

The Ages 1341

Chapter 1341 - Might of the Vastsun Godbeasts

In the Violetcloud Battlefield, Tianming hadn't been able to show off the terrifying effect of his pandemonium constellation at all. However, the golden imperial star managed to manifest now, spreading out into a starscape spanning thousands of meters with Tianming and his beasts at its center, forming a domain of chaos. The pandemonium constellation's unique characteristic was the suppression of other constellations.

The imperial star began to expand and spin, targeting the eight suns of Li Haochen's constellation. At that moment, the light and aura spreading from the imperial star surrounded the eight suns and began to suppress, invade, and devour them.

"Crush them all!" The power of constellations was fueled by astralforce. Tianming and his beasts channeled their astralforce into the constellation, further boosting its power. Eventually, the first solar star collapsed and broke apart, followed quickly after by the rest, ending with a rumbling explosion. The miniature suns had just collapsed and blasted a lot of flames outward, covering the entire battlefield. However, that only lasted a short time before the pandemonium constellation sucked up all of those flames as well, returning everything to normal. Even the fires on Xian Xian were put out.

The battlefield was quieter than it was moments before. With the eight solar stars crushed, only the imperial star of the pandemonium constellation remained. Standing right beneath it, Tianming wielded his sword, ready to receive the blow. Now that the solar stars were gone, the radiant imperial star began applying pressure on Li Haochen, whose momentum had greatly fallen following the loss of his constellation. Even the vastsun godbeasts had been pulled down to an even playing field from the oppressive heights they'd previously occupied. In fact, Li Haochen found it hard to keep his eyes open to stare at the imperial star.

"This constellation... that must mean he's at least at the eighth level now. Who could've raised a disciple like this?! It must be the Sky Palace themselves, right?" Little did he know that Tianming was only at the third level. It was only thanks to his Primordial Chaos Beasts and the Grand-Orient Vortex that he managed to match up to Li Haochen. Even so, being at the eighth level wasn't Li Haochen's only advantage; he hadn't used his powerful totems to their full potential yet.

"Even though I tried to start flashily, he managed to easily neutralize my offense. I'll make sure he's completely crushed with my next move." He took a deep breath, allowing his fighting spirit to surge once more as he jumped up. He completely abandoned his constellation and gripped his blade tight as his beasts roared. "Go!"

Then, he charged at the front with his beasts following behind him, traveling at such a speed that they blurred into a flaming pillar. Tianming, on the other hand, stood with Xian Xian behind him, Lan Huang in front, Ying Huo on him, and Meow Meow on his head. The black cat had collected a lot of lightning and was ready to strike. Yin Chen, on the other hand, had spread across the entire battlefield and was also waiting for a chance to strike.

Some vastsun godbeasts sprinted across the land, some burrowed in the ground, and others flew. Xian Xian had tried using its Radiant Vines to whip them, but they would quickly be ignited before they

connected with the totem beasts. It was incredibly hard to bind them, and whipping with withering vines only did so much. This was a really bad matchup for Xian Xian.

"Just focus on using the Evernight Curse and Trisoul Fiendsong!" Tianming said. "Okay!" While those abilities took a while to get going, they were the only things Xian Xian could do now. Fortunately, the other four beasts were completely unaffected. In fact, Ying Huo was right in its element.

"Cat Bro, go!" Ying Huo intentionally shrank and turned into a beam of fire, charging in from the flank. Meow Meow had primed its abilities long ago and launched the black lightning bolts at the eight vastsun godbeasts. As Misty Hellthunder struck them from above, the crackling lightning bolts triggered many explosions on the godbeasts. Meow Meow's ranged attacks were constantly getting stronger. After getting Blitzbane, Worldbolt Blast, every bolt of its lightning was infused with the Aeonian Grandbane's power. Getting struck with so much firepower was bad news for Li Haochen.

"Do it!" Two of the vastsun godbeasts morphed into gigantic feline beasts, a tiger and a lion respectively, both of which were covered in golden divine patterns. They shrank as well, dropping from more than a thousand meters to around two meters, giving them far more speed and agility. They zipped into the clouds toward Meow Meow, their flaming claws drawn. This was a battle art, from the looks of the intricacy of the claws' movements. Not only were they able to avoid Meow Meow's attacks, they could even rapidly close the distance!

Meow Meow was caught off guard and left with many burning, bleeding wounds. Crying out in pain, it quickly escaped. "That was harsh! Gotta run!"

While they were only eighth-level constellier totems, they were probably around the ninth level or above in power, with their ability to unleash claw arts. No doubt, Li Haochen had trained with these battle arts so that his totems would have the same advantage Ying Huo did. Unlike lifebound beasts, most totems could be used to execute battle arts. Even though they looked like lifebound beasts, they were actually totems! This definitely wasn't a typical fight between beastmasters.

Meow Meow could only rely on its speed to widen the distance between itself and the two vastsun godbeasts, but they continued the chase unrelentingly, putting pressure on Meow Meow to ensure that it wouldn't be able to cause too much havoc on the battlefield. Eventually, they caught up. Meow Meow changed to its Regal Chaosfiend form and got into a biting match with the two feline godbeasts, but it was at a huge disadvantage thanks to their numbers and sheer size.

Li Haochen was far stronger than Tianming had imagined. While the two were keeping Meow Meow busy, the other six charged in with Li Haochen, using battle arts in conjunction with their master. Two of the beasts turned into a flaming rhinoceros and a flaming bear respectively, both of which were larger than even Lan Huang. When Lan Huang used its Primordial Wheel and rammed into them, the clash sent it flying back onto the ground.

Then one of them turned into a snake and wrapped itself around Lan Huang, binding it while its bear friend pressed down on Lan Huang's heads, its flaming paws leaving huge burn marks on it.

"Die!" Li Haochen cried, slashing toward the poor tortoise dragon with the Crimsoncloud Dragonbane.

Chapter 1342 - Myriadbeast Heavenly Judgment

Saying that Li Haochen could decapitate a dragon with a single swing was no exaggeration at all. Crimsoncloud Dragonbane had a similar effect as the Violetglory Star's ultimate weapon, which allowed them both to expand at will. That instant, the flaming blade lengthened to a hundred meters as it swept toward Lan Huang while it was pressed down by two vastsun godbeasts, one of which had turned into a snake that bound Lan Huang. It was rather similar to how Tianming used his chain to keep others bound.

Lan Huang struggled to climb up and used Primordial Soundwave to shake off the two vastsun godbeasts, but it wouldn't be able to take Li Haochen's attack. But right before it connected, a silver dragon came flying in, followed by a rain of flaming feathers. The Lifesteal Silverdragon wrapped itself around Crimsoncloud Dragonbane and let out a screeching noise, dragging the blade off its trajectory and causing it to crash into Lan Huang's shoulder. It broke through its defense of Montseabane, Starocean Flicker, digging three meters deep into Lan Huang and spilling blood, marking a gory turn in the battle. The two young disciples were representing the two main factions of their star and neither was prepared to lose. Now that blood had been spilled, they would fight to the death! Li Haochen didn't show any mercy at all and had fully intended to use his legendary blade for its intended purpose: dragon-slaying.

"A rather quick reaction. As expected of the famous Lifesteal Silverdragon. That weapon is the only flashy part about you, though." Li Haochen used an evasive technique to avoid Ying Huo's Skyscorch Featherblast. As he spoke, another two vastsun godbeasts charged toward Tianming, then shrank to about Tianming's size, condensing the flames that made up their bodies. Eventually, they turned into flaming praying mantises with blades for arms. Conjuring a lot of astralforce, they let it explode in one instant by executing an airtight blade art at about the fifth-realm in power, both of them flanking Tianming in a pincer attack.

Flaming shadows filled Tianming's vision. They weren't mere insects, but harbingers of death and part of Li Haochen himself.

"An octabane totemancer is truly impressive. All that variety in his moves..." Tianming had never seen someone use totems with such finesse and mastery. With eight totems at his beck and call, Li Haochen was the avatar of death and destruction.

"It took you so long to notice? It's already far too late!" Li Haochen roared, his beasts echoing his cries. In the eyes of the seniors, his techniques had already far superseded the impressiveness of Tianming's pandemonium constellation.

When the blades of the mantises crossed with Tianming's sword, sparks flew. The flames from their bodies had long swallowed Tianming up, but that did little to him thanks to Ying Huo's Infernal Armor. On the other hand, Li Haochen was still hell bent on killing Lan Huang. After all, it was among the easier ones to target, unlike Ying Huo or Meow Meow. However, nobody had been paying any attention to Yin Chen throughout the entire battle.

"Huh?" Li Haochen felt a stinging sensation all over his body and noticed countless silver ants on him! He looked below and saw a sea of silver ants trying to burrow into his body with their black mandibles. "This is a lifebound beast too?!"

