

## The Ages 1351

### Chapter 1351 - Just a Little Sister

Within the run-down hall, Tianming came up with a plan that centered around Yin Chen.

"This fellow's cockroach and bonegnaw ant forms are far too powerful. Even though they aren't that suited for combat, they can't be beat when it comes to surveillance and control. It wasn't able to do much in the fight against Li Haochen, as it doesn't really have any abilities. But as a tradeoff for being relatively weak in combat, it has amazing utility."

Back in the wondersky realm, Yin Chen was still rather useful in fights against specters and beastmasters. Its hatching had been a pivotal moment in Tianming's journey on the Azurecloud Continent. Now he was certain of what he had to do, and much of his plan relied on Yin Chen's ability to completely control somebody. It was the only trump card he had against people who were centuries older than him. Naturally, his benefactors, like Long Wanying and Jiang Qingliu, were really important as well. They finished discussing the details of the plan.

"Five days from now, I'll be departing with Ye Buzhiqiu. Before that happens, he might go to the Greatriver Valley first to find a good spot to deploy the Singularity Atlas," Jiang Qingliu said.

"That's why we have to go there even earlier so we know where he'll be. Then, we'll use the Divine Worldeater Cauldron to turn the tables," Tianming said. They had the advantage of knowing where and when the enemy was at all times.

The Divine Worldeater Cauldron was a grade-eight divine artifact that had almost caused the entire Myriad Solar Sects to break out into a civil war. Apart from pill refinement, it had many other functions. These days, Yu Ziqian had been exploring what it could do and had familiarized himself with the cauldron's artifact soul. Using it as a tool for capture like the orderian cauldrons was a good idea. He recalled that the cauldron could even turn transparent as well as partition its insides into separate battlefields. As such, Yu Ziqian could do some basic crowd control. He could even shrink the cauldron to the size of Yin Chen's bodies.

"Ye Buzhiqiu will definitely pick a quiet place to kill you so that nobody else will find out. We need a place like that for our plans as well. So, let's not waste any more time and look for one!"

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In the north of the Azurecloud Continent were many mist-shrouded mountains. Within the mist was a sea of white clouds, atop which a celestial sanctuary was built. If it weren't for the slow moving speed of this floating island, it would be no different from a miniaturized Divine Sun Palace. Li Haochen stood on the sea of clouds with his brows furrowed, deep in thought. Not far behind him was Li Ruoshi, dressed in white and holding a basket of flowers, and the seductively dressed Long Youyou. It was rare for them to walk in lockstep with each other, but their eyes were filled with worry.

"Come here," Li Haochen said. They hurried over and hugged an arm each, pressing their bodies against him. "Shishi, Youyou, I think my aunt is messing around a little too much. The Myriad Solar Sects only tolerated what happened to the Xuanyuan Dragon Sect because the Veildragon Palace had an excuse. However, Aunt is going around the Azurecloud Continent and killing with no concern at all. That's harder

to justify. She's neither a wargodean nor a member of the Blueblood Starocean, after all. Instead, she's a real deal celestial orderian, my father's sister no less. We're pushing the limits of what the Myriad Solar Sects will tolerate by killing the people from the Azuresoul Palace like that without care."

"So? Are you planning to tell on her to the emperor?" Li Ruoshi asked.

"Yes. Only my father can make her stop. After my loss, I've begun to understand why my father has such strict expectations for me, so I don't want to stay here any longer. However, my aunt won't let me leave. I know I've caused her to lose face to Long Wanying, so she's trying to get back at them," Li Haochen said.

"I heard that when she was young, she did whatever she wanted without holding back because the emperor cared for her a lot. I thought she'd be different now, but turns out it wasn't the case," Long Youyou said, poking her tongue out.

"Make sure you never let her hear you say that," Li Haochen warned.

"Okay!"

"Big Brother Haochen, you just don't want Li Tianming to die by her hand, right?" Li Ruoshi asked.

"That's right. Firstly, he's a disciple of the Sky Palace, so his identity is sensitive. If Aunt does what she wants, it's no different from crossing the line with the Sky Palace and the Myriad Solar Sects. Secondly, if he dies just like that, I'll never be able to conquer my demons for the rest of my life."

"Alright. I feel that her temper is really short, shorter than even most young people's. Perhaps we really should tell the emperor about this," Long Youyou said.

"No, we can't," Li Ruoshi said.

"Why?"

"Big Brother, there's something you have to acknowledge no matter what. The emperor only has one sister, but he's got ten sons. Even your brothers are trying to get on her good side. In other words, she seems to be far more important to the emperor than you are. If you tell on her or offend her, there'll be no future for you, especially with her personality. Don't forget that not even your own mother dares to offend her," Li Ruoshi said with worry.

"Weird.... She's just the emperor's sister, so why is she so cherished? I just don't get it!" Long Youyou said.

"Alright." Li Haochen didn't quite understand why either. No doubt, making a report about this would earn him the scorn of his aunt. He was beginning to feel that she was quite the oddity among the celestial orderians.

"I even heard that Aunt Wushuang has slapped the empress in front of the emperor a few times without even being told off," Li Ruoshi whispered."Really? Who said that?" Li Haochen said, widening his eyes in shock.

"It's in the clan grapevine. When someone's married off, they're always warned to never cross Aunt Wushuang."

Li Haochen grit his teeth. "Fine. My father will surely have eyes of his own somewhere. If she really does something that could draw a lot of trouble and ruin his plans, he'll deal with her himself. I just hope that she doesn't touch Li Tianming."

In actuality, it would be much better to leave the fighting on the continent to the wargodeans, Blueblood Starocean, and the Supracloud Sanctuary. There would be no issue if those in the Myriad Solar Sects were to fight among themselves. However, Li Wushuang doing the killing herself was akin to the celestial orderians showing blatant aggression.

"I heard that she's looking for a helper, but I don't know who," Li Ruoshi said.

"Probably one of her many hopeful suitors. She's not married yet, after all, and anyone that does marry her will instantly rise to the top. There's more than enough people who'd be willing to serve her, enough to form a queue from the Divine Sun Palace all the way to the Voidsky Realm," Li Haochen said, rolling his eyes.

"Aren't those people afraid of getting beaten up? She's really violent, you know," Li Ruoshi said, fearfully patting her chest.

"Oh, like you're so gentle," Long Youyou said.

"You make a lot of noise yourself, you know."

Yet another fight started, so Li Haochen covered his ears to tune it out.

### **Chapter 1352 - First Humiliation Since Antiquity**

In the past few days, word of Tianming's gang defeating the top three celestial orderian youths, including the sun emperor's son, had spread throughout Orderia. The Myriad Solar Sects' morale was greatly boosted, while countless celestial orderians cursed Li Haochen for causing them to suffer humiliation. Some even called it the first humiliation their race had received since antiquity.

Li Haochen knew that if he returned now, he would only constantly be blamed. The celestial orderians tolerated no failures or setbacks. The consequences of the event were already brewing, but they couldn't be felt yet. When they were finally ready to burst, there would be endless chaos.

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Tianming, Long Wanying, Yan Nuxia, Yu Ziqian, and Jiang Qingliu had gone to the Greatriver Valley in advance to make plans. That part of the divine tree was producing the most divine herbs so far. In the cities controlled by the Azuresoul Palace, there were about three hundred thousand cultivators in total. They were all harvesting the fruits alongside their lifebound beasts and transporting them back to the sect. The divine herbs ranged from grade one to the occasional six.

For now, the Supracloud Sanctuary and Azuresoul Palace stuck to picking the fruits at their own borders. Border skirmishes happened all too often, with people dying at every moment. However, no large-scale conflict like the one that almost happened over the grade-eight divine herb had occurred yet, though it was only a matter of time for the grievances from small skirmishes to accumulate to a boiling point. With how widespread the skirmishes were, there was little Tianming could do about it.

"There's only one way to prevent death on a large scale on the continent. We have to make the Supracloud Sanctuary and Azuresoul Palace evenly split the fruits." However, Tianming didn't think that could be achieved, at least not before he executed the first phase of his plan. There were still many uncertainties with the bonegnaw ants, so he had to succeed in the first phase before considering other things.

"Actually, as long as not too much of the total harvest is taken by outsiders, the divine tree should produce more than enough resources for both sects."

The Azurecloud Divine Tree was considered an amplifier of the nova source the continent received, in a sense. However, the sects themselves only got around a tenth of the harvest thanks to outsiders coming in to help. It wasn't easy to imagine how many benefits this continent-spanning tree would afford the two sects if the fruits of the harvests weren't always taken by meddling outsiders.

"The Azurecloud Continent must be united through cooperation from both sides for them to be powerful enough to receive the share that they deserve." These were the foundations of Tianming's ambitions.

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When they arrived, Tianming scattered Yin Chen around the places where the divine tree stretched. The little eggs turned into nearly a million invisible cockroaches and spread out. Now the entire place was under his control. They had come rather early; it was another six hours before Ye Buzhiqiu showed up to deploy the Singularity Atlas before going back to depart with the other swordpupils.

