

## The Ages 1041

### Chapter 1041 - Universal Manna

"You feisty little chicken." Tianming mocked Ying Huo for a bit before presenting all eighteen manna before it. The entire hall was illuminated by the bright light emanating from them and thick power filled the room. There seemed to be sounds of crackling fire, storms, mountainous rumbles, and waves, suddenly turning the silent palace quite rowdy.

"Divine-grade manna that's above the level of tribulation manna... They're completely different. Otherwise, they wouldn't work on divine beasts. Normally, they're called universal manna, because they're born in the wide expanse of the universe and wouldn't show up on worlds with a nova source."

All of them were universal manna. It was easy to distinguish them from normal divine manna.

"It's said that there were two great miracles in the astralscape of order that resulted in such a prosperous and rich world. The first was the birth of the universe itself. Unclaimed nova sources were precious treasures cultivators would fight for. Securing one would ensure millions and billions of years of prosperity for a star world and birth countless elites. If a race doesn't find a new nova source before the one of their world expires, even the most advanced and powerful races would fall. As for the second miracle, it's the existence of universal manna!"

Universal manna could allow lifebound beasts of the rootbeast race, as well as specters, to evolve. While its importance could hardly be compared to a nova source, it was similar in that it was formed from the universe itself. Other treasures, like spirit herbs and ores, on the other hand, formed due to normal objects absorbing nova source. However, Universal manna had nothing to do with a nova source.

"If the universe had a creator, nova sources and universal manna are the only two creations." Those two elements of the universe were the only things that couldn't be explained in terms of other things. The formation of nova sources were rather rare, but in the endless void of the universe, the formation of universal manna wasn't uncommon. It was also a precious resource, not just for the rootbeast race and specters, but also countless other races across the universe.

"In fact, we don't even have an explanation for how manna forms on the Flameyellow Continent." The existence of manna was a top mystery. Legend said that they had spontaneously appeared, even those of the lowest grade. They were treasures that could even be used to unlock the bloodline shackles of Primordial Chaos Beasts.

As for distinguishing the effects of them, it was a simple thing. There was an obvious sign of the quality and grade of universal manna. For instance, Tianming was holding a flaming ball a meter in diameter, covered in many complicated patterns. On both sides were a set of horns that were hot to the touch. It emanated a power that seemed like a nova source, or at least a compressed, miniaturized version of it. However, it was clear that the manna was a single source of power. Through the flaming surface, one could see that it was a void of chaotic energy. Within the void were two golden balls of flame that looked like suns.

"This is a two-star universal manna." The number of balls of energy denoted the number of stars universal manna would be classified as. Among those that Sovereign Xi had given him, this two-star universal manna was of the lowest quality.

Tianming placed them all on the ground. Even though the floor of Origin Hall was made of spirit ores, they still burned from the power of the universal manna. With enough time, the hall would collapse.

He then turned to look at another one that was covered in a blue mist. Deep within the mist were close to a hundred dragon-shaped beasts flying about and roaring. They were chasing water-blue balls of light that emanated the power of frost. There were three of them in total.

"So this is a three-star universal manna, the Draconic Pearl." As far as Tianming knew, nova sources weren't limited to balls of flame like Orderia, which was the sun. Violetglory Star's nova source was purple in color, due to its complex internals that didn't contain the power of fire.

The 'stars' within universal manna looked just like a kind of nova source. Undoubtedly, this manna was a grade higher than the former flaming one, which was in turn many magnitudes better than the ultimate tribulation manna from the Kilostar Domain, being in a completely different league.

Among the eighteen manna he had received, most of them were ranked two to three stars. Sovereign Xi had said that she had given him four four-star universal manna on account of him having four lifebound beasts. As for the rest, they were just backups. Her generosity was shocking, to say the least. Even though Tianming hadn't spent long in the wondersky realm, he knew that getting four manna of such quality on Violetglory Star would undoubtedly be incredibly difficult for a beginner ascendant. Liu Wanwan, for instance, had a lifebound beast with fifteen hundred stars, and that was through the use of a two-star universal manna.

"Did she give me the entire fortune of the Divine Moon Realm that was accumulated over millions of years? I know they don't have any use for it, but it's still too grand a gift."

Tianming put away the other manna, leaving only the four-star universal manna behind. Within each of them were four nova source-like celestial bodies. The one right before Tianming's eyes was covered in a chaotic black and red mist. Within it were four black flaming balls moving about like four eyeballs, emanating an evil power of incineration. Those four balls could even turn into four black birds that flew around and even shrieked at Tianming. When he took that manna out, the ground continued to sink and burn as the black ravens flew around the manna and tore at his black arm, causing a clanging sound to reverberate throughout the hall.

"It's a four-star universal manna indeed." Tianming recalled that even the five ultimate tribulation manna he had acquired from the Kilostar Domain had powers that were under control, unlike these almost sentient forces of nature. They didn't look like simple treasures, but entire microcosms in their own right instead.

## **Chapter 1042 - Fiend Series**

"That's right, it's a universe in its own right!"

Two-star universal manna had two star worlds, and so on. Tianming looked at the brief introduction that the manna had come with.

"So this four-star universal manna is called Flamefiend's Shadow." It appeared that it had been specially prepared for Ying Huo.

"Looks like your little birdie has a big reputation, Tianming," Ying Huo said.

"Is that supposed to be an innuendo?" Tianming said.

"Haha, aren't you a smart one!"

"Curse you! I wish you'll stay a chicken after this evolution as well!"

"In your dreams!"

Either way, Ying Huo still felt a little nervous about ingesting this manna. It was three meters in diameter alone. Ying Huo looked like a little chicken standing before a tiger.

"How do I even eat it? Where do I start? Will it explode?"

Tianming couldn't be bothered to care. He turned to the other three four-star universal manna. "Huh, so is this a series of fiendish manna or something?"

The second manna was shaped like an eyeball with countless blood-colored lightning balls that looked like blood vessels. It looked fierce and scary. There were four celestial bodies within it that looked like concentrations of lightning.

"This is called Blitzfiend's Eye." Meow Meow was lucky to get it, since it was a Genesis Chaos Thunderfiend to begin with so the manna had unbelievably high compatibility with it. The previous one it got, Fiendish Venus, had horrible compatibility, relatively speaking, which gave it quite a hard time.

Tianming turned to the third universal manna. Like the rest, it was graded as four stars. It was a gigantic black and crimson sword ten meters long. Pierced into the ground, it exuded a fiendish aura, with blood constantly dripping from its blade. However, it wasn't an actual sword; within it were four celestial bodies as well.

"The third one's called Starfiend's Sword." This one was for Lan Huang. It seemed that Sovereign Xi had obtained detailed information about his lifebound beasts from the Huiyue Clan before he came.

As for the last one, it looked like a flower. Not a pretty one, though. It slightly resembled a heart, and every time it pulsed, it let out a fiendish sound like that of a banshee that made one incredibly distraught. The patterns on its surface looked like the blood vessels of a heart. "The last one, Spiritfiend's Heart!"

All four manna were dark, ferocious, and bloodthirsty in nature. Using them for evolution would no doubt affect the natures of the beasts, at least to some degree. If the ultimate tribulation manna he used happened to match up as part of a series of stars, it was a series of fiendish manna! By now, Meow Meow, Lan Huang, and Xian Xian were certain that ingesting these manna to evolve wouldn't be a problem. After all, Meow Meow could take the form of a Regal Chaosfiend to increase its size. Ying Huo was the only one who stood blankly before the manna that towered over it.

"Don't you like it big? Too big for you, huh?" Tianming said.

"Hmph! Are you insulting me?!" Ying Huo snapped.

"Yes, yes I am."

"Just you wait, you bully. I'll tear your lips off one day." As they bickered, the rest had entered the lifebound space with their respective manna. Manna had to first be swallowed and integrated into their bodies before they could return to the lifebound space. So, Ying Huo would have to ingest its first before it could return.

"Alright, just stay outside. I want to witness your suffering," Tianming said.

"Then open your dog eyes wide. I'll deal with it!"

"Don't chicken out, get it?"

"Aaagh! You're driving me mad!"

Ying Huo charged straight into the manna. Almost immediately, the four flaming black birds within immediately angrily screeched at it and charged. It looked like they were going to devour Ying Huo instead of the other way round! It had no choice but to engage them in a fight. The scene reminded Tianming of the Aeternal Infernal Phoenix consuming planets for nova sources.

"As expected, with every evolution, they seem to be regaining their true natures. They're behaving more and more like they used to. Universal manna must have some kind of synergy with nova sources."

Tianming had a feeling that things that just spontaneously appeared in the universe wouldn't be that simple. He did nothing but watch; evolution was a dangerous process, so he had to be ready to defend them at a moment's notice. He couldn't help them even if the situation required it. While the three still had backup manna to use if their evolution failed, Tianming knew they would only settle for the strongest. Not even Meow Meow wanted to lose out in that regard.