He let his astralforce surge, burning away many of the ants, but the others just grouped together and turned into silver scorpions before they furiously injected Ghostwater Mercury all over his body with

their stingers. Once a large amount entered his body, he would start to turn into metal and eventually die. The countless metal critters then morphed into spiders, centipedes, and even locusts, surrounding Li Haochen from all directions and forcing him to defend himself. The threads of the spiders and venom of the scorpions almost pushed him to the brink. No doubt his power could easily crush the bugs, but there were far too many of them. Tianming had gotten Yin Chen to exclusively focus on keeping Li Haochen busy, as it didn't have any explicit abilities it could use against spiritforms like totems. Since that was the case, Yin Chen could always disrupt the totems by directly attacking the one controlling them! The grating metallic sound sent chills down the spines of those that heard it.

"Do it!" With Li Haochen temporarily distracted by Yin Chen, Tianming, Ying Huo, Lan Huang and Xian Xian regrouped. Then Meow Meow descended from above to join the group as well. Lan Huang executed its Azure Oceanic Purgatory, converting the earth underneath them into a large body of water. Being able to dive within, its combat capabilities significantly rose. It then dragged two of the vastsun godbeasts into the water. The one that had turned into a snake immediately began evaporating the water around it as its flames were slowly fizzling away. The rate at which they evaporated the water couldn't keep up with the water that was currently forming, though. Meow Meow also dove into the sea to give chase.

"Not being able to use my totems is really troublesome. Totems can't really be killed, after all." So far, Ying Huo and Meow Meow had the most powerful abilities. The two of them charged up to the snake godbeast, with Ying Huo using Death Inferno and Meow Meow using Cosmic Lance, sending it flying. The flames and lightning bolts of the abilities were able to swallow up the flames on the godbeast's body, causing it to suffer even more damage than Lan Huang had so far.

"We finally injured one!" It had been far too difficult. Meanwhile, Xian Xian and Tianming worked together to hold back a few of the godbeasts that wanted to charge into the water. Xian Xian withstood the pain of its Radiant Vines being burned away and fired Bloodrain Swords at them, causing quite a lot of commotion. The sheer magnitude of chaos the battle wrought was shocking even for the seniors to see.

"Li Tianming is doing rather well. Despite being at a disadvantage in terms of raw power, his coordination with his beasts is giving Li Haochen quite a bit of trouble."

As the spectators from the Azuresoul Palace were easing up, Li Haochen felt even more impatient when he saw his totems suffering damage. "A beastmaster's greatest weakness is that they'll be crippled if their lifebound beasts die for real!" He swung his blade, allowing flames to cover it. While the flames themselves were unable to harm Yin Chen, the astralforce contained within managed to vaporize quite a lot of its bodies.

"Isn't it the same for totemancers if their bane-rings are destroyed?" Tianming let his chain stretch hundreds of meters, thrusting its spike toward Li Haochen, who angrily deflected it with his blade.

The golden flames formed into a ball of flame around him and exploded with him at the center, covering his vastsun godbeasts. It was his totemic calamity, Myriadbeast Heavenly Judgment. Instantly, the flaming mantises, lion, tiger, rhinoceros, and snake expanded and began dividing into ten thousand vastsun godbeasts, joining up into a sea of flames. "Charge" Li Haochen roared. It somewhat resembled

Tianming's Myriadword Providence. "Beastmasters with an inferior system of cultivation shouldn't be allowed on the sun! You should be vaporized and turned to ash!"

Li Haochen had uttered an affront to all beastmasters, including the Supracloud Sanctuary and wargodeans. Even Long Youyou herself was a beastmaster. However, they couldn't utter a word at the sight of the might of this totemic calamity. There was no argument that Orderia was the home turf of totemancers.

"Begone!" Li Haochen charged with his ten thousand totems, wielding the Crimsoncloud Dragonbane with both hands. His golden hair and robes fluttered in the wind. The light from his overlaid bane-rings was so bright that it shot toward Tianming like a pillar. He was the embodiment of the ultimate ruler of the sun and his blade slashed with unmatched ferocity. Even though he looked rather handsome and refined, the will with which he wielded his blade and the blade art he was using centered around absolute domination. This was no doubt a sixth-realm blade art, and for someone of his age to be able to use it, it marked him as one of, if not the best among his peers. His own father had taught him this blade art, called Heavenly King's Domination, Solitary Slash. It was as savage as its name sounded, a move that focused on the essence of domination to its utmost.

The myriad beasts stampeded alongside the sweeping blade that unleashed flames all across the area it swept past, heating up the air around the divine tree and setting fire to its leaves, directing all of that destructive force toward Tianming. The blade descended, infused with the will of the ruler of beasts. Even some grade-one swordpupils couldn't help but marvel at the might of that strike coming from someone easily a tenth of their age. Based on that alone, Tianming knew that even if Lingfeng could fight eighth-level constelliers, he would have a lot of trouble with Li Haochen. Now, the sky seemed to be falling as Tianming approached the critical moment more and more.

"Come!" In a battle where he had nothing to lose, Tianming wasn't afraid in the least. His expression barely changed as he moved the imperial star of his constellation to put pressure on Li Haochen, taking half the force of the blow away. Then he regrouped with all five of his beasts.

Chapter 1343 - Monstrous Lifebound Beasts

"Little Li, let me take this move! I haven't contributed much yet, after all. Make it up to me by preparing lots of food!" Xian Xian's spiritform said, standing on Tianming's shoulder.

"No worries, consider it done!" They weren't in a place like the Ninedragon Imperial Tomb, so food for Xian Xian would be easy to find. It was just as hard to kill as Yin Chen, and now, it was no longer the youngest after Yin Chen's hatching. It was almost as if Xian Xian had matured overnight.

"I'll show you the power of symbiotic cultivation!" Xian Xian's tree uprooted itself and landed in front of Tianming, gathering all of its leaves, branches and roots close together and forming a gigantic shield that blocked off the stampede. Its Radiant Vines were at the forefront of the shield, tying everything tightly together. Right after it formed, the full force of Li Haochen's attack collided against it, tearing and burning away large chunks of the shield. Then the blade came crashing toward Tianming, though much of its force had been blocked by Xian Xian. As the leaves, roots, and vines were curling up from the flames, Lan Huang quickly came to put them out.

"Ouch, it hurts! Avenge me, quick!" Xian Xian cried, completely unlike its previous courageous stand. It disappeared into the lifebound space, almost having gone bald from the flames. Though, the fact that it was willing to take the blow despite knowing the pain it entailed was a sign of having matured. This was a kind of relationship that totemancers would never be able to understand.

"Totems are only a part of the body, while lifebound beasts are life forms in their own right. We fight through life and death side by side as comrades!" Tianming and the rest were enraged by how badly hurt Xian Xian had been. Even though it could easily recover with enough food, seeing it crying out like that didn't feel pleasant in the slightest. "I'm angry!" Yin Chen's hundred and eighty thousand remaining bodies cried in unison. Though it sounded robotic, it was clear that it considered itself part of the family. All of its attempts at hiding how it really felt were just fronts. The others knew how it truly felt.

"Let's avenge our little sister!" they all cried.

With the Myriadbeast Heavenly Judgment having finished its execution, the eight vastsun godbeasts assembled back together. Li Haochen's slash had only wounded one of Tianming's beasts, which was a rather unsatisfying result. "Avenge? I'll see if you can still say that once all of you are dead." He smirked. So far, everything was under his control, including the expressions of the hundred thousand seniors that were watching them. He knew that he had to prove his might to them as the son of the sun emperor.

"I'll show these shortsighted fools who really rules Orderia!" He raised his blade once more, only to find his arms badly hurt. Turning and looking, he noticed that a scorpion had crawled on him once more and injected more Ghostwater Mercury into him. By now, quite a substantial part of his skin had been metalized. With the slightest loss of his focus, the invisible cockroaches would be able to crawl on him and turn into ants that completely swarmed him. He had almost been entirely swallowed up by the bonegnaw ants while he was focusing too deeply on executing his proud blade art.

"Ignore his totems and focus on attacking him!" Tianming said to his beasts. The totems were really hard to deal with, so they would only effect any real change by attacking Li Haochen. Yin Chen had started the onslaught by taking its bonegnaw ant form. While not many managed to reach his bones, it could still inflict a lot of pain. By now, there were around a thousand of the ants that had burrowed into his bones, only for around nine hundred to be eradicated by the astralforce between the albi. However, the remaining hundred or so began gnawing away, causing Li Haochen to shriek in pain. Though those numbers weren't enough for Tianming to exert complete control over him, it could still inflict constant pain on him.

This was their chance. Tianming and his other beasts rained down attacks with all the rage and fury they felt on Xian Xian's behalf and from being looked down upon. While Lan Huang had been intercepted by the vastsun godbeasts, Ying Huo and Meow Meow managed to rely on Infernal Haze and speed, respectively, to shake off the other totems and reach Li Haochen. Ying Huo unleashed Skyscorch Featherblast, but a godbeast jumped in to take the blow. However, it underestimated the piercing power of Blazebane, Cosmic Blade and was pierced straight through by the feathers, being an ethereal spiritform itself. Though it hadn't been harmed by the feathers, it'd allowed tens of them to embed themselves in Li Haochen's body.

"Urgh!" he cried, his face contorting from the agony. He was just about to eradicate the remaining ants in his bones after wiping out some twenty thousand of Yin Chen's bodies, only for the feathers to put

more holes into him and pierce straight into his bone. Right after that, a large number of bonegnaw ants swarmed toward the wounds, with at least ten thousand of them making it to the bone. This could be fatal. While Ying Huo and Yin Chen's combination strike hadn't hurt the totems, they'd at least unlocked an opening. Once totemancers were sufficiently injured, they wouldn't be able to properly control their totems, so taking them down would be enough to cripple the entire fighting unit!