"I bet he'd never expect that we know everything he's doing," Yu Ziqian said.

"Yeah!" Jiang Qingliu's expression was calm.

Two hours later, Ye Buzhiqiu finished setting up the atlas. Dusting off his hands with satisfaction, he smiled and left.

"I have to say, the place he picked is rather good. This valley is surrounded by cliffs on both sides and there's a ridge down to an abyss at the rear. The only entrance is the dense forest ahead. Once the illusion formation is deployed and you enter it with him, the sounds of battle will have a hard time spreading out. There aren't any divine tree branches here, either, so nobody's standing guard," Long Wanying said.

"How is it, Ziqian?" Jiang Qingliu asked after he nodded his agreement.

"It's fine. The cauldron can expand a lot. We'll bury the lid in the ground first. When the time comes, we'll drop the cauldron from the top of a mountain to seal off these two cliffs and the atlas itself. He'll be a sitting duck. Though, we have to note the energy I have. I can only cut off the noise of battle at most. If Ye Buzhiqiu breaks out of the lid, I'll lose control, so you can't give him any chances."

"Alright. It's only Ye Buzhiqiu alone, after all. He wouldn't even be able to move when faced with all three of us," Yan Nuxia nonchalantly said. She was from a first-rate sect, like Long Wanying. The only ones she had to be careful of were people on Gujian Qingshuang's level. "We must settle it as quickly as possible. I can already see the look on his face when he realizes he's trapped."

Though Jiang Qingliu looked calm the entire time, he was mentally prepared to go all out. He had seen every expression, every smile of glee on Ye Buzhiqiu's face as he deployed the Singularity Atlas, and every time, he felt a blow to his heart. This was a straight-out betrayal.

"Master, don't overthink this. You're just slaughtering a chicken," Yu Ziqian said as he tapped his master's shoulder.

"I only hope for the time to come sooner," Jiang Qingliu said. After that, he returned to the Azuresoul Sword Mountain alone while Tianming and the rest finished the rest of the preparations. It would take another hour for all of it to be done. After that, all that would be left was waiting.

Long Wanying and Yan Nuxia would hide somewhere near the atlas while Tianming and Yu Ziqian waited at the valley's two peaks, holding their breaths. Two days later, Yin Chen reported that Ye Buzhiqiu and Jiang Qingliu had arrived with about ten thousand swordpupils. Their group was spread out, thanks to the threat of Li Wushuang. Even Ye Buzhiqiu and Jiang Qingliu had come alone to the rendezvous point. After that, they began quietly picking the divine herbs and stationing secret guards to keep watch.

A day later, Tianming saw Ye Buzhiqiu bringing Jiang Qingliu toward the atlas. "They're almost here. Get ready!"

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The black-robed Jiang Qingliu listlessly watched the yellow figure ahead of him. Ye Buzhiqiu's hair was neatly combed together and his silhouette as he walked through the forest was long and slender like a sword.

"Come on, what's with all the mystery? Why're you asking me to come with you?" Jiang Qingliu asked.

"Don't ask so many questions. I already told you that the chief instructor wanted you to follow me," he said, turning around and giving him an annoyed look.

"I mean, if it's some kind of mission, you should at least tell me what it is beforehand, right?" Jiang Qingliu said meekly.

"If you don't want to come, you don't have to. Just stay away from me and don't get in my way. Why would I need to tell an old fogey like you everything? Follow if you want, and do what I say instead of mumbling and complaining the whole time." That was the usual attitude Ye Buzhiqiu had when he dealt with Jiang Qingliu and he didn't dare to act any differently. If he was too polite, Jiang Qingliu might suspect that something was off.

"Fine!" Jiang Qingliu helplessly shook his head, though he still followed with a heavy heart.

Ye Buzhiqiu looked at him and thought, how could the Azuresoul Tower choose someone so meek that lets others boss him around like this? Is the artifact soul of the tower getting senile or something?

### **Chapter 1353 - Gurgle Gurgle**

Though Ye Buzhiqiu said that, he actually felt much more relaxed. The more Jiang Qingliu let himself get pushed around, the more he felt his ego growing. Jiang Qingliu had lived like that for centuries, and it wasn't the first time he had been ordered around like that. Ye Buzhiqiu didn't believe that his little

outburst would be enough to scare Jiang Qingliu into not entering the range of the Singularity Atlas with him.

"It worked." He wasn't the least bit surprised. He couldn't hold back and started laughing, all the while not turning back inside the deep forest. His body shook with the laughter of mockery, joy, and insult. He opened his flask and took a large swig of fine wine brewed from top-tier divine herbs, then turned to Jiang Qingliu and smiled. However, he didn't swallow the wine and instead spat it out.

"What're you laughing at, Ye Buzhiqiu?" Jiang Qingliu asked, feigning ignorance.

"Heavens, have you not noticed yet?" Ye Buzhiqiu said in an exaggerated fashion.

"Noticed what?"

"The Singularity Atlas, of course! Look around you, fool!"

"Huh?" Jiang Qingliu looked around and noticed that he was indeed trapped inside a dense forest formation. Even the sky was covered in some illusory fog. After he tried flying up, he found himself dropped into another forest. The Singularity Atlas could generate an illusory forest formation layered tens of thousand times on top of itself, making it so that those within couldn't break out with brute force no matter what.

"Congratulations on becoming the new leader of House Dongye. I see that your uncle has passed it down to you. How impressive," Jiang Qingliu said.

Ye Buzhiqiu was completely stunned to hear that. "How stupid must you be if that's your takeaway from it? Don't you know that you'll die soon?"

"Die? Are you joking? There aren't any enemies here."

"No enemies?" Ye Buzhiqiu almost fell over from the laughter as he pointed his sword at Jiang Qingliu. "I want to use the Singularity Atlas to kill you. Do you still not get it?"

"What did you say?!" Jiang Qingliu pretended to sound shocked.

"Forget it... why do I bother? Just die in ignorance."

"Please don't. I'd prefer to die enlightened," Jiang Qingliu said with a sudden chuckle.

"Hehe..." Ye Buzhiqiu thought that it was only a waste of breath to talk to such a fool. "No wonder you were crippled at the age of thirty. It seems like you were also mentally crippled as well." He immediately struck after his insult.

"Really? Are you sure?" Jiang Qingliu smiled.

"Huh?" This was the first time Ye Buzhiqiu found himself stunned. He didn't believe what he saw. "Are you smiling?"

"Yeah, I'm celebrating a new lease in life. Looks like this chapter of my life's going to have an exciting start."

"You're insane! Just die already, you mental invalid!"

"You're the invalid." While Ye Buzhiqiu was still puzzling it over, Jiang Qingliu pointed above. "I'm sure you can vaguely see it. The Divine Worldeater Cauldron, I mean."

"Huh?" Ye Buzhiqiu could see outside through the atlas and noticed nothing but pitch darkness around both mountains. That couldn't be! There was no nighttime in Orderia, so something must have been blocking out the light. It couldn't be anything other than the cauldron!

"What's this?" His expression changed as he felt something was off. The entire illusion formation began rapidly shaking, as if it was going to crumble. "Someone's attacking the Singularity Atlas from the outside!"

Ye Buzhiqiu's heart skipped a beat. That was the atlas's weakness. It was resistant from within, but exactly the opposite from without! Eventually, it began cracking, then completely shattered before his eyes.

"Don't think I'll let you leave!"

Ye Buzhiqiu turned to run, only to stop when he felt a chill. He saw the two women whose statuses were far above his own in the sky, coldly glaring at him. Within the cauldron were the Whitedragon Empress and Yan Nuxia! It was a setup, alright, but he was the prey! He was shaken to the core.

"Impossible! How dare you plot against me?! What're you planning?!" Ye Buzhiqiu snapped. Though he tried to sound threatening, his legs were actually shaking.

"What are we planning? I was thinking we should start by whipping you," Jiang Qingliu said.

"You wouldn't dare, not you! My dad and the chief instructor will immediately come here. You'll pay for messing with me like this!"

"Don't even bother trying to bluff. They're waiting at the Azuresoul Sword Mountain for you to bring the Azuresoul Tower back to them."

"You... you know everything?" He drew a cold breath, just now realizing that all his boasting from before was nothing but a court jester's act. He couldn't figure out where it had gone wrong.

"Of course we do! Ye Buzhiqiu, you've picked on me for long enough!" Jiang Qingliu said gleefully.

"Do it," Long Wanying said.

"Ugh!" A chill shot toward Ye Buzhiqiu's head from his feet.

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Tianming and Yu Ziqian sat on what appeared to be nothing above the valley. It was actually the cauldron, but it was in its invisible form. Without getting close enough, nobody would be able to see it. Ye Buzhiqiu had intentionally picked a quiet place far away, after all, and with these two standing guard, there shouldn't be a problem.