His mood swayed as time passed. Within the lifebound space, his beasts were engaging in an internal battle that didn't cause much commotion. Ying Huo, on the other hand, was literally fighting the manna on the outside, consuming it bit by bit.

"How far the great has fallen. To think that aeons ago, you swallowed an entire sun in a mouthful," Tianming lamented. Was that only a dream, or was it a record of something that had actually happened? He couldn't be sure. The only thing he knew was that Ying Huo and the rest started from the far bottom beneath the stars and had to climb up step by step, overcoming countless tribulations to reacquire their true selves.

However, when the day came, they would no longer be the Primordial Chaos Beasts from aeons ago. They had acquired feelings and warmth. Perhaps that was the difference between wildbeasts and rootbeasts. It was said that even divine wildbeasts had no true sentience. In exchange for the insane combat capabilities the heavens had granted them, they didn't have an intellect that could be compared to an average person.

"Work hard. One day, you'll find your true selves once again." The process of evolution was similar to finding and becoming what one was meant to be. He wasn't sure how many times they had evolved until now. This was their own battle to fight that would define their own identity.

He watched as Ying Huo gained one wound after another without relenting. It cared a lot about how it was perceived. Being the first to hatch, it was the big brother for all of them and wanted to be the best at everything, so it always did its best, never backing down from a fight and never giving up. Tianming sometimes felt like it was a reflection of himself; perhaps that was the true purpose of symbiotic cultivation.

Finally, the first black bird was swallowed into Ying Huo's body. Then, it began burning with black flames. The bird was still resisting Ying Huo from the inside, while the other three clawed at it from the outside. It looked like Ying Huo was in a dire predicament. There was no choice for it but to persevere and overcome its limits. That was the way to undo the bloodline shackles of Primordial Chaos Beasts.

"I'm not evolving into you! I'm using your power to stimulate my own bloodline! I'm the noble Aeternal Infernal Phoenix!" Its bloodline was sublime and its pride forbade it from both losing and from falling in line with the clowns.

As time passed, Tianming watched Ying Huo swallow the second and third flaming birds, which caused the flames that burned around it to turn darker. It looked like it was almost charred at this point; being damaged from within was far more terrifying than from without. However, it still didn't hesitate to hunt down the last bird and bite its head before sucking it up into its belly. Those four birds were the core of the manna. Once they had been dealt with, Ying Huo only needed to inhale once to consume all the mist surrounding it.

With a whoosh, Flamefiend's Shadow was no more, leaving behind a little charred phoenix on the ground. The black flames burned stronger and stronger like it was forging Ying Huo.

"Are you doing fine? The rest are going to succeed, so you'd better not die off just like that," Tianming said concernedly.

"Nonsense!" It felt its pride being slighted, causing its fighting spirit to rise.

"Haha, you're like a chicken on steroids."

"I know I call myself a chicken for laughs, but I'm a phoenix, dammit!"

Tianming's provocation had drawn out every bit of spunk from it. In actuality, Meow Meow and the rest were only halfway through and far from completion. However, Ying Huo's situation seemed a little more dangerous. Its sharp cry signaled the arrival of the most difficult stage of the process as the power of its bloodline surged in its body.

The piercing cry of a phoenix sounded louder and louder as it grew amidst the black flames. Then, the black flames intertwined with its original red-colored fire. The red flames even began to have hints of black as it mixed together and the temperature in the surroundings rose higher and higher.

Tianming squinted and could see the little bird growing bigger in the midst of the flames, but not to a ridiculous degree. After all, it wasn't that large by Primordial Chaos Beast standards to begin with. But to

Ying Huo, this might be the first time it actually stopped looking like a chicken and took the form of a true phoenix.

Its wingspan was now a bit over three meters. Amidst the dark flames, its eyes burned brightly, glaring at Tianming and emanating a ferocious, insidious, and bloodthirsty aura. It let out a sky-shaking cry.

Tianming teared up. "Haha, you're finally a chicken no more."

### **Chapter 1043 - Death Inferno**

The flames receded back into Ying Huo's body as if they were never there. That instant, a brand new Aeternal Infernal Phoenix stood before Tianming's eyes. Its crimson feathers were now black with hints of red, looking fiendish and blazing at the same time. Ying Huo looked more like a demonic bird. Coupled with the black bane text that covered its feathers, it looked incredibly menacing. It finally looked impressive for once.

"Quick, mirror!" Ying Huo cried the instant it succeeded.

"Take a look!" Tianming took out Feiling's mirror from his spatial ring.

Ying Huo immediately smiled. "I look so cool! Ahahahaha! It's finally my time!"

"How many stars are there?"

"More than forty-seven hundred! It grew by more than three thousand! As expected of universal manna."

The star count limit for universal manna was five thousand stars, so that was already a decent result. Normally, one-star universal manna could only help a beast evolve to a limit of two thousand stars, while three-star manna had a limit of three thousand. The ultimate tribulation manna Tianming had used before couldn't be counted as universal manna, so its limit was a thousand stars.

"I look perfect. From now on, call me Sir Insidious."

"Sir?" Tianming burst out laughing. "There's nothing insidious about you."

"You're just jealous! I can smell it!"

"Why do I have to be jealous of you? Well, show me what else you can do now." Tianming took a few steps back.

Ying Huo was now about as big as a person. While its agility hadn't been negatively affected in any way, it had definitely gained a lot of damage-dealing ability. At the very least, its Cosmic Blade feathers were now the size of a normal dagger.

"Challenging me, are you? Shudder in fear, puny human!"

Ying Huo really did have a domineering aura. Tianming didn't hesitate to bring out his four cardinal godswords. Now that he was at the second level, his swords were thirty meters long. Even with its recent size increase, Ying Huo was still dwarfed by them.

"Eat this!" Ying Huo's brutish manner remained the same as it charged toward Tianming and used Infernal Haze. The black and red feathers on its body immediately formed into ten thousand identical clones that were as large as it was now. Tianming noticed that they were far more realistic than before, and even more corporeal than his totems. In fact, each and every haze clone resembled the four black flame birds from before, a clear sign that the ability had grown much stronger. Tianming felt like he was facing off against ten thousand Ying Huos as they smashed toward him like a meteor shower.

"This is the second stage of Infernal Haze: Death Inferno!"

The clones formed a deathly hellscape as they attacked alongside Ying Huo's main body. It looked like the world was about to end.

While Ying Huo and the rest were still able to harvest abilities from wildbeasts to awaken their own, they were hitting the limit using that method. Since Xian Xian had hatched, it mostly relied on manna for new abilities, which its three older siblings also mirrored. Death Inferno was a result of evolving using Flamefiend's Shadow.

Tianming blocked the blow with all four totems. They cut through many haze clones, but that didn't matter as they began exploding with fire and fury. He couldn't neutralize the entire move at all.

"Impressive!" Since it was only a test, they weren't going to fight for real. Now he had a rough idea of Ying Huo's improved power. Looks like Ying Huo can take on totems at the Hexaunity Sky level after evolving with Flamefiend's Shadow, coupled with Blazebane, Cosmic Blade, and its battle arts.

Despite the tough process, the results spoke for themselves.

"How is it, son? Pissing yourself from fear yet?" Ying Huo said, wings on hips.

"Oh, it's leaking alright. You're really badass now." Tianming was genuinely glad for Ying Huo, as the power of its bloodline would also be transferred to him thanks to symbiotic cultivation.

"Amazing!" Now that Ying Huo was done, the hall finally quieted down once more.

Tianming sat on the cobblestone floor with Ying Huo stretching its wings out onto his shoulder. "I have some good news to tell you."

"What good news?"

"You see... I just went through puberty. So all the beautiful avians across the astralscape of order will swoon in the face of my vigorous adult form!"

"Sorry, I need to be alone for a while from all the cringe."

"Hahahaha!" Ying Huo's delusions caused it to smile stupidly and drool on the floor.

Tianming was truly impressed, having witnessed how it grew from a little chicken to its current splendid form.

"What about them? Didn't you say they'd be done soon?"

"I was just messing with you."

"Hmph! Toying with my feelings again? Meanie..."

"Gross! Get off me!"

As they spoke, Meow Meow finished up in the lifebound space. Thanks to its great affinity with the lightning and fiend aspects, it completed its evolution without issue. It was as if the manna had been made for it.

Meow Meow emerged from the lifebound space in its Regal Chaosfiend form, immediately causing black clouds to gather above. When it roared, its lightning-charged fur sparked and caused the entire palace to grow bright. Then it tilted its head and asked, "Do I look cool?"

It had absorbed Blitzfiend's Eye, so naturally the majority of the changes were visible in its eyes. They were now deep pools of lightning tinged with a dense red. It was as if the lightning bolts themselves were swimming in a sea of blood. Now, its eyes stored its lightning reserves and were the place its abilities would burst forth from.