"Your totems are powerful, but you're their weakness, Li Haochen! So I don't want to hear you boasting about your totems anymore!" Tianming lashed the Lifesteal Silverdragon out toward Li Haochen's Crimsoncloud Dragonbane, piercing it through a few ethereal totems. While they weren't afraid of being damaged by the chain, they similarly didn't have the ability to stop it, either, so they had no choice but to charge in and try attacking Tianming, all eight of them.

"Do you think this ol' tiger's actually a sickly cat?!" Meow Meow used its Ninefold Chaos Thunderscape, covering the eight totems in countless black lightning bolts, each one infused with the power of Blitzbane, Worldbolt Blast. Thunder loudly boomed as a gigantic bolt of lightning a kilometer in diameter fired off from the little black cat toward the totems. Lan Huang also used its Primordial Wheel in tandem with the attack, sending the eight totems flying off and allowing Tianming some breathing room.

Though Li Haochen had wanted to give Tianming a taste of his own medicine by letting his 'beasts' loose on him, his plan had failed due to the pain that came from the ants. Not to mention, Ying Huo had appeared next to him and was constantly pestering him.

"Are you the only one who can use battle arts?" It puzzled him to see a little phoenix using its wings like a sword, not to mention the divine hazard sword ki that was released every time it struck. Even though it was using a simplified version of the four-fusion strike, it was quite the sight when paired with Blazebane. "Wait, is that the Ninedragon Tribulation?!"

Li Haochen was shocked. How could a lifebound beast execute a battle art like a totem could? Though he wanted to do his best to fend Ying Huo off while exterminating the ants in him, his Crimsoncloud Dragonbane was bound by the Lifesteal Silverdragon and wouldn't budge. Panicking, he used the fingers on his left hand and projected sword ki from it before thrusting it toward the phoenix. The wings clashed with his fingers, almost looking like a draw as they were both weaponless, but there was no way his fingers could compare with Ying Huo's wings in terms of toughness. The wings took off his little finger, causing him to hurriedly retreat in pain.

"You cut off so many of my sister's branches and leaves, but I only took one finger! I'm not done with you yet, so don't run!" Ying Huo used Sixpath Infernal Lotus to catch up and continued the assault with Yin Chen, who turned many of its bodies into spiders to continue spinning Infinite Silverthreads to weigh him down even more. Additionally, a huge tugging force came from the Lifesteal Silverdragon. With his vastsun godbeasts and Meow Meow clashing and blocking Li Hoachen's sight, he had no idea that he was actually in a tug of war with Lan Huang, not Tianming.

"What kind of monstrous lifebound beasts are these?!" It was the first time he had been rendered so flustered and speechless. This was nothing short of humiliating, especially after he had trumpeted the superiority of totems over lifebound beasts! Yet his Solitary Slash and totemic calamity had been completely neutralized by Tianming and his beasts, with his totems unable to harm him at all! The mere

notion of losing this battle caused his heart to constrict as he recalled the cold gaze from that golden figure. "I can't lose! Not even if I die!"

His deep-seated rage reverberated throughout his body like a roar, channeling the domineering will of the celestial orderians. It was as if all of his ancestors were coursing through his veins. "How could these alien outsiders possibly compare with the millions of years of history of the celestial orderians?!"

It wasn't just power, but also his will to fight and never give up. He vented all of his frustrations, no longer having his totems surround Tianming. Instead, he summoned them back. From his fervent gaze, it was clear to everyone that he still had a trump card to use.

Chapter 1344 - Worldspanner Slash

The variety of Tianming's lifebound beasts had pushed Li Haochen to his limit. He channeled his newfound willpower, giving the ones who were watching him worriedly hope once more. This was probably why the celestial orderians and the sun emperor were so feared. They watched as the eight totems returned to Li Haochen, but they didn't enter his bane-rings. Instead, they rammed into his body, their golden divine patterns gathering around him and resulting in eight subsequent explosions.

His totem ki and astralforce blended together, causing a pillar of flame a thousand meters high to blast off from his body and form a blade-wielding giant. This was the totemic calamity, Vastsun Truegod. It was a second totemic calamity, something thought to be impossible. It looked even more terrifying than his first totemic calamity. Now, he really seemed like a god descending from the heavens. The flames around his body were conjured from pure totem ki, radiating immeasurable power.

The waves of flames looked like waves of a vast ocean, sweeping past the entire area and burning all of the plant matter to a crisp down to the roots. The sheer amount of fire coming from the giant sounded like a booming roar. The gigantic titan of flame looked like it had three eyes with how bright the eight overlaid bane-rings looked. Li Haochen raised his blade high and the giant above him mimicked the movement. "You ants will be turned to ash by my Vastsun Truegod!" The giant echoed his exact words as he said it.

"This looks really hard to deal with." This battle was easily three times harder than Tianming had thought it would be. Even after Xian Xian had gotten gravely injured and Yin Chen had lost thirty thousand bodies, he still hadn't managed to defeat Li Haochen, who by now was at a new height of power with his second totemic calamity.

"Scared? What a wimp," Ying Huo said.

"What? I'm not scared!" Tianming tossed the Lifesteal Silverdragon to Lan Huang and tightly gripped the Grand-Orient Sword with both hands. There was a firm look in his eyes as he said, "Same deal. Take down the main target. Meow Meow, Lan Huang, and Yin Chen, do all that you can to hold back the Vastsun Truegod. Ying Huo and I will crush Li Haochen as quickly as we can."

They exchanged glances, convinced that that would be their only recourse. Everyone's hearts beat quickly in anticipation, watching the flames of battle burn. "Go!"

They were only able to fight in a coordinated fashion due to their symbiotic relationship; each member of the group had to fulfill their own role for the survival of everyone. "This isn't something you would understand, Li Haochen!"

Though the Vastsun Truegod was insanely powerful, it had a weakness: Li Haochen himself. Lan Huang, the Regal Chaosfiend Meow Meow, and Yin Chen that took the form of countless centipedes that combined into one large one, charged in. They heavily leaned on their abilities, speed, and the Greenspark Tower's endless healing, ready to weather the attack of the gigantic totem. Even if the three of them lost, Tianming and Ying Huo had to win no matter what or it would be complete defeat!

There was nothing but a cold smile on Li Haochen's face as he watched them struggle. He looked straight at Tianming with his blade raised, gathering boundless amounts of power for his strike. Unlike Solitary Slash, this move's range spanned far and wide, using even more power and force. The sheer force of the move caused Li Haochen's hair and robes to wildly flutter. The blinding light coming from his bane-rings was cast straight on his blade.

At the same time, the titan of fire used the same move against Meow Meow, Lan Huang, and Yin Chen. It was the clash of the century! No matter if Li Haochen won or lost, his performance had completely convinced most people of his power. Nobody felt that it was the least bit inadequate for the son of the sun emperor. However, Tianming was an outright miracle. Faced with the impressive incoming onslaught, not only did he not retreat, but he instead charged straight in with four of his beasts to counter the move!

Meow Meow unleashed all of its lightning once more, neutralizing the first wave of power from the titan's slash by scattering some of the flames in it. Yin Chen spread out as well, losing around thirty thousand bodies in the process before colliding against the Vastsun Truegod. Then Lan Huang followed up with its Daybreak Worldslash to intercept Worldspanner Slash, forcibly pushing back the strike. It was clear from what happened that Li Haochen still couldn't control his totemic calamity that well. Even so, the impact greatly injured the two-headed dragon and had caused Yin Chen to lose quite a few bodies. But they had still survived without issue. If it weren't for them, Tianming would have definitely lost if the titan and Li Haochen's slashes both reached him.

The three beasts had reached their limit neutralizing the giant totem's slash, so now it was Tianming and Ying Huo's turn. They flanked Li Haochen from both sides. Tianming focused the power of his pandemonium constellation on his target's head, causing him to spit out some blood.

There was still a small number of ants gnawing away at his bones from within, but he endured the pain and followed through with his slash. Laughing, he said, "We'll never lose, got it?"

"Yeah, sure." Tianming and Ying Huo both used Quaddragon Tribulation. The move was already beyond a sixth-realm divine art in power, not to mention the strands of grade-six divine hazard sword ki in their bodies blasting out of them. The silver, black, blood, and blaze dragons entered the sword strikes, granting them speed, savagery, explosive power, and many abyssal spikes sprouting out of nowhere. The combined damage of the moves wasn't one bit inferior to Li Haochen's ultimate move.

On one end was the scion of a ruler that dominated everything. And on the other was the favored son of the heavens that had risen up from the most humble beginnings, treading a path of righteousness. One used a blade, the other a sword. The moment the lifebound beasts took the hit, Tianming and Li

Haochen clashed for real. Li Haochen's sweeping slashes came down heavily while Tianming reacted to them as flexibly as water.