Then the first rumble came from inside the cauldron. "Boss, won't you go in to take a look?" Yu Ziqian asked.

"There's no need. Your master and his Azuresoul Tower should be more than enough to deal with him, not to mention we have two goddesses backing him up," Tianming said.

People often said that Long Wanying was a late bloomer, referring to the fact that she had only grown powerful by focusing on nothing but cultivation after her husband died. Eventually, she broke through multiple barriers and rose to the position of the Whitedragon Empress.

As expected, the commotion soon stopped. Right now, Ye Buzhiqiu was probably powerless to move or resist. Tianming was playing around with a few silver eggs in his hand when they suddenly burst into tens of thousands of ants and crawled all around Tianming, making for quite the ghastly sight.

"That lifebound beast of yours is a monster if I've ever seen one," Yu Ziqian said.

"Hah, and it's just in its early form. You haven't seen what it can become yet," Tianming said.

"Yeah. Relying on it alone, we're able to control the entire continent. It's influential indeed. At the very least, we can't let these shortsighted people cut the divine tree down."

"Let's take things step by step and make sure we don't make any mistakes along the way." What they were attempting to do was incredibly bold and risky.

Some fifteen minutes later, Long Wanying called out to them. "Tianming, come in."

With how quiet it was inside the cauldron, it seemed that they had succeeded. Yu Ziqian opened the lid and let Tianming in. Tianming found himself in a dark area and spotted some destroyed plants nearby. They were plant-species lifebound beasts that looked a little like maple trees, all of them huddled in a corner and suppressed by two azuresky qilins.

On the other side was the Azuresoul Tower. It looked a little like the Azuresoul Sword Mountain, almost like a conical sword of sorts, and it could also be used as such. Though it looked slightly weaker than the Lifesteal Silverdragon, it was already a pretty decent divine artifact. Jiang Qingliu, Yan Nuxia, and Long Wanying stood beside the tower, completely subduing Ye Buzhiqiu.

"Over here," Long Wanying said, waving Tianming over.

"On it." He approached and saw a head peeking out from beneath the tower. He looked weak and at his last breath, seemingly having been badly tortured. He couldn't even move a single finger, thanks to the tower.

"Hey," Tianming called out.

Ye Buzhiqiu blinked blankly a few times before noticing Tianming. "You...." He suddenly shuddered. Doubtfully, he said, "Just kill me if you dare! Why bring a child here? To humiliate me?"

"That's right. I have some young piss for you to drink. Thirsty?" Tianming said.

"Fuck off!" Ye Buzhiqiu continued struggling, his face flushed from the effort.

"I'm just joking. I have something else for you to drink instead." Tianming squatted down in front of him.

"Get away from me, you mongrel!" Ye Buzhiqiu tried to use his glare and aura to suppress Tianming, but to no avail. Tianming took out a silver egg that turned into a swarm of ants. "What is this?!!"



"Now, you'd better do what I say." Tianming held Ye Buzhiqiu's mouth open and let the ants crawl into it like a stream of water.

"Uuugggh!" He cried and struggled, his eyes filled with despair.

"Don't panic. You won't die from this, but you'll have to suffer a bit today. I need to teach you the consequences of disobeying me. It isn't the kind of pain that'll kill you, but it'll make you shudder every time you hear my voice."

Tianming pulled out a few more eggs and poured them into his mouth. The third and fourth forced him to swallow them down, and Ye Buzhiqiu's eyes widened as his body twitched.

### **Chapter 1354 - Crimes Deserving of Death**

Every single egg could turn into ten thousand bonegnaw ants. While they were rather weak individually, and could be vaporized by astralforce, Ye Buzhiqiu was completely suppressed by the Azuresoul Tower and covered in injuries, both external and internal. A lot of his albi had been crushed, along with his will, so he had really low resistance to anything. Even so, it would still be much more difficult for Tianming to let the ants conquer his body than to kill him. Even the astralforce from his teeth and throat alone had eradicated almost all of the ants.

Tianming was only testing them out. When he was more or less certain of how strong the ants were, he cut open a piece of Ye Buzhiqiu's skull and let the ants directly invade from the opening of the bone. They began gnawing their way inside, causing Ye Buzhiqiu to howl in utter agony. His eyes were so wide that his eyeballs were about to pop out. Veins surfaced all over his body from the fierce, involuntary twitches.

"No! No!" However, his cries proved useless. Tianming coldly guided the tens of thousands of ants to enter his body. Even though Ye Buzhiqiu could vaporize many of them, they numbered far too many. Tianming had close to a hundred million of them, and if even one percent successfully made a nest in his bones, they could survive and multiply from the inside. Fortunately, the Divine Worldeater Cauldron kept the cries isolated.

"Please, I beg you, just kill me! Kill me!" He was yelling so hard that he began retching. The army of ants burrowed their way through his bones and spread to his chest, spine, and finally the bones in his limbs. Tianming mentioned one hour to be an optimistic estimate, but with how hard Ye Buzhiqiu was resisting, it took a whole two hours for a hundred thousand bonegnaw ants to infest his body. Then, just to be safe, he let the ants continue infesting him until they reached a million in number, taking up a whole day. He didn't look any different on the surface, but every single bone of his body was now filled with parasitic ants, though they only seemed to reinforce his skeleton rather than weakening it.

"It's over!" The ants stopped moving and laid dormant within. As long as Ye Buzhiqiu was obedient, he wouldn't even be able to feel them. However, the pain from the parasitization process was something he would never forget even after a few lifetimes. A million ants was equivalent to a hundred silver eggs, but quite a few of them had been eradicated in the process, so Tianming had actually used up to ten thousand eggs.

"Release the Azuresoul Tower now," Tianming said, stepping back to join Long Wanying and the rest. They all looked at their unconscious victim. "There's nothing too special about the infestation. We'll see how terrified of it he is when he wakes up." Would he really do their bidding?

"I think it should be fine," Long Wanying said, still feeling a little pensive. The thought of how it felt when the ants had infested her, and seeing the horrible experience Ye Buzhiqiu had gone through, was making her shudder. Even Jiang Qingliu and Yan Nuxia couldn't help but nod and closely look at Tianming time and again. They found that they really couldn't consider him a junior in his twenties anymore. While they had no doubt contributed much to do this, Tianming had been the core of their plan.

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Ye Buzhiqiu's fingers twitched, a sign that he was waking up. He gagged and snapped his eyes open as if he'd just had a terrifying nightmare. Soon, he recalled what had happened and glared at Tianming. "What did you put in my bones?!"

"Some of my lifebound beast's brood. They're bonegnaw ants and there are a million of them lying dormant in your bones. You won't be able to kill them, but they can kill you at any time. They can also let you experience the sensation you experienced just now over and over again, as many times as they want," Tianming said.

Being reminded of that alone was enough to make him shiver in terror, and all the while, Tianming explained what the ants could do in great detail. Ye Buzhiqiu knew from personal experience that he wasn't joking around.

"But the good news is that, as long as you serve me obediently, you'll never have to experience that kind of pain. What you had a taste of just now was the bare minimum I needed to make it work. I can make it a hundred times more painful right now. Do you want to know what that feels like?" Tianming held a silver egg in his hand, which split into ten thousand ants that crawled all over his body and face. Their little black eyes looked incredibly sinister, making Tianming look like an otherworldly demon.

"You animal!" Ye Buzhiqiu snapped. He'd thought that it had all just been a dream. How could his perfect plan of luring Jiang Qingliu into the Singularity Atlas have been foiled just like that? He had instantly fallen to rock bottom, which caused him to be in a bit of denial.

"I ask again. Want to give it a try?"

"Your foolish actions will earn you nothing short of death! Jiang Qingliu, you betrayed your sect and allied with the enemy. You deserve to die—AAHHH!" He suddenly cried out and every inch of his body, even his fingers, shook, causing him to involuntarily contort. His shrill cries caused the others to feel a tingle in their scalp.

"Stop..." he weakly said, completely despairing. Even after Tianming had the ants stop, he remained slumped on the ground, sobbing. "Did that feel good? After all that pain, you should know that this is no dream. This is reality, your reality for the rest of your life. You only have one choice: accept it." Tianming's voice resounded throughout the cauldron. Within it, Ye Buzhiqiu couldn't even send out a transmission stone.

Crying, he looked up at the white-haired youth, easily the most terrifying of all of them there. That gaze of his made Ye Buzhiqiu understand that it was no coincidence that he had become a Sky Palace disciple. "Are you going to make me serve you with this method?"

"If you're optimistic, you can even call it cooperation. I'm not someone who mistreats my pets, you see," Tianming said.

"Dream on! I can kill myself and foil your plans!" he roared.

