging waters of the fiercest river.

"You're thinking about it again." Ryu's father suddenly spoke in a voice so deep it resonated with the ground beneath their feet. He didn't open his eyes to look at his son, but he knew he was there. "Don't ever ask me to take back the things I've given."

"Maybe if it was just about your choice, it wouldn't matter so much. But, your decision has shaken the foundation of the Shrines." Ryu's voice was cold. If it wasn't for the slight affectionate glint in his eye, no one would ever guess that he was speaking to his father.

Ryu's father snorted. "No one can tell me what I can and cannot do. If I could not gift my own flesh and blood treasures as a pleased, what was the point of my years of cultivation? It would mean nothing more than dog shit."

In the end, Ryu decided not to respond. Those who wondered where his stubbornness came from only needed to take one step down his bloodline to find his father.

Titus Tatsuya was a man who really dared to do anything. His birth was a product of an alliance between the Emperor Fire Dragon Clan and the Fire Phoenix Clan. He embodied fire itself without remorse and left carnage in his path. Even if it was an Elder of the Fire Shrine who dared to raise a word of complaint, Titus Tatsuya would kill him without blinking an eye.

However, this time, Ryu knew his father had gone too far. Maybe he wouldn't place such seriousness on the matter before... But the alignment of the stars truly worried him.

Ryu silently laughed at himself. Hadn't he resigned himself to fate long ago? Wasn't that exact why he, a man with everything, was still so scared of this enigmatic something?

Since fate told him he would die, he would die. And now that fate told those around him might suffer, wouldn't he just have to accept that as well?

Chapter 4: Third Phoenix Clan

Later that day, guests began to slowly arrive, filling Fire Shrine with a lively atmosphere. Ryu, however, was content to continue to spend time with his family.

"Look at you, you've grown more handsome since grandma saw you last." A beautiful woman who seemed to be about in her late 50s lovingly caressed Ryu's cheeks. Despite her age, her looks could still topple a nation. Everything from her pure white hair to her demeanor was refined to an extreme. "Tell me, has that little vixen vexed my little boy?"

Ryu smiled lightly, taking his maternal grandmother's arm as they strolled through the palace.

"Of course not, grandmother. Elena is lovely."

"Hmph. Those Holy Wing tramps are no good. My grandson deserves better. There are many nice young ladies in grandma's Ice Phoenix Clan. Grandmother will introduce you to them all today. Hmph, hmph."

Ryu knew quite well that this grandmother of his wasn't venting her hatred for Elena, but rather, Elena's own grandmother. The two of them had been rivals ever since their youth. It was their worst nightmare for their grandchildren to be bonded in such a way.

Those of the Holy Wing Clan weren't supposed to marry. Much like ancient era Amazonians, they used men like tools to continue their lineage. If the child was a boy, he would become the "property" of the father. If the child was a girl, the Holy Wing Clan would take her in.

In the past, Ryu's grandmother and his grandmother-in-law were love rivals. The result was his maternal grandfather choosing his grandmother. However, in a very

domineering fashion, his grandmother-in-law cornered his maternal grandfather and poisoned him with a potent aphrodisiac. In the end, the result was a female child that she subsequently barred Ryu's maternal grandfather from seeing. This child was the current Priest Saintess of the Light Shrine.

Luckily, this child wasn't Elena's mother, or that would make Ryu related to his fiancée by blood. Elena's father was actually unknown to her, or anyone, for that matter. For some inexplicable reason, his grandmother-in-law refused to tell anyone, something that was a far cry from her usual domineering openness.

This aside, for obvious reasons, these matters sent his usual lovable grandmother into a rage whenever she thought about them. Such a culture was the darkest secret of the Holy Wing Clan. On the surface, they were maidens of the light, unblemished by worldly affairs. But, in the dark they were suffused with ancient and outdated practices.

Ryu only smiled, continuing to accompany his grandmother.

"Speaking of the Clan, grandmother, I've found some clues about that ruin you asked me about."

"Oh?" The Mistress of the Kunan family, Vorena Kunan, sighed. "The Ice Flame has been in decline for a long time, yet the Holy Wing Clan seems to pump out a new Saintess every year. Grandma really might die of frustration. The heavens really don't have eyes."

Ryu didn't need to meet his grandmother's gaze to know that she meant more than what it seemed by her last words. By all rights, Ryu had the perfect constitution for cultivation. Yet, his meridians lay dormant. If one couldn't say the heavens were blind because of this, then when could you?

"This ruin should have a small spark of hope." Ryu spoke with an eerie calm. "It's actually not an Ice Flame ruin, but rather a Phoenix ruin."

"A phoenix ruin?" Mistress Kunan responded in surprise.

Ryu nodded, his eyes lighting with passion that was completely out of place for his usual apathetic appearance.

Mistress Kunan's heart warmed when she looked toward this grandson of hers. He was usually so cold, but it all seemed to melt away when he spoke about his hobbies.

Ryu's comprehension of archeology had reached a level that could no longer be properly classified. He put those Ruin Master old fogies to shame.

"As you know grandma, I have Ice Phoenix blood from mother and Fire Phoenix blood from father running through my veins. But, according to a few historical documents I've

pieced together, there was a final, third species of phoenix that have been long forgotten."

"A third?"

"Mm. Usually, the elements are the simplest of heaven's laws to comprehend. There are only two exceptions to this rule."

"Lightning and Fire."

Ryu nodded. "Right. The flame, in particular, is quite enigmatic. It's the root of all life however... it's also the root of all death."

Mistress Kunan fell into a contemplative state. Her Ice Phoenix Clan controlled the Ice Shrine and the Life Shrine. This was entirely due to the special characteristics of their Ice Flame.