Then a resounding clang resonated throughout as Tianming's four-fusion strike collided with Heavenly King's Judgment. Fortunately, the annoyance from the bonegnaw ants had significantly worn Li Haochen down. Everyone expected the Grand-Orient Sword to break, but it didn't—instead, Ying Huo struck from the other flank, completely unabated, continuously using more and more abilities to wound him. The two of them had managed to stop the Crimsoncloud Dragonbane, breaking Worldspanner Slash midway!

Tianming raised his sword once more, ready to strike. "Li Hoachen, you lose." Those words caused Li Haochen to feel a chill throughout his whole body. "Perhaps you might come to understand one day that there's no such thing as an ultimate cultivation method, only cultivators of different leagues. And dare I say that you're out of my league!"

There was no way Li Haochen could deny that. There were less than two thousand bonegnaw ants remaining; it was only a matter of time before he wiped them all out, but they had already substantially damaged his skeleton. Not to mention, Ying Huo's repeated sword strikes had turned his back into a bloody mess. Then the grade-six sword ki pierced through his chest.

"Accept your loss already!" Tianming swung his sword horizontally. There was no way Li Haochen's blade could parry the strike now, and it was struck flying from his grasp.

"Huh?" Stunned, he noticed at the next instant that Tianming's sword was right against his head where the bane-rings were, but it didn't go through.

The little phoenix hung by his throat with its sharp feathers held fast against it. "Don't move, or I'll send your head flying," Ying Huo said with a snicker.

With but a single thought, Tianming could end the life of the son of the sun emperor. There could be no argument about who had won. The Crimsoncloud Dragonbane eventually plunged into the ground, still wobbling, as if dissatisfied with its master's defeat. Li Haochen let his arms weakly hang from him.

"This..." His eyes contorted with chaotic emotions. The entire battlefield was shocked and silent. Though Tianming and his lifebound beasts had paid a huge price, with their injuries and the number of bodies Yin Chen lost, he had crushed the best of the celestial orderian juniors on behalf of the Myriad Solar Sects. All three celestial orderians had lost! It was a huge stain on their pride and dignity, and would have far-reaching consequences. Even Li Haochen could do nothing but blankly stand there. He didn't dare to contemplate the consequences of today's events at all. At the very least, he would become a laughingstock among his race. The mere thought of returning to face his seniors, kin, and that man almost caused his mind to collapse. "Uuuuaagh!"

It was far too terrifying. His eyes widened as he slumped weakly to the ground, kneeling as tears of blood gathered in his eyes. "Father... I have dishonored you!"

Chapter 1345 - Thoughts of the Defeated

All Li Haochen could hear was a humming sound. It felt like water had entered his mind, the bitter water of suffering. The fluid seeped into his organs, making his body ache all over. He didn't dare to look up

and meet the gazes of the hundred-odd thousand people there, knowing that he would find a range of expressions of shock, disbelief, and flabbergastment. He was nothing but a laughing stock; however, he was the son of the sun emperor, someone born to be the absolute best. There was no way he could fall this low. The internal contradiction caused him to feel a twisting sensation in his chest. It was as if he was tasting snake bile. He had never experienced such despair that could completely crush his pride and confidence.

"Huff... huff...." He widened his eyes, breathing raggedly and feeling as if the golden figure in his mind was a towering mountain that pressed down on him from above, crushing every single albus in his body to dust. During the twenty-five years of his life, he had stood at the very top, enjoying the admiration and adoration of all, only for him to crash and burn right at this moment. His body and soul had been turned into a bloody paste by someone of his age. He began contemplating death. His clan's pride, father's monitoring, and race's hopes had forbidden him from losing, but that was exactly what he'd done. He had besmirched the name of his so-called invincible race. They would suffer this humiliation with him, and death was the only release. This was the first time in his life that he thought about seeking an escape.

"Once I die, it'd be as if nothing happened, right?" Lowering his head, he smiled bitterly. Everything was as Tianming said. He couldn't afford to lose, and his clan's glorious history wouldn't permit a failure like him to exist. He didn't even look up, but he knew that the people were now worshiping Tianming and pitying him. Never would he have thought that the word 'pity' would ever be used to describe him! His throat felt like it was burning.

"I'm sorry...." His thoughts were going down a death spiral. Each pity-filled gaze he saw was like a slap on his face, accelerating his death. He found it hard to breathe and thought that he had in fact died. He didn't need Tianming to kill him at all.

"It's over... Haha...." His forlorn laughter was like a farewell to the world. It wasn't that he couldn't endure any hardship at all, but the children of the sun emperor all carried a burden that was far too heavy for them. If they weren't the best, they were useless! He raised his hand, causing the Crimsoncloud Dragonbane to fly into it.

"Li Haochen, are you refusing to admit your loss? You still want to fight?"

Many people cried in shock and Li Haochen felt even more agonized after hearing it. All he wanted to do was to end himself, and if he were to do that, he had to be fast. There was no other way for him but death. Quickly, he pulled the blade toward his neck, fully intending to decapitate himself!

In a flash, Tianming stopped the blade with his sword. "What're you trying to do?"

"I'm seeking release," Li Haochen said with a hoarse voice.

"Save it. Your 'release' will cause me to be targeted by your race for all eternity. You're trying to mess things up for me."

"You don't get it! Someone of my status can't afford to fail!"

"Oh, please, I've heard that line countless times before. Not being able to fail just because of your status? Tell me. Has there ever been mighty elites that have risen to the heights they've reached

without any hardship? Even if there were, I can guarantee that people who've never been forged through trial and failure will be complete trash. If you're really someone who deserves to stand at the top over all others, the least you can do is to not be afraid of failing. What's more important is having the courage to stand up after the inevitable failures."

"Are you lecturing me?" Li Haochen didn't think that the one who would pull him out of his spiral of despair would be his opponent, rather than his own allies.

"Lecturing? I'm not qualified for that. I just don't want you to die because it'll get really troublesome. If you really want to kill yourself, make sure to do it after a period of time so you don't get me involved."

"Hahaha...." Li Haochen suddenly laughed, putting his blade down and clenching his fists. He finally looked up, turning his reddened eyes to look at Tianming. "How old are you?"

"Twenty-four... more or less."

"A little younger than me, yet you are stronger. You were even able to defeat my Vastsun Truegod. I'm suddenly really full of admiration for your strength."

"Now that's the right attitude to face failure. There's nothing embarrassing about praising the strength of the one that defeats you. In fact, I think I've done you a favor. From now on, you'll be able to accept your loss and move on. Those who can do that are able to rise up even stronger than before. There's lessons to be learned in failure. Those who have never failed all their lives will often crumble at the slightest sign of hardship," Tianming added, still afraid that Li Haochen would suddenly die and cause him to be hunted down for eternity. Tianming had already gotten what he wanted and he saw that Li Haochen was truly fearful of the consequences of not being able to live up to his clan's heavy expectations.

"You're right. That makes a lot of sense!" Li Haochen snapped out of it, his gaze growing stronger by the moment. Standing up, he turned to Tianming again. "I wasn't weak at all. I'm the first one to have ever awakened a second totemic calamity, so that makes me far better than many of my elder brothers. I only lost today because I encountered a genius of the Myriad Solar Sects, an anomaly that hasn't appeared in millions of years. You're far too powerful, but that's good. My life will only be more interesting with a rival like you in it. I needed to be humbled and shown how inadequate the current me is. You're both my enemy and my motivation!"

"Alright, I get it. It's good that you got that out of your system, but don't go on a long tirade about it," Tianming said, smiling. In fact, if he wanted to ensure Qingyu's safety, it was best that he didn't antagonize someone of such high status that could potentially approach her. Not to mention, Li Haochen seemed to be the understanding type. It was clear to see that his entire personality was constantly adapting and evolving. At the very least, the way he looked at Tianming now suggested that he had resolved himself to surpass Tianming one day. He was no longer a proud and aloof fellow, like he was before. Tianming had indeed rendered him a huge favor, if he dared say so himself.

"One day, I'll come for a rematch to win my reputation back." Li Haochen raised his fist straight out.

"You're welcome to do so anytime," Tianming said, giving him a fist bump.

"Before that day comes, I'll make sure nobody bothers you for defeating me. You're an opponent I respect, after all." Li Haochen had gone through a complete heel-face turn, his willpower greatly increasing to new heights. Perhaps this was the ideal outcome.

"Let's meet again," Tianming said as he turned to the crowd. "Make sure your aunt does what she promised," he finished, then returned to his allies' side with his lifebound beasts.

Chapter 1346 - Wushuang of the Li Clan

When Tianming returned to them, all the seniors of the Azuresoul Palace, Empyrean Sword Sect and Group of Celestial Maiden Halls stared hard at him. They felt a spark that had been absent for a long time and cheered at him like he was a celebrity. "Invincible Tianming, destiny of the heavens!"

The talented youths of the Myriad Solar Sects had defeated all three geniuses from the celestial orderian side, including the son of the sun emperor. That was far more shocking than the appearance of the Ninedragon Imperial Tomb. They were shedding tears of joy from witnessing such a miraculous event. No doubt this news would shock everyone on the sun, even those in the territory of the celestial orderians.

"This is an unprecedented miracle!"