Tianming looked at Long Wanying and couldn't help but laugh. "Alright, if you're going to do it, you'd better be quick about it. We'll just find someone else. I'm sure we can lure your father in with the Singularity Atlas. I doubt he'll be as stubborn as you are." Tianming's nonchalance about the entire thing only made Ye Buzhiqiu despair even more. "Ye Buzhiqiu, the fact that you threatened us with killing yourself convinced us that you won't actually do it. If you actually wanted to kill yourself, you would've pretended to serve us and gone back to the Azuresoul Sword Mountain to tell Gujian Qingshuang about the bonegnaw ants before you made your heroic sacrifice. Otherwise, there wouldn't be a point, right?"

Ye Buzhiqiu blanked out. He was no fool himself, but the circumstances and his panicking had caused him to mess up. Tianming was right that if he really wanted to end his own life, he wouldn't have boasted about it.

Tianming continued, "If you choose to tell on us, I'd like to see whether you can do it before you die. I promise that the bonegnaw ants can kill you before you even finish three words or write them down. Do you know why? The ants in your body are part of my lifebound beast. Aside from your thoughts, I know everything you see, hear, and even do. I can even spot your secret signals. You can keep no secrets from me and you'll never be able to get rid of the ants that now live in your bones!" That was a terrifying prospect indeed. Not only had Ye Buzhiqiu been parasitized, but he also had to live knowing full well that he was being constantly monitored, even down to the most private of moments.

### **Chapter 1355 - Submission**

"Naturally, the same still stands. As long as you're cooperative, your life will be completely unaffected. Don't threaten me or do anything unnecessary and I won't interfere with what you choose to do when it comes to your own affairs. I'll respect your freedom," Tianming said.

Ye Buzhiqiu fell silent in thought. "How am I to trust your word on that?"

"Only time will tell. The moment you think I'm not keeping my promise, feel free to kill yourself. Actually, you know my intentions. All I want is to control you, not harm you." Tianming sprinkled a little bit of hope.

"So what do you want me to do?" Ye Buzhiqiu said, obviously having relented to his fate.

"Before we talk about that, let it be made clear that you were the one who plotted to harm my master first, got it? I was only striking back. You are by no means innocent and this is merely payback, understood?"

"Alright, fine. It isn't important anymore. The fact is you've succeeded. So how do you plan to use me?"

"I'll be straight with you then. My goal is Gujian Qingshuang. I will use the same method to control him. After that, I'll control the entire Azurecloud Continent."

"Are you insane? Don't you know how deep his power runs? And you dare to plot against him?"

"Let's make it clear. The two of you worked together to harm my master and take the Azuresoul Tower. That forced my hand. I wouldn't have chosen this path, otherwise." Even though Jiang Qingliu wasn't really his master, he was indeed Yu Ziqian's master, and that made no difference to Tianming.

"You even know about that?" Ye Buzhiqiu said, shocked.

"That's right."

"You have a mole planted among us. Who is it?" He had no idea it was actually an invisible cockroach and thought it was somebody. "That damn Granny Mu Hua, how dare she betray the chief instructor? She deserves to die!"

Tianming didn't plan to tell him the truth and kept him guessing. Perhaps he might even think that she'd fallen to Tianming's bonegnaw ants before he had. "What kind of sick lifebound beast is that..." He despaired as he looked at Jiang Qingliu. "You... even though the Azuresoul Tower greatly benefited you, you're actually acting against the sect! You shame the souls of our forebears!"

"Enough drivel," Tianming said.

Ye Buzhiqiu's paranoia eventually simmered down. When he was finally calm, he asked, "Fine, it's true that the chief instructor and I had plotted to kill Jiang Qingliu and take the Azuresoul Tower. Now, tell me why you want to control the chief instructor and the sect."

"Let me explain it to you then," Tianming said, not the slightest bit afraid of the man before him.

"I'm listening."

Tianming paid close attention to his eyes. "Initially, my plan was to consider the chief instructor one of my allies. That way, things would go more smoothly for me. It's too bad that he intentionally distanced himself from me and tried taking my master's life. That would put me in a far too passive position in the long term, so I decided to take action first. After controlling the chief instructor, I'll look for a chance to get Yun Tianque to submit and control the Supracloud Sanctuary as well. That way, the continent will be united under one banner. The new faction will have enough power to drive out the wargodeans, Blueblood Starocean, and the Emyrean Sword Sect. Even if we only get half of the harvest of the divine tree, that'll still greatly increase the power of those on this continent. From then on, we can protect the divine tree ourselves and ignore the outsiders' demands!"

Only then could Tianming build his foundations on the continent and rise up from there; it was a proactive attack plan. "Let me emphasize that I'm doing this for the good of the continent. Both the chief instructor and Yun Tianque stand to gain from this if it works out. They'll only be subject to the same conditions as you. As long as they don't betray me, they'll be free to live their lives as they please."

The main reason they had always lost so much of the harvest to outsiders was because of the fundamental conflict between the two main sects of the continent. If they stood united, instead of fighting internally and enlisting outside help, each of their shares of the harvest would be far more than

what outsiders would be willing to give them. Even if they didn't unite on the surface, it was enough for them to stand united against the outsiders when it came to the divine tree's harvest. Ye Buzhiqiu knew that train of thought fully well, but he couldn't have ever imagined that there would come a day when somebody could control the leaders of these two sects.

"That's nothing but a pipe dream. You won't succeed! If you could, someone else would've done it long ago. You're just an immature brat. Who put you up to this? Long Wanying? The Xuanyuan Dragon Sect?!" he spat angrily. He was never going to believe that a child could come up with something like this, let alone have the will to go through with it. Tianming had spoken as if he was the sole mastermind of this plan, but that sounded impossible.

"Ye Buzhiqiu, whether or not I can succeed is none of your business. All I need is for you to do what I tell you to. Lure Gujian Qingshuang over when the time is right. You'll see whether we succeed or not." If that worked out, his plan would have succeeded halfway. He wasn't worried about Ye Buzhiqiu snitching, since the ants wouldn't give him a chance to. "Do you know why I'm telling you all of this in so much detail?"

"Because you're not afraid I'll be able to leak it."

"Nope! I'm extending a sincere invitation to join my project of protecting this continent. I want you to know that everything I ask you to do has a purpose! If it works out, you can be proud of yourself for having contributed to this grand effort. Even though you've been controlled and are being forced into it for now, you won't lose out on anything, I promise," Tianming said, trying to brainwash him more.

Ye Buzhiqiu kept quiet. There was no way he could bring himself to believe Tianming's rhetoric. "I figured it out. Only you can think of something so idealistic and naive. It stinks of childishness. What's even more laughable is that the three of you are part of Li Tianming's crazy charade! Just you wait. You'll know how much pain you're in for when the time comes."

"If we lose, you lose too. I'm sure you won't be the one to have the last laugh," Tianming said. Ye Buzhiqiu had been forced to board his boat and there was no turning back now. "Tell your father that my master didn't fall for your trap and you're still figuring out a way to lure him into the Singularity Atlas. Use that time to heal yourself and wait for further instructions.

Ye Buzhiqiu took a deep breath and said, "Alright." He had finally submitted for real. Tianming's vision was still fresh in his mind, and now he couldn't tell whether it was childish or insane.

### **Chapter 1356 - Something Has Happened To Wanwan**

"It'll be fine, won't it?" Jiang Qingliu asked.

"Nothing will happen." Tianming replied. There were millions of bonegnaw ants in Ye Buzhiqiu's body. Even if he took a breath, Tianming would know. The ants were formidable, and even with the current distance between them, Tianming could easily speak to Ye Buzhiqiu through Yin Chen. He wanted to find an opportunity to return to the Flameyellow Continent and leave a few of Yin Chen's bodies to see if he could communicate with Li Caiwei and Xuanyuan Dao in real time. It would be even better if he could place a few with Qingyu.

"Should we pull Ye Dongliu to our side if we have the chance?" Yan Nuxia asked.

"Sure. He's old, and about as strong as his son, but he doesn't have the Singularity Atlas. Dealing with him will be easy. They might be the two people of the House of Dongye that're the most hostile towards us, but we'll get them to join us. Gujian Qingshuang will be the only one left and there isn't much one man can do," said Long Wanying.

Granny Mu Hua was even less of a problem.

"Senior Jiang, do you feel like you're betraying the Azuresoul Palace doing this?" Tianming asked.

"A little." Jiang Qingliu bitterly smiled.

"That isn't necessarily true. The Azuresoul Palace belongs to all swordpupils. As long as it continues serving the people and its swordpupils, it doesn't matter who's leading. We just want to bring Gujian Qingshuang over to our camp with the most reliable approach. Our ultimate goal is to deal with the Supracloud Sanctuary. If you still feel guilty after everything, I can remove the bonegnaw ants. It's all just a matter of intention. And don't forget that he's tried to kill you at least ten times," said Tianming.

"I understand! You might be young, but you're clearheaded. Ziqian's a complete dimwit compared to you." Jiang Qingliu said.

"What?! Why are you dragging me into this?" Squeezing Jiang Qingliu's shoulders, Yu Ziqian said, "Let me tell you something, old man. Stop being so emotional. I suggest you suppress Gujian Qingshuang, given the opportunity, and rule over the entire sect!"