"Very cool. Now show me what you can do," Tianming said.

"Meow!" While it was a little odd seeing a huge beast meow like a little cat, it certainly didn't look that way. Meow Meow in its Regal Chaosfiend form was as threatening as ever.

#### **Chapter 1044 - Meteoric Rise**

Meow Meow's entire body was covered in lightning bolts as Ninefold Chaos Thunderscape was constantly surrounding its body. At that moment, countless lightning bolts gathered in its eyes and seemed to explode before forming two long spears that blasted toward the sky. The blood-colored lightning spears moved at a speed three times faster than Meow Meow could—it was a ferocious strike indeed. In the blink of an eye, they pierced straight through the clouds. That ability was sure to be useful against most enemies, unless they were too many levels above Tianming's. Otherwise, there was no way they would be able to react to that strike, much less avoid it.

"This is my new ability, Cosmic Lance. One spear represents the light yang, and the other represents the dark yin. Both of them pierce the enemy at the same time. If I layer Blitzbane's power on top of it, it'll be powerful enough to be my finishing move. It's my strongest ability so far," Meow Meow bragged.

Tianming and Ying Huo looked at each other and gave Meow Meow a thumbs-up, or as close as Ying Huo could manage anyways.

"Cool. Now for the next one," Ying Huo said.

"Yeah!" Meow Meow reverted back into a black cat and leapt into Tianming's embrace. Then, it coquettishly meowed and said, "You made me so tired! It's horrible!"

Despite its words, it was already sleeping comfortably. By then, the other two were done as well. Lan Huang's appearance had changed quite a lot. It looked just as fiendish as the other two after absorbing the manna, having gained many ghastly red scales and sword-shaped spikes all over its body. Even its fangs looked like many Starfiend's Swords. A simple roll from it would be enough to tear its enemies apart. Its tail was also a gigantic Starfiend's Sword.



It gained a new ability called Daybreak Worldslash, which actually resembled a battle art more than an ability. It used the gigantic tail and the nine kui mountains on its back like ten blades and slashed in the fashion of Primordial Wheel. Coupled with its Kilofold Rings, Lan Huang was now a machine of war. It also had around forty-five hundred stars.

As for Xian Xian, its fourth flower bloomed. The new flowers bloomed in groups and had a unique purple shade. Tianming recognized them as grape hyacinths, which looked like purple grapes and bells at the same time. The grape hyacinth on Xian Xian was called Fiendsong Mare.

Just like Radiant Lily was no normal lily, Fiendsong Mare was no normal grape hyacinth. It bloomed in a huge bunch of a hundred thousand, each one looking just like a purple bell. With a shake of Xian Xian's body, it caused the bells to ring and resonate with the power of Fiendsong Mare.

"Basically, I've learned to sing!" it said using its spiritform, which now had a head full of grape hyacinths.

"Not bad! You can sing along with me!" Lan Huang said in its booming voice.

"No, not you! Let Xian Xian do it alone!" Tianming and Ying Huo said in unison. Letting Lan Huang sing could be fatal to everything within earshot.

Xian Xian's spiritform flew up to the group of Fiendsong Mares and blended into them. Then, all hundred thousand of them began ringing; Tianming could hardly describe the sound he heard. It was a mare that infested the dreams indeed, sounding like many people crying at the same time. It was as if countless souls were climbing toward his ears. The more he listened, the sleepier he felt, but right that instant, the sound suddenly turned ear piercing in a way that hurt his soul. Tianming let out his totems and noticed that they had also been affected by the Fiendsong Mares. The compounding effects of pain and sleepiness were hard to deal with.

"The flowers specialize in using sound to entrance the soul!" Tianming had seen methods like that before, but it was completely different when Xian Xian put its own spin on it. It was effective against both the vita and totems.

"To think that it can even affect totems... what an impressive ability." Coupled with Xian Xian's 'singing', the ability was called Trisoul Fiendsong. Now, Xian Xian excelled even more at crowd control thanks to its combination of Radiant Vines, Evernight Rose, and this new ability. Only her Scarlet Lily was used purely for attack, but even that was able to cause widespread destruction. Xian Xian was now an even more integral part of the team.

Tianming was all too happy with the new fiendish evolutions. More importantly, their pure hearts hadn't been distorted like their looks had.

"Sis! I like that ability!" Meow Meow was ecstatic. An ability that caused sleep was practically made for it.

"Forget it!" Tianming stuffed it back into his lifebound space. "Well, after all that effort in making you stronger, it's time you return the favor!"

Every time it came time to synchronize their bloodlines, Tianming appreciated symbiotic cultivation even more, thinking it to be the ultimate form of cultivation.

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"The third level... Trisource Sky." Their bloodline evolutions caused his Primordial Chaos Beast body to grow at the same time, which in turn triggered a change in his wills and caused him to break through again. That showed just how much power had been gained by going from around a thousand stars to forty-five hundred and above. All the way back in Vermillion Bird, stars only increased one by one in comparison.

Through a night of cultivation, he strengthened the albi in his body with the power of boundless stellar source. His infernal discs, primordial discs, genesis discs, and radix discs grew even stronger through Tianming's Lifesbane Will. However, he didn't give up on his Imperial Will, either; he was just making slower progress with it. With his current level of power, he was among the most powerful of the rootbeast race in the Divine Moon Realm.

"To think that Sovereign Xi dared to give me four-star universal manna. With so many stars, Ying Huo and the rest might be the most powerful lifebound beasts in the Divine Moon Realm."

Perhaps the reason for that was that totems reigned supreme in the Divine Moon Realm, as the divine moonrace were the dominant group. Tianming spent another half a day recharging, finally extending his godswords to forty meters in length. That way, it wouldn't be an issue if an enemy could run thirty-nine meters away in an instant.

"It's only been a short time since I came to the Divine Moon Realm. Right now, even if I only use the four cardinal godswords, even Shishi's father, an elite at the Heptaglorious Sky level, wouldn't be my match. I've really improved by leaps and bounds!"

Saving Ye Lingfeng would still be difficult, but Tianming had been growing at a startling rate since breaking his Lifesbane curse. He finally ended his cultivation session and stood up.

"There's many battle arts in the Moonnight Patio that I can obtain without having to challenge anyone. Let's see if there's any that will be suitable for me, Ying Huo, and Xian Xian."

While he could continue taking challenges in the wondersky realm, there was a cooldown of ten days. Here, on the other hand, Sovereign Xi had decreed that he would be allowed to take anything he wanted.

With how powerful Hexapath Samsara Sword's sword intent was, it was far better than many other divine-grade battle arts. For a move like that to have originated from the Flameyellow Continent showed that the world below also had impressive talent that was only limited by the lack of good spiritual energy and legacies. The Hexapath Sword God was said to have spent centuries perfecting the sword art. If it weren't for Tianming's short cultivation time, he would have been trying to discover his own sword art. However, it was better for him to keep learning from others' wisdom for now.

"The divine moonrace has a history of millions of years and they've birthed many elites. There's definitely a battle art out there that's much stronger than the Hexapath Samsara Sword."

Not wanting to stay in the quiet and lonely Xi Palace, he headed to the Moonnight Patio. He didn't think that right after entering, he would see two people talking. The first was the alluring sovereign, while the other was also a woman. However, she was dressed like a scholar and had her hair tied up in a knot. She

held herself with great poise and authority. Despite dressing like a man, her feminine beauty was impossible to hide. While she was probably as old as the sovereign, her power made her look just as young. In other words, they must have ascended at a young age.

"Greetings, Your Majesty, Imperial Guide," Tianming said. He had never seen the imperial guide before, but a simple guess was enough for him to know that she was the second most authoritative person in the Divine Moon Realm. Only she could talk to the sovereign without bowing or kneeling, literally on equal standing.

"Come here," Sovereign Xi said with a wave. When he came over, she put her hand on his shoulder in a friendly manner. "How is it? We just got Ourselves a young new man. He smells good, doesn't he?"

Tianming's expression immediately contorted. What did he smell like?

"He smells decent," said the imperial guide as she expressionlessly gazed at him, like this was something she was already used to.

"We told him that he's allowed to train at your Moonnight Patio with the highest of privileges."

"Understood," the imperial guide said with a nod.

"Your Majesty, I was just about to head there," Tianming said.

"What a coincidence, she's about to head back too. Lead the way, then."

"We shall take our leave." The imperial guide lowered her head and looked at Tianming, signaling him to follow her.

As they left, Sovereign Xi squinted and studied Tianming's back. "Isn't he a little fast?"

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Tianming left Xi Palace with the imperial guide and flew toward their destination. Soon, they reached an elysian location; it was none other than Moonnight Patio. Though its name sounded really elegant, it was actually the top cultivation location of the divine moonrace, their sacred legacy. Many royals cultivated there before reaching a hundred years old. This place had produced generations of royal elites, and only the best could attend it.

The imperial guide stopped before entering. "You may cultivate here, but don't cause any trouble."