From their gazes, one could tell that they had lived under the boot of the celestial orderians for far too long. Having been oppressed for countless years, they felt an ultimate catharsis from having their frustrations vented on their behalf by Tianming. They zealously looked at him, as if they were worshipping him. It was the foundation of them becoming Tianming's 'subjects' from whom he could draw Omniscient Will, a crucial part of his cultivation. It was the first thing he had done that really left a lasting impression on those of the Myriad Solar Sects. He felt their faith flowing into his body like a torrent, brushing against his divine wills. He was only in his twenties, yet he was being viewed as a god by many supercentenarians.

He turned back and looked at Li Haochen, who bravely returned to his group in a calm demeanor. Though the cheers Tianming had received was yet another blow to Li Haochen's pride, Tianming noticed that he was taking it well. "Not bad. As expected of the sun emperor's son. After shifting his mindset, he's able to muster his will."

If Tianming was someone from their clan, he doubted he would necessarily be able to take the blow of losing like that. Either way, Li Haochen's decision to bravely live on was good news for Tianming. He suddenly heard a deep gulp. Turning, he saw that it was Long Wanying. Her beautiful eyes were red with tears as she looked at him. The gaze was filled with gentleness and affection, and even a kind of motherly love that reminded Tianming of his mother. Wei Jing had felt the exact same way after he'd defeated Lin Xiaoxiao and become a disciple of Heaven's Sanctum.

It was doubtless cathartic for Long Wanying, who had lost her husband and son and suffered from the trauma ever since. She began to see him as her own son, given how similar they looked. Before she realized it, her tears had begun uncontrollably flowing.

"Aunt Ying, why're you crying? I really stuck it to Li Wushuang, didn't I? Shouldn't you be happy?" Tianming said.

"Yes... I'm happy... so happy that I'm crying. I think I'm going insane."

"Well, you know what they say. The insane and ignorant live the most blissful lives." He could see Gujian Qingshuang, Shi Yan, Yan Nuxia, and Ye Dongliu's expressions of deep shock. That finally hammered into him how significant his victory really was.

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"I'm sorry, Aunt." Li Haochen took a deep breath and stood quietly in front of Li Wushuang. He clearly saw the cold expression on her face.

"Am I the one you should apologize to?" She stretched out her hand and audibly slapped him in front of everyone. Li Haochen's face flushed red and blackened from the strike. "The one you should be sorry to is your father!" She slapped him a second time. "The celestial orderians!" A third time. "Your ancestors!"

The three slaps had caused his face to bleed and swell. Long Youyou and Li Ruoshi watched as their tears flowed and they quickly knelt to beg for mercy on his behalf. Li Wushuang had a lot of influence among the celestial orderians. Though she didn't rank in the top five in power, her authority was far greater than that of the sun empress. There was no disputing that she was the second-in-command, having been cherished by the sun emperor since her childhood. The sun emperor saw this sister of his as more important than anything else and he was famous for being overprotective of her in his youth. That was why Long Youyou and Li Ruoshi would kneel to her, someone who could discipline even the sun emperor's son.

Even the Tumulus Pill God and others wanted to beg Li Wushuang to show him mercy after suffering that humiliating loss. However, they didn't expect that he would wipe off his blood and smile at his aunt. "Thank you for disciplining me, Aunt. I lost today, so I'm willing to accept the consequences, punishment, and scoldings. I promise that I'll one day regain my honor on behalf of our ancestors and race."

Li Wushuang looked at him in shock. "How thick-skinned are you? You already lost all your honor! Do you think you can just take it back?"

"I understand that I didn't perform poorly today, but my opponent was even more spectacular. This must be a trial from the heavens. I will not cower and back down from it," Li Haochen said.

"Are you possessed or something? You might as well have killed yourself back there!" Li Wushuang's words completely shocked Li Haochen.

"Aunt, you seem to be suffering from my loss even more than I am," he said, shaking his head.

She merely coldly glared at him, not saying a word. However, the others could tell that she was going hysterical. No matter how hard she tried suppressing it, it was clear to see. She was raging from being so thoroughly humiliated. Was it from losing a seven-star universal manna? Definitely not. The treasure alone wasn't enough to make the darkness within her leak out like that. Li Ruoshi even asked him to shut up and say less.

On the other side, Yan Nuxia was hollering for Li Wushuang to immediately hand over the Solar Nucleus and leave. Li Wushuang looked past Li Haochen, pressing his head down and harshly pushing it. There was definitely something dark within her; this mysterious 'Lady Wushuang' was someone that nobody

could afford to piss off. The last one that did was none other than the previous Whitedragon Emperor, Long Junxuan, and people knew what his fate ended up being.

Li Wushuang stepped forward, causing the other side's cheering to simmer down. She raised her chin and said, "Long Wanying, come here and take it."

"Don't go! It must be a trick," someone warned.

"What're you saying? Do you think she can kill me in a single strike with everyone looking? Do you think I'm completely useless?" Long Wanying pushed Yan Nuxia's hand aside and approached Li Wushuang, someone against whom she held a deathly grudge. Every step she took caused the atmosphere to tense up. Li Wushuang reached the middle point between their two groups, and Long Wanying stopped right in front of her. The others were reminded that Li Wushuang had been trying to mess with Long Wanying from the moment she'd brought up the arrangement for their juniors to fight.

Chapter 1347 - Death of Daoyi

The woman with moon-white hair took out Solar Nucleus and stared coldly at Long Wanying. Smirking, she said, "You lowly cur... did you know that I came here to kill you after hearing that you were cowering and hiding here after your sect fell?"

"Oh, I'm most honored. I didn't think a busy animal like you would manage to find time in your schedule to come and deal with me," Long Wanying said, rolling her eyes.

"I know you're actually afraid of me. You'd better hide yourself well and not come out for strolls. If I get you, I won't let you have an easy death," Li Wushuang said. She was different from Shi Yan. She didn't need to hide her intentions at all. Just because she couldn't kill Long Wanying here, because there were too many people around, didn't mean she wouldn't have a chance to do so in the future. There was no way Long Wanying could stay cooped up forever like Jiang Qingliu, as she had too many things to attend to.

"Don't be so sure that you'll be the one doing the killing. If you end up getting captured by me, you'd better be ready for me to skin you," Long Wanying said, stretching out her hand. "Alright, enough nonsense. Just hand it over. You lost, so take it in stride and stop wasting time."

"Prepare your funeral," Li Wushuang said as she handed over the Solar Nucleus. Since she was so blunt with her threats, it meant that she didn't care if Long Wanying put up her guard against her. She had more than enough time to play the game with her, given the Xuanyuan Dragon Sect's current situation.

Even after Long Wanying got the manna, the two women still stared at each other, radiating their lifelong grudge. The memories from back then surfaced in Long Wanying's mind. Li Wushuang looked past her toward Tianming coldly with increasing intensity.

"Protect your new son well, though he'll eventually end up like Junxuan anyway."

"You were the one who got him killed. You have no right to say his name." Seeing Li Wushuang speak the name nonchalantly like that made it hard to control her temper.

"Got him killed? Didn't I tell you from the start? Nobody can have what I can't have! It was his fault for being too talented and getting my attention! Now that he's dead, I won't miss him anymore. It's a clean break." Li Wushuang smiled the entire time she said that.

"Li Wushuang, you're trying to threaten us just because you can't accept Li Haochen's loss. Do you think triggering me like this will help the sun emperor's son regain his lost honor? Did you forget how he lost? I doubt that's enough," Long Wanying said, crossing her arms. Li Wushuang's face was pulsing with anger. "Threaten us all you want, for all we care. It doesn't change the fact that your side lost. Suck it up."

Even though Li Haochen had accepted the results of the battle with stride, Li Wushuang couldn't bear the humiliation. It was like a poison in her mind. She was the kind of person who never wanted to lose even once. But the first time she did and wasn't able to get what she wanted, she destroyed it so that nobody could have it instead.

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The Tumulus Pill God and the rest had nothing much to say about the results. They had come with confidence, only to return empty handed. Many cultivators of the Supracloud Sanctuary felt horrible about it as they returned to their base.

On the way, Li Haochen said, "Aunt, the three of us plan to go back and leave the matters here alone. Father said that I should go to the Primalfiend Boundary to cultivate, and I'd like to give that a try."

"You can't leave, especially not after how you lost," Li Wushuang said.

"Fine." He kept quiet, not knowing what else to say.

Li Wushuang ignored him and turned to the others. "After this, we celestial orderians will send a lot of killers here. I need you all to send scouts to keep me informed about the locations and actions of the six Swordbearers, Shi Yan, Long Wanying, and the rest."

"Understood!" The Tumulus Pill God and the rest hurriedly nodded.

"Thank you, Lady Wushuang, for the help. With the celestial orderians' help, Azuresoul Palace is done for. They won't dare to touch the Azurecloud Divine Tree at all," Lan Sha said gratefully.

"Divine tree?" Li Wushuang scoffed. "It has nothing to do with that. I only care about killing them."

"Even the Sky Palace disciples?" the Tumulus Pill God asked. It was a sensitive topic.

"So what if they're Sky Palace disciples? Can they not be killed?" Li Wushuang countered.

"Yes!" They bowed their heads once more, knowing that things were going out of control now that Li Haochen had lost.