"That's enough nonsense. The Azuresoul Palace will always belong to the Gujian clan," said Jiang Qingliu.

"If it weren't for us, the Azuresoul Palace would belong to the House of Dongye. Yu Ziqian rolled his eyes. But that was a tale for another time. As long as they were able to think clearly, there wouldn't be any problems.

"Aunt Ying, can we use what we did today to deal with Gujian Qingshuang?" Tianming asked.

"I'd say we'd have a sixty percent chance of succeeding. He's pretty strong and has a few cards up his sleeve. It'll be harder than killing him. Moreover, Ziqian has limited control over the Divine Worlddeater Cauldron. It won't be easy if he escapes and returns to the sect. We would be shedding all pretenses of cordiality. This matter must remain hidden until we take down Yun Tianque."

"Sixty percent is still too risky." Tianming frowned.

"Tianming, didn't the Saintdragon Emperor say he'd give you three six-star universal manna? I think an acquaintance of mine will be the one delivering them. Although he isn't one of the dragon imperials, he's considered a guest official. He's stronger than me. With him, Tangerine, me, and Jiang Qingliu's Azuresoul Tower, we'll have an eighty percent chance," said Long Wanying.

"Can you trust him?" Tianming asked.

"Of course. He's pursued her for hundreds of years, and even joined the Xuanyuan Dragon Sect just for her. In the end, the heartless woman married Long Junxuan and had a child with him," Yan Nuxia laughed.

"That's nonsense. I was with Junxuan before he came," Long Wanying angrily said.

"I'm just kidding. Anyway, you can trust him." Yan Nuxia smiled.

"Alright, we'll wait for him to get here," Tianming decided.

With Long Wanying around, Tianming could accomplish a lot. Her connections were extremely important to him. Most importantly, people thought Tianming naive, willful, and whimsical, yet Long Wanying had firmly supported him from the very beginning. Her vision and courage were the reasons Tianming was willing to respect and care for her.

"Our next step is extremely important. We mustn't make a mistake!"

"What about the Supracloud Sanctuary?" Long Wanying asked.

"When I fought Li Haochen, I placed several cockroaches on the Supracloud Sanctuary cultivators' lifebound beasts. The cockroaches followed them back, but their numbers aren't enough for me to monitor Yun Tianque's actions, for the time being," Tianming explained.

"There aren't enough metal veins," said Long Wanying.

"The House of Dongye seems to have a few exclusive metal veins that aren't under the control of the Azuresoul Palace. With Ye Buzhiqiu on our side, we may be able to use them. But how will he explain it to Ye Dongliu?" Jiang Qingliu asked.

"There's no need to explain anything. If we take down Ye Dongliu, I can also expand the range of surveillance over the Supracloud Sanctuary." Tianming said.

Upon hearing that, the three sighed.

"What is it?" It was rare to hear all three of them sigh together.

"I have to say, your lifebound beasts are simply... miracles. Anyway, they've opened my eyes. I stand in awe," said Long Wanying.

"You'll get... used to... it it," the metal ants in Tianming's hand said in unison.

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Gujian Qingshuang, Shi Yan, Granny Mu Hua, and Ye Dongliu were gathered in the Driftsword Halls.

"Nothing's happened? It's been a few days," Gujian Qingshuang asked.

"I just received a transmission stone. Buzhiqiu says that Jiang Qingliu has been cautious. He hasn't been able to draw him to the location of the Singularity Atlas and is still looking for an opportunity to do so," Ye Dongliu replied.

Gujian Qingshuang nodded. After a brief pause, he said, "Uncle Ye, it's rather risky for Buzhiqiu to work alone. How about you hide within the atlas? When the time comes, both of you can join hands to slay Jiang Qingliu."

"There's no need for that. Buzhiqiu wants to take the credit alone. He's assured me that he'll complete the task and asked that I don't get in his way... I'm getting old!" Ye Donghua sighed.

"The apple doesn't fall far from the tree. Ye Buzhiqiu is indeed talented," Shi Yan added.

Upon further contemplation, Gujian Qingshuang said, "To be on the safe side, I think it's best you go as well. I will arrange for someone to guard the grade-six divine herbs."

"Alright, I'll leave right away." Ye Dongliu rose to his feet. He knew that Gujian Qingshuang was a little anxious. Being a proud man, it wasn't unusual for Ye Buzhiqiu to reject Ye Dongliu's help; however, proud people were often prone to mistakes.

It was obvious that Gujian Qingshuang wanted to raise the stakes before Jiang Qingliu took the bait. In fact, it was the Dongye house who had proposed they kill Jiang Qingliu, but Gujian Qingshuang was the anxious one and wanted a foolproof plan.

"Don't worry, Head Instructor. I'll bring back the Azuresoul Tower!"

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Naturally, their discussion couldn't escape Yin Chen's ears. The moment Ye Dongliu set off, Tianming invited Ye Buzhiqiu over. Due to his injuries, Ye Buzhiqiu couldn't lure Ye Dongliu over, but he never expected his father would walk into the trap on his own accord.

"You have yet to heal, but your father is coming to see you now. You can't explain your injuries, so I have no choice but to involve him. Is there anything wrong with that?" Tianming asked.

"Do I have the right to refuse?" Ye Buzhiqiu grit his teeth.

All he had to do was rearrange the atlas back to how it was before. He didn't care if his father was involved. The man had schemed to steal the atlas from his father; his actions were proof of how selfish and arrogant he was. Now that he was desperate, he couldn't care less for his father.

"Don't worry, I won't let him suffer as much. Make sure you persuade him," Tianming said.

"Yes."

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Tianming felt like he was fishing. He watched as the big fish entered his fishing net. Ye Dongliu had walked right into the trap. This time was easier than the last. Because he was older, his bones were looser so the bonegnaw ants had an even easier time invading his body. Keeping to his promise, Tianming had Ye Dongliu suffer less, then repeated the conversation he'd had with Ye Buzhiqiu.

With tears in his eyes, Ye Dongliu looked at his son. "You knew I was walking into a trap and didn't tell me? You bastard!" Ye Dongliu was about to die of anger.

"Father, there was nothing I could do. I'm too young to die. How can I sacrifice my life just to warn you?" said Ye Buzhiqiu.

"You lowlife scum!" Ye Dongliu was consumed by the desire to kill his son.

"It was your idea to use the atlas. Now look at what happened! We might as well wait for death together!" Ye Dongliu resentfully glared at Tianming and the others.

"Father, that's enough demoralizing talk. Why should we die? Instead, let's follow them and create a new era in the Azurecloud Continent!" Ye Buzhiqiu retorted.



"Fuck your new era!" It seemed as though both father and son were on the verge of violence. "You bastard, giving birth to you was no different from giving birth to feces!" Ye Dongliu continued cursing.

"Alright, that's enough. Stop arguing and give me your answer. Do you choose to live or die?" Tianming asked.

"Live," Ye Dongliu grunted. The older he got, the easier it was for him to accept reality. He had experienced the pain inflicted by the nightmarish bonegnaw ants, and this Sky Palace disciple was just as terrifying.

"Alright... first things first, take me to House of Dongye's metal veins."

Ye Dongliu respectfully stood up.

Ye Buzhiqiu leaned in and said, "Father, you bowed so quickly. At least I resisted for a while."

"Scram!"

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There were three metal veins in total, containing enough metal to give Yin Chen an additional two hundred thousand bodies. Tianming tossed tens of thousands of silver eggs into the metal veins; Yin Chen could multiply on its own. Then, they would wait for Long Wanying's helper.

During that period of time, Tianming entered the wondersky realm to cultivate. As soon as he arrived outside the Violetglory Pagoda, a girl dressed in orange ran up to him. It was Liu Xuanxuan, who had once been defeated by Tianming in the Violetcloud Battlefield.

"Lin Feng! Something has happened to Liu Wanwan!" she cried.

### **Chapter 1357 - The Redcloak Ghosts**

"Something happened?" Tianming froze.

When he realized that his amazing performance in the Violetcloud Battlefield might lead to trouble for Liu Wanwan, he had temporarily cut off contact with her. The Violetglory Star was a world divided in two between the Divineglory Dynasty and Violetcloud Imperium. With that kind of structure, the three top ten disciples of the Violetglory ranking who had no backers at all would indeed attract everyone's attention. They were extremely eye-catching.

"What happened?" Tianming asked.

"When she first disappeared, we couldn't find her even if we looked everywhere. Then Ni Hongyi, a grade-seven assassin of the Redcloak Ghost, said that Wanwan was in her hands. She made an announcement, calling you to Qianyuan Imperial City within the Deepwind Continent, or Wanwan dies!" Liu Xuanxuan said anxiously. Although there was conflict in the family, she was worried for her cousin when it involved life and death.

"Who're the Redcloak Ghosts?" It was as Tianming expected. He knew he had to calm down.