"Understood. I won't offend anyone of my own accord."

"There will be many who are curious about you."

"In what sense?"

"Many believe that those of the rootbeast race that use blood pacts have low potential, no matter how great their talent," she said.

"Then they're wrong."

"Wrong how?"

"My current abilities far supersede most of the people within," Tianming proclaimed.

### **Chapter 1045 - Her Majesty's New Pet**

Tianming had heard many people in Huiyue City say that the upper limit for his potential was low and that he would stop being able to progress one day. In actuality, that was just a product of their own superiority complex. The divine moonrace had a prejudice against the rootbeast race, those who used blood pacts especially, so they refused to believe what they saw before their eyes and made up an explanation to console themselves.

The fact that Sovereign Xi paid him so much heed was a testament to his actual talent. The imperial guide and many other elders were also aware of that fact. So what Tianming had just said wasn't borne of arrogance, but honest fact.

"Even though you're breathtaking indeed, you're underestimating my disciples at the Moonnight Patio if you make such a daring claim right now," the imperial guide said calmly. Unlike Sovereign Xi, she spoke without a hint of emotion from beginning to end.

"Understood." Tianming nodded without bothering to split hairs.

"Let's enter."

The Moonnight Patio was unlike many other academies and sects Tianming had seen before. It was an elegant, beautiful place filled with a rich ambience. It was a highly refined place no matter what he set his eyes on. The divine moonrace really valued quality of life and paid great attention to minor details. They were the superior race in the Divine Moon Realm, at least as far as they saw themselves, and considered themselves to be the only civilized people. So they indulged in rich culture and refined customs, often preferring subtlety over crude bombastic displays of excess.

For instance, the name Moonnight Patio, along with the modest, yet elegant architecture of the buildings there, the decor, and the man-made landscapes and ponds radiated a simple elegance that belied the arrogance hidden underneath it. It wasn't until recently that two people had completely shattered the divine moonrace's arrogant delusion.

The first was the mysterious killer that had taken at least a hundred thousand lives of the divine moonrace. As for geniuses, the seventeen-year-old Tianming had crushed their top genius, Huiyue Jie, and even caused the sovereign to desire him, which made the youths of the Divine Moon Realm feel really awkward. And now, Tianming had been admitted into the most prestigious place of study of the divine moonrace.

The place was rather large overall with few people within. Even so, the imperial guide wasn't just the administrator-in-name of the Moonnight Patio. Many youths that passed by respectfully greeted her. Tianming saw true reverence in their eyes; naturally, he was all too aware of her strength.

"Greetings, Imperial Guide."

The young divine moonrace greeted her one after another. They considered those under the age of fifty to be young. However, given the lifespan of ascendants, even those around the age of a hundred would

look like a Vermillion Bird citizen of around twenty. That was the benefit of being born as the descendant of an ascendant.

As a result of this law of nature, children of ascendants had an easier time becoming ascendants themselves, something that clearly showed even at the Samsara stage. The tens of girls that greeted the imperial guide were more beautiful and talented than both Huiye Shi and Huiye Yin. All of them had six bane-rings and were royals. Though they moved about in big flocks, their refined behavior prevented them from being noisy. They looked like a group of elegant ladies heading to a grand tea ceremony.

"Yueshen Qi," the imperial guide called out. Yueshen was the surname of the royal clan. Anyone who bore that name was someone to be reckoned with.

A gentle-looking girl in a yellow dress emerged from the group. She looked like a typical beauty of the divine moonrace, with a shapely figure, fair skin, demure demeanor, and elegance that oozed out of every corner of her body. Given how she had been standing amidst the whole group, she seemed to hold an important position in Moonnight Patio.

"Yes, Imperial Guide?" Yueshen Qi said in a gentle voice.

"Do you know this one?"

"Yes. He's Her Majesty's new pet."

Yueshen Qi smiled at Tianming. It seemed like she didn't think calling him a pet was in any way offensive. In fact, the divine moonrace almost saw it as an honor.

"Very well. He'll be coming here to train from now on. You're in charge of guiding him and attending to his needs. If they aren't something you can satisfy, you may come to me," the imperial guide said. The other royals there were a little shocked to hear that. For Yueshen Qi to be personally tasked to answer Tianming's demands meant the rest of them would have to assent to his whims as well.

"Yes, Imperial Guide." Yueshen Qi was a scion from an illustrious family, so she was well aware of what she needed to do in this situation.

"He wants to look up some battle arts today. Take him to the Bamboo Forest."

"Understood." Yueshen Qi bowed and smiled at Tianming, her dimples prominently showing. "Please come with me."

"Thank you in advance," Tianming said.

"Being able to serve Her Majesty's new pet is my honor."

Those words really unnerved him. The imperial guide was gone by now; she was probably really busy. After she was gone, the other royals left as well, but they secretly gathered further away to look at Tianming as they talked about him with weird looks.

"This way, please." Yueshen Qi humbled herself, smiling the whole time. Tianming followed her through the Moonnight Patio. Along the way, there were quite a lot of male disciples. It seemed that the gender balance there wasn't skewed.

"Sister Qi, who's this?" someone asked.

"Shush!" Yueshen Qi put up a finger against her lips as she warned them with her gaze, causing them to shut up. It would only take a look or two for them to figure out who Tianming was.

"Why's he here? Damn..." they chattered as they left.

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Soon, they reached the Bamboo Forest. For a place that stored legacies that countless people yearned for, it was given a really simple and humble name. Tianming could see tens of thousands of bamboo trees ahead of him, each of them hundreds of meters tall. They were colorful and bundled together and made the whole forest look like paradise itself. However, Tianming knew that they weren't real bamboo.

They were all made using a similar material as the Hexapath Sword Insight Rock, which was formed with multiple layers of sword barriers. The legacy and speech of the Hexapath Sword God were encoded within those barrier formations, allowing Tianming to systematically go through the levels of the battle art. While that was advanced technology by the Flameyellow Continent's standards, it was all too commonplace in the Divine Moon Realm. These were called legacy formations.

They weren't complicated things. It's just that legacy formations weren't commonplace on the Flameyellow Continent. For instance, there were legacy formations in the Li Saint Clan's mausoleum in the form of the tombstones, albeit simplified ones. Each of the bamboo trees in front of Tianming was a legacy formation in itself. They contained the records of the originator of the techniques demonstrating their self-created technique, which was much better than learning about a battle art from a manual. It also helped limit the easy spread of battle arts.

"Disciples of the Moonnight Patio have to contribute to be allowed access to the legacy formations, or gain approval of the seniors. They're also only allowed to pick one or two. But you're different. Her Majesty has decreed that you can choose as many as you want," Yueshen Qi said enviously. It was no wonder that Tianming had detected jealousy in the other disciples' expressions.

"Will you follow me inside?" he asked.

"I can't enter, based on the regulations," she politely said.

"It's fine. I'll need you to give me a brief explanation."

"Understood!" She knew full well that the right course of action for her was based on the conversation she had with the imperial guide. The rules applied to the disciples, but not Tianming.

He didn't say much more, but immediately stepped inside and noticed that each bamboo tree was about a kilometer away from the rest, barely interfering with the others around it. Some disciples could be seen cultivating in front of some of the bamboo trees.

"I assume the deeper we go, the better the techniques?"

"That's the case. In the same vein, they'll get harder too. What kind of battle art do you need? First, second, or third-realm ones?"

"Third-realm battle arts."

There was a stricter categorization with regard to battle arts across the astralscape of order, unlike the Flameyellow Continent, where any battle art created by ascendants were considered divine grade. Instead, the astralscape of order's view of battle arts was far more holistic.

Aspects like cultivation type and capabilities were considered in the creation and use of battle arts. For instance, Tianming's power was based on astral discs within his albi. Once he reached the Ascension stage, he noticed that the final strikes of Hexapath Samsara Sword were different from the former four. Only divine-grade battle arts could properly utilize the power of one's albi, which was why divine-grade battle arts were also called divine astral arts, or divine arts for short.

They were split into the first, second, and third realms for ascendants. It was said that the fourth realm and above required power beyond that of the Ascension stage, and training to use them before that wouldn't make any difference to using a first, second, or third realm divine art.

If I had to guess, the Hexapath Samsara Sword can probably be considered a second-realm divine art. Its sword intent might be better than many third-realm arts, too. However, there's a lack of support when it comes to the power base. That's why it's a bad match for the astral discs in my albi, which is a huge weakness. I need a divine art that doesn't have to have a complicated sword intent. Instead, it just needs to fit my astral discs and be able to be used throughout the Ascension stage.

Apart from battle arts, other special techniques were also classified with the realm system. However, Tianming already used the Primordial Chaos Beasts' respective codices as his cultivation technique, so he wouldn't have to worry about that.