At the same time, Ryu's paternal grandmother's Fire Phoenix Clan controlled the Reincarnation Shrine. If it wasn't for Ryu's paternal grandfather's Fire Dragon Clan controlling the Fire Shrine, they would also monopolize it.

Simply put, while their flames were known for the cold and heat respectively, their true root was control of Life and Reincarnation. The strongest flames in the world would always preside over such lofty quintessence.

This was the secret behind the power of the Tatsuya Clan. Their marriage alliance with the Kunan Clan brought not just two, but five Shrines into a single family! While a single clan might not even control a single Shrine, the Tatsuya and Kunan Clans controlled the Fire, Ice, Reincarnation, Life, and Lightning Shrines!

"So by death you mean..."

"Yes." Ryu said with a slight coldness. "A Dark Phoenix Clan once existed."

Chapter 5: Dormant Shrine

In the martial world, high grade beasts had long since gone extinct. What many knew as "beasts" today were unintelligent and savage creatures without scruples and inhibitions.

The so-called "Phoenix" and "Dragon" blood, not to mention the Lightning Qilin heritage that ran through Ryu's veins from his maternal grandfather, were actually human bloodlines, not beast bloodlines.

Before the rise of the human race, beasts ruled the lands. Mighty Dragons could shake the planes with a single roar, the cries of the Majestic Phoenix could decide life and death, while Qilins could shatter the earth with a simple step.

However, such an era had long since come to pass. The Human Race rose so fiercely that the Shrines the Beasts once lay claim to were taken by them, one by one.

Human Bloodlines evolved and matured. Suddenly, it was possible for their souls to manifest bestial auras surpassing even that of ancient beasts.

In the end, the era of the ancient beast ended and their bloodlines slowly diffusing as they married into human clans. The result was the present system where humans retained their cultivation talent, yet gained the robust bloodlines and sturdy bodies of their beast ancestors.

Clans like Ryu's Grandmother's Ice Phoenix Clan could evoke abilities of their Ice Phoenix predecessors. One such ability was the Ice Flame. Not only did this flame have the potential to freeze all things, it also had heaven defying healing capabilities that rivalled and often surpassed Saintesses of the Light Shrine.

Still, aside from Ryu's mother, the remaining descendants of the Ice Phoenix Clan were mere average talents. Currently, Mistress Kunan took the role of Priest Saintess of the Life and Ice Shrines. However, she felt that it was time for her to retire and live out her days in peace. The problem was that the only viable successor was her daughter, but according to the Laws of the Heavens, a single person could not preside over three Shrines.

Normally, this wouldn't be an issue. However, the successor of the Lightning Shrine was also in question. Would the Kunan Clan really have to give up one of the Shrines they had protected for so long?

Mistress Kunan had hoped that the birth of her daughter's child would solve this issue, but her poor grandson didn't have any cultivation. How could he help?

Fertility rates among high class clans were simply too poor. For someone with such a dense bloodline concentration as Ryu to be born, one can imagine how low the chances were. Ryu's parents tried for tens of millions of years before Ryu was finally born.

Ryu was highly intelligent. Before he even became of age for his meridian awakening ceremony, he had seen through this problem. At the time, he had sworn to become good enough to be acknowledged by at least one of those three shrines so he could alleviate the burden of his grandparents. But... Who knew that the heavens would play such a trick on him?

Although his grandmother would never express her disappointment over the matter to him, the feeling of uselessness overwhelmed Ryu so much so that after his awakening ceremony ended in failure, he spent the next half decade in seclusion.

At the time, many jealous of the Tatsuya Clan and Kunan Clan sneered as though Ryu's plight served him right. The little boy born with a spoon made of essence jade in his plump lips couldn't handle one set back? How pathetic.

No one believed that Ryu had truly entered seclusion. After all, how could one believe that a seven-year-old could withstand such a thing?

However, when Ryu emerged, he was a changed boy. Despite being only twelve years of age, his eyes had gained the depths of the world.

For the last five years, he had spent his time within the Shrine Library which had a repertoire of knowledge so dense that it stretched for thousands of miles long and wide, and tens of miles high. This was the place a seven-year-old boy had locked himself in.

Those years fueled an endless desire within him.

Alchemy? A waste of time. Why would I read about things I can't practice? Cultivation techniques? I'll ignore them, they have no use to me anyway. Formations? I'll only learn how to crack them, I would never be able to lay them down with my handicap.

A little boy spent five years not gaining knowledge, but gaining an understanding of what paths he could take as a cripple.

When he emerged, Ryu did so with determination in his eyes. There were so many things that he couldn't do, so he wouldn't waste his time. He'd pour his energy into what he could, he'd find ways to help his family even without an ounce of power.

Ryu became a Ruin Master, learning several trillion years of history. He then learned botany – there wasn't a single plant in existence or non-existence that he couldn't recognize, not a single heavenly flower he didn't know how to grow and nurture. Soon, after, he became a master of feng shui, grasping the world's beauty in his right hand.

With his skills in botany, he revived long-extinct species, blessing the Tatsuya and Kunan Clans with resources they could only dream of.

With his skill in feng shui he built the greatest cultivation rooms to ever exist, he reconstructed Tatsuya Palace to become the number one martial world wonder, and he became famous for the heavenly laws within his paintings.

And today... After more than nine hundred years of effort, he had finally found the path to reviving the Ice Phoenix Clan. Today, he'd use this skill he toiled over to alleviate a weight on his grandmother's heart.

"Dark Phoenix Clan?" Mistress Kunan's beautiful blue eyes widened.

Ryu smiled. "If I'm correct, the key to reviving the Ice Phoenix Clan fully is in these ruins. There's even a possibility of our Clans gaining yet another Shrine."