"A very powerful assassin organization.... If you think of them as a sect, they're equivalent to one of the top ten forces," said Liu Xuanxuan.

"Are they loyal to the Divineglory Dynasty or Violetcloud Imperium?" Tianming asked.

"Neither. They don't have dealings with anyone. They don't even have a gate or rule over a territory. Their lives are hidden and they come and go without a trace, taking whatever they lack." Liu Xuanxuan shook her head. As an outsider, Tianming knew little about the Violetglory Star.

"A top assassin organization captured Wanwan to force me to show myself?" There was trouble afoot.

"Yes! Lin Feng, you must save Wanwan. This matter involves you. It has nothing to do with her." Liu Xuanxuan's eyes turned red.

"Don't worry, let me think." Tianming pondered the matter. Although it sounded simple, there were quite a few mysteries to it. Logically speaking, the Divineglory Dynasty and Violetcloud Imperium were the only ones capable of such a feat. Now that the Redcloak Ghosts were mixed up in all this, who did they serve? More importantly, Liu Wanwan was only a small fry in the face of this kind of power struggle. Her relationship with Tianming wasn't that good, either. At most, they could be considered friends who had met by chance. In reality, they were too far apart. She almost seemed a little illusory to him.

The smart thing to do was ignore the matter, but there was one problem. No matter how unimportant their relationship was, he felt uncomfortable at the thought of a young woman hundreds of millions of miles away, kidnapped, imprisoned, and waiting to die because of him. That would always be his debt. He had underestimated the turmoil caused by him joining the top ten on the Violetglory ranking. They might have chosen to deal with Liu Wanwan because she was the only person Tianming had had contact with. Even if the odds were low, many would attempt to force Tianming to make an appearance.

"If I was in the Violetglory Star, I wouldn't want to cause her any harm. I might even choose to show up. But the point is, I'm not there!" Therein lay the problem. He had no way of saving her at all. "Deepwind Continent, Qianyuan Imperial City!" Getting there was impossible.

"You must go and save her! Bring your master and elders!" Liu Xuanxuan said. It seemed that the entire Violetglory Star was waiting for him to appear.

"Also, Ni Hongyi has requested that Feng and Lin Xiao follow you. As long as you go to Qianyuan Imperial City, she'll let Wanwan go," Liu Xuanxuan added.

Ni Hongyi wasn't necessarily in Qianyuan Imperial City. If news of the matter were to spread, many would wait for him in the city. Who would be the ultimate beneficiaries? It obviously wasn't the Redcloak Ghosts, who had been paid to execute the matter. Finding out who had paid them was more important.

Upon further contemplation, Tianming decided he didn't want to implicate Liu Wanwan. He would take the lead instead. "Xuanxuan, look for someone from the Violetcloud Imperium." Tianming said.

"Han Xingluan is here as well. He came with me," Liu Xuanxuan replied.

"Call him." Tianming knew that the Mystgod Pavilion was one of Violetcloud Imperium's forces. They had previously urged Liu Wanwan to ask him if he wanted to meet them, and Han Xingluan was one of the Violetcloud Imperium's disciples.

"Did Violetcloud Imperium do this?" Tianming asked.

Han Xingluan shook his head. "Although the elders have expressed their intention to accept the three of you, there's absolutely no need for us to do this. The Mystgod Pavilion is on our side. It's to our advantage that Liu Wanwan is on good terms with you. We have no reason to turn that advantage into a disadvantage by offending you. It'd be a stupid move."

"That makes sense." Tianming nodded. "But you're wrong about one thing. I've met Liu Wanwan a few times at most, and our relationship isn't that good. However, I hate implicating anyone. I'd like to ask the Violetcloud Imperium for a favor. Is that possible?"

"Go ahead. I'll convey your words to the elders," said Han Xingluan.

"I may not be able to go to Qingyuan Imperial City. You can think of me as trapped somewhere, incapable of dealing with anything that happens outside. Therefore, I hope the Violetcloud Imperium can help me save Liu Wanwan. You're the top force on Violetglory Star and you have people everywhere. It won't be difficult for you, will it?" Tianming asked.

"Trapped? Alright, I understand. No wonder you haven't shown up in person and you have such mysterious origins." Han Xingluan nodded.

"What about saving her?"

"I'll convey your request to the elders."

"Tell them that if they help me with this, if I make it out one day, the first thing I'll do is visit the Violetcloud Imperium and see if we can work together." Tianming said.

"Really?" Han Xingluan's eyes lit up.

"Yes." Tianming nodded. The promise meant nothing to him. After all, there was no way he could ever set foot on the Violetglory Star. The only thing he could do was entrust the Violetcloud Imperium with the task of saving Liu Wanwan in exchange for his promise.

"Liu Wanwan, I hope you're safe."

After saying his farewells to Han Xingluan and Liu Xuanxuan, Li Tianming decided to pay someone else a visit—Princess Shen Yu. He got the wondersky fairy to send her a message, asking if they could meet. As soon as the message was sent, Princess Shen Yu responded with a letter, inviting him over to talk.

"Let's go."

The wondersky fairy took him to Princess Shen Yu's reception room.

### **Chapter 1358 - Faint Waves Of Fragrance**

In a pavilion, the graceful Princess Shen Yu was dressed in purple. She played the zither, her slender fingers creating a melodious and moving tune. As the sound of the zither filled the air, the water in the lake formed rippling waves. A light breeze lifted the curtains. The jade-like beauty resembled a goddess. After a long time, the music faded.

Raising her chin slightly, she looked at Tianming with her starry eyes, her tender, yet imposing gaze locking on to his body like shackles. "I heard the Red Ghosts forced you to show yourself. You don't think I did something so senseless and hateful, do you?" Princess Shen Yu smiled.

"You must be joking. You're too noble to do such a despicable and stupid thing. It's probably some lowlife who's trying to be smart but ended up shooting himself in the foot," said Tianming.

"Why so angry? Does that girl mean a lot to you?" Princess Shen Yu leisurely rose to her feet, her enchanting curves swaying. The nine-centimeter-wide divinespring on her chest shone on her smooth, snow-white skin—tempting, yet untouchable.

"She isn't important, but I hate that kind of behavior. I don't like implicating others," said Tianming. Being self-aware, he'd deliberately chosen to not befriend anyone in the wondersky realm, yet something like this had still happened.

"Will you go to Qingyuan Imperial City? Would you like me to send someone to protect you? Or should I protect you myself?" Princess Shen Yu flitted across the lake, faint waves of fragrance emanating from her as she gradually approached Tianming. From three meters away, her grade-nine divinespring and smooth, satiny skin appeared even more dazzling.

"I won't go," Tianming said.

"Then why were you looking for me?" She asked.

"I'd like to ask for a favor and also make a bet with you."

"A favor and a bet? Putting the two words together seems a bit odd. Go on," she urged.

"I'm issuing you an official challenge for the Violetglory ranking," Tianming said.

"What's meant to happen will happen... and?"

"The bet involves victory and defeat."

"What happens if you win and vice versa?" she asked.

"If I win, you help me save the girl using whatever power, intelligence, and manpower the Divineglory Dynasty possesses." Results were more likely with both the Divineglory Dynasty and Violetcloud Imperium working to find Liu Wanwan. There was also a deeper intention behind Tianming's request. He was more than eighty percent sure that the one responsible for the kidnapping was either the Divineglory Dynasty or Violetcloud Imperium.

"What if you lose?" asked Princess Shen Yu.

"If I lose, I'll immediately head to the Divineglory Dynasty and pay my respects to you in person. After that, I'll serve the Divineglory Dynasty and obey your every word. Of course, I still need you to follow me to Qianyuan Imperial City and save Liu Wanwan. I don't want to implicate anyone," Tianming solemnly said.

Princess Shen Yu was a little dumbfounded. She didn't expect Tianming would be so forthcoming. In fact, it was due to his victory over Li Haochen, as well as Ying Huo's latest evolution. He was certain he would win.

This is the only way I can get the two forces to help me. Tianming didn't know what else he could do under such circumstances. He was suspicious of both the Violetcloud Imperium and Divineglory Dynasty. With this, they might expose each other's shortcomings and perhaps open his eyes to certain realities.

"Your Highness, do you accept the bet?" Tianming asked.

"I can only acquire you after I win?" Princess Shen Yu smiled.

"Yes, don't you have confidence in yourself?"

"Of course, but you're pretty strong. This is a fair challenge."

"It's only fun if it's a fair challenge. Isn't that right?"

"You're right. I agree. Since I'll have to save the girl, win or lose, I'll immediately start looking for her as a show of sincerity. Three days from now, we'll fight on the Violetcloud Battlefield. Who knows? When the time comes, she might appear in front of you, alive and well."

"That's even better. Thank you, Your Highness!" Tianming bowed.

"The question is, if I lose, will you still give the Divineglory Dynasty a chance in the future?" she said.

"Of course," Tianming replied.

"That's good."

"In that case, I'll get ready for our fight. See you in three days."