#### **Chapter 1046 - Moonnight Subdued Strike**

The Celestial Astral Punch from the Violetglory Star wondersky realm was considered a first-realm divine art. There were also some ultimate divine astral arts from ancient idols far beyond, but Tianming was limited in his number of challenge attempts. He wouldn't have bothered coming to the Moonnight Patio were that not the case. After all, the Hexapath Samsara Sword was starting to show its weakness, especially when he used it against even stronger foes to come.

He told Yueshen Qi, "Take me to the third-realm divine art zone."

"Understood." She obediently did as she was told without asking too many questions.

As they weaved through the forest, Tianming noticed that the crowd thinned the deeper they went. Using his Plundering Eye, he saw countless shining spots deep within the mist deep within. "What's that place?"

"Oh, that's the Divine Moon Lake."

"What's special about it?"

"It's the location of the formation core for our city. The imperial guide usually stands guard there."

"Ah, got it." So it was the formation core defending the capital city of the Divine Moon Realm. "Looks like Her Majesty deeply trusts the imperial guide."

"Of course. They go way back."

"Is there a story behind it?"

"Are you not here to train? It isn't my place to speak about the affairs of Her Majesty and the imperial guide."

"Forget it, then." He looked at the lake and continued onward, looking for a suitable divine art. The realm system was just a man-made categorization, so they weren't that distinct from one another, unlike universal mana grades. Divine arts in the same realm could differ greatly in performance and results, so picking a suitable one was no easy task.

However, Tianming had a clear goal in mind. "Take me to the legacy formations considered to have the strongest divine arts by the divine moonrace."

"The strongest..." Yueshen Qi furrowed her brows. Not only was that arrogant, it was also really prideful. "The strongest technique is also really hard to master. Currently, only one person is able to use it."

"No matter. What's it called? What's its origins?"

"It's a technique created by our distant forefather, the Eightmoon Swordsage with octabane talent. The sword art he created is called the Moonnight Subdued Strike."

"It doesn't sound that powerful, based on the name. What's the catch?"

Yueshen Qi shot him an odd look. "You sound a little arrogant. It was named by its creator, and that has nothing to do with its power. Only a shallow person would come up with a superficial name for a technique that claims to be able to split the earth and heavens." She seemed to bear some contempt for flashy technique names.

"Alright, then I'll witness for myself how impressive it is."

"Very well. That's your right. However, there's something I still wish to convey."

"Speak your mind, then."

"The Moonnight Subdued Strike is a killing strike. It is an ideal sword art for use in conjunction with totems. It isn't flashy, by any means, and a single strike will result in death. The Eightmoon Swordsage undertook many miraculous feats with that art. The one recorded in Bamboo Forest is but a simplified version that the sage devised for us. It doesn't contain parts that can't be executed by those at the Ascension stage. The original version is a fifth-realm divine art," she said with a sense of pride.

"Understood."

It reminded Tianming of Li Muyang simplifying Demise of Man-Earth-Heaven for him way back when. While he found that technique to be exceedingly easy now, the sword intent contained within was still unparalleled. He deemed it a worthy thing to study when he had the chance.

As they spoke, they reached the final bamboo tree in the forest. It stretched straight through the sky and was about three meters thick, making it look more like a pillar. Though it was essentially a formation, it had no defensive properties. Anyone with the privilege was allowed to observe it.



Tianming noticed someone standing in front of the bamboo tree with eyes closed. His sword was thrust into the bamboo as he tried to comprehend the sword intent. He had a huge physique, was around two meters in height, and had a messy head of light blonde hair, which was really unique among the divine moonrace. He definitely stood out as a little brutish compared to his refined brethren.

"Can I cultivate with him?" Tianming asked.

"No. Each bamboo tree can only be studied by one person at a time," Yueshen Qi said.

"You mentioned that only one person has mastered it, right? Is he that person?"

"Of course not. The only one to have mastered the move is Her Majesty. However, this person seems to have comprehended one of the moves of the art." The way she looked at the man was a little weird, as if she was avoiding him.

"Who is he?"

"That would be Her Majesty's youngest brother, Prince Zhuoyang, Yueshen Hao." For him to be cultivating at the Moonlight Patio meant that he was under a century old. Sovereign Xi's parents weren't the previous rulers of the Divine Moon Realm, and they were still around. It wasn't surprising that they had children just a few decades ago.

"That's a rather high status," Tianming said.

"It is indeed."

"How long will this continue?"

"The young prince cultivates for around ten days to two weeks."

"I can't wait any longer. Have him leave," Tianming said all of a sudden.

"Excuse me?"

"Have him leave."

"This..." Though she was at a loss for words, she snapped out of it and said, "There isn't a need for that, right? Why don't you try another technique? Prince Zhuoyang's temper isn't the best, and I wouldn't dare to ask His Highness to leave. Not only would it be insulting to His Highness, but I also don't have that right."

"Didn't the imperial guide say to assent to my every demand?" Tianming said with a smile. "This demand is beyond me," she said with a lowered head.

"Then seek out the imperial guide and ask her if I'm allowed to do that." He couldn't afford to wait that long, especially after seeing the lake of blood. There was no room for politeness when his life was in danger.

"Understood." Though she looked at him with a heart full of complaints, voice them she did not. Instead, she immediately scurried off.

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Fifteen minutes later, the imperial guide arrived, looking a little annoyed. Yueshen Qi followed behind her without daring to make a sound.

"Zhouyang, stop for a bit."

The young prince opened his eyes gradually. When he turned to face them, he looked even more burly, like a powerful lion. He really did look out of place among the divine moonrace. "What is it, Imperial Guide?"

"Her Majesty has arranged for him to train the Moonnight Subdued Strike, so make way."

"Huh?" Yueshen Hao looked at Tianming and immediately recognized him. He looked blanked out. Tianming thought he would freak out, but instead, he shook his head with a smile. "I didn't think the top genius of the Divine Moon Realm would grace us at the Moonnight Patio with his presence! Well met, Li Tianming! Go ahead!"

"Many thanks," Tianming said as he approached.

Yueshen Hao made way and said, "No need for thanks. It's only right for idiots to make way for geniuses."

#### **Chapter 1047 - Chaos**

"You're too humble," Tianming said before he turned his attention to the bamboo tree. He focused and waited for the Eightmoon Swordsage to start the demonstration. Yueshen Hao, whose title was Prince Zhuoyang, watched with a cold expression, tilting his head at the imperial guide.

"Moving you away, eh? If it was back then, wouldn't you have torn that person to pieces right away if someone said that to you?" the imperial guide asked.

"Imperial Guide, that was back then. Now that the new pet has come, everyone must submit without exception," Prince Zhuoyang said with a beaming smile.

"Looks like you've grown up."

"It's nothing, really. There's many pets that think themselves above everyone. In the end, they all quiet down anyway."

"Quiet down?" She shot him a cold look.

"Forget it! I'm only going to be held back for a little bit. This fellow is only a quadbane, and even used blood pacts for his lifebound beasts. Now he's being held back by symbiotic cultivation, so he's probably reached the end of his potential at the Ascension stage. How'd he even get to where he is now?"

"I don't know."

"Either way, I believe he's just a paper tiger. A simple touch would cause him to crumble."

"Don't act rashly. You can't afford it if you break him," she warned.

"I know! Well, he'll be tossed once he's no more fun anyway. It's always the same. How troublesome."

"How are you progressing with this technique?" The imperial guide changed the subject.

"I mastered the first move, but I still haven't understood the second. It's too hard, as expected of a fifth-realm divine art."

"That took you a few years, right? It's already decent. Others struggle to even start."

"But of course." Yueshen Hao cracked a confident smile.

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Tianming didn't care about the prince's arrogance at all. There was only one person who could decide his fate: Sovereign Xi. Since she had given him privileges, he was no longer afraid of offending anyone so he acted without worry. All he cared about was getting strong enough to protect himself and those he cared about.

He pierced the Grand-Orient Sword into the bamboo and held his breath. Once he was close enough, the bamboo legacy formation soon unveiled its true form to him. The scene within the bamboo changed into a wide, bright moon. Everything else disappeared from the vision, leaving only the silver moon behind, within which a silhouette appeared with a sword in each hand.

"Listen up. This is a strike that kills. It has no flair at all, and its only function is to take lives," said a voice that sounded more ancient than the Hexapath Sword God. "Strike in the night of the bright moon. One strike to startle, another to kill."

The figure moved about at a startling speed under the cherry blossom trees.

"The first strike: Seaborne Moon." The sword merely flashed. Tianming felt its sheer speed; when the sword reached its maximum acceleration, illusions began forming. It was like millions of moons were rising from the surface of the sea with the sword flashing brightly. Even the falling petals were slashed in half.

"Second strike: Sight Across Shores."

The figure had mentioned that the first strike was to startle and the second strike was meant to kill. When the second strike came, the illusions changed. The ground split apart and the figure manifested eight sword-wielding totems as well. They were towering, armored figures a kilometer in height. Together with the figure, they rained down devastation, making it seem like hundreds of thousands of moons were crashing down onto the earth. Though the moves from the totems' swords and the figure were completely different, they worked in tandem to form a sword formation.