They deserve what they get! That's right! It's their fault for knowingly going against the celestial orderians! Who cares if this territory belongs to the Myriad Solar Sects? Yun Tianque thought. Little did he know that it wasn't because of the battle from before. Li Wushuang had intentionally come to the continent to kill Long Wanying. In fact, the two-out-of-three battle for the divine herb was something Yun Tianque's side had proposed. They were the ones who wanted to take the divine herb from the

Azuresoul Palace's territory, after all. Tianming had never expected that he would run into celestial orderians on this continent. The Supracloud Sanctuary and the rest were the ones who forced him to.

"Aunt, who will be coming to help?" Li Haochen asked.

"It has nothing to do with you. Just care about yourself and don't even think of speaking of this to your father."

"Can you not kill Li Tianming?"

"Are you still sane?" She glared at him hatefully.

"If you kill him, I will no longer have a goal in life. People will just remember me as the one who lost for the rest of my life."

"You're overthinking things. No matter how impressive someone is, their reputation is worth nothing once they are dead. People will simply forget."

Li Haochen grit his teeth as Li Ruoshi and Long Youyou grasped his arms to stop him from saying anything else. "Lady Wushuang," the Tumulus Pill God said.

"What is it?"

"The grade-eight divine herb has ripened and been harvested, so the group over there have returned. Only Gujian Daoyi and around a thousand others remain to deal with the roots of the divine herb." He lowered his volume to a whisper and continued, "As we have suffered quite a bit today, shall we strike back at them with something else?"

"Stop asking the obvious. Are they still there?" Li Wushuang asked.

"Yes."

"I'll personally go there and send a thousand corpses their way," she said nonchalantly. The Supracloud Sanctuary didn't want an all-out battle to break out because of the potential casualties, but they wouldn't mind sudden assassinations if that meant it could deal a blow to the Azuresoul Palace.

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Back at the Azuresoul Sword Mountain, Gujian Qingshuang and the rest immediately had a meeting with Shi Yan.

"The Swordsage sends news that the lifesoul stones of the decapitator brothers have shattered. They are dead," Shi Yan said with a twisted look of disbelief.

"Impossible!" Though they said that, it wasn't the first shocking thing they had experienced today.

"They aren't that weak, so how could they die out of nowhere? They were there to kill Jiang Qingliu, but he looked completely unharmed! He didn't even say he met the killers! If he did and didn't tell us, does that mean he knows it has something to do with us?" Ye Buzhiqiu said.

"It's really odd," Shi Yan said.

"What do you think, Chief Instructor?" Ye Dongliu asked.

"I wonder if Jiang Qingliu was serious when he said he was about to break through," Gujian Qingshuang said.

"It can't be. I didn't feel anything when he left," Granny Mu Hua said.

"Even if he did, he couldn't be powerful enough to kill those two," Ye Buzhiqiu said.

"It's pointless to speculate. Let's test him when we get a chance," Gujian Qingshuang said.

"No matter what, the Azuresoul Tower is still with him so we're still in a passive position. If you had the tower, you could've taught Yun Tianque a lesson!" Ye Dongliu said.

They all fell silent.

"General Shi, can you send stronger killers to do the job?" Ye Buzhiqiu asked.

"It won't be possible. The brothers were specially raised by our sect and are trustworthy. While there are stronger ones, we can't trust them to keep this under wraps," Shi Yan said, frowning her brows.

"How about this... I'll test him and see if he really killed those two to reassure us. If I have a chance, I'll kill him myself!" Ye Buzhiqiu said.

"If he really killed the brothers, do you think he'll be killed by you so easily?" Shi Yan asked.

"Given how meek he's been all his life, to the point that he won't even dare to utter a sound when I speak, I refuse to believe he's any bit capable. He's nothing but a weakling." He knew Jiang Qingliu far too well.

"Alright, just test him. I'll go to the spot where the battle was supposed to take place to see if there's any traces," Gujian Qingshuang said. Right as he finished speaking, he got a transmission stone, the message which was attached to it turning his face grim.

"What is it?"

"Daoyi was killed!"

"By who?" some asked.

"Was it Li Wushuang?" Shi Yan probed.

"Yes...." Gujian Qingshuang immediately teared up as the others waned from the shock.

"They're venting their rage! It's a statement! Even if we won't clash in a full battle, they can still mess with us like this!" Ye Dongliu said, sighing.

"General Shi, this mistress of the celestial orderians is obviously here to cause chaos. I expect the Empyrean Sword Sect has countermeasures for this, right?" Gujian Qingshuang said. His only brother had died just like that.

"Of course." She nodded, but her gaze was elsewhere. Things were developing far out of her expectations. Li Wushuang was adding too many variables to the equation.

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Tianming expectantly took out his manna. "A seven-star divine beast...." He looked outside and waved. "My little chicken, fatten yourself up! Xian Xian is hungry and we're having chicken dinner tonight!"

Chapter 1348 - Sungod's Wrath

The seven-star universal manna was completely different from its four-star counterparts. It was like comparing the Lifesteal Silverdragon with a grade-four divine artifact. Even tens of thousands of four-star universal manna wouldn't compare to this one. The Solar Nucleus was a manna that had appeared within the suncore and was shaped like a flaming bird. There were seven burning stars within. Taking it out at Fairman Peak even instantly caused the temperature around the Sixth Sword Branch to rise, and much of the nearby greenery began withering away from the heatwave.

Universal manna was something separate from nova sources and divine patterns, being one of the things that spontaneously appeared in the universe. Even though divine patterns had been studied enough to be put into formations or tomes, universal manna had remained a mystery the entire time they fueled the prosperity of life in the universe. This seven-star manna was even more mysterious than the rest. Tianming took it out and let the flaming bird fly around. Then he smacked Ying Huo on the head. "What are you looking at? Eat it, quick!"

"I'm going first? What about the others?" It thought about Meow Meow and the rest. As always, it was a good elder brother to all of them.

"Relax. Aunt Ying said that even though the Xuanyuan Dragon Sect's treasury has been taken over by the Veildragon Palace, the Saint, Green, and Purple Dragon Imperials each took out one six-star universal manna to give to me. They'll be delivered soon. Aunt Ying herself also gave one to Xiaoxiao that suits the Archaionfiend."

"Wow, the four Dragon Imperials from the Xuanyuan Dragon Sect are really fond of you for them to still have something to give you despite being in trouble themselves."

"Yeah. Since they're willing to go so far for our sake, we shouldn't disappoint them."

Right then, the manna was about to fly away, so Ying Huo quickly flapped its wings and chased it down.

"Do your best, and at least try to grow a bit this time! Let's hope your wingspan reaches ten meters!" Tianming said. No matter how large Ying Huo's true form grew, it could still compress itself to the size of a palm in a fight. It also made Tianming's hair a convenient place for it to nest in. Fighting with a small body also made it harder to pin down and enhanced its piercing capability, but no matter what, its body's growth in size throughout the evolution was a sign that it would one day return to the gigantic Primordial Chaos Beast that Tianming had seen in that dreamscape. The Aeternal Infernal Phoenix would be so huge that it could swallow chains of stars like it was slurping noodles.

Based on what he had seen on the sun so far, Tianming concluded that the size of a lifebound beast didn't indicate how powerful they were. Some of the smaller beasts were just as powerful, and there were many large ones that were easy to take down. "Thinking back, Ghoul King Si Ling's lifebound beast was a worm about a kilometer in length, but it was really weak as well."

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Ying Huo flew straight toward the flaming bird and swallowed it. "Ouch, it burns! My stomach's going to burn through!" it cried, but it didn't return to the lifebound space. Instead, it charged into the abyss near the Sixth Sword Branch where there was an underground lake tens of thousands of meters wide. There were many water-type divine hazards deep within it and the disciples of the sect often practiced their swordplay nearby. Once Ying Huo charged into it, large amounts of water evaporated into steam. The entire lake began to furiously boil and bubble as many of them looked at the lifebound beast at the bottom of the lake.

"It looks like the Sky Palace disciple, Li Tianming's lifebound beast."

"Oh, that annoying bird. It played a huge part in defeating Li Haochen, right?"

"I know! It consumed the Solar Nucleus and is evolving!"

"I wonder how much more powerful it'll get."

People started gathering around to watch. Tianming stood amidst the crowd as many senior swordpupils talked to him. He clearly felt that no matter how Gujian Qingshuang and the others at the top regarded him, most of the swordpupils of the sect were impressed with and respected him. During their face-off against the Supracloud Sanctuary, Tianming had seen how tough these swordpupils could be. He got along with them rather well, even those from the House of Dongye. As they waited, Tianming chatted with the swordpupils about the million years of history of the divine tree and had heard many interesting tales about it. Most of the people on the Azurecloud Continent felt rather sentimental about this eternal tree.

"Tianming, it looks like it's about time," someone who had been watching the lake told him.

He headed over there and didn't know how to react. The former lake was now a crater filled with boiling magma. Pressurized steam loudly shot out of some parts of the crater, accompanied by waves of heat. The onlookers felt their faces heating up. At the very bottom of the lake was a gigantic bird whose body was constantly morphing. Tianming felt an ancient aura that belonged to the Primordial Chaos Beasts coming from it. It was the mark of the ultimate bloodline that inspired fear in those that felt it.