"Alright." Princess Shen Yu smiled as she watched him leave.

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The battle was scheduled for three days later to give the spectators time. As soon as the news emerged, a large number of people would begin gathering around the Violetcloud Battlefield. After three days, the number of spectators would be about ten times that of the battle between Tianming and Mu Sha. The battlefield might not be able to fit all of them.

"Aren't you being biased? The conditions you set for the Divineglory Dynasty and Violetcloud Imperium are different. You're willing to join the Violetcloud Imperium if they help you find her, but the Divineglory Dynasty has to help as well as defeat you." Ying Huo rolled its eyes.

"I originally came to challenge Princess Shen Yu. I want to enter the eighth level of the Violetglory Pagoda. Besides, I find the Divineglory Dynasty more suspicious," said Tianming.

"How can you tell?"

"Intuition." To be more specific, it was his gut feeling during his conversation with Princess Shen Yu. When those who didn't want to admit their wrongdoings spoke, there were subtle changes in their eyes

with every word. Tianming had made promises to both sides, but told only the Violetcloud Imperium that he was temporarily trapped.

Tianming had no plans to visit either place. What he wanted was for them to investigate each other. The innocent party would find out who was behind Liu Wanwan's kidnapping. It was difficult for him to make an accurate assessment, as he was too far away and he hadn't grown up on the Violetglory Star.

"Now we wait," Tianming said.

"Unfortunately, Fifth's eavesdropping skills can't be used in the wondersky realm. Otherwise I'd be able to hear everything Han Xingluan and Princess Shen Yu say in private after I leave."

"Yes."

Only when he couldn't use Yin Chen did he realize how important it was.

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After Tianming left, Princess Shen Yu returned to the pavilion, her expression turning icy as she resumed playing the zither. Not long after her return, a middle-aged man dressed in black appeared.

"Uncle." Looking up briefly, Princess Shen Yu greeted him, her fingers dancing across the string without pause. The tune gradually quickened, surging with passion and killing intent.

"You're responsible?" The middle-aged man sat down beside her, pulling out a small jar of wine.

"Yes." Princess Shen Yu said softly.

"I didn't think he'd bet on his future for a humble woman. Although he's similar to Ye Chen, his taste is far worse," the middle-aged man teased.

### **Chapter 1359 - The Tiger Shows Its Might**

"Taste? No, he doesn't like the girl, but he doesn't want to implicate anyone," Princess Shen Yu said.

"He's betting on his future because he doesn't want to implicate her? Do you believe that?"

"I do, because Ye Chen is the same. They both pay particular attention to righteousness, justice, and sentiment. They'll never treat their own people poorly, but they'll show no mercy to the enemy." She smiled, her fingers moving faster and the melody growing more intense.

"Interesting... if you win, he's yours. You can free Liu Wanwan. Everything will be easier. But the question is, can you defeat him?" the middle-aged man asked.

"Of course."

"If you win, that means that he can't compare to Ye Chen. Call me when he shows up and I'll place shackles on him. We can control him forever if he's a slave. Don't groom him as Ye Chen's substitute. There isn't room for two tigers on one mountain," the middle-aged man said.

"Alright."

"If you lose, will you release Liu Wanwan?" he asked.

"Not for the moment. She's his only weakness, so I can't just let her go. I was very careful, so there won't be any proof for him to find. He won't know that I'm responsible," Princess Shen Yu replied.

"But if he suspects you, he won't think favorably of you," the man added.

It doesn't matter."

"Why not?"

"I've mentioned him to Ye Chen. He thinks it's best to kill him if I can't control him." A cold glint flashed in her eyes.

"He's still so decisive when it comes to killing..."

"Of course. But it'll be best if I defeat him in three days. There won't be any issues then," she said.

"Three days? Are you planning on...."

"Yes, I'll ask Father to give me a temporary boost in strength. Even if he's stronger than he was when he fought Mu Sha, I'm ninety percent sure I can defeat him."

"He's continuously improved. Design a battle plan based on an overestimation of his abilities," the middle-aged man cautioned.

"Yes. The divinespring will come in handy."

Neither side thought they would lose this battle.

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For three days, Tianming cultivated in the seventh level of the Violetglory Pagoda. He predicted that news of his fight with Princess Shen Yu would spread all over Violetglory Star. The mysterious genius had appeared once more, and this time he was planning to climb to the top three with a fight against the princess of the Divineglory Dynasty. What an exciting battle!

Princess Shen Yu hadn't fought for a long time. She was an eighth-level constellier beastmaster. Before Ye Chen, she had been the most outstanding person in the Divineglory Dynasty. This was a duel between the best among the juniors. The Violetcloud Battlefield was filled in half a day.

After cultivating, Tianming returned to Orderia.

"The people of the Violetglory Star assume I'm just a totemancer. They think I used a blood pact for my lifebound beasts. It isn't Orderia. There's no sun emperor, no experiments. I don't have to worry that Li Wudi might cage and raise me like Qingyu. Since I'm a totemancer, how can I be considered a genius if I'm merely a heptabane?"

When he returned to the wondersky realm, Tianming instructed Ying Huo to register its strength and brought two hundred and fifty thousand silver eggs. He added not one, but two new totems. He was ready to reveal that he had nine totems.

"Seven totems won't be enough to garner real respect, but nine will create a sensation in the Violetglory Star. The ones responsible for kidnapping Wanwan will be forced to consider the consequences of

becoming my enemy." He needed an occasion to make his strength known and to intimidate his potential enemies.

"I hope this helps Wanwan!"

Tianming registered the nine totems. Nine out of the ten decapath era godswords had been revealed. Together with his five lifebound beasts, Tianming's strength had reached terrifying heights. That was the basis of his confidence in defeating Princess Shen Yu.

Tianming had defeated Li Haochen without the use of his totems. This time, Yin Chen's numbers had also increased and Ying Huo had evolved. How could Princess Shen Yu stop him? He wanted to repeat one of Meow Meow's quotes: "If the tiger doesn't show its might, you'll think it's a weak kitten!"

Five Primordial Chaos Beasts and nine totems....

Tianming descended into the Violetcloud Battlefield. There was still an hour before the appointed time. He was waiting for his opponent to arrive. The stars shone and the light flashed.

Up in the sky, the white-haired young man swept his gaze across the battlefield. His silhouette was magnified tens of thousands of times by the light, like a giant surrounded by the dense crowd. Thunderous cheers filled the air the moment he appeared.

"Lin Feng!" A mysterious disciple soared into the sky.

The last person to cause such a sensation was Ye Chen, who had defeated Violetcloud Imperium's number one disciple and risen to the top of the Violetglory ranking. That shocking scene made the spectators boil with passion. The dazzling starlight centered on Tianming's body, so the disdainful, overbearing expression on his face was deeply etched in their hearts.

You want me because I'm a heptabane, yet you despise me for my young age, for being a nobody, devoid of the ability to protect my life. What'll you think of me now that I'm a nonabane with the same talent as Qingyu?

The bane-rings on his arms trembled. Nine of the decapath era godswords began stirring—the four cardinal gods, life and death, heaven and earth, and time and space. Since his time in the Divine Moon Realm, Tianming hadn't exerted the full power of his totems. Two tigers couldn't coexist on the same mountain; who was stronger? He wasn't impatient. Closing his eyes, he waited patiently for his opponent to arrive. After all, she was a princess.

Half of the Violetglory Star supported the princess, and hundreds of millions of people outside the arena were eager for her breathtaking appearance. As a peerless beauty capable of causing the downfall of a country and holding a status and birth above all others, she was the dream of many.

Tianming chose the sea as the scene of the battle. The combination of starlight lighting up the waters below and the splash of the waves made for a spectacular sight.

Lan Huang was already swimming in the water. Having just recovered from its injuries, Xian Xian, who had eaten and drunk to its heart's fill, was rooted to the seabed like a small Azurecloud Divine Tree. Meanwhile, Ying Huo and Meow Meow each occupied one of Lan Huang's heads, surfing the waves. The



army of two hundred and fifty thousand silver eggs had turned into two and a half million little cockroaches that floated on the surface of the water.

"I love... this place... so much! I can... fight while... taking a... bath bath!" Yin Chen said excitedly.

"I specifically chose it for you. Am I great or what?" said Tianming.

"You're alright." Yin Chen said arrogantly.

Everyone could see their joy. They didn't seem to be nervous at all. Tianming was the only serious one; the matter involving Liu Wanwan made him sullen.

It was finally time! Princess Shen Yu was neither early nor late. At this moment, she was surrounded by thousands of people, like a goddess entering the Violetcloud Battlefield.

Now that both of them were present, the battle was imminent.