Tianming watched, completely impressed. "Even though the divine moonrace isn't currently that powerful, their ancestors were rather formidable." The Moonnight Subdued Strike was testament to that.

"In comparison to the Hexapath Samsara Sword's sword intent, this one isn't that much more powerful. However, the completeness of the move and the coordination with totems make it much stronger in absolute terms."

In other words, the Hexapath Samsara Sword was too limited by where it had originated. It lacked a true elite to properly explore the possibilities of its capability. Tianming was already impressed enough that

the sword god was able to incorporate his imagination about the six paths of reincarnation into the move. It was too bad there was an upper limit to how far it could go.

No matter the intricacy of the move, the Moonnight Subdued Strike would be much stronger, and this was only the simplified version. The figure executed the moves again and again under the moonlight night, highlighting their intricacies. It was only superficially complicated, and its principles didn't go that deep. Even then, the superficial manifestations allowed it to have enough power to be classified as a divine astral art. Not to mention, Tianming had a much easier time comprehending superficial complexity, unlike the Hexapath Samsara Sword, which required a true, deep understanding. If he could remember enough of the changing forms of the moves, he would be able to perfect it and unleash an even stronger strike.

"If the Hexapath Samsara Sword and Demise of Man-Earth-Heaven can achieve a superficial complexity rivaling this move, maybe they might be even stronger than the Moonnight Subdued Strike."

Tianming knew well that worlds with nova sources were powerful because of their millions of years of legacy and high-level complexity. The world below suffered due to legacies that could no longer be passed down, which resulted in concepts never developing past certain levels of complexity. Not to mention, the weak spiritual energy made for a poor cultivation environment.

Now that he had Vita Prime, his cognition and perception were boosted to terrifying levels of clarity, which made superficial complexity really easy for him to comprehend. It was nothing but a math question. When he learned the trick to solving it, the rest was automatic. It was far easier than understanding the true essence and principles behind the move.

He watched the Eightmoon Swordsage's movements. Despite the insane speed, he could slow the moves down and analyze them slowly and piece by piece, down to how the forces of the astral discs within the swordsage's body were circulating and covering the swords. At the same time, he studied how the totems worked with the main fighter to achieve maximum effect. These were complexities that couldn't simply be expressed by mere sword intent alone, unlike the Hexapath Samsara Sword. Instead, once he was able to match the precise details, he would be able to unleash the power of the move.

"In other words, divine arts like these are much easier for me now." That was also the reason he had mastered Celestial Astral Punch so quickly, and he knew it was all thanks to his Trisoul Prime. Even with all the perks he had, however, it took him nearly a full day to fully understand it. At the very least, he had memorized it in full.

"I guess I'll no longer have to come here anymore." Meanwhile, Prince Zhuoyang had to come here time and again for years to continue his training.

"I'll just have to practice the first strike some tens of times to execute it with correct form. The people in the astralscape really are impressive. They're able to teach their descendants how to execute a move by showing them the form alone. They'll be able to grow strong without understanding the true essence of the move's principles."

That wasn't a slight against the method's effectiveness, either. After all, might made right. Understanding in and of itself wasn't inherently valuable. It took real insight to be able to make a move like that in the first place.

Now that he had finished studying the move, he took a deep breath and ended his cultivation. He then saw that the imperial guide and Prince Zhuoyang were still waiting for him.

"Did you master the move already, genius?" the prince asked, his arms crossed.

"Far from it," Tianming said.

"Coming again tomorrow?"

"Nope."

"You aren't gonna try a little longer? It might just take you a day or two more."

"Forget it, there's no point."

"I knew you shouldn't have wasted your time," Yueshen Qi mumbled, annoyed.

Tianming pretended not to hear it and bid them goodbye. "See you again if we ever cross paths."

"See you again indeed!" he said, 'see' being the operative word.

Yueshen Qi was in charge of escorting Tianming away.

"Sister Qi," Yueshen Hao called out.

She slowly turned back.

"Let's meet at the usual spot tonight."

Yueshen Qi's expression seemed really distraught as she swiftly led Tianming away.

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By the time they left the Moonnight Patio, it was already dark outside and Tianming roamed about Divine Moon Skycity alone. "Ying Huo, I figured something out."

"What is it?" Ying Huo was still flying about in the lifebound space, marveling at its new form.

"The blood lake was filled with corpses. If I stay here any longer, I'll definitely end up like that. Sovereign Xi wants me dead. Tell me then, how I can get her to save Feng, without resorting to completely subjugating her."

"You mean to say that seeing the blood lake caused your fantasies about her to be completely dispelled?" Ying Huo teased.

"I never had such fantasies. I just wanted to understand her better to see if there was any other way. However, that no longer seems to be the case."

"Then leave. Huiye Shi's rescued already anyway. As for Feng, there's no point forcing it if you have no better way to go about it. You got a battle art today to boot, so let's escape with your winnings while you still can!"

"What can I do after escaping? Feng's still surrounded by xenofiends."

"If I knew, I'd be the boss instead of being treated like crap by you."

"Shut up."

Tianming looked toward the Xi Palace. "As long as Divine Moon Skycity is in order, Sovereign Xi's plan for me will only keep on proceeding. I wonder if there's anyone that can come in here to cause trouble for me to have a chance to act during the chaos?"

There was only one answer to that question.

### **Chapter 1048 - The Wise Take No Silly Risks**

"Who're you talking about, Little Li? That baldy?" Xian Xian's spiritform asked as she hung from Tianming's neck.

"Bodhi?" Ying Huo combed its head feathers with its wing. "Are you sure?"

"Of course. He's definitely someone who'd cause Sovereign Xi the most trouble. He's the only one that can disrupt her rhythm," Tianming said with a pensive look. As long as she could no longer pay attention to him, he would have hope for survival.

"Are you planning to do the same thing as you did on the Flameyellow Continent where you got the divine moonrace to kill the specters?" Ying Huo asked.

"There's no need for that. But if I can at least get them to be in conflict with each other, I'll benefit either way."

"Sounds great! I support it!" Meow Meow mumbled, then turned around and went back to sleep.

"Bodhi has the specters behind him, while Sovereign Xi has the divine moonrace. I, on the other hand, have the humans of the Flameyellow Continent. So far, I've been looking for a way for us to survive between the other two factions. But now I need a breather to look for a chance to save Feng in the chaos. The only way I can get that is to start a war between the two of them."

After seeing the lake of blood, he had lost all hope for any peaceful resolution.

"Yeah. By the time you see the blade at your throat, it's already too late," Ying Huo said. Though it seemed peaceful now, a fatal strike could come without warning.

"But how would you start a conflict in the first place?" Lan Huang asked as its heads tried to bite each other.

"Get outside, find Bodhi, then use your sky plunderer powers and work with him to bring him inside and let him cause chaos?" Ying Huo said.

"That's too idealistic. Don't forget that I killed his crown prince. There's no way we can work together. If I really do seek him out, even if he gave me a chance to talk, he'd kill me the moment I brought him into the city. Not to mention, my awareness of his true identity also puts the specters he's trying to protect at risk of being exterminated by the divine moonrace. If you were him, wouldn't you kill me?"

"If I were him, I'd kill you even if it means I can't enter the city. That's just great. Now you have two powerful elites with designs on your life," Ying Huo said.

"Then what do we do? Argh!" Lan Huang said.

"Either way, there's nothing good that'll come from Sovereign Xi either. Now that Shishi is fine and I got manna and a battle art, I think we should retreat first and watch what happens." The lake of blood had caused Tianming to give up any and all hope on Sovereign Xi.

"Sounds good. Once we leave, we'll think of another way. Maybe we don't even need to show ourselves before Bodhi to incite conflict between them," Ying Huo said.

"You're right." With how much danger he was currently in, he had to leave first. "The wise take no silly risks. No matter how urgent Feng's situation is, I can't lose my bearings and risk even more trouble."

His dynasty on the Flameyellow Continent was still very weak, and would easily be wiped out by a war of this scale. Now, Tianming held the lives of him, his lifebound beasts, Feiling, and all of humanity as a whole in his hands. A single misstep could ruin everything.

"Living on the edge is the catalyst of growth, I guess." Back then, he had relied on his talent and kept fighting. But now that he no longer had the backing of Li Wudi or the 'goddess', he had to rely on his own wits to solve things, especially with his status now as the Human Emperor.

"Let's go." He decided to leave the Moonnight Patio and head to the south of the city. "Sovereign Xi probably doesn't know that Divine Moon Skycity can't hold me."

He could see the formation of the city high above. Even if Bodhi had never shown up, the formation was activated all year long; everyone in the city was of the divine moonrace. Tianming blended into the crowd and moved in the shadows toward the wall. He didn't dare to move too quickly, choosing to walk at a leisurely pace to avoid drawing attention instead.