"Perhaps this level of change will be unprecedented for Ying Huo." In its previous evolutions, Ying Huo had never gone beyond the level of normal lifebound beasts. But now it had begun to resemble the phoenix he had seen in the dreams for the very first time.

"Come out!" Tianming yelled. The magma exploded, causing fire to rain down. The cry of a phoenix echoed out as a magnificent avian creature flapped its wide wings as it emerged from the lake, turning into a beam of fiery light as it ascended skyward. It flapped its wings, opened them fully, then descended in a manner fitting to be the ruler of all birds, almost causing the ground to quake from the sheer heat and light it gave off. All of the lifebound beasts in the Azuresoul Sword Mountain took note of its presence.

"Heavens... is this really Ying Huo?" Tianming was completely stunned. He recalled that it had merely been a little yellow chick when it'd first hatched. There was no way to connect how it looked back then to this flaming divine phoenix he saw before him now. The phoenix was like a sun in the sky, radiantly glowing. There was a hint of black in its Infernal Blaze flames, which caused the impression it gave off to

greatly change. Every single one of its feathers had the text of Blazebane on them, making them as sharp as red-hot blades that seemed to be able to cut anything like melted butter.

However, the key change was its overly huge size. Tianming had thought it would be great if Ying Huo had a wingspan of ten meters, but now it had a wingspan of a kilometer like the phoenixes of legend! It stood out almost as much as Lan Huang did now.

The heat from the flames could be felt on Tianming's head and its cry was so loud now that it could be heard from ten thousand meters away! No doubt, this was the ultimate lifeform. Each flap of its wings sent seas of flame into the air. Its nine long, beautiful tail feathers were like blades that left dark trails in the sky.

"Now that's what an Aeternal Infernal Phoenix should look like!" Tianming was moved at the sight. It finally felt like Ying Huo was starting to look like the Primordial Chaos Beast it was supposed to be. As he watched, Ying Huo didn't go down right away. Instead, it kept flapping its wings, causing the black and gold flames on its body to charge up. Then the Solar Nucleus seemed to appear on its body as countless flames gathered around it into a gigantic ball of fire that looked no different from a sun. It had turned into a sun in the sky, gathering terrifying amounts of heat and energy. Then the two-kilometer-wide sun exploded and sent a loud soundwave all over the place, causing many tremors.

"This is my new ultimate ability, Sungod's Wrath. Amazing, right?" it said to Tianming through telepathy. Ying Huo was still itself after all, despite the makeover. Sungod's Wrath continued exploding in the sky, but a small ember descended into Tianming's palm. It was a palm-sized chick with its wings on its waist. "How's that? Badass, right? Are you shaking from witnessing my might? Or swooning at how handsome I am now? Don't despair. I was born with these looks. You just weren't lucky enough to be graced with looks as good as mine."

"You never really change, do you?" Tianming rolled his eyes.

Chapter 1349 - Singularity Atlas

"You're just jealous! Naked jealousy! Young man... you won't grow if you let jealousy cloud your mind and drive you to wrong decisions," Ying Huo said.

Tianming merely pinched its neck and said, "Weren't you really impressive just now with a wingspan of a thousand meters? You can be a cool mount now. Why'd you turn back into this dumb form?"

"Mount? In your dreams. I'm the one who'll mount you, not the other way 'round," Ying Huo said, rolling its eyes. "Actually, I'm just more used to this size. It's far more convenient. If I keep taking my magnificently handsome true form, people will just be jealous of me and try to get back at me for it."

Tianming almost couldn't stand how unserious Ying Huo always was. "What other changes are there? What's your star count now?" Its eyes were so dense with stars that it was hard to count them all unless it took its huge true form.

"Around seven thousand and five hundred I guess. Apart from that, I got a new ability, the one I showed you just now. Not to mention my Infernal Blaze got a whole lot stronger, which also enhanced my other abilities to some extent."

Tianming had noted that the Infernal Blaze was now black and gold. It seemed even more impressive now. He knew that Ying Huo's flames and Meow Meow's lightning had a lot of room to improve. After all, the fire and lightning were part of their powers as Primordial Chaos Beasts. After the briefing, Ying Huo went looking for Meow Meow and the rest to show off. It felt like it was going to marry a princess when all of them expectantly called out to it.

"Once the Dragon Imperials' six-star universal manna arrives, I'll let Meow Meow, Lan Huang and Xian Xian evolve together and engage in symbiotic cultivation again. Hopefully the improved bloodlines of the Primordial Chaos Beasts can help me break through!"

Based on Ying Huo's current strength, he knew that he had made it big with the seven-star universal manna. Not to mention, he still had the grade-eight divine herb and was contemplating how to best use it.

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Senluo Mansion at the Second Sword Branch was where Ye Dongliu cultivated. Only the top brass of the Dongye house could enter the building, and not even Gujian Qingshuang regularly went there.

Currently, the Azuresoul Palace was led by the Gujian Clan, with House Dongye being their helpers. However, that hadn't always been the case. Throughout the history of the sect, there had been times when those from House Dongye took up positions as chief instructors, though they had languished in the past ten millennia and hadn't risen above the Gujian clan since then. While there was competition between the two sides, neither had ever really tried oppressing the other, for they needed a united front to be able to stand up against the might of the Supracloud Sanctuary. They also had historically good relations with one another.

Currently, Ye Dongliu stood alone in the Senluo Mansion with his arms behind his back, looking out of his window at the distant divine tree. He heard footsteps approaching. It was Ye Buzhiqiu from the Fourth Sword Branch. There was a saying that went 'one knows autumn's approach when the leaf falls'. However, Ye Dongliu had named his son with the opposite meaning of 'not knowing autumn's approach', as autumn was a rather melancholic season and he wanted his son to be ignorant of its coming as a sign of hope.

"Dad," said Ye Buzhiqiu, standing beside his father in a dark yellow robe. The light from the flaming clouds outside illuminated part of his face.

"What is it?" Ye Dongliu turned back and stood ramrod straight.

"I want to do something."

"Yes, I know what you want to say."

"Dad understands me best. The Gujian clan's chief instructor will eventually age. Originally, his younger brother, Gujian Daoyi, was supposed to take over and nurture the chief instructor's eldest son, Gujian Xuanyuan, but now Gujian Daoyi is dead. With Gujian Xuanyuan still unfit to rule, it looks like I'm the only person of our generation that can fulfill this purpose."

"There's still Jiang Qingliu. Even though he's a little older than Daoyi and you, he still barely qualifies," Ye Dongliu said.

"Jiang Qingliu, eh... hahaha...."

"Li Wushuang had Gujian Daoyi killed, so your chances are much better. The Emyrean Sword Sect has decided to send us more reinforcements. If we can use them to wipe out the Supracloud Sanctuary, our house will have good days to come," Ye Dongliu said with hopeful optimism.

"I hope there comes a day when we control the entire continent," Ye Buzhiqiu said. That was their shared ambition, and with Gujian Daoyi dead, it seemed even closer to being realized. They could push Gujian Qingshuang on the path of dominating the Azurecloud Continent and, eventually, the throne would be passed down to them. Even if they stayed in the background for now, they already mostly controlled how things went.

"We have to be careful of this 'young mistress' Li Wushuang, who's been around for centuries. As long as she continues causing trouble, the Myriad Solar Sects won't just sit and watch," Ye Dongliu said.

"It'd be perfect if she really ended up killing Long Wanying. Yan Nuxia and the rest, too."

"That's right. Now, tell me what you came to say."

"Okay. Dad, the Emyrean Sword Sect noticed the close relationship between Li Tianming and Long Wanying, so they're shifting their assassination target to her. Now they don't really care too much about killing Jiang Qingliu anymore, but that's bad for us. We need the Azuresoul Tower to give the chief instructor a push. Otherwise he'll continue to act indecisively forever and we'll miss all our opportunities. So I want to kill Jiang Qingliu myself. We're both in the same sect and have more chances to interact, after all. I just need the chief instructor to put me in the same group as him when we're deployed during the conflict surrounding the divine tree. I can find an opportunity then," Ye Buzhiqiu said.

"The problem is that we still don't know how the decapitator brothers died. Even though you've defeated Jiang Qingliu before, it's still risky. The one better suited to take action is me. It's a shame that my powers have waned in the past century and my body doesn't behave the way I want it to anymore. If I was in my prime, killing him would be like slaughtering a chicken."

"That's right. As such, I want you to pass the Singularity Atlas to me! There's a top-grade forest illusion formation in the atlas that can trap Jiang Qingliu within it and stop other people from going to his aid. They won't even know what happened. Not to mention, my powers will be boosted a few times within the formation, so killing him would be all too easy! I also have someone ready to blame for Jiang Qingliu's death: Li Wushuang!" He seemed really agitated at that point. "Dad, Li Wushuang already set the stage by killing Gujian Daoyi, so this is a huge opportunity for us."