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Somewhere in the vast, endless astralscape of order, a mysterious, purple, sparkling nova source absorbed and emitted light. In the Welkin plane below, the people could see a purple sun when they looked up. It was the most beautiful thing in the world—the source of light, the origin of power, the eruption point of divine ordered patterns.... In the people's hearts, those who lived on the purple sun were gods. To reach that magnificent world, one would have to first pass stellar source outposts and go through starry, purple clouds. That sun wasn't hot. Like the Divine Moon Realm, it was cool, mild, and dazzled with infinite starlight. Every inch of it was elegant and dignified.

In a hidden corner on the purple star, a girl with her hair tied up in a bun miserably huddled, her expression panic-stricken. A creepy, ghost-like figure was playing with its blood-red scimitar outside the window.

### **Chapter 1360 - Ye Chen And Wanwan**

There were many viewing booths in the Violetcloud Battlefield, each with the best view. Unsurprisingly, every starlit viewing booth was occupied. Only the crème de la crème of society could enter the place; ordinary folk could only crowd outside to watch the top three disciples.

The viewing booth was full, indicating that a large number of the Violetglory Star's influential figures had descended on the battlefield to witness the performance of the Violetglory Star's second miracle. Such interest of epic proportions had only been seen before when Ye Chen challenged the Violetcloud Imperium's number one disciple, Gong Yin. At the time, Gong Yin was still first on the Violetglory ranking, towering over Princess Shen Yu. But now he had been pushed to second place. However, Gong Yin, an octabane, was still number one among the totemancers. That battle had been witnessed by most of the people present today.

In less than ten breaths, Ye Chen, the "first miracle", had avenged the beautiful princess, crushed Gong Yin, dominated the Violetglory ranking, and caused a sensation in the world. The unprecedented event remained vivid in their minds. Today, Lin Feng was challenging Princess Shen Yu, whose strength was almost equivalent to Gong Yin. It was a battle of equal significance.

"It's time to find out if Lin Feng is comparable to Ye Chen, and whether or not he can be called a miracle."

The battlefield was filled with deafening cheers as the spectators gazed upon two of heaven's chosen. Even in the closed viewing booths, the vibrations caused by the millions of spectators were felt.

The Violetcloud Imperium disciple, Gong Yin, stood by the window, recalling the fear he had once felt under Ye Chen's power. On a day as sensational as this, he became the foil as feelings of helplessness, surrender, and resignation swept over him. He couldn't accept it, but he had to admit that he would always be second.

He was an emperor's son. And today, another sovereign's child would face a heaven-defying genius, another child of destiny.

"I hope I won't be the only royal descendant that's been suppressed by another...." Gong Yin's gaze was fiery. He supported Lin Feng and longed for his victory.

Behind Gong Yin stood Han Xingluan and the five grand Violetcloud Disciples—three men and two women, all of whom were young geniuses atop all living beings. They came from the Violetcloud Imperium's most prominent clans and had arrived two days ago. Gong Yin had been watching Tianming since he appeared.

"Senior Brother Gong, will you be able to accept it if this man joins the Violetcloud Imperium and robs you of your position as the first disciple?" Han Xingluan asked.

"Yes. I'm willing to do anything as long as we can suppress the Divineglory Dynasty," Gong Yin solemnly said.

"How open-minded of you, Senior Brother Gong."

He was truly a man of character. Despite being the emperor's son, he was willing to give up his position.

"It's about to begin...."

At that moment, the door opened and a dark figure walked in. The five grand Violetcloud Disciples turned around and respectfully said, "Greetings, Old Master." The dark figure slowly approached them. It was a hunchbacked old man dressed in plain cotton clothes. His hair had fallen out, his teeth were almost gone, and he shook with every step he took.

Logically speaking, his astralforce should have failed by now. A man this old would be unable to defeat the Violetcloud Disciples, yet his aura was extremely imposing and the Violetcloud Disciples respected him very much. His unusual features were visible when he appeared in the light. He had only one large eye which sat just above the bridge of his nose, occupying almost half of his forehead. Although he was old, his one green eye was lively and sharp.

"Why have you come, Old Master?"

Gong Yin lent him an arm for support, but the old man pushed him aside. Playfully looking at him, the old man said, "You don't have to help me. I might look old, but my body is stronger than yours. There's nothing I can't do in the heavens above and the earth below, even picking up beauties!" With that, his big green eye stared indecently at the two beautiful female disciples for a long time.

"I'm impressed!"

Gong Yin and the others exchanged a look, their mouths dry.

With his hands behind his back, the old man walked to the window and stared at Princess Shen Yu, his voice filled with praise. "Ah, that face, that tiny waist, that cute ass, those long legs... the little divineglorian is very exciting!"

The Violetcloud Disciples didn't look surprised. Turning his attention to Tianming, the old man said, "This is Lin Feng? The kid everyone has been talking about? Is he the one I'm here for?"

"Yes, he's the one. Old Master, you're so experienced and knowledgeable—"

Stroking his beard, the old man cleared his throat. "You don't have to flatter me. The longer you live, the more amazing things you see." He looked Tianming up and down. "A totemancer and beastmaster? Logically speaking, he was originally a totemancer, while his lifebound beasts were acquired via a blood pact. His lifebound beasts are a complicated mix of different types and they appear to be the spawn of wildbeasts. However, he's fifth on the Violetglory ranking despite the over-elaborate, garbage cultivation practice, which proves there's something special about him...."

"Yes, and therein lies our doubts," said Gong Yin.

"Are you sure he's a heptabane?" the old man asked.

"Yes, I fought him! At the time, he defeated me without his lifebound beasts, then defeated Mu Sha with his lifebound beasts alone," said Han Xingluan.

"I've come to a conclusion." The old man stroked his long beard.

"What do you mean, Old Master?"

"Behind him is a great alchemy guru who's been feeding him pills since he was a child. After the success of the blood pact, his progress was slow because of the wildbeasts' limited intelligence. He reached his current cultivation level relying on pills alone. That kind of cultivation method is putting the cart before the horse. It has exaggerated results in the early stage, but he'll be useless after that. He isn't even as valuable as you, Han Xingluan." The old man sneered. "There's all kinds of people in this world. The kid is probably some alchemy guru's pill tester. How could anyone be so despicable as to ruin a child?"

Upon hearing that, the five Violetcloud Disciples were stunned.

"In the past, people have made similar remarks but we didn't believe it then."

"Who would've thought he's actually a pitiful 'pill furnace'? He's exhausted an entire life's potential within his first thirty years."

"He'll be useless past the age of thirty."

Taking a deep breath, Gong Yin asked, "Are you sure you won't take a second look, Old Master? Others have said the same, but those who've seen him fight don't seem to think so. If he's really a pill furnace, there's no way he can be this smooth."

"Alright then. I'll watch. I'll make you a bet. If he's not a pill furnace, I'll unscrew my head and let him use it as a chamber pot." The green-eyed old man confidently smiled.

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A few people were in another viewing booth that was located right above the battlefield. The entire area belonged to the Divineglory Dynasty. A middle-aged man clad in black stood next to the window with one of his hands placed at the edge. The eye in his palm stared at the battlefield, while the mouth below chattered endlessly.

"Uncle, I'm here." Behind him, a figure entered the booth.

In a dark corner, a man leaned into his seat, lazily crossing his legs. He seemed comfortable and at ease.

"You're rather cavalier about all this. The battle's about to begin." The middle-aged man looked out at the Violetcloud Battlefield, his lips curling in a smile.

"I can't help it. You recently opened the Astraldome for me. They're all aliens from other stars, so fighting them is much more interesting. My schedule is packed with battles. I haven't had the time to keep up with what's happening here." The voice was low and magnetic—very charming. It obviously belonged to a young man.

"Why do you work so hard? You're already stronger than your peers," The middle-aged man laughed.

"Stronger than my peers? The astralscape of order is enormous. How dare I claim such a thing? There's always someone better than you. Modesty is the way of the king." The young man smiled.

"There you go again. No wonder they call you 'Great Pretender Ye'," the middle-aged man said.

"God, that sounds horrible!" The young man was horrified.

His nickname had the middle-aged man bent over in laughter. When he finally composed himself, he said, "The princess said that you suggested she kill Lin Feng if he can't be controlled?"

"You can say that. I noticed that she's recently become entangled with this person. It's a waste of her time. He won't be a problem if he's dead. Happiness is the most important thing. Anyone that makes us unhappy should die and be reincarnated. In eighteen years, he'll be a young man again."

"You don't want another person with the same exceptional talent and luck as you on the Violetglory Star, do you?" the middle-aged man teased.

"He's merely a heptabane and a pill furnace. What's so great about that?" the young man scoffed.

"He has secrets that we have yet to learn."

"Then I must pay attention. But there's one thing you need to understand...."

"What is it?"

"I might not be extremely confident, but I like being free and unrestrained. I want to protect the people I love. But here's the thing, if you think I'll fear someone with the same talent and luck as I have, and if you think I'll kill him for that, you're wrong. There's only one reason I suggested Wanwan kill him, and

that's because he upset her. My dearest Wanwan shouldn't be troubled. I attach great importance to a harmonious family!" He was referring to Princess Shen Yu.