He made sure to check, and it appeared that nobody was tailing him. It seemed that Sovereign Xi was confident in her city's formation. The grand city looked like a paradise above the clouds, thanks to the power of the dense stellunar source that gave everything a dreamlike quality.

In about two hours, he looked around and saw that he was only fifteen minutes away from the walls at this rate. There was only a cherry blossom forest ahead of him that was completely devoid of people. Right as he prepared to quicken his pace—

"Damn!" He rammed into a transparent wall all of a sudden. It looked to be some kind of barrier formation. Why would there be something like that in the city?

He didn't give it too much thought, since there wasn't anyone in the vicinity. But right as he was about to circle around, he picked up the voice of a girl crying for help with his enhanced senses. It sounded really horrifying, like she was about to be violated.

"So someone set up a formation here to lure prey inside, eh?" He had wanted to leave and ignore it. After all, the matters of the divine moonrace had nothing to do with him. However, he decided to help after taking two steps away. He wasn't trying to be a saint that set right all wrongs; pain and suffering was the natural state of the world and the bigger picture always saw the deaths of many innocents. For instance, to ensure the survival of his fellow humans, Tianming used the divine moonrace to massacre hundreds of thousands of elite specters. Even so, he still held true to his nature and didn't want to let it desensitize him to other people's suffering.

So he stretched out his black arm and dispelled the formation, which caused the cries for help to ring even louder. Using the Plundering Eye, he saw a burly man pinning a woman down, tearing away at her clothes like a beast.

"Don't do this! I already have a husband! He's your best friend too! You—"

No matter how much she struggled, the only other sound apart from her cries was the tearing of her clothes. She had been stripped naked.

"My best friend? Haha, you're overthinking it. Your husband's my dog. How long have we been flirting, eh? How long are you going to pretend that you don't like me? You were the one who tempted me!" the man growled as he pressed her arms down and prepared to devour his prey.

"No, I'm already pregnant! Stop!"

"Then let's end that little critter inside you."

Tianming couldn't take it any longer. How could a family friend have designs on the wife?! Not to mention, he didn't even hesitate to assault a pregnant woman. Right as he was about to violate her, Tianming gathered astral force at his finger to form a sword and thrust it at the man, who immediately noticed the danger. Terrified, he immediately jumped up and hurriedly dressed himself as he glared toward Tianming's location.

"It's you!" the perpetrator and victim said in unison. Tianming knew fewer than five people in the city. He didn't think he would be seeing two of them two hours after meeting just now. One of them was Prince Zhuoyang. Tianming hadn't recognized him just now as he pinned the woman down.

"The mighty Prince Zhouyang is forcing himself on a peasant woman, a married one at that. Isn't that a little beneath you?" Tianming said, shaking his head. He began feeling that the divine moonrace were no different from the theocratic Nineshades Clan in the Divine Capital. They were the hegemony of their realm and unchallenged by anyone, so they chased after the most superfluous of things. The Nineshades Clan did whatever they pleased, while the divine moonrace liked to maintain a facade of superior elegance.

Yet for a supposedly civilized and superior royal to do something shameless like this really tainted Tianming's perception of the divine moonrace even more. He decided that he would step in to help. It wasn't like the prince would dare to touch him, either, nor could he stop Tianming from leaving the city as well. However, when the panicked woman stood up, Tianming noticed that he knew her as well. She was none other than Yueshen Qi.

"Huh? What is going on here?" Tianming was stunned. Yueshen Qi was a married woman, whose husband was Prince Zhuoyang's friend. For them to meet here tonight after meeting once during the day...

"Li Tianming..." Prince Zhuoyang glared at him coldly, his smiling face from before nowhere to be seen.

Tianming ignored him and turned to Yueshen Qi. "I happened to be passing by. Consider my aid repayment for your guidance earlier. Leave!"



Her eyes were red from crying. Though Tianming had thought she would thank him and leave, she stood even closer to the prince instead.

"If word of this gets out, your reputation will be ruined. Once my husband finds out about this, he'll cause trouble for you, too... What do we do..."

"What do you say we do? Who asked you to shriek so loudly?" Yueshen Hao snapped. Then he turned to glare at Tianming. "Can you ensure you won't tell anyone about this today?"

Tianming was completely stunned. Turning to her, he said, "Can you please explain what's going on? Did I stick my nose somewhere I shouldn't have? Haha, then it's my bad. Goodbye, you two."

"Li Tianming, you don't understand," Yueshen Qi said.

"Don't understand what?"

"You did in fact help me. However, I can't afford to let you ruin my reputation."

"If that's the case, don't worry. I'll pretend all I saw was two dogs mating. Nothing else. I'm not so bored as to spread rumors in my free time." He really didn't know how to react. He had only helped her because of how desperately she was crying out in the first place, yet now she was worried Tianming would ruin her reputation instead.

#### **Chapter 1049 - Blazing Firegod, Sungod Cycle**

In other words, while Yueshen Qi wasn't willing to sleep with the prince, she did have some kind of relationship with him. Otherwise she wouldn't go to such a quiet place to meet him alone.

"Will you really keep it to yourself?" Yueshen Qi asked.

"I can't be bothered spreading it." Tianming turned to leave.

"Wait!" Prince Zhuoyang roared.

"What's up?" Tianming asked.

"I don't trust you. Since you like to meddle in business that's not your own so much, then die."

"What the flying—" Tianming had no words. This was the worst he had ever felt for trying to do a good deed. By now, he was standing in the formation already, so the prince decided to kill him without letting anyone else know, just in case. If word of this were to spread, it would be a huge scandal.

"Are you two serious?" Tianming was a little impressed.

Prince Zhuoyang and Yueshen Qi looked each other in the eye. He said, "I'll kill him. You'd better reinforce the formation for me to stop him from leaving."

"Then... at least let me give birth to my child," she said with her head lowered.

"No."

"You have so many women at your disposal. Why me?"

"Cause I like it. It's a fetish, alright?"

Tianming was really messed up after hearing that. These two had truly expanded his horizons. So there was a breed of men who really liked messing with the wives of others after all. What was worse was Yueshen Qi, who didn't even seem certain in her rejection of him.

"I'm gonna puke." Tianming could only blame himself for his bad luck. He turned around and stretched his black arm toward the formation, but the two immediately attacked.

Yueshen Qi was a hexabane and her totems were vines, just like Yusheng Luo's. The vines stretched out from her bane-rings toward the sky to encompass the surroundings. They didn't attack Tianming, but stuck to the inner surface of the formation to stop him. Now, he had to go through layers to leave the formation. Based on her totems, she seemed to be at the Hexaunity Sky level, but a sixth-level ascendant was no threat to Tianming.

Yueshen Hao, the Prince Zhuoyang, however, was stronger, despite being younger than Yueshen Qi. The fact that he dared to go for the kill meant he was confident he would be able to kill Tianming. After all, it normally took years for one to improve at the Ascension stage. Little did he know that analyzing the post-Lifesbane-curse Tianming with previous divine moonrace geniuses as reference was a huge mistake. Tianming's public record was his victory over the fifth-level Huiyue Jie. If Yueshen Hao also knew that the death of the sixth-level Huiyue Hai was Tianming's fault as well, he would no doubt have reconsidered.

"What do we do if Her Majesty finds out we killed him?" Yueshen Qi asked nervously.

"Only the two of us know, nobody else! Not to mention, my sister's flesh toys all end up vanishing without a trace anyway." He couldn't wait to vent his rage at Tianming for being asked to step aside. That was the main factor of his current decision.

He charged at Tianming with full force, not intending to hold back in the slightest. He wielded a sword covered in golden flames. Its hilt looked like a rotating compass that seemed to make the flames stronger. It was called the Sungod Cycle.

With the Sungod Cycle in hand, the prince's six sun-like bane-rings burned like six flaming eyes. Then, six totems came out of them. Though he personally called them sunsbane, they were actually a variation of moonsbane called gold moonsbane. Even so, it still seemed more powerful than Huiyue Jie's teardrop-like blood moonsbane. Each bane-ring was the size of a fist and seemed to radiate explosive power.

The totems that came out were domineering, to say the least. In terms of age, one could calculate the prince's age to be less than a hundred. However, he was at the Heptaglorious Sky level. However, he should be considered to have six and a half bane-rings instead as he was much stronger than Huiyue Du, being an elite royal.

His totems also burned brightly with golden flames. Each of them stood tall with a golden greatsword in hand. They were all heavenly being totems with humanoid forms, being the most well-rounded among all totem types. They were even adorned with a suit of heavy armor. Their heads were devoid of mouths and noses; instead, all they had was a single bright sun that looked to be their eyes. They were called blazing firegods.