Currently, Tianming and Long Wanying had angered Li Wushuang, causing her to kill Gujian Daoyi and making the Gujian Clan lose a powerful elite. If the Azuresoul Palace eventually suppressed the Supracloud Sanctuary with the help of other sects, Ye Buzhiqiu would be the one to enjoy the benefits. He was planning to frame Li Wushuang for the murder of his rival and use the Azuresoul Tower to give Gujian Qingshuang the push he needed. The circumstances were so perfect that it seemed like it must be heaven's plan for him.

Chapter 1350 - Big Plans

Hearing 'Singularity Atlas' caused Ye Dongliu to bitterly smile. "You little... I already said that I'd give you this treasure and the position of house leader in another decade, but you're still impatient about it."

"It's not that, Dad. It's not like I want the atlas that badly. It's just hard for me to find an opportunity to kill Jiang Qingliu without it," Ye Buzhiqiu hurriedly explained.

"Are you really only trying to give the chief instructor a push? You sure you're not pining over this treasure of mine?"

"Dad, is that how you see me? I'm your son, you know. You should understand me best!"

"Hahahaha... I was just messing with you. I'm just feeling a little lonely about the fact that you're fully grown up now and have your own plans in mind."

"Stop joking around, Dad. I'd already grown up by the time I was in my thirties, and now I'm almost five centuries old."

"Yeah, right, yet you still have no wife or children," Ye Dongliu said, raising his brow at his son.

"I worry that a wife and children could be an obstacle to my goals, so I want to achieve them first before I settle down."

"Don't take too long on that. If I get my grandson fast, I can still raise him to never repeat the mistakes of the previous generation."

"Understood! So, about the Singularity Atlas...."

Ye Dongliu put his hand on his son's shoulder. "Fine. I'll talk to the artifact soul about you and let you inherit it. You'll also be made leader of the house, but I can only announce it after the matter of the divine tree settles down, alright?"

"Yes!" Ye Buzhiqiu was overjoyed.

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At the Sixth Sword Branch, Tianming, Yu Ziqian, Long Wanying, Jiang Qingliu and Yan Nuxia got together for a meeting.

Jiang Qingliu had just returned, so Long Wanying asked, "How is it?"

"The chief instructor made new arrangements. Now, I'll be in the same group as Ye Buzhiqiu and we'll be posted at the Greatriver Valley where there's quite a few fruits," he said.

Hearing that, Tianming got a weird feeling. "Everyone, with Li Wushuang out there ready to kill, should the sect really be sending people out right now?"

Jiang Qingliu said, "Of course. The harvest of the divine tree determines how the sect will develop in the next ten thousand years. We can't afford to be scared into hiding. It's the same as giving up on the future. Not to mention, the tree is too wide, so Li Wushuang can only kill a small portion of people. Now that Gujian Daoyi has left us, we can only be more careful and avoid taking as many risks as we can."

"Brother Jiang is right. We shouldn't let a madwoman's threats dictate our actions. Not to mention, the group is only secretly going out to lay some groundwork. All we have to do is send word to people on where to find which fruits to pick. There's far too many of them, after all," Long Wanying said. The ones who would really be doing the picking were the many residents of cities scattered across the territories. The swordpupils were only there to protect them. As for Long Wanying herself, she would be on the lookout for Li Wushuang.

"Understood." Tianming nodded and turned to Jiang Qingliu. "Senior Jiang, I heard something about their new plans for you."

"Oh, what is it?" He had already guessed that this was a plot to get him killed.

"Do you know about the Singularity Atlas?" Tianming asked.

"Of course. It's a grade-seven divine artifact that's inferior to no other artifact in the sect than the Azuresoul Tower."

"That's the one." Tianming repeated what Yin Chen had heard at Senluo Mansion to Jiang Qingliu.

"No wonder I was assigned to a group with him. Looks like the chief instructor is committed to killing me! How cruel. Even after his brother's death, he still hasn't forgotten about wanting to claim my life."

"His younger brother is gone and he wants revenge, so he needs your tower to get stronger," Long Wanying said.

Jiang Qingliu took a deep breath and stayed silent for a moment. "Tianming, your lifebound beast is far too impressive. Without it, I don't know how many times I would've died by now."

"Since that's the case, I have some thoughts about this matter and I'd like Senior Jiang to support me," Tianming said. "Oh?" Jiang Qingliu's expression was solemn. "Let's hear it."

"Here and now, we're in the same boat, right? You're Ziqian's master, and he's my brother." Yu Ziqian was the one that connected Tianming to Jiang Qingliu, so if he didn't want his master to die for no reason, Tianming wouldn't either.

"Of course. You've saved me many times already, so if there's anything you'd like me to do, I'll do it with no complaint."

"Alright, then I'll be straight with you. I have a method to control people like Gujian Qingshuang for their whole lives. As long as you're able to defeat them and keep them subdued for an hour, I'll be able to completely put them under my control."

Jiang Qingliu was shocked, so Long Wanying explained the bonegnaw ants to him. She had personally experienced what it was like, so she was far more convincing.

"I won't keep this from you. My goal is to control Gujian Qingshuang and force him to focus all of the Azuresoul Palace's resources on me. At the very least, I need a lot of divine ores to let my lifebound beast get many more bodies, enough to span the entire continent. Naturally, if the chief instructor is cooperative, he won't be treated badly. But as he's someone who's condemned you to your death more than once, you wouldn't care if this happened to him, right?"

"He... I have nothing to say about that. However, I want to know what someone as young as you plans to do by taking control of a large sect like this."

"Here's what I am thinking. Using this chance, we'll take down Ye Buzhiqiu and let him work for us. By doing so, we'll get a chance to privately meet the chief instructor so we can put him under our control. Through that, we'll be able to strengthen the sect as a whole and find more opportunities. If we can take down Yun Tianque, we'll have united the two largest sects on the continent and be able to control the divine tree much better. Then we can chase the Blueblood Starocean and wargodeans out, thereby making sure that the Azurecloud Continent will truly enjoy the benefits of the Azurecloud Divine Tree!"

"You're making it sound easy, but each step is incredibly hard! It's shocking that you're even able to think of such a plan." Jiang Qingliu couldn't believe someone so young could shake him so deeply. Did terrifyingly precocious children like that really exist elsewhere?

"I understand that it's really difficult to bring about. However, we can test it out with Ye Buzhiqiu first. If it really won't work, we can just kill him. He wants to kill you anyway, so you're only returning the favor, right?"

"Of course."

"Master, stop hesitating and just work with us!" Yu Ziqian said, "You told me yesterday that you plan to stay strong and survive, right? How are you going to do that if people keep on plotting against you? Not to mention, Tianming's saved your life multiple times now, so it's time to return the favor and stop being so hesitant."

Jiang Qingliu pulled him over and spat, "I don't need you to tell me that! I was just about to agree, but if I do that now, it'll look like you convinced me after making me look all hesitant!"

Everyone broke out in laughter at that response. Even so, the shock and excitement lingered in their minds. Jiang Qingliu took a deep breath and said, "What should we do about Ye Buzhiqiu?"

"You'll be the bait and leave the sect with him. Aunt Ying, Aunt Yan, Gan Gangan, and I will go to the Greatriver Valley together to set things up. While his Singularity Atlas is impressive, Gan Gangan's Divine Worldeater Cauldron is much bigger and can completely seal off an area even larger than the atlas can. The three of you should have no issues taking on Ye Buzhiqiu, right?"

The cauldron was the key to the plan, which made Yu Ziqian an essential part as well. It would also be easy for Yan Nuxia, Long Wanying, and Jiang Qingliu to gang up on Ye Buzhiqiu. It would be much easier than dealing with Gujian Qingshuang. After that, they could use Ye Buzhiqiu to lure Gujian Qingshuang out.

"Senior Jiang, I probably won't be staying on the Azurecloud Continent for too long either. So, if our plan works out, you'll be the one that rules the continent for real," Tianming emphasized.

"I see...." Jiang Qingliu still didn't quite know what to make of this. He stared at Tianming blankly, constantly asking himself if he really was a junior. Privately, he asked Long Wanying, "Is this really his plan or yours?"

"His, of course! But he has my full support. In fact, if we can get Ye Buzhiqiu and Gujian Qingshuang, I want to make the Tumulus Pill God and even Lan Sha into our puppets... maybe even Li Wushuang!" She said the last name with extra vindictiveness.

"Are you crazy?"

"The Xuanyuan Dragon Sect is mostly a goner, and I already lost my husband and son. I already have nothing left to lose."

"I see...."

"As for you, those that you respect have betrayed and tried to kill you a few times already. Do you think you're still sane?"

"Me? I've gone insane long ago, hahaha!"

"Then let's be insane together. With this child's capabilities alone, this wouldn't work out without our support. If it succeeds, we'll be huge contributors to it as well."

"If we really manage to succeed all the way, what would we do about Li Wushuang?"

"I don't know. It sounds crazy to even think about it. But if we can make it so that it's hard for her to even kill herself, then I'm willing to do anything, even die for it," she said, grinding her teeth. This was her revenge, and she wouldn't hold back.

"Alright, let's start with Ye Buzhiqiu, then." At the thought of the young master of the Dongye house that constantly humiliated and challenged him, seething anger flashed across his eyes. "That damn Ye brat.... I've tolerated him for my whole life, and now I'll finally make him know what a fate worse than death feels like!"