Based on his totems alone, Yueshen Hao no doubt ranked among the top five. Tianming really felt annoyed at getting into trouble in his attempt to save a damsel. Though he wanted to leave, they kept trying to stop him. Putting aside the prince's totems, even Yueshen Qi's totems were causing him trouble.

Forget it. Let's beat them up before we go. It won't take much time, he decided. His greatest gain after coming to the capital was his beasts' evolution. They all had more than forty-five hundred stars now.

"Go!" With his decisive order, Ying Huo, Lan Huang, Meow Meow, and Xian Xian all struck fiercely and swiftly. Xian Xian's main tree body had grown quite a bit since its evolution. Though it primarily excelled in grand battles, it was plenty capable in small-scale fights like these, too. Xian Xian immediately spread throughout the formation and wrapped its Radiant Vines around Yueshen Qi's totems, then covered them in barrages of Bloodrain Swords. At the same time, its purple Fiendsong Mares bloomed and began ringing as it executed its Trisoul Fiendsong, a terrifying ability that, while not affecting the caelum, couldn't be avoided by the terra and vita.

The bells sounded really clear at first, but the sound grew more and more discordant. It was a hypnotic lullaby that caused the vitae of Yueshen Hao and Yueshen Qi to waver, severely affecting their totems in the process. However, sleepiness was but the first of the many symptoms to come. The ability would then damage, confuse, and finally control the soul! As long as the flowers were ringing, it wouldn't stop. Xian Xian alone was enough to severely hamper the totems, to say nothing about Tianming's other three lifebound beasts.

#### **Chapter 1050 - Heading to the Mooncore**

Meow Meow immediately infused Blitzbane into its abilities. It didn't turn into a Regal Chaosfiend, allowing it to maintain even higher speed and agility. Instead, it hid on Lan Huang's body to exploit its defenses while it blasted away with its abilities at the blazing firegods.

Lan Huang then leapt to engage the enemy totems. Even so, Prince Zhuoyang was capable enough to hold on despite that barrage of attacks; but it did make him furrow a brow.

"This doesn't seem to match his power level." He had no time to hesitate. If he didn't fight back, he would immediately lose, so he decided to use his totemic calamity, Skyscorch Fiend. The six totems hovering above his head took Meow Meow's bombardment and began fusing into one. Then it swung its sword and sent the charging Lan Huang Flying with golden flames filling the air.

"Die!" Prince Zhuoyang went on a rampage using his Sungod Cycle in tandem with his totem. "You blood-pact trash, how dare you compare yourself against my totems?!"

Tianming couldn't help but laugh when he heard that. How could the prince still maintain any semblance of superiority when he was being pushed back so hard?

"Are you calling me trash?!" Lan Huang got up; there was a huge bone-deep gash on its back, but it was recovering at a rate the eye could see. It charged forward and used Daybreak Worldslash. The nine kui mountains on its back, as well as the sword on its tail, blurred into a slashing wheel as Lan Huang spun before colliding with the six fused totems. A huge explosion resulted. While the prince was charging

forward, his fused totem was sent flying back with wounds to the chest and broken swords, but that was only the beginning.

Two bloody spears shot out from Lan Huang's body; it was Meow Meow's strongest ability, Cosmic Lance. One of them was aimed at the giant totem's head, and the other at its heart. Then the blood lightning began sparking with the power of Blitzbane as it instantly pierced through the fused totems. The head burst open and a hole was made in its chest. The totems that had just fused moments before were split into six again, marking the interruption of the prince's totemic calamity.

While the prince was still in a stupor, tens of thousands of flaming birds appeared in the sky, all of them identical. Like flaming meteors, they fell from the sky and struck the six totems, as well as him and Yueshen Qi. Even though he was four levels stronger than Tianming, the power of Death Inferno, as well as Ying Huo striking with its Cosmic Blade feathers, tore the totems completely apart, and that wasn't all.

While the totems were being mauled, all the prince could think of was getting back at Tianming. But when he looked up, he saw Tianming menacingly wielding his swords and the four cardinal godswords. During the day, he had thought that Tianming was a dead man for sure, but now he finally understood just why Sovereign Xi favored him so much. Tianming had tons of tricks at his disposal!

"Die!" Prince Zhuoyang roared as his totems were weakened by the debilitating wounds. He was still resisting the Trisoul Fiendsong's influence. "If I wipe him out in one strike, I'll still have a chance!"

There was no turning back if he made a single wrong move. He had spent many years training the Moonnight Subdued Strike just so he could have an advantage against opponents of the same level. In terms of raw power, Tianming couldn't compare to him, as astralforce quality increased greatly as one rose in level. At best, Tianming's astralforce was barely comparable to someone at Hexaunity Sky and couldn't even match up to Yueshen Qi.

This was Prince Zhuoyang's last stand: Moonnight Subdued Strike, Seaborne Moon! Instead of rising moons, his strike manifested tens of thousands of rising suns. His battered totems managed to execute the move with him. The seven swords formed an ultimate killing sword formation that shot toward Tianming.

"This move, eh? Great! Perfect time for me to practice." Tianming had been pondering the move the entire day, and smirked when he saw it used against him. He immediately struck. The Grand-Orient Sword shifted in his hands while his totems matched the form and began circulating the astralforce in his body. His sword stance changed, causing bright moons to rise.

The moons in his sword were gold and black. Eastdivinity Acme's moons were infused with its special properties, making them red suns, while Northapex Perpetuity's were frost moons. This was a third-realm divine art meant to be used in tandem with totems. However, two godswords were already enough for Tianming, as the prince's totems had already been badly battered by his lifebound beasts. It would be a miracle if they could still use a fifth of their power.

The Moonnight Subdued Strike was a move to kill. In a flash, bright moons appeared, completely crushing Prince Zhuoyang's prideful heart.

"How could this be possible?!" Being pushed so hard by Tianming had already wounded his pride somewhat, but now he learned that Tianming had mastered 'his' move in a single day. He immediately came to understand that only Orderia had geniuses of this caliber; the prince was merely a joke compared to people in that league.

With Prince Zhuoyang's confidence crushed, his move was no longer a threat no matter how powerful it was. With Ying Huo and the rest having vaporized eighty percent of them, the two godswords alone were enough to hold off the six weakened firegods and cause them to completely dematerialize back into terra. While the prince himself was still in peak fighting form, Tianming had countered him with the same move and slapped his face with the flat of his sword. The next moment, he felt searing pain as his sword arm was sliced off by Tianming.

"Aaaagh!" he cried as he was sent flying. His arm was severed and his totems were neutralized, so he was no longer in any condition to fight.

Tianming's gaze met the prince's. "Are you convinced of your loss?"

"Amazing, truly amazing! Too bad... too bad!" he said while shaking his head. He was indeed convinced, but he knew what Tianming's fate would be.

"Want to guess whether you'll live?"

"I'm guessing yes. I'm the sovereign's brother—if you kill me, there'll be endless consequences!"

"You guessed wrong then." Tianming zipped in front of him and sent his head rolling on the ground. He was about to leave the city, so he couldn't afford to let the prince make a fuss. He would never show mercy to those who would kill him without a second thought.

The prince's eyes were still wide open; he probably hadn't expected Tianming would be so ruthlessly thorough. Tianming's gaze then fell on Yueshen Qi, whose totems had been completely crushed by Xian Xian. However, she was foaming at the mouth on the ground with her eyes rolled back.

"What's up with her?"

"She's under the control of my Trisoul Fiendsong. She'll be out for a few days," Xian Xian said gleefully.

"Good. Guess she gets to live." Tianming was going to become a fugitive for trying to leave the city anyway, so killing or not didn't really matter.

"Let's go!" Right as he was about to leave, the surrounding air turned cold. He rapidly turned back and saw a woman in a blue dress with a cat mask appear by Yueshen Qi's side. She stretched out her hand and caused a few blue light swords to pierce into Yueshen Qi, killing her before she could even shriek in pain. She pulled her mask a little higher and sucked on her bloodied fingers.

Then, turning to Tianming, she said, "It's getting late, darling. Let's go back to the palace."

Tianming was troubled. He needed to know how long she'd been stalking him. Even though he had been really careful, he had no idea at all. She was using a really powerful method. "Why kill her?"

"They're a sinful couple. We each killed one, so we match," she said with a smile.

"Oh, that makes sense!"

In other words, she had witnessed the entire battle. Since they weren't close to the city walls yet, Tianming wondered if she would suspect him of trying to escape. If she did, he was in big trouble. She was careful and crafty indeed. If she wasn't aware he was trying to leave, then his encounter with Prince Zhuoyang and Yueshen Qi might work in his favor. If I can't leave, hiding in the Prime Tower will be the only method at my disposal...

His heart quickly pumped as he awaited Sovereign Xi's judgment. She slowly approached him and put her bloodstained finger on his chin. The cat mask in front of Tianming's face gave off a really sly impression. "I'm going to the mooncore. Will you accompany me?"

That was the center of the stellunar source, where the pathway to the xenomemory space was located!